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21 May 2015

Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resource Committee  
 Parliament House  
**BRISBANE QLD 4000**

By email: [ipnrc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:ipnrc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/ Madam

**RE: INVITATION SUBMISSION FLY IN FLY OUT LONG DISTANCE COMMUTING WORK PRACTICES REGIONAL QUEENSLAND INQUIRY QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT**

The Western Downs Regional Council (WDRC) welcomes the opportunity to provide the following submission in relation to the inquiry into Fly in, fly out and other long distance commuting work practices in regional Queensland.

WDRC opposes a 100% FIFO workforce however understands the role and requirement for FIFO in regional areas.

WDRC prefers and strongly encourages proponents to develop and implement a robust live local policy, encouraging staff and their families to live and contribute economically and socially to our existing communities.

**Background:**

It is assumed, most if not all of the FIFO work practices across the Western Downs are related to the resource industry. The Surat Basin population report identifies that as at June 2014, the Western Downs had an estimated non-resident population of 9100; of this 95% (8670) were accommodated in workers accommodation villages and the other 5% (435) in other types of accommodation including hotels/ motels and caravan parks.<sup>1</sup>

Results from a UQ research report- *Factors linked to the well-being of Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) workers, August 2013*, found that 75% of participants reported overall good or very good physical or mental health, yet 20% reported moderate to severe sleep disturbance; 60% agreed that the demands of long distance commuting work arrangements interfered with their home and family life; 40% reported feeling lonely or socially isolated, to some degree and 5% reported moderate to severe stress levels.<sup>2</sup>

The research also reports, "As the resources sector has become increasingly reliant on FIFO workers, it has become important to better understand the social and economic implications of this particular workforce model. The more recent explosion in FIFO worker numbers has meant that there has been relatively little research into the impacts of FIFO work arrangements on individual workers, or on the communities that house them, when they are at work. In particular, there is a dearth of information on the impacts of large-scale in-migration of FIFO workers into local communities, or about the types of accommodation that are likely to be appealing to FIFO workers."<sup>2</sup>

The study identifies previous research undertaken (e.g. Watts, 2004; Carter & Kaczmarek, 2009; Torkington et al., 2011; Bowers, 2010) which indicates that workers who commute long distance and are away regularly from home for extended periods of time can suffer from depression, anxiety or stress.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Concerns of health and mental health associated with FIFO work practices**

The following paragraphs are abstracts from Western Australian reports which represent the impact of FIFO work practices on individuals and their families; this may be representative of Queensland FIFO work practices.

"Shift workers often turn to stimulants such as coffee, energy drinks or cigarettes to help them stay awake and sedatives such as alcohol, sleeping pills and other non-prescription substances to help them sleep. Ongoing use or overuse of some stimulants and sedatives can create dependence, which can lead to a need to use higher doses for the same effect, as well as difficulties with withdrawal."<sup>3</sup>

"More than one-third of FIFO (fly in, fly out) workers in Australian mining communities are likely to have, or have recently experienced, a mental health problem, according to a recent report. Conducted by suicide prevention agency Lifeline WA, it found that many FIFO workers generally have resilience capabilities to manage the impact of their work arrangements on their mental health and wellbeing."<sup>4</sup>

"As many of us look forward to winding down for the Christmas break, spare a thought for those in industries which can be more affected by stresses and strains in the lead up to Christmas.

Christmas stresses can be experienced by many workers and their families, but it particularly impacts on construction and mining workers. The lead up to Christmas can also see a spike in workplace injuries for a number of reasons. Building projects winding down during the Christmas break can cause financial hardship for those living from week to week. While on the flipside, other projects continue through the Christmas period, leading to separation for workers and their families, particularly those who work in Fly in Fly out (FIFO) operations."<sup>5</sup>

Throughout these reports, separation from family and negative health and social impacts are often referenced, this is one of the reasons WDRC opposes 100% FIFO.

#### **The extent and projected growth in FIFO work practices by region and industry**

The Surat Basin non-resident population projections, 2015 to 2021, reports the winding down of CSG construction activity will see the region's non-resident population decline from a peak in 2014 of 9,100 to reach between 2,450 and 3,250 persons by 2021.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted, the projections do not include all planned and proposed major projects defined in the Advanced Western Downs Major Project list. It

is suggested that if these projects were to be implemented, further projections to the non-resident populations would eventuate.<sup>7</sup>

**The effect of a 100% non-resident FIFO workforce on established communities; including community wellbeing, the price of housing and availability, and access to services and infrastructure**

The lack of information relating to proponents activities including FIFO and the housing of employees and contractors in workers accommodation villages on tenement makes it difficult for WDRC to plan for the augmentation of key infrastructure or prioritise community needs and strategic planning due to lack of knowledge of the cumulative effects of major projects on councils assets.

The non-disclosure of camps and worker numbers could present substantial public health risks such as bio-security issues, spread of communicable diseases and health issues. The ability of WDRC and other emergency services to plan appropriately and effectively for disaster management and emergency services levels is compromised.

It is for these reasons that WDRC insists non-resident population is recorded in population and demographic statistics and acknowledged for the purposes of local government, community services and infrastructure funding.

**The effectiveness of current responses to impacts of FIFO workforces of the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments**

WDRC has no relevant research measuring the impacts of FIFO workforces to the Western Downs, however using applied learning from research undertaken in Australia and related experiences seen in local communities, conclusions can be drawn.

It is proposed that local government becomes the central source of data by requiring information from proponents in identifying social impacts, developing and managing measures that mitigate social impacts.

**Recommendations:**

WDRC prefers and strongly encourages proponents to develop and implement a robust live local policy, encouraging staff and their families to live and contribute economically and socially to our existing communities.

Recognise non-resident population in recorded population and demographic statistics and for the purposes of local government, community services and infrastructure funding.

Where FIFO is necessary, non-critical and operational staff should be accommodated in nearby towns (if reasonable) and be able to contribute and participate in the community whilst on shift.

Local government has the authority, as the central repository of data to receive information from proponents in identifying social impacts, developing and managing measures to mitigate social impacts.

**Conclusion:**

FIFO work practices are common across the Western Downs Region, future requirements for FIFO work practices will depend on the nature of activities and the skills required undertaking such tasks. Future proponents should assess the impact of a FIFO workforce on regional communities and all operational staff should be encouraged to reside in our communities. Where FIFO is necessary, employees are to be accommodated in nearby communities whilst on shift.



Access to information, such as FIFO numbers, where and how the FIFO workforce is housed and future requirement for FIFO from the proponents is essential for council to measure the impacts of FIFO and plan for the augmentation on local services and infrastructure in the Western Downs.

FIFO should be considered in conjunction with housing and accommodation planning to ensure significant impact is not placed on our regional communities.

A robust live local policy may address a number of the health and mental health issues associated with FIFO and minimise the effect of FIFO on local towns by supporting local businesses and contributing to the local community.

By reviewing FIFO work practices, the Queensland State Government will be able to assess the impacts on transient persons, families, communities and the industry and make decisions to support the FIFO workers, industry and communities.

**Attachments:**

WDRC Positioning Statement FIFO/ DIDO Work Practices

**References:**

<sup>1</sup> Queensland Government Statistician's Office. *The Surat Basin population report, 2014* <http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/reports/surat-basin-pop-report/surat-basin-pop-report-2014.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Barclay, M.A, Harris,J., Everingham,J., Kirsch, P., Arend, S., Shi,S & Kim,J, (2013) Factors linked to the well-being of fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers. Research Report, CSRM and MISHC, Sustainable Minerals Institute, University of Queensland: Brisbane, Australia.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/mining/articles/diet,-alertness-and-shift-work>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sia.org.au/browse.aspx?ContentID=issue176-news1>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/construction/articles/dealing-with-stress-as-festive-season-nears>

<sup>6</sup> Queensland Government Statistician's Office. *Surat Basin non-resident population projections, 2015 to 2021* <http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/reports/surat-basin-non-resident-pop-proj/surat-basin-non-resident-pop-proj-2015-2021.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> *Advance Western Downs Major Projects* <http://advancewesterndowns.com/major-projects.html>

Yours faithfully



Phil Berting PSM  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Encl: 1

## FIFO/ DIDO WORK PRACTICES

FILE REFERENCE:	LG8.2.1, AD12.2.8
AUTHORISED BY:	Phil Berting, Chief Executive Officer
ISSUE DATE:	May 15
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### **WDRC opposes a 100% FIFO/ DIDO workforce however understands the role and requirement for FIFO/DIDO in regional areas.**

It is assumed, most, if not all of the FIFO/ DIDO work practices across the Western Downs is related to the resource industry. As at June 2014, the Western Downs had an estimated non-resident population of 9100; of this 95% (8670) were accommodation in workers accommodation villages and the other 5% (435) in other types of accommodation including hotels/ motels and caravan parks.<sup>1</sup>

The increased number of workers accommodation may be due to the movement of gas field activities away from town centres and may have influenced the increased availability of hotel/ motel rooms. The winding down of CSG construction activity will see the region's non-resident population decline in 2015 to 5,170 persons and reach between 2,450 and 3,250 persons by 2021.<sup>2</sup>

### **Recognise non-resident population in recorded population and demographic statistics and for the purposes of local government, community services and infrastructure funding.**

WDRC understands the role/ requirement of some FIFO/ DIDO practices however does discourage a 100% FIFO/ DIDO workforce. There may be future requirements for FIFO/ DIDO work practices in the operations and maintenance phase of the CSG industry and other resource projects activities such as coal mining where specialist tasks need to be undertaken or labour cannot be sourced from the region. It would be our preference for proponents to source staff from the region or encourage staff to live locally.

Where FIFO is necessary, non-critical and operational staff should be accommodated in nearby towns (if reasonable) and be able to contribute to and participate in the community whilst on shift.

Social and mental health issues associated with FIFO DIDO work practices are of high concern to the Western Downs Regional Council, given there are a significant number of FIFO workers housed in temporary accommodation villages and camps within our region.

### **WDRC prefers and strongly encourages proponents to develop and implement a robust live local policy, encouraging staff and their families to live and contribute economically and socially to our existing communities.**

<sup>1</sup> QGSO Surat Basin population report, 2014

<http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/reports/surat-basin-pop-report/surat-basin-pop-report-2014.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> QGSO Surat Basin non-resident population projection 2015 to 2021

<http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/reports/surat-basin-non-resident-pop-proj/surat-basin-non-resident-pop-proj-2015-2021.pdf>