



5 December 2019

Councillor Bob Manning AM  
Mayor  
Cairns Regional Council  
Spence St. Cairns Q 4870

**RE: CTIA Deputation 3 December 2019**

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your time last Tuesday. It is appreciated.

Unfortunately the meeting from our perspective did not have many positive outcomes. We discussed a number of issues previously conveyed to you that are important to our membership and they included the following:

- A. **Visitor Levy.** This has been on the active agenda for a couple of years now. There has been some history to what has been discussed, the gist of which was forwarded to you formally from the CTIA on 6 September and was not responded to. It was forwarded again. Our discussion left the matter unresolved, except for your advice that you were in discussions with both sides of politics for an acceptable outcome, whatever that means in relation to amending legislation, and the resolution is some way down the track if at all. We do not know what that might look like, or the sorts of figures that you might be looking at and understand that the LGAQ is involved in the discussions with yourselves. As discussed, we remain unconvinced as to progress with this issue as details are scant, so we need to take you at your word for now that progress is being made which is important to us. You further advised that for now, there is no Plan B if the current discussions fail or drag on. This is an important issue for the tourism industry in Cairns as we are being outpointed and outsmarted every day of the year because of our inability to market and promote effectively. Our letter of 6 September contained some other options and we also discussed others as well. Contained in our correspondence is an offer to advocate with you for this but that is on hold for now;
- B. **CTIA as the LTO and funding.** The outcomes here were very disappointing. You will recall that you and I have discussed privately for well over a year now, the shortcomings at TTNQ and the inevitable response from some in the industry unless these issues were addressed. Nothing of substance happened except for the previous CEO leaving her post. Day after day we saw the inroads into our local industry go unchecked, the trashing of the GBR brand and a continuation of the experience marketing message at the expense of the destination. Despite the problems and the obvious failures as our falling visitation figures attest to, plus some well respected scepticism regarding the positioning and marketing of the region, nothing has changed except for the change of CEO. Despite an AGM, the Board was reappointed in it's entirety including the re appointment of the D Chair. Both the Chair and the D Chair have recognised conflicts of interest which prevents any genuine support advocacy on the two key issues namely the GBR and aviation access. Their roles are crucial to the success of TTNQ and to the community confidence, respect and support of the organisation. This is unlikely to change anytime soon without some corporate surgery . As you know, the Douglas Shire Council allocates \$470K annually to Port Douglas Tourism. They obviously value their industry as does the Cassowary Coast. On the other hand, the CRC contributes approximately \$3.6M annually all up to TTNQ, Cairns Airport, and COGBR which are essentially regional by nature and unrelated to the city agenda, and when the CTIA raised the issue of funding and LTO recognition, your response was unambiguous and that was you were of the view that there were too many industry represented voices. You further confirmed the current arrangement would not change and that all CRC funding for industry

marketing and tourism related matters would go to TTNQ knowing full well the regional nature of the organisation. In other words the CTIA is on it's own. This is a curious response and position of the CRC to adopt given that the CTIA is made up in the main of people who have skin in the game, who employ people, who pay the rates, who are committed to the success of the City and who are struggling to make ends meet and have been in large part the very back bone of the industry that is struggling to survive. They are not the larger corporates who populate much of the TTNQ membership and influence, but they still wish to make a contribution focussing on their city and wish to remain unconstrained by the dictates of TQ. The expectations of the CTIA from the outset have been modest and it is the intention to grow organically and the management team were expecting some level of modest encouragement from you and the CRC which was not forthcoming ;

C. **Cairns Airport.** We raised this issue to make the point that currently the airport and aviation policy generally is failing us and in your capacity as Mayor and with your local history knowledge and a previous role in the Cairns Airport management, you might understand the industry concerns and in your dealings with the airport convey our view to their Board. We are talking to Luis Perez at our level about this, but apart from demanding better from them there is little we can do except keep banging the drum which we intend to do; and

D. We are pleased that you left open the option of a Gateway sign in an appropriate location down the track.

Thank you again for your time and hearing us out.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Byrne', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kevin Byrne  
President.