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24 August 2020

Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Treasurer
House of Representatives
Parliament House
PO Box 6022
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: josh.frydenberg.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Treasurer

Whitsunday Region Priorities 2020 – Federal Government 2020/21 Budget Submission

Firstly, we commend the Federal Government's swift action in guiding Australia through the Coronavirus pandemic to date and providing vital income support through the Jobkeeper and Jobseeker initiatives to vulnerable Australian businesses and households.

Whitsunday Regional Council welcome the opportunity to highlight the Whitsunday region priorities for consideration in the 2020/21 Federal budget. The attached priorities document highlights the strategic projects, programs and policy initiatives to create a resilient and sustainable Whitsunday region.

Of the 25 priorities, we are calling on the Federal Government to assist with the following initiatives:

JobKeeper Extension

The Whitsunday economy is built on the three pillars of mining, tourism and agriculture. COVID-19 has had a profound affect on our tourism industry with approximately 50% of businesses in the tourism reliant Airlie-Whitsunday SA2 registered for JobKeeper. It is vital to regional communities and businesses that the JobKeeper initiative is extended until normal business resumes.

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Cannonvale
Shop 23, Whitsunday Plaza
Shute Harbour Road, Cannonvale QLD 4802

Urannah Water Scheme

The Urannah Water Scheme is a catalytic, irrigation precinct and renewable energy (Hydro power) generation scheme located approximately 90km west of Mackay in North Queensland. Continued support is needed to deliver this region building project.

Key Road Upgrades

Roads are the critical lifeblood of regional Queensland. In Whitsunday, our roads connect our \$1B mining industry, \$900M Tourism industry and \$600M Agriculture industry with the world. Despite this, our roads remain some of the worst in Queensland. We need immediate support to address the critical upgrades required.

Whitsunday Marine Centre of Excellence

Currently a high-level concept, and with stakeholders across the private sector and all levels of government, this project has the ability to affect transformational change for the Whitsundays. Detailed business and feasibility case is to attract commercial funding for this project.

Commonwealth Supported Small Business Recovery Advisors

Regional businesses need targeted on the ground support to help them navigate through the impacts of COVID-19. Local stakeholders have indicated that regional businesses are struggling to access the support mechanisms available to help them through COVID-19.

Underwritten Insurance Program

Government action into the price of insurance in Northern Australia is desperately needed. Premiums are reportedly twice the Australian average and rates of non-insurance are growing. The ACCC's second report into the Northern Australia Insurance Inquiry states:

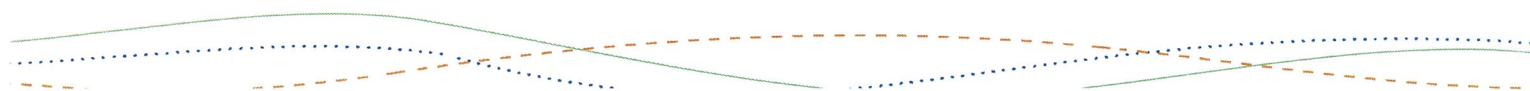
'Destructive extreme weather events are not a rare occurrence in northern Australia. Governments have committed to developing northern Australia, and laying the right foundations for economic growth, liveability and prosperity. If governments want people to live and thrive in these regions, this provides an additional reason to make insurance more affordable and to stem the growing rate of non-insurance.'

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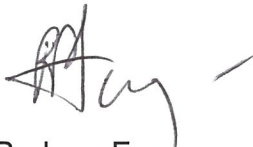


Booking Agent Inquiry

A Government led inquiry into issues within the Tourism booking industry is needed urgently. The inquiry must investigate guarantee of payment issues, commission models and unethical and collusive business practices with the intent to establish legislated measures or payment guarantee mechanisms to improve the sectors access to fair payment for services provided.

We thank you again for the support that the Federal Government has shown through COVID-19 and please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to discuss the Whitsunday Region's priorities further.

Yours sincerely,



Rodney Ferguson
Chief Executive Officer