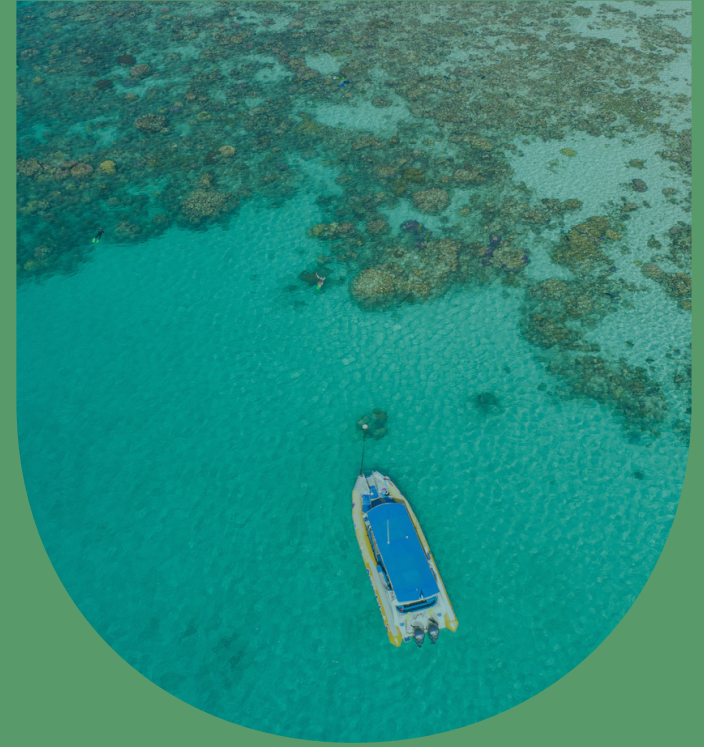


CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

TOURISM INDUSTRY

2024/25



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Industry Snapshot - 2024/25



\$1,685M

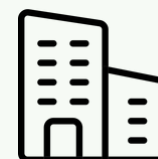
Output / Total Sales



8,141

Local Jobs

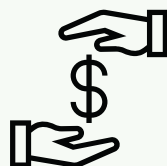
9.2% of total local jobs



1,188

Local Businesses

7.8% of total GST registered businesses



\$769M

Gross Value Added

7.3% of total industry value added

**5YR
ANNUAL
AVERAGE
GROWTH**



Output
Value Added
Local Jobs



KEY SUB-INDUSTRIES



Food & Beverage

\$99M Value Added

2,060 Jobs



Accommodation

\$242M Value Added

2,821 Jobs

Sources: NIEIR, 2026; Tourism Research Australia, 2026; ABS ABR 2026

Industry Size and Composition



Output/Sales



Value Added



Employment

Direct

\$1,685M

\$769M

8,141

Indirect/Flow-on Impacts

Industrial

\$1,352M

\$643M

4,176

+

+

+

Consumption

\$1,587M

\$758M

6,150

Total Impact

\$4,624M

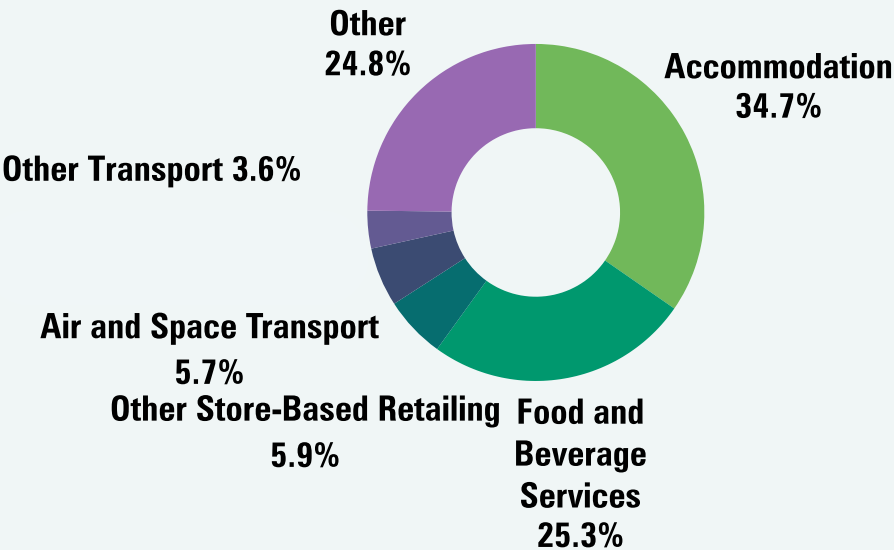
\$2,170M

18,467

In 2024/25, the Tourism Industry in Cairns was estimated to have generated \$769M in direct plus an additional \$1,401M in indirect impacts for a total contribution of \$2,170M in Value Added.

The industry supported 8,141 jobs directly and an additional 10,326 in indirect employment. The largest sub-industry for direct employment was estimated to be Accommodation with 35% of the total sector's direct employment.

Share of Total Sector Direct Employment, 2024/25

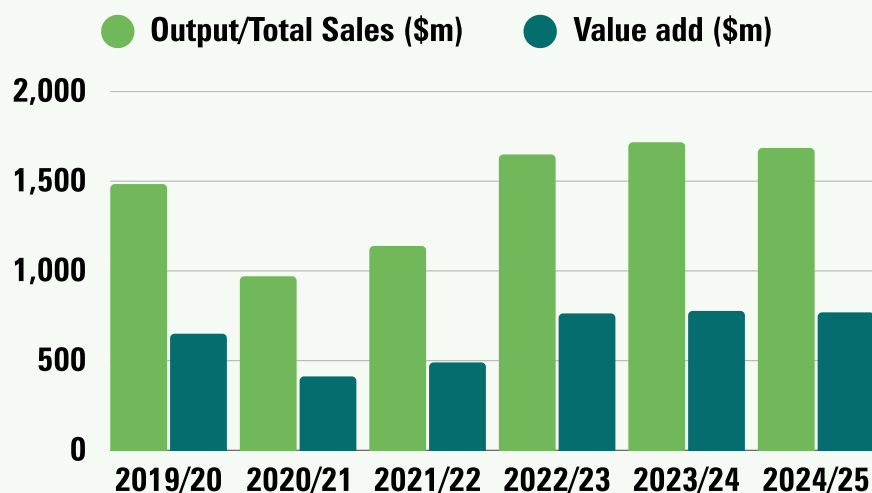


Sources: NIEIR, 2026

GROWTH TRENDS

In 2024/25, there were an estimated 8,141 employees working in the Tourism Industry in Cairns and 6,487 full-time equivalents. The industry generated \$769M in Value Added, or \$94,480 per employee (\$118,568/FTE). Growth in the industry has averaged 4.1% p.a. for employment over the last five years and 3.4% p.a. for value added. Both jobs growth and growth in value added has been lower than the state average.

Economic Value, Cairns Region, Financial Year

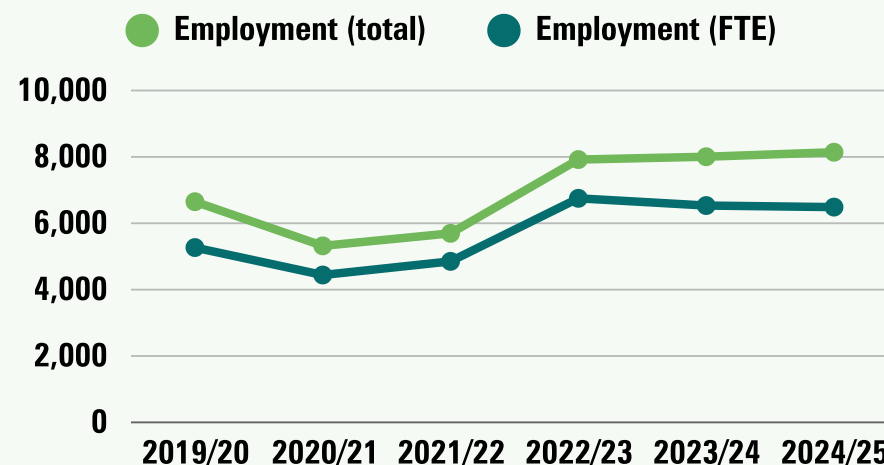


**5 YEAR
AVERAGE
ANNUAL
INDUSTRY
GROWTH**

2.6%
Output/Sales
5.0% p.a.

3.4%
Value Added
5.6% p.a.

Average Employment, Cairns Region, Financial Year



**5 YEAR
AVERAGE
ANNUAL
INDUSTRY
GROWTH**

4.1%
Employment
6.7% p.a.

4.3%
FTEs
6.2% p.a.

Sources: NIEIR, 2026



COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



Cairns' role as a gateway to natural assets, such as the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics Rainforests, and its warm climate has enabled the city to position itself as a major tourist destination.



Cairns has a major airport with networks to most domestic and overseas locations. The Port of Cairns also supports the docking of major cruise liners that regularly stop by.



Cairns is home to world-class specialist training facilities such as the Great Barrier Reef International Marine College. Tourism and hospitality courses are also a focus of TAFE QLD's Cairns campus and James Cook University.



With almost 10% of residents identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, more than double the QLD average, the Cairns region naturally offers unique cultural experiences that attract both domestic and international visitors alike.



Cairns regularly hosts regional and national cultural and sporting events including:

- IRONMAN Cairns
- Cairns Super Carnival
- Cairns Marathon
- International Cricket
- Cairns Italian Festival
- Cairns Festival
- Major MTB events at Smithfield Mountain Bike Park



Cairns Convention Centre hosts regular conferences, expos and live music. A 10,500m2 expansion was completed in October 2023. The upgrade included an expanded lobby, 450-seat plenary lecture space, 3 meeting rooms, exhibition space for 30 booths, and a 500-seat banquet room.

WORKFORCE PROFILE

Workers in the Tourism Industry in Cairns were slightly older than the state as a whole in 2021 with a median age of 34. Half of the workforce were female and 41% were born overseas (well above that for the state).

An estimated 1 in 5 workers were degree educated and 21% were working in professional or managerial roles.

In 2021, the FTE median income of the local workforce was slightly lower than the state median.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY, 2021 - CAIRNS REGION



34 years

Median Age

QLD - 29 years



\$56,682

Median Income FTE

QLD - \$57,769



49%

Male

QLD - 48%/52%



51%

Female



43%

Full Time

QLD - 39%



41%

Born Overseas

QLD - 33%



9.4%

Owner Manager

QLD - 9.8%



5.4%

Identified as First Peoples

QLD - 3.3%



21%

Professionals/Managers

QLD - 19%



16%

**Degree or
Above**

QLD - 16%

37%

**Certificate III to
Advanced Diploma**

QLD - 34%

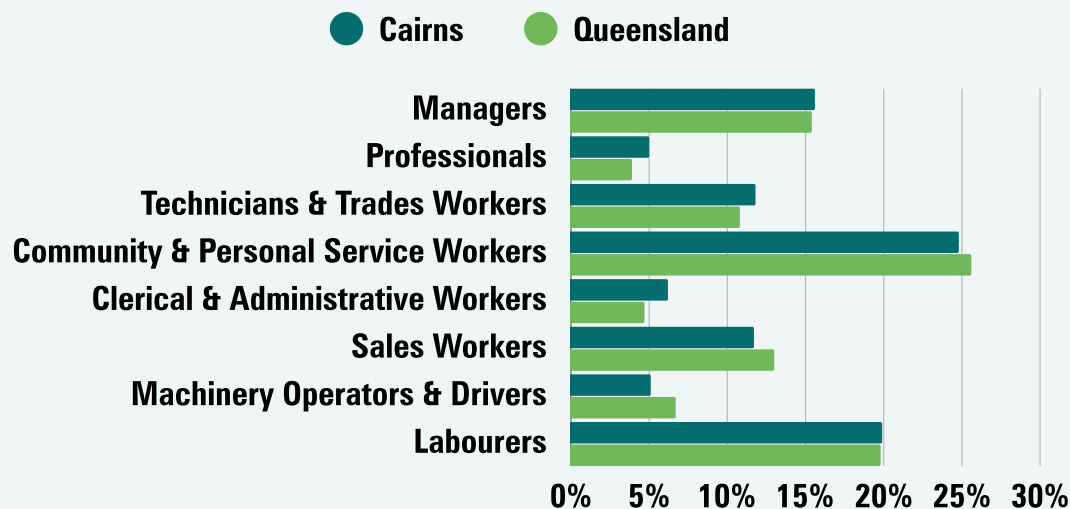
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

EDUCATION & SKILLS

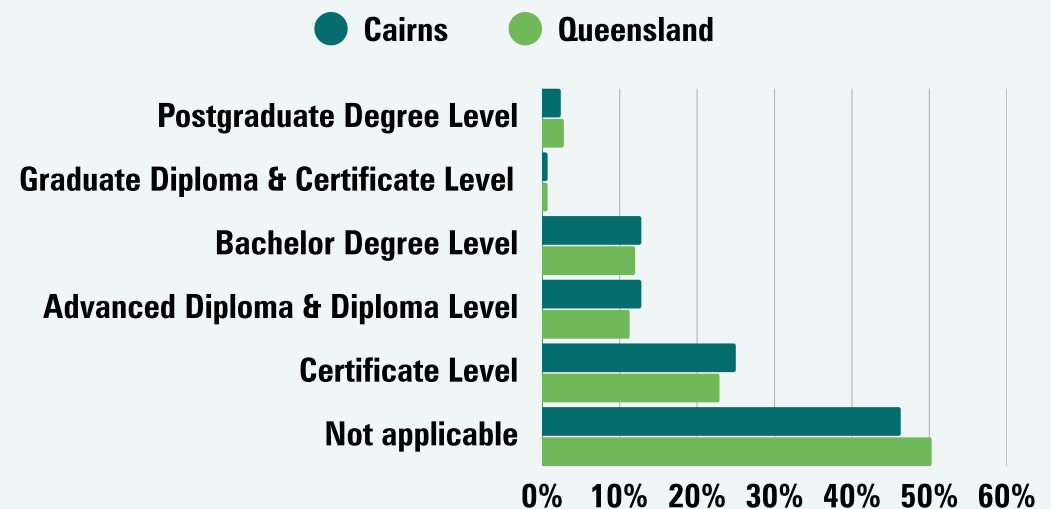
The Tourism Industry in Cairns had a higher share of workers in professional occupations in 2021 (5%) compared to the QLD average (4%). The top occupations were waiters and sales assistants.

The industry had a slightly higher share of qualified workers (54%) than the QLD average (50%), but a similar share with degree level qualifications (16%).

Local Workforce Occupations, 2021



Local Workforce Qualifications, 2021



Top Occupations

- Waiters
- Sales assistants
- Chefs
- Bar attendants and Baristas

Top Study Fields

- Hospitality
- Cookery
- Business and Management
- Tourism

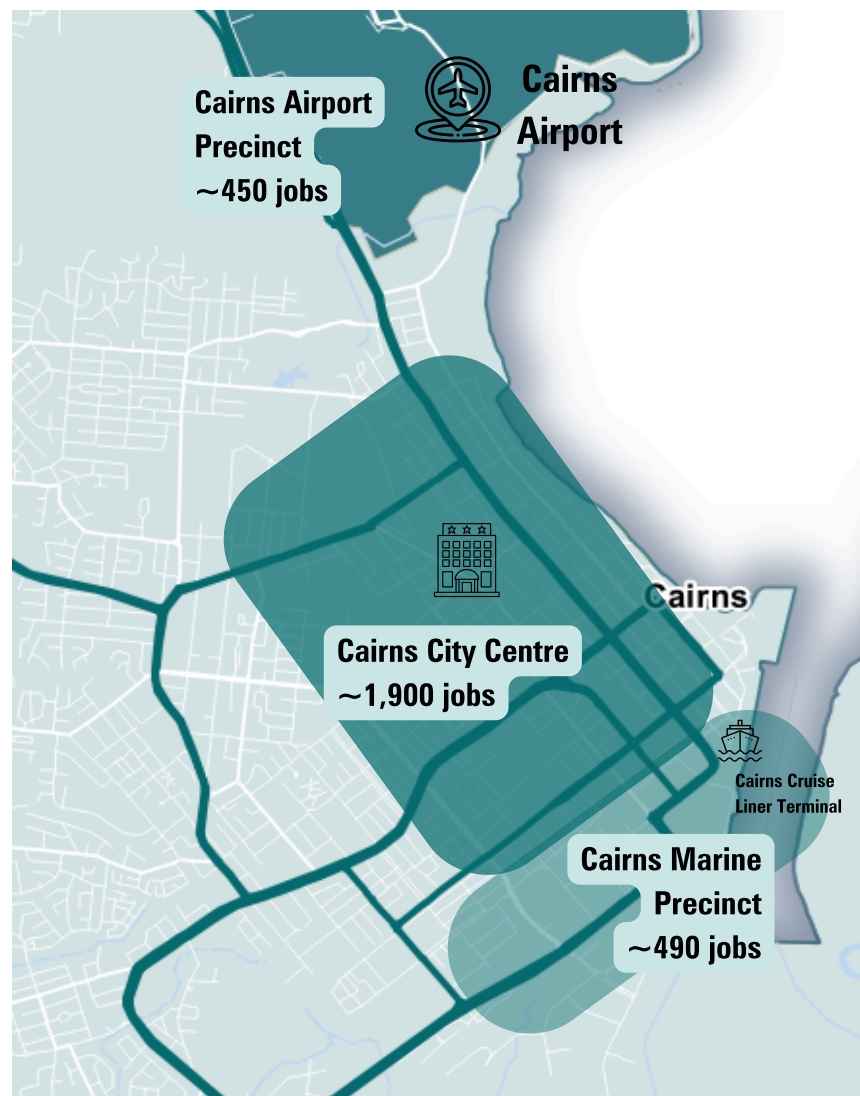
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Main employment precincts

Key employers



Estimated Industry Jobs, 2021



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

- Accor
- Cairns Adventure Group
- Cairns Airport
- Cairns Aquarium
- Cairns Convention Centre
- Cairns Discovery Tours
- Capta Group
- Crystalbrook Collection Hotels
- Entrada Travel Group
- Experience Co
- Hilton
- Mantra
- Novotel
- Pullman Reef Hotel Casino
- Quicksilver Group
- Rydges
- Shangri La
- Skyrail
- Sunlover Cruises
- The Tour Specialists

PROJECTS & TRENDS SHAPING THE FUTURE



Olympic upgrades at Barlow Park

Barlow Park is being developed as the region's premier sporting and major events precinct, leveraging 2032 Olympic legacy opportunities. Plans include a high-performance training hub to attract sports tourism, education programs and commercial activity, strengthening Cairns' year-round events economy.



Cairns Airport Terminal upgrades

Cairns Airport Domestic Terminal has been refurbished and a \$55M International Terminal redevelopment is complete, with Stage 1 delivered in 2024 and the final stage completed in December 2025. These projects will allow future expansion and maintain the competitiveness of the facility.



Agritourism & First Nations Tourism

Cairns has the potential to better capture different market segments looking for experiences beyond the reef and rainforest including:

- Indigenous culture
- Food
- Biking and hiking



Double Island Revitalisation

A new long-term lease has been secured to revitalise Double Island, one of Far North Queensland's iconic tourism destinations. The \$40 million, four-stage redevelopment will reintroduce public access and deliver a beachfront precinct with a beach bar, restaurant and luxury accommodation — restoring the island as a key regional drawcard while creating jobs and boosting the local economy.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Major natural assets such as the two World Heritage listed areas
- Proximity to Asia attractive for overseas students
- Strong transport facilities such as Cairns International Airport
- Indigenous cultural assets to build from
- Well established meetings/event destination enhanced by a major convention facility that has recently expanded



WEAKNESSES

- Peak periods can bring labour and accommodation capacity constraints
- Lack of investment and/or redevelopment of assets and product offer by some providers
- Lack of international air connections with major Chinese markets
- Tourism offer has not diversified to cater fully to different markets/segments
- Wet season perception can limit domestic travel



THREATS

- Labour constraints to potentially continue for sometime
- Cost competitiveness compared to overseas destinations may impact domestic tourism post-COVID
- Climate change can impact quality and attractiveness of natural assets
- Intensity of climatic events (like cyclones) increasing, and negatively impacting tourism assets and visitation



OPPORTUNITIES

- Potential to grow luxury market through attracting new high end global hotel brand
- Nature-based tourism still expanding
- Growing demand for cultural experiences can feed Indigenous tourism experiences growth
- Airport upgrades to support future passenger growth and potentially attract new airlines
- The region's leadership position on sustainability can support high yield markets



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

