

**SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS**

**COUNCIL MEETING ON 28 AUGUST 2025**

10. **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST:**

- 10.1 Matter of Public Interest - Federal Economic Reform Roundtable  
Submission ..... 3



Doc ID No: A11925264

ITEM: 10.1

FROM:

RE: MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST - FEDERAL ECONOMIC REFORM ROUNDTABLE  
SUBMISSION



DATE: 21 AUGUST 2025

---

This is a Matter of Public Interest submitted by Deputy Mayor Nicole Jonic concerning recognition of recommendations made toward the Federal Economic Reform Roundtable.

Deputy Mayor Nicole Jonic gave notice of her intention to table the following attachments as a Matter of Public Interest at the Council Meeting of 28 August 2025:

**ATTACHMENTS AND CONFIDENTIAL BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1.	Letter from Shayne Neumann MP to Treasurer with outcomes from the Blair Economic Roundtable <a href="#">↓</a> 
2.	Blair Economic Reform Roundtable Recommendations <a href="#">↓</a> 

# Shayne Neumann MP

Federal Member for Blair

*Working for our community*



18 August 2025

The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP  
Treasurer  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: [jim.chalmers.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:jim.chalmers.mp@aph.gov.au)

  
Dear Treasurer

I write to you with the outcomes from a Blair economic reform roundtable I held on 7 August 2025 to inform the Albanese Government's national Economic Reform Roundtable, to be held in Canberra on 19-21 August and the Government's ongoing reform agenda.

The forum generated a range of practical ideas on how to lift economic growth, productivity and economic resilience in Ipswich and the Somerset Region in my electorate and surrounds, but nationally as well.

The event brought together around 30 local business, union, community group and government representatives, as well as experts, to discuss shared economic challenges and opportunities in Ipswich, the Somerset Region and surrounds. It was useful to hear from a range of different voices on how to tackle our local economic development challenges.

A key observation from the discussion was that 'business as usual' is no longer an option, and we will need to think differently, engage differently and do things differently in future if we are going to make a measurable difference to productivity.

In summary, the forum canvassed a wide range of issues – from the need to fast-track more housing and road infrastructure, the value of volunteering and cutting red tape for local charities, to regulating sham contracting.

Presentations from RACQ and Suncorp raised the importance of transport connectivity, affordable insurance, and disaster resilience to the economic sustainability of the Ipswich and Somerset regions.

In addition, Professor Glen Coleman from the University of Southern Queensland, and respected seniors advocate, author and philanthropist Everaldo Compton OAM spoke about workforce challenges and intergenerational partnerships, and the need to provide pathways from study to employment to encourage people to stay in the regions.

Adjunct Professor Rees Banks from RDA Ipswich & West Moreton rounded out the discussion by emphasising the productivity benefits of people living in the regions and close to where they work.

Level 1, The Tarpaulin Building, Riverlink Shopping Precinct  
2 The Terrace, North Ipswich Q 4305  
PO Box 2579, North Ipswich 4305 [www.shayneneumann.com.au](http://www.shayneneumann.com.au)  
Phone: (07) 3201 5300 Email: [shayne.neumann.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:shayne.neumann.mp@aph.gov.au)

# Labor



Authorised by Shayne Neumann MP, 2 The Terrace, North Ipswich Q 4305. Printed by Allclear Print & Signs, 127 Hyde Rd, Yeronga 4104

Accordingly, a recurring theme at the forum, as well at a 2022 Blair Jobs Roundtable I convened in the lead-up to the Jobs and Skills Summit, was that all levels of government need to do more to build, attract and retain the right workforce skills in outer suburban and regional areas like Blair, for example, through housing affordability policies, better infrastructure, and more flexible education and training pathways.

While the Ipswich region has seen strong economic and jobs growth in recent years, we are experiencing growing pains, and need to be investing in more housing, infrastructure, services and skills to support our high population growth.

Ultimately, and consistent with the new 'Abundance Agenda', I want the local economy to deliver for my constituents so they can have access to affordable housing, health and education services, be able to raise a family, and enjoy a good quality of life; I want more people to be able to live, work and play in Blair.

To that extent, I am very keen to keep securing good, well-paid jobs for local residents, now and into the future by supporting local industries, attracting new investment, and equipping people with the skills they need to succeed and take advantage of new opportunities.

A full list of key findings and recommendations from the roundtable is at **Attachment A**.

I would be grateful if you would consider these proposals in the context of your Economic Reform Roundtable consultations, and the Government's second term growth and productivity agenda.

Yours sincerely



**THE HON SHAYNE NEUMANN MP**  
**Federal Member for Blair**

Cc: The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister  
The Hon Dr Daniel Mulino MP, Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services

**ATTACHMENT A**

**BLAIR ECONOMIC REFORM ROUNDTABLE RECOMMENDATIONS**

***Key proposals from presenters***

**Adjunct Professor Rees Banks - RDA Ipswich & West Moreton**

- Governments should support job creation and economic/industry diversification in regional areas.
- Governments should encourage people to move to the regions, and live closer to where they work, as there are individual productivity and quality of life benefits from reduced commute times, as well as societal benefits from reduced congestion.
  - This includes housing affordability measures and tax reforms, such as reducing or removing state government stamp duty on the sale of homes, to encourage and remove barriers to greater mobility, particularly as house prices in regional areas have increased significantly post-COVID.
- The Federal Government should continue to improve access to university and TAFE/VET and support services in regional areas given the important role of tertiary education in driving regional growth.
  - Evidence suggests it is easier to access post-school study opportunities in rural and remote towns like Longreach than it is in Boonah, which is close to Ipswich.
- Governments should do more to support volunteering as this contributes to social capital and liveability, particularly in regional mining communities, where FIFO jobs can make it harder for people to integrate and have the time to volunteer. Building strong resilient communities also encourages residents to give more back to their fellow citizens.

**Professor Glen Coleman - University of Southern Queensland**

- Universities should explore the 'apprentice degree model' with more work placements and on the job training, and more efficient delivery models to fast-track courses, to produce more work-ready graduates and allow them to start working sooner.
- Governments should collaborate with employers and education institutions to develop clearer pathways and more VET pathways from study to employment to encourage people to stay in the regions for workforce sustainability.
  - A current end-to-end nursing program offered by UniSQ in Charleville in partnership with the local Health and Hospital Service could provide a useful template for this. It also offers an example of educational institutions collaborating with other stakeholders to leverage their infrastructure and services, which reduces the cost of delivering training and provides a ready workforce for the community.
- Governments should work with education institutions, and professional and industry bodies to streamline regulation of education/training and professions/occupations (professional standards) as these are currently overly complex and convoluted.

- Notwithstanding the introduction of paid prac placements, the Federal Government could examine university placement costs and whether there is scope to further address these barriers, as well as better share these costs with state governments, who often directly benefit from the resulting workforce, for example in health services.

**Everald Compton OAM - seniors advocate, author and philanthropist (these proposals are from Mr Compton's submission to the Roundtable)**

- To increase productivity, governments should:
  - Remove all restrictions and penalties that discourage older Australians from re-entering the workforce and bringing their wisdom, experience and positive work culture/ethic with them.
  - Foster intergenerational partnerships through which older Australians can partner with young Australian visionaries to bring their creative dreams to reality – 'Wise Young' partnerships can help pioneering new start-ups to develop innovative projects.
  - Encourage retirees to attend TAFE soon after they turn 60 to learn new skills and enable them to start new careers when they reach the traditional retirement age of 67 and have more time to pursue other interests, rather than remain inactive.

**RACQ and Suncorp (many of these proposals are from RACQ's federal election priorities document)**

- The Federal Government should improve insurance affordability by working with state governments to abolish the double taxation of insurance products (GST and stamp duty) - or hypothecate tax revenue collected on insurance towards mitigation and resilience building in disaster prone areas.
- Greater investment in more resilient transport infrastructure.
  - Federal and state government need to fast-track major road and rail infrastructure projects in the Ipswich and Somerset regions (such as Warrego Highway, Brisbane Valley Highway and Cunningham Highway upgrades) to support better personal and freight transport connectivity and reduce congestion.
  - More investment in public and active transport, for example, expanding the new Brisbane Metro (bus transit) network into other regions, such as Ipswich.
  - Greater funding towards maintenance and building roads back better and stronger, for example, boosting Queensland's national highway maintenance and resilience funding, greater use of concrete roads, and improving road pavement treatments for upgrades to the Brisbane Valley Highway in the Somerset Region.
  - The betterment / natural disaster resilience program being made available outside of natural disasters to strengthen and rehabilitate any temporary repairs, or any road sections prone to surface failures after rain events.
- Greater investment in a range of measures to reduce the impact of severe weather events on high-risk communities.
  - Deliver significant risk reducing mitigation infrastructure such as levees or dams in flood prone communities to lower risk, leading to improved insurance affordability.
  - Expand the Household Resilience Program (cyclone) and the Resilient Homes Fund (flood) in Queensland for the next 10 years, providing an annual budget of \$500 million per year for homes at extreme and severe risk of flood and cyclone.
  - Invest in a voluntary home buyback program for households seeking to retreat from future flooding, particularly in flood-prone regions such as Ipswich.

**Item 10.1 / Attachment 2.**

- Introduce national policies and standards that prevent development occurring in flood prone areas.
  - Introduce stronger building codes and standards to ensure resilience infrastructure is used when building or renovating homes in high-risk areas.
  - Make improvements to the Cyclone Reinsurance Pool to ensure that properties in cyclone prone areas are protected and can afford insurance.
  - If these measures are not implemented, the Federal Government will become the insurer of last resort needing to invest in a model like a flood reinsurance pool, which will require heavy subsidies from Government and/or other sources.
- Greater investment in the EV transition and transport tax reform to replace fuel excise, and ensure fair, sustainable and ongoing funding for critical transport spending.
  - Continue the EV fringe benefit tax exemption.
  - Invest more in EV charging infrastructure, particularly in regional Australia.
  - Bring zero and low emission vehicles (ZLEVs) into the road user charging system.
  - Develop a new road user charge for plug-in electric vehicles to bring them into a new transport tax system.
  - Incorporate hybrids and ultimately all vehicles regardless of fuel/energy source into the new road user charge.
- In addition, RACQ cited a recent Business Chamber Queensland forum with Australian Retirement Trust Chair and Griffith University Chancellor (and former Queensland Treasurer) Andrew Fraser on Queensland's priorities to improve the nation's and the state's economic prosperity ahead of Mr Fraser's attendance at the national Economic Reform Roundtable. Key concerns discussed at that forum included:
  - How approval gridlock is impacting business confidence, not just in housing, but in workforce planning - when approvals are unpredictable and slow, businesses can't scale, plan for future demand, or hire with certainty.
  - The impact of compliance and complexity on productivity - from industrial relations laws to insurance taxes and payroll obligations, businesses are spending more time navigating compliance than delivering value.
  - Why Australia is losing its edge in innovation and R&D by regulating for risk, rather than growth.

***Other proposals from participants***

**Somerset Regional Council (SRC)**

- The Federal and state government should reduce red tape for local governments around infrastructure funding agreements, for example the SEQ City Deal, as this is leading to project delays and cost escalation, and deterring future project bidders.
- Federal and state government should encourage people to move to the regions, and live closer to where they work, as this would support better workforce recruitment and retention, and workplace cultural issues (for example, many senior SRC officers do not live in the region).



### **Somerset Business Chamber**

#### **Taxation**

- The Federal Government should reduce tobacco excise and increase enforcement against illicit tobacco to improve revenue collection and small business conditions, and combat organised crime.
- The Federal Government should pursue fair and equitable taxation of large businesses and international corporations, which often use transfer pricing and offshore entities to minimise tax.

#### **Infrastructure**

- The Federal and state government should insist that all infrastructure projects are on fixed contracts as open ended contracts do not ensure rigour and controlled spending of taxpayer funds.
- Building new infrastructure is critically important, but so is maintaining it. For example, money has been wasted on the Bremer River Bridge and Brisbane Valley Highway upgrade projects for very poor results and enormous amounts of indirect cost to the local community.
  - Infrastructure maintenance contractors, whether government (Roadtek) or private, need to be held to account against clear performance indicators.

#### **NDIS**

- NDIS is a critical part of our health infrastructure, however greater efficiency in how we deliver these services could see a substantial improvement without reducing service quality. Some serious and transparent assessment of the NDIS budget and operational foundations should release substantial funds for the nation.

#### **Availability of capital for homebuyers and small business**

- Bank responsible lending laws should be reviewed to free up more capital for home lending, for example, not taking rent paid into account when doing a loan assessment is very restricting for new entrants to the home loan market.
- The Federal Government should consider that most small businesses have to borrow against their homes, yet many have substantial inventories, which could form an asset, but this is not allowed.
- The Federal Government should put in place a government-funded mortgage insurance system for higher risk borrowers to allow people to take out a mortgage, given the high deposit ratios when borrowing for a home.

#### **Energy**

- The Federal Government needs to better articulate a clear plan to transition to cheaper reliable energy as many small businesses are currently struggling with the cost of energy.

#### **Regulation**

- Governments services should be less siloed and accessed through one portal, for example MyGov if possible, to reduce red tape and the cost to government, and increase productivity for businesses.
- Governments should reduce regulatory complexity as small businesses do not have HR or support areas to navigate regulations, and there should be more support for businesses to navigate government services and a less punitive approach when things go wrong.

Employment/education

- Governments need to get young people more employment-ready and encourage employers to utilise local workers, where possible, to avoid having to bring in international visa workers, particularly when the Somerset Region has above average unemployment.
- The Federal Government should consider changes to Unfair Dismissal laws that create large costs for employers and discourage small businesses from hiring staff.

**CPM Advisory**

- The Federal and State Governments should improve enforcement of ABN sham contracting, as it is argued some government departments are facilitating tax avoidance by professional services workers, for example in the infrastructure and transport, and emergency management portfolios.
  - At a Federal level, this could be addressed through conditions on Federal funding to the states that prevent this type of employment arrangement.

**Employer Protect (business management consultants)**

- Governments need to allow for greater skills recognition among migrants to allow Australia to make better use this human resource.
- Governments should improve enforcement of ABN sham contracting.

**Springfield City Group and Stockland**

- The Federal Government should reform Federal environment laws (under the EPBC Act) and collaborate with state and local governments to allow for faster project and planning approvals to unlock more housing, and encourage more investment in land and housing to increase supply.
- Governments need to support greater densification/infill, including high-rise developments, and more public and active transport.
- Governments need to address building construction costs.

**Australian Workers' Union**

- Governments should foster a tripartite approach to workplace relations and collaborative relationships among governments, employers and workers/unions to support strong businesses and job creation, which also benefits workers.
- The Federal Government should continue to support greater job security and local industry and manufacturing through programs such as Future Made in Australia.
- Governments should improve enforcement of ABN sham contracting.
- Businesses need to focus not only on labour productivity, but the role of management capability and technology, and Total Factor Productivity more broadly.
- Businesses need to be investing more in capital/technology and undertaking more R&D, and publicly listed companies should not just focus on shareholder returns.
- Health and education should be seen not as a cost to government, but an investment in human capital and productivity enhancing.
- Governments and education institutions should support the study of arts and humanities to cultivate strong analytical and critical thinking skills, as well as more technical areas, to enhance productivity.
- Government should support economic growth and secure well-paid jobs to allow workers to afford housing, health and education services, be able to raise a family, and enjoy a good quality of life.

### **SDA QLD**

- Governments need to support low-paid workers through housing affordability policies, including reforms to planning approvals to unlock more housing and greater densification and infill.
- Governments should listen more to 'Yes In My Backyard (YIMBYs)' over 'Not In My Backyard (NIMBYs)' when it comes to new housing developments.
- Governments should make it easier for people to move to the regions, and live closer to where they work.

### **Darling Downs West Moreton PHN and West Moreton Health**

- The Federal and State Government should support access to primary and other health services, for example, through digital and telehealth options, and transport infrastructure investment.
  - This could include funding for local businesses or community groups to provide transport services for patients.
- The Federal and State Government need to support the significant future health workforce needs of the Ipswich region and surrounds, and support access to health education and training in the region and elsewhere.
- Governments, educational institutions and stakeholders need to support more pathways for school leavers in Ipswich and surrounds, including in healthcare to meet future workforce needs, and including students from multicultural backgrounds.
- Governments need to provide more support for housing and homelessness.

### **Goodness Enterprises and Raceview Congregational Church**

- The Federal and state government should reduce red tape for small, local volunteer-run charities and community organisations, which do not have the same capacity as larger national not-for-profits, given high social returns on investment with such charities and their support of local businesses, as well as significant community demand for assistance.
- Federal and state government agencies should be less siloed and collaborate more across whole-of-government to support community organisations, and act more as partners and enablers, rather than purely as lawmakers and regulators.