



21 August 2013

Geographic Labour Mobility  
Productivity Commission  
LB2 Collins Street East  
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

[Labour.mobility@pc.gov.au](mailto:Labour.mobility@pc.gov.au)

To whom it may concern

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission (enclosed) to the Productivity Commission's research study entitled Geographic Labour Mobility, which is assessing geographic labour mobility within Australia and its role in a well-functioning labour market. This submission provides more information further to the Queensland local government census and skills data, as well as conversations, already provided by Tony Goode, Workforce Strategy Executive, and Gabrielle Dorward, Principal Advisor – Workforce Planning.

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) strongly believes that there is a need for a comprehensive and coordinated population strategy, both at a national and at a State level. This population strategy would take into account a number of different factors relating to the diversity of Queensland communities and the labour market, such as the impacts of Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) and Drive-In-Drive-Out (DIDO) strategies and resourcing issues specific to rural and remote communities.

Over the past several years, the LGAQ has invested significant effort in researching some of these specific issues, and further details are contained within the enclosed submission.

If you have any queries in relation to this submission, please contact Beth Norman, Strategic Policy Researcher, at either [beth\\_norman@lgaq.asn.au](mailto:beth_norman@lgaq.asn.au) or on (07) 3000 2245.

Yours sincerely

Greg Hoffman PSM  
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



# **GEOGRAPHIC LABOUR MOBILITY STUDY PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION**

## **SUBMISSION**

**Local Government Association of Queensland Ltd**

**21 August 2013**

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. It is a not-for-profit association set up solely to serve councils and their individual needs. LGAQ has been advising, supporting and representing local councils since 1896, allowing them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities. LGAQ does this by connecting councils to people and places that count; supporting their drive to innovate and improve service delivery through smart services and sustainable solutions; and delivering them the means to achieve community, professional and political excellence.

## Executive Summary

1. The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) continues to strongly advocate for a comprehensive population strategy, both at a national and State level. Such a strategy would be able to highlight and address many of the specifics this Productivity Commission project aims to study, including:
  - Acknowledgement of the incredible diversity of Australian communities – urban, regional, rural, remote and Indigenous – and subsequent regional variations in occupations, workforce demand and seasonal variations, as well as the needs of target communities such as ageing populations, people with disabilities and young people;
  - Barriers to geographic mobility, such as affordable housing, availability of transport and facilities, social inclusion and cost;
  - Patterns and trends in geographic mobility, including by State and/or region, industry, occupation, skill level, form of employment and demographic characteristics;
  - Key drivers of mobility, including costs and benefits from various perspectives (businesses, individuals, families and governments);
  - Mechanisms needed to support mobility, such as planning and possible incentives; and
  - Assessment of current and proposed strategies used by employers and governments that affect geographic mobility.
2. Over the past several years, the LGAQ has conducted a number of in-depth research projects to identify issues and highlight potential initiatives to address community and council needs in Queensland on these topics, including:
  - Capacity Building Needs for Non-Amalgamated Councils – LGAQ Report 2009;
  - Queensland Population Inquiry 2010;
  - LGAQ Resource Communities Position Paper 2010; and
  - Community Wellbeing Indicators Project 2012.
3. In addition, the LGAQ has provided a number of submissions to the Queensland State Government and the Australian Government in relation to these issues, specifically including:
  - Inquiry into the Review of the Auditor-General's Reports – Remote Council Issues, submitted to Queensland Public Accounts and Public Works Committee on 31 March 2011;
  - Inquiry into the Use of 'Fly-In, Fly-Out' (FIFO) Workforce Practices in Regional Australia, submitted to the Housing of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia on 7 October 2011;
  - Access and Equity Inquiry, submitted to the Multicultural Policy Section of the Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship on 22 February 2012;
  - Development of a National Settlement Framework, submitted to Multicultural Affairs Queensland on 26 October 2012;
  - Population revision proposals re 2006-2011 intercensal population, submitted to the Australian Bureau of Statistics on 26 November 2012; and
  - Queensland Uranium Mining, submitted to the Uranium Mining Implementation Committee on 17 December 2012.

4. The LGAQ has also often highlighted the need for a strategic, coordinated and industry-driven approach to Federal workforce development and employment programs in collaboration with local councils that demonstrably and measurably support and promote business and skills development. The availability of such programs is an important factor influencing geographic labour mobility.
5. The LGAQ strongly encourages the Productivity Commission to specifically contact councils in all States and Territories throughout the development of this study in order to capture the experiences of local governments, as councils are the sphere of government closest to the community.

## A Population Strategy

6. The LGAQ has long advocated for the need for an overarching and comprehensive Population Strategy, both at a national and at a State level.
7. The Australian Federal and State Governments have consistently pursued economic growth over the past decades with active policies to attract investment in agricultural development and manufacturing, resource development and tourism, and more recently knowledge-based industries, education, financial services and new technology sectors. As a result, investment has occurred at an increasing scale. Jobs have been created, directly through multiplier effects from this investment, and governments have used population growth as a measure of success and as an indicator of progress, particularly in Queensland.
8. In 2009, the Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship undertook research into State and Territory governmental strategic planning of anticipated population growth. Among the key findings was that there was no cohesion among States and Territories in their approach to using demographic change and population projection analyses, no Commonwealth body to coordinate a national approach, and more integration needed between State and Territory aspirations and requirements with the then proposed Long Term Immigration Planning Framework.
9. In 2010, the LGAQ commissioned a Public Inquiry on the Need for a State Population Policy, comprising of written submissions, online polling and public hearings. Published in June 2010, the Final Report acknowledged the diversity of Queensland communities, with some regions keen to encourage economic and population growth, while others actively managing economic and discouraging population growth. Issues that were identified in the public forums ranged from improving the management of environmental assets to pressure on water resources, liveability and adequate infrastructure.
10. The Inquiry found that the scope of the debate and submissions received justifies an explicit statement of Population Policy by the State Government. Such a policy would allow the Government to:
  - Respond to community concerns;
  - Demonstrate how growth is to be managed (in scale, character and location);
  - Respond to population ageing issues, including encouragement of ongoing workforce participation;
  - Assess multiplier effects from new investment across the State, as well as impacts from alternative policy options;
  - Explore measures that can potentially regionalise growth from both direct and indirect demand for labour, and hence for population;
  - Identify actions that governments could take to support regionalisation, as well as more sustainable development;
  - Address matters such as the scale and character of labour market demand created by new investment across the State;
  - Explore sources of labour supply to meet that demand, including the likely sources of migrant workers and the arrangements by which they are engaged;
  - Input to a State Migration Plan to complement Federal initiatives; and
  - Establish a framework for assessing progress to more sustainable, affordable and efficient growth outcomes.

11. The Inquiry also found that a population policy could be seen as an overarching framework guiding policies for:
- Economic development;
  - Regional development;
  - Infrastructure provision;
  - Environmental protection and improvement;
  - Sustainable management of natural resources;
  - Housing provision, technology, affordability and appropriateness; and
  - Land assembly for comprehensive urban development.
12. A number of key recommendations were produced from the Inquiry. Among them are:
- *Recommendation 2*: “There is an urgent need for a comprehensive review of the scale and character of labour market demand by industry, including that created by new investment across [Queensland]. Strategies to address this demand in the context of the projected labour market supply must be developed. Priority must be given to training strategies that ensure that the skills obtained by Australians are appropriate to the needs of the changing labour market and which include a focus on skills development at the regional level.”
  - *Recommendation 3*: “The State Government should develop a State Migration Plan targeting the skills necessary to ensure sustainable economic development of Queensland. This Plan must address skills required by all sectors, not just the booming resource sector. The Commonwealth should develop systems that ensure the States and Territories receive skilled immigrants in relation to their share of national labour demand.”
  - *Recommendation 4*: “The State should regularly provide estimates of the number of households under housing stress by income category. These estimates should be by Local Government Area for a ten year period. The State and Local Governments should collaborate to develop local strategies to deal with housing stress. Commonwealth participation should also be sought.”
  - *Recommendation 8*: “The State should evaluate the cumulative impact of FIFO activity on housing and infrastructure need in those communities where these workers and families reside. The review should assess whether royalties and other contributions by resource companies adequately contribute to the overall costs and impacts of each project on these communities.”
  - *Recommendation 10*: “The State should investigate a range of incentives (eg differential payroll tax) to support regional job creation. The State Government should also play a lead role through decentralisation of head office type functions to suitable regional locations.”
  - *Recommendation 11*: “The State Government, supported by both the Federal and Local Governments, should ensure that quality infrastructure and services are provided up-front in key regional locations. This initiative will be integral to any strategy for reducing growth pressures in SEQ.”
  - *Recommendation 13*: “There needs to be a partnership approach across all spheres of government to ensure that funding is provided for infrastructure required to support growth. Alternative financing mechanisms should be investigated to supplement current funding arrangements.”
  - *Recommendation 16*: “The Federal Government should ensure that a substantial infrastructure fund from the RSPT [Resources Super Profit Tax] is available to local government in communities impacted directly and indirectly by resource development, for social and economic infrastructure provision.”
13. This Inquiry was conducted during the previous Government’s term. While the Report was welcomed, despite active lobbying by LGAQ, no commitment was given to develop a State Population Policy. The current State Government has sought to implement decentralisation policies recommended by the Inquiry with success, and work is underway on proposed Regional Plans across Queensland.
14. During the 2012 Queensland State Election, the LGAQ produced a 10 Point State Election Plan, point 5 of which being: “Local government seeks a commitment to develop a coordinated, broad-based population strategy, incorporating policies on regionalisation and decentralisation, within 18 months of the election.” Each political party that responded (Australian Labour Party, Liberal National Party, Queensland Greens and the Katter Australian Party) endorsed this sentiment to provide better regional and State planning in Queensland.

15. The LGAQ continues to believe that a State Population Policy, integrated into a national Population Strategy, will provide an effective means of addressing and encouraging appropriate population and economic growth, such as geographic labour mobility, in accordance with regional and local needs, aspirations and opportunities.

## **A National Settlement Framework**

16. The LGAQ provided a submission to the Select Council on Immigration and Settlement (SCIS), under the auspices of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on the development of a new National Settlement Framework in October 2012. The development of such a Framework, to identify and adopt a common set of principles and facilitate a strategic focus on settlement and related policy and programs, should be commended.
17. While the Framework is specifically focused on multiculturalism and immigration support, it does bear relevance on immigrant movements throughout Australia in eventual settlement in either urban, regional or rural areas, and the valuable skills many hold, potentially filling skill shortage gaps in many areas.
18. Local governments play an integral part in the provision of migrant support and service delivery (out of necessity), facilitation of intercultural harmony in their local communities, and in building a strong sense of community. As such, the LGAQ strongly advocated for a greater level of intergovernmental engagement and coordination in the development of this Framework, with local government recognised as a strategic partner with the other levels of government and the non-government sector. In addition, the LGAQ identified a need for a more clearly articulated and strategic position on the respective roles and responsibilities of all levels of government and the non-government sector around settlement and cultural diversity policy and programs.

## **Workforce Development and Employment Programs**

19. Another factor influencing geographic labour mobility is the availability of workforce development and employment programs that support business productivity and skills development. The LGAQ has long highlighted the need for a strategic, coordinated and industry-driven approach to Federal workforce development and employment programs, in collaboration with local councils, which demonstrably and measurably support and promote business and skills development.
20. The Australian Government, in collaboration with local government, has an opportunity to fundamentally reform the approach to local skills development through a more focused program better aligning business opportunities, productivity improvement and enhanced workforce capacity and employability. Remote and Indigenous councils in particular have consistently called for more responsive and inclusive workforce development and employment programs that help drive local economies. Putting local communities at the centre of desired outcomes for workforce development and employment programs will naturally lead to skills development targeting existing and planned jobs and encourage the growth of local businesses. Underpinning this industry-led approach is a commitment to improved strategic workforce planning with demonstrable and measurable links between strategies and outcomes.

## **Community Wellbeing Indicators**

21. The LGAQ launched its two-year Community Wellbeing Indicators Project in March 2011. The Project aimed to support councils in developing better ways to:
  - Understand and measure local community wellbeing;
  - Build a better and consistent statistics base;
  - Improve community planning; and
  - Strengthen citizen involvement.



22. The LGAQ undertook a community wellbeing indicator pilot survey in 2011 in five local government areas (Sunshine Coast, Gladstone, Isaac, Longreach and Wujal Wujal) to establish benchmarks within these diverse communities. Early in 2013, the LGAQ also conducted a State-wide survey to validate the pilot and establish State-wide benchmarks.
23. In mid-2013, the LGAQ and the Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government (ACELG) partnered to refine and release the Community Wellbeing Indicators: Measures for Local Government report and the Community Wellbeing Indicators Survey. This report and survey builds on national work undertaken in developing community wellbeing indicators and contributes to the enhanced capacity of Queensland councils to plan for, measure and report on the wellbeing of their communities. It also aims to enhance local government's ability to measure and assess the value of their investment in their communities across social, cultural, economic, environmental and democratic activities using comparative benchmarks. The report and the survey are also part of a wider campaign to allow councils to improve community planning, measure community wellbeing and strengthen engagement.
24. This research and survey instrument is invaluable to local governments and communities in identifying issues of concerns and establishing a valid statistical base to measure wellbeing, particularly in measuring the impact of new initiatives instigated by governments. The importance of investment in programs, people and infrastructure which supports community wellbeing and placemaking is also critical in attracting people to communities.

### Queensland's Resource Communities

25. Along with Western Australia, the State of Queensland is heavily reliant on the resources sector for sustained economic growth, and it is one of the primary drivers of the labour market and employment patterns in Queensland's regional and rural areas. Local communities, and the local governments responsible for them, need to respond to a wide range of demands and impacts placed on their area by the resources sector.
26. Following in-depth research, analysis and consultation with Queensland councils, in September 2010 LGAQ released its Position Paper entitled Supporting Queensland's Resource Regions: Recommendations for enhancing local government and community sustainability in regions with current or proposed mining and petroleum activity.
27. At the outset, it is noted in the Position Paper that:
 

*"...the issues confronting local governments [and communities] located in, or adjacent to, Queensland's resource regions/basins are significant, complex and diverse. Infrastructure provision, housing affordability, workforce skills and recruitment, social and cultural cohesion, environmental protection, supply of essential services, public order and safety, town planning and amenity, increased administration, managing and maintaining industry relationships, and participation in legislative processes are some of the key challenges confronting councils [and communities] seeking to balance the benefits of resource industry activity with community wellbeing and long term sustainability."*
28. In 2010, direct employment resulting from the resource sector in Queensland was nearly 45,000 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), and was estimated by AECgroup to increase to over 120,000 FTEs by 2030. This estimate will be impacted by the availability of workers within regions, and does not include flow-on economic activity. Though the resources sector is currently in the midst of a contraction, this is not expected to last.
29. The previous State Government established a number of working groups in the Surat Basin to plan and manage the impacts of mining and resource related activities, focused on the following areas:
  - Regional Planning Framework;
  - Preferred Settlement Pattern Development;
  - Regional Transport Investigation;
  - Housing Affordability Delivery Strategy;

- Land Access Policy Framework;
  - Workforce Development Plan;
  - Strategic Cropping Lands;
  - CSG Water Management Policy; and the
  - Health Working Group.
30. Though this list is fairly comprehensive, it lacked a cohesive overarching strategy to integrate these elements and ensure that issues, including labour mobility and settlement strategies, were properly addressed. To LGAQ's knowledge, there were also no reviews of the roles and responsibilities or these groups, any stakeholder satisfaction/dissatisfaction or functioning of the groups.
  31. The current State Government has developed new Social Impact Assessment (SIA) guidelines, which identify social impacts that directly relate to resource projects and propose strategies to either capitalise on opportunities or mitigate against negative impacts. The SIA can include workforce management, local business impacts and housing and accommodation impacts, amongst other areas.
  32. Adequate social impact management in resource communities is a priority area of advocacy for LGAQ, and genuine and long-lasting reform can only occur if local government is empowered to play an active role in identifying impacts, developing mitigation strategies and linking those mitigation strategies to broad regional economic initiatives.
  33. Cumulative impacts, suffered by these resource communities as well as resource-related employees, are a major concern and arise from compounded activities from single and/or multiple mining operations as well as impacts with past, current and future activities that may be related to mining. Cumulative impacts can be social, economic or environmental in nature, such as additive pollution of coal dust, noise, water quality, vibration, scenic amenity, greenhouse gases and biodiversity. In a survey of Mount Isa residents commissioned by Xstrata in 2007, almost all survey respondents indicated that they or their families had been adversely affected, with irritation to the nose or throat being the most common impact. Of particular concern, more than 5% reported having sought emergency medical treatment for air quality in the 12 months previous; lead and water contamination were also identified as important environmental concerns.
  34. Community concerns about these impacts have been frequently expressed in a variety of community forums, consultative processes, deputations and in the media. Social impacts in resource regions are usually identified through changes to population demographics, the availability of human services, housing affordability, the standard of community infrastructure, community participation and integration as well as general community wellbeing and identity. As a result, there is a greater reluctance to move families to resource regions for employment; yet there are also complex and well documented social and emotional implications of the family breadwinner being absent for periods of time.
  35. The link between mining activity and housing shortages is well documented. Related to this issue, local governments and other industries in mining regions struggle to attract and retain staff due to a lack of available and affordable housing. This is one of the primary drivers for Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) and Drive-In-Drive-Out (DIDO) arrangements utilised by mining companies, while local governments often subsidise housing for its workforce. A large number of mining workers and contractors, including exploration crews and tradepersons involved with the construction of new mines, occupy temporary accommodation in areas adjacent to the mines for extended shift rosters, and can commute long distances by air or road between their workplace and usual residence. Accommodation arrangements can range from a basic collection of transportable dwellings and communal amenities through to hostel-like single person quarters and family housing. In all instances, councils are required to provide critical services, including water, sewerage and sanitation, often at relatively short notice outside usual council annual planning and budgeting cycles.
  36. Conversely, the FIFO and DIDO working arrangements can offer a lifeline to sustain those families under financial stress due to local economic downturn. As a result, a number of Queensland local governments (particularly in coastal high unemployment areas) are supportive of FIFO arrangements



and support initiatives that encourage the delivery of skills to resource areas, such as the Gold Coast Airport being promoted as a specific FIFO resource with the assistance of the Gold Coast City Council's Economic Development unit. LGAQ believes that a State-wide population policy, developed in collaboration with local governments, can provide a means to work through to a mutually beneficial consensus between proponents, State Government, local governments and communities in issues such as these.

37. FIFO and DIDO operations are a significant feature of Queensland's regional labour force. At the end of 2011, LGAQ provided a submission to the Australian Government's House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia specifically on this growing trend by many resource companies to employ non-resident workforces. The submission noted that these workforces place considerable pressure upon established communities, existing services and infrastructure, and community wellbeing, at times to the extent that at the LGAQ's Annual Conference 2011, Isaac Regional Council, the North Queensland Local Government Association and the Western Queensland Local Government Association put forward a motion to make representations to the State Government to place a "cap" on the number of non-resident workers who are associated with resource industry activities. This motion demonstrates the sentiment often found in communities where FIFO and DIDO activities are not well managed, for instance in allowing a 100% FIFO or DIDO workforce creates a population imbalance between resident and non-resident workers, increasing pressure on regional services that are funded on the basis of permanent population numbers.
38. The provision of housing for these employees can also have significant impacts on the local property market for existing residents and prospective residents and investors. Whilst demand for housing rises, rental and purchase prices can be artificially escalated, often forcing out long term residents or those most vulnerable in the community such as the young and elderly who can no longer afford to live locally. Legacy issues associated with temporary accommodation facilities once a project is complete also needs careful consideration. In some cases, these facilities are constructed outside of existing town boundaries within rural areas, and the presence of high density single quarters, heavy commuter traffic, provision of infrastructure and supplies, and roster changeovers can have significant negative impacts upon the quality of life for local residents as well as overall community cohesion.
39. Due to the tenure and approval processes linked to resource activity, Queensland local governments are often afforded limited opportunity to be engaged in meaningful decision making about the consequences and impacts on their local communities. LGAQ believes that local governments, instead, need to be a key stakeholder in any approval processes, as the decisions about social, infrastructure and workforces requirements directly impact on council processes, infrastructure planning and community issues.
40. Since the election of a new State Government in Queensland in March 2012, the LGAQ has sought to improve this situation. The State Government has stated its commitment to engage with councils in a timely manner and through the Royalties for Regions program is funding local government infrastructure needed in response to resource related development. Funding under this program is available to councils Statewide; only South East Queensland councils are excluded from applying for funds.
41. The LGAQ's submission to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, on 26 November 2012, also noted the significance of FIFO and DIDO operations on Queensland's regional labour force, boosting local populations and placing pressure on the services and infrastructure of small communities. LGAQ noted in its submission that these operations, and other similar labour mobility factors, contribute to intercensal and other errors in population estimates. As councils are heavily reliant on funding that is provided under the *Local Government Assistance (Financial Assistance) Act 1995*, LGAQ believes that any process that seeks to revise or analyse population figures, ideally within specified local government areas, should pay particular attention to the implications of the methods chosen for communities.

## Queensland's Rural and Remote Communities

42. In 2009, the LGAQ commissioned a scoping study on the Capacity Building Needs of Non-Amalgamated Councils. The councils specifically targeted were the 18 non-amalgamated councils with a population of less than 5,000, and included a literature review, teleconferences, forums, a discussion paper and draft reports. The Queensland Local Government Reform Commission in 2007, which oversaw an amalgamation process that reduced council numbers from 156 to 73, had identified a number of concerns for these councils, including:
  - The need for these councils to sustain the social fabric of communities, filling the gap in delivering human and other services normally provided by the private sector;
  - The remoteness coupled with distance and area over which councils in western Queensland must deliver services, making it difficult to gain scale economies from larger entities;
  - Specific difficulties in financial sustainability, including a lack of revenue flexibility as a result of a high dependence on grants and external revenue sources; and
  - Human resource difficulties, particularly for more remote councils.
43. Issues directly and indirectly associated with human resource recruitment and retention were a common theme across all councils. During consultation, a number of councils pointed to a very high turnover rate (over 70% in a twelve month period – internally or externally) and the difficulty in retaining staff with young families, particularly once secondary school attendance was required.
44. In addition, these smaller councils and communities face capacity challenges. Requiring fully qualified professionals for each discipline within Council is often unrealistic (eg planning, building, environmental health), and councils advocate strongly for para-professionals to undertake some tasks instead to alleviate this issue, particularly as these councils are faced with an ageing workforce population. While some councils do see opportunities to use skilled travelling workers (such as grey nomads) to supplement staff resources, other councils believe that the short time frames that these travellers stay for are too limiting, with significant resource costs in terms of repetitive induction and training.
45. Legislative regulations and compliance requirements are also often described by these councils and communities as being relevant for the circumstances of major coastal centres – but with little demonstrated understanding of the needs and operational issues faced in small remote communities.
46. ACELG's paper called A Capacity Building Strategy for Rural-Remote and Indigenous Local Government, published in March 2011, highlighted that "rural-remote councils are commonly expected to provide a greater range of services than their regional and urban counterparts... [and] often assumed a 'provider of last resort' role in order to ensure the sustainability of small communities." The paper went on to state:
 

"In addition to the pressures of community expectations and withdrawal of services, the capacity of rural-remote and Indigenous councils is also challenged by unrealistic policies and demands of the other levels of government. The scoping studies in WA and Queensland particularly noted concern about 'one-size-fits-all' approaches taken by government agencies, without due consideration of the appropriateness of the functions expected or the requests made of different rural-remote and Indigenous councils."
47. An example of the capacity constraints experienced by rural and remote councils is the recent advocacy work of LGAQ in relation to the requirements around the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care. While these reforms are welcome, as they aim to ensure a high national standardisation of quality care for young children, the application and inflexibility of new requirements have made it difficult for some rural councils to attract and retain suitably qualified childcare providers and directors in the council-run childcare centres – often the only childcare centres in the entire area and serving populations of less than 500 people.
48. LGAQ also provided a submission to the Queensland Public Accounts and Public Works Committee's 2011 Inquiry into the Review of the Auditor-General's Report on Remote Council Issues, highlighting these issues facing the rural and remote councils and communities.

49. Greater recognition and understanding of the capacity constraints in rural and remote councils is required, particularly in the development of policy and initiatives that may address and encourage greater labour mobility to these areas.

## Conclusion

50. Though the Productivity Commission's Terms of Reference specifically focuses on "patterns of mobility, impediments and enablers, and their effect on the ability to meet Australia's continually changing workforce and employment needs", the LGAQ believes that this is an incredibly complex and diverse area that crosses many issues, such as:
- Reliance on specific economic sectors, such as the resources sector and its associated issues;
  - Housing needs;
  - Community wellbeing and liveability;
  - Employment;
  - Capacity constraints, particularly in rural and remote communities;
  - Settlement strategies; and
  - Workforce development strategies.
51. As such, the LGAQ strongly believes that there is a critical need for a comprehensive and coordinated population strategy, both at a national and a State level. This population policy would take into account these different factors relating to the diversity of Australian communities and the labour market.