

Cairns

Smart Green

Economy



CASE STUDY: NET ZERO ENERGY

Tropic Wings The CaPTA Group

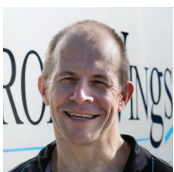
Tropic Wings Cairns Tours & Charters, part of The CaPTA Group, is pioneering sustainable tourism in Far North Queensland by launching the first fleet of electric coaches in the Southern Hemisphere. This forward-thinking initiative responds to the dual challenge of reducing diesel reliance and lowering CO² emissions, while continuing to provide world-class visitor experiences.

With 13 battery electric vehicles (BEVs) now making up 35% of the Tropic Wings fleet, and ambitions to grow this to 80% by 2030, the project is a prime example of Far North Queensland's transition to a Smart Green Economy.

13 ELECTRIC COACHES ON TOUR ROUTES

Tropic Wings invested in its first electric coach in 2018, and after receiving excellent customer feedback, the coach tour operator expanded the initiative in 2023. This expansion included the installation of 11 charging stations and adding 12 battery electric vehicles (BEVs) through an \$11.2 million investment, partially funded by ARENA (Australian Renewable Energy Agency). As a result, Tropic Wings is the only tour company in Australia and possibly the world operating a full fleet of electric coaches on commercial tour routes.

The coaches are charged via solar-powered infrastructure, reducing running costs and emissions, and enhancing passenger comfort with quieter, fume-free rides.



"Tropic Wings is revolutionising sustainable transport and tourism by launching the first and only electric vehicle fleet in the Southern Hemisphere. This project reduces our carbon footprint while enhancing guest experience—and serves as a blueprint for operators worldwide."

Michael Woodward
Systems & Projects Director, The CaPTA Group

HOW IT WORKS

Tropic Wings' strategy is built on a foundation of strong partnerships and smart infrastructure:

Strategic investment: \$11.2 million total investment, including ARENA co-funding.

Fleet transition: Additional 12 electric buses deployed with 11 depot charging stations, located in Cairns.

Battery innovation: A 215kW on-site battery will store unused solar to charge buses overnight.

Regional expansion: Additional charging stations planned for Rainforestation Nature Park in Kuranda to extend range and enable all-electric tours.

The project has drawn on national and local expertise, working with Energy Australia, the Electric Vehicle Council, Vehicle Dealers International, and Babinda Electrics.

The project follows a rigorous and practical methodology involving multiple stakeholders.

WHY IT MATTERS

This initiative delivers powerful economic and environmental outcomes:

Lower emissions: Replaces diesel engines with clean electric power.

Cost savings: Solar-powered charging stations reduce operating expenses alongside reduced maintenance costs for the fleet.

Improved customer experience: Quieter, smoother, more comfortable rides, has increased customer satisfaction.

Scalable model: Provides a replicable framework for tourism and transport operators across Australia.

As an eco-certified business for over two decades, Tropic Wings is at the forefront of sustainable tourism. In 2024, the leading coach operator won the National Environmental and Innovation Award at the annual BIC National Conference.

By reducing carbon emissions and preserving natural resources, the company is ensuring a healthier and more vibrant environment for generations to come.



"We now run the largest electric tour fleet in the country. We started with one electric bus back in 2018 to stop diesel fumes at our Rainforestation Nature Park in Kuranda. Now we have 13—and we're not stopping."

Colin Anderson,
General Manager, Tropic Wings

Disclaimer: This case study showcases an innovative approach in Cairns' Smart Green Economy. While this project is not owned by Cairns Regional Council, and the presentation of this case study does not imply Council endorsement, it is our aim to highlight some of the exciting initiatives in our region and inspire positive change within our community.

13

Electric buses in the Tropic Wings fleet

35%

Of fleet now battery electric (target: 80% by 2030)

\$11.2M

Total project value

11

Charging stations already installed

215kW

Battery energy storage system coming soon

SUPPORT THIS PROJECT

To learn more about how Tropic Wings and The CaPTA Group are driving sustainable tourism through smart transport innovation, visit:

capta.com.au

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