



STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2021

Strategic Economic Priorities

1. TRANSPORT

2. WATER & ENERGY

3. ENVIRONMENT

4. SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

5. COMMUNICATION

2 | Provide reliable and affordable water and energy

Preamble:

Reliable and affordable water and energy is essential for the FNQ region if it is to have sustainable economic growth and development. COAG policies including Northern Australia White Paper, Regionalisation, Asian Market Access and Indigenous Advancement have identified the strategic importance of FNQ to economic and social development.

FNQ has seasonal over and under water supply. Bulk storage and control via new and enlarged dams is a key solution and offers the collateral benefits of hydroelectric power, tourism and lifestyle opportunities.

There are potential opportunities within:

- CSIRO's recent resource assessment of the Flinders Gilbert catchments found that the area could add up to 50,000 hectares of irrigation with a combination of in-stream and on-farm dams. The Gilbert offers the possibility of irrigation developments exceeding the scale of the current Ord River irrigation area. The private sector is already showing strong interest in investing in new infrastructure to support agricultural growth

in this area.²

- The Mitchell river catchment. This catchment receives almost as much water as the Murray Darling Basin (96%) and yet is essentially untapped largely due to the lack of water and transport infrastructure.
- Lakeland for increased agricultural productivity.
- Southern Tablelands (upper Herbert) for irrigation & flood mitigation;
- Nullinga for urban and agricultural expansion, and
- Tully Millstream Hydroelectric Scheme.

Affordable water pricing is essential for:

- Agricultural industry viability. Sunwater, a government owned company (GOC), has control in the Tablelands and Mareeba districts with the Department of Natural Resources controlling the volumetric approval and pricing of on-farm dams and bores;
- The livability and affordability of communities via Council operation and maintenance of domestic, business and industrial supply.





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2. Cont...

Energy costs are escalating unsustainably due to a combination of:

- Inflated energy market prices set by GOCs with a regulatory cartel on the national grid. Price benchmarks – even for renewable energy system buy-ins are now set at unaffordable levels – even with the Queensland Governments “tariff equalization” subsidy.
- Off-grid and mini-grid users of wind / solar/ generator / battery hybrid systems are realizing cheaper systems than being on the main grid network.

Energy reliability is being enhanced by installation of renewable utility scale green energy production and

battery storage at remote and fringe off grid locations such as:

- Kidston, Lakeland and Weipa Solar Farms;
- Winton Geothermal Plant (pilot for other western shires);
- Ravenshoe and Mt Emerald Wind farms; and
- Potentially, hydro at Nullinga, Lakeland, Gilbert and Herbert dams.

Reduction in capital and operational costs could see prices kept at existing levels. It is more likely, however, that price constraint will only come from government policy changes or consumers installing independent, off-grid systems.

