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MICHELI (Mick) BORZI AM OBE

A TRIBUTE TO MICK BORZI

Mick Borzi's influence on the progress of Cairns and the region was exceptional.

I first met Mick in his role as Chairman of Mareeba Shire along with Roy Dickson as Chairman of Johnstone Shire at the Herbert Valley Motel in Ingham in the early 1970s. Mick and Roy were collaborating on behalf of the North Queensland Local Government Association on a campaign to gain community support to promote recognition of local governments' vital role in national progress and an increase in national government support for the sector. I had not long returned north from working with government and the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Canberra and they were seeking some assistance in developing the case.

It did not take long to recognise Mick's judgement and ability to get things done. Over the years, I was privileged to have been able to work with Mick on various projects.

Mick was the best meeting chairman I have ever worked with and seen in action. His ability to quickly and efficiently steer a meeting to an agreed and sound course of action was outstanding.

However, Mick's greatest achievement for Cairns and the region was the upgrading of Cairns Airport to take wide-bodied jets on long distance direct flights from overseas. It was a team effort but it was Mick as Chairman of the Cairns Harbour Board, who first brought to everyone's attention the potential of moving to 'local ownership' as a pathway to achieving a long sought after much-needed upgrading of the airport if the Cairns region was to achieve its obvious potential to become an international tourism destination. It was Mick who formulated the resolution passed at a public meeting at the Civic Centre to form a special committee to pursue local ownership.

After a furious internal community debate it was Mick who as chairman of the Cairns Harbour Board (reconfigured as the Cairns Port Authority to also manage the airport), who negotiated the Commonwealth funding that made the upgrading possible and it was Mick as Chairman of the Port Authority who oversaw the works that culminated in the first Jumbo Jet flight to Honolulu taking off at the end of March 1984.

Bill Cummings, BEcon (UQ), HonDEcon (CQU), Manager, Ingham District Development Bureau 1968-1973, Manager Far North Queensland Development Bureau and its sub Board for Tourism & Travel 1973 -1981, Principal Cummings Economics 1981 to present including provision of Secretariat Cairns Chamber of Commerce 1981-1998.