



STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2021

Strategic Economic Priorities

1. TRANSPORT

2. WATER & ENERGY

3. ENVIRONMENT

4. SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

5. COMMUNICATION

3 | Respect and manage our natural assets and environment

Preamble:

Our region's world renowned natural assets, natural resources and environment are key factors in the economic success of the region. The region includes two World Heritage listed areas, the rainforests of the Wet Tropics and the reefs and waters of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). To the west we have the Gulf Rivers Strategic areas and to the north Cape York Peninsula.

The economic success of our natural assets is evidenced by the growth in our largest industry, tourism, which is valued at over \$3.1 billion dollars. This is in addition to the contributions from the region's growing global reputation in primary industries, education, health, marine and aviation.

Respecting our natural assets and upholding the integrity of the areas unique bioregions is important for the sustainable economic growth and development of FNQ. A changing climate and land use impacts on water quality are recognised as major threats to the region's natural assets.

The diverse FNQ environment faces a range of pressures including invasive species, changes in climate, land-clearing and fragmentation. This includes the world-renowned GBR, with our changing climate considered to be one of the greatest threats to its health, along with poor water

quality from land-based practices. Long term monitoring by the Australian Institute of Marine Science shows the GBR has lost half its coral cover in the past 27 years. Recent media releases highlighting wide spread bleaching of the GBR have already had some negative implications on the tourism industry. Other examples include the threatened mangrove communities of the Gulf of Carpentaria and the decline of endemic and key-stone species, such as the Wet Tropics cassowary, an icon of several destinations in the region. Further deterioration of the region's natural assets will threaten the tourism industry and the economic prosperity of the region.

Councils recognise that healthy, resilient ecosystems are essential for sustainable economic growth and healthy communities. A collaborative approach between local government, the State and Federal governments and industry is essential in ensuring the value of our natural assets and environment is retained now and into the future to support ongoing economic growth. Successful examples include the Healthy Waterways Partnership which helps to identify target areas to address, the Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef Program to promote tourism and the Reef Guardian Councils Program.





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3. Cont...

The FNQ region is well positioned to supply local and global markets with innovative emerging industries which harness the region's natural assets, knowledge and partnerships including renewable energy, environmental management and Indigenous knowledge.

Respecting and managing the region's natural assets and the environment will assist sustainable economic growth and development in the region. Improving the water quality and managing the effects of a changing climate will offer some protection to the estimated 69,000 related (tourism, recreation, commercial fishing and scientific research) jobs which depend on a healthy waters in a sustainable ecosystem.

By deploying a combination of strategies to protect natural assets the region will be able to prosper and grow. Strategies such as:

- Investing in renewable energy which will stimulate employment, innovation and offer a sustainable energy source for future generations; and
- Reducing excess nutrients, sediments and pesticides and other pollutants will improve water quality. This could be achieved by upgrading sewerage treatment plants and encouraging the agricultural industry to reduce run-off through sustainable farming practices.

