

ANNUAL REPORT

2008/2009

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



South East Queensland (SEQ) is the fastest growth region in Australia, hitting the three million residents mark last year, and set to expand to four million by 2025. To meet the challenge of a growing population the Council of Mayors (SEQ) continued to advocate on behalf of the region's residents to address and improve the prosperity, liveability and sustainability of our diverse communities.

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) faced considerable challenges over the last year, not least adjusting to larger amalgamated Councils across the region. The number of Councils in SEQ dropped from 18 to 11, and includes 5 of the 6 largest Councils in Australia. Despite an ever changing environment we can claim positive gains across several key objectives which demonstrated that in working together Councils across the region can achieve more.

We helped secure nearly \$15 million in Federal Government funding for South East Queensland (SEQ) for housing affordability and nature reserves, influenced over 100 changes to the SEQ Regional Plan 2009-2031, advocated for changes to the State Government's institutional water reforms that reduced transitional costs by over \$200 million, launched the first in a series of regional carbon sinks and initiated an infrastructure campaign to highlight the needs of the fastest growing region in Australia.

I was pleased to lead a delegation to Canberra in September 2008 to lobby for a share of the Federal Government's Building Australia Fund, as well as following up on the \$3 billion in road funding commitments we won ahead of the 2007 Federal Election. We have continued to stay in close contact with Federal MPs. The infrastructure needs of SEQ are so large that all levels of governments need to work collaboratively to address them.

I wish to thank all Mayors, Councillors and Council staff who have contributed to the effectiveness of the Council of Mayors (SEQ). And I wish to thank the Executive Director and the staff of our small secretariat office for their effort over the past year.

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) has continued to demonstrate the maxim that, by working together, SEQ Councils can achieve real and positive outcomes for their residents. And that is exactly what our ratepayers are looking for.

Cr Campbell Newman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Campbell Newman". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Chairman - Council of Mayors (SEQ)



Council of Mayors
South East Queensland



COUNCIL OF MAYORS (SEQ) 2008/2009

Speaking with one voice for South East Queensland

Mission

“The Council of Mayors (SEQ) is a political advocacy organisation that represents the interests of one in seven Australians. We proactively influence Federal and State Governments to ensure the long term viability, wellbeing and sustainability of our communities. We speak with one voice to ensure appropriate funding and delivery of infrastructure and services to the residents of South East Queensland.”

Goals

- 1) Review and implement the SEQ Regional Plan, taking into account population growth Management
- 2) Improve Wellbeing and Livability of SEQ Communities
- 3) Promote Sustainability
- 4) Demonstrate Strong Leadership

Membership 2008-2009

Eleven SEQ Councils represented by the region's Mayors.

- Cr Campbell Newman (Brisbane), Chairman
- Cr John Brent (Scenic Rim), Deputy Chairman
- Cr Paul Pisasale (Ipswich), Treasurer
- Cr Ron Clarke (Gold Coast)
- Cr Steve Jones (Lockyer Valley)
- Cr Pam Parker (Logan)
- Cr Allan Sutherland (Moreton Bay)
- Cr Melva Hobson (Redland)
- Cr Graeme Lehmann (Somerset)
- Cr Bob Abbot (Sunshine Coast)
- Cr Peter Taylor (Toowoomba)

Committees:

Infrastructure Committee:

- Chair: Cr Campbell Newman (Brisbane)
- Deputy Chair: Cr Ron Clarke (Gold Coast)

Regional Planning & Growth Management Committee:

- Chair: Cr Paul Pisasale (Ipswich),
- Deputy Chair: Cr Pam Parker (Logan)

Environment & Sustainability Committee:

- Chair: Cr Allan Sutherland (Moreton Bay)
- Deputy Chair: Cr Melva Hobson (Redland)



SEQ Council of Mayors (SEQ) members

(Ipswich Deputy Mayor Cr Victor Attwood pictured, proxy for Ipswich Mayor Cr Paul Pisasale.)

Trail Bike Taskforce:

- Chair Cr Steve Jones (Lockyer Valley)

Regional Carbon Sink Taskforce:

- Chair Cr Melva Hobson (Redland)

Executive Director:

- John Cherry (from 15.12.08)
- Rodney Ringe (Acting from 7.10.08 to 15.12.08)
- Jon Black (From 19.7.05 to 7.10.08)



IMPROVING THE REGION'S LIVEABILITY

Water

Good rains saw an increase in the water capacity of the region's dams to over 70 per cent and an easing of the water crisis.

Council of Mayors (SEQ) continued to work with the Queensland Water Commission on the development of a Regional Water Strategy, and on the second round of SEQ water entities institutional reforms. Councils continued to work on the delivery of the State's preferred reform model of separating Council water distribution and retail businesses, although they continued to object to the cost and inefficiencies of the model.

Strong advocacy by the Council of Mayors (SEQ) eventually persuaded the Government to agree to a new model, which will see the establishment of three integrated water distribution/retail companies. The revised model avoids more than \$200 million in transitional costs.

The Water Reform Program is currently developing a program of activities to support the establishment of the revised water reform model. In 2008/09 the Council of Mayors (SEQ) Water Reform Program:

- Delivered a Memorandum of Understanding ratified by all ten Councils involved in the Stage 2 water reforms;

- Identified functions to transition into the new water entities or remain within Councils, both in the transition period and longer term;
- Drafted and negotiated a Workforce Framework to protect employees entitlements and ensure consistency during transition;
- Developed processes for infrastructure planning and development assessment when water businesses are separated from Councils;
- Established service level agreement principles and templates on the services Councils will provide to the new water entities, with interim agreements to support soft separation of water businesses within Councils;
- Designed and commenced a comprehensive due diligence program and collected substantial financial, technical and legal information from Councils to support the establishment of the new entities; and
- Negotiated with the State for target credit ratings and analysis of alternative capital structures for the new entities.

Turfgrass Research Project

Before the current drought and water restrictions, more than half of potable water in SEQ was used outside to water lawns and gardens. Tough water restrictions saw water consumption fall from an average of over 300 litres per person per day to just 130 litres by mid 2008. The total ban on outside watering created major interest in drought resistant turfgrass.

Council of Mayors (SEQ) is funding a four year \$200,000 research project at the University of Queensland to identify and develop more drought resistant turf grass.

The EcoTurf project commenced in October 2007 has collected over 800 grasses, mostly green couches from a diverse range of natural and artificial habitats across Australia and VIC and overseas. The collections are being DNA fingerprinted, subjected to a morphological and

agronomic assessment and compared for drought tolerance and nitrogen use efficiency. This project will finish in 2011.



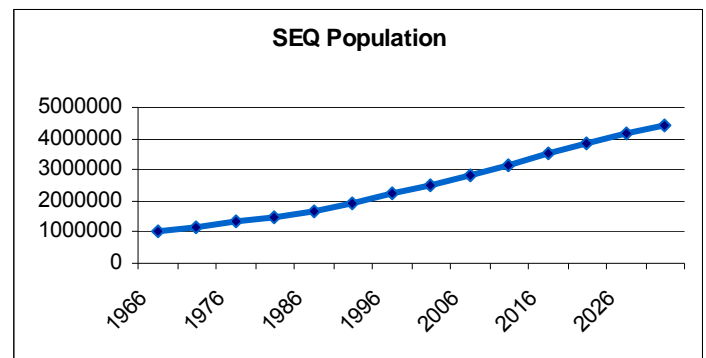
IMPLEMENTING THE SEQ REGIONAL PLAN

The population of SEQ hit three million in 2008, and will reach 4.4 million people by 2031. This means more than 1,200 people will move to SEQ each week. Growth is a huge challenge for all levels of government to manage. The Council of Mayors (SEQ) was actively involved in promoting a collaborative regional approach to planning for and managing growth in SEQ, working closely with the State Government on the development of the Regional Plan and encouraging the Federal Government to become more involved. After all, SEQ is home to one in seven Australians, but generates one fifth of the nation's economic and population growth.

Key achievements and priorities last year included:

- Input into the review and finalisation of the SEQ Regional Plan 2009 – 2031, negotiating over 100 changes in the final plan. Key changes include a reduction in Ministerial designation powers, broadening of appropriate activities in rural areas, and minimising changes to the urban footprint.

- Helped to secure \$11 million in Federal funds for Housing Affordability and development assessment initiatives for SEQ Councils.
- Advocated for better integration of land use planning and infrastructure rollout.
- Representation of SEQ Councils on key regional forums including the Regional Coordination Committee.
- Communication of key SEQ Council messages to industry bodies, policy conferences, Federal and State parliamentarians, the media and other key stakeholders.



Housing Affordability Projects

Council of Mayors (SEQ) has been awarded \$5 million out of the Federal Government's Housing Affordability Fund for two projects to develop improved development approval processes which should reduce processing times and developers' holding costs.

The **Target 5 Days** project will implement strategies to reduce assessment timeframes for 'well made' applications for residential developments, including a 75% reduction in approval times (to as little as five days) for low risk compliant applications.

The **Next Generation Planning** Project will

develop more consistent Affordable Housing codes and policies across the region.

The \$6.4 million **Electronic Development Assessment** Project, lead by the Local Government Association of Queensland, includes the Council of Mayors (SEQ) as a key partner in developing on-line DA processes for high growth Councils across Queensland.

The projects will be rolled out to SEQ Councils over the course of the next year, building on the work Councils have already done to improve their DA processes.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY

Environment

Promoting sustainability is a key goal of the Council of Mayors (SEQ). Through the establishment of the Environment and Sustainability Committee in May 2008, the Council of Mayors (SEQ) has delivered several key achievements:

- Worked with the State to finalise the SEQ Natural Resource Management (NRM) Plan, which will set regional targets for improving the condition of natural resources, and advocated for effective coordinated implementation of the plan.
- Ensured that the SEQ NRM Plan will be formally recognised in the SEQ Regional Plan and its associated planning activities.
- Worked with the State on developing the SEQ Climate Change Management Plan, particularly on managing the risks associated with climate change (e.g. sea level rise, natural disasters, water scarcity).
- Helped secure \$3.5 million in Federal funds for Councils to acquire conservation land under the National Reserve System.
- Obtained a commitment from the State to investigate policy tools for regional and local approaches for environmental offsets.
- Commenced the development of a regional waste management action plan.
- Secured State Government commitment not to introduce a waste levy.
- High level submissions on the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.
- Coordinated SEQ Councils' input into regional NRM delivery bodies including SEQ Healthy Waterways Partnership and SEQ Catchments.
- Launched the SEQ Sustainable Agriculture Strategy jointly with the Queensland Farmers Federation and advocated to strengthen the Rural Futures Strategy, which was released in July 2009.
- Promoted SEQ Council participation in 2008 and 2009 Earth Hour.



INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE

Securing infrastructure investment for the region is a key focus for the Council of Mayors (SEQ). Federal, State and Local Governments all engaged in record infrastructure spending this year, trying to address the congestion issues of SEQ caused by underspending in the last two decades and compounded by growth.

SEQ Councils committed to increasing their capital spend in 2009 to \$3.5 billion - a \$1 billion increase on last year. That will sustain an estimated 25,000 jobs.

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) ongoing infrastructure campaign this year included:

- Agreement on 12 key regional infrastructure priorities which were submitted for consideration to the Federal and State Governments.
- Mayoral delegation to Canberra on infrastructure, with follow-up meetings with MPs, including the Senate Public Transport Inquiry.
- Increasing public awareness of key infrastructure issues facing SEQ including population growth, congestion and economic impact of infrastructure through a series of infrastructure policy briefs.
- Developed whole of region submissions to Infrastructure Australia and the Federal Government and on the SEQ Infrastructure Plan and Program (SEQIPP).
- Developed a *Ready to Go Infrastructure Prospectus* of 'shovel ready' infrastructure projects which Councils could bring forward and create jobs if funding was available.



Trail Bikes - places to play

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) Trail Bike Taskforce worked to address trail bike issues and to identify legal and safe riding options for trail bike riding. With over 230,000 riders in SEQ, finding appropriate legal riding options is crucial to attracting people away from illegal riding sites. Key actions included:

- Secured \$150,000 in State Government funding, which was matched by the Council of Mayors (SEQ), and worked closely with the State on identification of future legal riding sites on public land.
- Successfully sought the inclusion of consistent use definitions in the Queensland Planning Provisions. Including a motor sport activity definition in Council planning schemes will make it easier for applicants and Councils to understand their requirements.
- Secured the addition of a temporary use definition which will make it easier for operators to establish one off events.
- Commissioned market research to determine the needs of trail bike riders and identify what type of facilities riders will use.
- Attracted considerable media coverage on the work of the Taskforce.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



As can be seen in this report, the Council of Mayors (SEQ) has had a busy year, racking up progress across many fronts.

Some of these are big and high profile, such as our work on water reform and the regional plan. Some are more in the nature of a slow and hard slog, such as our advocacy on issues like infrastructure investment and climate change.

What our work program and achievements demonstrate is the clear and continuing value of Councils working together for the collective benefit of the region.

So many of the issues faced by SEQ Councils are regional in nature, and the solutions to the challenges they face are often regional in scope.

The commitment shown by the Mayors, their officers and their Councils to looking beyond their boundaries to finding regional solutions is a credit to the political maturity of Councils and their leaders in this region.

The long repeated refrain of the Council of Mayors (SEQ) is that the challenges of managing growth in the fastest growing region in Australia is beyond the capacity of any single level of government to fix alone. Cooperation between all three levels of Government is essential, and promoting this remains a key priority.

Council of Mayors (SEQ) continues to produce well researched evidence-based submissions and

reports to support the objectives of the Mayors. Good technical backup is crucial to effective advocacy, and I want to thank the policy officers of the secretariat as well as the Council officers for their superb effort over the past year.

Council of Mayors (SEQ) runs on a very tight budget, and I wish to also thank the support staff for their highly professional efforts in servicing of Council and committee meetings, our taskforces and projects, and our communications and lobbying efforts.

I also wish to acknowledge the foundation work of Jon Black and Rodney Ringe in setting up the Council of Mayors (SEQ) and in leading it so effectively into 2008.

Looking forward, Council of Mayors (SEQ) will seek to narrow its focus to a smaller number of key strategic priorities. In value adding to the work of Councils, we need to focus on how best to make a difference and presenting the best possible case of behalf of our member councils.

I wish to thank the Chairman Cr Newman and the Deputy Chairman Cr Brent for their support and leadership over the past year, and the member Councils for their continuing recognition of the importance of regional cooperation and advocacy.

John Cherry

Executive Director

Extract from *Courier Mail* editorial 25 June 2009

“South East Queensland’s council leaders are driven by a much wider and more comprehensive vision of the job they do than was the case a decade ago. Back then, only the likes of Brisbane lord mayor Jim Soorley, Ipswich’s John Nugent and Noosa’s Noel Playford regularly considered anything in policy and political terms beyond their immediate municipal boundaries, much less contemplated the impact of their decisions on the region as a whole.

These circumstances meant it was relatively easy for the higher tiers of government to play one council leader against the other and so weaken their collective influence.

All that has changed in recent years, culminating in the formation of the Southeast Queensland Council of Mayors, an advocacy group charged with pursuing the interests of and winning policy changes to benefit the nation’s fastest growing region.

As a lobbying organisation, it has helped to rack up some wins on infrastructure funding for the region and, as a collective forum for mayors to further mutual interests, it has stood up to the excesses of the Bligh Government in regards to water pricing and other ill-conceived policy...”

CHAMPIONS FOR SEQ

Working together to benefit the three million residents in SEQ

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) continued to highlight the region's challenges and issues. This region – the fastest growing in Australia – is home to one in seven Australians, but generates one fifth of the nation's economic and population growth. SEQ Councils lobbied for the creation of a Regional Plan for SEQ to manage its growth challenges, and seek to work closely with the State Government on the development and implementation of the Plan.

Central to the success of the Plan is the rollout of infrastructure ahead of the growth. Decades of underspending in SEQ have led to serious congestion issues that pose a threat to the productivity of the local economy and the liveability of the region. Pressuring Federal and State Governments to invest more in infrastructure is a key challenge for all SEQ Councils.

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) met with the State Government and Opposition in the lead up to the 2007 election and sought specific election commitments on infrastructure, planning and environmental issues. Meetings were also held with Federal and State MPs and senior officials over the course of the year.

In 2008/2009 Local Government in South East Queensland:

- Addressed the needs of three million residents, set to rise to 4.4 million by 2031
- Represented one in seven Australians
- Generated one fifth of the nation's economic growth
- Had a combined budget of \$7.4 billion
- Spent nearly \$2.5 billion on capital works
- Employed over 22,800 workers
- Included five of the six largest local authorities in Australia.



SEQ Mayors delegation to Canberra, August 2008

Our message is clear – all levels of government need to work together for the benefit of SEQ residents. The challenges we face are now so large, there is no other solution.



For more information on the Council of Mayors (SEQ)

- Go to - www.councilofmayorsseq.qld.gov.au
- Read - COMmuniqué, our fortnightly newsletter
- Telephone - 07 3403 4782
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- Write - GPO Box 1434, Brisbane Qld 4001
- Visit - Level 5, 239 George Street, Brisbane