

RESOURCING OF STATE REGULATORS OF MAJOR RESOURCE AND RENEWABLE PROJECTS



MOTION ONE

That the LGAQ calls on the State Government for investment to adequately resource State Regulators of major resource and renewable projects (including the Office of the Coordinator General, Department of Environment and Science and Department of Resources) to enable both upfront education and assessment processes, and understanding of social impacts vital for achieving optimum outcomes for industry and communities in the facilitation of projects by:

- Delivery of improved education and understanding of current legislation, standards, principles and guidelines administered by state agencies.
- Compliance and monitoring by State Government Agencies on delivery of major resource and renewable project commitments, conditions, and improved engagement with community to satisfy conditioning and project commitment deliverables.
- Improved engagement standards on mining lease permit processes outside of Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) assessment criteria are captured and transparently communicated to communities hosting these projects.

DESIRED OUTCOME

What we seek is:

- a. For improved consistency and understanding of the *Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act (SSRC Act)*, principles and accepted standards between regulatory agencies;
- b. For compliance and monitoring purposes under the *SSRC Act, Environmental Protection Act, State Development and Public Works Organisation Act*, with a focus on delivery of proponent commitments and broadened engagement with community to gauge satisfaction on conditions, compliance and commitment deliverables.
- c. For improved engagement standards with communities on mining lease permit processes outside of EIS assessments, noting that small-scale projects or ancillary development of mine infrastructure carries a range of impacts that are not transparently communicated to community.

The intent of the motion and outcome is to deliver a much-improved focus on education and assessment processes and a more prominent understanding of social impacts vital for achieving optimal outcomes for industry and communities in alignment with the intent of the Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) commitments of the Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan (QRIDP – July 2022).

BACKGROUND

Isaac Regional Council is experienced in the breadth of resources sector assessment and regulatory processes in Queensland.

From a regional lens on a broad spectrum of issues and constraints associated with assessment and regulation of projects in Queensland, our experiences can be best summarised as:

- Difficulties in achieving consistent outcomes across various localised impacts on land use, socio-economic outcomes, natural resources and infrastructure – depending on legislative head of power and assessing agency of the project;
- A complete disregard by proponents of their social commitments made during EIS processes prior to commencement of the SSRC Act, with no ability for regulators to enforce;
- An onus on Council in educating proponents on appropriate standards and responses to road infrastructure, water, waste and social impacts;
- A lack of regional understanding by assessing authorities when assessing and deciding projects, with assessing officers based in Brisbane;
- An emphasis on expediency, rather than quality engagement prior to and during the assessment process by industry and assessing agencies to allow for quality input by local government in the formulation of conditions and baseline acceptable standards;
- An absence of regulation and enforcement of off-site impacts such as dust impacts, traffic and infrastructure management and social performance, with Council often carrying the bag of community discontent on matters subject to state approval and regulation;
- An absence of a regulatory framework to govern end-of-life processes and impacts on local communities;
- There is an immediate need for investment by the State in upfront education on assessment processes and understanding of social impacts, which is vital for achieving optimal outcomes and delivering on the intent of the ESG intents of the QRIDP; and
- For the State to directly assist projects under historic legislation and in accordance with historic benchmarks that no longer meet modern-day society's expectations in social or environmental sustainability, both in their ongoing operations and when projects reach their end of life.