

NORTH QUEENSLAND SPORTS FOUNDATION - 2026 NQ SPORT STAR AWARDS - RESOURCE AND PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT

L&C | 52/8/4 | #7885117

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

1. Approves an amendment to the Resource and Performance Agreement with the North Queensland Sports Foundation (NQSF) to include an additional \$45,000 (\$16,092 in kind and \$28,908 in cash) (ex GST) for the delivery of the 36th North Queensland Sport Star Awards (NQSSA) at Tanks Arts Centre on 17 October 2026; and
2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* to negotiate and finalise any and all matters relating to the Resource and Performance Agreement.

INTERESTED PARTIES:

NQSF Board of Directors:

- Councillor Rhonda Coghlan, Chairperson, Cairns Regional Council
- Councillor Kate Hastie, Deputy Chair, Charters Towers Regional Council
- Councillor Jane Pickels, Director, Isaac Regional Council
- Councillor Kristian Price, Director, Townsville City Council
- Councillor Ash-Lee Johnson, Director, Mackay Regional Council
- Councillor Nikki Flute, Director, Flinders Shire Council
- Michael Whiting, Independent Director
- Glenn Mintern, Independent Director

Note: The identification of interested parties is provided on a best endeavours basis by Council Officers and may not be exhaustive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council is in receipt of a proposal from the North Queensland Sports Foundation (NQSF) seeking financial support to host the 36th North Queensland Sport Star Awards (NQSSA) in Cairns for the first time, on Saturday 17 October 2026 (refer **Attachment 1**).

The proposal aligns strongly with outcomes established through Council's recently renewed Resource and Performance Agreement with the NQSF, endorsed by Council in July 2025 which included;

- exploration of hosting the NQSSA in Cairns and branding the event as part of Cairns 150 celebrations
- initiatives recognising and celebrating female athletes and leaders
- advocacy and promotion of regional sporting opportunities
- development initiatives supporting local sporting organisations.

The proposed event would be held at Tanks Arts Centre with an anticipated audience of approximately 230 attendees including athletes, sporting organisations, dignitaries, business leaders, media representatives and community stakeholders.

The proposal incorporates a number of broader legacy initiatives including athlete portrait exhibitions featuring local female artists, Hall of Fame inductees and activation opportunities focused on women in sport, leadership and business.

In 2026/27 Council will contribute \$51,854 (ex GST) as part of its existing 3-year Resource and Performance Agreement with NQSF (2025/28). Should this additional proposal be supported (being a further \$45,000 ex GST), Council's total investment in 2026/27 will be \$96,854 (ex GST) and \$200,067 (ex GST) over the Resource and Performance Agreement 2025/28 period (currently \$154,797 ex GST).

Officers are supportive of the proposal given its alignment with Council's strategic priorities relating to Cairns as a premier destination for women's sport, Cairns 150, community participation and destination positioning, as well as its consistency with Council's established relationship and partnership with the organisation.

BACKGROUND:

The NQSF was established in 1983 through a partnership of North Queensland local governments with the objective of promoting and developing sport throughout the region.

Cairns Regional Council has been a member of the NQSF since its inception and currently maintains a Resource and Performance Agreement with the organisation through to 30 June 2028.

The NQSF delivers several key regional initiatives including:

- The North Queensland Games
- The North Queensland Sport Star Awards (NQSSA)
- Move It NQ
- The North Queensland Sports Hall of Fame.

At the 23 July 2025 Ordinary Meeting, Council approved the renewal of the Resource and Performance Agreement with the NQSF for a further three-year term. As part of that arrangement, Council sought several strategic outcomes including:

- exploration of hosting the NQSSA in Cairns and branding the event as part of Cairns 150 celebrations
- initiatives recognising and celebrating female athletes and leaders
- advocacy and promotion of regional sporting opportunities

- development initiatives supporting local sporting organisations.

The current proposal represents delivery against those agreed outcomes.

Since its inception in 1991, the NQSSA has been hosted in a range of North Queensland locations (including Townsville on 5 occasions and Mackay on 2 occasions), however, the event has not previously been staged in Cairns.

COMMENT:

The proposal presents an opportunity for Cairns to host a significant regional sporting and community event that complements Council's broader strategic priorities and C150 celebrations.

Importantly, the proposal directly delivers on several commitments established under the current Resource and Performance Agreement between Council and the NQSF.

In particular, the proposal includes:

- induction of female athletes into the North Queensland Sports Hall of Fame
- commissioning and funding of a public mural celebrating our regional sporting identity
- commissioning multiple female artists from our region to create "gallery-style" portraits of the senior awards finalists
- strong female representation across award categories and event programming
- initiatives promoting women in sport, leadership and business.

The event extends beyond a traditional awards ceremony and seeks to create broader cultural and community outcomes through associated legacy initiatives.

The proposed athlete portrait exhibition would provide opportunities for local female artists and create a unique integration of sport and arts within the Tanks Arts Centre environment.

The proposed mural initiative would also create a lasting community legacy celebrating Cairns sporting identity and recognising the contribution of local athletes and sporting leaders. Specifics, such as the location of the proposed mural, are yet to be determined.

The event is anticipated to generate positive regional exposure for Cairns through media coverage, stakeholder engagement and visitation associated with the awards program.

Officers consider the proposal represents a strong strategic outcome from Council's ongoing partnership with the NQSF and provides an opportunity to position Cairns as a premier destination for women's sport as well celebrating our culture and community.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (recommended):

That Council:

1. Approves an amendment to the Resource and Performance Agreement with the North

Queensland Sports Foundation (NQSF) to include an additional \$45,000 (\$16,092 in kind and \$28,908 in cash) (ex GST) for the delivery of the 36th North Queensland Sport Star Awards (NQSSA) at Tanks Arts Centre on 17 October 2026; and

2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* to negotiate and finalise any and all matters relating to the Resource and Performance Agreement.

Option 2

That Council does not support the North Queensland Sports Foundation's proposal and does not enter into a Resource and Performance Agreement with North Queensland Sports Foundation.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Funding support would be managed through an appropriate Resource and Performance agreement outlining:

- event delivery requirements
- acquittal and reporting obligations
- branding and acknowledgement requirements
- agreed outcomes and legacy initiatives
- insurance and risk management obligations.

The proposed event would be delivered by an experienced regional organisation with a demonstrated history of successfully managing major sporting recognition events and programs throughout North Queensland.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

The NQSF is seeking funding support of \$45,000 (ex GST). Funding would contribute toward:

- venue hire and event delivery
- artist engagement
- branding and program design
- stakeholder and community activation
- photography and videography
- legacy planning associated with the mural initiative.

The event is expected to generate economic and promotional benefits for the region through increased visitation, accommodation demand, hospitality spending, and media exposure. By way of comparison, the 2025 event generated an estimated \$321,000 in total economic benefit for the Townsville region.

In addition to this request, Council will contribute \$51,854 (ex GST) in 2026/27 through its existing Resource and Performance Agreement with NQSF (see table below). Should

this proposal be supported, Council’s total investment in NQSF would be \$96,854 (ex GST) in 2026/27.

Financial Year	Current Value of contribution (ex GST)	Proposed value (ex GST)
2025 / 2026	\$50,081	\$50,081
2026 / 2027	\$51,854	\$96,854
2027 / 2028	\$53,131	\$53,131
Total	\$154,797	\$200,067

Given the proposal aligns with Council’s established Resource and Performance Agreement with NQSF and directly supports the Cairns Premier Destination for Women’s Sport Action Plan, it is proposed that funding be allocated from the Women’s Sport Investment Program (the Program) provision within Council’s 2026/27 operational budget in the Community Spaces portfolio.

It is acknowledged that this funding allocation is proposed prior to the formal establishment of the Program framework and associated reference panel. This approach is considered appropriate in this instance due to the timing of the request and the need to provide funding certainty to support event planning and delivery. Future Program funding allocations will be progressed in accordance with the endorsed Program framework and governance processes which are expected to be in place in the last quarter of 2026. Following this allocation, a residual balance of \$55,000 will remain within the Women’s Sport Investment Program for the 2026/27 financial year.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

This recommendation supports Council’s Corporate Plan 2021-2026, specifically the Community & Culture and Robust Economy Strategic Goals.

Statutory:

The recommendation of this report is in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* and the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

Policy:

The Resource and Performance Agreement will be developed and administered in accordance with Cairns Regional Council’s Community Grants General Policy.

CONSULTATION:

Consultation has occurred between Council officers and the NQSF regarding the proposed event scope, funding request and associated legacy initiatives.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: NQSF proposal to bring the 36th NQSSA to Cairns

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kylie Richardson'.

Kylie Richardson
A/Executive Manager Community Spaces

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Destry Puia'.

Destry Puia
Director Lifestyle and Community

Attachment 1: NQSF proposal to bring the 36th NQSSA to Cairns



**NORTH QUEENSLAND
SPORTS FOUNDATION**

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ABN: 18 010 492 127

15th May 2026

Celebrating Cairns Through Sport, Leadership & Legacy

The North Queensland Sports Foundation proposes bringing the 36th North Queensland Sportstar Awards to Cairns for the very first time, creating a signature regional event that aligns strongly with Cairns' 150-year celebrations, while showcasing the city's leadership in sport, culture, female participation and community identity.

We propose delivering the event at *Tanks Arts Centre* on Saturday 17 October 2026, with an anticipated audience of approximately 230 guests, including athletes, dignitaries, business leaders, sporting organisations, media and community representatives.

Key Legacy Initiatives

North Queensland Sports Hall of Fame Inductions

As part of the evening, we propose inducting prominent Cairns sporting legends into the North Queensland Sports Hall of Fame, with a deliberate focus on recognising pioneering female athletes and contributors from the region.

Female Leadership & Industry Partnerships

In alignment with Cairns Regional Council's focus on inclusion, leadership and economic participation, NQSF will engage with female-led businesses and organisations (including sector-aligned groups such as The Female Co.) to support networking opportunities, collaboration and visibility around women in sport, business and leadership.

Athlete Portrait Exhibition

We propose commissioning multiple female artists from the region to create "gallery-style" portraits of our senior award finalists. These works would be displayed throughout the venue during the awards evening, creating a unique fusion of sport, storytelling and visual arts while showcasing local creative talent.

Cairns Sporting Legends Public Mural

Working collaboratively with Council, NQSF would also seek to identify a suitable public site for a sport-themed mural project, celebrating sporting legends from the Cairns region with a particular lens on female participation, achievement and representation. It's recognised that this artwork may occur before or after the proposed event.

Funding Request

To successfully deliver the event and associated legacy initiatives, the North Queensland Sports Foundation seeks support from Cairns Regional Council of:

\$45,000 + GST



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This investment would contribute toward:

- Venue and event delivery costs for October 17th.
- Artist engagement
- Program and branding design
- Community and stakeholder activation
- Photography & Videography
- Legacy planning associated with the mural initiative

We recognise that Councils know their communities. In-kind support would be appreciated in minor design assistance (ie. to align with CRC brand constraints), and via assistance in the planning stages of the event via the Events team (to identify venue challenges, best practice etc).

Based off of our 2025 event in Townsville, history also tells us this event is most successful when we are able to use Council's marketing channels to promote nominations for the awards, and for ticket sales (CRC owned Billboards, EDMs, newsletters).

Strategic Value to Cairns

Hosting the 36th North Queensland Sportstar Awards in Cairns presents an opportunity to:

- Position Cairns as the sporting and cultural capital of Northern Australia
- Celebrate the city's 150-year milestone through a contemporary regional showcase
- Elevate female leadership, participation and representation in sport
- Engage local artists, businesses and community leaders
- Generate regional visitation, media exposure and civic pride
- Strengthen Cairns' identity as a destination for major regional events

The North Queensland Sports Foundation welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with Cairns Regional Council to bring this significant regional celebration to Cairns for the first time.

Yours sincerely,

Alexander J. Fisher
Chief Executive Officer
North Queensland Sports Foundation



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