

ANNUAL ADVOCACY OUTCOMES REPORT – 2024/25 AND 2025/26

EDA | 52/1/16 | #7909805

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council notes the Annual Advocacy Outcomes Report for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

INTERESTED PARTIES:

- Not applicable

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council's Advocacy Policy, adopted on 29 April 2026, commits Council to a transparent, strategic and Councillor-led approach to advocacy. The policy also requires Council to publicly report on advocacy activities, outcomes and achievements. In accordance with this policy, it is proposed that an annual report be presented to Council each year outlining advocacy activities and outcomes. This is the first report following the adoption of the revised policy and covers two financial years (2024/25 and 2025/26) so that it encompasses advocacy activities relevant to the most recent State and Federal elections.

Council's advocacy activities during the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years helped secure significant government investment, influence policy outcomes and progress projects that support housing supply, economic growth and infrastructure delivery for the Cairns region.

This report provides a summary of Council's advocacy activities and outcomes for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial year. Key advocacy achievements and activities during the period included:

- Secured a \$300 million funding commitment (to be managed by Economic Development Queensland) consisting of \$220 million in grants and an \$80 million concessional loan, to support delivery of housing enabling infrastructure in the Mount Peter Southern Growth Corridor.
- Secured \$175 million in additional funding to support delivery of Cairns Water Security Stage 1 (\$390 million funding in total), with construction continuing throughout the year.
- \$91 million Olympic upgrade of Barlow Park committed. The upgrade will see the current 1,700-seat West Stand rebuilt and its capacity more than doubled to 3,500 permanent seats, with an additional 1,500 retractable seats for use over the existing athletics track.
- Advocated for the establishment of a new Airport Bus Link connecting Cairns Airport and the CBD, with funding support announced by the Queensland

Government.

- Continued advocacy for major transport infrastructure projects, including the Cairns Western Arterial Road, Captain Cook Highway upgrades and the Barron River Bridge replacement.
- Supported advocacy efforts for the Cairns Marine Precinct Common User Facility,
- Continued to strengthen collaboration with regional organisations, including FNQROC, Advance Cairns, the Cairns Chamber of Commerce, TTNQ, RDA Tropical North and the LGAQ, on matters of shared regional importance.
- Prepared funding applications, submissions and policy positions on issues including housing and trunk infrastructure funding, disaster recovery funding, tourism funding, insurance affordability, regional planning and community safety.
- Developed and implemented Council's revised Advocacy Policy articulating Council's key advocacy principles, and strengthening transparency and reporting of Council's advocacy activities.
- Established quarterly forums with State and Federal MPs, creating a regular platform to strengthen relationships, collaboration and advance Council's advocacy priorities.

BACKGROUND:

Advocacy is a core function of local government and plays an important role in securing investment, influencing policy outcomes and advancing initiatives that benefit the community.

On 29 April 2026, Council adopted a revised Advocacy Policy which established a contemporary, principles-based framework for how Council identifies, prioritises and pursues advocacy priorities. The policy reinforces a strategic, evidence-based and non-partisan approach to advocacy and recognises that effective advocacy is led by elected representatives and supported by Council officers across the organisation.

Advocacy is a whole-of-Council activity with multiple Council directorates actively involved in supporting successful advocacy outcomes. While coordinated through Council's Economic Development and Advocacy directorate, successful outcomes rely on the expertise, technical input and ongoing support of teams and subject matter experts from across Council. This collaborative approach ensures Council's advocacy priorities are informed by organisational needs and aligned with the long-term interests of the Cairns community.

One of the guiding principles of the Advocacy Policy is accountability and transparency, which states that Council will be open and transparent about its advocacy objectives, activities and results. Consistent with this principle, it is proposed that an annual report be presented to Council outlining advocacy priorities, activities, outcomes and achievements.

This is the first Annual Advocacy Outcomes Report prepared under the revised policy. To provide a comprehensive overview of recent advocacy activity and outcomes, the report covers activity from the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years so that it captures Council's advocacy activities associated with the most recent Queensland State Election in October 2024 and the Australian Federal Election in May 2025. Future reports will be presented annually and will report on advocacy activities undertaken during a single financial year.

Throughout the reporting period, Council's advocacy efforts focused on securing investment and government support for initiatives that contribute to the region's growth, liveability, resilience and economic development. Advocacy activities included direct engagement with Federal and State Ministers, Members of Parliament and government agencies; preparation of submissions and briefing materials; election advocacy; strategic partnerships with regional organisations; and ongoing stakeholder and community engagement.

Council's key advocacy priorities during the reporting period included:

- Cairns Water Security Stage 1;
- Securing Cairns Housing Foundations Plan, including housing-enabling infrastructure for the Mount Peter Southern Growth Corridor;
- Sustainable tourism funding;
- New University 2 Reservoir;
- Airport Bus Link;
- Disaster resilience and recovery funding;
- 2024 State election priorities; and
- 2025 Federal election priorities.

Council also supported advocacy efforts led by regional partners where there was clear alignment with Council's strategic objectives and the interests of the Cairns community. This included support for significant regional infrastructure priorities such as the Cairns Western Arterial Road, Captain Cook Highway resilience improvements, Barron River Bridge replacement, Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct and Cairns Base Hospital expansion, and the Cairns Marine Precinct Common User Facility.

These priorities align with Council's Corporate Plan and contribute to the long-term prosperity, resilience and liveability of the Cairns region.

COMMENT:

The Annual Advocacy Outcomes Report (Appendix 1) provides a detailed summary of Council's advocacy priorities, activities, outcomes and achievements across the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. Key advocacy outcomes are outlined in the Executive Summary, with the attachment providing additional information on advocacy initiatives, advocacy activities, stakeholder engagement, funding outcomes and regional partnerships.

The review demonstrates the value of a coordinated, whole-of-Council approach to advocacy, with elected representatives leading advocacy efforts and Council officers across multiple directorates providing the technical expertise, project development and stakeholder engagement required to support successful outcomes.

Looking ahead to 2026/27, Council officers will work with Councillors to review and endorse an updated suite of Advocacy Priorities and develop supporting tactical advocacy plans to guide engagement and advocacy activities. This work will ensure Council's advocacy program remains focused on the projects, policy reforms and investment opportunities most critical to the future growth, liveability and resilience of the Cairns region.

The 2026/27 financial year will also see a strong focus on supporting the delivery of significant State and Federal Government commitments announced for Cairns and Far North Queensland. Council will continue to work collaboratively with governments, industry and regional stakeholders to seek greater certainty around project sequencing, delivery timeframes and funding pathways. Improved visibility of the infrastructure pipeline will support workforce planning, contractor and supply chain capacity, and business confidence across the region.

Council officers will continue to refine advocacy processes and reporting to ensure advocacy activities are strategic, coordinated and aligned with Council priorities, while improving the tracking of funding opportunities, stakeholder engagement and advocacy outcomes.

Maintaining strong relationships with all levels of government, regional organisations and industry stakeholders will remain a key focus, helping Council advance priority projects, influence policy outcomes and secure investment for the Cairns region.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: (Recommended):

That Council notes the Annual Advocacy Outcomes Report for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Option 2:

That Council **does not** note the Annual Advocacy Outcomes Report for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

The report supports the governance and accountability principles of Council's Advocacy Policy and assists in managing advocacy-related risks through transparent reporting of activities and outcomes. Council's advocacy approach is guided by the policy's principles of being non-partisan, independent, evidence-based and collaborative, helping to ensure advocacy efforts remain credible, effective and aligned with community interests.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

Effective advocacy plays an important role in securing external funding, influencing policy outcomes and attracting investment that supports the Cairns community. Advocacy outcomes achieved during the reporting period, including funding secured for housing-enabling infrastructure, community facilities and transport initiatives, will contribute to the region's long-term economic growth and reduce pressure on Council's financial resources.

Council's advocacy activities were undertaken within operational budget allocations for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

This report and the implementation of Council's Advocacy Policy directly align with Council's Corporate Plan, particularly:

- A robust economy that supports our diverse and growing businesses; and
- Focused and informed decision-making that delivers positive outcomes for our community.

Policy

This report has been prepared in accordance with Council's Advocacy Policy and fulfils the policy's commitment to accountability and transparency through annual reporting of advocacy priorities, activities, outcomes and achievements. The report also includes information on contestable grant funding activities undertaken in accordance with the Applying for External Contestable Grant Funding General Policy, recognising the important role external funding plays in delivering Council priorities and community outcomes.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Annual Advocacy Outcomes Report for 2024/25 and 2025/26



Nick Masasso
Director – Economic Development and Advocacy

Attachment 1: Annual Advocacy Outcomes Report for 2024/25 and 2025/26

2024 State Election – Advocacy Activities and Outcomes

Priorities and ask

On 27 July 2024 Council endorsed the following State election priorities:

- **Cairns Community and Multicultural Centre:** \$4 million in State funding, matched by Council, to deliver the detailed design and construction of the facility.
- **Cairns – Destination Mountain Biking:** \$14 million to expand the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park trail network and support infrastructure for the Wangetti Trail southern trailhead.
- **Cairns Major Events Precinct:** State support for a high-performance facility and funding for the Major Events Precinct Masterplan.
- **Housing and Infrastructure – Mount Peter Southern Growth Corridor:** Declaration of a Priority Development Area (PDA) to accelerate housing delivery and supporting infrastructure.
- **Jeff Pezzutti Park Youth Activities Space:** \$1.46 million in State funding, matched by Council, to deliver the youth activities space.
- **Palm Cove Entry Statement:** State funding to deliver an entry statement at Palm Cove.
- **Redlynch Community Sporting Precinct:** \$5 million in State funding, matched by Council, to deliver Stage 3 of the precinct.
- **Smithfield Leisure Precinct:** \$1.85 million in State funding, matched by Council, to deliver Stages 1 and 2 of the masterplan.
- **Tropical Cyclone Jasper Recovery Funding:** Address funding gaps in disaster recovery and reconstruction arrangements.

Advocacy activities

Across all State Election advocacy priorities, Council undertook the following activities:

- Developed and delivered a co-ordinated State Election advocacy campaign.
- Included priority projects within Council's endorsed State Election advocacy platform.
- Conducted meetings with State election candidates, Members of Parliament (MPs), Shadow Ministers and ministerial and opposition representatives.
- Prepared and delivered project briefings and advocacy materials.
- Facilitated candidate briefings and project-specific engagement opportunities.
- Advocated for priorities through election commitments processes and budget submissions.
- Maintained regular engagement with key stakeholders, industry groups and community partners to build support for projects.
- Engaged with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and relevant agencies regarding disaster recovery funding matters.
- Promoted priority projects through Council advocacy channels, stakeholder networks and government engagement activities.
- Maintained advocacy efforts beyond the election period to progress funding, approvals and project delivery outcomes.
- Provided regular updates to Councillors and incorporated advocacy priorities into Council's broader advocacy work.

Outcomes

- **Cairns Community and Multicultural Centre:** While no election commitment was secured, the project was successfully elevated through Council's advocacy program and remains positioned for future funding opportunities.
- **Cairns – Destination Mountain Biking:** Secured a \$15.5 million State Government commitment to expand the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park trail network and support infrastructure associated with the Wangetti Trail southern trailhead.
- **Cairns Major Events Precinct:** While no election commitment was secured from the incoming Liberal Government, Labor committed \$15 million to Stage 1 Queensland Academy of Sport and High-Performance Centre in Cairns ahead of the election.
- **Housing and Infrastructure – Mount Peter Southern Growth Corridor:** Whilst no election commitment was made on this Advocacy Priority the Queensland Government has subsequently declared the PDA and a joint State and Federal funding package has been announced (see Endorsed Council Advocacy Priorities section for further details).
- **Jeff Pezzutti Park Youth Activities Space:** Secured a \$1.46 million State Government commitment from the incoming Liberal Government, matched by Council, to deliver the project.
- **Palm Cove Entry Statement:** While no election commitment was secured, the project remains an advocacy priority.
- **Redlynch Community Sporting Precinct:** While no election commitment was secured, the project subsequently attracted Federal Government funding through the Growing Regions Program and a grant application to the State's Games On funding program has also been made.
- **Smithfield Leisure Precinct:** While no election commitment was secured, the project remains an advocacy priority.
- **Tropical Cyclone Jasper Recovery Funding:** While no standalone election commitment was secured, Council continued to progress disaster recovery funding claims and reconstruction activities, reducing funding gaps and supporting ongoing recovery efforts across the region. Council received almost \$85 million in Federal and State Disaster Recovery Arrangements Funding support following TC Jasper, which was essential to restoring critical public infrastructure, beaches, community assets and recreation spaces.

2025 Federal Election – Advocacy Activities and Outcomes

Priorities and ask

On 26 February 2025 Council endorsed the following State election priorities:

- **High priority item: Securing Cairns Housing Foundations Plan – Infrastructure Funding:** Council sought \$150 million in federal funding, and a matched commitment from the State Government, for essential trunk infrastructure needed to accelerate housing supply in stage 1 of the Mount Peter Southern Growth Corridor.
- **Cairns Major Events Precinct:** Federal Government funding to complete the Cairns Major Events Precinct Masterplan and establish a high-performance sports facility within the precinct.

- **Muddy's Playground Revitalisation:** \$1 million from the Federal Government, matched by Cairns Regional Council to deliver the Cairns Esplanade - Muddy's Playground Revitalisation project.
- **Red Arrow – Eastern Side Upgrade:** \$575,000 from the Federal Government, matched by Cairns Regional Council to upgrade the eastern side of the Red Arrow trail at Mount Whitfield Conservation Park.
- **Cairns Celebrates 150 Years:** Federal funding to support and amplify events as part of the Cairns Celebrates 150 Years celebration in 2026.

Advocacy activities

Across all Federal Election advocacy priorities, Council undertook the following activities:

- Delivered a coordinated Federal Election advocacy campaign to promote Council's priority projects.
- Developed and promoted advocacy materials and election briefing documents.
- Undertook meetings, briefings and ongoing engagement with Federal candidates, MPs, Ministers, Shadow Ministers, advisers and government agencies.
- Collaborated with regional stakeholders including Advance Cairns, FNQROC, RDA Tropical North, TTNQ, the Cairns Chamber of Commerce and industry partners to strengthen advocacy efforts.
- Continued advocacy post-election to secure funding commitments, progress project planning and support delivery of announced investments.

Outcomes

- **High priority item: Securing Cairns Housing Foundations Plan – Infrastructure Funding:** While no election commitment was secured from the incoming Labor Government, the LNP committed \$33.8 million toward road infrastructure in the Mt Peter Growth Area during the Federal Election campaign. On 18 May 2026, a joint Federal and State \$300 million funding commitment was announced (to be managed by Economic Development Queensland) consisting of \$220 million in grants and an \$80 million concessional loan, to support delivery of housing enabling infrastructure in the Mount Peter Southern Growth Corridor.
- **Cairns Major Events Precinct:** The project received bi-partisan support through the Federal Election campaign, with both federal Labor and LNP committing \$15 million towards the High-Performance Training Facility. Subsequent to the election, Council also secured up to \$850,000 through the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program to prepare a masterplan for the precinct.
- **Muddy's Playground Revitalisation:** While no election commitment was secured from the incoming Labor Government, the LNP committed \$1 million towards the Muddy's Playground Revitalisation.
- **Red Arrow – Eastern Side Upgrade:** No election commitment was secured.
- **Cairns Celebrates 150 Years:** No election commitment was secured.

Endorsed Council Advocacy Priorities – Advocacy Activities and Outcomes

Priorities and ask

Outside of the State and Federal election campaigns, Council continued work to progress the following advocacy priorities:

- **Cairns Water Security Stage 1:** Additional Australian and Queensland Government funding to support delivery of the Cairns Water Security Stage 1 project.
- **Securing Cairns Housing Foundations:** State declaration of a PDA for Mount Peter and tripartite government funding for essential trunk infrastructure to deliver the Mount Peter Southern Growth corridor.
- **Airport Link Bus:** Bus link from Cairns Airport to the Cairns CBD.
- **Sustainable Tourism Funding:** Amend State legislation to enable local governments to introduce an optional visitor levy, providing councils with the flexibility to determine whether and how a levy is implemented based on local community needs and circumstances.
- **New University 2 Reservoir:** Australian and/or Queensland Government funding to support the delivery of this new reservoir which is critical to the resilience of Cairns urban water supply.
- **Queensland Waste Levy:** Extension of the annual advance payment for seven regional Queensland Councils.
- **Barlow Park upgrade:** Advocacy and engagement to secure a fit for purpose Olympic Upgrade to Barlow Park that will provide a pre and post Games legacy benefit for the community of Cairns.

Activities

Council undertook the following activities to progress these advocacy priorities:

- Developed and submitted annual Federal and State pre-budget submissions advocating for Council's endorsed priorities.
- Undertook regular correspondence with Ministers, Assistant Ministers, local Members of Parliament, ministerial advisors and senior government officials.
- Facilitated and participated in face-to-face meetings, briefings and site visits with elected representatives, government agencies and key decision-makers.
- Worked collaboratively with key regional organisations including Advance Cairns, FNQROC, Regional Development Australia Tropical North, Tourism Tropical North Queensland, Cairns Chamber of Commerce, Community Housing Industry Association, UDIA and LGAQ.
- Participated in policy consultations, inquiries, submissions and government review processes to influence policy and funding outcomes.
- Delivered targeted advocacy and stakeholder engagement activities to raise awareness of regional priorities and build support for funding and policy outcomes.
- Facilitated Councillor engagement with government representatives to support priority projects and initiatives.
- Pursued external grant funding opportunities.
- Supported regional advocacy through LGAQ motions.

- Maintained ongoing engagement with government agencies to progress project delivery, funding agreements and implementation timeframes.
- Monitored government funding programs, policy announcements and emerging opportunities to align advocacy efforts with government priorities.
- Provided regular advocacy updates to Council, stakeholders and partner organisations.

Outcomes

- **Cairns Water Security Stage 1:** Secured \$175 million in additional funding to support delivery of Cairns Water Security Stage 1 (\$390 million funding in total). State Government announced an additional \$87.5 million in funding on 27 June 2024. This additional funding was matched by the Federal Government just prior to the Federal Election campaign, on 24 January 2025.
- **Securing Cairns Housing Foundations:** On 30 July 2025, the Queensland Government declared the Mount Peter PDA. On 18 May 2026, the Australian and Queensland Governments announced a \$300 million funding commitment (to be managed by Economic Development Queensland) consisting of \$220 million in grants and an \$80 million concessional loan, to support delivery of housing enabling infrastructure in the Mount Peter Southern Growth Corridor. Council continued to pursue additional funding opportunities to accelerate housing delivery, including applications to the Queensland Government's Residential Activation Fund (RAF). While Council's Round 1 application was unsuccessful, a further Round 2 application seeking more than \$45 million for critical water, wastewater and transport infrastructure was submitted in April 2026 and remains under assessment.
- **Airport Link Bus:** The Cairns Airport Link Bus service was as proceeding confirmed in the Queensland Government's 2026/27 Budget.
- **Sustainable Tourism Funding:** No change in legislation updated financial and economic analysis completed.
- **New University 2 Reservoir:** Council formally endorsed the New University 2 Reservoir as a High Advocacy Priority on 24 June 2026 and commenced engagement with State and Federal governments to seek funding support for the project. The new reservoir has also been endorsed as the top priority on Council's Local Resilience Action Plan (LRAP).
- **Queensland Waste Levy – extension of the annual advance payment for R7 Councils:** Cairns Regional Council was one of the seven regional councils that secured temporary extension of the State Government's 100% waste levy offset through to 2024–25. A further temporary exemption was granted from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 due to the fire at Council's Bedminster facility.
- **Barlow Park upgrade:** On 27 August 2024, the Australian and Queensland governments committed to the \$91 million upgrade of Barlow Park. The upgrade will see the current 1,700-seat West Stand rebuilt and its capacity more than doubled to 3,500 permanent seats, with an additional 1,500 retractable seats for use over the existing athletics track. Council Officers have been actively engaging with representatives of the Queensland Government and the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority through the project validation report, design and procurement phases of the project.

Advocacy support for priorities led by others

Priorities and ask

Council continued work to support the progress the following advocacy priorities being led by others:

- **Cairns Western Arterial Road.**
- **Captain Cook Highway Improvements.**
- **Barron River Bridge Replacement (Kuranda).**
- **Cairns Marine Precinct/Common User Facility.**
- **Cairns Southern Access Corridor Bruce Highway Upgrades.**
- **Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct and Cairns Hospital expansion.**
- **NQ Cowboys Cairns Community Development and High-Performance Centre.**
- **Cairns South State Development Area.**

Activities

Council undertook the following activities to progress these advocacy priorities:

- Supported advocacy led by key regional stakeholders through government engagement and stakeholder meetings.
- Supported regional delegations to Brisbane and Canberra advocating for regionally significant priorities.
- Ongoing engagement with project proponents (including Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service, Ports North, Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, NQ Cowboys, Queensland Coordinator General)
- Appropriate commentary in Council media releases relating to State and Federal budgets (pre and post budget releases and associated commentary)

Outcomes

- **Cairns Western Arterial Road:** Additional Federal funding commitment announced for the project in 2026/27 Budget. Advocacy efforts have shifted towards securing greater certainty around project delivery timeframes and sequencing to support regional planning, workforce readiness and business confidence.
- **Captain Cook Highway Improvements:** Advocacy efforts have shifted towards securing greater certainty around project delivery timeframes and sequencing to support regional planning, workforce readiness and business confidence.
- **Barron River Bridge Replacement (Kuranda):** Federal and State investment has been confirmed, with advocacy efforts now focused on delivery timing, sequencing and project implementation.
- **Cairns Marine Precinct Common User Facility:** Continued advancement of the project, including Federal and State investment commitments. Expressions of Interest for the Cairns Common User Facility announced on 17 June 2026. Advocacy efforts have shifted towards securing greater certainty

around project delivery timeframes and sequencing to support regional planning, workforce readiness and business confidence.

- **Cairns Southern Access Corridor Bruce Highway Upgrades.** Federal and State investment has been confirmed for certain component parts (e.g. Foster Rd Intersection Upgrade, with advocacy efforts now focused on delivery timing, sequencing and project implementation).
- **Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct and Cairns Base Hospital expansion:** The Queensland Government announced a \$943 million expansion of Cairns Hospital, representing a significant investment in regional healthcare infrastructure and supporting the continued development of the Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct.
- **NQ Cowboys Cairns Community Development and High-Performance Centre:** Federal commitment of \$15 million has been confirmed and Council has continued to support the NQ Cowboys advocacy for investment from the Queensland Government.
- **Cairns South State Development Area (SDA).** Office of the Coordinator General provided an update to Council in early 2026 and Councils continues to advocate for appropriate development in the precinct including development supporting long term sustainability of the cane/sugar sector within the southern element of the SDA adjoining the Mulgrave Mill.

Contestable Grants (inwards) –The following projects have secured recent state or federal funding and are aligned with Council-endorsed Advocacy Priorities.

Securing Cairns Housing Foundations: Residential Activation Fund – Round 2

Council continued to pursue additional funding opportunities to accelerate housing delivery, including applications to the Queensland Government's Residential Activation Fund (RAF). While Council's Round 1 application was unsuccessful, a further Round 2 application seeking more than \$45 million for critical water, wastewater and transport infrastructure was submitted in April 2026 and remains under assessment.

Cairns Major Events Precinct Masterplan: Federal Government's Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (rPPP)

On 13 August 2025, Council successfully secured approximately \$850,000 in funding under the Australian Government's Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (rPPP) Stream One – Precinct Development & Planning for its Major Events and Sporting Precinct Concept. The Masterplan project is currently underway and due for completion in 2027.

Cairns Community and Multicultural Centre: Federal Government's Growing Regions Program

On 8 January 2025, Council successfully secured \$4 million in funding from the Federal Government's Growing Regions Program. The Cairns Community and Multicultural Centre will deliver social facilities and key support and outreach services for residents of the White Rock and surrounding areas, as well as Cairns' diverse multicultural community.

Redlynch Community Sporting Precinct: Federal Government's Growing Regions Program.

On 8 January 2025, Council successfully secured \$5 million in funding from the Federal Government's Growing Regions Program. The project will deliver Stage 3 of the Redlynch Community Sporting Precinct including two new rectangular fields, an oval field, amenities, internal roads, and parking, providing vital sport and leisure facilities for residents in the western suburbs of Cairns.

Collaboration and engagement

Regular MP forums

Regular meetings were held with local Members of Parliament - these helped maintain strong relationships, promote collaboration, raise awareness of Council priorities and emerging issues, and ensure advocacy objectives remained visible to key decision-makers. The forums also enabled Councillors and relevant officers gain an enhanced understanding of key priorities of local State and Federal members.

Meetings were held on the following dates:

Matt Smith MP Member for Leichhardt:

- 24 October 2025
- 14 April 2026

Bree James MP Member for Barron River:

- 25 July 2025
- 5 November 2025
- 22 January 2026
- 8 May 2026

Terry James MP Member for Mulgrave:

- 25 July 2025
- 5 November 2025
- 22 January 2026
- 8 May 2026

Michael Healy MP Member for Cairns:

- 29 August 2025
- 6 February 2026
- 14 July 2026

Brisbane and Canberra advocacy visits

Council officers from the Economic Development and Advocacy team supported/undertook Brisbane and Canberra visits supporting political engagement at the State and Federal level on endorsed advocacy priorities and relationship building more broadly on the following dates:

- **Brisbane: 2 September to 3 September 2024:** Key meetings with Ministers, Shadow Ministers, EDQ and external stakeholders.

- **Brisbane: 20 August to 22 August 2025:** Key meetings with Ministerial advisors, LGAQ, UDIA.
- **Brisbane: 21 April to 23 April 2026: Supporting Mayor with Ministerial meetings.** Additional meetings with ministerial advisors, QTIC and LGAQ.
- **Canberra: 24 November to 28 November 2025:** ED&A Director supported the Mayor at a series of meetings with Federal Members of Parliament, Ministers and Shadow Ministers, and Ministerial advisors. The visit also included attending the ALGA Housing Forum and delivery of the Northern Australia Ministerial Statement by Minister for Northern Australia Madeleine King MP.

Regional advocacy meetings with key advocacy stakeholders including TTNQ, Advance Cairns, Cairns Chamber of Commerce, FNQROC, and RDA Tropical North.

Quarterly meetings were held with regional stakeholders, Council and external advocacy advisors. Meetings were held on the following dates:

- 27 October 2025
- 27 February 2026
- 22 May 2026

The meetings aim to promote collaboration between organisations on advocacy matters of shared interest and priority.

Government Submissions

Developed government submissions, funding proposals and policy responses aligned with Council's advocacy priorities and regional needs including pre-Budget submissions for both State and Federal Government Budgets. Council has endorsed and lodged the following submissions to support advocacy on issues of importance to the Cairns region (highlights below – not an exhaustive list):

- Cairns Water Security Stage 1 Budget Federal Budget Submission – 6 November 2024.
- 100-day Review of Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games Infrastructure - Cairns Regional Council Submission – 29 January 2025.
- Destination 2045: Queensland's Tourism Future – 26 February 2025.
- Australian Government's 2025 review of the Terrorism and Cyclone Insurance Act 2003 – 29 October 2025.
- Draft Far North Regional Plan review and submission – 10 December 2025.
- 2026-27 Federal Budget submission - 10 December 2025.
- 2026-27 State Budget submission - 10 December 2025.
- Preparing for Emerging Industries across Northern Australia – 28 January 2026.
- Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026 (Bill) - 25 March 2026.
- Queensland Redistribution Commission electoral boundary redistribution - 25 March 2026.
- Parliamentary Inquiry into E-Scooter and E-Bike Safety - 29 April 2026.
- Australian Government's Office for the Arts, to inform the development of the next National Cultural Policy - 13 May 2026.
- Queensland Parliament's Justice, Integrity and Community Safety (Protection of the Australian Flag) Amendment Bill 2026 - 24 June 2026.

Advocacy and Government Relations processes, reporting and administration.

Advocacy Policy review

- Developed and implemented a revised Advocacy Policy in consultation with Council.
- Council adoption of the revised Advocacy Policy on 29 April 2026.
- Established a contemporary framework for identifying, prioritising and pursuing advocacy opportunities.

Advocacy Reporting and Annual Review

- Developed reporting processes to support regular monitoring of advocacy activities and outcomes.
- Prepared Council's first Annual Advocacy Outcomes Report.
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Advocacy Tracking Systems

- Commenced ministerial political engagement tracking systems.
- Established processes to capture government announcements relevant to Council advocacy priorities and local and regional matters of significance more broadly.
- Recorded and tracked advocacy activities, engagements and outcomes to support reporting and strategic planning.

It is noted that the processes outlined above are in the early stages of implementation and are still subject to further refinement which is expected to be a focus in the 2026/27 financial year.

State Capital Budgeted Expenditure Monitoring

- Prepared annual reports monitoring State Government capital expenditure commitments across the Cairns region.
- Tracked progress and delivery of major government-funded projects.

Advocacy Website Development and Review

- Continued development and enhancement of Council's advocacy webpages.
- Published advocacy priorities, project information and advocacy outcomes, contestable grant outcomes and government and related submissions made.
- Improved public access to information about Council's advocacy activities and achievements.
- Supported greater transparency, stakeholder engagement and community awareness of Council's advocacy program.

Other activities

LGAQ motions and policy advocacy

Supported broader local government reform and strengthened advocacy on issues of importance to regional Queensland.

The following 2025 LGAQ Motions submitted by Cairns Regional Council were endorsed at the 2025 LGAQ Conference:

- Motion 1: Cost of crime to not-for-profit organisations The LGAQ calls on the State Government to consider a proactive grant funding program targeted at community Not-for-profit organisations who are significantly impacted by crime and anti-social activities.
- Motion 2: Community purpose reserves The LGAQ calls on the State Government to amend section 52AB of the Land Act 2009 (inconsistent actions by particular trustees) to read: (2) Despite section 52(2)(a), the trustee of the trust land may take an action under section 52(1) that is inconsistent with the purpose for which the land is dedicated as a reserve or granted in trust if— (a) the trustee has prepared a management plan for the land that states how the action would not adversely affect the public interest; and (b) the action complies with the management plan.
- Motion 3: QHeat2050: Tackling heat hazards to keep Queenslanders safe The LGAQ calls on the State and Federal governments to develop and fund a QHeat2050 Program to proactively plan for and address heat hazards at a local government level.
- Motion 4: Trading hours for detached bottle shops. The LGAQ calls on the State Government to enable Local Governments to apply to have the trading hours of detached bottle shops located in specified areas/precincts within a Local Government Area restricted where such a restriction is considered to be in the public interest.
- Motion 5: Federal funding to unlock housing supply. That the LGAQ calls on the Australian Government to establish a long-term funding program dedicated to supporting local governments in the delivery and upgrade of trunk infrastructure necessary to unlock housing supply and accommodate population growth.

Council officers regularly engaged with LGAQ representatives on matters of shared advocacy interest.

Strategic communications and advocacy campaigns

- Developed advocacy communication strategies to support Council's priority projects and initiatives.
- Prepared key messages, communication materials and stakeholder engagement resources.
- Worked with Council's Strategic Communication and Engagement team to develop digital content, project collateral, and advocacy campaign materials.
- Produced briefing materials to support engagement with governments, stakeholders and industry partners.

- Increased awareness and understanding of Council's advocacy priorities and objectives among key audiences.

Media and Public Engagement

- Working with Council's Strategic Communication and Engagement team to coordinate media releases, interviews and communications supporting advocacy priorities.
- Supported announcements, milestone communications and advocacy campaigns through proactive media engagement.
- Increased public awareness of Council's advocacy priorities and achievements.

Advocacy Materials

- Developed briefing notes, ministerial briefing packs and supporting advocacy documentation.
- Produced materials to support funding applications and policy discussions.
- Supported advocacy meetings, stakeholder engagement activities and government discussions through tailored briefing materials.