



# Burdekin Shire Council

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*FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR*

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23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014

Mr. Alex Dobes,  
Aquaculture Review,  
Queensland Competition Authority,  
GPO Box 2257,  
BRISBANE Q 4001.

Dear Alex,

**Re: Burdekin Shire Council - Submission to the Queensland Competition Authority  
Aquaculture Regulation in Queensland**

The Burdekin Shire is situated on the Pacific coastline, centred 80km south of Townsville where climatic conditions are warm to tropical. The Shire is in excess of 5000 square kilometres and home to an estimated 17,784 people. Queensland Treasury forecasts the region's population will reach approximately 19,500 by 2031.

The Burdekin region is centred on the rich Burdekin River Delta. Abundant water supplies, fertile soils and an average of 300 days of sunshine per year have resulted in the Burdekin becoming one of the strongest agricultural regions in Australia. The dominant crop is sugar cane, where the region produces over one quarter of the nation's harvest. However, the Burdekin also boasts multimillion dollar horticulture and beef cattle industries.

The Burdekin has an established aquaculture industry through Pacific Reef Fisheries. Aquaculture is a relatively new industry in Australia and for the region, servicing the large domestic markets of Brisbane and Sydney. The aquaculture industry is set to expand in the Burdekin with plans for export to the South-East Asian market. Pacific Reef Fisheries (PRF) is a large, fully integrated prawn farming operation, with grow-out and processing facilities near Ayr. Having commenced operations in the Burdekin in 1998, the family-owned business is now capable of growing over 1000 tonnes of premium Black Tiger Prawns and North Queensland Cobia annually. PRF has recently received Council approval to increase production of its prawn farm from 68 hectares to 98 hectares, allowing for 30 existing, one hectare ponds to be used as part of the operations. It is expected that this expansion will employ an additional 6 permanent staff. PRF has won five gold medals in the Sydney Fine Foods Show and the Champion Prawn Product for 2012 and supplies fresh prawns to the Coles supermarket chain. PRF employs a wide range of people including marine science graduates from James Cook University in Townsville. During the growing season staff numbers swell from a base of about 50 to anything up to 100 once processing gets under way. PRF is currently seeking to expand its nearby Guthalungra operations in order to become the largest single prawn farming operation in Australia.

We are also fortunate to have MBD Energy, in partnership with Pacific Reef Fisheries and James Cook University, commercialising ground breaking aquaculture waste water treatment systems in the Burdekin. These systems provide the dual benefit of water treatment as well as an additional crop from the system, in high value marine macro-algal (seaweed) species. As such novel systems will be integral to further aquaculture development adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, we believe it is logical that the Burdekin should be a focus of any such development.

Burdekin Shire Council was pleased to hear that a review is currently underway to investigate and report on regulation of the Queensland aquaculture industry to include recommendations for a regulatory approach that could facilitate expansion of aquaculture in Queensland.

Burdekin Shire is very interested in the draft recommendation in Chapter 8 recommending *that the government set a target of establishing aquaculture development areas. The target could be the identification of development areas enabling 450 hectares of aquaculture operations with two years of the Government's response to the QCA's recommendations. Public reporting of progress against this target could be provided at six-monthly intervals.*

The Burdekin is well positioned to establish a development area with access to abundant suitable land as well as support from a well-developed aquaculture industry. The Burdekin also has access to research and expertise in the aquaculture field, marine science and engineering through James Cook University.

I applaud the State Government for giving the aquaculture industry the opportunity to voice their opinions on aquaculture regulation in Queensland and we sincerely appreciate the opportunity to be part of the public consultation process.

Yours faithfully,



Bill Lewis  
MAYOR

Cc: The Honourable Jeff Seeney, MP,  
Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning,  
PO Box 15009,  
CITY EAST QLD 4002.

For your information.

Bill Lewis  
MAYOR

Mr. Doug Hayward,  
Regional Director,  
North Queensland Regional Office,  
Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning,  
PO Box 1732,  
TOWNSVILLE Q 4810.

For your information.

Bill Lewis  
MAYOR