

Expression of Interest:

A social sustainability research agenda for the Ella Bay development.

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A trans-disciplinary research team, led by Dr Michael Cuthill and Professor Helen Ross, would like to register its interest in developing and implementing *A social sustainability research agenda for the Ella Bay development*. The UQ Boilerhouse Community Engagement Centre will be the coordinating centre for the research.

The UQ Boilerhouse acts as a facilitating agent bringing together diverse stakeholders from the private, public, community and tertiary sectors to develop informed and collaborative responses that contribute to building just and sustainable communities (www.uq.edu.au/boilerhouse). The centre currently runs 15 projects with a total (project and operational) budget of approximately \$2 million. These projects actively involve over 100 stakeholders from all sectors. Over the past five years the centre has been involved in 3 major ARC linkage projects. Current projects the research team are involved in focus on the broad topic of *social sustainability* including social infrastructure (hard and soft), social capital, participatory planning/decision making, social impact assessment, social justice, community identity, and sustainability indicators and monitoring.

These current research projects, together with the expertise of the research team, appear to coincide with the broad focus of research that is required for the Ella Bay development. We would suggest further dialogue is required to develop a detailed research agenda relating to a guiding research question that asks, *How do you build a socially sustainable community?*

The project team is (detailed resumes and referees can be provided as required):

Dr Michael Cuthill: Michael is Director of the UQ Boilerhouse and has 14 years experience in facilitating participatory research in sustainable development, most recently focusing specifically on issues of social sustainability. He has extensive experience in applied social research and has worked in both the public and private sectors, as well as with several universities. Current major research projects he is leading involve local and state government agencies, property developers and community sector agencies in collaborative efforts to build socially sustainable communities. Michael previously lived in North Queensland for 20 years and has worked at the Australian Institute for Marine Science, James Cook University and the Cooperative Research Centre for Reef Research. As such, he is familiar with the regional context, and is currently involved in a joint project with Helen Ross and others looking at social resilience in selected North Queensland communities. He will lead and coordinate the proposed research. The UQ Boilerhouse will act as the administrative body for the research.

Professor Helen Ross: Helen is Professor of Rural Community Development and leads the social science staff and programs within the interdisciplinary School of

Natural and Rural Systems Management. This school takes a systems approach to the sustainable development of rural areas both in Australia and overseas, encompassing social, ecological and economic foci. Helen has particular strengths in interdisciplinary and research-user collaborations, community development and social impact assessment. She led research within the Cooperative Research Centre for Reef Research focused on Aboriginal interests in co-managing the reef, was a member of the social science expert panel guiding the rezoning of the reef, and has longstanding collaborations with natural resource management personnel in the region.

As a next step in progressing this expression of interest the research team would, in conjunction with stakeholders, 1) articulate a relevant social sustainability research agenda considering both the proposed town and its potential impact within the region, 2) develop a detailed research design including budget, 3) implement identified research, and 4) analyse and report research findings. Other research staff would be identified to take on specialist research roles as required to support the project team.

A particular area of interest to the team is the opportunity to develop an *Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage* proposal which will 'value add' to the currently proposed funding and to our current research in the region. This provides an opportunity for a longer term research focus to be designed, implemented and maintained. The research team are well placed, with strong contacts to public and community sector interest groups in the region, and a well regarded social sustainability research history, to develop a high profile large scale ARC proposal based around the Ella Bay Development.

We trust you find this preliminary EoI meets your initial requirements and look forward to further discussion to expand this into a more detailed project description,

Regards

Michael Cuthill

Helen Ross