

# SUBMISSION COVERSHEET

**Submissions may address any key issues related to the Infrastructure Australia agenda and/or in specific response to the topics raised in the discussion papers.**

Please complete and submit this form with your submission. Where possible, *Infrastructure Australia* requests submissions are submitted electronically. Contact us:

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Organisation:

Contact person: Tony Wood

Postal address:

State:

Postcode:

Country:

Email address:

Telephone:

Submission title: Thinking Outside the Square

Author(s): Tony Wood

No. of pages: 2

Date: 10/10/08

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Please indicate which of the following your submission covers:

Issues Paper 1 — Australia's Future Infrastructure Requirements

Issues Paper 2 – Public Private Partnerships

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Transport Infrastructure

Energy Infrastructure

Climate Change

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Public Private Partnerships

International issues

Infrastructure Audit

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## Thinking Outside the Square

This is a short paper relevant to the following quote in the Submissions Guide, “Infrastructure Australia’s focus is on infrastructure issues of significance to national productivity.” Obviously infrastructure should be developed to maximise national productivity within the limits of the users of that infrastructure, but should it go further? Should the development of the infrastructure encompass other factors which might enhance national productivity beyond those pertaining to the immediate users of the infrastructure? Where this does not appear to happen I suggest that the subject is one of interest to Infrastructure Australia. I further submit that an example of this lies in the proposed development of the seaport of Cairns.

In truth it should be said that this whole subject is under review in Cairns as a consequence of the Queensland Government selling the Cairns Airport which is currently under the jurisdiction of the Cairns Port Authority (recently renamed Cairns Ports). Therefore the Queensland Government may resolve this particular example of its own accord, but the situation as it stands right now serves as an illustration of the principle.

There are two factors which affect national productivity here. The first of course is the need of Cairns Ports to develop modern seaport facilities to service seagoing users of the port. The second and perhaps less obvious, but nevertheless very important factor is to realise the tourist potential of Cairns which is a major tourist destination and which depends very heavily on tourist dollars. In other words if the development of the seaport infrastructure can be feasibly done in a way which enhances tourism, but this opportunity is not taken, then this inhibits the development of national productivity.

The situation in Cairns is that tourists are attracted to an outdoor or partially enclosed tropical environment preferably with eating and entertainment facilities and items of historical interest. Those areas bordering water are the most attractive of all, but the waterfront area along the Esplanade on the ocean front is narrow and already developed. Probably the most attractive land for further tourism development in the region of the Cairns CBD is a small section, not much more than 50m wide and 500m long, in the vicinity of the old Trinity wharves on the Trinity Inlet. This land is under the jurisdiction of Cairns Ports and a plan has been prepared for its development which is called the Cityport Plan. The Cityport Plan is available on the following website <http://www.cairnsport.com.au/files/pdf/Cityport%20LAP.pdf>

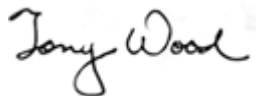
It is submitted that if this plan were to be implemented it would have two effects. The first would be to provide substantial funds to Cairns Ports through the selling or more probably the leasing of land for 6 to 10 story buildings, which would occupy much of the land surface. A reading of the Cityport Plan available on the website would confirm that, although lip service is given to the need to cater for tourism, this is belied by the details of the plan which is not really a plan, but a loose list of criteria that would enable easy compliance for any developer. These funds could be used to develop the port facilities, particularly the cruise liner wharf area, which coincides with the old heritage listed Trinity wharves. The second effect would be to alienate the land for any meaningful tourism purposes for the life of these buildings and to effectively wall in the CBD from the waterfront.

The questions for Infrastructure Australia are: does this matter come under its terms of reference and if so, how can the wider question of national productivity be

superimposed upon an Authority which is legitimately going about its business of enhancing its port infrastructure using the only assets it has at hand? I understand that the Cityport plan has been fairly widely distributed within the State bureaucracy, yet apparently the question of national productivity hasn't arisen from within, as no concerted in-house objections have emerged. Outside the Government the citizens of Cairns apparently have no say through the Cairns Council, since the land is outside its jurisdiction.

I am unable to provide a detailed solution. The purpose here is mainly to flag the problem. I feel that the solution should involve transparency, so that relevant agencies, other than the one charged primarily with the provision of the infrastructure, should be required to formally endorse the development proposal and to explain how the proposal affects their own goals. Furthermore it is highly desirable to carry the public along. Any proposal will always acquire detractors, but there is probably something very wrong with a proposal for which there is not substantial public support.

I hope this short paper aligns with one of your stated goals (...to facilitate public discussion about how the nation could improve planning and investment in infrastructure to meet our needs ....),

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Wood".

Tony Wood  
10/10/08