



COMMITTEE FOR BRISBANE



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND REFORM

Fast-tracked projects and campaigns; policy and funding levers/
initiatives for Brisbane City Council and greater Brisbane

May 2020



Purpose of the Committee for Brisbane Recovery Strategy Group

COVID-19 is a strategy-derailing event that will require structural and governance responses to recalibrate the economy.

The Committee for Brisbane (CFB) has formed a Recovery Strategy Group to provide coordinated and relevant strategic advice to the city's and the state's key decision-makers.

By harnessing the knowledge and experience of this diverse group, the CFB will inform Council and state government planning, policies, and investment for economic recovery and long-term success.

The reputation of both Brisbane and Queensland will be determined by how we manage the response to the pandemic and how we plan for recovery - by improving the economy, maintaining a collaborative government, and benefitting our society. This task is too big for governments alone.

CFB will look upward and forward to help plan for greater Brisbane and southeast Queensland's recovery, building on the region's competitive advantages to create a better, stronger economy for our future.

Committee for Brisbane recommendations and suggestions

The Committee for Brisbane has developed this list of recommendations and suggestions for Council to consider. They have been prepared by experienced businesspeople who represent a wide-cross section of the south east Queensland economy - and who are dealing, daily, with the impacts of the pandemic.

CFB requests that Council engages fully on these recommendations – and others that will eventuate as strategic planning progresses – to ensure the region is well-positioned for the earliest and strongest economic recovery from the pandemic.

Critically, government action must not only assist the short-term economic challenge, but also act as a multiplier to drive Brisbane and southeast Queensland's viability, affordability and vibrancy.

Existing and established long-term planning should be urgently reviewed and updated to accommodate post-COVID-19 work, travel, and settlement patterns. This should include a review of Brisbane Vision 2031, the Brisbane Economic Development Plan, the Brisbane City Plan, the Brisbane City Centre Master Plan, and the SEQ Regional Plan. Citizen mobility, including possible lower demand for public transport and more flexible (work from home) arrangements, will likely impact on transport and commercial centre planning. The long-term population growth patterns for the region may change dramatically, including due to the impact of diminished international migration. Any infrastructure investment should reinforce these revised plans and unlock bottlenecks - there is an opportunity to get ahead of future demand (and supply) for land to ensure the long-term affordability and liveability of the region.

The investment must have a strong economic multiplier. Priority should be given to public investments that will catalyse further private investment and be of more value in the longer term. For example, fast-tracking trunk infrastructure (eg a trunk sewer upgrade) to unlock a private development project.

Establishing an Economic Recovery Taskforce (business-Council partnership)

While recognising the structures that have been set up by Brisbane City Council to undertake strategic planning for the recovery phase, CFB believes that the process would be enhanced through the establishment of an Economic Recovery Taskforce that is a true business-Council partnership.

Similar to the model developed by Premier Dan Andrews with his *Building Victoria's Recovery Taskforce*, which is co-chaired by a senior businessperson and two senior bureaucrats, we are calling for Brisbane's planning for economic recovery to be strongly informed by the corporate sector in partnership with the Council. The Victorian Taskforce has approved the fast-tracking of five, shovel-ready building and development projects across Melbourne, valued at \$1.2 billion, in a bid to kickstart that state's economy and create thousands of jobs.

The Taskforce should investigate planning and investment opportunities that will provide an economic stimulus, deliver productivity enabling infrastructure and support an economic response to the challenges of climate change and help set up the greater Brisbane economy for the future.

Our focus is to ensure greater Brisbane is well-positioned for the earliest and strongest economic recovery from the pandemic, and we believe that will require the development of strategies within weeks, not months.

Our region's corporate sector can provide the experts who have the life and business experience to help chart the bold courses back to economic success, including opportunities for structural reform.

We believe the task of designing our economic recovery should be championed by those who drive the economy, working in partnership with Council and industry associations – it's a collective responsibility.

Our Federation and collaborative government work best when policy levers and funding decisions are informed by the knowledge and experience of the business sector that has skin in the game, understands risk and makes the business decisions that drive the economy.

We want to ensure that Brisbane and SEQ are well-positioned for the earliest and strongest economic recovery from the pandemic - to drive the region's viability, affordability and vibrancy - and to ensure that no one is left behind.

As set out below, a critical and immediate task for the Economic Recovery Taskforce will be to identify and progress fast-tracking project opportunities, including the design and procurement phases.

The Committee for Brisbane has identified 17 projects and campaigns to be considered for fast-tracking and 28 policy and funding levers/initiatives, designed to generate new jobs and deliver regional economic value.

A longer-term, but equally critical task for the Economic Recovery Taskforce would be to undertake a thorough review of the financing, contracting, procurement and approval processes for development, construction, and infrastructure projects in Brisbane. The requirement for a coordinated response to economic recovery post COVID-19, and the need for the development, construction and infrastructure sectors to play a major part in that recovery, provides a golden opportunity to reset how those sectors operate, and how they engage with Council, to set a more sustainable path for the long-term benefit of the community.

Policy and funding levers/initiatives

Construction and infrastructure

The Committee for Brisbane calls on Brisbane City Council to:

1. **Establish** a Brisbane Economic Recovery Taskforce of industry experts and Council (a business-Council partnership) to undertake immediate and longer-term actions for economic recovery, including:
 - Identifying and progressing fast-tracking opportunities for construction and infrastructure, including the design and procurement phases, to get as many people back into the workforce as quickly as possible. This should include both large-scale projects that support big workforces over longer time frames as well as smaller, labour-intensive projects, such as maintenance. Projects that are not quite shovel-ready need to be brought forward as quickly as possible and the definition broadened to include projects that are at the procurement/planning/design stage and could be shovel-ready in six to 12 months, including business cases.
 - Simplifying Council procurement processes (incentives, transparency of process and decision making) and fast-tracking by removing barriers to deliver efficiency.
 - Ensuring that project proponents are genuinely encouraged to suggest innovative responses that benefit a project and/or the community, by awarding contracts based on the value proposition, rather than just price.
 - Reviewing the Council's "buy local" tendering requirements to ensure they provide the best possible support for regional economic recovery, and long-term economic stability.
 - Conduct a "no agendas" review of project financing models and opportunities, including borrowing and the reuse/recycling of city-owned capital, including land.
2. **Review** the Brisbane Vision 2031, the Brisbane Economic Development Plan, the Brisbane City Plan, and the Brisbane City Centre Master Plan to accommodate post-COVID-19 work, travel, and settlement patterns.
3. **Advocate** to the State Government to commission a "root and branch" review, in partnership with the development and infrastructure sectors, to improve lengthy and complex assessment and approval processes and modernise Queensland's planning laws to encourage and stimulate long-term economic activity. (Note: The WA Government recently announced the fast-tracked implementation of that State's largest ever planning system overhaul, which may see assessment and approval timeframes reduced from years to months, and eliminate costs for home renovators).
4. **Develop** a Brisbane Infrastructure Investment Plan - in proper consultation with industry - including alternate funding models for infrastructure projects and how to attract more private sector investment in infrastructure. Considerations should include any opportunities for investment triggered by a possible trans-Tasman/Pacific/east Asia bubble, including from Brisbane's sister cities.
5. Conduct an international **review** of project risk-management/sharing options. Project risk sharing needs to be recalibrated. Equitable risk sharing is paramount to project success and governments at all levels need to be partial risk holders. Government must share the burden on projects, particularly at this time when the Balance Sheets of developers and contractors are being hit. Collaborative contracts should be implemented for project delivery going forward.
6. **Direct or lobby** Queensland Urban Utilities to review and amend its infrastructure charges to reflect the economic impact of COVID-19 on construction projects and to provide direct financial relief to support economic recovery.
7. **Initiate** a project to integrate land uses with transport across the entire SEQ rail network. With its planned delivery of increased rail capacity and frequency of service, Cross River Rail could be

transformational by delivering economic benefits not only to Brisbane's inner city, also to areas showing the greatest growth in population like Ipswich, Logan and Moreton and Brisbane's "missing middle".

8. **Lobby** the State Government to provide demand-side stimulus, eg stamp duty relief and additional first home buyer assistance, to reboot the housing construction sector. While there are shovel ready projects in the residential development sector, demand is subdued due to job losses and economic uncertainty and the necessary constraints on sales operations. Tax and financial incentives will provide an important boost to this critical economic sector.
9. **Consider, and adopt** where relevant to Brisbane, proposals for economic recovery recommended by industry associations, for example the Property Council of Australia's seven-point plan, to ensure specialist industry advice informs Council's strategic responses.

Creative industries

The Committee for Brisbane calls for a stimulus package for greater Brisbane's creative industries, to redress the industry's loss of all self-generated income, without which hibernating companies cannot pay non-staffing expenses and cannot survive.

Creative industries are a key contributor to Brisbane's economy and a crucial link in the supply chain for hospitality, accommodation, transport, and tourism. Brisbane's has the largest core night-time economy in Australia, comprising 6,378 establishments, employing more than 68,750 people and with sales turnover of \$8,140 million.

Brisbane City Council's *Creative Brisbane Creative Economy Strategy* states as one of its objectives:

- *Brisbane, a global city for creativity: Brisbane is a leading destination for distinctive and authentic cultural experiences, where diversity is celebrated, and the creative workforce thrives.*

The State Government and Brisbane City Council need to create well-designed, long-term stimulus measures for the arts and creative industries to avoid industry collapse, significant long-term unemployment, and devastation to the night-time economy. With input from the sector, Council can inspire innovation, including impactful public campaigns to rebuild confidence and raise awareness.

The Committee for Brisbane calls on Brisbane City Council to:

10. **Pledge** \$1.25 million to provide immediate assistance to creative artists and creative organisations via quick response grants, to ensure Brisbane remains a creative city, globally recognised for its dynamic cultural scene. To ensure fast turnaround and notification of grant applications, Council can draw on the expertise of the local sector to conduct peer reviews.
11. **Provide** programming subsidies to Brisbane venues to purchase creative content. Alternatively, **provide** a programming "line of credit" to venues to invest in booking talent, to be repaid from ticket sales. The intent of the subsidy or line of credit is to give venues the ability to engage artists directly, with an incentive to sell as many tickets as possible. Venues are generally booked by promoters, with a relatively long lead time. If venues had the budget, they could immediately employ local talent, reducing the financial risk from paying upfront fees to artists.
12. **Create connections** with, and **incentivise**, local businesses/landlords to activate empty or under-utilised premises for creative purposes. For relevant spaces/locations, Council and the State Government should **facilitate** (uncomplicated) liquor licences and noise permits to enable events and optimise opportunities for a range of temporary/pop-up activities to stimulate economic activity.

13. **Provide** free parking at Council managed car parks and free public transport if attending an arts/cultural event.
14. **Identify** BCC owned assets that could be offered for use and activation by artists. Council could **provide** venues, such as the Seven Hills Theatre, in-kind to encourage more local events as well as provide spaces for creative development and use of public spaces for pop-up activations and temporary art.
15. **Provide** a Council-managed “self-storage” facility at subsidised rates. This will give creatives and collectives a storage solution to safeguard equipment, sets and road cases, ready for re-use or touring opportunities. There is potential to design the Brisbane Tool Library into this facility and have it manage the space and loans.
16. **Implement** a communication strategy to boost consumer confidence as entertainment precincts and arts organisations start to re-open. Be an ally and amplify the voices of the creative sector, advocating for the city’s creative workforce to other levels of government and promote the value and importance of the arts to the Brisbane community.
17. Offer **incentives** to developers and businesses to work with artists to contribute to the identity of neighbourhoods, for example, via the commissioning of public art.

Social and affordable housing

18. **Invest** in more social/affordable housing – to provide people with homes and keep builders building. The demand for more social/affordable housing stock and the need to renew old social housing stock existed before the pandemic. Demand will continue to grow, and private dwelling investment is likely to decline, so the time for Council investment in and/or **support** for social/affordable housing is now. For example, projects such as St Vincent de Paul’s Peel Street and 3rd Space in Fortitude Valley are ready, or near ready, for Council consideration and, when submitted, should be assessed speedily.
19. Conduct a proper consideration and **assessment** of realistic (ie attractive to private sector investors) build-to-rent projects as a counter-cyclical activity to offset a likely dampening of mum-and-dad investment in rental stock. Brisbane’s essential workers need access to affordable housing to enable them to live as close as practicably to their employment.

Supply chains and advanced manufacturing

20. Undertake an **analysis** of advanced manufacturing opportunities for greater Brisbane, including industry attraction initiatives, and consider programs to support re-tooling, including R&D grants, to re-establish a robust manufacturing sector in the region. For example, the Rheinmetall Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence is about to be commissioned for the construction of LAND 400 vehicles and an opportunity may exist to expand training and re-skilling (ie through TAFEs) and manufacturing opportunities to support the project.
21. **Provide assistance** (funding and/or resources) to identify local and regional supply chains that can provide critical goods and services to support existing and future local manufacturing.
22. The Lord Mayor’s election pledge to reduce payment terms for small businesses that supply to Council from 30 days to seven days to **commence** from 1 July and be a permanent change to Council’s supply chain management.

Skills and training and entrepreneurship

23. Help to grow a digitally-competent regional economy by providing **funding support** for the retraining and upskilling of workers, managers and employers in Brisbane, including digitisation strategies for the delivery of services and managing supply chains. This type of agile learning could be achieved in partnership with the region's TAFEs. (Note: online shopping has boomed during the lockdown, testing the reliability of online platforms and their supply chains. Companies that do not have online platforms, or that lag behind competitors in digital experience, will suffer post-COVID-19. Retail businesses that rely solely on physical channels and fail to invest in a broader omnichannel approach will do so at their peril and negatively impact on the regional economy).
24. Consider **establishing** business incubators to provide direct advice and support to Brisbane businesses that may need to recalibrate their products and/or services. Alternatively, consider a grants scheme to provide funds directly to businesses to enable them to access the right support.
25. Consider **establishing** an innovation fund that encourages, and provides financial support for, Brisbane businesses that opt to recalibrate their products and/or services or that are ready to move to the commercialisation (scale-up) phase. This could be based on the Federal Government model, chaired by Will Hodgman, of an equity investment fund to provide longer-term equity funding to small businesses.

Community spaces, placemaking and temporary urbanism

26. **Support** local business communities through the (temporary) reclamation of street space to increase public space and improve local streets and paths. Acknowledging that physical distancing will likely be in place for some time, it will be important to provide shared spaces for people and transport. One example is Perth's recent easing of licencing requirements to allow cafes and restaurants to operate in temporary reclaimed spaces. Another is the NSW *Streets as Shared Spaces* grants that provide funding for temporary activations that accommodate physical distancing requirements and help to support local businesses - and build on local character and improve the attractiveness of centres and public spaces. The intent of the NSW program is to deliver short-term improvements that:
- Support essential workers to travel to work, and people working from home
 - Contribute to economic recovery in local centres by creating vibrant streets and additional safe spaces to support local businesses
 - Activate high streets to create better quality public space
 - Support physical distancing requirements and encourage safe social connection
 - Support community well-being and ability to exercise
 - Attract people back into public spaces in a safe way
27. Brisbane could earn a reputation as a place where businesses can seamlessly integrate flexible working solutions as a part of their employee value proposition - to deliver a competitive advantage in the search for future talent. Part of successful flexibility will include access to "community" where employees don't gather daily in a workplace. Brisbane City Council could play a significant role in **identifying and creating** community and green spaces to facilitate "off-site" interaction.

Reducing waste and carbon

28. Using the catalyst of reduced carbon emissions (worldwide) as a result of the lockdown, undertake a detailed **review** of Council operations, policies and supply chains to embed circular economy and carbon reduction principles into "Business As Usual" activities, to rebuild the regional economy with strong environmental credentials.

Fast-tracked projects and campaigns

Every dollar spent on construction and infrastructure projects has a multiplier effect. It directly results in increased employment by the contractors and consultants engaged to do the work, increases the demand for the goods and services required to build the project, and results in increased spending by the workers employed. This, in turn, leads to further employment of people in the wider economy.

The Committee for Brisbane recommends the following projects and campaigns be considered for fast-tracking assessment, noting that some projects are already live, but that their staging/phases may be able to be brought forward.

1. Connecting Inland Rail to the Port of Brisbane: **Advocate** for a dedicated freight rail line to the port. The link could increase GRP in the region by around \$5.4 billion to 2045 and deliver 2.4 million less truck movements, around \$820 million in economic, social, and environmental benefits each year and an average of 1,200 new jobs each year to 2045. Further, we call on the Federal and State Governments to **fast-track approval processes** so the detailed design and construction of the Queensland sections of the Melbourne to Brisbane project can start sooner.
2. Brisbane Live: **Finalise** the business case, market soundings and any other assessments as a matter of urgency and announce the commencement of the Brisbane Live entertainment precinct that has the potential to deliver 450 jobs per year during construction and 600 ongoing jobs once operational.
3. Cross River Rail Precincts Strategy: **Fast-track** the CRRDA precincts strategy around the high-capacity stations at Boggo Road, Woolloongabba, Albert Street, Roma Street, and Exhibition. The precincts strategy can significantly revitalise key inner-city growth areas and is expected to leverage up to \$20 billion in new city-changing investment and generate around 35,000 new jobs.
4. Kangaroo Point to CBD and Breakfast Creek green bridges: State Government **approval processes to be fast-tracked** to enable construction timelines to be brought forward. Subject to community feedback and government approvals, construction of the green bridges could commence as early as 2021, with expected completion by 2024-25.
5. North West Transport Network: Council is developing a business case to help reduce congestion on Brisbane's north west transport network. The business case study is currently being finalised. CFB calls on the Federal Government to **fast-track its assessment** of the business case, once submitted.
6. Brisbane Metro: State Government and Council to **resolve** the redesign of the Cultural Centre Metro Station as a matter of urgency and bring forward schedules to deliver this project sooner than its planned 2023 completion.
7. Waterfront Brisbane: **Fast-track** approval of the \$2.1 billion Waterfront Brisbane project to transform Eagle Street Pier into a premium business and leisure destination. It is estimated that 1,120 construction jobs per year will be created, on average, over the next 10 years, with an additional 900 operational jobs supported once fully constructed.
8. SEQ City Deal: Federal, State, and local governments to **recommit** to the SEQ City Deal which was scheduled for release (version one) by mid-2020. The SEQ City Deal should play a critical role in any economic recovery strategy. With the amount of time and energy expended to date on exploring the SEQ City Deal, it is clearly a logical place to start.

9. 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games: **Release visions** around the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics candidature and commission upgrades required for an Olympic bid (as soon as practicable). **Establish** a Legacy Planning Taskforce (with significant private sector participation) to guide the investigation and development of long-term, public and social infrastructure projects; and consider opportunities for inclusive tourism, leisure and event experiences for participants and spectators.
10. Suburban renewal opportunities: **Conduct an audit** of potential suburban renewal projects, for example, undertake a cost/benefit analysis of the 2019 Suburban Alliance proposals for Chermside and Salisbury. A \$100m project can make a big difference to suburban centres and is more likely to be tendered and delivered by local businesses and professionals.
11. Royal Queensland Golf Club: State Government and Brisbane City Council to **support** the redevelopment of Royal Queensland Golf Club as an integrated tourism hub, with golf retained as the primary use supported by a golf-focussed, commercial, community precinct.
12. Victoria Park: **Continue to develop** the Vision and masterplan for Victoria Park. The future design, protection, celebration, and activation of Victoria Park is critical to stitching together the city centre and one of Brisbane's greatest assets.
13. Marketing Brisbane's creative sector: **Fund and implement** an immediate, multifaceted marketing campaign that draws on the archive of Brisbane's creative sector to highlight the value of creativity, culture and lifestyle. The campaign should be devised and driven in partnership with the sector. Longer-term, **fund and implement** a 12 - 24-month recovery marketing campaign, aimed at local, intra and interstate audiences, that re-engages people with arts and culture and increases their confidence around Brisbane's recovery.
14. "Streets of Your Town" music history trail and placemaking: **Provide financial and administrative support** to undertake the "Streets of Your Town" activated cultural heritage project (that has been developed by QUT Creative Industries) to develop a new approach to creative city development by activating cultural heritage through popular music. Streets of Your Town is a placemaking and tourism concept supported in principle by the Committee for Brisbane, that may form part of its broader Creative Brisbane Vision planned for 2020.
15. Brisbane Charter of Digital Capability: **Develop** a charter of minimally acceptable internet services for Brisbane that enables businesses and their staffs to competently ask for and access suitable standards of service. Internet services are as important to the modern business for connectivity and supply chain as are roads and railways.
16. Internet black holes: **Commission** an audit and develop a program of rectification for Brisbane's internet "black holes".
17. Access to quality IT advice and standards: **Support and fund** the establishment of a Brisbane SME advisory service that allows SMEs to be briefed on available business technology services, minimum standards of service and support. The ITC industry is largely unregulated, and vendor-driven, and Brisbane SME's deserve an impartial and qualified advisory service to maximise their capacity in the digital economy.