



7 May 2020

Cr Andy Ireland  
Mayor  
Livingstone Shire Council  
PO Box 2292  
Yeppoon QLD 4703

BY POST/EMAIL – enquiries@livingstone.qld.gov.au

Dear Mayor,

**RE: Congratulations and development industry employment during coronavirus outbreak**

As you would be aware, the Urban Development Institute of Australia Queensland (the Institute) is the peak body for the property development industry in Queensland. Powered by a unique Research Foundation and a regional branch network comprised of 11 branches throughout Queensland, the Institute is ideally placed to provide you and your council expert advice on a range of matters relevant to the local development industry and its role in our economy.

We would like to take this opportunity to offer the Institute's sincere congratulations on your recent success in the local government elections. The Institute has long valued its productive working relationship with Mayors across the state and we look forward to establishing this relationship with you over the coming four years.

As you may also be aware, our industry contributes to 9% of regional employment in the Central Queensland region employing 6,217 people directly and a further 7,333 indirectly.<sup>1</sup> Whilst these jobs have always been important to quality of life in the Livingstone region, there has rarely been another time when it has been as critical to save these jobs and secure the economic future of residents throughout the region.

For this reason, we would like to take this opportunity to brief you on some key issues arising from the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and recommend initiatives which we believe will be key to our community weathering this difficult time and eventually being well positioned to recover. In writing, we would also like to acknowledge that council is already taking many steps to support the community as well as shouldering the responsibility to continue essential services.

The Institute holds significant concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on local employment in our industry. With many industry firms now under considerable pressure on several fronts, difficult decisions are being made about the continuation of projects, the launch of new projects as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> Urbis for the Urban Development Institute of Australia Queensland, March 2018

longer-term sustainability of businesses. For this reason, and further to our letter to council of 19 March 2020 and the Institute's *Project Bounce Back, a COVID-19 Industry Action Plan* (attached) we propose additional measures to keep the property development industry working. We particularly wish to emphasise initiatives below that council can put in place quickly, within the framework of existing programs, and which will have a material impact on saving industry jobs in a short time frame.

#### **Halving all development related fees**

This reduction in costs would allow the industry to keep applications rolling, thereby creating a pipeline of project work ready for economic recovery and jobs creation. It would also reduce the financial burden for projects at a critical time and assist directly with retaining their workforce. Mackay Regional Council has been proactive in this regard announcing this measure as part of their first COVID-19 stimulus package and we strongly encourage Livingstone Shire Council to consider this option to stimulate construction activity.

#### **Ensure all inspections continue**

Council should commit to all inspections continuing whilst ensuring appropriate arrangements are put in place to achieve social distancing. We urge council to continue to conduct these necessary inspections to ensure the industry can continue to be operable and deliver development during this uncertain period.

#### **Offer a rates reduction for completed stock and development land holdings**

With sales grinding to a halt due to COVID-19, a reduction in development related rates by council would provide relief to those business with completed but unsold stock available or lands held for future projects. This relief will assist with cash flow and help sustain industry jobs.

#### **Offer Infrastructure Charges Incentive Scheme**

Infrastructure charges discounts are a common way for local government to stimulate and shape economic development and have well established implementation mechanisms in councils throughout the state. Offering Infrastructure Charges waivers and discounts would provide critical support to company cashflow shoring up industry jobs through our region. We urge council to explore this measure to assist the property industry and stimulate and support the region's economy and respond to COVID-19.

#### **Introduce new home builders grant**

Council should replicate Rockhampton Regional Council's initiative, offering at least \$5,000 per new dwelling to boost local employment.

#### **COVID-19 in general**

We reiterate the importance of taking action to keep the property development industry moving to safeguard jobs, enable a bounce back of activity, and minimise damage to the economy as much as possible. We understand that these times present many challenges for council and we are very keen to offer our assistance to work towards an economic recovery strategy for the Livingstone Shire.

To this end Central Queensland Branch President, Gideon Genade will shortly be in touch to arrange a time convenient to you to come and brief you on matters raised in this letter as well as to answer your questions on all industry matters.

We thank you for taking the time to consider our letter during this difficult period. The Institute offers its assistance wherever we can to ensure the property industry continues to operate in the current

circumstances. If you have any questions, please contact Manager of Policy, Martin Zaltron ([mzaltron@udiaqld.com.au](mailto:mzaltron@udiaqld.com.au)) on (07) 3229 1589.

Yours sincerely,  
**Urban Development Institute of Australia Queensland**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Chessher-Brown', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kirsty Chessher-Brown  
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gideon Genade', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gideon Genade  
Central Queensland Branch President