

CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE INDUSTRY

2024/25



CONTENTS

- 3 INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT
- 4 SIZE AND COMPOSITION
- 5 GROWTH TRENDS
- 6 COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
- 7 WORKFORCE PROFILE
- 8 SKILLS AND EDUCATION
- 9 PRECINCTS AND KEY PLAYERS
- 10 TRENDS AND MAJOR PROJECTS
- 11 SWOT ANALYSIS

Industry Snapshot - 2024/25



\$2,516M

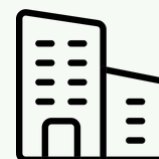
Output / Total Sales



20,084

Local Jobs

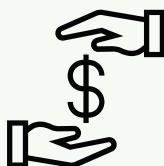
22.6% of total local jobs



1,499

Local Businesses

9.9% of total GST Registered Businesses



\$1,740M

Gross Value Added

16.5% of total industry value added

**5YR
ANNUAL
GROWTH**



KEY SUB-INDUSTRIES



Hospitals

\$736M Value Added

7,039 Jobs



Social Assistance Services

\$370M Value Added

5,748 Jobs

Sources: NIEIR, 2026; ABS ABR 2026

Industry Size and Composition



Output/Sales



Value Added



Employment

Direct

\$2,516M

\$1,740M

20,084

Indirect/Flow-on Impacts

Industrial

\$573M

\$283M

1,999

+

+

+

Consumption

\$1,825M

\$926M

8,424

Total Impact

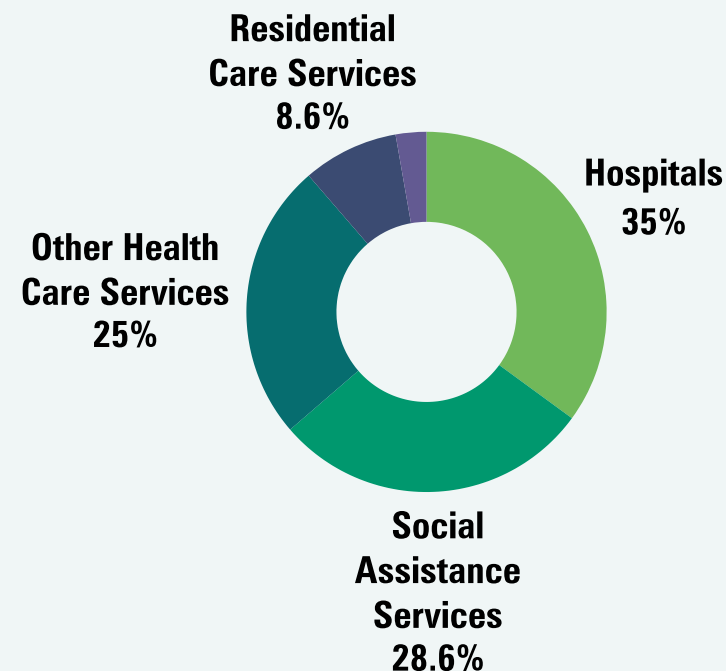
\$4,914M

\$2,949M

30,507

In 2024/25, the Health Care and Social Assistance Industry in Cairns was estimated to have generated \$1,740M in direct plus an additional \$1,209M in indirect impacts for a total contribution of \$2,949M in Value Added. The industry supported 20,084 jobs directly and an additional 10,423 in indirect employment. The largest sub-industry for direct employment was estimated to be Hospitals with 35% of the total sector's employment.

Share of Total Sector Employment, 2024/25

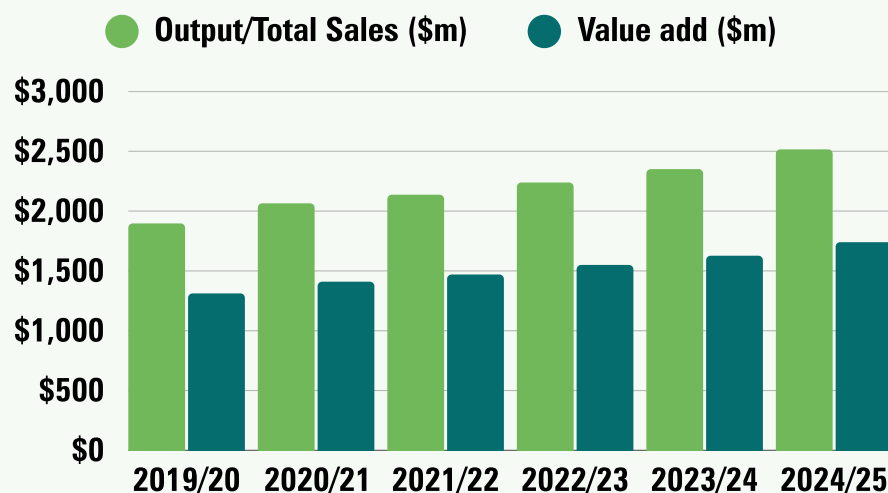


Sources: NIEIR, 2026

GROWTH TRENDS

In 2024/25, there were an estimated 20,084 employees working in the Health Care and Social Assistance Industry in Cairns and 15,762 full-time equivalents. The industry generated \$1,740M in Value Added, or \$86,632 per employee (\$110,391/FTE). Growth in the industry has averaged 6.8% p.a. for employment over the last five years and 5.8% p.a. for value added. Growth in jobs and economic value has been above the state average.

Economic Value, Cairns Region, Financial Year



**5 YEAR
AVERAGE
ANNUAL
INDUSTRY
GROWTH**

5.9%

Output/Sales

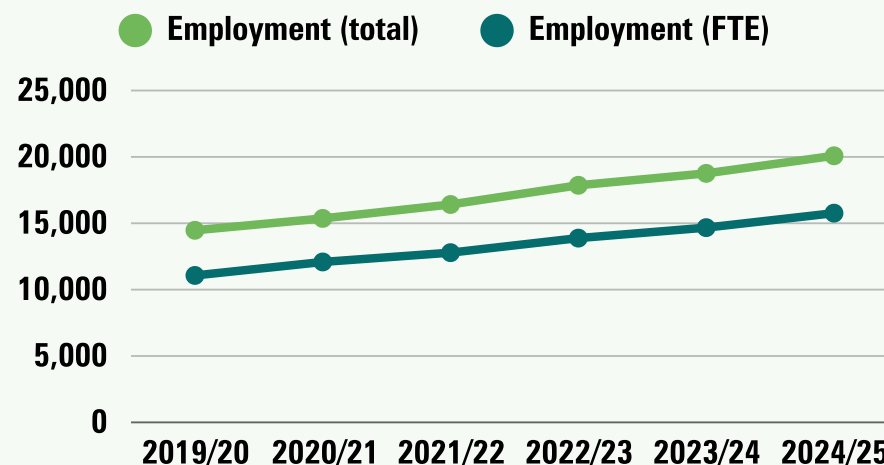
5.6% p.a.

5.8%

Value Added

5.5% p.a.

Average Employment, Cairns Region, Financial Year



**5 YEAR
AVERAGE
ANNUAL
INDUSTRY
GROWTH**

6.8%

Employment

6.3% p.a.

7.3%

FTEs

6.5% p.a.

Sources: NIEIR, 2026



COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service (CHHHS) has secured more than \$1 billion from the Queensland Government to progress the Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct.



Cairns Hospital is the largest major referral hospital in FNQ. Cairns Private Hospital is run by Ramsay Health Care, one of the largest and most respected private hospital operators in the country.



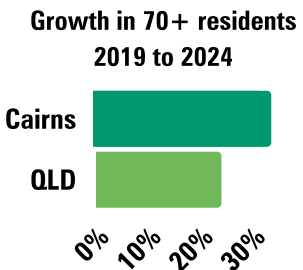
James Cook University specialises in Tropical Health and Medicine and is partnering with CHHHS in the new Health and Innovation Precinct. CQUniversity and TAFE Queensland also provide health and nursing courses at their Cairns campuses.



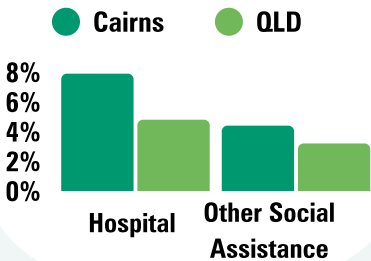
Cairns is attractive to new workers offering lifestyle advantages including great weather, major city facilities and access to the Great Barrier Reef. Workers also enjoy above state average median incomes.



Cairns 70+ year old population has grown by 32% in the last five years, far above the state average (24%).



Share of local employment in hospitals and other social assistance (aged/disability care) is above the state average.



Sources: ABS Regional Population, 2025; NIEIR, 2026

WORKFORCE PROFILE

The profile of workers in the Health Care and Social Assistance Industry in Cairns was similar to that for the state as a whole in 2021 with a median age of 42, 77% being female and 35% born overseas.

Nearly half the workforce was degree educated and working in professional or managerial roles.

In 2021, the FTE median income of the local workforce was higher than the state median, likely due to a higher % of professionals.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE INDUSTRY, 2021 - CAIRNS REGION



42 years

Median Age

QLD - 42 years



\$80,088

Median Income FTE

QLD - \$78,373



23%

Male

QLD - 22%/78%



77%

Female



57%

Full Time

QLD - 53%



35%

Born Overseas

QLD - 34%



7%

Owner Manager

QLD - 9%



7.2%

Identified as First Peoples

QLD - 3.3%



46%

Professionals/Managers

QLD - 44%



46%

Degree or Above

QLD - 47%

37%

Certificate III to Advanced Diploma

QLD - 35%

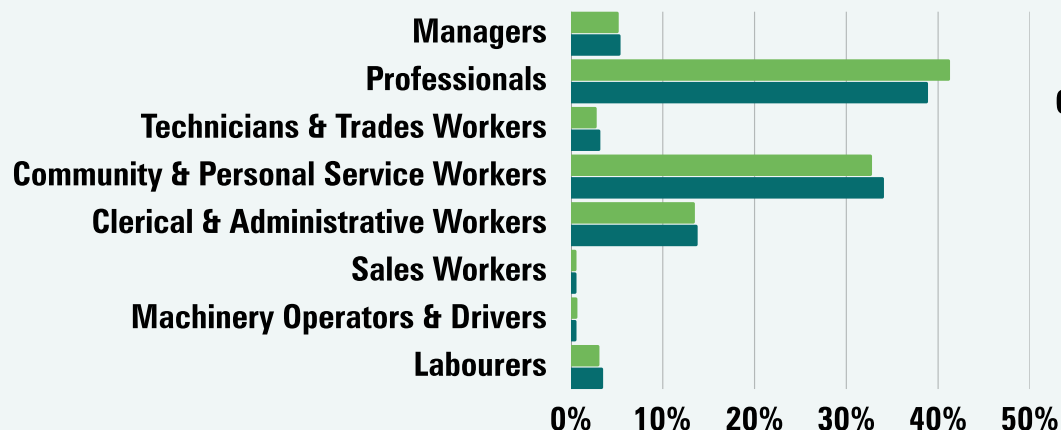
Sources: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

EDUCATION & SKILLS

The Health Care and Social Assistance Industry in Cairns had a higher share of workers in professional occupations in 2021 (41%) compared to the QLD average (39%). The top occupations were registered nurses and aged/disabled carers. The industry had a slightly higher share of qualified workers (85%) than the QLD average (84%), but a slightly lower share with post-graduate degree level qualifications (9% vs 10% for QLD).

Local Workforce Occupations, 2021

● Cairns ● Queensland

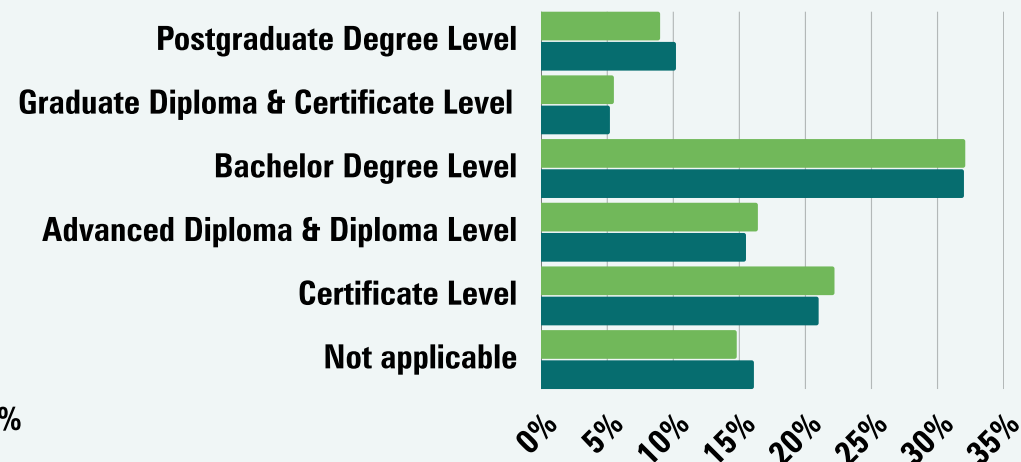


Top Occupations

- Registered Nurses
- Aged and Disabled Carers
- Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers
- Child Carers

Local Workforce Qualifications, 2021

● Cairns ● Queensland



Top Study Fields

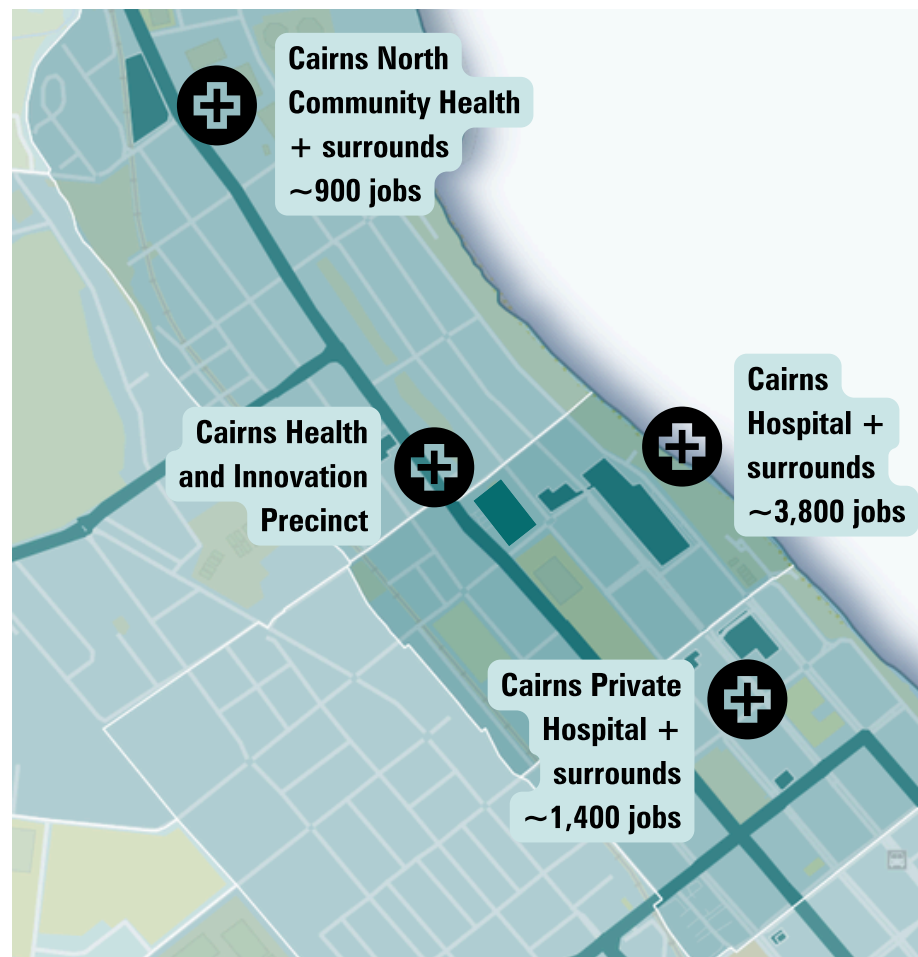
- General Nursing
- General Medicine
- Business and Management
- Children's Services

Sources: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Main employment precincts



Estimated Industry Jobs, 2021



Sources: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Key employers

- Bolton Clarke Farnorha
- BUPA Aged Care Cairns
- Cairns Hospital - the largest major referral hospital in Far North Queensland
- Cairns North Community Health
- Cairns Private Hospital - part of Ramsay Health Care
- Far North Queensland Hospital Foundation
- HCA Home Cairns - Aged Care & NDIS Provider
- Mercy Health - Mercy Place Cairns Aged Care
- Spinal Life Healthy Living Centre



PROJECTS & TRENDS SHAPING THE FUTURE



Major expansion of Cairns Hospital

The expansion of Cairns Hospital continues with a 32-bed ward opening in 2026, and a further 32-bed ward opening in 2027, together with the first adolescent mental health unit (8-beds). The \$83M 53-bed Cairns mental health unit opened in January 2025.



New retirement villages

Construction has begun on Casa Mia Living - a \$72M major planned retirement village and colocated medical centre in Gordonvale. Projects like this meet growing demand by affluent retirees and have strong allied health spillover impacts.



Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct

Cairns Hospital is transitioning to a tertiary facility, expanding its strengths in clinical care, research, education, and innovation. The new precinct will unite private providers, corporate partners, and universities to create an interdisciplinary, state-of-the-art, Asia-Pacific-connected hub. The Qld Government has committed more than \$1 billion to progress the precinct.



Cairns Tropical Enterprise Centre

The \$60M James Cook University facility gifted the name The Yeinie Building is now complete, featuring a clinical school, research, and innovation activities. It provides a multi-disciplinary centre for applied technology and enterprise with a focus on health.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Large-scale major public and private hospitals with supporting suburban health centres
- High level of collaboration between education and industry to identify and address workforce gaps with established pathways to careers in health
- Lifestyle attractors spurring growth in older residents with health needs and also attractive to skilled labour
- Established research expertise in tropical health issues
- Strong networks and demonstrated advantage in disability services



WEAKNESSES

- Distance to other major population bases can limit market growth
- Existing capacity constraints at Cairns Hospital
- Employment in residential care below state average
- Low or negative growth in young children in the region has seen employment in childcare plateau



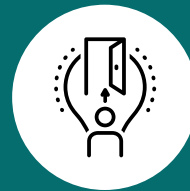
THREATS

- Labour constraints to potentially continue for sometime, especially for a sector overly reliant on a migrant work base
- Aged care reforms will require providers to be more accountable and see increased need for qualified workforce



OPPORTUNITIES

- Major expansion of Cairns Hospital will generate new employment and complementary allied health demand
- The committed \$1 billion Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct can improve applied science and research and boost commercialisation of new health-related enterprises
- JCU's Cairns Medical School to enable students to complete the entirety of their medical degree in Cairns
- Improved NBN and 5G technology allows for expansion of digital health services





For more economic data on the
Cairns Region, visit economy.id

