



11 April 2019

Council Ref: GVT-LIA-FED

Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

**REMOTE AREA TAX CONCESSIONS AND PAYMENTS ENQUIRY - SUBMISSION BY MAREEBA SHIRE COUNCIL**

The Productivity Commission is seeking submissions to determine the appropriate ongoing form and function of the zone tax offset, FBT remote area concessions, and Remote Area Allowance.

Mareeba Shire is made up of towns and rural areas considered Outer Regional Australia, and areas to the west are classified as Remote and Very Remote (ABS Remoteness Area Classification, 2011). Mareeba, with a district population of 10,181, is the main commercial and administrative centre and lies 64 km south west of Cairns (ABS 2011 Census, Usual Residents). Most of the shire's remaining population reside in and around smaller towns and districts including Kuranda, Koah, Speewah, Bibbohra, Mt Molloy, Julatten, Mt Carbine, Mutchilba, Dimbulah, Irvinebank, Watsonville, Almaden and Chillagoe.

Mareeba Shire estimated resident population of 21,833 is dispersed across 53,457 km<sup>2</sup> resulting in a very low population density of 0.4 persons/sq km compared with 2.6 persons in Queensland (ABS ERP June 2015). The median age of the shire's population is 41 years compared to 36 for Queensland and 37 for Australia (ABS 2011 Census). Demonstrating the shire's high cultural diversity, 12.2% of the shire's population compared with 9.8% of Queensland currently speak a language other than English at home, with Italian the most common second language (ABS 2011 Census).

A range of socioeconomic disadvantages in the Mareeba Shire compared with Queensland and Australia which include:

- The higher unemployment rate in Mareeba (S) at the 2016 Census (8.3%) compared with Queensland (7.6%), combined with the high percentage not in the labour force, brings down the employment to population (aged 15+ years) rate in Mareeba (S) (46.8%) compared with Queensland (56.4%)
- A lower median family weekly income in Mareeba (S) (\$1,274) compared with Queensland (\$1,661) and Australia (\$1,734)
- A lower median household weekly income in Mareeba (S) (\$1,045) compared with Queensland (\$1,402) and Australia (1,438) (ABS 2016 Census)

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- Higher cost of living expenses i.e. food, fuel, insurance
- Distance from available specialised medical facilities
- Distance from higher education facilities

Some of the above features of Mareeba Shire's society and demography contribute to its placement in the 30th decile on the ABS SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) 2016, i.e. Mareeba Shire is in the third most socio-economically disadvantaged 10% of LGAs in Australia based on the summary measure of disadvantage in the IRSD (ABS SEIFA 2016)

The outlined socio-economic, social and education limitations are among some of the hurdles facing Mareeba Shire in terms of growing as a regional community. There is an untapped potential for this Shire to hold increased capacity as an important strategic regional hub for industrial, agricultural and transport industries if provided with government incentives and assistance to small business and industry.

Mareeba Shire Council would be supportive of the Australian Government aiding residents who reside in specified geographic areas through the zone tax offset, the fringe benefits tax (FBT) remote area concessions and the Remote Area Allowance.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this matter further, please direct your enquiry to Council's Director Corporate and Community Services, Jennifer McCarthy

Yours faithfully

**PETER FRANKS**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**