

Ipswich/West Moreton Regional Development – Forum Notes

Implications and Observations Arising from Speaker Addresses

Needs and Trends of Youth in our Region

- Younger people have different expectations of work/workplace.
- They want more feedback and more creative opportunity.
- Within our Regional Development Area (RDA) we have a demographic trend of 1 in 5 youth who are 'disengaged' from community – not learning or earning.
- Gen X & Y have a different ethos in some places
- There were concerns with the results of NAPLAN testing for this region indicating relatively high proportion of Year 9 students struggling in some areas.

New Technology Challenges and Opportunities

- The challenge with Ubiquitous Connectivity is that older people are not as at home with it
- We need to develop familiarity with the options and tools
- We don't know what we don't know – we don't know how to best use what we do know.
- We need to actively develop the knowledge and use the tools.
- Need to develop new comfort levels with technology – or we miss chances for profit and productivity and service.
- Older people refuse to adopt the technology – they do not trust it or feel comfortable.
- Banks find that over 60's fear the internet has no security – refuse internet banking.

Small & Medium Enterprises

- SME's are a major employer and must be specifically included.
- We need to set a bold target to achieve SME engagement in digital economy initiatives
- Need a strategy to achieve targets.
- Develop the skills and capacities, develop networks of like-minded businesses that can link together to share information and learning.
- Optimism in Qld's Pulse Survey is there however also much skepticism
- There is not strong belief in the capacity for productivity gains.
- Disillusionment regarding red tape, government duplication and inflexibility.
- Recommendation to focus on strengthening the SME segment.
- Some SME's do things very tough – not all are thriving or entrepreneurial.

Function of Government in a Connected Age

- Government is worse and worse at dealing with the emerging problems because they are stuck in an old format that no longer fits the demands.
- They need to be prepared to provide frameworks that allow engagement and innovation from the community.

- The skills and solutions are within the communities
- Government function to empower the capacities in society and not to be prescriptive.
- The times of delivering public policy on high on tablets of stone is not a fit for the needs.
- The people have the answers – they need mechanisms for these to be accessed and implemented.
- Government needs to reinvent itself
- Change the government approach to problem solving – become consultative and seek the wisdom of the “crowd” – of the community.
- Use digital engagement and consultative approaches to find solutions that are a fit to issue.
- Complexity and diversity too great for government to manage with the old forms of autocracy.
- Use incentives (prize money?) to engage specialists in solutions eg mathematicians finding answers in publicly available/open data.

Employment Issues

- Becoming necessary to offer flexibility in employment
- Part-time, work-from-home and full time options
- Employment options need to be explored in new ways.
- Due to the high numbers of people commuting in and out of our Region, could we explore some job-swap options that might allow people to stay in their home location without commuting.
- The digital generation know how to connect – very comfortable with technology.
- They do distinguish however between their Social Space and Employment so beware assumptions and generalisations.
- Digital economy is not the whole answer to employment opportunities.
- Must engage with industry and business – need a narrative that will show relevance.
- Stories of success that can be translated by various sectors and sizes and ages and places.
- Work with unfamiliar issues to make them usual tools of trade.
- Need to create frameworks to assist making the transition.

General Issues for the RDA Roadmap

Demographics

- People are coming to the area for cheaper living
- Springfield and some other housing developments pulling new residents.
- Somerset and Lockyer seeing smaller growth than Ipswich area
- Rural residential subdivisions halted by State Govt Policy impacted the growth of the region.
- The focus went away from jobs to population growth.
- We need to find a story about our region that tells of opportunities for the future.

Transport

- Transport is a major issue for the Somerset community – people can't get to work.
- In Esk there is a very diverse range of needs
- We have had bus services but they are not strongly patronised and fail.
- Subsidisation is necessary for transport options to be sustainable.

Education

- Relationship between the educational offerings and the specific needs of workers and employers are not finding a fit.
- There are specific needs in this geographic/demographic area
- Engage with schools
- Engage with industry
- Be open to new approaches, deliverables, frameworks.
- Employees who are over 35 years of age will often struggle for comfort with technology.
- How can we re-skill or upskill – need a way to bridge the gap.
- Do we recruit young people – is this feasible?

Digital Engagement

- Are there opportunities to foster those networks of common interests and work together to upskill with digital tools and knowledge.
- Even developing/managing a webpage is a foreign experience – let alone the social media.
- Could develop partnerships with educational institutions - real world projects for students?
- Work experience students – another way to engage with young people in a two way benefit.
- Best indicators of online success is shown and measured when we achieve on line targets
- Get everyone in our business communities engaged.
- Get a strategy
- Get people actively involved.

Technology Infrastructure

- Equality is reliant on equity in access to infrastructure.
- If there are internet or phone black spots then it is a serious disadvantage.
- Internet speed limitations are a disadvantage.
- Will the NBN be available to all? To 97% of Australians...will this mean us?
- Rural people still potentially disadvantaged.

Alternative Economic Opportunities

- Digital economy is part of the solution and an opportunity but not the whole story
- We have an important agricultural sector – unskilled international labour being recruited/outsourced
- 457 labour instead of locally disengaged youth and others
- Why can't we employ the local people – is agriculture too hard work, not sexy?
- Talk with agricultural sector about possibilities to employ local unemployed instead?
- Tourism projects could be supported by the RDA
- Engage young people and collaborate between the councils
- Take a regional approach – visitors don't care about council boundaries.
- Aged care – opportunities exist for service provision.
- Equine industry – high number of horses in the area and many associated industries
- RDA has an Equine Industry study completed – revisit and review.

Sustainable Community

- The answers to local sustainability are always found locally.
- We are a peri-urban area
- We need to look at small solutions and establish industry in small localised solutions
- The digital economy is part of the answer only – harness it but not excluding other opportunities and offerings.
- Be holistic and strategic, look for an inclusive approach.
- Place based solutions.