

27 May, 2016

Hon Barnaby Joyce
Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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Simplifying the Movement of Heavy Vehicles to Assist the Agricultural Sector

Dear Deputy Prime Minister

I am seeking your support and the support of your party, to hold an inquiry to help simplify the system to allow the movement of heavy vehicles and thereby assist in the economic development of the agricultural sector.

The Wide Bay Burnett region has one of the lowest social demographics in Australia, when looking at economic indicators of

- unemployment (8.4% as at Dec Qtr 2013 compared with Queensland's rate at 5.9%), (participation 58.5% as at June Qtr 2013 compared with Queensland's rate of 65.8%) and
- an ageing population (20.3% of population over the age of 65 years in June 2012, up 2.8 percentage points since 2007), and
- Social trends of skill and youth migration away from regional areas to larger metropolitan locations and below average household income levels prevail.

The region needs to develop economically. As agriculture is a key component of our economy, we need to make it easier for that industry to grow and flourish. One of the inhibitors of growth in this industry is the movement of agricultural products and livestock. Moving some of the responsibility, particularly the legal liability responsibility for permits for restricted access vehicles to local government engineers is not the answer. Councils see the process of 'endorsing' a proposed route as transferring a level of legal responsibility for the infrastructure to be suitable, and maintained as such. General 'as-of-right' vehicles e.g. semi-trailers use the existing infrastructure at their own risk, with Council's responsibility managed by an inspection and maintenance program that is also aligned to its budget capacity. This transfer of potential legal liability is always going to create an over-cautious response.

While the NHVR initiatives are commendable, they are slow in coming forward and still rely on Local Government to take the lion's share of responsibility. While this may be more practical from a local knowledge perspective, we believe it is too much additional workload for many Local Governments.

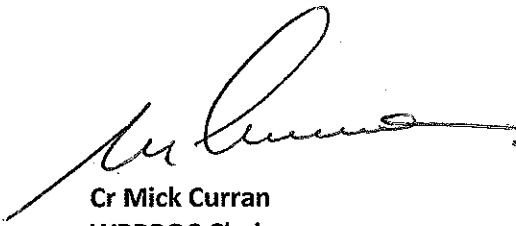
Member Councils: Bundaberg Regional Council, Cherbourg Aboriginal Council, Fraser Coast Regional Council, Gympie Regional Council, North Burnett Regional Council, South Burnett Regional Council

The Commonwealth and State Governments need to take more responsibility for simplifying the system and addressing the legal liability issues in a more practical and workable way.

Therefore, WBBROC would like to know your, and your party's response, should you be re-elected to Government on 2 July, to establishing an inquiry to look into a way of simplifying the system and helping agribusiness in our region and others to flourish.

I look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely



Cr Mick Curran
WBBROC Chair

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