

ONLINE ARTICLE

Title:	"No beef with Townsville port, but regional mayors demand change"
Author:	Charlie McKillop
Date:	Wednesday, 8 August 2012
Publication:	ABC Rural
Copyright:	ABC
Address:	< http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/201208/s3563371.htm >
Accessed:	Thursday, 9 August 2012



Townsville may be a centre for live cattle exports, but no boxed beef has been sent out of the port for years. (Karen Hunt)

The fallout continues in North Queensland after a report revealed Townsville port has been operating at just over a third of its capacity.

The 50-year plan for freight infrastructure points to inefficiencies, shortcomings in facilities and a lack of transparency in the supply chain, worth \$15 billion a year.

It also recommends the appointment of a supply chain co-ordinator to attract new growth and attract infrastructure investment.

A mayor at the helm of a local government working group says change must start from the top.

Mayor of Richmond John Wharton says the Townsville port can and must do better.

"The Federal and State Governments and Infrastructure Australia have given us the opportunity... we'll get one shot at this and if we don't do it properly, it's never going to work," he said.

"I know I won't be backward in coming forward if I believe that board needs to sharpen up their knife and cut a few out.

"We're not worried about personalities, we're looking for efficiency, so there are jobs in the future for our region."

Both the Port of Townsville and Queensland Rail have declined the opportunity to be interviewed for the Country Hour.

Meanwhile, Australia's largest meat processor, JBS Australia, believes it's an opportunity to re-visit supply chain logistics across Queensland.

JBS has not exported out of Townsville since a direct service to the United States ended in the mid-2000s, instead sending boxed beef from its abattoir at Stuart 1,500 kilometres by rail to the port of Brisbane.

But executive officer John Berry says any additional freight option available to his business operating in a highly competitive global industry is welcome.

"If it was cost effective, that's the bottom line. That's going to take volume and also the capacity to service through the infrastructure 20 and 40 foot containers movements to a range of international market places," he said.

"I think the time has come where we've had a lot of bureaucratic planning, both state and federal.

"I'm sure the new government here in Queensland is looking to engage with commercial players around where their plans and where they see opportunities to do more.

"But at the end of the day, it comes back to cost structures and we need access for our product out of locations that are cost effective, not putting extra costs on our businesses."