



STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2021

Strategic Economic Priorities

1. TRANSPORT

2. WATER & ENERGY

3. ENVIRONMENT

4. SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

5. COMMUNICATION

1 | Develop resilient transport infrastructure and connectivity

Preamble:

Resilient transport infrastructure to ensure connectivity across the region is essential if FNQ is to have sustainable economic growth and development. The current situation however, is far from satisfactory and the state of roads and ports is an inhibitor to further realise the vast untapped potential that Far North Queensland offers.

Roads

Over 80% of Cape York cannot be accessed by land-based transport during the wet season due to the unsealed nature of large parts of the Peninsula Development Road (PDR) and the numerous low-level river crossings. Equally the east-west linkages are poor and simply cannot cope with any increased level of heavy transport. The current transport network is exacerbated with the National Highway ending south of Cairns. Our region has a large Indigenous population and their attempts to achieve economic growth and prosperity is thwarted by the poor transport infrastructure.

A resilient transport infrastructure is expected to support a diversity of road users from agriculture and the resource industries to a growing tourism industry. The state of our roads is a major safety concern impacting tourism development across the region as the growth of visitors from Asia fly in through Cairns to explore northern Australia.

It is estimated that global food production needs to increase by 70% by 2050 to keep pace with population growth. FNQ has vast untapped potential for the development of an array of 'Agri

Businesses'. The Mitchell River catchment, for example, receives almost as much water annually as the Murray Darling Basin (96%) and yet this resource is essentially untapped due to the lack of suitable water and transport infrastructure. Land that could be used for high earning crops is being used for grazing and even this use is inhibited by the lack suitable transport infrastructure. Properly constructed, all weather, north-south and east-west road linkages are essential for the growth of the region. Without resilient infrastructure the economic potential of FNQ cannot be realised.

Ports

The FNQ region has four major ports with the capacity to connect the resource and agricultural industries, including live export of cattle, to international markets. Tropical North Queensland is the second-fastest growing tourism destination in Australia and Cairns Port serves as a significant tourism gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and a rapidly growing cruise ship market. The lack of investment inhibits development of these ports.

- Cairns: Whilst Cairns has developed as a major tourism port, it has far more potential to attract major marine industries; both domestic and military. Dredging of the port would allow for visitation of much larger vessels. The limitations of the Kuranda Range Road and the railway line to the Tablelands means it currently has little potential to service export markets.





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- Mourilyan: Mourilyan Harbour is a protected deep water harbour with potential for the conduct of export operations; currently utilised for iron ore, timber, livestock, raw sugar and molasses. Land surrounding the port has been protected to support the potential for further mid-sized bulk exports from this region; more particularly to the Pacific Islands and Papua and New Guinea.
- Weipa: A major deep water port on the western side of Cape York Peninsula. With the development of the new bauxite export facility, Weipa now emerges as an excellent opportunity to develop this port for live cattle export, minerals and ultimately, perishable goods. It also has the potential to be a home port for the Pacific Fleet. Long term connectivity by rail would guarantee Weipa to be our most important access point for the container trade.
- Karumba: Karumba has excellent potential for the live cattle trade, seafood and mineral exports. Also for the import of supplies and services for agricultural industry and the export of grain and other agricultural commodities in the future.

Due to the poor interconnectivity of our road and rail network, each of these ports is limited in its potential to support export markets.

The FNQROC region now encompasses the third largest production area of fruit and vegetables in

Queensland and is situated several thousand kilometres from major markets by both coastal (Bruce Highway) and inland routes. The completion of the inland route from Lakeland Downs to Melbourne will provide an all-weather, efficient transport alternative.

High priorities for a resilient transport network in FNQ include:

1. Extension of the National Highway to Smithfield to connect the Cairns International Airport and strategic highway links to the Peninsula Development Road (north), Burke Development Road (West) and Kennedy Highway (South west).
2. The development of a Cairns urban and regional heavy vehicle road network within the region.
3. Integrated development of the Innisfail transport hub which includes road connection, development of Mundoo Airport and Mourilyn Port.
4. Investment in the ports of Weipa and Karumba.
5. Investment in Cairns Port to cater for the existing needs and potential growth.
6. Pacific Fleet home port at Weipa and long-term development of a rail linkage to Weipa.

History tells us that investment in transport infrastructure is a vital precursor to the economic growth and development of a region and the nation. Until this investment is made the FNQ region will fail to deliver on its vast potential.

