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14 November 2017

Industry calls on Far North Queensland candidates to back timber for regional growth

Timber Queensland has called on all local candidates in the Queensland election to back the timber industry which has significant potential to grow and generate much needed economic development and jobs in Far North Queensland.

Timber Queensland Chief Executive Mick Stephens said 'We are calling on all candidates to promote development of the timber industry in the far north, which could generate an additional \$30 million in industry output and 100 direct new jobs over the next 5 years. This requires a clear focus from Government through:

- improved manufacturing competitiveness for remote locations, such as affordable energy, including better incentives for baseload renewable power such as bioenergy;
- well-targeted infrastructure for roads and ports for market access; and
- secure access to available hardwood forest resources from state owned land.

The industry already supports 1500 direct and indirect jobs, including softwood plantation timber processing in areas such as Mareeba and Ravenshoe, local hardwood processing, and timber fabrication and trading outlets in key centres such as Cairns'.

'Going forward, a key issue is the need for hardwood resource security from crown leasehold lands. Presently, there are large areas of leasehold grazing land with valuable woodland resources, but only a handful of short term wood supply contracts. Without more secure arrangements, the industry cannot invest and expand into the future. Some of these businesses may simply close within the next 2 years as the current contracts expire', Mr Stephens said.

'Like most industrial users, timber processors are facing crippling energy prices and network costs. This is ironic as there is excess wood waste from forestry and timber processing in the region to generate baseload renewable bioenergy that can take the pressure off the grid. Unfortunately, there is insufficient incentive or Government focus to make this happen'.

'There is also significant potential for indigenous forestry development in areas such as Cooktown and Aurukun on Cape York. Better industry policy would deliver local economic development for those communities and allow businesses to further invest in forestry and processing activities.

The Timber Queensland election policy statement makes a strong case for Government to focus on key timber industry regions across the state, given their potential to grow and add further value to regional economies and jobs. The TQ policy statement can be found [here](#).

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