BCE Chairman Report 2015

“Nobody does advocacy better than BCE” was the quote recently from the head of a Queensland government department, and is a great compliment, being one that our organisation surely deserves.

The year started off in full swing with the announcement of a State election and with this we ensured that all Burdekin electorate candidates were well briefed on our 2 major projects Urannah and the Bowen Boat Harbour along with securing the T2 Dredge Disposal Site.

Following the election George Christensen had suggested all the local and regional groups from Townsville to Mackay get together to do a round table with the new Queensland government and asked WMDL to coordinate. This didn’t eventuate but over the next 9 months we were able to achieve a similar result.

With the launch of the white paper on Northern Australia development and the opportunity for funding potential developments our Urannah work soon slipped into another gear with a unanimous decision by the board to commit $30,000 to a pre pre feasibility study that could be used to help our politicians fight for some of this funding.

Peter Gilbey was engaged as the project leader supported by Murray Smith (Irrigation and Agribusiness), Geoff Crooke (Economic and Future Demand), Damien Burrows (Environment) all of which were well recognised in their particular fields.

Our two local politicians George Christensen and Dale last have been absolutely driving Urannah, and in turn driving BCE, and as late as last week George had delivered a speech on it in the last sitting of federal parliament which was backed by the Member for Capricornia Michelle Landry.

This would be the strongest political support I believe our region has ever had for a project, and led us to having discussions in being part of development group that will be finalised this week in Brisbane and this should almost guarantee the government funding for the next step.

None of this of course could have happened without the absolute dedication, passion and vision of David Evans and David Nebauer and with this the BCE name has been further secured as a very future thinking and proactive group.

We continue to fight for a future for the Bowen Boat harbour promoting the concept plan we developed with Queensland Transport in 2013.

With the help of Dale Last we were finally able to meet with the new Transport Minister Mark Bailey to ensure the plan had the support of the new government and have been assured of his support as his closing comments were “you really can’t understand why it wouldn’t have happened already”.

A lot of work was done for the boat harbour project following the release of the WRC new Town Plan, which showed the harbour to be an industrial harbour only in complete contradiction to the mixed use of our concept plan.

Many meetings were organised with council and lease holders, and the support and knowledge from our group in particular, Paul Crack, John Finlay and Andrew Willcox saw some of the overall Industrial section changed to Special Use and the town planner cooperating in making some initial changes to some of the lease holder’s areas.

Another dimension has come to light with the Abel Point Marina owner Paul Darrouzet showing interest in the harbour for super yacht servicing and maintenance.

This interest has been welcomed and thanks to Andrew Willcox for promoting the concept plan to him in the hope that he will be part of the future development of our harbour.

Terry Pilcher is continuing his work in expanding the NQCYC marina and hopefully we might see some progress later this year.

The draft WRC Town Plan gave further concern over the projected population figures and these concerns were voiced on a number of occasions. The figures suggested Bowen and Collinsville to grow by 2900 and Airlie Beach 11200 in the next 29 years and the worry being that investors would baulk seeing our region with little planned growth.

The thought of a meatworks being established in the area was very thoroughly addressed by Rod Barrett in a presentation with the outcome being basically not a viable proposition at this point in time.

A fruit and vegetable processing plant steering committee was formed by Dale Last which included BGGA, DAFF, and BCE and has achieved a public meeting of growers and interested parties, and now is in the process or raising $25,000 for a pre pre-feasibility study similar to the Urannah one, that will be presented for Northern Australia Development white paper funding.

A presentation was done to the Queensland Government FIFO enquiry by Ross Meier, Terry Pilcher and myself with information gathered from our members. We presented in Proserpine and we were well received, with special interest taken in our comments on the lack of permanent positions available which means the building industry along with many others suffers as banks are reluctant to lend money to those without guaranteed employment.

BCE along with Bowen Tourism and Business and the Bowen Business Chamber presented to the Senate Committee hearing on funding to Environmental groups, and was a good demonstration on how the 3 organisations in unison can have a strong effect.

Another highlight of the year was the Townsville Enterprise / Townsville City Council visit which came about after Dale Last viewed concerns how the 3 regions in his Burdekin electorate were all promoting different projects, with all of them for the same reason of promoting economic development. It was decided that if we show everyone what each other was promoting we could all come up with a similar plan that would be easy for governments to decide on. The tour included site inspections of Abbot Point, Collinsville Powerhouse, Collinsville mine site viewing and a presentation over lunch of the Whitsunday Growth Corridor Plan, and had representatives from TEL, Townsville City Council, Ergon, and Sun Metals.

Special thanks to Dale Last and Lewis Ramsay (TEL / Townsville Bulletin) for the idea and also our members Peter Taylor, David Nebauer, and David Evans for ensuring they went away impressed and ready to start working together knowing how our plans could link with theirs.

This year we welcomed new representatives in Andrew Crosby from TAFE, Paul Crack from NQBP, Tom Mullins from Daff, and Michael MacNamara from Australian Salt, all of whom have proved to be valuable members of BCE.

A special welcome this year is to the Burdekin Shire Council who has joined the board, and we look forward to uniting our 2 regions in lobbying for the many similar opportunities we both have in common.

Stephen Pilcher has resigned from BCE as he has changed employment and moved to Darwin, and has asked if he can be kept in the correspondence loop.

Terri Byrne had a temporary job change within Education Queensland and we look forward to her return next year.

With all our current board members we now cover – Federal and State Governments, Whitsunday and Burdekin Councils, Bowen and Collinsville communities, Agriculture, Grazing, Fishing, Mining, Ports, Salt, Tourism, Aged Care, Health, Education, Construction, Aquaculture, Finance, Financial Services, and Promotion. There would be very few groups in any region that would have such a vast overall knowledge all in one group.

Special thanks again to Peter Tayler from Glencore and Ross from Queensland Country Credit Union for their financial contributions to helping us to continue to operate and Andrew Crosby from TAFE for organising our special rent deal.

One who also goes unnoticed each month is Mardi Mathieson who consistently displays complete professionalism in the running of our organisation.

In conclusion the list all the contacts and meetings that we have had in 2015 is very impressive and I am proud to say that we have again been a guiding light for all in the Bowen and Collinsville communities, in not only promoting our region, but giving hope that we still have a great potential but always understanding we need to fight for it.