

ORDINARY MEETING	5
21 FEBRUARY 2024	

## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL AND JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY 2023 PROGRESS REPORT

58/6/1 | #7328849

### RECOMMENDATION:

That Council notes the contents of this report.

### INTERESTED PARTIES:

James Cook University (JCU)

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

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Cairns Regional Council and JCU signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 10 October 2019 with the intention to work together on initiatives, projects, issues and opportunities of mutual interest to create lasting educational, intellectual, cultural, social, health, environmental, and economic benefits for both parties, the broader Cairns community, and Tropical North Queensland.

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of projects and activities which have been delivered during the period of 1 January to December 31, 2023. Attachment 1 includes a more comprehensive list, with some notable areas of collaboration included in the following highlights:

- JCU's participation and contribution within the *Towards 2050: Shaping Cairns Growth Strategy*.
- Joint delivery of an exhibition at the *International Business, Environment and Climate Conference*, showcasing research projects within the *Smart Green Economy*.
- Joint production and delivery of a promotional video under the *Choose Cairns* brand to promote the enviable lifestyle of studying Medicine in Cairns, while also highlighting the career pathway for future doctors within the expansion of the Cairns Hospital and the opportunities within the Far North Queensland Health and Innovation Precinct (FNQHIP).
- Support of JCU's bid to the Federal Government for funding of the *Future Tourism Cooperative Research Centre*.
- Several initiatives to support student placements within Council and develop student employability skills.

**BACKGROUND:**

JCU has campuses in Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane and Singapore. JCU's Nguma-bada campus in Smithfield, the secondary campus located in the Cairns CBD and a research station in the Daintree Rainforest feature state-of-the-art facilities and equipment to allow optimal learning experiences. These facilities include JCU Dentistry teaching facilities and dental clinic, the JCU Ideas Lab which houses the Internet of Things and Electrical Engineering and Data Science programs, the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine, and the Australian Tropical Herbarium. JCU Cairns offers courses across a broad range of disciplines from business, law, information technology, social sciences, nursing, pharmacy, tourism, science, dentistry, and engineering.

JCU continues to invest and attract investment for facilities in Cairns while also contributing to the region's liveability. JCU and the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service have partnered to bring to life a unique opportunity for health, research, education, technology and innovation partners in the FNQHIP, now known as the Dugurrdja Precinct.

The Federal Government has committed \$60 million to the establishment of the Cairns Tropical Enterprise Centre (CTEC) within the FNQHIP. CTEC will be located adjacent to the new Cairns Hospital Surgical Centre, which forms part of a \$250 million investment by the Queensland Government in new clinical capacity and capability at Cairns Hospital.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Council and JCU commenced on 10 October 2019 for a five-year period and provides a broad framework under which joint initiatives and projects can be undertaken.

There is an option to extend for a further five-year period on the same terms and conditions contained therein, where both parties agree to such an extension in writing prior to the MOU's expiry date.

This report provides a summary of the activities and projects where collaboration between Council and JCU has occurred pursuant to the MOU during the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

**COMMENT:**

With reference to the agreed aims in the MOU, the projects and activities during the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023 are set out in Attachment 1.

**OPTIONS:****Option1 (recommended):**

That Council notes the contents of this report.

**Option 2:**

That Council **does not** note the contents of this report at this time and requests additional information from Council Officers before reconsidering this matter.

**CONSIDERATIONS:****Risk Management:**

The risks of individual projects developed under the MOU will be considered and managed on a case-by-case basis. JCU has a well-established reputation as a provider of quality education in the domestic and international marketplace. As such, the reputational risk of collaboration with JCU via an MOU is considered low.

**Council Finance and the Local Economy:**

There are no direct costs associated with the MOU. Financial and budgetary implications of collaborative projects are considered by Council on a case-by-case basis.

**Corporate and Operational Plans:**

Council's *Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026* identifies Education and Training as a priority sector, and Innovation, Research, and Design as an economic initiative. This MOU with JCU supports and progresses both of these priorities.

**CONSULTATION:**

James Cook University

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1 – Project / Activities attributable to the MOU between Council (CRC) and JCU for the period 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023 (complete and ongoing)



Nick Masasso  
Director Economic Development & Advocacy

**Attachment 1 – Project / Activities attributable to the MOU between Council (CRC) and JCU for period 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023 (complete and ongoing)**

Specific MOU Aim	Project/Activity
<p>Work together on projects, initiatives, and research of mutual benefit to both parties (Agreed Aim 2.1.1)</p>	<p>JCU participated in stakeholder engagement sessions by Council’s Economic Development and Advocacy team to help inform Council’s long-term approach to Investment Attraction.</p>
	<p><i>Towards 2050: Shaping Cairns Growth Strategy</i> – A strategic project designed to establish a clear and coordinated long term plan for the growth and development of the Cairns local government area. Council recognises the importance of JCU’s involvement in this project through the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the Stakeholder Group Panel</li> <li>• Members of the Local Professional Reference Group</li> <li>• Participation in community workshops and summits</li> <li>• Promotion of participation in the Community Panel to students.</li> </ul>
	<p>Council partnered with JCU to host an exhibition booth at the <i>International Business, Environment and Climate Conference</i>, showcasing research projects within the <i>Smart Green Economy</i>.</p>
	<p>Supported by Council’s Economic Development team, JCU participated in Council’s <i>Meet the Buyer 2023</i> event, which aims to grow our regional economy by committing to strong procurement connections between large industry and our local small business sector.</p>
	<p>As part of a joint research project with JCU’s Australian Tropical Herbarium, Council’s Principal Arborist contributed to the development of a descriptive database that helps identify fungi found in trees.</p> <p>The tool allows Council officers to correctly describe fungi found by members of the public to mycologists at JCU, assisting in their identification and enabling the mapping of affected trees.</p>
	<p>As part of a Master of Data Science Course, Council’s Water and Resource Recovery team are working with students to analyse water meter data and land use information to inform a review of Council’s design criteria for water demand.</p>

Specific MOU Aim	Project/Activity
(continued)	Council's Natural Assets Management team provided a JCU PHD student access to stands of Sicklepod (restricted weed) on Council land to assist with their PHD project work. The student studied a range of processes and conducted experiments including pollinator observations and insect collection; hand pollination experiments; and herbivore and defence study.
	Council officers from Sustainability, Water and Environment, Animal Management and Natural Assets teams participated in consultation to inform the Regional Drought Resilience Plan. The plan is being developed by Far North Queensland Region of Councils alongside the Rural Economies Centre of Excellence within JCU.
Retain and attract human intellectual capital to the Cairns region (Agreed Aim 2.1.2)	<p>In partnership with JCU's Services and Resources Division and the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Services, Council funded the production and delivery of a promotional video under the <i>Choose Cairns</i> brand.</p> <p>The objective of the video was to promote the enviable lifestyle of studying Medicine in Cairns, while also highlighting the career pathway for future doctors within the expansion of the Cairns Hospital and the opportunities within the Far North Queensland Health and Innovation Precinct (FNQHIP).</p>
Support activities that aim to increase higher education participation rates within the Cairns region (Agreed Aim 2.1.3)	Council hosted several Data Science Students at its <i>Low Carbon Procurement Workshop</i> , which focused on how to identify and avoid Greenwashing in business and gave practical examples and tips on how businesses could reduce and measure their own carbon emissions.
	Council's Coordinator Strategic Planning presented to Planning students on the topic of Community Engagement, using Council projects and case studies to provide context.
Act together and with stakeholders to be a repository of regional knowledge and research capacity (Agreed Aim 2.1.4)	<p>Council supported JCU's bid to the Federal Government for funding of the Future Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (CRC).</p> <p>The Future Tourism CRC will prioritise scalable industry research and innovation, underpinned by advanced data collection and analysis, and develop an industry focused education and training program. It enables sustainable and regenerative tourism growth as global markets look to more responsible and sustainable options.</p>

Specific MOU Aim	Project/Activity
<i>(continued)</i>	<i>State of the Arts Research Project</i> – An independent analysis of the Cairns Strategy for Cultural and the Arts highlighting the insights of why Cairns is the Arts and Cultural Capital of the North.
Support strategic engagement with State and Federal Governments to achieve regional economic growth and development outcomes (Agreed Aim 2.1.5)	<i>Smart Green Economy</i> – A body of work to position Cairns and Far North Queensland as a leader in the smart green economy by investigating the benefits of projects that could deliver economic returns as well as environmental and social dividends. Council recognises JCU and the Cairns Institute’s continued support in the Project as members of the Collective Working Group and Biodiversity and Carbon Markets Cluster.
Identify and secure available funding from Government and other potential external sources for projects of mutual benefit to both parties (2.1.6)	Council provided a statement of support to JCU for the <i>FNQHIP Industry Prospectus</i> , which will be utilised to attract private sector investment into the precinct.
	Council supported JCU’s application for funding through the <i>Health Workforce Program</i> to secure forty Commonwealth Supported Places for medical students in Northern Australia, five of which would be located in the Cairns region.  This initiative is an important step in addressing the pressing healthcare needs of our community and cultivating a robust workforce of doctors dedicated to serving in regional and remote locations.
	Council’s Economic Development and Advocacy team identified a funding opportunity for the FNQHIP through the <i>Queensland Innovation Precincts and Places Fund (QIPP)</i> and notified JCU of the opportunity.  Council supported JCU’s application for funding through the QIPP Fund with a letter outlining support and advocacy for JCU’s value proposition in the region, the establishment of a governance and delivery framework for FNQHIP, sector alignment with attracting investment and the precinct initiative as a whole.
	Council supported JCU’s application for funding through <i>Advance Queensland’s Industry Research Focus Fund</i> for a project that aims to track shifting shorelines with drones and geospatial artificial intelligence.

Specific MOU Aim	Project/Activity
Foster innovation and strengthen the innovation ecosystem (Agreed Aim 2.1.7)	Council and JCU are members of Partner Up Queensland Regional Science and Innovation Network (PUQRSIN) Steering Committee.
	Council's Economic Development and Advocacy team provided marketing support for and attendance at Breakfast with the Chief Scientist event facilitated by PUQRSIN which JCU is the lead institution.
	Founders in residence at JCU's Ideas Lab; Lenaion Labs and Green KPI, were invited to host a stall at Council's Low Carbon Procurement Workshop.
	As a member of PUQRSIN Steering Committee, Council's Economic Development and Advocacy team participated in a tour of JCU's Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine (AITHM) with the Deputy Vice Chancellor Education, Director of AITHM and the Deputy Director of AITHM.
	Council's Economic Development and Advocacy team attended the official opening of JCU's Ideas Lab Computer Assisted Virtual Environment (CAVE).  The CAVE is an exemplar project positioned as a Northern Queensland Satellite Centre for the North Queensland Simulation Park.
Promote higher education and research capacity in the Cairns region both domestically and internationally (Agreed Aim 2.1.8)	<p><i>Study Cairns International Education Familiarisation</i> – Council worked with Study Cairns to host international agents from Cairns' priority and emerging markets in the region.</p> <p>Council and JCU contributed to the familiarisation program by hosting various events, activities and tours for the agents.</p>
Complement and strengthen the capabilities of both parties through sharing knowledge information and resources (Agreed Aim 2.1.9)	<p>Council's Creative Life team hosted the <i>Cairns Curators' Symposium</i>, inviting visual arts stakeholders based in Cairns to come together, share recent achievements and to discuss future projects and potential partnerships.</p> <p>JCU presented at the March Symposium on the <i>Falling From the Sky Exhibition</i> at JCU's Cairns Institute and provide an overview of tertiary opportunities for Visual Artists in Cairns.</p>

Specific MOU Aim	Project/Activity
<i>(continued)</i>	Council's Executive Manager for Information Services hosted an Australian Computer Society event at JCU on the topic ' <i>Why an all-hazards approach to Security is crucial</i> ' with Chief Security Officer of NBN.
Enhance informed decision making and governance to deliver better outcomes (Agreed Aim 2.1.10)	<p>Council's Chief Executive sits on JCU's College of Business, Law and Governance Advisory Board, which offers a diversity of experience and perspectives and is a valuable source of advice on the College's strategic direction, the effectiveness of academic program offerings, the future needs of employers, and potential industry and consultancy opportunities.</p> <p>JCU's Deputy Vice Chancellor – Academy presented an update on the FNQHIP at Council's <i>Economic Development Round Table</i>, a forum for stakeholders to discuss economic development projects and initiatives occurring in Cairns and the region. The round table is held twice a year and JCU is an active member.</p> <p>Council's Energy Management and Sustainability Advisor sits on JCU's Internet of Things Industry Advisory Board. The Internet of Things (IoT) is an ever-expanding area of information technology and electronic engineering.</p> <p>JCU Vice Chancellor and President, presented an update to Councillors on JCU's future strategic direction, plans and priorities.</p> <p>JCU Director of Estates provided an update to Councillors on the Cairns Tropical Enterprise Centre (CTEC), which will form part of the wider FNQHIP and is being developed in partnership with Queensland Health.</p>
Support student placements in CRC to develop student employability skills (Agreed Aim 2.1.11)	<p>Council's Workforce Development Officer and a team member from Council's Project Management Office were invited to present to students from the College of Science and Engineering at JCU on Work Integrated Learning placement opportunities for undergraduates and employment opportunities for graduates.</p> <p>Council's Sustainability team hosted an Environmental Science and Management student for 130 hours of professional placement.</p> <p>Council's Enterprise Architecture unit hosted 2 x Master of Data Science students for 200 hours (each) of professional placement.</p>



Specific MOU Aim	Project/Activity
<i>(continued)</i>	Council's Strategic Asset Management and Planning unit hosted a Master of Data Science student for 200 hours of professional placement.
	Council's Water & Environmental Compliance unit hosted an Environmental Practice student for 130 hours of professional placement.
	Council's Project Management Office employs Student Engineers in the following discipline in FTE / casual capacity as part of the student's mandatory industry placement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="635 689 1337 728">• Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) (Electrical)</li> </ul>