CCIQ response to:
Consultation paper – Regional Data Hub: Understanding and responding to regional data needs

Submitted via email on 14/07/2021 to regionaldatahub@infrastructure.gov.au

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland (CCIQ) thanks the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications and Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research for the opportunity to be consulted on the proposed Regional Data Hub

CCIQ is Queensland's peak industry representative organisation for small and medium businesses. We represent over 448,000 Queensland small and medium businesses who employ 44% of Queenslanders working in the private sector. CCIQ works with the regional and local chamber network across Queensland to develop and advocate for policies that are in the best interests of Queensland businesses, economy, and community.

CCIQ appreciates the value of quality data in decision-making by businesses, as well as for our own industry advocacy and policy development needs. From our experience working with small and medium businesses, we acknowledge the challenges that they face in both compiling and accessing data.

CCIQ has prepared our response to the consultation paper as per the two key sections of inquiry:
- *How do you want to access data? What data do you need?:* our response below represents data access and needs from the data user perspective, and
- *Data sharing opportunities:* our response below represents the data owner and sharer perspective.

Accessing and using data

Businesses appreciate the value of local data in informing government decisions affecting them, either directly or indirectly. Creating or enhancing ways to generate, collect and utilise data has great potential for the regional business environment, can promote better government decision making and better access to information for engaged businesses. As an organisation, CCIQ appreciates the value of localised data to inform evidence-based advocacy targeted at either the State or the Commonwealth government. The below recommendations reflect the needs from the data user perspective.

- A need for better data sharing between levels of government: Businesses and government have acknowledged the lack of sharing of data between levels of government. This was also confirmed in a Productivity Commission report (Productivity Commission Inquiry Report No.82, 31 March 2017) which recommended the need for better data sharing between the three levels of government. Recommendations in the report led to the December 2020 introduction of legislation into Parliament (Data Availability and Transparency Bill 2020), designed to facilitate the creation of an agency to share data more freely amongst accredited agencies across all levels of government. This Bill is still going through the legislative process. A regional data hub will go a long way to resolving these challenges, and

CCIQ would like to make the following recommendations to maximise the opportunity inherent in this.

- <u>A need to support access to localised regional data:</u> A regional data hub would further support access to localised data, with the opportunity to enrich both CCIQ's and our members understanding of the drivers of regional business conditions and sentiment, and further strengthen consumer and business research capabilities, as well as evidence-based advocacy on behalf of business.

- <u>A need for a user-friendly interface:</u> CCIQ's discussions with small businesses and chambers highlight a clear struggle to access and interpret complex datasets. They rely on third parties and industry bodies to interpret data that they need to make decisions. As a result, the proposed regional data hub must ensure that any information shared and disseminated is made available in a user-friendly format. Examples of user-friendly formats include drop-down menus and other filters, regional dashboards of key indicators, and simplified, downloadable versions of complex data sets.

- <u>Potential opportunity to focus on much needed regional skills data:</u> Lack of skilled labour in regional Queensland, as is the lack of data clearly showing this by location, sector, occupation. Skills shortages are often a very localised issue, particularly for a state with such varied sub-regional economies like Queensland. For example, Queensland has distinct mining regions, agricultural regions, tourism regions and the services-dependent South East Queensland corner.

    Any means of capturing business skills needs at the local, regional, state, and national level will enhance the quality of any policy changes to the skilled migration programme. It will allow for the capturing of localised skills shortages and allow the aggregation of data for state-sponsored skilled migration programmes and further aggregation to inform the federal programme.

    For industry representative bodies such as CCIQ, localised skills shortage data allows us to improve evidence-based advocacy to support the skills needs of small and medium enterprises in Queensland. If such information is presented in a user-friendly format, local chambers and business owners can also access it and determine how widespread their specific challenge is. This allows for localised advocacy on skills issues that can be resolved with the support of a local council and a confident handover of state-wide issues to industry bodies such as CCIQ for further advocacy.

Data sharing opportunities
It is understood that a key objective of the proposed regional data hub is to encourage data sharing from multiple data owners, including business. The below recommendations reflect the needs from the data owner and sharer perspective.

- <u>Incentivised sharing:</u> Where small businesses and associations are being encouraged to share the data they hold, there must be a clear incentive for doing so. For example, businesses could be incentivised to become data sharers with an opportunity to obtain free access to the regional data hub for their own data needs. A key benefit of this approach would be expanding the range of data shared, and uptake of the regional data hub as a business decision making tool. It may also present opportunities to access regional business data in real time where policies require rapid analysis and action, such as in the case of the recent COVID-19 crisis.

- <u>Data security and integrity:</u> Data security and integrity is a critical part of any data sharing platform. In the 2020 CCIQ Digital Readiness Survey, 77% of survey respondents believed that their data was secure. While this shows some level of confidence in the safety of digital data, there are also risks, or the perception of risk, inherent in data sharing and storing. The highest level of data security must be assured.
- <u>The need for data sharing permissions to protect data owners:</u> It is critical for the design of the regional data hub to provide extensive and reliable provisions for data owners to clearly state which user types may or may not access their data, the ability for data to be anonymous where suitable, and immediately removed from storage at the discretion of the data owner.

CCIQ thanks the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications and Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research for the opportunity to comment on this consultation paper. If there are any further questions in relation to this submission, please contact our Policy team at ████████████████████

Kind regards,

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