

CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2022 2026

acknowledgement of country

Cairns Regional Council acknowledges the First Peoples within our region who are the Traditional Custodians of this country: the Djabugay; Yirriganydji; Bulawai; Gimuy Walubara Yidinji; Mandingalbay Yidinji; Gunggandji; Dulabed and Malanbara Yidinji; Wanyurr Majay; Mamu and NgadjonJii peoples.

We pay respect to elders past, present and future and extend that respect to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians within our region.



acknowledgements

Council thanks contributors and stakeholders consulted in the development of the Cairns Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026. This includes:

- Advance Cairns
- Australian Government: Local Jobs Program
- Australian Government: Office of Northern Australia
- Cairns Airport
- Cairns Aviation Skills Centre
- Cairns Chamber of Commerce
- CQUniversity
- Dive Queensland
- James Cook University
- Master Builders Queensland
- Ports North
- Queensland Government: Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service
- Queensland Government: Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
- Queensland Government: Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Queensland Government: Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
- Queensland Government: Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport
- RDA Tropical North
- FNQROC
- Superyachts GBR
- Terrain NRM
- Tourism Tropical North Queensland
- Tradelinked Cairns-PNG-Pacific



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mayor's message



Making life better for people: It's a simple objective and one that's at the very core of what this Council aims to deliver. For us to achieve this objective, a robust and resilient economy is critical. It provides the jobs and opportunities our community needs to grow and prosper.

Reflecting on our previous economic development strategy, we certainly did not predict a global pandemic like COVID-19, and the dramatic effect it would have on both our economy and way of life. But whilst COVID-19 continues to impact certain sectors of our economy (in particular tourism and international education), we have been fortunate that, more broadly, the impacts have been far less severe than initially expected and the speed of recovery much quicker. The unprecedented levels of support from all levels of government in response to the crisis has no doubt contributed to these better-than-expected outcomes.

It is also pleasing to note that recent economic analysis commissioned by Council indicates that, contrary to popular perception, Cairns has one of the most diverse economies in Australia. This diversity is a strength we will look to further leverage whilst at the same time supporting the recovery of tourism and other sectors disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

So whilst recent times have proved challenging, there is also reason to be optimistic about the future. Our status as the capital of Far North Queensland (the largest and one of the fastest growing, regions in Northern Australia); world class universities and tertiary training institutions; a globally connected airport and seaport; the symbiotic relationship between key sectors of our economy and the preservation and conservation of our natural environment; and an enviable way of life are just some of the competitive advantages that mean we're well positioned for sustainable economic growth.

Building on these strengths, Council's Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026 aligns directly with our recently endorsed Corporate Plan and has been developed following significant consultation and engagement with key stakeholders who contribute to economic development in our region.

Continued wealth and job creation are key priorities within our strategy. The true measure of success will be how broadly these outcomes are delivered for our entire community.

I look forward to working with you in delivering this economic development strategy for our city and making life even better for the community of Cairns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Manning'.

Cr Bob Manning
Mayor November 2021

Cairns Regional Council Corporate Plan 2021 - 2026

ROBUST ECONOMY

NATURAL ASSETS

DESIGN FOR LIVEABILITY

COMMUNITY & CULTURE

FOCUSED COUNCIL

Economic Development Strategy 2022 - 2026

Priority Industries/ Sectors	Geographic Areas of Focus	Economic Initiatives	Major and Economic Events
Aviation	City Centre	Smart Green Economy	Event Prioritisation Strategy 2022 - 2026
Marine and Defence	FNQ Health and Innovation Precinct	Innovation, Research and Design	Event Identification and Attraction
Healthcare and Social Assistance	Cairns Airport Precinct	Small Business Support	Event Partnerships
Tourism	Portsmith Marine Precinct	International Relations and Trade	Event Delivery Support
Construction	Southern Cairns Precinct	Investment Attraction	Event Performance Assessment
Manufacturing	Smithfield Precinct	Indigenous Business Support	Event Portfolio Management
Education and Training	Gordonvale	Choose Cairns Advocacy	
Arts and Culture	Babinda	COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience	

Targets by 2026

\$13 BILLION ECONOMY (GRP)

15,000 NEW JOBS

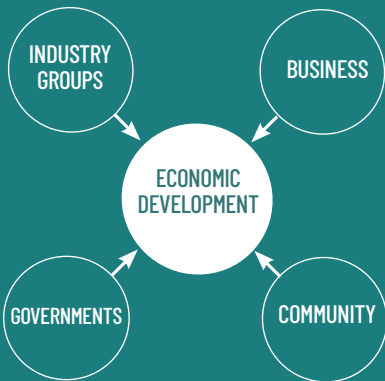
RECOGNISED AS A LEADER IN THE SMART GREEN ECONOMY

SUPPORTING A DIVERSIFIED AND RESILIENT ECONOMY THAT BACKS BUSINESS INNOVATION, GROWTH AND JOBS

introduction

what is economic development?

Economic Development is the intentional practice of improving a community's economic wellbeing and quality of life. It includes a broad range of activities to attract, create, and retain jobs. Economic Development is a collaborative effort involving industry, government and community stakeholders.



who is involved in economic development?

Collaboration is at the core of both economic development and this strategy. Council works together with public, private and community stakeholders to deliver a collaborative approach to economic development, coordinating effort and minimising duplication.

what is council's role in economic development?

Cairns Regional Council has a dedicated Economic Development team that works closely with other areas of Council as well as business, industry groups, community, and State and Federal Governments. The Economic Development team work with these key stakeholders to foster a prosperous environment for businesses and industry, enabling economic growth and wealth creation for the residents of Cairns.

Our role:



Advocate

Promoting economic development priorities to decision makers and influencers.



Partner

Forming partnerships and strategic alliances with other parties to progress economic development priorities.



Funder

Funding other organisations to deliver economic development outcomes.



Facilitator

Assisting others to be involved in activities by bringing groups and interested parties together.



Provider

Delivering economic development services.



how was this strategy developed?

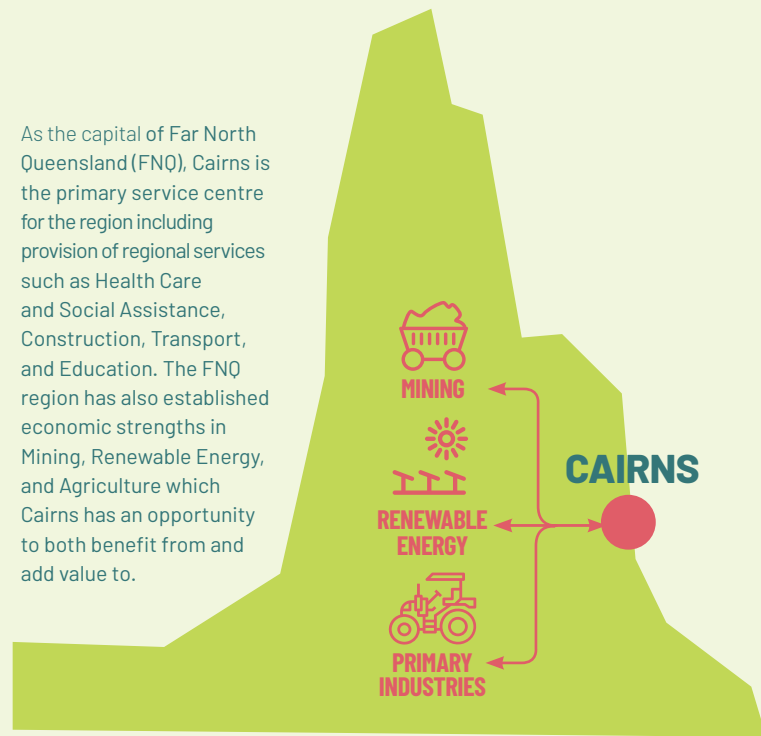
In formulating this strategy, Council conducted a detailed review of the preceding economic development strategy as well as an in-depth analysis of Cairns' competitive advantages, local industries, potential geographic areas of focus and economic initiatives. Other plans and strategies of relevance were considered, stakeholder consultation (internal and external) was undertaken, and community input through the Our Cairns survey was considered. The result is a strategy that complements the work of other agencies involved in economic development in Cairns, which clearly articulates the areas Council will focus on to support economic development for our region.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2022 - 2026

economic snapshot



As the capital of Far North Queensland (FNQ), Cairns is the primary service centre for the region including provision of regional services such as Health Care and Social Assistance, Construction, Transport, and Education. The FNQ region has also established economic strengths in Mining, Renewable Energy, and Agriculture which Cairns has an opportunity to both benefit from and add value to.



RESIDENT POPULATION***
168,449
(LGA, June 2020)

REGIONAL SERVICE POPULATION***
265,039
(SA4, June 2020)

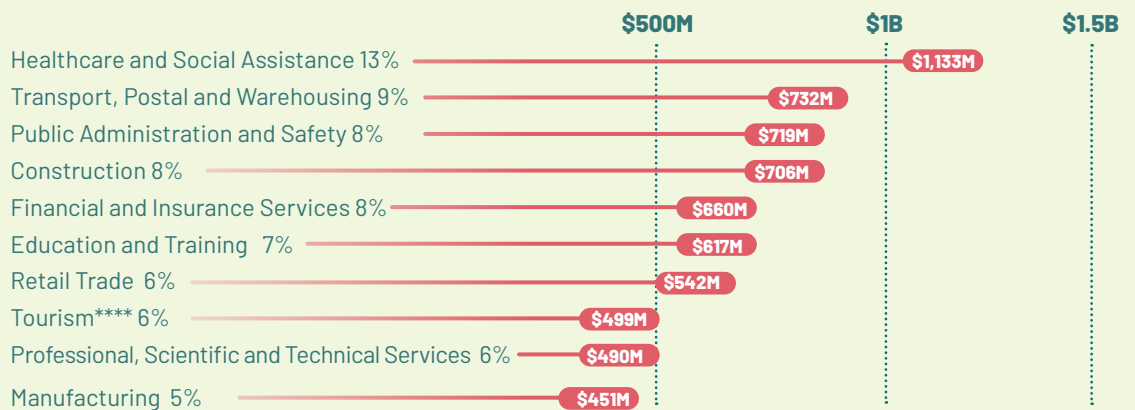


LOCAL BUSINESSES*
14,074
(LGA, June 2020)

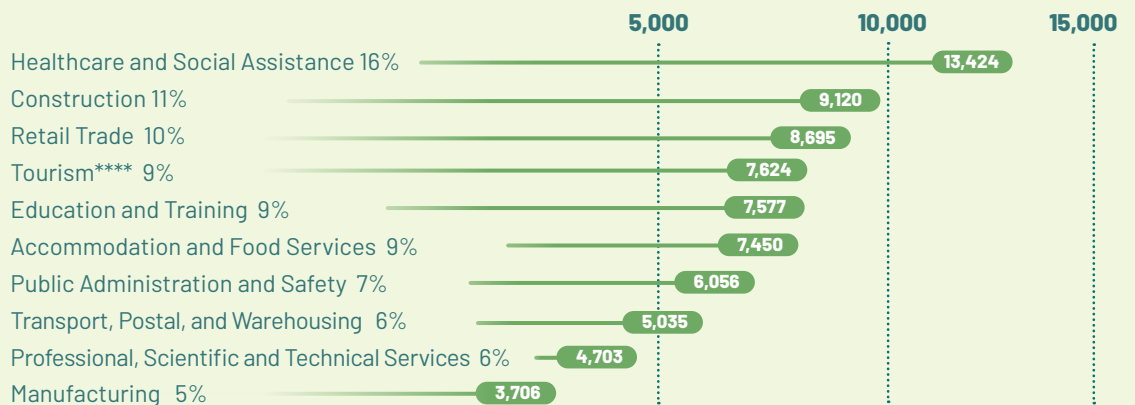
5.5%
unemployment*
(LGA, June 2021)

top industries in Cairns Local Government Area (LGA)

BY CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY
(2019/20 Industry Value Added, Direct, \$M)*



BY EMPLOYMENT
(2019/20, Total Jobs, Direct)*



Sources: *economy.id **Spendmapp.com.au ***QGSO **** Non-standard ANZIC industry – Tourism consists of contributions from multiple standard industries

building on what we have

CAIRNS ENJOYS AN EXCELLENT FOUNDATION ON WHICH TO BUILD A ROBUST ECONOMY FOR THE FUTURE.

THE CAPITAL OF FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND

Cairns services communities across Queensland, Northern Territory and the Asia Pacific with the largest and one of the fastest growing regional populations in Northern Australia. The region enjoys abundant natural resources and is the gateway to one of Australia's largest agricultural and renewable energy zones. Cairns is also the commercial centre and export hub for a growing regional economy.

WORLD CLASS UNIVERSITIES AND INDUSTRY TRAINING

A highly skilled workforce is supported by James Cook University and CQUniversity both of which have excellent learning and research facilities across numerous disciplines. The Cairns Aviation Skills Centre and Great Barrier Reef International Marine College (TAFE QLD) provide industry specific training in established sectors with significant growth potential.

A DIVERSE RESILIENT ECONOMY

Cairns has the 8th most diverse economy in Australia*. Economic diversity has increased significantly over time. This has been driven by growth across a range of industries including Health Care and Social Assistance, Education and Training, Construction, Financial Services, Professional Services, and Manufacturing.

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY

Cairns is home to one of Australia's largest Indigenous communities as well as a diverse mix of cultures from around the world. This diversity creates a stronger, more vibrant and resilient community and benefits our economy in the areas of tourism, education and global linkages.



**A GLOBALLY
CONNECTED CITY
AND ENVIABLE
LIFESTYLE**

The Cairns International Airport and Port of Cairns are vital conduits for visitation and trade. World class digital connectivity also underpins high value industries. Residents of Cairns are able to enjoy the benefits that come with global connectivity and a relaxed tropical lifestyle.

**WORLD HERITAGE
LISTED REEF AND
RAINFOREST**

The Cairns region is home to two UNESCO world heritage sites in the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics Rainforest; two internationally celebrated ecosystems with rich biodiversity. These sites deliver incredible environmental and economic value, and provide the foundation of the unique lifestyle afforded to residents of Cairns.

**TROPICAL
EXPERTISE**

Living and working in the tropics has given the business, science, and health research and development organisations the opportunity to develop successful ways of working in remote, hot, humid, wet and dry tropical climates.

**CLIMATE CHANGE
MITIGATION,
ADAPTATION &
RESILIENCE**

Maintaining the wellbeing and vibrancy of our community and the protection of Cairns' outstanding natural environment will continue to strengthen our economic prosperity and generate economic opportunities.



HOW WE DETERMINED OUR PRIORITY INDUSTRIES

Contribution to the economy

Significance to the economy relative to the wider region

Jobs

Growth to date and growth potential

Alignment with Our Cairns Survey

Alignment to State and Federal Government priorities

our priority industries/sectors



AVIATION

Aviation is an established industry for Cairns with significant growth potential. Growth will be driven by Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) capabilities and tourism, centred around Cairns Airport.



MARINE AND DEFENCE

Marine and Defence is a growing industry for Cairns with significant development potential, which will be driven by investment in the Cairns Marine Precinct and HMAS Cairns.



HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Healthcare and Social Assistance is Cairns' largest industry by jobs and contribution to the economy. Growth will be driven by projects such as the FNQ Health and Innovation Precinct and the emergence of biomedical and tropical health.



TOURISM

Tourism is a significant industry that cuts across most traditional business sectors in Cairns. A growing global middle-class population with an increased propensity / appetite for travel has the potential to drive further sector expansion over the medium to long term.



CONSTRUCTION

Construction benefits from growth across all industries and is Cairns' third largest industry by jobs and contribution to the economy. Growth will be driven by substantial public and private investment.



MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing is underpinned by an increasingly high-value manufacturing base. Supported by the Cairns Manufacturing Hub, this industry will also cut across other sectors, specifically, Agriculture (food), Aviation, Marine and Defence.



EDUCATION & TRAINING

With two world-class universities in Cairns, the Cairns Aviation Skills Centre, TAFE QLD and the Great Barrier Reef Marine College, and various English language course providers, Education and Training is the fourth largest industry by jobs and contribution to the economy in Cairns.



ARTS AND CULTURE

The Arts and Culture sector is an important contributor to the Cairns economy relative to the wider region, with strengths in Indigenous arts and culture, film and performing arts. Cairns has a high level of creative excellence, where culture and the arts are reflected in residents' everyday lives.

geographic focus areas

Council has varying administrative powers over land within the Cairns Local Government Area. In general, Council administers land use and strategic planning over most of the region, such as within the City Centre, Smithfield, Babinda and Gordonvale. However, certain parts of the region (for example the Cairns Airport Precinct and Cairns Marine Precinct) are overseen by other Government and/or private sector entities, which primarily lead economic development activities within their footprint.

Cairns Airport Precinct

Cairns Airport is a key industrial area and key employment hub of aviation and tourism activity with significant growth potential. Land within Cairns Airport is primarily administered by the North Queensland Airports Group (trading as Cairns Airport).

FNQ Health and Innovation Precinct

Anchored by university and public hospital proponents, the intent is to integrate research, education, and training to create an inviting, open and inclusive public space and learning environment.

City Centre

The Cairns city centre provides the highest order and most diverse mix of uses including retail, commercial, administrative, community, cultural, tourism, recreation and entertainment. The centre is the primary focal point for employment and business opportunities within the region.

Smithfield

CAIRNS

Edmonton

Gordonvale

Smithfield Precinct

Smithfield has growth potential as a self-contained employment area with opportunities for increased economic activity and mixed use development.

Portsmith Marine Precinct

Portsmith is a key industrial area and employment hub of marine and defence activity with significant growth potential. Land within the Port of Cairns is primarily administered by the Far North Queensland Ports Corporation Limited (trading as Ports North), a Queensland Government Owned Corporation.

Southern Cairns Precinct

The Southern Cairns Precinct encompasses the growth area of Edmonton and the regionally significant Cairns South State Development Area (SDA). The nearby residential land surrounding Mount Peter is also proposed to be progressively developed, steadily increasing the population base in the southern corridor. Land within the Cairns South State Development Area is administered by the Queensland Government.

Gordonvale

Gordonvale is a growing township separated from the city and suburbs of Cairns, and is characterised by many distinctive natural and historical features. Gordonvale possesses significant opportunities in tourism, recreation, agriculture and specialised health care facilities as well as in general retail and services as a District Centre within the centres hierarchy within the Planning Scheme.

Babinda

Babinda is the most geographically separated settlement in the Cairns Local Government Area, and has significant tourism potential supported by agriculture and a range of businesses, community organisations, and services as a District Centre within the centres hierarchy within the Planning Scheme.

Babinda

economic initiatives



SMART GREEN ECONOMY

Position Cairns as a leader in the Smart Green Economy by leveraging the region's existing competitive advantages, natural assets, and the global growth of the 'Green Economy' and associated clean jobs.



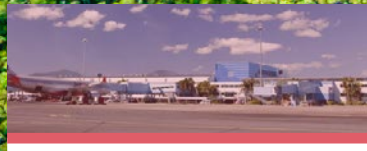
INNOVATION, RESEARCH, AND DEVELOPMENT

Support the local innovation, research and development ecosystem to grow new ideas and economic opportunity.



SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

Support small businesses to drive economic growth and job creation. Cairns Regional Council has committed to the Small Business Friendly Council Charter.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND TRADE

Work with Trade and Investment QLD, Austrade, Cairns Airport and other relevant agencies to grow export and aviation route development opportunities across all sectors.



INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

Facilitate economic growth by creating the conditions that support reinvestment from local businesses and the attraction of new investment into priority industries/sectors



INDIGENOUS BUSINESS SUPPORT

Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to access opportunities and grow capabilities.



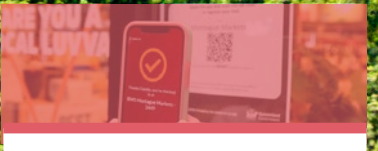
CHOOSE CAIRNS

A website and digital campaign to promote Cairns as an excellent place to live, work, invest and do business.



ADVOCACY

Advocate on behalf of the Cairns community for infrastructure and policy change that will be the catalyst for future economic development.



COVID RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Continued implementation of the COVID-19 Cairns Local Recovery Plan including support for initiatives which assist the recovery and ongoing resilience of the Cairns economy in response to the pandemic.



major and economic events

KEY OBJECTIVES

- A diverse events portfolio
- A 'Year-round' event calendar
- Direct economic benefits from events – visitation, visitor length of stay, and visitor expenditure
- Indirect economic benefits from events – Cairns and Great Barrier Reef destination and media profile development
- Growth in individual event and portfolio return on investment

Working with key stakeholders, Council will develop a diverse portfolio of events that supports economic growth, elevates the profile of the Cairns and Great Barrier Reef region and provides community benefits to the residents of Cairns. Council contributes to the attraction and retention of major and economic events through the provision of direct funding and in-kind support.



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

	Event Prioritisation Strategy	Event Identification and Attraction	Event Partnership	Event Delivery	Event Performance Assessment	Event Portfolio Management
Overview	A long-term strategy to attract, retain and develop a diverse portfolio of events that deliver economic benefits for the community of Cairns	Pro-active identification of potential events that align with the Event Prioritisation Strategy. Engagement with proponents of potential events and coordination of event proposals for consideration by key funding partners	Negotiation and agreement of commercial terms (including funding, support, benefits and KPIs etc) between Council and event proponents	Direct delivery of the event	Management of event acquittals and assessment of the performance of individual events against agreed KPIs (in particular economic benefits generated)	Pro-active assessment and management of Council's entire major and economic events portfolio to ensure successful delivery of the Event Prioritisation Strategy

KEY STAKEHOLDERS & ROLE*

Cairns Regional Council	Primary role	Supporting role	Primary role	Supporting role	Primary role	Primary role
TTNO	Supporting role	Primary role	Supporting role	Supporting role	Supporting role	Supporting role
Event Proponent		Supporting role	Primary role	Primary role	Supporting role	Supporting role

*CRC also partner with Tourism & Events Queensland and other Government organisations to deliver major events.

Key targets for 2026

**\$13 BILLION
ECONOMY
(GRP)**

**15,000
NEW JOBS**

**RECOGNISED
AS A LEADER
IN THE SMART
GREEN
ECONOMY**

how we measure success

Success will be measured by progress against key economic development metrics, including but not limited to the following:

- Jobs and unemployment
- Gross Regional Product
- Priority industry growth
- Key tourism statistics, including visitors and expenditure
- Population growth
- Consumer spending
- Delivery of economic initiatives
- Delivery of major and economic events
- Growth of economic activity in geographic areas of focus



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