

## **CITY LIFE THOUGHTS APRIL 2020**

The truth is that the strength of our City is driven by the resilience of the region to which we belong. We are the sum of many parts and the logical international gateway to Northern Australia which has driven the internationalisation of our city over the last 25 years. It has been a hard slog to get here and has been achieved in no small part by the belief of some who drove the agenda and who campaigned fearlessly for the united voices of our region to be heard. Our remarkable growth during the late 80s through to the advent of the GFC of 2008 was no fluke. Then we sought out and capitalised on opportunity, we had population growth, we had local and international investment, we had confidence aplenty and chanced our arm. As we grew so did our infrastructure mostly from the private sector. We were the envy of many and still are.

Times have changed in the intervening years offering new and different challenges. Just as we might have been emerging from the economic malaise of the GFC decade, along comes COVIT 19 to test our mettle once again. Communities need a certain resilience to get through these things. Each segment of the regional jigsaw puzzle will play their part be they community focussed social institutions all the way through to local governments across the region and every one in between. They have no choice but to step up so do we all as individuals.

The pandemic has imposed on us the need to adapt to survive, but certainly not on the scale being suggested by the amateur futurists in these bizarre times. What we see today will not be the new normal. Our work places will return to what they were with the odd design and behavioural modification. Isolating at home has reinforced the notion the work places are also places of social interaction. Cars and individuals will roam the streets again, we will go fishing with the family and our mates, schools will be back at full tilt, restaurants will be churning out wonderful dishes , aged care will continue to operate as will our health systems. A modified normalcy will return. Cairns will occupy it's place in the sun again. The challenge for us will be how quickly we get there.

I cannot escape a sense of regret, that despite the many consistent warning signs over decades, we failed to diversify our city's economy to play the role of the regional capital of Northern Australia . We need bold thinking around what this means and get on with it. No excuses. The current situation has taught us that we cannot waste another moment. This is a huge wake up call and there is much to do ahead and that is the great positive of today and as a community and a region we need to rise to that. Enterprise North will ensure we are there. I love these challenges and that is why I love these parts. Governments need to allow us to get back to normal quickly and get on with it.