

## **MEDIA RELEASE – 10 MAY 2023**

### **Addressing our region's housing crises**

Greater Whitsunday Communities (GWC) and Regional Development Australia Greater Whitsundays (RDA GW) have partnered to deliver the Greater Whitsunday Housing Project to develop region-specific, place-based solutions to the housing crises in the Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday regions.

These solutions will be co-designed with regional stakeholders in the commercial housing sector, social and affordable housing sectors, as well as the construction supply chain.

To that end, a Housing Roundtable took place last December to identify key themes ahead of next month's Housing Summit on 6 June. Top of the list of issues is availability and diversity of choice. Queensland Hydro, which is proposing to build the world's largest pumped hydro project in the Pioneer Valley, is the major sponsor of the Summit.

Rob Cocco, CEO of RDA GW explained that: "Housing is constraining economic development in the Greater Whitsunday region. We need more housing stock – to rent and to purchase, to be able to attract more workers to our region to deliver against the many economic opportunities we have. And we need to find ways to bring this stock online quicker than we have ever before."

Carol Norris, Executive Officer at GWC said: "GWC has engaged URBIS to gather baseline data to help inform discussions at the summit and provide the evidence to support funding applications to access State and Federal funding schemes."

The housing market is imbalanced and GWC has been actively seeking partners to support the Housing Project's activities. Two organisations that are well-known in our region for investing in their communities have come on board – Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal Pty Ltd (DBCT P/L) and Community Bank Sarina Bendigo Bank.

Carol said: "GWC and RDA GW are very grateful for the support of these two organisations who have contributed towards this Housing Project, along with the Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday Regional Councils. We need the activities relating to the Housing Project funded for us to make sure that public money that is invested in our region goes to the right places, the places where they can have greatest impact.

"The Summit will result in an Action Plan for our region, comprising many sub-projects across the housing spectrum. This Action Plan will be co-design, localized and outline relevant place-based solutions. The Summit will allow us to hear the voice of regional community stakeholders and build their insights into the solutions proposed."

Community Bank Sarina Company Secretary Maree Franettovich said that: "It is only because of the Community Bank Model that we are able to provide such a level of support in the community. When people choose to bank with Community Bank Sarina, up to 80% of the profits generated are invested into the local community through a range of ways – including worthwhile initiatives such as the Greater Whitsunday Housing Summit, to address important community concerns."

DBCT P/L CEO, Steve Rae, went on to say: "At DBCT P/L, we are committed to supporting the community through support and investment. We want to grow genuine partnerships with our local and regional communities, as well as drive positive change through these connections. Housing is a challenge in this region and we are investing in this Project to support the positive change that GWC and RDA GW are seeking to affect."

More recently, Queensland Hydro has agreed to be the major sponsor of the Housing Summit, demonstrating its commitment to sustainable outcomes in the region, given the proposed Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project is likely to bring many jobs to the region and require significant workforce accommodation.

“Queensland Hydro shares the same interests and goals as the Housing Summit, with workforce accommodation being a key interest area for construction and infrastructure projects like ours which, if it proceeds, will require a large supporting workforce,” said Queensland Hydro CEO (Interim) Chris Evans.

“In becoming a partner in this project, Queensland Hydro wants to demonstrate to the region that we are serious about finding solutions to the increasing demand on accommodation that major projects can bring. But we also we want to help create project workforce accommodation that leaves a legacy and has a long term community housing benefit beyond the construction phase. We’re committed to working with GWC and RDA GW to help find these solutions.”

For more information or to register to attend the Housing Summit visit:

<https://www.greaterwhitsundaycommunities.org.au/greater-whitsunday-housing-project> or email [tonia@gwcommunities.org.au](mailto:tonia@gwcommunities.org.au)

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