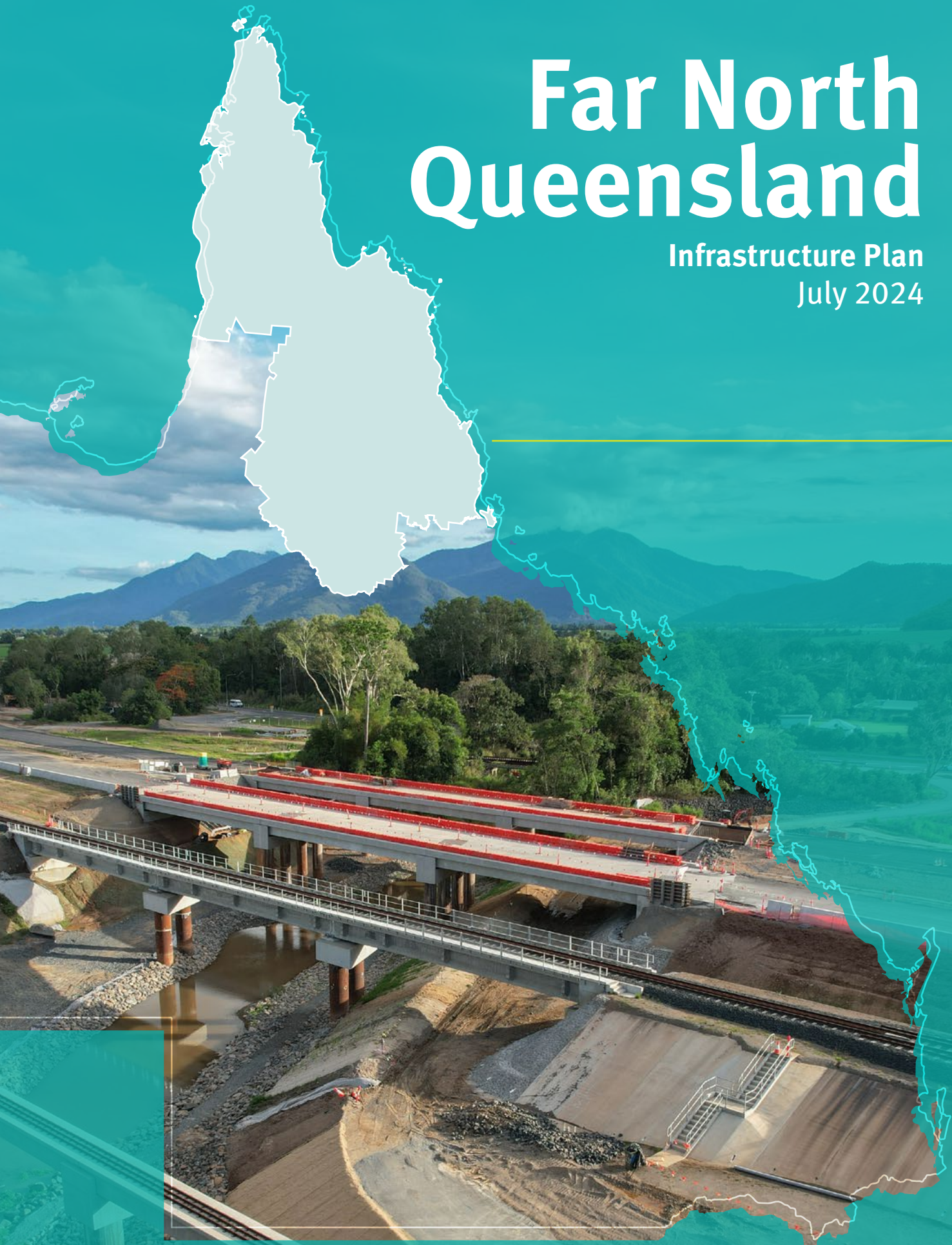


Far North Queensland

Infrastructure Plan
July 2024



Queensland
Government

The Department of State Development and Infrastructure connects industries, businesses, communities and government (at all levels) to leverage regions' strengths to generate sustainable and enduring economic growth that supports well-planned, inclusive and resilient communities.

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Cover image: Bruce Highway, Cairns Southern Access Corridor (Stage 3), Edmonton to Gordonvale (Source: Department of Transport and Main Roads)

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Queensland Government acknowledges the First Nations peoples in Queensland: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their connections to the lands, winds and waters we now all share.

We pay our respect to Elders, past and present. We also acknowledge the deep relationship, connection and responsibility to land, sea, sky and Country as an integral element of First Nations identity and culture.

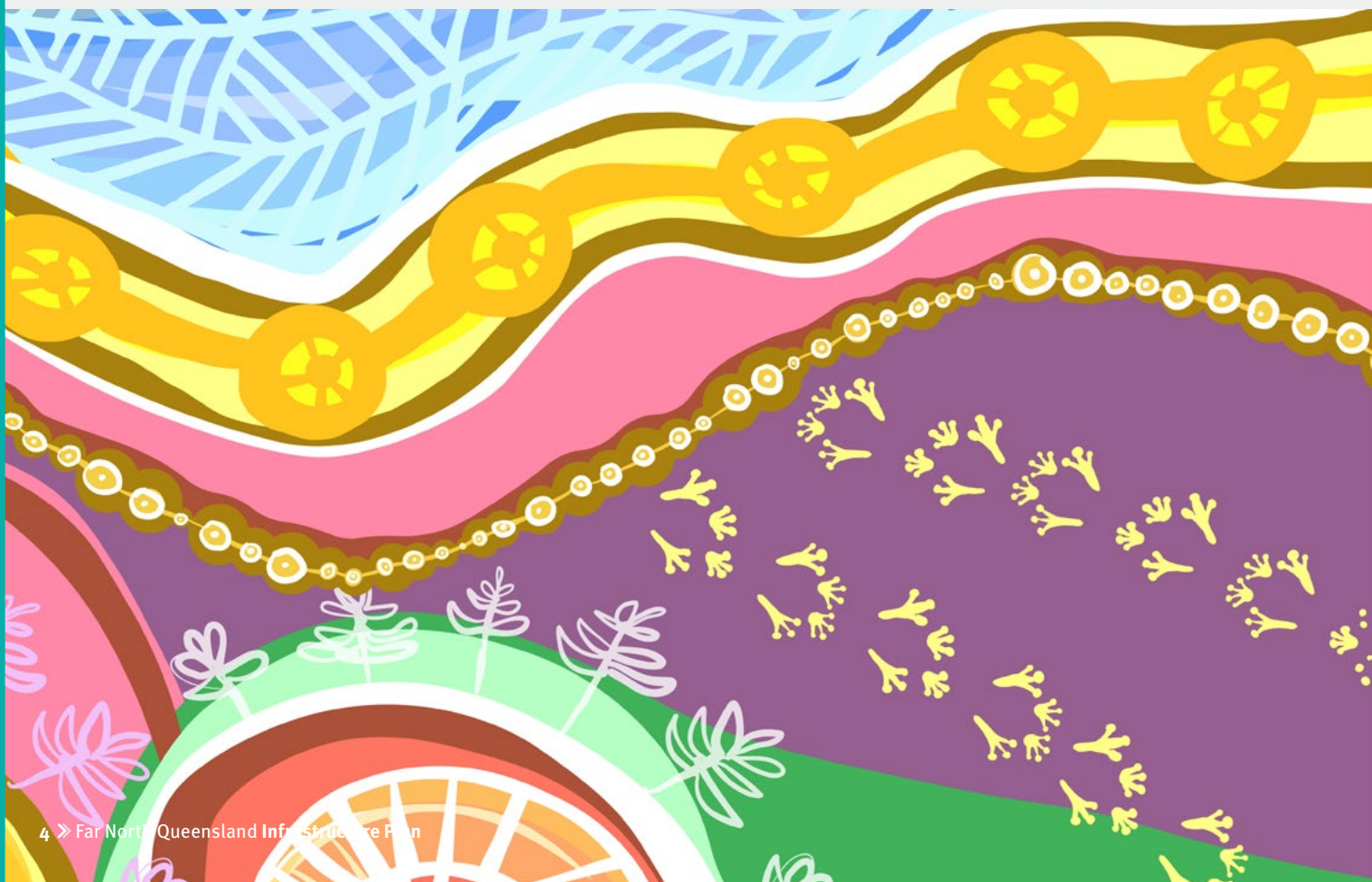
The Country is sacred. Everything on the land has meaning and all people are one with it. We acknowledge First Nations peoples' sacred connection as central to culture and being. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of First Nations peoples and commit to shaping our state's future together. The Queensland Government recognises the contribution of First Nations peoples and communities to the State of Queensland and how this continues to enrich our society more broadly.

» THE YHURRI GURRI FRAMEWORK 2021–2024

The Yhurri Gurri Framework 2021–24 (the Framework) outlines the Department of State Development and Infrastructure's (DSDI's) ongoing commitment to grow First Nations participation in its everyday business with initiatives that support First Nations communities, businesses and peoples across Queensland. It is part of DSDI's commitment to support the reframed relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the Statement of Commitment.

Regional infrastructure plans support the Framework's 'Structural Reform' initiative which recognises the need to draw on perspectives and knowledge of First Nations peoples in legislation, policy and program design. Regional infrastructure plans are developed in consultation with First Nations peoples, embedding their perspectives, priorities and knowledge into each plan's strategic economic and social priorities, and infrastructure priorities to guide place-based State infrastructure planning and investments.

The Yhurri Gurri design conveys the different pathways to growth and building which speaks to the department's approach to bringing community together, both physically and philosophically (Source: Department of State Development and Infrastructure (DSDI))



Foreword

MINISTER GRACE'S FOREWORD

We're building big to deliver the infrastructure our growing state needs. Over the next two decades the Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan will help drive investment and enable emerging sectors including aviation and renewable energy.

This demand for renewable energy will help create more jobs and industries in this region attracting skilled workers and their families keen to enjoy the lifestyle opportunities that the region offers.

Creating a thriving green economy by decarbonising the regions' supply chains for key industries will enhance growth, sustainability, and resilience. In achieving this we want to partner and work with the regions' First Nations communities to share in the benefits of these emerging industries and opportunities.

Natural disasters have wide-ranging impacts on regional communities, particularly cyclones and floods in Far North Queensland. Our State Recovery and Resilience Plan will provide a pathway to address the immediate and long-term effects of these major events by enabling resilient communities and improving recovery outcomes.

We can't do this work alone — the Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan, informed by local government, industry and local stakeholders, can only be delivered in partnership.

We are committed to seeing this plan deliver outcomes for the people of Far North Queensland. This means more jobs in more industries, diversifying the economy in emerging and growth industries to enhance our thriving, liveable communities where Far North Queenslanders love to live, work and play.



The Honourable Grace Grace MP
Minister for State Development and Infrastructure
Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing

MINISTER BUTCHER'S FOREWORD

Far North Queensland is perfectly positioned to build on existing competitive advantages and benefit from investment that supports sustainable economic growth, new employment opportunities, innovation, diversification and resilience.

With a world-renowned tourism sector and thriving industries in agriculture, marine, defence and aviation sectors, Far North Queensland presents exciting paths for growth and transformation to a low-carbon economy.

This Infrastructure Plan is about working collaboratively with communities to understand and support a coordinated approach to sequencing and prioritising infrastructure the community will need for decades to come.

Regional water security and building advanced manufacturing capability will play a fundamental role in the decarbonisation of Far North Queensland's ongoing regional economic development and provide more good, secure jobs in the Far North. It is critical that regional and remote communities, including First Nations communities, can share in the benefits of a decarbonised economy.

The Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan will ensure the region is ready for future growth and provides the services needed to support the jobs and lifestyles regional Queenslanders love.

By taking a long term, holistic and coordinated approach, we can work together to unlock significant potential for the region, while preserving its unique landscape, cultures and lifestyle.



The Honourable Glenn Butcher MP
Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water

Introduction

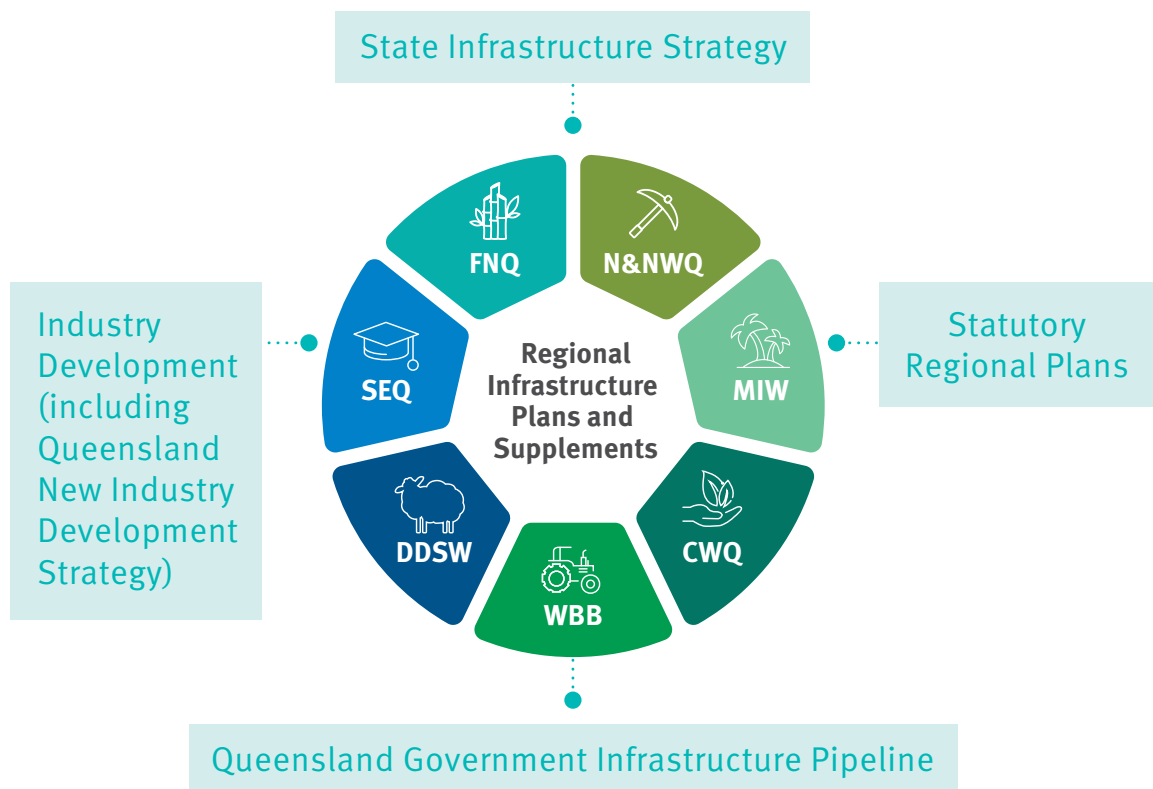
Regional infrastructure plans are a new Queensland Government initiative supporting the State’s intent for greater focus on place-based infrastructure planning to deliver upon the key strategic priorities of a region, identified by the region.

Regional infrastructure plans have a long-term 20-year outlook identifying strategic economic and social priorities, and infrastructure priorities for the region to guide State infrastructure planning and investments, in partnership with other levels of government and industry where possible.

The priorities identified by the regions through the regional infrastructure plans will inform the State’s Regional Plans (developed under the *Queensland Planning Act 2016*) and complement the State’s industry development priorities. Collectively, this new integrated approach to planning will set the strategic direction for regional growth and provide

timely regional responses to economic, social and environmental changes, combining economic strategy with land use and infrastructure planning.

Regional infrastructure plans align with the *State Infrastructure Strategy 2022 (SIS)* which sets policy objectives for infrastructure planning by agencies to ensure that infrastructure delivery meets the changing needs of Queensland’s population and economy. The SIS introduced place-based regional infrastructure planning to better reflect the unique strengths and opportunities of each region and the role infrastructure plays in catalysing regional economic recovery, growth and liveability.



» FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan (FNQIP) is one of seven regional infrastructure plans to be developed to support the implementation of the SIS. The diverse region stretches from Cairns to Cape York and the Torres Strait, is home to approximately 290,000 people (6 per cent of Queensland's population), across approximately 270,000 square kilometres and represents 16 per cent of Queensland's total land area.

The FNQIP identifies five strategic regional priorities focussing on liveable communities, a green economy, tropical agriculture, marine and aviation, and tourism. State infrastructure planning activities that align with and support these priorities have also been identified.

The FNQIP includes the local governments of Aurukun, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook, Douglas, Etheridge, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Mareeba, Napranum, Northern Peninsula Area (NPA), Pormpuraaw, Tablelands, Torres Shire, Torres Strait Island, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah as well as the Weipa Town Authority.

» FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND AND CAPE YORK STATUTORY REGIONAL PLAN REVIEW

Regional plans are statutory, long-term strategic documents that guide land use planning for state and local governments and industry. They set direction for how Queensland regions will address growth and change over time through a statutory policy framework and spatial mapping. The Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works (DHLGPPW) has commenced fit-for-purpose reviews of all regional plans older than five years. These reviews will provide land use direction for local governments and ensure that policy settings for regional Queensland align with contemporary government policy.

The reviews of the Far North Queensland (FNQ) Regional Plan and Cape York (CY) Regional Plan are underway. The FNQIP will inform elements of the FNQ and CY Regional Plan reviews, including the consideration of strategic regional priorities, stakeholder engagement outcomes and economic evidence base.

The FNQIP aligns with the combined FNQ and CY Regional Plan boundaries.

» QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE

The Queensland Government Infrastructure Pipeline (QGIP) demonstrates the government's commitment to statewide and regional priorities through a regularly updated pipeline of planning investment and proposals.

The QGIP provides industry with visibility of the State Government's infrastructure pipelines across key infrastructure classes in the region to provide greater certainty and confidence and help inform industry project coordination, procurement, supply chain and workforce planning. The FNQIP will inform future updates to the QGIP.

The QGIP is an interactive dashboard of state infrastructure opportunities across Queensland. It contains two datasets:

- » the delivery pipeline which provides details of the current state infrastructure commitments and activity over the next four years
- » the infrastructure planning pipeline which includes investment proposals that are at a planning stage. These are proposals currently being assessed by the Queensland Government. All proposals in planning stage are subject to government consideration and final investment decisions.

The QGIP dashboard provides better and easier access to infrastructure project information in an interactive and user-friendly format. Information is accessible online and can be searched and filtered by:

- » region
- » infrastructure class
- » total estimated cost (delivery pipeline)
- » stage of development (planning pipeline).

Delivering Queensland Government priorities

The FNQIP is informed by and aligns with key State Government priorities.

The strengths of the FNQ region and its emerging growth industries will play a key part in the decarbonisation of the Queensland economy. To that end, the FNQIP builds on a range of key Queensland Government strategies including *Homes for Queenslanders*, the *Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan*, the *Queensland New-Industry Development Strategy*, *Queensland Climate Action Plan* and the Local Thriving Communities reform to maximise opportunities for FNQ and drive future investment.

» HOMES FOR QUEENSLANDERS

Homes for Queenslanders is a plan for a fair and sustainable housing system that ensures better housing outcomes both now and for the future. This includes a commitment to fast track one million new homes by 2046, including 53,500 new social homes, in the areas where Queenslanders want to live and work.

Homes for Queenslanders also commits to *Our Place: A First Nations Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2024–2027* to deliver a suite of actions to achieve the vision for every Queensland First Nations person to have access to a safe and secure place to call home that meets their personal, locational and cultural needs and drive improvements to accelerate Queensland's progress towards National Agreement Closing the Gap commitments.

Key initiatives in FNQ and CY include:

- » social homes for First Nations communities
- » new and replacement shelters for people experiencing domestic and family violence
- » supported accommodation sites for individuals
- » accommodation sites for families, and
- » a youth foyer.

» QUEENSLAND ENERGY AND JOBS PLAN

The *Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan* (QEJP) outlines the state's pathway to transform the energy system over the next 10 to 15 years to deliver clean, reliable, and affordable power, creating a platform for strong economic growth and continued investment. The QEJP charts an ambitious infrastructure investment pathway

to 2035, including two large-scale pumped hydros in regional Queensland, 22 gigawatts of new renewable energy, and major new transmission lines across the state which will form Queensland's SuperGrid.

Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) will be a key enabler to coordinate the efficient connection of new renewable generation in Queensland. The *Queensland Renewable Energy Zone Roadmap*, released in March 2024, outlines Queensland's approach to developing 12 potential future REZs over three phases to early 2030s. This includes the in-flight FNQ REZ underway, as well as two potential future REZs to be developed in North and FNQ.

Additionally, the Queensland Government has invested \$40 million to upgrade transmission infrastructure between Cairns and Townsville. This investment will provide up to 500 Megawatts (MW) of renewable energy connection potential in FNQ.

The QEJP will underpin Queensland's decarbonisation pathway, with the FNQIP forming a focal point for collective action and place-based implementation.

The Queensland Government has also committed \$10 million for the Queensland Microgrid Pilot Fund (QMPF) to improve network resilience of these communities. *Queensland's Clean Energy Workforce Roadmap* is designed to ensure Queensland's clean energy sector has the skilled workers to continue to grow, and that Queenslanders benefit from the clean energy job opportunities.

» QUEENSLAND EMISSIONS REDUCTION AND RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGETS

In April 2024, the Queensland Government passed laws to legislate emissions reduction targets and renewable energy targets. The *Clean Economy Jobs Act 2024*, legislates emissions reduction targets of 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, 75 per cent below by 2035 and net zero by 2050.

While the *Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act 2024*, enshrines into law key commitments from the QEJP, including the three renewable energy targets of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030, 70 per cent by 2032 and 80 per cent by 2035.

» QUEENSLAND NEW-INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The *Queensland New-Industry Development Strategy* (QNIDS) has been developed in line with global shifts for the demand for cleaner, greener and more responsibly sourced products and services. A driver of the QNIDS is global decarbonisation, and the Queensland Government is committed to developing industries that expand Queensland's footprint in high-value supply chains that take advantage of this shift.

Six key industries play a part in the state's decarbonisation efforts, enabling industry development and economic growth. They act at the intersection of what the world needs and what Queensland has:

- » Renewable energy manufacturing and infrastructure development
- » Critical mineral processing, manufacturing and product development
- » Battery industry development
- » Green hydrogen
- » Circular economy, including resource recovery and recycling
- » Bioeconomy, including biofuels and sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

The place-based focus of the FNQIP facilitates opportunities through a framework that ensures infrastructure planning is an enabler for industry development.

» LOCAL THRIVING COMMUNITIES

The Queensland Government acknowledges the importance of valuing, protecting and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rich and diverse knowledges, cultures and traditions. Putting this into effect to support authentic co-design requires genuine partnership and shared decision making between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to ensure First Nations knowledges, cultures and traditions are embedded in planning and development processes.

There are opportunities for First Nations peoples to lead decision making in relation to infrastructure planning guided by the FNQIP through shared decision making, a key priority of Closing the Gap. Shared decision making is about improving the design, delivery and investment in service delivery by working in partnership with Local Decision-Making Bodies (LDMBs) established in Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The establishment of LDMBs is giving communities a direct link to the Queensland Government to influence the design and delivery of services, ensure investment makes their community stronger and maximise opportunities for local service and industry partnerships. This includes opportunities for First Nations peoples to play a leading role in the transition to a clean energy industry in Queensland.

» CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The FNQIP supports the Queensland Government's commitment to action on climate, protecting and conserving the environment, and vision for the future of our natural assets and biodiversity contained within the *Queensland Climate Action Plan, Conserving Nature – a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Queensland*, and the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan*.

FNQ is rich in cultural landscapes and natural assets and home to two World Heritage Areas. The FNQIP will also support the Queensland Government's commitments under the SIS and the objectives for the community to protect biodiversity and the environment. By working together, infrastructure can be designed to protect and enhance environmental values including biodiversity and being sensitive to the surrounding environment.



Laura Quinkan Dance Festival (Source: Tourism Tropical North Queensland)

» FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND

Far North Queensland is a large and diverse region that stretches from the Torres Strait, through Cape York to the greater Cairns area in the south, rich in unique natural landscapes.

Far North Queensland

» FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

For thousands of years, First Nations peoples have lived in FNQ with rich and distinct cultures across Torres Strait, Northern Peninsula Area, Cape York, Daintree, Wet Tropics, Tablelands, inland and coastal regions.

These communities maintain traditional customs and possess invaluable knowledge of the land and sea Country, providing critical lessons for ongoing land and natural resource management. At least 43 distinct First Nations languages belong to the area. First Nations peoples are an integral part of the region's social fabric and identity, yet they continue to experience diminished access to services, facilities, housing, education, and employment.

Many of the issues identified by First Nations peoples during stakeholder engagement are also shared by the wider FNQ community, with some being magnified for First Nations peoples. Key concerns include access to health services, education, and employment pathways. However, opportunities exist to enhance awareness, deepen community understanding, and enrich the region's future development by incorporating cultural sites, values, practices, and responsibilities through integrated regional planning. The Queensland Government will continue to consult with First Nations peoples on how to address these challenges and opportunities through the regional plan reviews.

» CAIRNS AND COAST

Cairns is a dynamic and connected city that serves as the primary gateway into FNQ and is the region's major service centre. Renowned for its proximity to the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas, Cairns and the coastline areas north and south of the city have a diverse economy, including a strong agricultural industry and a mature tourism sector. Cairns International Airport and Port of Cairns (along with the Port of Mourilyan) facilitate exports of sugar, beef, dairy products, seafood, and tropical fruits to international markets, particularly in Asia. Cairns is emerging as a hub for education and research, with several world-class institutions located in the city.

» TABLELANDS AND INLAND

This is a mountainous and scenic area rich with diverse natural landscapes, including the Atherton Tablelands and region extending west. The towns in the area are home to just over 50,000 people. The area has a thriving agricultural industry and is known for being a premier banana and cane growing region as well as horticulture, cattle, poultry and mining. Proximity to the international airport at Cairns and rapidly expanding Asian markets provides further opportunities for increased market access and investment in the area. Tourism is becoming a growing economic driver of employment and prosperity, providing a strong foundation to support future growth in the area.



Weipa Integrated Health Service Centre
(Source: Queensland Health)



Health workers Far North Queensland
(Source: Queensland Health)

» CAPE YORK

Cape York is a sparsely populated area with about 14,000 people living in small communities scattered along the coastline. The peninsula area has rich First Nations culture and heritage, with large parts of Cape York subject to Native Title claims and determinations. The key industries in Cape York are mining and cattle grazing with some tourism. Cape York's diverse and relatively intact landscapes are home to over 15 per cent of Australia's species. Over 5000 plant and animal species are known in the area, including over 270 rare or threatened species.

» WEIPA

Weipa is a small town of about 4000 people and is renowned for its mining operations. Whilst this is currently the dominant industry there is potential for new industry opportunities including space launches and capitalising on the demand for eco, cultural, adventure and fishing tourism. Weipa hosts a rich natural environment, and its native wildlife includes many threatened animal and plant species.

» TORRES STRAIT

The Torres Strait consists of 18 inhabited islands and five NPA communities and is home to almost 8000 people. The Torres Strait is a multicultural society that recognises and celebrates a rich cultural heritage — an attraction and asset currently gaining momentum in tourism markets. The Great Barrier Reef reaches its northernmost extent in the Torres Strait with the region known for its relatively pristine marine and island biodiversity. The Torres Strait's extensive seagrass meadows support populations of dugong, green turtle, and fishery species.



Spirit of Freedom (Source: Tourism Tropical North Queensland)

» 20-YEAR OUTLOOK

Factors driving transformative change across the region over the next 20 years.

20-year outlook

Key drivers of change across FNQ over the next 20 years include decarbonisation, adaptation to climate change, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' self-determination, national security and Indo-Pacific relationships, and health and wellbeing.

These drivers will bring about transformative change and shape long-term strategic and policy directions and investment in the region. Each of FNQ's strategic regional priorities and associated infrastructure initiatives respond to these drivers.

» DECARBONISATION

The move towards net-zero emissions is driving a transformation in energy markets to renewable sources of energy. Queensland's energy generation mix is transforming to include more wind, solar and storage to meet energy demand and emissions targets driven by the QEJP. Unlocking renewable capacity through the proposed REZs in North and FNQ will be critical in enabling this transition. FNQ has natural endowments to potentially yield a competitive advantage in these emerging clean energy industries and markets. To support the transition there will likely be increased investment in low-emission assets and infrastructure, primarily in transport, energy and buildings.

The energy transformation will decarbonise Queensland's electricity network and accelerate the growth in new and emerging industries in FNQ. Decarbonisation will steer growth in renewable energy manufacturing and infrastructure development, critical minerals, circular economy (including resource recovery) and bioeconomy. Decarbonisation will drive established industries to adopt innovative approaches to low-emission business models.

Decarbonisation will also drive growth in natural capital markets and nature-based investment. FNQ is uniquely positioned to play a leading role in carbon and nature repair markets owing to its unique biodiversity and iconic natural assets such as native vegetation, oceans, coastal habitats, and wetlands — our natural carbon sinks. The preservation of natural assets will play an increasing role in contributing to Queensland's 75 per cent emission reduction target by 2035 and to support disaster mitigation in the region.

Net-zero infrastructure

Infrastructure contributes to annual greenhouse gas emissions across Queensland and focused efforts to reduce emissions from infrastructure assets and services can support the government in meeting its climate change targets. The increasing expenditure and long operational life of infrastructure means that the progress towards net-zero infrastructure is embedded in planning and decision making. Reducing emissions from government infrastructure is part of the solution through increasing the use of recycled materials, minimising construction waste and optimising designs by improving infrastructure sustainability.

The Queensland Government has legislated a 75 per cent emissions reduction target by 2035. Achieving the 75 per cent emissions target by 2035 is dependent on the Queensland Government and the Australian Government working together to pursue significant action across all sectors of the economy. New action to decarbonise key sectors of the economy, including the built environment, will further secure Queensland's economic future and ultimately ensure Queensland remains a great place to live. As a tropical living environment, there are opportunities for FNQ to continue to demonstrate its unique commitment to providing innovative tropical infrastructure with a focus on practical and sustainable solutions.

» ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The region will need to adapt to extreme and unprecedented weather events as climate change will exacerbate the frequency and scale of natural disasters. This increases the risk of impact to the natural and built environment, water supply and reliability, energy supply and critical infrastructure, low-lying areas, accessing remote and coastal communities, supply chain resilience and access

to essential services. To manage the impacts of a changing climate, FNQ's agriculture, marine, fishing and tourism industries will need to innovate and adopt new technologies and practices. Preserving healthy, intact ecosystems can also mitigate people and infrastructure from the impacts of extreme weather events.

Disaster recovery response

During disaster season, FNQ communities are susceptible to severe disaster events, particularly cyclones and floods. In response to such events, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) manages and coordinates the Queensland Government program of infrastructure renewal and recovery within disaster-affected communities, with a focus on working with state and local government partners to deliver best practice administration of public reconstruction and resilience funds. This fits within QRA's broader remit of coordinating action to improve the resilience of Queensland communities and facilitating locally led disaster recovery.

Financial assistance to help communities recover from eligible disasters can be provided through activating the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), which is jointly funded by the Australian Government and state and territory governments.

Throughout the 2023–24 disaster season, Queensland has seen twelve disaster events impacting the state, including Tropical Cyclone Jasper (TC Jasper), which resulted in record breaking flooding across the Far North. Following this event, QRA activated DRFA measures to provide personal hardship assistance to impacted communities, undertake counter disaster operations, cover the costs of clean-up and restore damaged roads, bridges and other essential public infrastructure. This included the development of a range of DRFA exceptional circumstances packages to support councils with medium and longer-term recovery through initiatives such as Local Recovery and Resilience Grants, and providing funding support for the tourism industry, primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profits.

Due to the nature of this event, QRA is coordinating the development of a State Recovery and Resilience Plan (the Plan) to provide a single coherent pathway to recovery addressing the impacts of TC Jasper and other significant disaster events that were activated across the state in the 2023–24 disaster season. The Plan will include local activities, regional recovery and resilience priorities, and State and Australian Government initiatives and funding opportunities to capture and measure recovery and resilience progress over time.

20-year outlook

Resilient infrastructure

Resilient infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting communities to withstand, respond to and recover from seasonal weather impacts and natural disasters. Planning for resilient infrastructure has the potential to significantly reduce disaster recovery costs and ensure supply chain security and maintain connectivity during events. The Queensland Government is committed to strengthening disaster resilience, so our communities are better equipped to deal with the increasing prevalence of natural disasters. The *Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2022–2027* promotes a systems approach to resilience that connects a range of agencies and sectors to deliver improved outcomes for Queensland, including a commitment to deliver more resilient infrastructure to enhance connectivity and supply chain resilience.



Aurukun Access Road, Cape York Region Package CARP works, July 2023 (Source: DTMR)

Regional Resilience Strategies

Queensland's suite of Regional Resilience Strategies ensures every region across Queensland is now part of a locally led, regionally coordinated and state-facilitated blueprint to strengthen disaster resilience.

Every community is different, so these strategies have used a co-design process and place-based approach, recognising that communities are best placed to understand and identify their needs. The strategies reflect local communities working together and sharing local knowledge to address local risks.

The relevant strategies for FNQ are:

- » *Hinterland to Gulf Regional Resilience Strategy*
- » *Wet Tropics Regional Resilience Strategy*
- » *Cape York and Torres Strait Regional Resilience Strategy.*

These strategies include the core resilience needs of these regions, many of which are directly related to regional infrastructure priorities in the FNQIP.

In addition to these strategies, councils have developed Local Resilience Action Plans to provide a clear forward plan of resilience and disaster mitigation activities that may form the basis of submissions for future funding opportunities.

Betterment

Queensland leads the nation in building resilience in its communities through betterment programs. Betterment allows local governments and state agencies to rebuild essential public assets to a more resilient standard to help them withstand the impacts of future natural disasters. Queensland's betterment programs are jointly funded (50:50) by the Australian and Queensland governments under Category D of the DRFA.

Since 2013 when the first Betterment Fund was established by QRA, more than 531 projects have been approved across 70 local government areas in Queensland with a betterment value of more than \$434 million to help create stronger, more resilient Queensland communities (figures as of July 2023).

Of the 531 betterment projects completed to July 2023, 423 projects have been subsequently impacted, and 79 per cent of those impacted suffered no damage. It has been estimated that from a \$174 million investment, there is \$397.5 million in avoided reconstruction costs or only minor superficial damage.

Not only has betterment achieved substantial cost savings through more resilient infrastructure, but it has also improved the lives of those living within the impacted communities, including:

- » increasing the resilience of Queensland communities to natural disasters
- » reducing incidents, injuries and fatalities during and after natural disasters
- » improving asset utility and connectivity during and after natural disasters.

Queensland's experience with betterment funds shows that an upfront investment in rebuilding impacted assets to be more resilient saves money for all levels of government in future disasters. The Queensland Government will continue to administer and deliver on key betterment programs within FNQ.



Isabella Creek Bridge, Endeavour Valley Road, completed betterment works, December 2020 (Source: DTMR)

20-year outlook

» CASE STUDY

Tropical Cyclone Jasper leaves trail of road damage

Works are continuing to reconnect isolated FNQ communities after sustained heavy rainfall and flooding associated with TC Jasper in late December 2023 caused major road damage across the region.

TC Jasper crossed the coast as a Category 2 cyclone, then weakened to a tropical low that took almost five days to cross Cape York Peninsula.

This led to significant rainfall and a total of 2086 mm was recorded in six days at Whyanbeel Valley north of Port Douglas, 1891 mm at Kuranda Railway Station and 1593 mm at White Cliff Point near Mount Molloy.

As a result, landslips occurred on all four range roads between Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands - Palmerston Highway, Gillies Range Road, Kennedy Highway (known locally as Kuranda Range Road) and Mossman-Mount Molloy Road.

Significant landslips and severe road damage also occurred at multiple locations on the Captain Cook Highway, while several suburbs in Cairns and the townships of Wujal Wujal and Degarra were devastated by flooding.

A total of 1706 kilometres of state-controlled roads were closed or had restricted access in local government areas activated under DRFA.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) had crews assessing road damage and making urgent repairs to restore access for communities. By late December 2023, all but 46 kilometres of state-controlled roads had been reopened.

A 27-kilometre section of the Captain Cook Highway between Buchans Point and Oak Beach was closed due to significant damage and reopened on 20 January 2024, with several single-lane sections remaining under traffic control.

The reopening reconnected local communities ahead of the school year and allowed for freight and other critical supplies to move between Cairns and Port Douglas.

The recovery works are jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments through the DRFA.



Captain Cook Highway (Cairns-Mossman) — landslide at Buchans Point caused by TC Jasper December 2023 (Source: DTMR)

» ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES' SELF-DETERMINATION

Increasing recognition of the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across FNQ will continue to see Native Title determinations. This includes tenure changes to enable Traditional Owners to live on Country, benefit economically, and manage high value areas jointly as national parks. The *2022 Statement of Commitment* reaffirms the Queensland Government commitment to reframe the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, committing to working together to deliver real outcomes.

Through self-determination and improved frameworks there is an opportunity for greater economic inclusion and liveability for First Nations peoples in FNQ. Closing the gap between First Nations peoples and non-Indigenous Australians will continue to remain a priority with health outcomes impacted by food security, access to water, housing, access to health services, levels of educational attainment and climate change. Genuine partnership and shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will drive improvements in economic participation and liveability for First Nations peoples in FNQ.

» NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE INDO PACIFIC REGION

Geo-political tensions and Australia's strategic circumstances have driven change in how we might manage conflicts and threats in the future, necessitating a focus on northern Australia. The *Defence Strategic Review 2023* recommends that "Australia's immediate region encompassing the north-eastern Indian Ocean through maritime Southeast Asia into the Pacific, including our northern approaches, should be the primary area of military interest for Australia's national defence." This will include an enhanced network of bases, ports and barracks across Northern Australia.

The Royal Australian Navy's presence in Cairns and the maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) of vessels locally plays an essential role in protecting Australia's northern maritime borders. With access to key shipping and air routes and its geographic location, FNQ provides a strategic link between Australia, and the broader Indo-Pacific region. Further investment in defence in FNQ will encourage prime contractors serving defence to locate logistics infrastructure closer to key defence user facilities.

» HEALTH AND WELLBEING













An ageing population and a growing interest and expenditure in personal health and wellbeing are key drivers of future demand for accessible, specialist medical services and tailored community-based healthcare facilities (including digital healthcare). People living in rural and remote Australia experience poorer health outcomes, higher rates of chronic disease and lower life expectancy than those living in metropolitan areas. These rates are even higher for First Nations peoples which necessitates a continued focus on closing the gap on the long-term social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

FNQ has a comparative advantage in tropical health due to its geographical location and its expertise in the research, development, and delivery of healthcare solutions for tropical diseases. Cairns is home to the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine, located at James Cook University that works in partnership with other research institutions, governments, and organisations to develop innovative solutions for tropical health issues, such as malaria, dengue fever, and other infectious diseases prevalent in tropical regions. Demographic, cultural and geographic factors will continue to drive demand in the FNQ health and social assistance sector.

Far North Queensland Infrastructure Map

THE REGION'S KEY INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS THAT UNDERPIN THE ECONOMY

LEGEND

	Arterial roads		Port
	Rail network	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Port of Port Kennedy*2. Port of Skardon River3. Port of Weipa4. Chith Export Facility**5. Port of Quintell Beach6. Port of Cape Flattery7. Port of Cooktown8. Port of Cairns9. Port of Mourilyan	
	Airport	<p>*Thursday Island **Servicing the Amrun bauxite mine</p>	
	Solar farm		
	Wind farm		
	Hydroelectric power station		Water Storage ⁺
	Mining	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Loggy Creek Dam2. Coen Water Supply Dam3. Copperlode Falls Dam4. Tinaroo Falls Dam5. Wild River Dam6. Ibis Dam7. Koombaloo Dam8. Big Reef Dam9. Charleston Dam10. Copperfield River Gorge Dam	
	Defence	<p>⁺ Not an exhaustive list of FNQ water storage</p>	
	Education		Tourist attraction
	Great Barrier Reef World Heritage site	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pajinka (Tip of Cape York)2. Cooktown3. Daintree rainforest4. Port Douglas5. Great Barrier Reef6. Cairns7. Kuranda8. Atherton Tablelands9. Chillagoe-Mungana Caves National Park	
	Wet Tropics World Heritage Area		
	Large cattle station [#]		
	Agriculture		
	Hospital		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Thursday Island Hospital2. Bamaga Hospital3. Weipa Hospital4. Cooktown Hospital5. Mareeba Hospital6. Cairns Hospital7. Atherton Hospital8. Gordonvale Hospital9. Herberton Hospital10. Babinda Hospital11. Innisfail Hospital12. Tully Hospital		

[#] FNQ includes a mix of small, medium, and large cattle properties which are distributed throughout the region. The FNQ Infrastructure Map indicates the location of large cattle properties only.



Port of Weipa

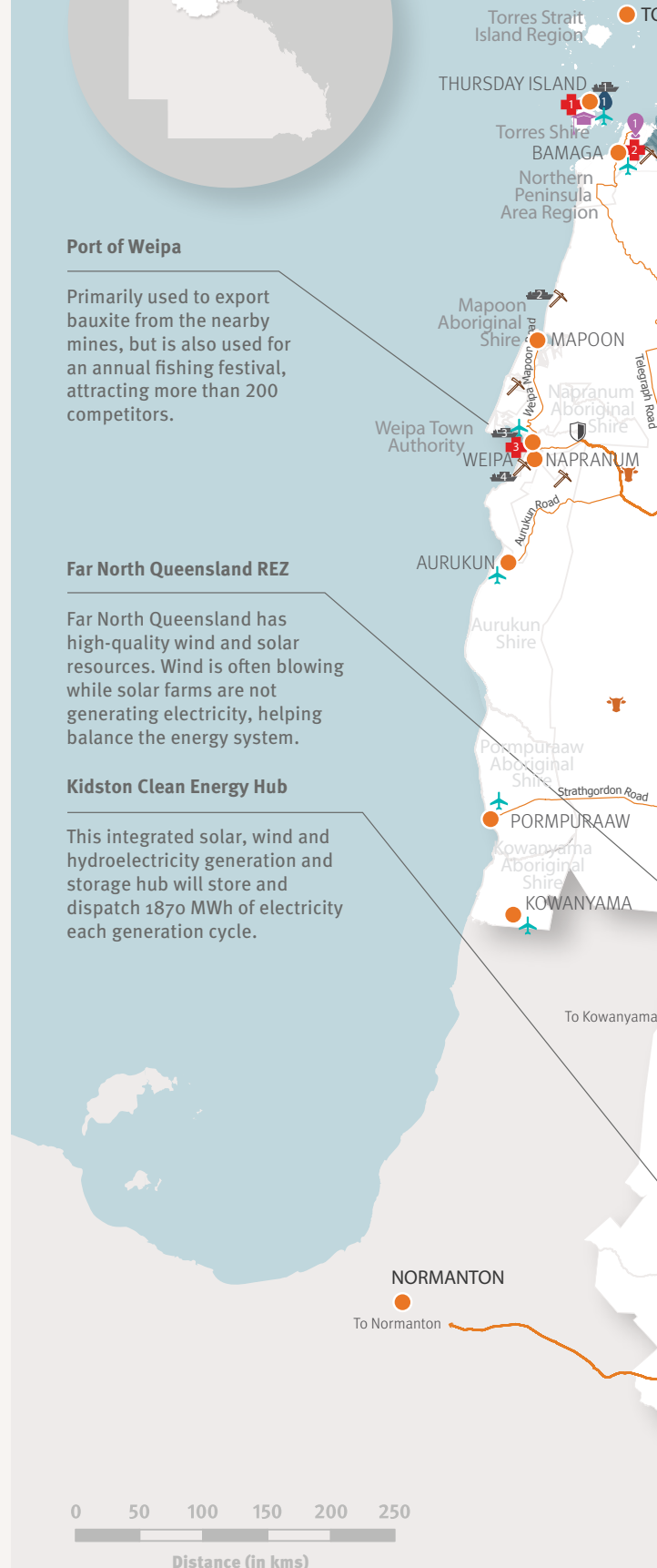
Primarily used to export bauxite from the nearby mines, but is also used for an annual fishing festival, attracting more than 200 competitors.

Far North Queensland REZ

Far North Queensland has high-quality wind and solar resources. Wind is often blowing while solar farms are not generating electricity, helping balance the energy system.

Kidston Clean Energy Hub

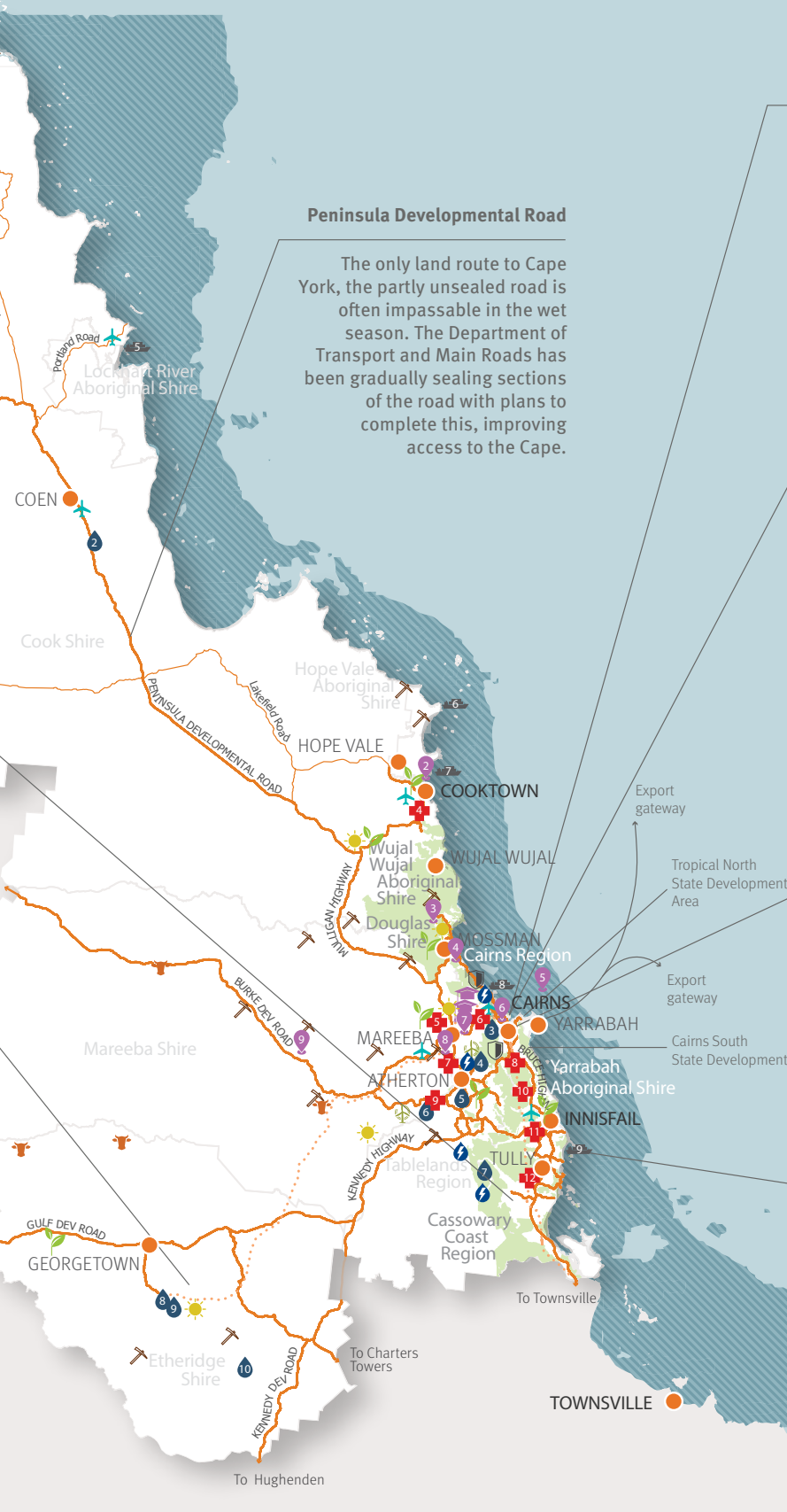
This integrated solar, wind and hydroelectricity generation and storage hub will store and dispatch 1870 MWh of electricity each generation cycle.



Map for illustrative purposes only



TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS



Peninsula Developmental Road

The only land route to Cape York, the partly unsealed road is often impassable in the wet season. The Department of Transport and Main Roads has been gradually sealing sections of the road with plans to complete this, improving access to the Cape.

Cairns Hospital

The Cairns Hospital is the largest major referral hospital in Far North Queensland, caring for patients from Tully to the Torres Strait. The Far North Queensland Health and Innovation Precinct will support the hospital's growth and development. It will comprise the Cairns Health and Innovation Centre, a new surgical centre, the Cairns Tropical Enterprise Centre, incorporating the James Cook University Clinical School and other related businesses.

Cairns Airport

The primary entry point for half of domestic tourists and almost all international tourists to the region. It is a large cargo port, with a Regional Trade Distribution Centre, sending high value goods to domestic and international markets. The domestic terminal was upgraded in 2020 and upgrade work to increase the airport's passenger capacity has commenced on the international terminal, due for completion in 2025. Established MRO capability is prominent within the general aviation precinct.

Port of Cairns

The port caters for a diverse range of bulk, project and cargo customers. It is home to industries including tourism, cruise ships, superyachts, fisheries, marine education, MRO, HMAS Cairns naval base and the Department of Defence Regional Maintenance Centre – North East. MRO facilities include significant ship lift capabilities, attracting clients from Australia and overseas.

Port of Mourilyan

Used for bulk commodities exports (iron ore, sugar and molasses), includes a livestock export facility and has the capacity to expand into new medium-bulk cargo exports.

Regional opportunities and challenges

» HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

Regional stakeholder engagement informed the FNQIP.

Six in-person and online workshops were held with local governments, industry, community and First Nations peoples between September and November 2022 to inform the draft FNQ strategic regional priorities. In-person workshops were held in Atherton, Cairns, Cooktown, Thursday Island and Weipa.

The draft FNQ strategic regional priorities were tested with stakeholders in early 2023. Workshops and an online survey provided government, industry and community stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on regional industry opportunities, liveability challenges and infrastructure enablers. Stakeholders provided valuable insights and feedback throughout consultation which informed the FNQIP.

Key opportunities identified by stakeholders include:



- » The natural endowments that underpin the FNQ economy and lifestyle place the region at a competitive advantage in emerging clean energy industries and markets, allowing the region to capitalise on:
 - ▶ Emerging circular economy industries and the availability of feedstocks for biofutures projects
 - ▶ The development of biofuels, including SAF
 - ▶ The commitment to decarbonise by designing fit-for-purpose housing appropriate for climate management and resilience
 - ▶ The potential reuse of existing infrastructure for new critical mineral export and hydrogen development
 - ▶ Current research and development infrastructure such as Walkamin, South Johnstone and Mareeba to mature tropical agriculture activity.
- » Develop and grow emerging industries through:
 - ▶ The investment potential enabled by the Common User Facility located at the Cairns Marine Precinct
 - ▶ The focus on Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games to drive cultural, experiential and marine based tourism and visitation
 - ▶ Release of industrial land in the Cairns South State Development Area (CSSDA)
 - ▶ Improved transport infrastructure, including FNQ regional air services, to advance economic development opportunities in freight and tourism
 - ▶ Broadening economic development through leveraging the regional strengths in:
 - › defence supply chains
 - › aviation – MRO and composites manufacturing
 - › vessels and boat building, including MRO
 - › agriculture – bulk water security including the investigation of alternate water sources in primary agricultural areas
 - › circular economy (including resource recovery and recycling)
 - › critical mineral processing.
- » Develop and grow local processing and manufacturing capacity for horticulture to adapt to processing oversupplied and/or downgraded regionally grown fresh produce, also aiding FNQ food security.
- » Harness First Nations cultural knowledge to assist with effective natural resource management, agriculture, aquaculture and native ingredients supply and manufacturing.
- » Implement a place-based approach to social infrastructure which combines public, private and not-for-profit services in one location.
- » Improve digital connectivity to enable the development of new industries (including Agtech) and access to digital health care services.
- » Explore the potential for investment in new First Nations arts and cultural tourism experiences and establish alternative experiences such as eco-tourism, agritourism and experiential tourism.

The Queensland Government has consulted FNQ local governments, industry and community to identify regional infrastructure priorities to focus on opportunities and challenges and influence the region's future prosperity. Local government input on the draft infrastructure priorities for this plan was provided through a targeted review in June 2023. Regional Planning Committee (RPC) members were also engaged through the FNQ and CY RPC meetings, held in July 2023.

The FNQIP was endorsed in late 2023 however public release was delayed due to ex-TC Jasper impacts on the FNQ region in December 2023. The FNQIP has been updated to reflect ex-TC Jasper impacts and relevant regional recovery and resilience actions. All levels of government, the private sector and community have a role in realising the opportunities and addressing the challenges.

Key challenges identified by stakeholders include:



- » **Increasing costs** of providing infrastructure to remote and regional locations, including the provision and maintenance of maritime and airport infrastructure in smaller communities.
- » **Ensuring that infrastructure provision is fit for purpose** and is delivered to the agreed scope to minimise maintenance, life cycle and operating costs.
- » **The need for climate resilient infrastructure** to meet the needs of a diverse and decentralised population.
- » **Housing supply and diversity** to address affordability, seasonal and key workforce growth in addition to overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.
- » **Land tenure issues** and balancing community needs and aspirations and ongoing sustainable resource development.
- » **Increasing demands** on health and education services and facilities, requiring careful management of new and ageing infrastructure.
- » **Access to clean, reliable energy** and securing a safe, clean water supply and the ability of small remote communities to adequately access water supply solutions.
- » **Water access and security** for domestic use and for the agricultural sector to enable greater productivity.
- » **The provision of transport infrastructure to remote communities** to the north and west and connectivity to Cairns provides vital agriculture, mining and supply chain linkages but is constrained by topography and the increasing challenge of balancing a shared user space for road freight and passenger vehicles.
- » **The transport corridors between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands** provide critical supply chain links for freight movement, services and the community. The corridors pass through difficult terrain and continue to create challenges for connectivity and efficiency.
- » **Limited public transport options** reduce the ability for those people without vehicle access to move around the region.
- » **Ensuring that infrastructure and the establishment of experiential tourism and corridors** do not contribute to the fragmentation of habitat and the disruption of ecology that underpin the biodiversity values of the region.
- » **Managing future development of maritime and agricultural industries** to avoid impacts to reef water quality.
- » **Control of invasive species;** managing biosecurity threats and impacts from intensive agriculture on the natural environment, such as sediment and nutrient pollution reaching natural waterways.
- » **Limited digital connectivity impacts** liveability, agriculture, commercial activities, tourism development, and the delivery of e-health services.



Reef Magic (Source: Tourism Tropical North Queensland)

» FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND STRATEGIC REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Far North Queensland's strategic regional priorities for economic and social development.

Far North Queensland strategic regional priorities

The strategic regional priorities reflect the unique characteristics of FNQ and outline where the region wants to be in 20 years.

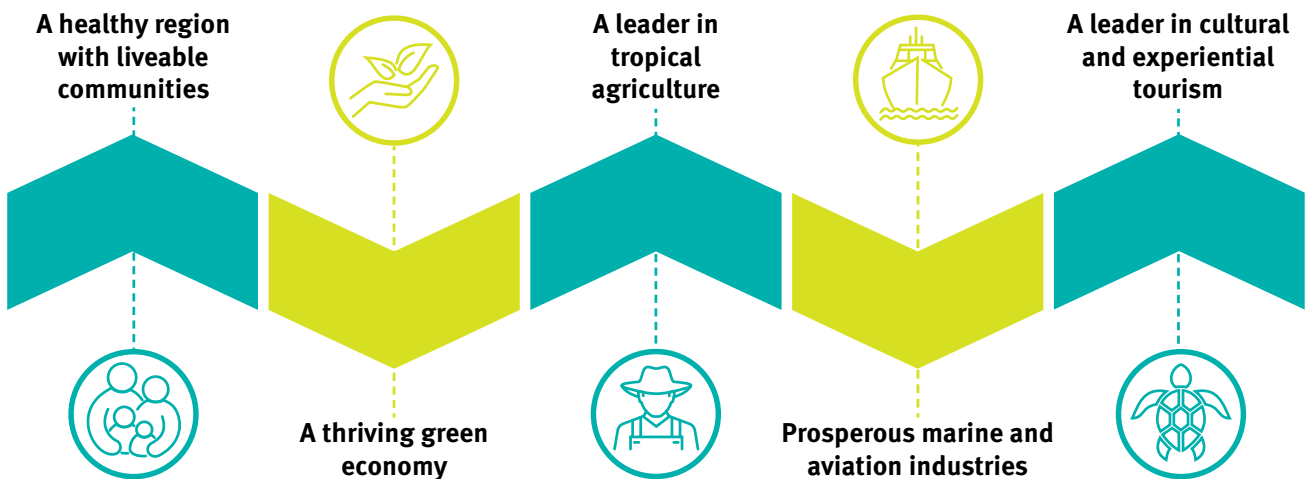
These strategic regional priorities are informed by consultation with regional stakeholders and a review of the region’s existing strategic documents and available data. The strategic regional priorities leverage FNQ’s competitive strengths in emerging industries and support traditional industry strengths of marine, aviation, tropical agriculture and tourism.

The strategic regional priorities will guide and enable coordinated infrastructure planning and prioritise investment by state agencies, local government and industry, as well as inform prioritised investment by the Australian Government.

The strategic regional priorities will align other statewide policies and strategies through a place-based planning approach. These strategic regional priorities will also inform land use planning considerations as part of the review of relevant statutory regional plans for the region.

As a guide for long term strategic infrastructure investment, the strategic regional priorities are ambition statements, and includes a vision for the future, focus areas and priorities for infrastructure. These strategic regional priorities will inform the Queensland Government’s infrastructure planning and investment considerations for the region.

» STRATEGIC REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



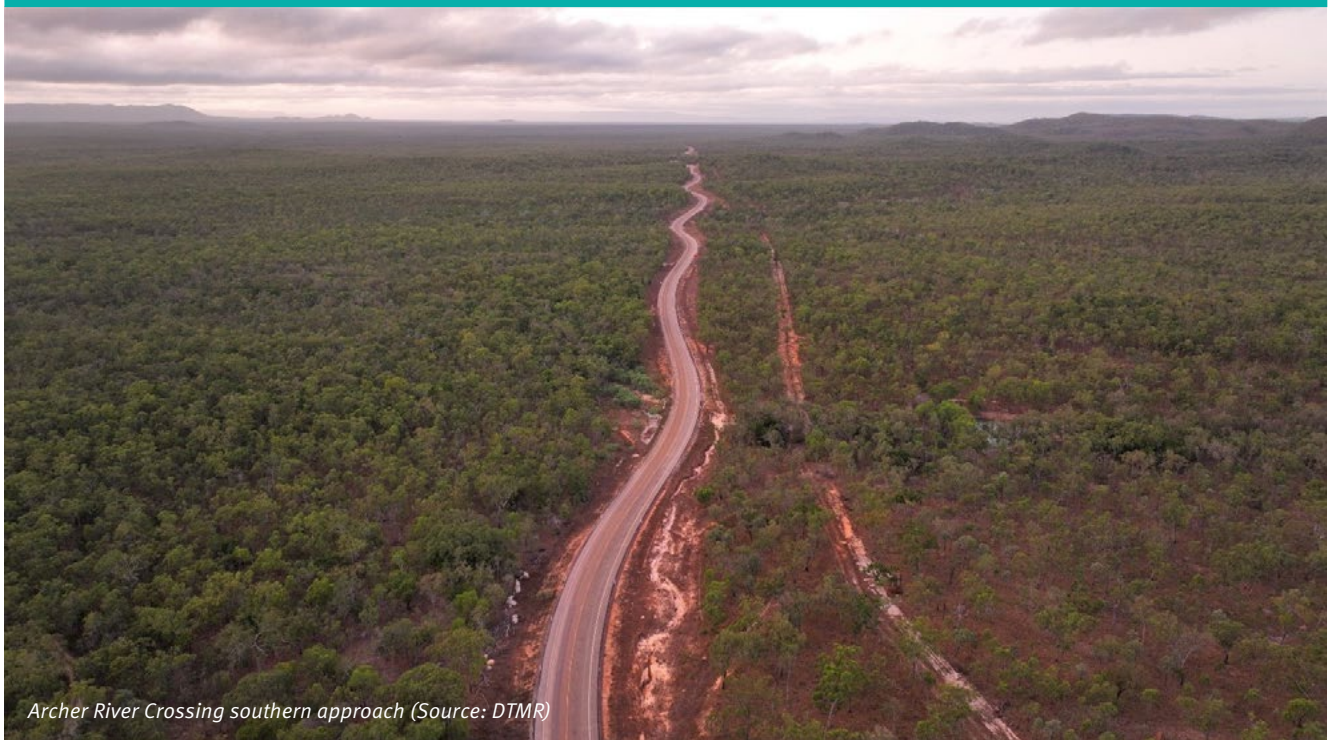


A healthy region with liveable communities

Our vision for the future

The liveability of the FNQ region and community well-being continues to improve reflecting the diverse characteristics of the region and the needs of its discrete and remote Indigenous communities. The availability and diversity of social and affordable housing will continue to be a key enabler, particularly in attracting and retaining workforce and meeting the diverse housing needs of the region's communities.

Improved transport (road, sea and air) connectivity and all-weather access will also play an integral part in connecting the communities throughout the region including access to essential goods and services and enhancing food security. Improved digital connectivity will enable FNQ businesses to participate and benefit in the growing digital economy as well as enable innovative delivery of education and healthcare services, particularly in rural and remote communities.



Archer River Crossing southern approach (Source: DTMR)

Regional focus areas

» HOUSING SUPPLY AND DIVERSITY

Housing has a critical role in the labour market allowing workers to move geographically to fill labour needs. In FNQ, appropriate housing for essential workers (including health, education and emergency services), in addition to a seasonal agricultural and tourism workforce is a key priority to ensure the region continues to thrive. Planning for and facilitating diverse and affordable housing supply in the region will support greater labour mobility, attract a growing number of international (and domestic) students, help address skills attraction and retention and lift economic output across all industries.

Drivers of the housing market in FNQ differ across each location and these complexities require a shared response across all levels of government, the private sector and non-government organisations.

Much of the health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in Queensland can be attributed to the broader social determinants of health. Housing is a key social determinant of health, and the relationship between housing outcomes and health outcomes is interdependent. In addition, there are clear links between the quality and location of housing and health outcomes.

Overcrowding is a significant issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with overcrowding rates increasing with remoteness. In remote areas 26 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are living in overcrowded housing, increasing to 51 per cent in very remote areas. Overcrowding in remote and very remote areas of FNQ is much higher compared to Cairns which reflects the Queensland average. Partnering and shared decision making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities on the design, construction and maintenance of housing contributes to addressing the relationship between housing and health outcomes.

As climate change continues to have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations, resilient housing designs, such as innovative and modern methods of construction, including modular construction, can mitigate some of the impacts and improve public health outcomes. Within FNQ, sustained heat contributes to health-related illnesses, and opportunities exist to design cool green communities as part of a multi-faceted response to climate change impacts. Appropriate housing for people living with disability and older persons enables the community to live in their homes longer and be close to support networks.

Social housing

Social housing plays a key role in creating liveable and well-serviced FNQ communities. Social housing is critical for some individuals and households who don't have the opportunity to access and sustain appropriate housing options in their community. Social housing dwellings are managed directly by the State Government or by community housing providers, and some state-owned properties may be leased by non-government organisations to provide social housing or crisis accommodation. Partnerships between all levels of government, the private sector and community housing providers create levers to help improve affordability, access and innovation in housing delivery. The supply of social housing can also enable access to safe, secure and affordable housing and contribute to economic participation, particularly for key groups including older women, women and families experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence, people living with disability and young people.

Regional focus areas

» HEALTH AND WELLBEING

People living in rural and remote areas of Australia experience poorer health outcomes, higher rates of chronic disease and lower life expectancy than those living in metropolitan areas. These rates are even higher for First Nations peoples, who comprise 15 per cent of the FNQ population. Geographical and systemic barriers contribute to service duplication, inefficient spending and gaps in service delivery, which is further exacerbated by social and cultural determinants, which contribute to inequitable access to healthcare and health outcomes.

A healthy and liveable region requires access to fresh affordable food, clean water, reliable and affordable energy and digital connectivity. In FNQ water capacity and security remains a challenge, and it is important to balance urban and agricultural water needs, to ensure that water access and use by a growing resident and tourist population does not constrain agricultural growth (and vice versa). Appropriate and inclusive access to education, investment in housing, transport and healthcare hubs was also identified by stakeholders as critical to the continued growth of the region. Improvements across education, housing, transport and healthcare will enhance health services and support the health and disability workforce in FNQ.

In many FNQ communities, food is rarely fresh, often expensive and basic items are frequently unavailable. This is primarily experienced in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Poor nutrition contributes to unhealthy weight and chronic disease including type 2 diabetes, stroke and coronary heart disease — the largest cause of mortality in remote First Nations communities. Many communities in FNQ have limited access to medical services, face a shortage of general practitioners and are serviced by the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Healthcare hubs in Cairns, Mareeba and Atherton have important roles as service providers to regional and remote communities of both FNQ and Papua New Guinea. The future Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct, which will involve a purpose-built education and training, research and innovation centre, is essential to the hospital's growth and development.

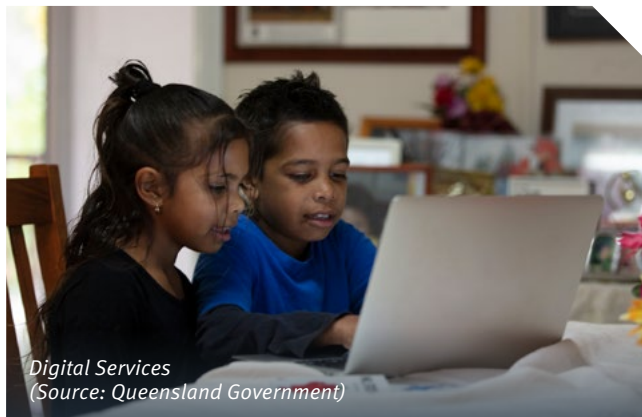
The precinct's vision is to deliver an interdisciplinary technology-focussed, state of the art precinct for education, training, research, and innovation in FNQ that connects Cairns into the Asia Pacific.

» DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Digital connectivity plays a crucial role in achieving a healthy community, particularly in remote areas, as it supports access to telemedicine, remote learning and other essential services including disaster resilience and recovery. Many homes and businesses in the larger FNQ centres have national broadband network (NBN) fibre-based services, with lesser populated areas serviced by NBN satellite and fixed wireless. Bandwidth and speeds across FNQ vary, mobile coverage outside of larger towns can be intermittent and costly and many areas have no coverage. Digital connectivity will enable industries to thrive and underpin innovation, access to education and help FNQ to retain, grow and attract a highly skilled workforce.

The availability of digital connectivity can help bridge the gap in healthcare and education services between urban and rural areas, allowing individuals to access information and resources regardless of their location. Digital connectivity can also enhance social connectedness and community resilience, fostering a sense of belonging and support among community members. In remote centres, significant challenges exist when technology needs repair or replacement (long lead times) and extremes of heat, dirt, dust, salt and conditions impact the longevity of equipment.

Increased connectivity (digital and physical) in remote communities can support addressing inequality and disadvantage and support First Nations peoples to assert their place in the modern economy while retaining their connection to land and sea Country. Improving bandwidth and speed of digital connections can further close the gap in employment, education, and healthcare in remote communities.



Digital Services
(Source: Queensland Government)

» TRANSPORT

Improving transport connections to enable better access to health and education services and increase food security.

Transport infrastructure in FNQ is varied and diverse and must be resilient to maintain liveability across the region and sustain economic growth and development. Cairns Airport is the primary point of entry for tourists and visitors to the region with direct flights from most large Australian cities and international destinations including Papua New Guinea, Japan, Singapore and Indonesia. The Port of Cairns is the focus of goods import and export, visits to the Great Barrier Reef, cruise and superyacht tourism and the site of the HMAS Cairns Naval Base. Other ports and airports throughout FNQ (refer infrastructure map) are vital for other exports, transporting goods and people and critical in times of disaster events. The Bruce Highway, Kennedy Highway and North Coast Line provide land transport connections south and west.

Roads remain the primary method to connect communities to services. A lack of all-weather access roads in some parts of the region limits access. Similarly, safe, accessible and affordable public transport enables people without vehicle access to move around the region. Availability of public transport options can also assist in workforce mobility and retention. Marine infrastructure is important to move goods to and through the region and is the key transport network in Torres Strait.

Expanding agriculture and industries is hindered in some areas by the inability to transport produce to markets year round due to road closures in the wet season. Improved transport connections across all modes will contribute to facilitating the full potential of FNQ. It will also work to address supply chain inefficiencies, First Nations advancement and decarbonisation goals.

Sealing the Peninsula Developmental Road was seen as a key economic and liveability enabler by stakeholders, to enable more efficient transport from the remote Cape region, reducing costs and delays and establishing resilient food supply chains. Similarly, stakeholders noted that finalisation of the Mareeba Bypass and sealing of the Burke Developmental Road from Almaden to Chillagoe are strategic priorities for FNQ. The Gulf Developmental Road is critical infrastructure that delivers freight, services and tourism linkages for Etheridge Shire residents.

DTMR is committed to ensuring the state's rail network is capable of responding to long term population growth needs and economic priorities. To inform this, DTMR is undertaking planning to understand the long-term requirements from a whole of rail network perspective, including:

- » key freight and passenger corridors (such as the North Coast Line between Cairns and South East Queensland),
- » integration and optimisation of systems, and
- » achieving broader sustainable and accessible transport outcomes.

This planning will inform further policy, planning and decision-making processes in prioritising investments and effectively allocating resources for the state's rail network.



Kennedy Highway (Source: DTMR)

Regional infrastructure priorities

The following regional infrastructure priorities outline the types of infrastructure needed to realise the strategic regional priority.

They have been developed in partnership with FNQ stakeholders. All levels of government and the private sector have a role in planning and delivering on these priorities.

Strengthen FNQ transport infrastructure to enhance connectivity across the region by:

- » Improved road access to enable reliability, safety and network efficiency between Cairns to Mareeba and Southern Tablelands that delivers the resilient transport needs for existing and future populations and economic growth whilst respecting natural assets.
- » Resilient and reliable road, air and sea connectivity in remote areas of FNQ to enable the timely and safe transportation of patients, medical supplies and healthcare workers.
- » Resilient road, air and sea infrastructure to enable food security in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- » Sealing of the Peninsula Developmental Road to Weipa.
- » Public transport and improved active transport to enable improved physical health and reduced traffic congestion in urban areas, with a focus on fewer emissions and improved air quality.

Improve infrastructure to facilitate liveable communities through:

- » Trunk infrastructure to enable housing supply to support the growth of FNQ communities; and attract and retain workers in existing and new industries.

- » Blue green infrastructure to reduce cooling costs and mitigate the impacts of urban heat island effects and the increasing frequency and intensity of heatwaves.
- » Climatically responsive housing types and diversity to provide varying typologies to cater for all needs of a diverse community that efficiently uses existing infrastructure. This will contribute to reducing overcrowding, undercrowding and associated health issues.
- » Water and sewerage infrastructure to enable improved health by providing suitable washing facilities, and management of wastewater.
- » Upgraded, secure and sustainable drinking water supply, waste treatment and sanitation infrastructure assets that can withstand climate risks to mitigate impacts on those communities vulnerable to existing and exotic illnesses.
- » Digital and telecommunications infrastructure to address black spots in key FNQ transport routes, enable effective disaster management, support small to medium enterprises to thrive, and bridge the gap in healthcare and education services in FNQ.
- » Accessible community infrastructure such as parks, open spaces and community facilities to support an active, healthy and inclusive lifestyle.
- » Education facilities that are fit for purpose and aligned to changing industry and community needs across FNQ.
- » Improved health infrastructure in regional and remote areas of FNQ including community hospitals and community clinics (primary health facilities) and outpatient services sites, to provide basic and some specialist local health care.
- » Infrastructure that continues to protect or enhance biodiversity and offset any significant residual impacts.

» CASE STUDY

Healthy housing for improved health

DHLGPPW is partnering with Queensland Health to pilot a Healthy Housing Program to support improved health outcomes in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The pilot was established under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019–2023* and is being expanded and continued under the *Our Place: A First Nations Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2024–2027*.

The Healthy Housing Program will support healthier home environments and reduce the risk of infectious disease in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through focused health promotion and advice on healthy living practices connected to timely housing repairs and maintenance.

The Healthy Housing Program is a response to the increase of acute rheumatic heart disease in remote and discrete communities and aims to reduce the incidence and prevalence of communicable health diseases exacerbated by poor housing conditions.

Queensland Health identified the pilot locations through preliminary assessments which indicated that Yarrabah and Badu Island are well-positioned as pilot locations due to community structures, the capacity of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations and availability of local trades.

The program is now being delivered to 149 households across the Yarrabah and Badu Island communities.

Supporting the delivery of local government infrastructure

The Queensland Government provides financial support to local governments to enable the delivery of infrastructure. This funding can help bridge this gap by providing much-needed investment in infrastructure which can help spur economic development, improve access to essential services, disaster mitigation and build resilience, and enhance the overall quality of life in regional and remote areas. The projects support job creation, economic stimulus and encourage recreational activities across the state.

Through the 2022–24 Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program, the Queensland Government has committed over \$13.572 million to support delivery of 16 infrastructure and planning projects by FNQ councils.

Over 5 rounds since 2016, the Works for Queensland program has provided \$1.1 billion in allocation funding to support local governments outside South-East Queensland to undertake job-creating maintenance and minor infrastructure projects.

In the current funding round 2021–24, Works for Queensland will provide \$47.74 million to deliver 79 projects in FNQ.

From 2023–24 an allocation of \$51.6 million over two years has been provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils as part of the Indigenous Councils Funding Program. This investment will be used to support council delivery of infrastructure and services to their local communities.

Under the Roads and Transport Alliance, local governments and DTMR cooperate to invest in our regional transport network. Planning and decisions at the local level are undertaken by 17 Regional Roads and Transport Groups across Queensland, who are each allocated annual state funding under the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme, under an arrangement where non-Indigenous councils generally match state funding. In 2023–24, \$76 million was allocated for local governments across Queensland, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community assistance, with a total of over \$286 million allocated over four years.

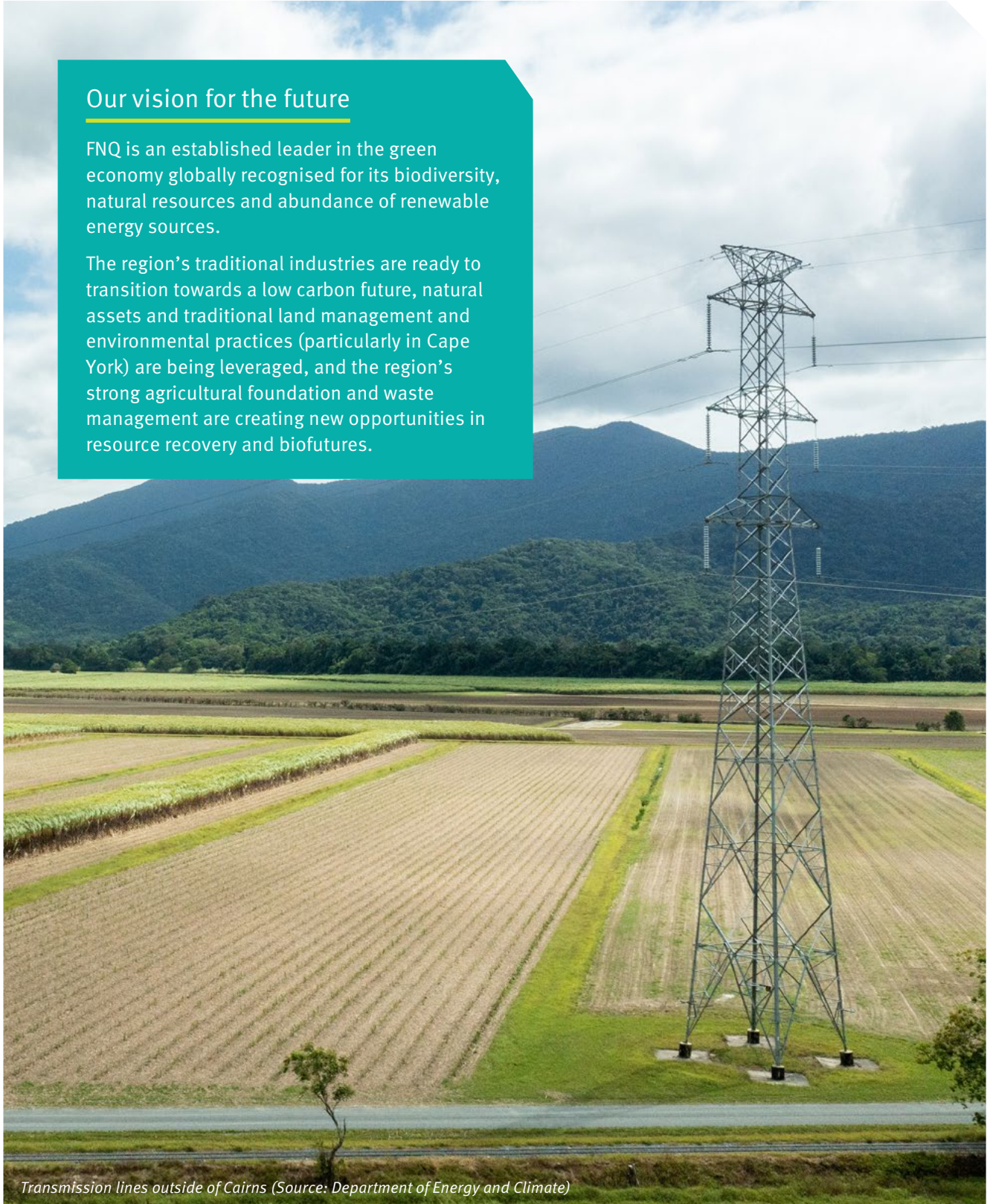


A thriving green economy

Our vision for the future

FNQ is an established leader in the green economy globally recognised for its biodiversity, natural resources and abundance of renewable energy sources.

The region's traditional industries are ready to transition towards a low carbon future, natural assets and traditional land management and environmental practices (particularly in Cape York) are being leveraged, and the region's strong agricultural foundation and waste management are creating new opportunities in resource recovery and biofutures.



Transmission lines outside of Cairns (Source: Department of Energy and Climate)

Regional focus areas

» RENEWABLE ENERGY

The FNQ region is well placed to capitalise on its strong wind, solar and tidal resources to improve energy security and reliability. Spatial planning will be required to ensure that the region's environmental values and sustainability credentials underpinning a green economy are not compromised.

The QEJP outlines the Queensland Government's commitment to achieving 80 per cent renewable energy by 2035, whilst the *Clean Economy Jobs Act 2024* sets a 75 per cent emissions reduction target by 2035. The Queensland Government is also committed to zero net electricity emissions across (the Queensland Government owned Corporation) – Energy Queensland's isolated power stations. Under the QEJP, Energy Queensland will update its Isolated Network Strategy and complete feasibility studies to decarbonise its isolated power stations in each community, including the Gulf of Carpentaria, Cape York and on numerous Torres Strait Islands.

As part of the energy transition, the Queensland Government is co-designing a *Clean Energy Strategy* for remote and First Nations communities to ensure these communities can access and share the benefits of clean, reliable and affordable energy into the future.

Renewable energy offers a crucial opportunity for businesses to decarbonise and enhance their productivity while reducing energy costs. Advanced biofuels and renewable hydrogen may be the way forward for those industries that will be more challenging to decarbonise, such as manufacturing, mining, and aviation. FNQ is ideally positioned as a destination for renewable energy investment with flow on benefits to the local economy and opportunities to improve energy security in remote communities.

The Queensland Government is committed to developing industries that will be in demand for a decarbonising world. FNQ is pivoting towards future opportunities that are aligned to the new emerging industries identified in QNIDS to ensure the region is at the forefront of global markets.

Remote area power supply – microgrids

There are several projects underway to support micro-grid development in remote areas of FNQ. A micro-grid is a small electricity network configured from the integration of energy generation and storage systems such as wind turbines, solar panels, waste to energy, biofuels and batteries.

The \$10 million QMPF is a two-year program offering grants for feasibility studies and projects to develop and deliver microgrid projects. QMPF recipients in FNQ include microgrid build projects in Jumbun and Mossman Gorge, and a feasibility study in Yarrabah to be conducted by Ener-G, with the support of the Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji Peoples Prescribed Body Corporate Aboriginal Corporation.

By supporting a pipeline of microgrid projects through the QMPF, Queenslanders living in regional and First Nations communities can have access to cleaner, more resilient electricity supply.

Resource recovery and biofutures

Resource recovery promotes sustainable waste management by diverting useful waste and end-of-life materials away from landfill to create new products. Biofutures promotes conversion of organic and waste resources into biofuels, bioproducts including bioplastics and biochemicals as an alternative to fossil fuel derived products. FNQ has an efficient and modern agricultural industry complemented by agricultural land and essential feedstocks for resource recovery and biofutures supply chains.

The region is a major sugar producer and can draw on existing sugarcane for use in polyethylene and resins, and other agricultural biomass for conversion. Given that FNQ is rich in links to agriculture and has existing infrastructure such as sugar mills, stakeholders identified opportunities in SAF which has the potential to become an emerging new energy transition sector. FNQ has established universities and research organisations that can collaborate with industry to enhance the commercialisation of feedstocks or production processes.

However, commercial viability of these industries is highly dependent upon production facilities being located close to feedstock supply to minimise transport costs. In some areas, regional aggregation of waste volumes may increase supply chain efficiencies for the recovery of waste for end use markets.

Regional focus areas

» DECARBONISING THE SUPPLY CHAIN

The agriculture, tourism, health and manufacturing industries have a significant opportunity to reduce the carbon footprint and improve sustainability by adopting a low carbon supply chain. Agriculture has the potential to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions while simultaneously increasing efficiency, reducing costs and achieving enhanced environmental performance. The Queensland Government has identified circular economy (includes resource recovery) and bioeconomy as priority industries to support decarbonisation. Drawing on its strong agricultural foundation FNQ has the potential to diversify through supply of essential feedstocks including sugar cane for these bioeconomy industries.

Similarly, the tourism industry can leverage sustainable practices such as renewable energy, eco-friendly transportation and responsible waste management and recycling. These approaches will lead to a significant reduction in carbon emissions and environmental impact while creating a more sustainable and resilient tourism industry and attract environmentally conscious consumers. There are opportunities in the health and manufacturing sectors to invest in low-carbon technologies and processes which can reduce emissions and may help reduce operational costs. An efficient FNQ transport network would also contribute to decarbonising the supply chain.

» NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

There is an increasing demand and desire for infrastructure projects to produce co-benefits for biodiversity, water, soil conservation and integrating investment into sustainable agricultural landscapes to deliver social benefits for FNQ regional communities. The World Heritage assets of FNQ are unique and stakeholders identified the protection and recognition of their value as a key priority.

Natural resource management (NRM) is essential to achieving a decarbonised economy and First Nations land management practices and skills are crucial to sustainable NRM outcomes.

NRM has an important role ensuring economic prosperity of FNQ as natural assets underpin tourism, support sustainable agriculture, traditional land management practices and providing employment opportunities linked to Country. First Nations peoples' knowledge and practices can be incorporated into modern NRM strategies, such as regenerative agriculture and ecosystem restoration, to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change effects.

Cape York communities can leverage and share learnings from traditional environmental practices of existing abatement practices such as plantings and savanna area burning. Integrating First Nations' knowledge and expertise into NRM can contribute to sustainable economic development while promoting environmental protection.

The new Reef Credits market provides land managers with an opportunity to participate in eligible land-based projects that help improve water quality going into the Great Barrier Reef, in return for an alternative income stream. These projects also generate opportunities for the local economy through works to rehabilitate and restore gullies.

Designed by Terrain NRM, the Cassowary Credit Scheme is an emerging new biodiversity market scheme that will enable FNQ land managers to generate tradable units of habitat restoration, known as 'Cassowary Credits'. These will be sold on environmental markets to investors ranging from philanthropists to governments and corporates. The Cassowary Credit Scheme focuses on habitat restoration across land that is unsuitable for agriculture and up to 50,000 hectares of land has potential to be part of the scheme.

Regional infrastructure priorities

These regional infrastructure priorities outline the types of infrastructure needed to realise the strategic regional priority.

They have been developed in partnership with FNQ stakeholders. All levels of government and the private sector have a role in planning and delivering on the below priorities.

Facilitate the transition to a thriving green economy by:

- » Employing wind and solar infrastructure to improve energy security and reliability, while ensuring FNQ's strong environmental and agricultural values are maintained.
- » Investment in green infrastructure to protect and restore waterways, wetlands and coastlines.
- » Activating the CSSDA with supporting infrastructure to attract emerging industries and circular economy opportunities such as biofutures, advanced manufacturing, agricultural diversification and resource recovery.
- » Facilitating enabling infrastructure, such as fit-for-purpose aggregation points and scaleable processing facilities to deliver improved waste management and resource recovery, overcoming challenges of small volumes and long transport distances.
- » Infrastructure support for the development of biofutures industries, such as SAF.
- » Using tropical design principles to ensure infrastructure appropriately responds to the local climate and reduces energy consumption.
- » Pursuing water supply, sewer and transmission infrastructure to activate the Cairns Regional Industrial Estate and facilitate private sector investment and broader economic development to diversify and decarbonise FNQ industries.
- » Delivering the Queensland SuperGrid to connect FNQ to more renewable energy and storage across the state, sharing the benefits of clean, reliable and affordable energy.

Conserving Far North Queensland's natural assets and biodiversity

Natural capital, including the stock of Queensland's biodiversity and natural systems, provide ecosystem services benefits which support positive economic societal, environmental, cultural and health outcomes. These services are critical to sustaining the region's existing and emerging industries. The agriculture industry relies on soil productivity, climatic stability, and pollination. Marine industries rely on ocean ecosystems functioning well to support fishing, aquaculture and tourism. Tourism relies on the natural capital provided by biodiversity, ensuring natural attractions stay in good condition and attract visitation.

Conserving Nature—a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Queensland (the Biodiversity Strategy) highlights that protecting what we already have and

keeping it in good condition is the most efficient and cost-effective approach to conservation of biodiversity and the services it provides.

Delivering the Biodiversity Strategy through promoting biodiversity recovery and avoiding negative impacts on our natural assets is a priority. The goals and principles of the Biodiversity Strategy support existing and emerging green economy opportunities such as natural capital markets, decarbonisation, and resource recovery, as well as development of nature-based solutions to our challenges. Leveraging these opportunities and implementation of existing programs such as the Land Restoration Fund will support this and ensure biodiversity and its values continues to support the region into the future.



A leader in tropical agriculture

Our vision for the future

FNQ continues to be recognised for its critical role in Australia's agricultural industry and expertise in tropical agriculture and fisheries building on its world class agricultural research facilities, skilled workforce, food product manufacturing capabilities and ideal tropical climate to grow a range of high-quality and nationally significant agricultural products.

New technologies and innovative infrastructure approaches (including aggregation of processing and distribution centres) are pursued to realise new opportunities, boost productivity and to improve climate change resilience.



Lakeland Downs (Source: Regional Development Australia Tropical North)

Regional focus areas

» CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

Highly suitable soils and abundant rainfall make FNQ a productive place for agriculture. Australia and the world have growing populations with an increasing demand for food, particularly proteins, and FNQ is well positioned to supply fresh produce to domestic and south-east Asian markets. Boosting tropical agricultural exports will continue to grow the area's economy and enable employment opportunities.

Agriculture is a significant sector of the FNQ economy, annually generating almost \$2 billion and employing 6 per cent of the population. However, climate change presents an ongoing risk to agriculture, through changes in rainfall, temperatures and the increasing frequency and effects of natural disasters. Managing water access and security will remain a challenge as competing urban and agricultural needs will need to be balanced as demand continues to grow. There is an opportunity for FNQ to continue to limit the sector's greenhouse gas footprint and streamline production efficiencies through a coordinated sector-wide partnership approach as outlined in the *Queensland Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap 2022–2032*.

FNQ's tropical climate supports a range of high-quality and tropical agricultural products including sugar cane, fruits, nuts and seafood supported by good market access and established supply chains. Processing agricultural products (agribusiness) adds value, generating greater economic activity in the region.

FNQ is Australia's third most productive fruit growing region and recognised as a critical food bowl. Fruit (including avocados, bananas, citrus, mangoes, grapes, papaya and blueberries), nuts and vegetables are grown on the coast around Cairns, Lakeland and the Atherton Tablelands. Other agricultural activity on the Atherton Tablelands includes dairy, poultry, beef and plant nurseries.

Cape York supports beef cattle grazing and a significant horticulture industry around Lakeland and the Savannah Gulf is expanding the production of cotton and sorghum. FNQ is also recognised for its unique crocodile farming sector, which exports high-value products and complements the local tourism industry.

Sugarcane has long been a staple industry in the area but faces challenges with competition from other nations, environmental regulations and development pressures. Decarbonisation presents new opportunities for the industry as sugar can be used as a feedstock to produce biofuels.

Fisheries occur around the region and include high and low-value products (coral trout, crayfish, barramundi and prawns) for export and domestic consumption. Onshore and offshore aquaculture locations are dependent on ready access to markets. A First Nations-led agricultural sector could explore opportunities on land and sea Country, focusing on agri-food, fisheries, natural capital and environmental markets, with leadership from both First Nations peoples and the agriculture sector who have vital knowledge and assets to realise this opportunity.

» FOOD PRODUCT MANUFACTURING

Food product manufacturing accounts for over a third of employment in the FNQ manufacturing industry. There are further opportunities for grower and value chain collaboration and networks and clusters. Small and medium enterprises in the region may come together to ensure volumes and economies of scale for common user infrastructure such as agricultural distribution hubs. However, connectivity challenges remain when transporting goods from regional areas to global markets. The region is committed to pursuing onshoring and reshoring production and manufacturing to deliver sustainable transport models and limited food miles.

Regional infrastructure priorities

The following regional infrastructure priorities outline the types of infrastructure needed to realise the strategic regional priority.

They have been developed in partnership with FNQ stakeholders. All levels of government and the private sector have a role in planning and delivering on the below priorities.

- » Safe, resilient road, air and marine infrastructure including seaport and airport facilities, to enable the efficient movement of agricultural goods to domestic and international markets, which contributes significantly to the region's economy.
- » Additional common user infrastructure to enable local processing of agricultural products to export goods by air from the region, including consideration of an irradiation facility at Cairns.
- » Seek opportunities to co-locate infrastructure to respond to changing and emerging agricultural markets and progress the decarbonisation of FNQ food and fibre supply chains.
- » Information infrastructure to enable productivity, enhance specialisation, and to transition to low emissions agriculture. This could include digital connectivity to support smart agriculture to innovate, improve yields and make better use of limited resources including human capital or water.
- » Bulk water security including the investigation of alternate water sources in primary agricultural areas to build on the growth potential of horticulture and broadacre cropping and meet increasing demand for high value horticulture.
- » Adoption of new technologies and enabling infrastructure to support more efficient use of water and energy in food production.
- » Development and preparation of on-farm infrastructure to connect to new energy opportunities as they become available.
- » Flexible and innovative housing solutions in key agricultural areas to accommodate a seasonal workforce and enable products to reach market.

Regional Trade Distribution Centre to boost export capacity

The Queensland Government invested \$10 million through the Jobs and Regional Growth Fund to deliver the Regional Trade Distribution Centre for the Far North.

Located at the Cairns Airport freight precinct, the 2400-square-metre facility houses large cold and freezer rooms, temperature-controlled spaces and ambient transit areas with capacity for future expansion. Operations enable fresh produce including fish and crustaceans (live and frozen), avocados, mangoes, melons, citrus and blueberries to be seamlessly and safely exported to international markets especially throughout Asia.

The facility will boost aquacultural and agricultural produce export capacity, generate jobs and improve productivity throughout the industry supply chain. It will also capitalise on Queensland's global reputation as a leader in the production and processing of high-quality produce.



Regional Trade Distribution Centre
(Source: Air Freight Handling Services)

Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–2032

Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–2032 (Queensland Workforce Strategy) is a 10-year strategy to strengthen Queensland’s current and future workforce. The strategy has five focus areas: workforce participation, local solutions, school to work transitions, workforce attraction and retention and skilling Queenslanders now and into the future. In the first Action Plan (2022–25), the Queensland Government is implementing 33 actions in partnership with industries, regions and communities.

The ‘local solutions’ focus area recognises the unique challenges and opportunities of regions and the importance of supporting regions such as FNQ to ‘grow their own’ workforce.

- » The Rural Jobs Initiative delivered with the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network has supported:
 - ▶ Sugar industry skills development addressing the significant labour shortfall on the eve of the FNQ sugar cane harvest.
 - ▶ A two-day intensive education to industry trip for students from Tully State High School which included a visit to the renowned Rotary Field Days in Mareeba.
 - ▶ The Holiday Harvest Program recruited senior school students and university students to address the pandemic-induced labour crisis and inspire the next generation of the FNQ agriculture workforce.

- » In the ‘school to work transitions’ focus area, the Gateway to Industry Schools Program (GISP), facilitates partnerships between schools and industry to enable young people to acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes to participate effectively in the Queensland economy. Gordonvale State High School is one of 78 schools participating in the Agribusiness GISP. Gordonvale students are encouraged to participate in accredited training and enhance their understanding of a wider variety of career pathways. Other offerings for participating schools include work experience opportunities; professional development for agriculture teachers; and a variety of pilot collaborative projects designed to ignite interest in working in agriculture.

The *Queensland Workforce Strategy* is supporting Queensland employers in the region through a range of workforce related support including Industry Workforce Advisors, Human Resources Support Grants, Mentoring for Growth, and initiatives to assist employers in attracting and retaining workers such as Diverse Queensland Workforce and the Back to Work Program.



Prosperous marine and aviation industries

Our vision for the future

FNQ's strategic location and proximity to south-east Asia will continue to build the region's reputation as a key defence hub in Northern Australia and enhance its capabilities to provide marine and aviation MRO services, transport, pilotage and training nationally and across the broader Pacific.

Freight and logistics particularly transporting people and goods around the Torres Strait, along with the region's marine and aviation research and training institutions, will continue to play important roles in enhancing and growing these industries.

The region is also well placed to meet the global demand for sustainable aviation fuels through local biofuels production.



Australian Army soldiers during Exercise Northern Shield in Weipa (Source: Department of Defence)

Regional focus areas

» DEFENCE

Northern Australia has become a vital component of Australia's defence strategy and FNQ is well positioned to support this focus. The Australian Government is investing approximately \$270 billion in defence capability of which a significant proportion will be allocated to the maritime domain. HMAS Cairns is the most northerly base on the eastern seaboard and supports regular visits by both Australian and foreign defence vessels.

As part of the *2023 Defence Strategic Review* the Australian Government will deliver upgrades and development of the northern bases network as a matter of priority, with \$600 million in maritime estate investments, including HMAS Cairns. Further investment in defence in the region will encourage prime contractors serving defence to locate logistics infrastructure closer to key facilities.

The Queensland Government is supporting national endeavours to build Australia's defence capability. Driving capability and growth of our local defence industries and supply chains can provide opportunities to generate high-skilled jobs for Queenslanders to help secure our economic future and cement our position as Australia's next generation defence suppliers.

A Regional Maintenance Centre (RMC) in Cairns has been delivered as part of four RMCs across Australia to support the Royal Australian Navy's current and future fleet. RMCs are integrated Australian Government and industry maintenance enterprises that will plan, manage and deliver maintenance on a range of defence asset classes. RMCs build on existing local supplier networks to achieve efficiencies through resource coordination, commonality and economies of scale.

» STRATEGIC POSITION

With access to key shipping routes, FNQ is a gateway to the Pacific Ocean, the Arafura Sea and the Gulf of Carpentaria. FNQ provides a strategic link between Australia, South-East Asia and the broader Pacific region.

The Port of Cairns is regarded as infrastructure of state and national importance, catering for a diverse range of bulk, project and general cargo. The port's bulk cargo includes petroleum products, sugar, fertiliser and liquid petroleum gas. The port has long been a centre for consolidating and redistributing supplies that are shipped to coastal communities north of Cairns, the Torres Strait Islands and the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The Port of Cairns includes HMAS Cairns, shipyards, a commercial marina, a cruise liner terminal, a cruising yacht squadron, a world-class tourism reef fleet, an international marine college and a range of marine-related businesses. As one of the top four Australian cruising destinations, Cairns has major international and domestic cruise ships operating out of the port. The Cairns Marlin Marina also accommodates superyachts and reef vessel operations servicing the Great Barrier Reef.

In addition to the Port of Cairns, Far North Queensland Ports Corporation Limited (trading as Ports North) is the port authority for the ports of Mourilyan, Cape Flattery, Skardon River, Port Kennedy (Thursday Island), Quintell Beach, and Cooktown. North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation Limited is the port authority for the Port of Weipa and Rio Tinto Limited manages the Chith Export Facility servicing the Amrun bauxite mine. All of these ports are crucial for the transportation of general cargo and fisheries products and export of sugar, molasses, livestock, magnetite, silica sand, bauxite and other minerals.

Ports North's *Port of Cairns and Port of Mourilyan 30-Year Two-Port Master Plan* guides the sustainable development of the ports of Cairns and Mourilyan. The Port of Mourilyan is a deep-water port suited for bulk exports and larger vessels, with good access to major freight routes. The proposed port expansion presents considerable trade growth opportunities in areas like mineral sands, sugar and mineral resources.

Regional focus areas

» CAIRNS MARINE PRECINCT

The Cairns Marine Precinct (CMP) plays an integral role in the broader operations and activities undertaken at the Port of Cairns. As the gateway to the Pacific region, the CMP is considered a national defence asset, and the premier maintenance and sustainment destination for the region. The CMP includes three major commercial shipyards, which service a variety of vessels including domestic and foreign Defence vessels, Australian Border Force vessels, trawlers, tugs, ferries, tankers, cargo vessels, offshore support vessels, landing craft support vessels, fishing boats, tourism vessels, barges and commercial shipping vessels.

The Queensland Government is supporting the growth of the CMP. The Queensland Government approved \$28 million and Ports North contributed \$4 million for the CMP early works project. The \$32 million project includes new in-water maintenance berths and other infrastructure upgrades which will expand capacity to carry out in-water maintenance on vessels used by the Australian Defence Force and Australian Border Force. The early works project was finalised in July 2023.

Further to this investment, the Queensland Government in conjunction with the Australian Government has committed to deliver an expansion of the CMP with the development of a Common User Facility (CUF). The proposed CUF will include a 5000 tonne ship-lift, a new wharf, three hardstand areas and two blast and paint sheds. In addition, the Queensland Government announced a \$12 million fund for Cairns shipyards to upgrade existing facilities.

» ACCESSIBILITY

The sea is a vital means of transport accessibility and economic opportunity for communities in the Torres Strait Islands and the Cape York coastline, as most supplies are delivered by sea. The Torres Strait Islands and Cape York are surrounded by rich fishing grounds and the industry has developed a unique fishing culture that incorporates traditional knowledge and modern fishing techniques. Torres Strait Islander people play an active role in fishery management with a focus on maintaining the health of the marine environment and preserving their cultural heritage. Sea Country is equally important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, carrying the same cultural importance as land.

Some FNQ communities face challenges due to their remoteness and the cost to upgrade and maintain council-owned barge ramps and jetties. Marine infrastructure is the only way many communities can access essential supplies. A collaborative approach with governments and community will identify priorities for investment and focus on unleashing potential for First Nations employment and business participation.

» AVIATION

Aviation is an important enabler in FNQ supporting many industries and delivering significant opportunities in training, research and MRO.

Aviation is vital for moving people and freight quickly, facilitating tourism, agriculture, mining and emergency services. Given the distances and seasonal road closures in the region, aviation provides essential links to and between remote FNQ communities. Air access is essential for enhancing liveability of regional and remote areas with connectivity contributing to the improved access to health and other services of communities. The Cairns Aviation Precinct is vital to the region, with direct flights carrying passengers and freight to domestic and international destinations.

Domestic flights from Cairns Airport enable tourists to easily access the wider region and contribute to the visitor economy of FNQ. Airport connectivity across the region is reliant on robust and resilient airport infrastructure.

Following a recent \$25 million upgrade, the Mareeba Aviation Precinct can strengthen FNQ's existing position as a regional supply and service hub for the mining, cattle, agricultural and tourism industries, as well as consolidate its role as a sub-regional industrial hub in Northern Australia. The region has an established aviation MRO industry and Cairns' proximity to Southeast Asia presents a major competitive advantage in attracting new international business in MRO services and composite manufacturing into the future. Travel from Indo-Pacific countries is anticipated to grow and FNQ is well-placed to provide training to support this growth.

There is a growing demand for decarbonising air travel by providing a net-zero emission substitute. SAF is almost chemically identical to traditional jet fuel and can be used in existing aircraft engines and airport refuelling infrastructure with no required modifications to cut carbon emissions by more than 80 per cent. Queensland is internationally recognised as one of the best locations to establish an Australasian SAF supply chain because this state produces significant feedstock needed to make SAF, including tallow, sugarcane, cropping residues and alternative crops such as pongamia. Local production of biofuels in FNQ offers a competitive advantage for the aviation industry and supports the decarbonisation agenda.

» EDUCATION

FNQ is home to several research and education institutions that enable the marine industry, including public and private colleges that provide courses in maritime operations and universities that research marine biology and other features of the Great Barrier Reef. James Cook University's Cairns campus has a strong focus on marine biology with research programs studying the Great Barrier Reef's ecology and conservation. The expansion of the TAFE Queensland's Great Barrier Reef International Marine College will ensure it remains as a leader in the provision of maritime training to local, national and international clients. Under the Pacific Maritime Training Services contract, the Australian Department of Defence is supporting Guardian Patrol Boat crews to be trained at this facility.

Aviation is a significant opportunity for FNQ and is backed by strong education pipelines. Aviation Australia and CQ University are key aviation training and higher education providers in FNQ operating from the Cairns Airport. *The Defence Strategic Review 2023* proposes a more northern force posture which includes comprehensive upgrade work at Royal Australian Air Force Base Scherger east of Weipa, providing supply chain and employment opportunities in FNQ. Regional workforce plans for key FNQ industry sectors are under development, as part of the *Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–2032*.

Regional infrastructure priorities

The following regional infrastructure priorities outline the types of infrastructure needed to realise the strategic regional priority.

These priorities have been developed in partnership with FNQ stakeholders. All levels of government and the private sector have a role in planning and delivering on the below priorities.

- » Marine infrastructure, including ongoing maintenance, to support a prosperous marine industry and provide local connectivity in the Torres Strait and NPA.
- » Support international route development, MRO expansion and manufacturing, to enable FNQ to capitalise on opportunities within the aviation sector.
- » Upgrades to the Peninsula Developmental Road to increase access and enable future use and diversification of the Weipa port facilities.
- » Road and rail transport networks to ensure safe, efficient and effective transportation of goods to port (such as agriculture and mining), and from port (including fuel, fertiliser and renewable energy infrastructure such as wind turbines).
- » Maximise the use of significant regional infrastructure, such as the Cairns Marine Precinct Common User Facility when delivered, to enable the expansion of the MRO services for the marine industry, including defence.
- » Expansions to accommodate larger vessels at the Port of Cairns including cruise ships and accommodate a larger volume of bulk goods at the Port of Mourilyan.
- » Continued investment in regional and remote FNQ ports to provide logistical support for industry (mining, agriculture, aquaculture, tourism) and to support community resilience during adverse weather events (for example, when roads are inaccessible during wet season).
- » Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of port infrastructure through the use of sustainable materials to improve recovery and reconstruction activities, and mitigate impacts to the natural environment.
- » Blue-green infrastructure to retain riparian buffers and mangrove forests, to mitigate impacts of flooding and erosion and continue to provide critical habitats for marine life including migratory birds.
- » Biosecurity infrastructure and provision to process foreign vessels.



Royal Australian Navy sailors line HMAS Arunta's forecastle during a port departure from Cairns, Queensland. (Source: Department of Defence)



A leader in cultural and experiential tourism

Our vision for the future

The FNQ region's World Heritage Areas, rich First Nations cultural heritage, numerous national parks and well-established horticultural and marine industry continues to attract international visitors and grow domestic tourism. FNQ offers a range of cultural and experiential tourism, including nature-based tourism, eco-sports and culinary tourism.

Connectivity and accessibility of tourism locations throughout FNQ are enhanced and supported by key infrastructure that preserves the region's natural assets and biodiversity.



Walkabout Cultural Adventures (Source: Tourism Tropical North Queensland)

Regional focus areas

» NATURAL ASSETS

FNQ includes two World Heritage Areas (the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics), numerous national parks and the traditional lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The warm weather, leisurely lifestyle, world-class facilities and services make the region attractive to travellers from Australia and around the world. Growth in experiential tourism must be balanced between protecting the natural environment and deriving economic benefit for the region.

These assets provide visitors with the opportunity to immerse themselves in nature and the culture and traditions of FNQ's distinct communities, providing experiential tourism that drives word of mouth recommendations and repeat visits. Building from this strong foundation FNQ has grown other tourism offerings including eco-tourism and nature-based tourism, active tourism (such as mountain biking), First Nations cultural tourism, sports tourism, agritourism and culinary tourism.

Recent weather events have caused extensive damage to some of FNQ's natural assets. It is imperative to protect these areas and preserve the environment so it can withstand future climate-related events.

Agritourism and culinary tourism leverages the region's established horticultural industry, connecting growers with consumers, promoting the diversity of local food, and educating visitors on tropical products. Seasonal events, farm stays and experiences showcasing local produce add further diversity to the region's tourism offering.

Arts, culture and historic places showcase the personalities, stories and histories of Queensland, delivering unique tourism experiences to local and international audiences. Enhanced and new infrastructure and precinct development support the delivery of arts and cultural experiences that attract national and international visitors and respond to the increasing demand for First Nations arts and cultural experiences.

» FIRST NATIONS

With a strong foundation already in place, there is significant potential for the continued development of authentic, engaging and sustainable tourism experiences that share First Nations cultures and the importance of connection to Country. In recent years, Australian and international tourists have expressed significant interest in First Nations culture and arts and a desire to participate in experiential tourism. A cultural trail of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and art centres in the Cape and Torres Strait can attract increased tourism and presents an opportunity to effectively engage with First Nations peoples, respecting their culture and customs.

Improved digital connectivity in remote communities will enable online bookings and contactless payments, meeting visitor expectations. There is also significant employment growth potential in natural resource management and ranger programs, inherent in the management and protection of World Heritage Areas.

Regional infrastructure priorities

The following regional infrastructure priorities outline the types of infrastructure needed to realise the strategic regional priority.

They have been developed in partnership with FNQ stakeholders. All levels of government and the private sector have a role in planning and delivering on the below priorities.

- » Road infrastructure, including rest stops and scenic lookouts, signage and wayfinding information, to improve the quality and attractiveness of tourist drive routes.
- » Increasing sealed road access to allow access by two-wheel drive vehicles to increase more tourist visits.
- » Expansion of the hiking and mountain biking trail network as well as trail head and ancillary facilities to enhance the visitor experience and support and expand the tourism industry.
- » Enabling infrastructure facilities in appropriate locations to support the visitor experience consistent with the type of tourism offering, including boardwalks, walking tracks, day use areas and suitable carparking.
- » Enhanced new infrastructure and precinct development to support the delivery of arts and cultural experiences.
- » Consider a centrally located hub to showcase and celebrate the histories, stories, cultures and truth telling of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- » Maintain and establish fit-for-purpose legacy infrastructure for cultural and sporting events that will stimulate economic development. This could include sporting infrastructure to attract visitors to the region to participate in or view sporting events such as the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- » Airport infrastructure, including runways and terminal facilities, to improve connectivity and tourist experiences across the region and the community.
- » Improved digital connectivity access in remote communities to enable online bookings and contactless payments while also meeting visitor expectations of digital access.
- » Infrastructure to support and implement the *FNQ Principal Cycle Network Plan* and related walking networks.
- » Seaport infrastructure to support cruise ship visitation.
- » Expansion of aviation MRO infrastructure to enable servicing of aircraft to realise growth potential of this sector in the broader Indo Pacific region.
- » Water and sewer infrastructure capacity to meet the needs of tourists and local communities in peak tourism periods.

Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy

The transport corridors between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands provide vital links for the community and freight. The corridors pass through World Heritage listed rainforests and difficult terrain creating challenges for connectivity and efficiency.

DTMR has completed a comprehensive planning study into the four transport corridors linking Cairns to the Northern Tablelands. The *Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy* (the Access Strategy) provides a comprehensive roadmap of initiatives and investment over the short, medium and long-term to deliver the right infrastructure at the right time.

During consultation for this plan, regional stakeholders highlighted the Kuranda Range Road as a priority.

A project to install additional Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) treatments on Kuranda Range Road has been completed. The ITS treatments allow rapid detection and management of incidents on Kuranda Range Road. It is expected that the treatments will reduce incidents and shorten the length of time for closures of the road, improving trip reliability. The ITS stations also provide real-time information about road surface conditions. When sections of the road are slippery due to wet weather, the speed limit for these sections will be remotely adjusted, making it safer for motorists. Various ITS stations have been installed between Smithfield and Rainforestation Nature Park. The ITS stations complement the existing variable message signs on the approaches to Kuranda Range Road. This \$39.5 million project was jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments on an 80:20 basis.

In addition to considering short and medium term actions that can deliver immediate accessibility benefits between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands, the Access Strategy has also explored the long-term potential to plan for a future new road corridor.

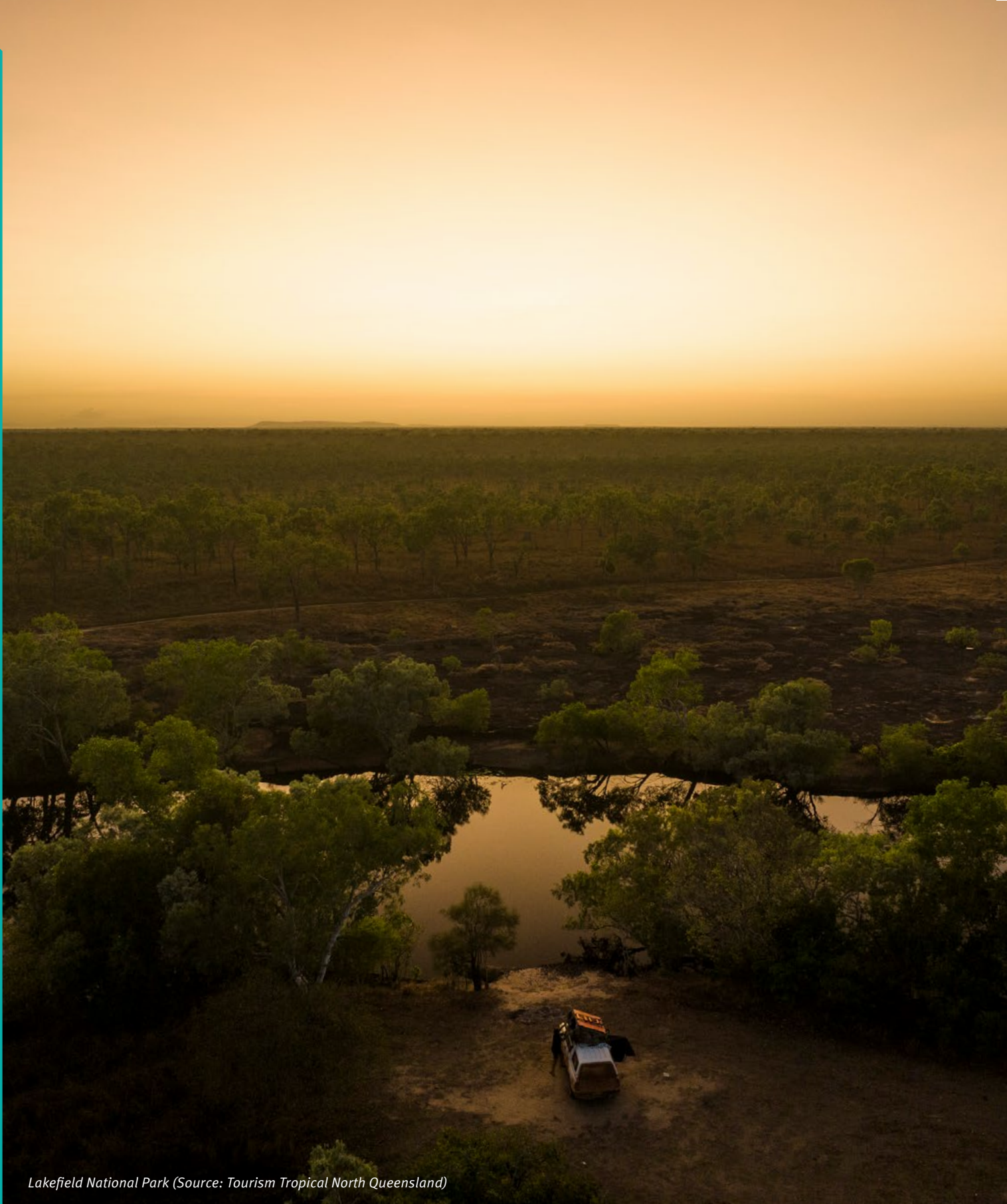
While the Access Strategy recommends that consideration of a new road link should be progressed in future, more work needs to be done to confirm:

- » What residential and industrial areas (existing and future) it connects to, and the economic benefits that it may present.
- » What existing roads it connects to and the impact on traffic congestion and road safety.
- » How it would be safely constructed while minimising disruption to the environment and community.
- » What function it would serve and when it is needed to best benefit the region.

Future population and economic growth also need to be considered before identifying a preferred corridor for growth that integrates land use and transport needs for existing and future residents.



Kuranda Range (Source: DTMR)



Lakefield National Park (Source: Tourism Tropical North Queensland)

» STATE INFRASTRUCTURE RESPONSE

Queensland Government's infrastructure planning and programs that address Far North Queensland's strategic regional priorities and infrastructure priorities.



A healthy region with liveable communities

In FNQ, a place-based approach to infrastructure can facilitate liveability through housing, education, health facilities, improved transport and digital connectivity.

A selection of State Government-led infrastructure planning and programs aligned to this priority across the region are provided below.

Remote Housing Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils

The Remote Housing program provides funding to 17 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils through QuickStarts Qld, the \$40 million Interim Program and \$105 million in Australian Government funding. This funding enables local governments to determine and deliver community-led, place-based housing solutions in accordance with their locally identified needs and priorities that suit local climate and meet security, sustainability and cultural needs.

Delivery agency: DHLGPPW

Government Employee Housing

Offering safe and secure housing helps attract essential frontline government workers – including doctors, nurses, paramedics, police personnel and teachers – to regional and remote communities.

The Queensland Government approved an employee housing package of \$519.2 million towards delivering 439 additional residences for approximately 550 frontline staff located in regional and remote communities across the state. The program aims to deliver 147 residences in FNQ.

Delivery agency: DHLGPPW

Social and Affordable Housing Capital Program

The \$2 billion Housing Investment Fund provides \$130 million per annum to support the commencement of 5600 social and affordable homes across Queensland by 30 June 2027.

In the FNQ Region, QuickStarts Qld will see 301 social homes commenced by 30 June 2025 through an investment of \$157.2 million, along with an additional 53 social homes supported through the Social Housing Accelerator.

In the Cape York Region, QuickStarts Qld will see 207 social homes commenced by 30 June 2025 through an investment of \$169 million, along with an additional 35 social homes supported through the Social Housing Accelerator.

Delivery agency: DHLGPPW

Household Resilience Program

This program provides grant funding to help eligible homeowners improve the resilience of their homes against cyclones. Owner-occupiers who live in a house built before 1984 and located within 50 kilometres of the coastline from Bundaberg to the Queensland/Northern Territory border, can apply to receive a Queensland Government grant to assist fund eligible improvements. The program has now commenced its fourth phase with 904 grants awarded to homeowners in the FNQ region over the first three phases.

Delivery agency: DHLGPPW

Coen Arts Centre

\$8.2 million over two years from 2024–25 has been approved for the construction of the Coen Arts Centre which will include a Museum and Gallery store, visual art and sculpture workshops, flexible art studio spaces and undercover outdoor area for art making, a music stage for performing arts and sound and recording studios. The Art Centre will provide a place to share and contribute to the ongoing preservation of culture.

The establishment of a Coen Arts Centre has been a priority for the Coen community for the past 4 years. Through regular interactions with the Ministerial and Government Champions program and Coen community, it has been identified the construction of a dedicated Art Centre would provide a pathway for local artists and the community to work towards economic independence.

Delivery agency: Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (DTATSIPCA)

Specialist learning space upgrade and refurbishment at Cairns State High School and Trinity Bay State High School

Upgrades and refurbishments to specialist learning spaces at the following schools will ensure students can continue to access a contemporary curriculum:

- » \$808,000 is committed to an upgrade and refurbishment of the existing dance studio at Cairns State High School. It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded in Term 3, 2024
- » \$3.7 million is committed to an upgrade and refurbishment of the resource centre at Trinity Bay State High School. It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded in Term 2, 2025.

Delivery agency: Department of Education (DoE)

Fire and Emergency Services

In the 2024–25 State budget, the Queensland Government has committed:

- » \$4.5 million of a \$8.5 million total spend to commence the replacement of the Queensland Fire Department’s Cairns FireCom Facility
- » \$4.2 million of a \$4.9 million total spend to continue the delivery of the new Bamaga fire and emergency services complex
- » \$0.25 million for the strategic acquisition of land for the purposes of constructing a replacement fire and rescue station at Babinda.

Delivery agency: Queensland Fire Department

Strata Resilience Program

The Strata Resilience Program aims to help bodies corporate in Central and Northern Queensland improve the resilience of their strata properties against cyclones.

Eligible body corporates can apply for a grant for up to 75 per cent of the cost of eligible resilience strategies.

The \$60 million Strata Resilience Program is jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland governments.

It follows the delivery of the North Queensland Strata Title Inspection Program (STIP), conducted by James Cook University on behalf of the Queensland Government since 2018.

Delivery agency: DHLGPPW

Discrete Communities Renewal Program

\$43.2 million has been allocated over four years from 2022–23 for educational infrastructure projects in Queensland schools that service 18 discrete First Nations communities, 16 of which are located in FNQ.

Delivery agency: DoE

Western Cape College – Weipa Campus

Western Cape College – Weipa Campus has experienced growth in the school-aged population and requires additional facilities to continue to meet enrolment demand in the short to medium term. A new \$15.9 million two-storey learning centre will provide modern, fit-for-purpose learning spaces to deliver the college’s unique pathways to employment programs and support future enrolment growth. The project is forecast for completion in late 2024.

Delivery agency: DoE

New Learning Centre – Cairns State Special School

A new \$20 million learning centre will be constructed at Cairns State Special School to support continued strong local enrolment growth. This investment offers families in the Cairns region an opportunity to enrol their child in a school that provides highly individualised programs to meet their particular educational needs. The new learning centre will have eight learning spaces, an outdoor learning space and covered link. It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded in late 2024.

Delivery agency: DoE



(Source: DoE)

Health infrastructure to support FNQ regional priorities

Cairns Health Services

More than \$450 million of health infrastructure projects are underway or in planning stages in the Cairns region, including:

- » Cairns Hospital Emergency Department redevelopment
- » Cairns Hospital Expansion Project – new surgical centre and ward refurbishments
- » Cairns Health and Innovation Centre – stage 1
- » Cairns Mental Health Unit
- » Cairns Youth Alcohol and Other Drugs Residential Treatment Centre, a new purpose built 10 bed facility providing a 24/7 operating model
- » The new Cow Bay Primary Health Centre.

Cairns Health and Innovation Centre

The Queensland Government has committed \$60 million in the 2024–25 state budget over two years to progress the Cairns Health and Innovation Centre (CHIC) to deliver additional capacity for clinical services within the existing Cairns Hospital Precinct and provide necessary health education, training and research facilities for future medical professionals in Cairns.

Cooktown Multipurpose Health Facility

\$200 million to redevelop and deliver a contemporary Cooktown Multi-Purpose Health Service facility to support modern models of care including maternity, paediatrics, mental health and palliative care, increasing bed numbers by 50 per cent.

Bamaga, Pormpuraaw, Boigu, Badu Island, Ngurupai (Horn) Island, Laura and Lockhart River Primary Health Care Centres

Replaced and enhanced Primary Health Care Centres as part of Phase 2 of the Building Rural and Remote Health Program to enhance health services infrastructure in rural and remote communities. The projects will see the existing assets, which have been identified as aged and costly to maintain, redeveloped with a fit-for-purpose facility to improve health service delivery to residents and increase the quality of care closer to home.

Also included is the Staff Accommodation Program which will add to and replace existing staff accommodation to address staff attraction and retention in rural and remote health facilities.

Moa Island St Pauls Public Health Community Centre Rectification

\$8.7 million in 2024–25 out of a \$10.7 million total spend to deliver a new extension to the public health community centre. This project is in the initial stages of development with the provision scope to include the construction of a new extension of the Public Health Community Centre building including reconfiguration of the existing site.

Delivery agency: Queensland Health

Transport infrastructure planning and delivery to support FNQ regional priorities

DTMR works in partnership with all levels of government, and in consultation with stakeholders and the community to plan and deliver transport infrastructure projects guided by priorities and actions contained in Regional Transport Plans. Transport infrastructure projects in FNQ are delivered through a range of investment programs, including programs delivered in partnership with local government and the Australian Government.

Committed projects are published annually in the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP), including planning and delivery for:

- » Safety, flood immunity and network resilience improvements across FNQ.
- » Significant investment in urban road corridor safety and capacity upgrades including:
 - ▶ Cairns Bruce Highway Southern Access Corridor
 - ▶ Cairns Western Arterial Road
 - ▶ Captain Cook Highway.
- » Transport infrastructure to support regional growth including:
 - ▶ Planning for Mareeba Heavy Vehicle Bypass and Innisfail Bypass
 - ▶ Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy recommendations
 - ▶ Planning for the Barron River Bridge at Kuranda
 - ▶ Planning for Palmerston Upgrade Strategy.

- » Cape York Region Package program of works for the Peninsula Developmental Road and transport infrastructure in Cape York communities.

Active transport network planning and delivery

The FNQ Principal Cycle Network Plan shows core routes needed to get more people cycling more often. These routes are indicative and exist to guide further planning. Priority Route Maps are addendums to the Principal Cycle Network Plan and identify the delivery priority state and local governments have assigned to principal cycle routes in each local government area. All DTMR funded projects on the Principal Cycle Network must provide fit-for-purpose active transport infrastructure according to the Cycling Infrastructure Policy.

The Active Transport Investment Program funds high quality and safe active transport infrastructure on high priority routes identified in addendum Priority Route Maps. Walking Local Government Grants provide funding to local governments and DTMR regions to develop walking network plans and priority works programs. Walking network plans focus on precincts of up to two kilometres around primary destinations such as public transport, schools and town centres, and result in works programs to make the plan a reality.

Delivery agency: DTMR

Cairns Water Security Project – Stage 1

Cairns Regional Council's planning for future water demand identified that works outlined in the Cairns Water Security Stage 1 project, will be required by 2026 to meet Cairns' forecast water supply needs. This \$447.4 million project is being delivered by Cairns Regional Council.

Whilst Queensland councils have primary responsibility for servicing their communities' drinking water needs, the 2024–25 Queensland Budget has bolstered the state commitment to the project to a total of \$195 million. The Queensland and Australian Government commitments total \$302.5 million in funding towards this critical project.

The new Mulgrave River intake, water treatment plant, reservoirs and distribution network will provide a modern, integrated water security solution to service Cairns now and into the future. The project will deliver a new drinking water supply to the region, supplementing existing supplies from Copperlode Falls Dam, Behana Creek and smaller rural intakes across the region. The project is expected to provide approximately 5500 megalitres a year of increased water to the region and enhance resilience

Delivery agency: Department of Regional Development Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW)

Relevant strategies

- » **Making Tracks** provides the overarching policy directions to guide the Queensland Government's long-term effort towards achieving health parity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Queenslanders.
- » **Communities 2032** is Queensland's long-term plan to strengthen the fabric of communities and help Queenslanders live their best lives.
- » The **Queensland Women's Strategy 2022–27** provides a framework for all Queenslanders to strengthen and support the rights of Queensland women and girls and work towards achieving a gender-equal Queensland.
- » **Queensland's Disability Plan 2022–2027** is the primary mechanism to drive implementation of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031* in Queensland.
- » The **Far North Queensland Regional Transport Plan** provides a shared direction for shaping the region's transport system in a way that supports regionally specific goals for the community, economy and environment.
- » **Gather + Grow 2023–2032** and its first **Action Plan (2023–2026)** are the Queensland Government's response to food insecurity in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Gather + Grow outlines a whole-of-system approach addressing the barriers to food security through four priority areas:

 - ▶ Optimised supply chains and logistics
 - ▶ Sustainable local food production
 - ▶ Empowered healthy communities
 - ▶ Healthy Homes.
- » **HEALTHQ32: A vision for Queensland's health system** sets the future direction for the health system and focuses on being adaptable, embedding innovative models of care and new technologies that improve patient care, and delivering services more efficiently. As Queensland continues to grow and advance, the health system should be equitable and accessible for everyone, no matter where Queenslanders live.
- » **Rural and Remote Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022–2027** outlines a whole-of-system approach to achieving health equity for our rural and remote populations.
- » **Good People. Good jobs: The Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–2032** delivers innovative and practical solutions that are needed now to ensure Queensland has a ready workforce to support growth, strengthen our communities and keep Queensland at the forefront of new economic opportunities.
- » **Queensland Digital Infrastructure Plan**

The Queensland Government is developing a Digital Infrastructure Plan to focus the collaborative efforts and investments required across sectors to bridge the digital divide. The Digital Infrastructure Plan aims to establish a statewide view of gaps and opportunities for future investment. While the Queensland Government does not have a direct role in the delivery of the required infrastructure as this is provided by NBN Co and commercial carriers controlled by Australian Government legislation and regulations, the Digital Infrastructure Plan will enable the Queensland Government to more proactively work with carriers and stakeholders to address mobile blackspots and poor broadband connectivity.

» CASE STUDY

Far North Queensland Health and Innovation Precinct – Dugurrdja Precinct

The Far North Queensland Health and Innovation Precinct, recently named the Dugurrdja Precinct, is currently under development. The precinct vision is to deliver an interdisciplinary technology-focussed, state of the art precinct for education, training, research and innovation in FNQ.

Values and principles emphasise health equity, community engagement and the importance of place, innovating from a rural and remote community context but with global reach. The precinct will assist in the retention and attraction of students and health professionals to Cairns.

The precinct will also support the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service vision to transform Cairns Hospital into a University Hospital. These initiatives are critical to regional growth and consistent with strategic directions to enhance the education, training and research sector in the region.

The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service's flagship buildings within the precinct will be the CHIC and a surgical centre. Co-locating James Cook University Cairns Tropical Enterprise Centre is intended to provide opportunities for integration and collaboration.

» CASE STUDY

Wujal Wujal recovery from Tropical Cyclone Jasper

After TC Jasper crossed the mainland on 13 December 2023, five days of intense rainfall fell in Wujal Wujal, causing major flooding and the evacuation of almost 300 residents to Cooktown. On 20 December 2023, the Wujal Wujal local government area was declared a disaster area. The substantial damage to residential dwellings, roads and community infrastructure resulted in the displacement of the entire community, just days before Christmas, and for several months. QRA worked swiftly to activate assistance measures under the DFRA and in recognition of the extraordinary impacts on individuals in the displaced community and the prolonged disconnection from culture and Country, DTATSIPCA commissioned a sub-committee of the Human and Social Recovery and Resilience Group dedicated to Wujal Wujal.

This sub-committee, taking a human-centered approach, developed a 60-day Plan to return residents to the approximately 55 homes that were not damaged by floodwaters, while work to repair homes and buildings continued.

The 60-day Plan achieved remarkable outcomes for the community including:

- » All 91 homes were returned by QBuild to the DHLGPPW for re-tenanting
- » The local store was completely refurbished and enhanced with new disability-friendly amenities and cool room storage
- » Water and sewerage services were restored
- » A new temporary modular health clinic was constructed and opened
- » Each household was equipped with any necessary whitegoods, bedding or other household items
- » Emotional, psychosocial and wellbeing supports were delivered
- » Kindy and aged care services re-commenced and children were welcomed back to classroom learning
- » Roads and transport services were restored.

Long-term recovery efforts are continuing, with the Queensland Government continuing to work with the Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council, Elders and residents to identify high priority community and recreational assets which require repair, and to support the return of community members.



Cairns Health and Innovation Centre — artist's impression subject to change
(Source: Queensland Health, DSDI)



A thriving green economy

FNQ's thriving green economy will be realised through the combined efforts of governments, industry and communities in implementing policies and programs supported by investment in infrastructure and industry.

The State Government plays a key role in supporting new industries by investing in infrastructure such as transport, communication and energy networks to create a conducive environment for industry growth. By providing infrastructure, governments can catalyse and attract private investment, create jobs and facilitate innovation, ultimately promoting economic development.

The key State Government infrastructure initiatives supporting this regional priority are provided in the following section:

Land Restoration Fund

The Land Restoration Fund (LRF) is a \$500 million initiative of the Queensland Government that leverages the carbon market to deliver a range of environmental, socio-economic and First Nations outcomes by investing in carbon farming projects through carbon credit contracts where the project is likely to produce priority co-benefits.

In Cape York, the LRF has committed around \$37 million towards two projects that will see Traditional Owners working on Country to deliver savanna burning projects. The projects will use early season cool burning practices to prevent over half a million tons of carbon from entering the atmosphere while creating jobs, skills and training opportunities for Traditional Owners.

Delivery agency: Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI)

Far North Queensland REZ

The Queensland Government has invested \$40 million in North and Far North Queensland to upgrade the transmission infrastructure between Cairns and Townsville. This investment will provide up to 500 MW of renewable energy connection potential in FNQ. This is facilitating the connection of the 157 MW Kaban Green Power Hub, the foundation project for the in-flight FNQ REZ.

Delivery agency: Department of Energy and Climate (DEC)

Kaban Wind Farm capacity purchase agreement

\$343.7 million was committed in the 2023–24 State Budget to exercise the rights to 157 MW of renewable energy capacity from a new wind farm in the Atherton Tablelands region. The Kaban Wind Farm, being developed by Neoen, will consist of 28 wind turbines and will supply around 457 gigawatt hours of electricity each year, enough to power 96,000 homes. During construction, this project will support up to 250 jobs and provide clean renewable energy for the grid.

Delivery agency: DEC

» CASE STUDY

Rock Road Wildlife Corridor

South Endeavour Trust, a team of conservationists in FNQ, has secured over \$2.95 million from the LRF to transform farmland into a tropical rainforest. This will allow the Trust to complete the Rock Road Wildlife Corridor project at Tarzali; which involves reforesting a 1.8-kilometre-long corridor of former farmland with diverse rainforest species native to the region. The project will reconnect the largest fragment of intact high altitude tropical rainforest on the Atherton Tablelands with the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, generating significant environmental and social co-benefits.

The reforestation work involves planting more than 204,000 trees and maintaining over 60 hectares for 16 years. This new habitat link will have a major positive impact on the outlook for climate sensitive wildlife species such as the green ringtail possum as well as cassowaries and Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo. Although the project area is less than 100 hectares, the overall value of the project was judged to be high given the excellent conservation outcomes the project aims to achieve.

FNQ Regional Waste Management Plan

Funding of \$300,000 was allocated to the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC) to develop a Regional Waste Management Plan for the 11 councils in the region.

The *FNQ Regional Waste Management Plan* identifies the priorities and opportunities for waste management and resource recovery infrastructure and non-infrastructure needs, providing a blueprint for investment.

The Plan was released in April 2023, with implementation discussions now underway between DESI and FNQROC.

Delivery agency: DESI

First Nations Regional Waste Management Plans

First Nations Regional Waste Management Plans have been developed for the following areas:

- » Western Cape comprising the Aboriginal Shire Council areas of Lockhart River, Aurukun, Pormpuraaw, Mapoon and Napranum
- » Eastern Cape comprising the Aboriginal Shire Council areas of Yarrabah, Hope Vale and Wujal Wujal
- » Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula comprising Torres Shire Council, Torres Strait Island Regional Council and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council.

Implementation activities are underway with councils in all three regions. The Plans support implementation of *Respecting Country: A sustainable waste strategy for First Nation communities*, which was released in April 2022.

Delivery agency: DESI

Queensland Recycling Modernisation Fund

The Queensland Recycling Modernisation Fund is a joint initiative of the Queensland and Australian Governments providing \$40 million funding to support industry infrastructure expansions or upgrades to address gaps in waste reprocessing capacity. Funding supports projects that improve sorting, processing, recycling or remanufacturing of waste and divert waste plastic, paper and cardboard, tyres or glass from landfill.

Delivery agency: DSDI

Regional and Remote Recycling Modernisation Fund

The Regional and Remote Recycling Modernisation Fund is a joint initiative of the Queensland and Australian Governments providing funding to support projects that best address regional waste challenges to divert waste plastic, paper and cardboard, tyres or glass from landfill.

Delivery agency: DESI

Relevant strategies

- » **Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan** is a plan to transform our energy system to deliver clean, reliable and affordable energy to provide power for generations.
- » The **Queensland Clean Energy Workforce Roadmap** (CEWR) builds on the *Hydrogen Industry Workforce Development Roadmap 2022–2032* which was developed with industry to support workforce development for the renewable hydrogen industry. The Department of Employment, Small Business, and Training (DESBT) developed the CEWR in collaboration with all levels of government, industry, skills and training providers and key regional stakeholders. The CEWR is key action of the *Queensland Workforce Strategy*.
- » The **Queensland Resource Recovery Industries 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan** provides a framework to accelerate the diversion of waste from landfill and increase recycling and develop our State's resource recovery industries.
- » The **Queensland new-industry development strategy** sets out the Queensland Government's approach to proactively developing the industries that will be in demand in a decarbonising world.
- » **Respecting Country – A sustainable waste strategy for First Nation communities** serves as the overarching resource to guide the development of Regional Waste Management Plans.
- » **Conserving Nature – a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Queensland** sets out the Queensland Government's vision for the future of biodiversity in the state and outlines the goals and objectives for biodiversity conservation.
- » **Queensland Zero Emission Vehicle Strategy 2022–2032** sets out Queensland's vision and strategic direction towards zero emission vehicles over the next 10 years.
- » The **Queensland Electric Super Highway** ensures regional Queensland is connected to the tourism and economic development opportunities associated with zero emission vehicles.
- » **Queensland's Manufacturing Hubs** assist and support manufacturing businesses to decarbonise and transition to advanced manufacturing through world-leading technologies. The Cairns Manufacturing Hub provides a place for local manufacturing businesses to receive expert advice with a focus on marine, aviation and food manufacturing. The Cairns Manufacturing Hub supports FNQ enterprises to transition to a low carbon economy, increasing diversity and accessing supply chain opportunities in the emerging green energy sector.



A leader in tropical agriculture

All levels of government and the private sector have a role in enabling the growth of the agricultural (including fisheries) and agribusiness industry in FNQ.

Improving access to information, piloting new technologies and delivering infrastructure can help the adoption of more efficient and sustainable farming practices, promoting industry growth. A selection of State Government-led infrastructure planning and programs aligned to this priority across the region are provided in the following section:

North Queensland Regional Freight Plan

An integrated multi-modal regional freight plan for North Queensland is being developed to identify and prioritise freight network improvements to support supply chain efficiency and resilience.

The *North Queensland Regional Freight Plan* will build on the shared commitments in the *Queensland Freight Strategy* and activities detailed in the *Queensland Freight Action Plan*. It will be tailored specifically for the North Queensland region and responds to actions set out in the Far North Queensland, Northern Queensland and North West Queensland Regional Transport Plans.

DTMR is working in partnership with key government agencies, regional leaders and stakeholders, to deliver an integrated multi-modal freight plan that considers current and emerging needs and identifies key barriers and priority infrastructure and non-infrastructure improvements for the freight transport network. The North Queensland Regional Freight Plan will support safer and more efficient movement of freight to advance the region's economic potential.

The Queensland Government has also committed \$64 million over five years to ease freight related cost of living pressures in remote communities in the Northern Peninsula, Torres Strait and Gulf regions.

Delivery agency: DTMR

Tablelands Regional Water Assessment

Under its Regional Water Assessment Program, the Queensland Government is delivering assessments that will set a roadmap for economic development in regions identified as having the best potential to achieve greater growth through investment in water. The assessments are focussed on the state's most significant food bowl areas — including the Tablelands, Burdekin and Gulf regions.

The Tablelands Regional Water Assessment includes the Tablelands Regional Council, eastern parts of Mareeba Shire Council and a western part of Cairns Regional Council. The Tablelands assessment has been completed and approved by the Queensland Government.

The Burdekin Regional Water Assessment includes the Burdekin catchment, which extends into part of the FNQIP area that occurs in the southern part of the Tablelands Regional Council area. The Burdekin assessment is expected to be completed by early 2026.

The Gulf Regional Water Assessment includes parts of Mareeba Shire Council and Etheridge Shire Council. The Gulf assessment is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

These assessments will set out how existing infrastructure, new infrastructure and non-infrastructure solutions can be used to maximise water supply and drive economic growth.

Delivery agency: DRDMW

Aquaculture Development Areas

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) has developed a methodology and selection criteria to identify marine areas most suitable for non-intensive marine aquaculture and undertook desktop geographic information system analysis to identify potential optimal areas.

This project aims to facilitate further development of new emerging sectors like tropical rock oysters and seaweed and complement the existing

land-based Aquaculture Development Area (ADA) network. The identification of marine ADAs will help expand the industry through a coordinated and supported planning framework and will help promote and grow a sustainable aquaculture industry in Queensland.

Delivery agency: DAF

Relevant strategies

- » **AgTech Roadmap 2023–2028** provides solutions to transform global agriculture and drive productivity, sustainability, traceability, provenance, biosecurity preparedness and response, climate resilience and emissions reduction.
 - » **Queensland Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap 2022–2032** provides a strong framework to reduce agriculture emissions and increase carbon farming.
 - » **North Queensland Regional Freight Plan** (in development as part of the *Queensland Freight Strategy – Advancing Freight in Queensland and Queensland Freight Action Plan*) aims to deliver an integrated multi-modal freight plan, clearly articulating the current and forecast future freight demand and identifying key barriers and priorities.
 - » **Queensland Transport Strategy** is a 30-year vision to harness emerging transport trends to continue to move people and products safely and efficiently into the future.
 - » **Sustainable Fisheries Strategy** sets out the Queensland Government’s reform agenda over 10 years, paving the way for a world-class fisheries management system.
 - » **Queensland Water Strategy** is a sector-wide strategy for the future of water management that values Queensland’s precious water resources through its life-cycle.
- The strategy also reflects the importance of strengthened engagement and partnerships with First Nations peoples in water management.

» CASE STUDY

Cape York Fisheries Working Group

As part of the commitment to ensuring fisheries resources are managed in a sustainable and responsible manner that recognises the interests of all Queenslanders, the Queensland Government has committed to establishing a special fisheries working group for Cape York. The group will work closely with key stakeholders to identify new business opportunities through charter fisheries and tourism operations while ensuring sustainable fisheries are maintained for future generations.

The working group will also consider a broader range of economic initiatives related to fishing and fisheries resources.

Cape York First Nations businesses, prescribed body Corporates, shire councils, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members and First Nations industry partners have been invited to nominate for the new Cape York Fisheries Working Group. This group will work closely with First Nations stakeholders to identify new economic pathways through fishing and fisheries resources and infrastructure.



Prosperous marine and aviation industries

Planning and delivering investment for a prosperous marine and aviation industry requires involvement from the private sector and all levels of government.

This section highlights some of the infrastructure planning and programs led by the Queensland and Australian Government which align with this priority across the region.

The CMP is a region shaping investment which will enable new related economic opportunities, with both marine and aerospace. The Queensland Government and Australian Government have committed funding for the Cairns Marine Precinct Common User Facility (CMP CUF).

Cairns Marine Precinct Common User Facility

The CMP is a leading maritime MRO destination for commercial, defence and recreational industries across Australia and internationally. The CMP services approximately 15 per cent of all Australian registered vessels and almost 80 per cent of all north Queensland registered vessels over 15 metres. Under the Pacific Maritime Security Program, the Australian Government is gifting 22 Guardian Patrol Boats to 12 Pacific Island countries and Timor Leste, which will be maintained at the CMP. The continued growth of the marine MRO sector is linked to the growth in defence, Australian Border Force, commercial fishing, freight services, transport services and tourism, including superyachts.

Increasing the capacity and capabilities of the CMP through the provision of new infrastructure and services is necessary to secure maintenance and refit demand from commercial, private and defence vessels while also catalysing future economic development in the regional economy. DSDI identified the opportunity to develop a CUF through the Cairns Marine Precinct Infrastructure Investment Detailed Business Case. The Queensland and Australian Governments have committed \$180 million each, bringing total funding to \$360 million towards construction of the CUF.

The CUF is expected to accommodate forecast demand from defence, government, tourism and commercial sectors to 2055.

The delivery and operations of the CUF is expected to generate benefits, including:

- » supporting Queensland defence-related capabilities in the region
- » enhancing capabilities and competitiveness of the CMP to remain a leading maritime centre in northern Australia
- » strengthening and diversifying the FNQ economy
- » attracting domestic and international investment and re-investment in downstream industries in the region
- » supporting the current and future defence capability plans
- » advancing the Queensland Government's *Queensland Superyacht Strategy 2018–2028*
- » increasing skilled job attraction and retention
- » enhancing STEM education opportunities
- » supporting growth in the marine tourism industry in Cairns
- » growing the commercial and maritime maintenance market in Cairns.

Great Barrier Reef International Marine College

Great Barrier Reef International Marine College (GBRIMC), run by TAFE Queensland will expand to cater for significant projected training demand from domestic and international partners and to meet training delivery requirements. This investment will support the \$16 million extension to the existing facility to include a new workshop, additional classrooms, offices and staff facilities, and a new boat shed. Students at GBRIMC have access to specialised training facilities including a Class A Full Mission Bridge simulator, tug-optimised bridge and desktop simulators, a sea survival training immersion pool and engineering workshops.

Delivery agency: DESBT

Horn Island Marine Facility upgrade

Safer services for ferry passengers travelling to and from Thursday Island will be delivered through the upgrade of the Horn Island passenger jetty and wharf head. Ports North, as the owner and operator of the facility, has been awarded \$4 million through the Queensland Government's Maritime Infrastructure Investment Program to deliver the upgrade.

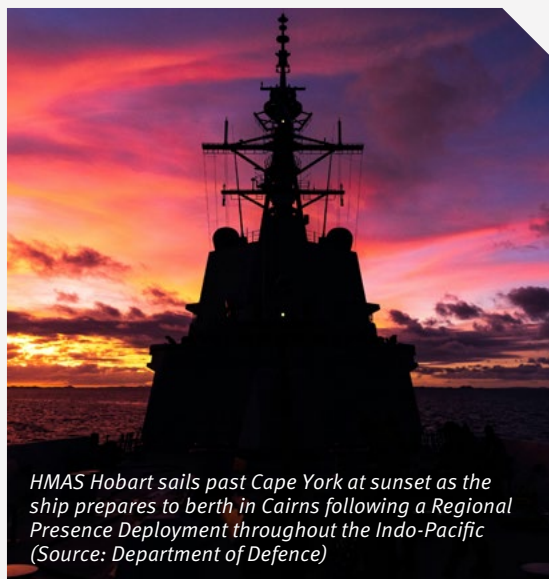
Delivery agency: DTMR

Torres Strait Island Marine Infrastructure Program

The Torres Strait Islands Marine Infrastructure Program is a combined Australian and Queensland Government investment of \$80 million to initiate urgent make safe works for Torres Strait and NPA marine infrastructure over six years, commencing in 2022–23.

This investment will provide safer, more appropriate, accessible and resilient marine infrastructure for communities in the region, with a focus on unleashing potential for First Nations employment and business participation.

Delivery agency: DTMR



HMAS Hobart sails past Cape York at sunset as the ship prepares to berth in Cairns following a Regional Presence Deployment throughout the Indo-Pacific (Source: Department of Defence)

Relevant strategies

- » The **Queensland new-industry development strategy** sets out the Queensland Government's approach to proactively developing the industries that will be in demand in a decarbonising world.
- » **Queensland Defence Industry Hubs** support businesses to become defence ready (which includes aviation and maritime services).
- » **Queensland Defence Industries 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan** supporting national endeavours to build Australia's defence and sovereign capability, capturing opportunities by driving capability and growth of our local defence industries and supply chains.
- » **Queensland Aerospace 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan** identifies new opportunities and solutions to continue to accelerate growth in both the civilian and defence aerospace sectors and to create sustainable jobs well in the future.
- » **Queensland Superyacht Strategy 2018–2028** sets out the Queensland Government's support for growing this high-value industry.
- » The **Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan** is the Australian and Queensland Government's overarching framework for protecting and managing the Great Barrier Reef to 2050.



A leader in cultural and experiential tourism

Key infrastructure assets essential for delivering a quality visitor experience include transport, accommodation, digital connectivity, public amenities and attractions.

A selection of State Government-led infrastructure planning and programs aligned to this priority across the region are provided below.

Barlow Park Upgrades – Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games

The Brisbane 2032 infrastructure program will be funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments under the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games intergovernmental funding agreement.

The \$7 billion-plus infrastructure program will reshape some of Queensland's most significant venues and precincts, leaving a legacy for the community well after 2032.

Barlow Park in Cairns will receive major upgrades to sporting and spectator facilities to meet the needs of growing communities ahead of hosting the preliminary football events for Brisbane 2032. This includes upgrading the capacity of the stadium to 5000 and upgrading the car park, targeting a 6-star Green Star Buildings rating from the Green Building Council of Australia, and improved amenities and equipment for athletes and the public. This major upgrade will help Cairns attract other major events.

Early planning for all new and upgraded venues, including Barlow Park, is underway, with Barlow Park slated to be completed well before 2032. The Queensland Government will continue to work with Cairns Regional Council and other asset owners to scope and plan the required upgrade works planned for Brisbane 2032 in line with the agreed venue master plan. Total venue capacity for Brisbane 2032 will be 20,000 including a 15,000 temporary overlay for Games delivery.

Delivery agency: DSDI



*Snorkelling on Reef Magic tour
(Source: Tourism Tropical North Queensland)*

Barlow Park – Upgraded Lighting

The Queensland Government is providing \$4 million for Barlow Park lighting upgrades. These significant upgrades will ensure that Barlow Park is a contemporary and fit-for-purpose facility that meets the needs of event organisers, hirers, broadcasters, and spectators into the future. The upgrades will also support the attraction and retention of more state, national and international content and boost sporting tourism opportunities for the region. This project is jointly funded and delivered by Cairns Regional Council.

Delivery agency: Department of Tourism and Sport (DTS)

Tourism and Transport Planning

DTMR will work with key stakeholders to develop a tourism and transport action plan to identify priorities and actions to improve access and enhance the visitor experience to help support region's tourism industry. This will consider visitor travel modes including aviation, cruise, long distance coach and rail, drive tourism, public transport, marine facilities and active travel. The plan will also focus on sustainable transport outcomes, and accessibility for older persons and people living with disability.

Queensland Walking Strategy

The *Queensland Walking Strategy 2019–2029* sets the direction to make walking an easy choice for everyone, every day over the next 10 years. The strategy is supported by an action plan that lists the practical actions we need to do to create more walkable communities and encourage more walking. The action plan is updated every two years.

Delivery agency: DTMR

Queensland Cycling Strategy

The *Queensland Cycling Strategy 2017–2027* sets the direction for cycling over the next 10 years. The strategy is supported by an action plan that lists the practical actions we need to do to ensure we respond to changes and are progressing towards our vision of more cycling more often. The action plan is updated every two years.

Delivery agency: DTMR

Cullen Point Campground and Mission Site development

As part of the Resources Community Infrastructure Fund, \$1 million has been committed in 2023–24 out of a \$2.9 million total spend to upgrade and expand the Cullen Point Campground in Mapoon and develop a historical interpretation walk of the mission village sites in the old Mapoon Precinct.

Delivery agency: DSDI

Wangetti Trail

The Wangetti Trail is a proposed walking and mountain biking trail 94 kilometres in length from Palm Cove to Port Douglas. It will be one of Australia's leading adventure-based ecotourism experiences, and will enhance conservation and protection while delivering environmental, social, and economic benefits to FNQ.

The Wangetti Trail is proposed to feature four sites offering eco-accommodation and public camping, and an additional site with public camping only, offering visitors a one-of-a-kind experience of the region's First Nations cultural history and stunning coastal and hinterland scenery of the World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef.

The Wangetti Trail aims to deliver genuine ecotourism experiences, unlock new income streams for the preservation and management of parks and support long term environmental, economic and social benefits.

The Wangetti Trail has suffered from the impacts of TC Jasper in December 2023. In May 2024, funding of \$2.1 million has been approved to support cleanup efforts and the cost to re-align the trail into Ellis Beach following significant landslips along this section of trail.

Delivery agency: DTS

First Nations Cultural Centre – Cairns

In May 2023, the Queensland Government announced the development of a business case for a First Nations Cultural Centre in Cairns, in addition to a business case for a First Nations Cultural Centre in Brisbane, acknowledging the significant opportunity to recognise the contributions of First Nations peoples in FNQ and the Torres Strait.

It is envisioned these cultural centres will be places to share the histories, stories, and truth telling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and act as hubs that connect with First Nations communities across the state, including the network of Indigenous Art Centres and other significant sites and locations throughout Queensland.

Delivery agency: DTATSIPCA

Relevant strategies

- » ***Towards Tourism 2032 (TT32) – Transforming Queensland’s visitor economy future***, is Queensland’s collective framework to guide industry and government’s partnership to deliver long term growth and success for Queensland tourism.
TT32 supports a number of the initiatives in the FNQIP including the development of First Nations tourism experiences and sustainable experiential tourism that balances environmental preservation, protection and interpretation.
- » ***Ecotourism Plan for Queensland’s Protected Areas 2023–2028*** provides the framework for planning and delivering immersive ecotourism experiences in Queensland’s spectacular national and marine parks and other protected areas.
- » ***Activate! Queensland: 2019–2029*** is the Queensland Government’s 10-year strategy with a vision to enrich the Queensland way of life through physical activity, including by encouraging people to get out, be active and enjoy the natural beauty of our state through active recreation and nature-based tourism.
- » ***Creative Together 2020–2030*** is a 10-year Roadmap for arts, culture and creativity in Queensland. It takes a strategic approach to investment and growing partnerships that will support cultural events and experiences that grow the state’s economy and reputation as a global tourism destination.
- » ***Queensland’s Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030*** outlines the Queensland Government’s commitments to expand protected areas and ensure our national parks deliver world-class visitor experiences. Expanding national parks provides a wider range of tourism offerings, enhancing visitor experiences in regional areas and providing local economic benefits.
- » ***Tourism and Events Queensland Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021–2024*** supports the revitalisation of the Queensland nature-based tourism offering to capitalise on the growing and evolving consumer demand for experiences in nature and to maximise Queensland’s world class natural and cultural assets.
- » The ***Wet Tropics Sustainable Tourism Plan 2021–2031*** provides a platform for tourism in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to turn visitors into advocates, protect and conserve our natural and cultural assets, and move towards a sustainable and resilient future.

Future opportunities

» EMERGING INDUSTRIES ACROSS THE FNQ REGION

A range of economic opportunities were identified through research and consultation on the FNQIP, with a number of these still maturing.

Infrastructure implications for these emerging industries will need to be determined and investment decisions considered across all levels of government. In certain cases, further development of these industries is subject to major investment or policy decisions. Infrastructure needs to support these future opportunities will form part of periodic reviews of the FNQIP.

Critical minerals

Global demand for critical minerals is anticipated to grow significantly as nations look to decarbonise their economies through clean energy technologies. Home to some of the world's largest critical mineral reserves, Queensland must position itself as a global supplier of choice to capitalise on the emerging markets, especially as demand for traditional resource commodities begins to subside.

The Queensland Government is investigating options to accelerate growth in the critical minerals industry through the *Queensland Resources Industry Development Plan* and the *Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy*. This will support Queensland as a destination of choice for extraction and first stage processing. Critical mineral processing, manufacturing and product development is one of six key priorities in the QNIDS and the Queensland Government is committed to proactively supporting growth and unlocking opportunities within this sector.

FNQ is rich in high-demand critical minerals including high-grade silica sand at Cape Flattery, tungsten at Mount Carbine and several critical mineral mines around the Atherton Tablelands. There are also large quantities of bauxite (including processing facilities) around Weipa that help meet global demand for aluminium.

The resource industry offers significant employment and economic opportunities for local FNQ communities but must preserve environmental and cultural values for which the region is recognised. Effective engagement with local communities is essential in order to understand their priorities and concerns, and to ensure that economic benefits are shared fairly. Sustainable mining practices and investment in alternative industries can also create long-term economic opportunities beyond the life of the mine, with mine rehabilitation providing opportunities to enhance the biodiversity and natural environment.

While the resources sector is established in FNQ, the next phase of investment for critical minerals and the associated infrastructure implications are still being determined. Further development of the industry is subject to assessment and approvals. However, the critical mineral industry will build on existing strengths and leverage the talents and resources of FNQ.

Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy

The *Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy* has been developed to support accelerating the critical minerals industry and unlock the next resources boom in Queensland. The strategy also builds on Queensland's strong environmental, social and governance (ESG) foundations to sourcing and manufacturing minerals sustainably and responsibly. As part of a suite of actions, the Queensland Government will work collaboratively with community, First Nations peoples and industry to commence a coordinated approach to establish Critical Mineral Zones. Consultation will be undertaken in FNQ to investigate applying this approach to particular localities where appropriate.

The Office of the Coordinator-General has two coordinated silica sand mining projects in the Cape Flattery region. FNQ communities will have an opportunity to contribute and have their say on the environmental impact statement and social impact assessment processes for these critical minerals projects.

Space industry

The *Queensland Space Industry Strategy* sets out how the government is supporting and building capacity in the space industry. Queensland has industrial and geographical advantages that make it uniquely positioned to support global space activities and bolster Australia's sovereign space capability, particularly in satellite launch, control, robotics and Earth observation.

FNQ is well positioned to participate in the emerging space industry, given its proximity to the equator, available open space and established infrastructure. There is a growing worldwide demand for launch sites, with several thousand satellites expected to be launched globally by the end of the decade.

Suitable road, air and telecommunications connections are vital enablers to realise these space sector opportunities. For example, sealing of the Peninsula Developmental Road would facilitate improved road access to proposed FNQ space launch sites.

Implementation and review



» IMPLEMENTATION

Communities and regions are central to the economic transformation of the state as it moves towards decarbonisation. Regional infrastructure plans will help inform State Government funding decisions about the region's infrastructure investment priorities.

This includes early and meaningful engagement with First Nations peoples during infrastructure planning to support the realisation of aspirations for their Country as well as identifying economic development and participation opportunities during all stages of infrastructure development. The Queensland Government will continue to work towards embedding this place-based approach to infrastructure priorities into its planning and processes.

Given the key role of the regions in the renewable energy transformation pathway, the implementation of the FNQIP will be strongly aligned with key implementation actions and funding committed as part of the QEJP and the QNIDS (along with other key strategies such as the regional Workforce Plans being developed in line with the *Queensland Workforce Strategy*).

Further to this, as the FNQIP identifies the region's strategic regional priorities, it will also inform Statutory Regional Plan reviews that are already underway in the region. Monitoring the progress of government responses towards the identified strategic regional priorities will be ongoing, along with the FNQIP's contribution towards the SIS objectives.

» A RENEWED FOCUS ON PLACE BASED REGIONAL GOVERNANCE IN INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY

A transparent and coordinated infrastructure pipeline can provide benefits such as increased investment, reduced costs and improved project selection, resulting in improved economic growth and social outcomes. With a constrained labour market and the increasing cost of construction, there is a need to ensure the pipeline of activities in the region are delivered in a coordinated way. Stakeholders emphasised the need for improved governance and coordination, particularly in the Cape and Torres Strait, to overcome the complexity of infrastructure delivery and improve economic benefit and community outcomes.

The Queensland Government is delivering a renewed focus on regional governance with a strong interest in collaboration across state agencies, making better use of current governance mechanisms and networks and improving local solutions for our regional communities.

As part of the *Even better public sector for Queensland strategy 2024–2028* action plan, the public service will ensure it is better equipped to respond to complex challenges. The Regional Collaborative Governance Model has been developed to improve collaboration across Queensland government departments to address priorities in regional Queensland.

It is an internal governance framework which supports a new way of working. There are three main goals: understanding regional challenges, promoting cross-agency collaboration, and cultivating regional leadership. The Model does not deliver services or programs; it is a governance structure that enables agencies to work together and learn from each other.

Local Economic Opportunities Network

The local economic opportunities network (LEO network) assists regional communities with economic transition. The LEO network is part of the QNIDS and was established to support investment in clean energy technology and help communities take advantage of the economic opportunities available in Queensland. This network of regionally based staff are a single government contact point for renewable energy, decarbonisation and economic diversification opportunities.

Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office

The Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office (RILIPO) was established to facilitate development across 16 remote discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local government areas, with most located in FNQ. RILIPO works in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through its representatives at the national, state and local level to embed built-environment planning initiatives to facilitate remote community development on behalf of government; improve economic opportunities; and meet the needs, aspirations and expectations of each community and its leadership.

RILIPO's initiatives, training, advice, support and knowledge transfer are critical to the continuity needed for improving economic outcomes and maximising environmental strategies to build healthy and vibrant communities, and help facilitate:

- » new housing and infrastructure development
- » local employment opportunities
- » better use of government assets (for example, houses and offices), better service delivery for water, power and other essentials
- » long-term planning to encourage development and private home ownership opportunities
- » a coordinated approach to dealing with Native Title, cultural heritage and other land-related matters.

DSDI will work in partnership with the RILIPO regarding FNQIP implementation and stewardship.

» CASE STUDY

Local Community Engagement through Co-design

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap commits government to work in an unprecedented way with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to overcome inequalities and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians. Closing the Gap is everyone's business.

The Local Community Engagement Through Co-design (LCETC) model aims to assist the Department of Education to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to elevate their voices and use cultural protocols through a co-design process.

Purpose

The LCETC model aims to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Queensland state schools, using a strategic approach to assist schools to establish, maintain and leverage relationships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to co-design programs of work that will assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to succeed.

Infrastructure projects

The Discrete Communities Renewal program has allocated \$43.2 million over four years from 2022–23 for educational infrastructure projects that service 18 discrete and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The program will focus on equity and provide infrastructure to support curriculum and educational outcomes for children located in Queensland's discrete and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

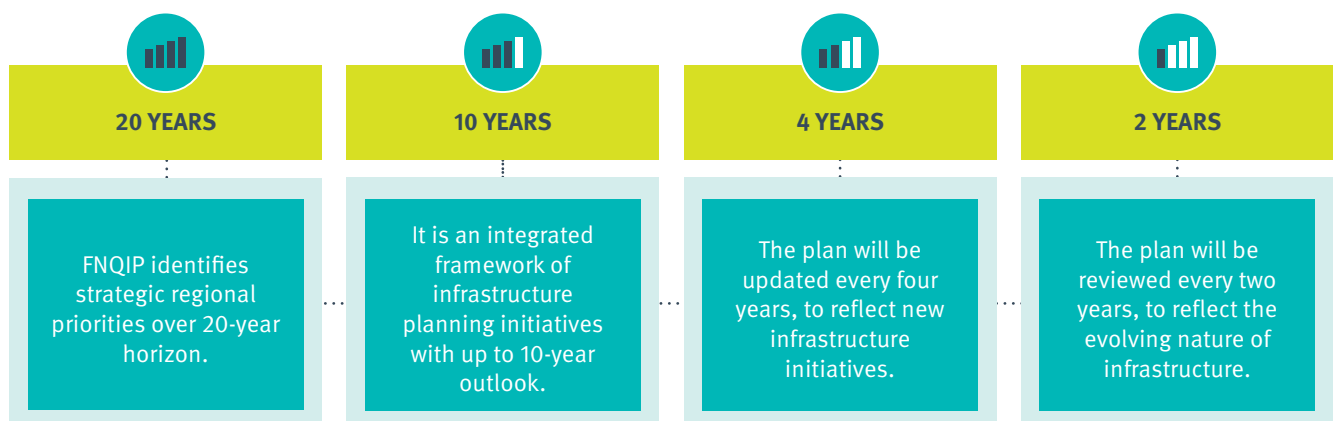
Community members will be invited to participate in a co-design process for investment in education infrastructure for their communities during the Discrete Communities Renewal program project planning stage.

The Department of Education continues to respond to needs identified for schools in discrete communities, in conjunction with the school leadership and the community.

» REVIEW

The FNQIP will be reviewed every two years to respond to emerging industry and community needs and remain aligned with government and regional stakeholder priorities.

FNQIP reviews will be led by DSDI in consultation with key regional stakeholders, including local government, industry, peak bodies, community groups and First Nations peoples, including LDMBs.



Acronyms

Acronym	Definition	Acronym	Definition
ADA	Aquaculture Development Area	HMAS	His Majesty's Australian Ship
CEWR	Clean Energy Workforce Roadmap	ITS	Intelligent Transport Systems
CHIC	Cairns Health and Innovation Centre	LCETC	Local Community Engagement Through Co-design
CMP	Cairns Marine Precinct	LDMBs	Local Decision-Making Bodies
CMP CUF	Cairns Marine Precinct Common User Facility	LEO	Local Economic Opportunities Network
CSSDA	Cairns South State Development Area	LRF	Land Restoration Fund
CUF	Common User Facility	MRO	Maintenance, repair and overhaul
CY	Cape York	MW	Megawatts
DAF	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries	NBN	National Broadband Network
DEC	Department of Energy and Climate	NPA	Northern Peninsula Area
DESBT	Department of Employment, Small Business and Training	NRM	Natural Resource Management
DESI	Department of Environment, Science and Innovation	QEJP	Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan
DHLGPPW	Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works	QGIP	Queensland Government Infrastructure Pipeline
DoE	Department of Education	QMPF	Queensland Microgrid Pilot Fund
DRDMW	Department of Regional Development Manufacturing and Water	QNIDS	Queensland New Industry Development Strategy
DRFA	Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements	QRA	Queensland Reconstruction Authority
DSDI	Department of State Development and Infrastructure	QTRIP	Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program
DTATSIPCA	Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts	REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
DTMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads	RILIPO	Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office
DTS	Department of Tourism and Sport	RMC	Regional Maintenance Centre
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance	RPC	Regional Planning Committee
FNQ	Far North Queensland	SAF	Sustainable Aviation Fuel
FNQIP	Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan	SDA	State Development Area
FNQROC	Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils	SIS	State Infrastructure Strategy
GBRIMC	Great Barrier Reef International Marine College	STIP	Strata Title Inspection Program
GISP	Gateway to Industry Schools Program	TC	Tropical Cyclone
		TT32	Towards Tourism 2032



Far North Queensland

Infrastructure Plan 2024

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