

**Responding to the challenges of regional development:
Clermont's Preferred Future and Community Development Strategy**

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Abstract

The Clermont Preferred Future Project is a twelve month community planning study undertaken under the leadership of the (then) Belyando Shire Council, in partnership with Rio Tinto Coal Australia and the Clermont community. For a number of generations, the Clermont community has prospered, due largely to the presence of Rio Tinto's Blair Athol coal mining operations. However, this long term relationship has resulted in Clermont becoming accustomed to, and economically dependent on, the mine. For Clermont to continue to enjoy sustainable growth, the community must now seek to develop a economic base that (a) adjusts to the impending closure of the Blair Athol Mine; (b) capitalises and leverages off the growth brought by the new Clermont mine; and (c) enables the township to develop a longer term post-mining economy and future. This paper describes the primary challenges and opportunities confronting the Clermont community in light of these impending changes, as identified by the key stakeholders. It also discusses the Preferred Future Strategy, which was a key outcome of the Preferred Future initiative. The Strategy is framed around the need for the Clermont community to develop a wider economic base, build self-reliance, and consider issues of community vitality, health and well being into the future. It provides recommendations on the ways in which Clermont can combine the efforts of local industry, the three tiers of government and the community in order to seek a sustainable, desirable future for the township and region. The challenges confronting the Clermont community are not unique: many are experienced in other rural and regional areas, particularly those centres that are based around coal mining operations. Hence, the key lessons learned through the Preferred Futures Project and its resultant Strategy can be applied elsewhere in Australia to help achieve sustainable regional development.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A regional approach to community development

Regional planning and community development continue to be vitally important in achieving sustainability and growth in Australia's non-metropolitan communities. Economic growth and community development are intrinsically linked: strong economies build strong communities. Regional planning is also an important tool for fostering strong community ownership of outcomes: this signals a shift in thinking from the traditional "top down" planning to the use of "bottom up" approaches instead (DLGSPR, 2008). The most effective regional planning strategies are usually those that simultaneously promote regional growth, assist with the effective operation of their communities, ensure community and political support for activities and improve their financial situation.

1.2 Existing regional planning documents

A number of planning initiatives have examined economic and social growth in regional areas of Australia; examples include strategies developed for the tropical and far northern communities of Queensland. Such documents can be used to provide insights as to what has been done elsewhere, along with what has worked and what has not. Two key documents that are especially relevant to the present study, as they overlay the area and provide a higher level strategic framework, are:

- the Whitsunday Hinterland and Mackay (WHAM) Regional Plan (2005) and
- the Central Queensland Regional Growth Management Framework (2002) by CQ A New Millennium (CQANM).

A short summary of these two documents follows below; most of these comments have been drawn from the project report submitted to the Belyando Shire Council by the Institute for Sustainable Regional Development (Miles *et al.*, 2008).

1.2.1 The WHAM Regional Plan (2005)

The *WHAM Regional Plan* was developed by the local governments of the WHAM region to provide an integrated policy and strategic framework to guide the growth and development over a 15 – 20 year period. The regional planning framework was initially established by examining the strengths of the region, along with a consideration of ecological sustainability and social justice. From this, seven key thematic areas were distilled, under which 400 individual strategies were addressed. The theme headings were:

- regional Identity, leadership and management;
- environment and natural resources;
- economic development;
- social infrastructure;
- settlement patterns;
- infrastructure; and
- transport.

The WHAM regional plan is framed around seven thematic areas to identify the key issues for the region; determine what is needed to successfully address those issues; and to formulate goals to achieve the individual strategies. An ongoing challenge for the WHAM region is, to achieve at the high level targeted, the desired community ownership required to address the widely-ranging nature of the issues identified.

1.2.2 CQANM and the CQ Regional Growth Management Framework

CQ A New Millennium (CQANM) was a community led initiative in the Central Queensland region that brought together all levels of government, Industry and the community, in to create a framework to guide future regional growth and development in the region (DLGSR, 2008). The CQANM group was established following the recognition that the (then) Shires of Central Queensland shared many similar issues: this prompted regional cooperation and a long term approach to planning to ensure sustainable development for the region – both ecologically and economically. The CQANM regional growth management framework was developed over a three year period with extensive local community and stakeholder consultation. This approach was targeted to securing community ownership and to provide an integrated approach to managing the future growth and development of Central Queensland. This plan was designed to capitalize on regional strengths/opportunities and guide the future growth and development of the region. Particular target areas included:

- developing support industries to add to the diversity of the economy;
- enhanced competitiveness for knowledge-based industries through the development of ICT (Information, Communication and Technology);
- sustainable land use as essential for the future of the area;
- the health of water resources as pivotal to prosperity; and
- examination and inclusion of three regional drivers – social, economic, environmental.

The CQANM used as its framework a focus of People and Work, Leisure and Lifestyle and Environment Culture and Heritage to reflect the triple bottom line to the economic, social and the environmental dimensions of the region.

1.3 Factors for success, catalysts and blockages

The WHAM regional plan was well received and areas of successes were considered to be:

- a long-term high level strategic vision, scoping regional needs for 20 years in advance;
- was directed at maintaining or improving the lifestyle for those in the region by pursuing sustainable development;
- Allowed for the development of a unique regional identity for the WHAM region.
- worked to build a firm foundation by establishing and maintaining strong linkages through efficient transport and communications systems, business bases and leadership;

The areas of success and effectiveness of the WHAM plan seemed to be anchored in the working partnerships that are developed between the levels of government and key regional stakeholders. A major challenge for the WHAM plan however was that after using a specialist team of consultants to prepare a very good plan, lay the challenge of securing an ongoing level of commitment and ownerships by the community.

CQANM plan was regarded as a benchmark in planning after receiving the IPA national award for planning excellence and later the IPA state award for including environmental considerations into the plan. The key success factors for CQANM were similar to the WHAM areas but included:

- extensive level of direct community engagement, input and community ownership of the Plan
- Offered an inclusive partnership approach in concert with regional growth

General blockages that affect the successful progress of both plans include:

- difficulties dealing with different Government agencies;
- politics of parochialism (narrow views/self-interests);
- human resource constraints; and
- inadequate and unreliable financial resources that were linked to poorly developed business models.

While many plans were reviewed all had the same inherent problems - a lack of effective follow up resourcing and lack of true community engagement, ownership and empowerment and for many a top down approach. In all instances it was recognized that an enduring plan should be dynamic – that is, a living document that must be upgraded regularly to meet the changing needs of the community and business.

2.0 Belyando Shire and the Clermont Community

Belyando Shire (anachronism intentional; this Shire is now formally part of the new Isaac Regional Council) is located 200 to 400 kilometres southwest from Mackay, in the heart of the Bowen Basin from which the majority of Queensland's coal exports are supplied. The region exceeds an area of 30,000 km² and is home to more than 11,000 people.

Clermont is one of two regional townships within Belyando Shire (the other being the community of Moranbah). The steaming coal deposits of the Clermont region began to be developed at the Blair Athol Coal Mine during the 1980s. This resulted in rapid growth of Clermont and, concomitantly, two decades of economic prosperity tied to the mine. However, the community has since become accustomed to, and economically dependent on, the Blair Athol Mine. In fact, the mining industry today accounts for approximately twenty-two percent of Clermont's workforce (ABS 2006, QuickStats), although this is largely represented by 'transient' (= non-resident, shiftwork) employees. The impending closure of the Blair Athol Mine will therefore significantly impact upon the community of Clermont, for example, by creating a vacuum in terms of employment and population losses, flow-on expenditure and loss of services. Conversely, the future expansion of the coal industry, largely through the creation of the new Clermont Coal Mine, is expected to increase the local population, place additional pressure on existing resources and provide significant opportunities for further economic development of the Clermont community.

2.1 The need for change and management

The Clermont community currently faces a complex challenge mounted by the prospect of rapid growth on the back of the development of the Clermont mine, against a backdrop of a community that is largely dependent on the mine for growth and economic prosperity. This is combined with a need to stem economic leakage and control growth, particularly with respect to managing the emerging pressures on the limited, existing infrastructure whilst accommodating the demands for the projected population growth. In short, the community of Clermont must seek to develop a future that adjusts to the closure of the Blair Athol Mine, capitalises on the growth that the new mine will bring and also consider a longer term post-mining future. Many of the needs and issues impacting on Clermont mirror those already identified in the WHAM and CQANM regional planning documents. Nevertheless, the Clermont community has a unique situation and therefore must address their challenges using a tailored approach.

2.2 The "Clermont Preferred Futures" Plan

The Clermont community is one of vibrancy, with a highly regarded lifestyle, sense of community wellbeing and good community cohesion. The Community, and its supporting Shire, have indicated

that they wish to retain this dynamic and to develop a preferred future that will see growth and opportunity managed for the long term benefit of the region. Furthermore, Rio Tinto Coal Australia (RTCA) is one of the premier mining companies in the region and has an active interest in being a good corporate citizen. RTCA also wishes to integrate the mine into the fabric of the community and invest strategically in the community to leave a legacy for the future. It was this situation that precipitated the Clermont Preferred Future project. The resulting Preferred Future Plan and Strategy were the products of a twelve-month initiative by the community and RTCA, under the leadership of the Council, and these are described in further detail below.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The Preferred Future Strategy for Clermont was framed around the need for the community to develop a wider economic base, build self-reliance and consider community vitality, health and wellbeing into the future. The objective of the planning process was to work with the Clermont community, industry and Government (three tiers) to distil ideas, thoughts and processes that would secure agreement from all stakeholders on a common vision and purpose for the future of Clermont. This would then allow a pathway forward to achieve the “Preferred Future”.

The planning process commenced with a detailed literature examination, with analysis of regional development strategies that had already been undertaken elsewhere to identify key success factors, and to learn lessons from past failures and mistakes. Where possible, existing local strategies (e.g., the WHAM Regional Plan and the CQ Regional Growth Framework) were used to inform the report; this also avoided duplication of existing effort and activity. However, the review encompassed the following Strategies:

- *Whitsunday Hinterland and Mackay Regional Plan (2005) (WHAM)*
- *Central Queensland Regional Growth Management Framework (2002) CQ A New Millennium (CQANM)*
- *Far North Queensland Regional Plan (February 2000)*
- *Gulf Regional Development Plan (November 2000)*
- *Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy (November 2004)*
- *Towns and Villages Futures Program – Milparinka - Success Story (2005)*
- *Main Street Small Towns Program – Inverell – Success Story (2006)*

A Preferred Futures Steering Committee (the Committee) was formed under the guidance of the Belyando Shire Council and was underwritten by funds provided by RTCA. Council sought representation from both the community sectors and from external stakeholders, resulting in a collaborative, stakeholder-driven community forum that comprised representatives from:

- Belyando Shire Council, including four elected representatives for the Clermont area, the Chief Executive Officer, Mayor and Director (Corporate Services);
- State Government representation, with input sought from:
 - Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation
 - Department of Communities (Blue Print for the Bush)
 - Department of Infrastructure and Planning
 - Department of State Development and Innovation
- the CQANM and WHAM regional planning groups; and
- the community, with representatives from the following sectors:
 - AgForce
 - local businesses
 - youth

- aged care (represented by a councillor)
- the Indigenous community
- community health & welfare.

Periodically, other people (e.g., other community/government representatives, senior RTCA representatives) were invited to present and/or provide input at meetings as required by the agenda. To ensure that the committee was kept to a manageable size, all other sectors and interest groups were engaged, consulted with, and/or invited to attend meetings on an as-needs basis. A proactive communication and engagement strategy ensured that a collaborative and collegiate community approach was taken.

A project support officer was appointed to undertake the daily operational activity of the committee. The Committee also engaged an independent chairman/facilitator sourced from the Institute for Sustainable Regional Development (ISRDR) at Central Queensland University. The role of this facilitator was to provide strategic insight, processes and procedures and to ensure the committee performed in an effective and timely manner. The facilitator also provided independent technical advice and input into the committee and acted as a 'critical friend' to the team members on the project.

The agreed operating principles and values as determined by the Committee were to:

- strive toward a collegiate, inclusive, collaborative and community driven approach;
- seek proactive stakeholder engagement;
- work toward building self reliance and community wellbeing;
- take a holistic triple bottom line approach to strategy development;
- seek equal and genuine partnerships and alliances that build capacity and capability of the community and its industries;
- be open, honest and transparent in its dealings; and
- engage with all interested parties and stakeholders and solicit their input.

4.0 OUTCOMES

4.1 Community characterisation

The first phase of the Preferred Futures Plan involved a thorough socio-economic characterization of the Clermont community. An independent consultant (SGS Consulting) was engaged to undertake this primary analysis, which was designed to provide a basis for the strategy development. The full report is an extensive document that cannot be detailed here; however, key findings relevant to the development of the region Plan include:

- Clermont as a largely an Anglo-Celtic community as reflected in birthplace, ancestry and languages spoken at home;
- The latest Queensland Government forecasts (2006 data) indicate significant population growth is expected over the next twenty years in Clermont and the wider region;
- Clermont's population is aging, with the median age increasing from 29 years to 36 years during the period 1991 to 2001;
- Clermont's population is dominated by families (3.3 persons per household compared with the Queensland average of 2.6); and
- A large proportion of homes in Clermont are rented (42% compared with 30% for Queensland) and median house prices have increased substantially in recent years: this has effectively eroded housing affordability (adapted from SGS consulting (2007)).

4.2 Key findings, goals and recommendations

The key findings derived from Committee meetings and community and stakeholder discussions were organized under six main themes and their accompanying subthemes (see Table 1). This framework – which echoes the approach used in the WHAM and CQANM planning documents – provided a way in which to organize, and consider effectively, the multiple challenges, pressures and opportunities presented to Clermont. The themes were chosen to allow the easy disaggregation of a relatively complex task into manageable areas to which people could more easily relate and meaningfully contribute. Each of these themes are examined below, including comments on some, but not all, of the key problems currently experienced in Clermont, and a list of the goals that will be pursued under the Preferred Futures Plan. Specific approaches developed to realize each of the individual goals could not be adequately described within the constraints of this paper: the full Plan consisted of some 191 strategies under the six main theme areas.

Table 1. The six themes, and their accompanying subthemes, that comprised the Clermont Preferred Futures Plan.

Clermont Preferred Future		
<p>Theme 1: Business, entrepreneurship & economic development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business and economic development ▪ Agriculture, farming and agribusiness ▪ Business partnerships, alliances and networks ▪ Tourism ▪ Economic diversity ▪ Indigenous population and the economy ▪ Global trends and generational drivers 	<p>Theme 2: Infrastructure, Investment and Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information technology and communications ▪ Transport (road/rail/air) ▪ Water Supply ▪ Post mine economy 	<p>Theme 3: Leadership and governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governance, networks and alliances ▪ Leadership and capacity
<p>Theme 4: Liveability and lifestyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Liveability and lifestyle, sport and 	<p>Theme 5: Natural capital and cultural heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environment and natural resource 	<p>Theme 6: Community health and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education ▪ Health and welfare

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recreation ▪ Culture and the arts ▪ Tree change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management ▪ Climate Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment ▪ Youth ▪ Aging ▪ Housing and affordability ▪ Childcare
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4.2.1 Theme 1: Business and economic development

Clermont is highly dependent on the mining industry for economic prosperity. However, whilst the mining boom has created great economic prosperity for some, it has also reduced the availability of skilled and unskilled workers to other industries. There is a need to improve business acumen, business partnerships and alliances within Clermont. Currently, the majority of expenditure by the Blair Athol Mine does not occur in Clermont. Much of this economic 'leakage' is due to mining and other industry contracts for goods and services being procured through businesses outside of the Clermont community. Ideally, this leakage should be stemmed and actions to support and facilitate new or emerging business and industries should be encouraged. There is, therefore, a need for the mining, industry and the agricultural sectors to work in partnership with local businesses, and for Council to explore not only what goods and services could be procured from within the region, but also what is required for this to happen.

The agricultural sector provides a solid economic base for Clermont, although this has declined in relative importance in recent times due to the scale of coal mining. Nevertheless, the agricultural sector is likely to continue to be a major component of the business mix into the foreseeable future, thus, the traditional components of this sector need to expand, diversify and value-add. Growth will need to be achieved through niche marketing and global competitive advantage; integrated transport infrastructure planning is also essential for this sector to maintain its competitiveness.

Tourism has the potential to supplement and value-add to the existing economic and business activity in the Clermont region, but local tourist attractions are largely underdeveloped. Accordingly, there is a need to encourage and develop the fledgling tourism sector to achieve sustainability.

The small size and population of the Clermont community remain limiting factors in terms of the attraction, development and retention of culture, business, goods, services and infrastructure. The competition from larger centres that have a greater proportion of services (e.g., Emerald and Moranbah) tends to cascade as these towns grow. The limited economic diversity in Clermont, together with a lack of growth in many areas, is a key issue that needs to be addressed.

The overarching Strategy goals derived by the Committee for the 'business and economic development' theme were:

- to further develop local business for social and economic growth;
- to sustain economic growth and business expansion in the Clermont community;
- to achieve an agribusiness sector that is globally connected, market driven and focused on value-adding through new products and services;
- to develop effective partnerships/alliances and networks for decision making and planning for economic and regional development;
- to develop an economic climate that attracts and supports ongoing local business development maximizes growth and stems economic leakage;

- to have a well established, developed and promoted commercial tourism sector in the Clermont area;
- to develop a strong, diverse economy and a broad economic base that is highly resilient to external economic fluctuations;
- to develop strategies to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of the Indigenous people of Clermont, acknowledged native title and nurture their economic prosperity; and
- to have a Clermont business community that is globally competitive and quality assured and environmentally aligned.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Infrastructure, investment and transport

Information Technology and Communications (ITC) is a key enabler for any business or community to operate effectively: ITC pathways and access must be maintained and upgraded to support business, youth and education initiatives within Clermont. There is a real need to take an integrated approach to the provision of high quality, cost effective services and access to meet the ongoing needs of the Clermont community.

Public transport is limited in Clermont, with one bus per day to Emerald/Mackay, no rail or commercial flight services and no local public transport available. For many, this limits access to essential health services, other businesses and recreational pursuits. Consequently, there is a need to assess transport routes and encourage existing operators to incorporate Clermont by adjusting and value adding to current services.

The long term supply of water is a critical issue for the Clermont community and for future industry development. At present, Theresa Creek Dam is the sole source of the town's water supply. During extended dry conditions this source drops to a level that threatens supply. Whilst surrounding bores can provide a backup, the longer term issues of demand, supply and reliability need to be evaluated, particularly given the emergence of climate change affecting supplies elsewhere.

The Preferred Future goals for the infrastructure, investment and transport theme were:

- to obtain adequate access to reliable, cost effective, up-to-date ITC services for the whole Clermont community;
- to meet the transport needs of the Clermont community by exploring the viability of integrated transport services;
- to provide a quality water supply that is both reliable and ecologically sustainable; and
- to plan for the future of the Clermont community by developing a partnership with Government (three tiers) and RCTA to secure strategic investment in infrastructure and the diversification of the economy for the long term benefit of the community.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Leadership and governance

Recent changes to Queensland local government boundaries have created uncertainty as to the representation, structure and functioning of local government in Clermont. Since representation is recognised as a critical pathway to the future, there is a need to ensure that adequate and effective governance and representation is ensured for the Clermont community. Intra- and inter-regional partnerships and alliances will particularly need to be strengthened.

The development of leadership in any community is pivotal to long term community sustainability. This is particularly important for the Clermont community which needs to diversify its economy,

engage and be empowered to achieve self determination. There is a need to build future leadership capability in Clermont, to capitalise on the pre-existing strong sense of community, and for the wider community to engage in continuous learning and re-skilling.

The two Strategy goals for the 'leadership and governance' theme were:

- to develop a strong sense of community spirit through social cohesion and strong local leadership that supports innovation, change and effective regional governance; and
- to develop community leadership to achieve effective regional governance

4.2.4 Theme 4: Liveability and lifestyle

Clermont has a relaxed lifestyle and offers a variety of local leisure, sporting and recreational opportunities. However, declining volunteerism rates and a lack of an integrated approach to the management of the existing facilities has impacted on viability of some pursuits, with high transaction and management costs presenting a challenge. There is a need to undertake a feasibility study of the potential to integrate and amalgamate the existing and proposed sporting and recreational facilities into a multipurpose community sports, recreation and leisure facility to service the Clermont community.

Goals for optimizing the liveability and lifestyle of Clermont were:

- to promote a healthy, active lifestyle that encourages community participation in a positive environment;
- to provide residents with an opportunity to participate in a range of artistic and cultural pursuits and to stimulate community creatively through artistic and cultural endeavors; and
- to promote Clermont as having an aesthetically appealing environment and welcoming community for people wishing to experience a 'tree change' in their life.

4.2.5 Theme 5: Natural capital and cultural heritage

Climate change has the potential to significantly impact on Clermont environmentally, socially and economically. Climate change is expected to result in increased temperatures, as well as an increase in the spatial and temporal variability in rainfall (i.e., longer droughts and a greater frequency and severity of extreme weather events). There is a need to evaluate the risks and opportunities and that climate change will bring to Clermont's industries and community. Key goals for this theme were:

- to manage and use the environment and natural resources in a sustainable manner; and
- to develop a risk management and mitigation strategy at the community level to manage proactively for climate change.

4.2.6 Theme 6: Community health and wellbeing

Although Clermont is serviced by a multi-purpose health service, health, welfare and family support services in the Clermont community are struggling to meet demand. The aging population creates an emerging challenge, presenting a need to provide adequate and affordable services in geriatrics and *in situ* palliative care. The retirement of a large age cohort (i.e., the baby boomers) will also lead to greater skills deficits and labour shortages as these people move out of the work force. Clermont has a need to develop activities that encourage the aging population to stay actively engaged in the community and to proactively plan for the expanding aging population's health care and housing needs. There are also emerging concerns relating to the health and social impacts of shift work and

its effect on community wellbeing. There is a need to ensure that quality health care, welfare services and family support services are provided in real time, and that these are affordable to the Clermont Community. In addition, it would be useful to explore, in conjunction with the mining companies and other stakeholders, alternative models that might address or ameliorate the health and social impacts associated with shift work.

Local employers in the Clermont community find it difficult – often impossible – to match the higher incomes offered to mine workers. The attraction and retention of skilled and semi-skilled employees and professionals is currently a national problem, but in Clermont, solutions need to be targeted and reflect realistic local actions. There is a need to explore how to improve the attractiveness of the business sector as an ‘employer of choice’ for prospective employees; a skills audit of Clermont would be a worthwhile exercise to identify latent skill sets and capabilities.

The loss of youth from the community continues to represent a major challenge for many rural communities and Clermont is no exception. There is a need to evaluate the needs of youth and the level of services, employment prospects, housing, entertainment and recreation. There is also a need for programs that will engage, develop youth leadership and enhance the capacity for change with the youth in the Clermont community.

Housing has emerged as a key challenge for Clermont, particularly given the development of the new mine and projected population growth. Median house prices have increased substantially in recent years and this has impacted upon housing affordability. The option to choosing a ‘fly in/fly out’ model versus a ‘resident’ model through to a staged transition, need to be examined in detail, since the impacts and demand for housing, infrastructure and services will significantly differ in each case. There is a need to develop suitable, affordable and attractive housing for both the existing and new residents of Clermont, and to increase the supply of affordable housing to meet the future needs of Clermont’s community.

The goals for the last of the six themes in the Preferred Future plan are:

- to achieve equity of access to quality educational services and opportunities for the Clermont community that contributes to community viability, health and wellbeing;
- to provide quality health care, welfare services and family support services in real time and at a level affordable to the Clermont Community;
- to create a wide range of employment opportunities in Clermont and improve the attractiveness of Clermont as a place to live and work;
- to develop leadership, capacity, community spirit, connectedness and a sense of self worth by engaging, mentoring, empowering and retaining Clermont’s youth;
- to develop strategies to accommodate the ageing cohort of Clermont and to engage the aged in an active and healthy community focused and supported lifestyle (active aging);
- to develop a supply of affordable housing to meet the future needs of Clermont’s community; and
- to have access to quality child care services which meet community needs.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Many opportunities exist within the Clermont community to address, and potentially rectify, the challenges that are currently being experienced. Small businesses and community groups have the opportunity to cluster to provide the necessary strength to grow and prosper. Business growth could include expanding product lines to fulfill existing demands for those goods and services that are currently met elsewhere (i.e., to stem economic ‘leakage’ from Clermont community). Community

groups could combine at a multipurpose facility to achieve lower overheads and greater overall use. Primary producers could join to discuss future employment, directions and value adding for their respective industries. The opening of the new coal mine has the potential of importing new employees to the community, bringing with them spouses, families and new and desirable skill sets. "Tree changers" could bring fresh new ideas and enhance the social capital of the Clermont community. Transport companies have the opportunity to assess and modify existing transport routes to incorporate Clermont through adjusting of current services and value adding to existing services (e.g., sometimes returning empty on return to larger centres).

The issues confronting Clermont are complex and interdependent and cannot be dealt with in isolation. The Clermont Preferred Future strategy is designed to be used by the three tiers of government, industry and the community leaders as a starting framework to address key challenges, stimulate growth and remove the impediments or blockages confronting Clermont in achieving its preferred future. The issues covered, while regarded as the key enablers or blockages to the future growth and development of Clermont, only form part of the range of issues that require action for the Clermont community to achieve their preferred future. A consideration of global trends and drivers is paramount, since regions today must be globally connected and competitive. Other key challenges for regional planning include maintaining energy and commitment through time, the need to plan for succession of leadership, collaboration as opposed to competition, regional governance and regional self-determination. Community ownership, empowerment and self reliance are also continually 'identified' as key ingredients to effective regional planning tools. Consequently, a significant success factor in the Preferred Futures Plan will be the ability of the community to proactively master their own destiny. This will require the community develop sound principles and practices for effective regional governance, and to become intimately linked with industry and Government. Unless the community takes ownership and drive this strategy it will be but another plan.

6.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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