

Queensland Policy Forum



# MAKING THE CHANGE - NEW THINKING AND BOLD IDEAS

Long-term post COVID-19 Strategy and Policy Initiatives  
for the Development of Queensland and Its Regions

This **Policy Position Paper** examines what the ‘new norm’ may look like for the future development of the State of Queensland and its regions. It has been written as a knowledge product for community discussion. It proposes a range of **policy ideas** to effectively meet the challenges presented in the post-COVID era. The paper has been prepared by a group of active semi- and retired government, academic and business professionals. This group brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the discussion. They propose ideas and strategic and important solutions to guide the future sustainable and regenerative development of the State. A separate **Supporting Document** elaborates on the details in this paper, providing descriptions of concepts, examples of policy initiatives and references.

## Policy Position Paper

May 2020





# Making the Change - New Thinking and Bold Ideas

Long-term post COVID-19 Strategy and Policy Initiatives for the Development of Queensland and Its Regions

*"We need to prepare for a new normal"*  
Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison.

## Challenges for Post COVID-19 Recovery and Development

Pandemic crises, like COVID-19, create huge disruptions and distortions and can trigger enormous economic, social, and technological change. To limit the extensive adverse impacts from the current and future economic and social crises that will follow the health crisis, and to emerge strongly, preparations are needed by government to develop policies, strategies, and programs that are not necessarily orthodox. This applies to the ongoing challenges of growing the economy, addressing inequity, addressing environmental degradation and climate change, and recovering from the recent natural hazards in the State.

This **Policy Position Paper** examines what the 'new norm' may look like, and it proposes **policy ideas** to effectively meet the challenges presented. It has been prepared by a group of active semi- and retired government, academic and business professionals who meet regularly in Brisbane to address urban and regional development issues, and who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the discussion. A separate **Supporting Document** elaborates on the details in this paper, including descriptions of concepts, examples of policy initiatives and references.

A clear impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and is that significant changes will occur in the way we live, work, communicate, socialise, trade, run businesses and government in Australia, and indeed, around the world. Potentially, the crisis also presents a '**golden opportunity**' to adopt **innovative approaches** to enable us to reassess and to adopt a more **collaborative and inclusive model of development** to change the way we could:

- rebuild the economy;
- have a more equitable society; and
- better manage the environment.

The paper has been developed with these over-arching goals and objectives in mind to achieve **sustainable and regenerative development** by pursuing a '**quadruple-bottom-line**' approach to improve the **well-being** and **quality of life** of people and communities. It is critical to reduce the growing risk of inequities between the 'haves' and 'have nots'.

Consistent with that integrated approach would be to take initiatives to rely less on measuring development success in terms of GDP to also incorporate performance on measures of well-being and environmental outcomes in evaluating progress.

COVID-19 pandemic impacts have revealed how **globally connected** and **vulnerable** we are as a State to the world economy and the structural economic weaknesses and deficiencies, such as the gaps in supply chains, with closures of trading partners' borders and their stopping access to critical medical, energy, and other supplies. Solutions include the need to **diversify**, **re-engineer**, and **expand the internal economy** to produce critical supplies locally through **structural re-orientation**.

**Institutional innovation** encompassing **regulatory and procedural reforms**, including the State's planning and industrial relations (IR) systems, can also be considered. A focus, particularly at the regional level, on **inclusive engagement 'bottom-up' approaches** will be appropriate and beneficial to more widely engage business, NGOs, and community-based organisations in policy development and implementation, to minimise transaction costs.

The Prime Minister has flagged Australia's need to become a **more self-sufficient** nation in line with a global shift to streamline and restore economic sovereignty for crucial supplies and services. Possible responses include:



- onshoring and support to develop strategic endogenous growth industries;
- strengthening governance arrangements for greater localisation and delivery of goods and services; and
- shortening industry supply chains and production systems.

Changes to generate wealth will necessitate identifying and embarking on strategies to:

- regenerate existing jobs, building on assets, endowed resources and existing core competencies and competitiveness for the State and regional economies; and
- generate new jobs, and significantly enhance national and/or regional self-reliance.

The unfortunate reality of the COVID-19 crisis is that the changes necessary to restore the State to economic, social and environmental prosperity, and to ensure benefits are distributed equitably, will have to be made in the face of profoundly deleterious economic and social impacts, destroying lives, businesses, and livelihoods across the State. Repairing the widespread damage and overcoming these adversities facing society will be long and costly. The financial challenges alone are immense and complex. Post COVID-19 will see Queensland burdened with **unprecedented levels of debt for generations**, much of it falling disproportionately on those who can least afford the additional burden - the poor, the young and the marginalised. Strategies to meet those obligations by increasing public revenues need to be balanced while accommodating additional funding calls to rebuild the economy, set it on new paths, and provide the social programs and support needed for an equitable society.

Overall, the complexities of the issues are enormous, and the solutions to ensure the **road to recovery** of the State and regions are sustainable, will require **new thinking and bold ideas** which take us beyond the present and immediate concerns to build a platform for a more prosperous, resilient, and stable future. The Action Plan looks closely at some of these solutions.

## Virtuous Circle for Sustainable Development

Queensland is encouraged to start developing and shaping strategies and policy initiatives which provide strategic directions to guide decisions taken amid the crisis - and not wait until the health crisis ends. When examining previous experiences, one key lesson from major natural, economic, and conflict disasters is that **change management** needs to go hand in hand with **post-disaster planning** for recovery.

Even before COVID-19, our society and economy were undergoing irreversible changes. We are at the beginning of a new revolution - the **4th Industrial Revolution** - the outcomes of which, currently, are unknown. Innovative interventions can help create and shape desirable outcomes for the economy, society, and environment. Some bold **experimentation** might be appropriate. **Collaborative efforts** are needed by all stakeholders to work together to set directions and manage the disruptions of this revolution as they play out.

A **virtuous circle** approach to **sustainable and regenerative development**, using collaborative governance and 'quadruple-bottom-line' approaches, will achieve development outcomes that enhance well-being, quality of life, equity and prosperity of all who live and invest in the State.

To achieve these outcomes, calls for an integrated approach to development is needed to:

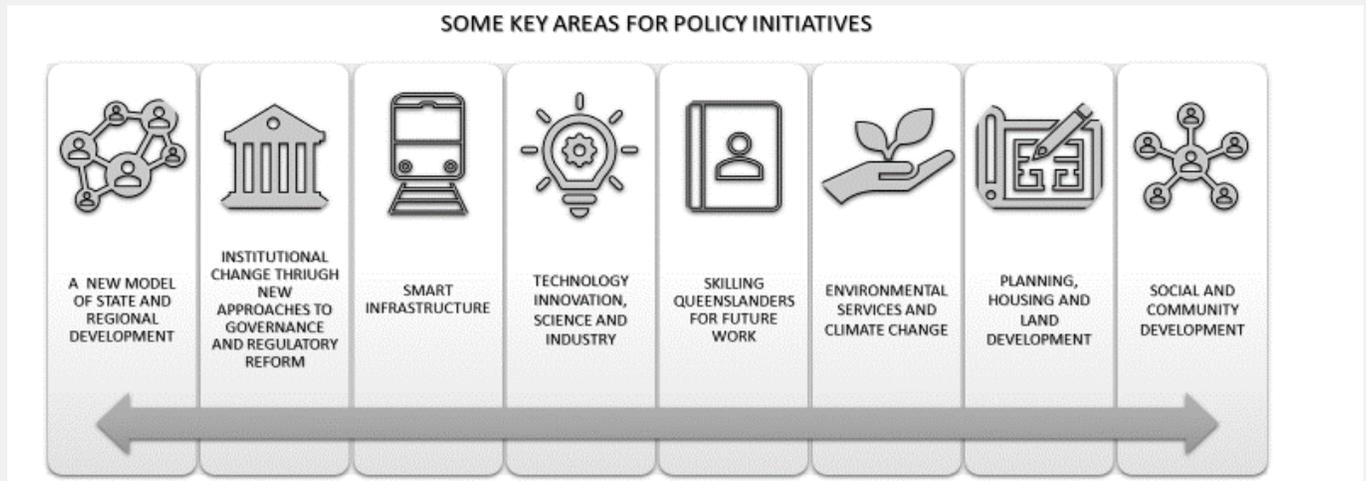
- pursue and implement economic development strategies that enhance **productivity**. recover old and create new jobs, and generate wealth;
- create an **equitable society** with inclusive and cohesive regions and communities;
- pursue **ecological diversity**, enhance environmental conservation, and environmental management; and
- build **institutional** - both formal and informal - capacity and capability using **government structures** and developing more effective **governance processes** to enhance trust and address culture concerns.

In pursuing these well-established **sustainable development goals and objectives** it is inevitable that **institutional reforms and innovation** occur to underpin and facilitate the development and implementation of policy and plans embracing collaborative effort embracing governments, business, NGOs, and community organisations.

A series of **policy position ideas and initiatives** - some tried and tested, some novel and innovative - is presented in the **Action Plan** for consideration by the State government - in collaboration with business and communities - to adopt or adapt, as needed, to effectively restore the State and its regional economies to equitable prosperity in the shortest possible time, following the



COVID-19 health crisis period. The ideas presented are clustered into **eight thematic areas**. The term ‘**economic development**’ encompasses the integration of social, environmental and governance factors, all of which will have significant influence on State and regional development. Note that these themes are not silos. Rather they interact with each other.



More **integrated systems approaches** are encouraged by the government to State and regional development and land-use planning and development procedures, in collaboration with business and communities. Governance, finance, and implementation arrangements for programs and projects to support State and regional development need examining and possible revision. That may include a reorientation of economic development modelling, planning, and the future nature of work.

The COVID-19 crisis provides a unique opportunity for the State along with its regions and their local governments, to review and reset the clock on its future economic, social and community development, which might best be achieved through a **spirit of collaboration and engagement**. Institutional innovation such as the collaboration seen in early 2020 between federal, state and territory governments in Australia (**the National Cabinet initiative**), and between government, unions, and industry, is unprecedented and was unimaginable just a few months earlier. That innovation has been widely acclaimed as being highly desirable, indeed necessary. That **momentum** ought not be lost by reverting to old somewhat broken processes.

This spirit of cooperation, collaboration and engagement, echoed around the world, has driven and encouraged innovation, creativity, ideas and a willingness and ability to change. It is vital that this same spirit is continued and directed into medium and long-term post COVID-19 recovery efforts by government, particularly when setting new policy directions and pathways for the State and its regional economies in the decades ahead.

The COVID-19 crisis is a tipping point in social, economic and technological change. The next decade has the potential to turn this change into a **‘new age of enlightenment’**. Queensland can be at the forefront of this.

## Action Plan

The **Action Plan** proposed examines eight themes and related policy positions to consider when framing policy to restore the State to prosperity and well-being. They are elaborated in the **Supporting Document**.

There are many linkages and opportunities for synergies between the policy position ideas presented. They are not put forward in any order of priority. The Action Plan outlines actions and impact needed to achieve outcomes consistent with principles of sustainable and regenerative development and to help the government not to get bogged down in short-term problem solving and quick fix solutions.

### 1. New Model of State and Regional Development:

To position Queensland and each of its diverse regions to respond effectively to the challenges, an enhanced set of strategic objectives and desired outcomes will require the revision of the State Economic Development Strategy with a greater emphasis on, *inter alia*.



- structural diversification of, and enhanced connectivity within industry sectors to leverage on existing strengths and create new industries and jobs;
- focusing on growing high value-adding, hi-tech economic activities within shortened supply chains;
- reforms to enhance productivity performance and applications of advanced technologies, including AI;
- a balance between exogenous and endogenous growth underpinning:
  - a circular economy with competitive and collaborative advantages;
  - filling in supply chain gaps in core industries (including onshoring) that drive the State's development;
  - developing a 4th<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution (FIR) economy;
  - localization, globalization and glocalization of economic activities; and
- develop a national and state system of trading cities to:
  - enhance connectivity, value-add to industry supply chain and production systems;
  - co-production between firms and institutions;
  - common-use access and cost-sharing of infrastructure and services;
  - co-marketing of local products and services and Research and Development.

An objective is to help **mitigate** the inevitable **exogenous and endogenous risks** that the State and its regional economies will potentially face.

A co-ordinated program to undertake and implement **regional economic development strategies across the whole State** - using a common methodological framework but developed through bottom-up collaborative engagement between government agencies, businesses, NGOs, regional and community organisations - would be an important initiative facilitated through State government funding support. An operational model is the recently implemented program of regional economic development strategies across the regions of NSW.

## 2. Institutional Change, New Approaches to Governance and Regulatory Reform:

Building **institutional capacity and capability** - including **leadership** - is a crucial issue to facilitate regional economic and social development and enhance environmental management. The need for Institutional changes also applies to industry and business.

Objectives to streamline processes to minimise **transaction costs** for doing business, streamline processes to improve efficiency in the delivery and effectiveness of outcomes to provide infrastructure and services. This will require innovation in governance arrangements, processes, and related regulatory measures. New or enhanced models for **public-private partnership** need to be incorporated. Initiatives might include actions to:

- establish a **State Planning Commission** to integrate sectorial and spatial development programs;
- reform local government, especially in the area of **municipal management and finance**, including issuing bonds, obtaining Sovereign guarantees, and co-financing;
- formulate and adopt a new model of **collaborative governance** - to incorporate institutional reform and innovation adoption; and
- greater **professionalisation** of the public sector to engage and negotiate with industry/the private sector; restore in-house core skills to retain corporate knowledge; research and risk management skills

Such reforms need to work with the private sector and civil society interest groups on property development, construction, infrastructure and services delivery through new public-private partnership models.

## 3. Smart Infrastructure:

Infrastructure is crucial to underpin economic and social development and enhance community well-being and quality of life. It **encompasses hard, soft and smart infrastructure**.

Infrastructure financing, provision, and management will be crucial elements of development strategies and plans for both the State and its diverse regions. It is important that infrastructure projects undertaken are explicitly linked to the infrastructure priority requirements identified in those plans. Smart integrated systems of infrastructure, finance and revision of the prioritisation of outstanding infrastructure projects will be required.



Smart infrastructure elements to be considered include:

- preparation of lifecycle asset management plans, incorporating programs, priorities and funding arrangements for the maintenance, sustainability and disposal of public utilities, infrastructure and assets to optimise the capacity and use of these to support State and regional development;
- the development of local area energy, water, wastewater and transport networks;
- investment in hard and soft infrastructure to strengthen connectivity and efficiency of intra and inter regional and city networks and systems;
- new modalities and instruments for funding Infrastructure;
- introducing intelligent transport and logistics systems to support seamless intermodal transfers;
- water infrastructure, including drought resistance; and
- development of meta data infrastructure.

#### 4. Science, Industry, Technology, and Innovation:

A concerted new strategy will be needed to:

- apply a Quad Helix Model approach to Science, Industry, Technology, and Innovation
- develop the solar, hydrogen, new materials, health and smart transport infrastructure services sectors;
- embrace more widely existing technologies and to adopt emerging, new, and yet unknown technologies;
- enhance and build regional innovation systems and ecologies, entrepreneurship and new businesses;
- support Citizen Science and Traditional Knowledge including better meta data gathering, integration and synthesizing of cross-science data collection and information;
- incorporate policy and regulatory reforms to reduce business transaction costs, including drastically reducing energy costs and reviewing processes to effectively identify and streamline administration;
- facilitate the development of local, regional and national networks of industry clusters; and
- adopt cleaner production systems, industrial ecology and repurposing of used assets and products.

Focus on the longevity of investment in **Research and Development** crucial to the development of new products and services leading to high skilled job creation. The **'quad helix' model** of innovation is appropriate.

The State could adopt an approach to support industry development through improvements in **industrial metabolism**. This involves support to improve the production processes and performance of industries, which are often shared by other industries, rather than support to specific industry sectors. For example, a holistic focus needs to be given to **state-wide** and **inter-state waste management** and repurposing including applications of industrial ecology as a way of turning waste into profit.

#### 5. Skilling Queenslanders for Future Work:

To produce the skill sets and **competencies** for a changed economy and the creation of new jobs, current institutional arrangements for **education and training programs** will need to be **reviewed** in partnership with business and government.

Skills will be needed to:

- build on existing **resource endowed strengths** and competitive and collaborative advantages;
- create new strengths to diversify the **structural composition** of the economy to generate sustainable wealth creation and grow employment - especially development of para-professional and technical skilled workforce and higher wage jobs - underpinned by the appropriate mix of human capital;
- develop **Community Colleges**, Online and Communities of Practice learning; and
- building **social capital** and networks of relationships among people who live and work in the State and regions, which will enable communities and society to function more effectively.



A **skills and competency audit** of the under- and unemployed, together with surveys of what skill base businesses need, will be important to reshape the State’s education strategy for a new, more diversified economy with a focus on competitive and collaborative advantage, value-adding, and wealth generation. This needs to be undertaken to relate explicitly to, and enhance the implementation of, the State economic development strategy and objectives and the needs of the regions and private sector partners.

Substantial **reform of the education and training system** will be required, which will be a major challenge for schools, TAFE colleges and universities to step-up to the job. Areas of focus include developing the human capital to meet STEM-related future skills requirements, and preparation of online core instruction material involving online learning for remote communities, indigenous people and foreign languages for migrants. There are opportunities for secondary and higher education institutions to deliver online services to the **Asian and Pacific regions** taking advantage of diaspora language and education skills.

## 6. Environmental Services and Climate Change:

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the Australian environment had experienced enormous stress from extended periods of drought and an unprecedented bushfire season. Post COVID-19 recovery needs to include support in regional, urban and non-urban areas for **environmental and landscape restoration** for our highly stressed environment. **Planning for natural disasters** and addressing the complex issue of **climate change** needs to remain as an important priority area for State and regional development and environmental management with a focus on **localisation** of responses. It will be important to:

- focus environmental services and restoration programs towards priority landscape restoration targets;
- adopt a collaborative process involving local communities in the identification of and solutions to challenges and in the implementation towards agreed priority targets;
- engage the State’s established NRM Bodies and compliment their ongoing efforts to protect the State’s environmental services and address climate change adaptation;
- incorporate citizen science and Traditional Knowledge into environmental and restoration programs;
- establish a State climate change fund, with thematic and bundled programs of assistance made available to regional natural resource management bodies and local government groups to localise projects and programs to support mitigation and adaptation measures; and
- address Sustainable Development Goals reporting.

## 7. Planning, Housing and Land Development:

Planning needs to play a key, positive and facilitative role in the State’s development underpinned by **integrated strategic planning and budgeting**. The changes that COVID-19 will bring to the State’s planning and development system and processes will be significant.

The technological, economic and social changes that are emerging will impact, functionally and spatially, on land use, transportation, utilities, and services delivery, necessitating a change to the State’s planning systems. **Institutional reform** through a root-and-branch review of the current planning system will be needed to ensure more systems and self-organising approach to planning is implemented, mirroring changes in technology. That will require:

- reviews and changes to many of the State’s regional and local **development plans**;
- increased **collaboration** with the private sector and civil society interest groups;
- adoption of merit, performance, and evidence-based Planning;
- incorporation of an **adaptive management approach** to Planning and urban design; and
- incorporate **risk assessments** and management in all planning processes.

Institutional reform could include a **review of the current regime of taxes, charges and levies** on development which substantially add to transaction costs and make housing less affordable, with possible replacement by a State **land and value capture taxes** for funding and maintaining urban infrastructure.

**Housing market reform and innovation**, including new ways of financing, providing and managing social housing, is needed to improve housing affordability. That will require a change in the **land development model**, including:



- increased collaboration with the private sector; and
- consideration of new approaches such as grey banking (accumulation of inner city developed land, packaging, and tendering of larger inner-city land for redevelopment).

Housing will continue to be an important driver of the State economy, and there is a well-established need for a specific orientation of housing policy on the provision of **affordable housing**, especially **rental social housing**. That ought to be a priority for a concerted initiative with innovative approaches to financing, constructing and managing social housing across the State. Many models for achieving that are available.

## 8. Social and Community Development:

The State, its regions, and communities, need to start preparing for a significant third wave shock once the immediate threats of the health and economic crisis have passed.

For the State that might begin with preparing **strategies and programs** for **community development** to:

- assist marginalised and indigenous groups to realise identify and their development potential;
- ensure mental health and well-being;
- restore damaged human capital within the state and communities;
- develop social capital to strengthen communities; and
- enhance cultural and heritage capital.

There are especially important issues in regional Queensland. The role of Community Development needs to be revised to incorporate economic, social and governance contributions to the sustainable and regenerative development and management of local communities and regions.

Delivery of these programs will be more effective if the **focus is localised**, with an emphasis on self-organisational delivery arrangements. **Resilient and sustainable communities** can be significantly enhanced through well supported and facilitated community-led planning and action programmes.

## CONSULTATION PROCESS

The realisation of policy change for initiatives outlined under these eight themes will require a new way of working including accessing high levels of expertise and knowledge, collaboration, and a stronger focus on embracing **inclusiveness** into **decision-making processes** for planning and development of the State and its regions.

Within the active retired and semi-retired community there exists a **significant pool of knowledge, experience and expertise** in formulating and implementing public policy. Government can call upon these resources at this time of need to support the recovery effort. Such skills, knowledge and experience can be used to support the many policy think-tanks, professional advisory panels, in-house thinkers, problem solving and planning task forces that will be needed to guide the recovery efforts and policy reforms required to support the development of the State and regions after the COVID-19 crisis is over.

The contributors to this policy position paper encourage the State and local governments to call upon these resources to assist in reshaping the policy changes needed to ensure that the State and regions continue to build **prosperity** and **well-being** in a **sustainable, inclusive** and **equitable** way. The Supporting Document contains some principles to focus discussion to set priorities for preparing a **New Road Map for the Future We Want**, and determining policies and initiatives for the State's future development.

*We are in a new age of enlightenment, with new thinking and bold ideas needed to build the foundations and a strategy for the road to recovery for sustainable and regenerative development in this great State of Queensland.*



## Contributors to Paper<sup>1</sup>

The following senior members of professions linked to sustainable and regenerative development have contributed to the paper:

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### <sup>1</sup> Disclaimer

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