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Dear Yvette Goss

RE Productivity Commission, Geographic Labour Mobility, Draft Research Report, Canberra.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a formal submission on the above draft research report.

Over the last 12 months we have led a collaborative Regional Development Australia project between the Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, Logan/Redland, Brisbane and the Gold Coast, which examined opportunities and challenges for establishing a network of digital work hubs across South East Queensland.

The [final Digital Work Hub research report](#) was released in Dec 2013 and has demonstrated the opportunity for digital work hubs as part of a new urban agglomeration strategy across both city, urban and regional areas. The benefits of which include productivity and societal gains from offering highly skilled workers the opportunity to work closer to where they reside and equally as a hub for local large and smaller businesses to collaborate and drive projects.

Digital Work Hubs are a network of highly curated collaborative workspaces that co-locate a number of activities including coworking (freelancers, entrepreneurs, start-ups) and teleworkers (public and private sector professionals) into vibrant urban clusters. Digital work hubs are equipped with the latest information and telecommunication technology, meeting room facilities, event space, kitchens and cafes located in highly accessible urban nodes.

The project illustrated that when combined with lifestyle choices of knowledge workers, co-location of businesses in regional digital hubs will contribute significantly to regional agglomeration strategies aimed at reducing the economic divide between cities and regional centres.



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Summary of Digital Work Hub research results:

- Building knowledge-intensive industries in suburban and regional areas through digital work hubs would address the disruption of digital work from commuting, improve regional productivity, develop regional knowledge, transfer skills, foster entrepreneurship and incubate innovation possibilities in regional specific business sectors. Note: the report quantified the regional productivity gains for each of the individual regions in terms of cost savings, job and capital creation as well as additional health and wellbeing benefits.
- Digital work hubs offer an important component to the long-term operation of telework, allowing people to work closer to home in an Active Work Model. This model encourages employees to choose their work locations by dividing their working week between a central office base, a digital hub and home. This has potential links to recycle vacant government owned office accommodation and the uptake of *activity based working* in the public sector.
- Creates a real opportunity to advance high-speed broadband nodes in outer urban and peri-urban areas with a fibre cable to the local Telstra Exchange, to give local economies access to high-speed broadband services ahead of the rollout of the NBN.
- Proactively address the jobs deficit in outer urban and peri-urban areas, particularly with downturn in manufacturing and agglomeration of financial transaction jobs in the CBDs.
- Reduces pressure on rate of need to upgrade expensive major transport route infrastructure from increased commuter traffic and population growth.
- Balances cost of living pressures on young families living in the more affordable housing areas of outer and peri-urban areas and reducing the economic divide between cities and regional areas.

The final results of The Digital Work Hub Project and measureable prosperity benefits have attracted interest from across all levels of government, key investor groups and organisations within the private sector. The key recommendation for the report is to develop an Activation Plan for South East Queensland. With initial seed funding from the RDA collaborative project team this is currently underway to build the partnerships and resources to establish the first networked digital work hubs.

Yours Sincerely,

Russell Mason
CEO



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