

DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT INCENTIVE POLICY 2026-2029

Intent Encourage development that advances the targets identified within Council's Economic Development Strategy:

1. Economic activation; and
2. Revitalisation of key centres; and
3. Activation of underutilised areas within the Cairns Region Local Government Area (LGA).

These outcomes will be supported by providing targeted Infrastructure Charges waivers for development that:

1. Delivers significant catalytic benefits to the region; or
2. Is situated within established key centre localities; or
3. Promotes strong infill residential development and dwelling diversity.

By offering greater certainty for developers and reducing barriers to investment, Council seeks to unlock transformative projects and position Cairns as a business-friendly destination.

Scope This Policy has effect from 01 July 2026 and remains in force until 30 June 2029 ('the policy period'). The Policy applies to eligible development approved on or after 01 July 2026.

Council may, at its absolute discretion, consider waiving levied Infrastructure Charges to support the delivery of the following eligible development activities:

- Clause 1 – Catalytic development; or
- Clause 2 – Accommodation Activities or Centre Activities situated within any of the designated key centre localities; or
- Clause 3 – Development that constitutes a Material Change of Use (MCU) for a specified land use, and where it is located within the Low-Medium Density Residential Zone (L-MDR) or Medium Density Residential Zone (MDR).

The value of any waiver provided under Clause 1 shall be determined by Council.

The value of any waiver provided under Clause 2 or 3 shall be determined as follows:

1. Where levied charges do not exceed \$500,000, a 100% waiver applies.
2. Where levied charges exceed \$500,000 but not \$1,000,000, the waiver shall be calculated as 100% for the first \$500,000, then 50% of the value between \$500,000-\$1,000,000.
3. Where levied charges exceed \$1,000,000, the waiver shall be calculated as per 2 above, then 25% of the value above \$1,000,000.

Note: The above figures are exclusive of GST.

Example: for eligible development with levied charges of \$1,250,000, waiver would be \$500,000 + 50% of \$500,000 (\$250,000) + 25% of \$250,000 (\$62,500). Total waiver= \$812,500. Applicant pays balance of levied charges - \$437,500.

1. Eligibility requirements

The Policy waives the levied charges payable for development that meets all the mandatory criteria and satisfies at a minimum, Clause 2 or 3. Mandatory criteria does not apply for development that satisfies Clause 1.

1.1 Mandatory Criteria

- a. Requires substantial commencement of building works prior to the end of the Policy period, defined as when site establishment and construction costs exceed 20% of the total value of approved building works.
Note: Council at its sole discretion may provide in principle support to facilitate development commencement, with the waiver applied once demonstrated compliance with criteria 3.1b, c and d; and
- b. At least 80% of the construction workforce consists of local workers; and
- c. The development is acted upon within the initial currency period; and
- d. The development is not the result of a compliance or enforcement matter; and
- e. The development is not located within the Cairns South State Development Area; and
- f. The development is not located within the Mount Peter Priority Development Area.

1.2 Development Type Requirements

Clause 1- Supports the achievement of multiple catalytic outcomes listed below:

- Create a positive legacy for community and delivery of enduring planning and economic outcomes.
- Requires significant initial investment within the Cairns Regional Council LGA i.e. > \$20,000,000.
- Generates significant enduring economic benefits within the Cairns Regional Council LGA through the creation of ongoing post construction jobs that significantly contribute to the community and create a positive legacy (delivering >20 new and ongoing Full Time Equivalent employment opportunities post construction).
- Demonstrably enables broader industry growth and/or attracts further private sector investment within the Cairns Regional Council LGA.
- Delivers demonstrable activation or revitalisation benefits beyond the development site itself, positively influencing the surrounding precinct or locality.
- Introduces a land use or economic activity not currently established or materially represented within the Cairns Regional Council Local Government Area, and which supports one or more priority industries identified in Cairns Regional Council's Economic Development Strategy.
- Demonstrates strong alignment with an endorsed strategy/plan of Cairns Regional Council.

Note: Development that is RaL does not constitute catalytic development for the purpose of applying this Policy.

Note: All catalytic development waiver requests will be assessed by officers to determine eligibility, having regard to this policy and other relevant matters. After this review, officers will present a recommendation to Council for decision at an Ordinary meeting. If there is not alignment with the eligibility criteria, officers at their sole discretion may elect to not proceed to present the request to Council.

Clause 2- Accommodation Activities or Centre Activities situated within one of the following key centre localities:

- Area shown in Map 1 - Cairns City
- Area shown in Map 2 - Cairns North
- Area shown in Map 3 - Gordonvale CBD
- Area shown in Map 4 - Babinda CBD
- Area shown in Map 5 - Babinda Mill Redevelopment

For the purposes of this clause and its application to the area shown on Map 5 – Babinda Mill Redevelopment, development that is consistent with the Development Approval (Council Ref: 8/30/155) in effect on the land is eligible for an incentive under this policy, where it complies with the Mandatory Criteria.

Clause 3- Encourages strong infill residential development and dwelling diversity on land within the Low-Medium Density Residential zone or Medium Density Residential zone, where the proposal involves a Material Change of Use (MCU) for one of the following land uses:

- Multiple Dwelling
- Rooming Accommodation

Incentives under Clause 3 are only available where building height complies with acceptable outcomes for MDR or L-MDR zones.

PROVISIONS

1. Confirmation of the Development's eligibility must be provided to Council prior to the infrastructure charges becoming payable.
2. An application must be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer for any Development to be considered Catalytic Development and where generally consistent with the eligibility criteria, will be decided by the full Council.
3. Where a development qualifies for assistance under more than one component of this policy, it is eligible to receive support from only one component. In such cases, the incentive providing the highest level of support will apply, and assistance under multiple components is not permitted.
4. Council may, at its absolute discretion, consider the previous conduct of an Applicant or any related entity when assessing eligibility for an incentive. Where an Applicant or related entity has previously received the benefit of an incentive and failed to comply with the obligations of the associated IA, Council may decline to enter into any new incentive agreement.
5. This policy is to be reviewed annually and amendments to the policy may be made at Council's absolute discretion.
6. Council will not charge infrastructure charges for any development that occurs on Strategic Port Land.
7. If credits for demand calculations or trunk infrastructure provision, waivers within this policy are taken to have no effect. For example, refunds for trunk infrastructure will be calculated in accordance with the Charges Resolution in effect at that time and refund amounts will be calculated on the additional demand methodology.

DEFINITIONS

Terms used but not defined in this Policy have the meaning given in the Cairns Plan 2016 or the *Planning Act* (in that order).

Accommodation Activities:

- Community residence
- Dual occupancy
- Dwelling house
- Dwelling unit
- Multiple dwelling
- Residential care facility
- Retirement facility
- Rooming accommodation
- Short-term accommodation

CairnsPlan 2016 means the current planning scheme adopted by Cairns Regional Council at the time of request for assessment against this policy.

Centre Activities:

- Adult store Bar Club (other than small scale)
- Food and drink outlet
- Function facility
- Health care services
- Hotel Nightclub entertainment facility
- Office
- Service industry
- Shop
- Shopping centre
- Showroom
- Theatre
- Veterinary services

Currency period has the meaning given to the term under the *Planning Act 2016*. For the purposes of this policy, the currency period does not include any extended period granted pursuant to an Extension Application, Ministerial Notice or other similar mechanism.

Land uses are defined under *Planning Regulation 2017*.

Substantial commencement means the stage in the completion of building work for eligible development where the total cost incurred by the developer for permanent building work authorised under a valid Building Approval for the eligible development has exceeded 20% of the total value of all building work for the Eligible Development. Substantial commencement is not demonstrated by costs incurred carrying out general site establishment activities such as fencing, hoarding, vegetation clearing, storage or layout areas or earthworks unrelated to permanent building works. This definition is intended to ensure that only costs directly relating to physical permanent building works are taken into account, rather than administrative costs, such as preparatory, design or supervision costs or preliminary site preparation costs.

Strategic Port Land means land which will not be subject to local government planning under the *Transport Infrastructure Act 1994*.



This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

Director responsible for Review:

Director, Planning, Growth & Sustainability.

ADOPTION: 1 July 2026
DUE FOR REVISION: 30 June 2029

Ken Gouldthorp.

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Ken Gouldthorp
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Map 3 -Gordonvale CBD Area of Eligibility



Map 4 – Babinda CBD Area of Eligibility



Map 5 – Babinda Mill Re-Development Area of Eligibility.

