

2010/2011

BUSINESS AND ACTIVITY PLAN



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They say that diamonds are made under pressure and arguably the very difficult conditions which our region experienced during 2009/10 led to the coming of age of Advance Cairns.

The past twelve months have been an extremely trying time for the Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region. In response to the major downturn in our regional economy and the challenges that caused Advance Cairns led a consortium of regional bodies in the push to revive our economy through the *New Deal* initiative. This included a range of initiatives under a 3 pronged "Relief, Recovery and Reform" format, which were put to all three tiers of government. The initiative attracted significant interest and response from all Governments and led to a range of actions and programs being put in place directed at improving our economy.

While arguably no amount of assistance will ever be enough, as an organisation and as a representative of our region we were very pleased to be heard and to see swift and significant action in response to our call. However, one of the most pleasing aspects of the *New Deal* initiative was the way that we were able to collaborate so successfully and meaningfully with other regional bodies to take our message to Canberra and Brisbane with one voice, therefore earning and living our tag line, "One Region, One Voice". That was certainly noticed and repeatedly commented on by Government representatives at all levels. We continue to monitor ongoing Government response to the *New Deal*, but in addition and in recognition of the ongoing problems in the region we are now developing and will shortly release a second stage of initiatives to put before our Governments, which we have dubbed *New Deal Part II*.

We are proud that we are now seen as a body that Governments must deal with in TNQ – when politicians and senior public servants come to Cairns they now come to see us, rather than us chasing them.

Other Activities

Apart from the *New Deal* initiative Advance Cairns has continued to work on a series of projects aimed at further developing, diversifying and improving the health of the region's economy. Memorable among these were the launch of the Think TNQ web portal highlighting the region's housing, liveability and investment attraction capabilities. Our Tropical Expertise activities through ATEC have gained much momentum and acknowledgement, and our major Food Tourism project which won critical acclaim across the region and beyond.

A range of other projects were also delivered - these included the Creative Industries and Bio Organic Feasibility studies; the Food Development project; and the Sustainable TNQ initiative. We also maintained and increased our activities through our Sustainable TNQ committee and recruited Nicky Swan as a project officer for that committee.

Another pleasing activity was the true expansion of Advance Cairns' activities across the wider TNQ region. These actions, spearheaded by Regional Development Officer Margaret Darveniza, have now confirmed Advance Cairns as a truly regional entity.

We have also had strong engagement with the newly formed RDA committee for our region, and look forward to a long, collaborative and prosperous relationship with them.

In 2009/10 we streamlined our Board committees to specifically address issues across:

1. Operations
2. Finance
3. Communications
4. Patronage

These committees continue to meet regularly to offer advice and support to the executive team.

Over the past year we again delivered a range of projects funded through the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI). These projects were designed to increase the industry activity of the region. A new structure which DEEDI has put in place commencing July 2010 will still be supported by Advance Cairns although DEEDI's funding has been reduced.

The structure of our organisation was changed in March 2010 to increase the size of the Board by one to allow for eight independent Directors. Efforts continue to attempt to change the structure of the company from a company limited by shares to a company limited by guarantee, but that issue is currently with Treasury and continues to move slowly.

Overall 2009/10 was a difficult but also an exciting period for the organisation, and one where we gained much credibility. However, it was unfortunate that this came about because the region was in such dire economic straits. We expect that the 2010/11 will year again be a challenging one for the organisation and the region, and it will require a supreme effort from Advance Cairns and all or stakeholders, and continuing cooperation and collaboration, to assist the region to overcome our economic problems and turn its fortunes around.

The 2010/11 Business and Activity Plan

The 2010/11 Plan reflects a desire on the part of the Advance Cairns Board to streamline and better manage our planned activities through six priority areas of activity, with a further six areas of still significant but second tier activities. These priorities emerged from our Strategic Planning day and from consultation with other stakeholders.

Our six priority areas of activity are :-

1. Trade opportunities with Papua New Guinea and other destinations
2. Regional Cultural Centre Advocacy
3. Developing the Regional Economic Plan
4. Tropical Expertise activities
5. Mining Services/FIFO coordination for the region

6. *"Who the Hell Knows"* – meaning that we have allowed room in our budget and plan for flexibility in dealing with the inevitable exigencies that will come along over the course of the year.

Our six secondary areas of activity include:-

1. Regional Advocacy/Lobbying
2. Sustainable TNQ
3. Regional Development Activities
4. Regional Food Project
5. Promotional Activities
6. Projects for DEEDI

We will also continue to draw on the resources of our various representative bodies and our Board members to assist the management team with ongoing policy issues and plan implementation.

Plan Structure

The structure of this plan has been altered this year to break it into two separate documents, being this short "punchy" document which is designed to succinctly set out the proposed key activities of the organisation for the 2010/11 year, and a supplementary document containing supporting documents which is more of a management and strategy guide. Those supporting documents are important and underpin the plan, and provide some background as to why our key 2010/11 activities were selected.

Section 2 Key Corporate Objectives

Our six priority areas of activity will be:

2.1 Trade opportunities with PNG and other destinations

The export potential of the region is seen as one of our real opportunities for diversification. Consistent with that a major emphasis for the forthcoming year will be assisting Cairns region businesses to identify and implement export (and in some cases import) opportunities with trading partners in places such as PNG, China, South East Asia and the Western Pacific. This will include substantial work in and with PNG, our nearest neighbour. We will work closely with the Chamber of Commerce to support their endeavours within this market. This work will build upon the work carried out in 2010 in producing the PNG Trade Strategy. We will support Cairns Regional Council's activities in partnering with other regions through various forms of MOUs and Sister City relationships, and will lead with Council a trade delegation to China. We will also support any of the other Regional Councils that wish to form or reinforce cooperation arrangements.

We will not ignore other opportunities within our segment of the globe and will continue to work with other organisations such as TTNQ in markets such as China and Guam.

2.2 Regional Cultural Centre Advocacy

In 2009 Advance Cairns highlighted that the Regional Performing Arts Centre was the single most important infrastructure project for the TNQ region. This does not diminish our support for other required infrastructure throughout the region but this project is our highest priority. Advance Cairns has highlighted this project in the New Deal initiatives and will support the project through lobbying efforts and by utilising our influence with the community.

While Cairns Regional Council will be the lead agency with this project, AC will play a strong supporting and lobbying role highlighting TNQ business desire to see this key project happen. Our activities will include assistance in lobbying for and advocacy of the project and also a major role in assisting with the promotion of the project to the Cairns and wider regional community.

2.3 Developing the Regional Economic Plan – Highlighting the top five economic drivers.

Our region has long recognised and espoused the need for an all encompassing Regional Economic Development Plan. It has also been a priority for Advance Cairns for some time but up until now there has been little external support for and certainly no resources available for the concept. In late 2009 Prime Minister Kevin Rudd visited Cairns and offered the support of the Office of Northern Australia and the newly formed local RDA committee to support the development of such a plan. Discussions have subsequently been held with ONA, RDA, Cairns Regional Council, FNQROC and ourselves with a view to working collaboratively on an economic plan for the region. The project will function as a truly shared arrangement with all parties putting in resources and officer time.

The plan will dovetail in with the "roadmap" which the RDA is contracted to prepare for the federal Government, and is intended to highlight the top five economic drivers for the region to analyse how they are travelling, and in due course will be utilised to determine our ongoing economic, strategic and infrastructure priorities and activities. The development of this plan, which will involve wide ranging stakeholder consultation, will

Section 2 Key Corporate Objectives

assist the region to decide what its aspirations are, and will inform us and Government as to what needs to be done to enable us to reach those aspirations.

2.4 Tropical Expertise activities

Advance Cairns has experienced significant success with its Tropical Expertise initiatives through the Australian Tropical Expertise Consortium (ATEC). The ATEC group continues to grow and is kicking many goals. The initiative has been singled out as one of the most successful DEEDI QRDI projects ever conducted in the State. Recently a working arrangement has been formed between ATEC and the newly formed Troplinks agency. An MOU between the two agencies is in draft form and will hopefully be signed shortly.

The working arrangement sees ATEC undertake a training and development role, bringing companies to an export ready state and then Troplinks carrying on with the promotion and business matching for those companies. AC has applied to DEEDI for further funds to continue this initiative.

2.5 Mining Services and Fly-in/Fly-out (FIFO) Coordination

Advance Cairns considers that a major opportunity for the region is to become a major procurement centre for the Northern Australian and PNG mining and resource markets.

Two major areas of promise are:-

- a) The promotion of the region's mining service and training companies through a cluster with capability and delivery evidence accumulated through an on-line database accessed through a dedicated web-portal; and
- b) Promoting our region as a "the" hub for the delivery of FIFO services for resource and mining operations across Northern Australia and PNG.

These two initiatives have the ability to make a huge difference to the diversification of our economy. Advance Cairns has requested support for the first initiative through the DEEDI's QRDI program and have asked the Federal Government through Parliamentary Secretary Gary Gray MP for assistance with the second part of this.

2.6 "Who the Hell Knows"

As we saw last year with the New Deal initiative, which very properly attracted much of our management time and other resource, there needs to be some flexibility and capacity within the organisation to allow for the unexpected. This flexibility needs to be accounted for in both officer time and expenditure capacity in our operational budget. We need to be nimble enough to be able to respond to situations as they arise and have some capacity to deal with these situations.

Therefore a portion of the time and financial budget will be "reserved" for crisis or otherwise compelling activities that crop up throughout the year.

Section 2 Key Corporate Objectives

Our six secondary areas of activity will be:

1. Regional Advocacy/Lobbying

We have now developed a track record in this regard with some considerable success, and will continue to lobby and advocate for the region as required.

2. Sustainable TNQ

We will continue to host, support and promote this important initiative under the Chairmanship of Board member Mayor Val Schier and through the direct involvement of Project Officer Nicky Swan.

3. Regional Development Activities

Through our Regional Development Officer Margaret Darveniza we will continue the great work done last year in and for our surrounding regions.

4. Regional Food Project

We will continue with, finalise and deliver the Federally funded TQUAL project. This project is required to be delivered in March 2011.

5. Promotional Activities

It is vital that Advance Cairns continues its organisational and regional promotion throughout the year, including Patron and other stakeholder engagement.

6. DEEDI Projects

We will deliver the 2 recently contracted DEEDI projects, being:

- **TNQ Mining Training and Services Virtual Hub and Promotion Activity**
- **Fostering Business Development for Export Readiness**

These projects fit comfortably within our key initiatives.