



# State Government Regional Priorities

AUGUST 2020







## Member Councils



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# Foreword

## *Sustainable Economic Growth and Development for Far North Queensland*

### **Our Organisation**

The FNQROC region is the largest and fastest growing region in Northern Australia. It extends over 320,000 square kilometres with a population of approximately 279,948 (ABS ERP 2019) and gross regional product is \$16.33 billion<sup>1</sup>. COVID-19 estimates have GRP reducing by 13% and an additional 19,356 people unemployed or on Job Keeper.

To mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 into the future the communities within the thirteen Councils of Far North Queensland welcome the opportunity to contribute further to the National and State domestic productivity through the utilisation of existing assets, identifying our gaps and working collaboratively to support sustainable economic growth and development for Far North Queensland.

### **Transport**

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. Resilient transport infrastructure to ensure connectivity across the region is essential; the current situation however is far from satisfactory and the state of the roads and ports is an inhibitor to further exploit the vast untapped potential that Far North Queensland offers.

### **Water and Energy**

Reliable and affordable water and energy is critical to 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 a seasonal over and under water supply and bulk storage and control via new and enlarged dams is a key solution offering the collateral benefits of hydroelectric power, tourism and lifestyle opportunities.

### **Environment**

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) and to the west, the Gulf Rivers Strategic Environment areas.

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.

### **Social Infrastructure**

There is universal agreement that strong, resilient and healthy individuals, families and communities play a vital role in building the ongoing prosperity, wellbeing and economic development of a region. It has been demonstrated that long term economic growth in the regions occurs through investment in human capital development.

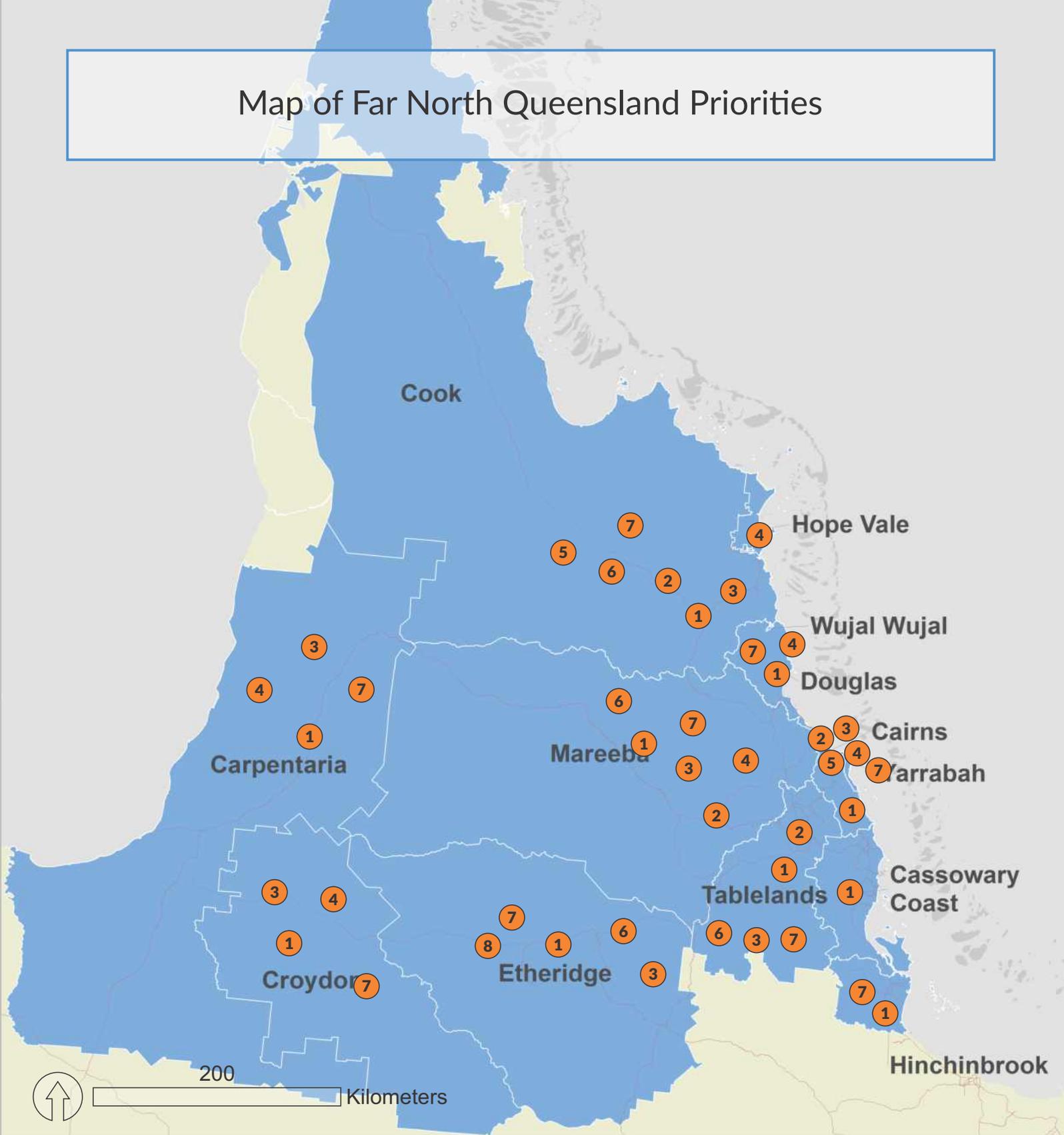
### **Communication**

An equitable communication network for the region is essential if FNQ is to have sustainable growth and development. The size of FNQ means there is a reliance on communication networks whether mobile, broadband, fixed Wi-Fi or satellite. To be competitive in current marketplaces (national and international) and drive increased productivity and access to greater economic opportunities through a global marketplace our communication network is essential. FNQ has vast untapped potential for the development of an array of 'Agri Business', tropical expertise and tourism products which can be exported from the region. An equitable communication network will also support efficient and effective employment, government service delivery, education, health, workplace health and safety and social wellbeing.

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) 2019.

# Map of Far North Queensland Priorities



## Legend

- 1 FNQ Regional Roads
- 2 Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy
- 3 Economic Value of Dams over the longer term
- 4 Social Housing
- 5 Kidney Transplant Unit (Cairns Based)
- 6 Waste Management Costs generated within Qld State and National Parks
- 7 COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Future Resilience
- 8 Gilbert River Irrigation Project

# FNQ Regional Priorities at a Glance

**ROAD INVESTMENT: FNQ Regional Roads**



Assessment to prioritise best returns on upgrades

**4k State  
2k Local**  
Kilometres of roads assessed



**\$461m**  
to remedy priority route deficiencies

 **+ 1066 Jobs**

 **GRP up \$133m**

 **Output up \$324m**

Annually

**Recommendation:**  
FNQROC seeks \$461mil be allocated over the next four years (guided by the priority ranking within the FNQ Regional Road Investment Strategy) to remedy immediate priority route deficiencies.

**ROAD INVESTMENT: Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy**



Delays in providing a solution has proven to stifle economic development

**AT CAPACITY**

If works started today, it would be **8 years** before alleviated



Need to resolve access between East Coast, Tablelands, Gulf & Cape York Peninsula.

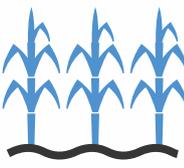
**Recommendations:**

1. FNQROC seeks delivery of the findings of the \$1.25 million Cairns to Northern Tablelands access strategy which was due for completion mid 2020.
2. FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to work with Local Government in resolving the service requirements to allow the Tablelands, Cape York Peninsula and Gulf economy to grow and prosper.
3. FNQROC seeks commencement of the Preliminary Evaluation and Business Case for Kuranda Range Road (Est \$20mil).

**WATER INFRASTRUCTURE: Economic value of Dams over the longer term**

**30+**  
No study has been undertaken on the Economic Impact of Dams over 30 years

**COST**   
**BENEFIT**  
Analysis into Dam Investment is limited in scope

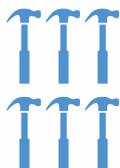


High Value Crops  
=  
High Margin Transport

**Recommendation:**  
FNQROC seeks to inform the Queensland State Government that this study is being undertaken and commit to working with FNQROC to incorporate the findings in future assessments.

**WATER INFRASTRUCTURE: Gilbert River Irrigation Project**

**BENEFIT COST RATIO = 1.15**  
Based on P90 cost estimates

**2,285**   
FTE jobs ongoing

**+**   
**\$85m per year**

**Recommendation:**  
FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to support Etheridge Shire Council through the next stage of the Gilbert River Irrigation Project to get the project listed as a State Coordinated Project and commence an Environmental Impact Statement estimated to cost \$7.5million.

## HEALTH: Kidney Transplant Unit at the Cairns Hospital



Chronic Kidney Disease  
**7x HIGHER**  
in Indigenous Australians

2019	CAIRNS	19
	T'VILLE	7

Kidney Transplant  
Recipients



A Cairns Unit reduces  
patient travel to a  
single or no travel leg



Foundational  
infrastructure and  
in-house expertise  
already exists



National Indigenous  
Kidney Taskforce

### Recommendation:

FNQROC, with the support of TCICA, seeks the Queensland State Government to prioritise Cairns as the next location for a Kidney Transplant Unit in Queensland.

## SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE: Social Housing



**1100**  
remote houses by  
**2028**



**700**  
people on the  
Yarrabah waitlist



**2362**  
experiencing  
homelessness  
in Cairns  
**70% ATSI**



Detrimental to  
Health, Employment  
and Education

### Recommendations:

1. FNQROC seeks as a matter of priority, for the Queensland State Government to work with the relevant councils to deliver on its commitment to Local Housing Plans to identify land availability, address land tenure issues and progress planning for new subdivisions ensuring there is a plan for funding of trunk infrastructure to support new housing development now and into the future.
2. FNQROC, with the support of TCICA, will continue to lobby the Commonwealth to match the \$1.08b commitment by Queensland State Government.

## ENVIRONMENT: Waste Management Costs generated within Queensland State and National Parks



QLD has highest  
number of  
National Parks



Policy placing  
financial strain on  
rural & remote  
Councils



Councils unable  
to meet new  
licencing requirements  
for small  
landfill sites



Illegal dumping  
will increase in  
remote areas

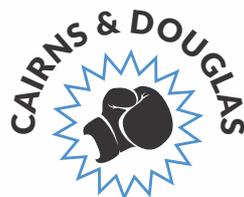
### Recommendation:

FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to accept all associated waste management costs generated within the Queensland National Parks networks, including waste generated by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service works, service staff and tourist visitors.

## ECONOMIC DRIVERS: COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Future Resilience



Our Region wants to  
be part of the  
State Solution



Hit **first** and hit **hard!**



Direct link between  
Tourism and Agriculture  
and their reliance on  
each other



Locally developed  
plans should  
not be ignored

### Recommendations:

1. FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to leave no community behind in the transition out of the COVID-19 impacts and works with councils and regions on existing priorities and innovative initiatives into the future.
2. FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to give due consideration to plans developed by councils with their communities in transitioning out of the COVID-19 impacts.

## PRIORITY: ROAD INVESTMENT

Project: **FNQ Regional Roads**



Assessment to prioritise best returns on upgrades

**4k State  
2k Local**  
Kilometres of roads assessed



**\$461m**  
to remedy priority route deficiencies



**+ 1066 Jobs**



**GRP up \$133m**



**Output up \$324m**

**Annually**

### Recommendation:

FNQROC seeks \$461mil be allocated over the next four years (guided by the priority ranking within the FNQ Regional Road Investment Strategy) to remedy immediate priority route deficiencies.

Far North Queensland experiences a distinct wet season and is susceptible to extreme weather events impacting accessibility due to inadequate road networks resilience and redundancy. This is combined with inconsistent and poor road conditions. The regions road networks has limited FNQ in meeting its potential, with significant economic and social implications.

### Our challenges include:

- Geography and climate
- Investment across jurisdictional boundaries
- Network safety
- Network efficiency and reliability
- Competing needs of road users
- Population growth and development
- Access to affordable transport options.

### Our opportunities include:

- Agricultural growth
- Tourism growth (current value of tourism using our roads is \$951mil per year)
- Future development in the mining and resource industry
- Emerging opportunities such as shipbuilding, education, tropical health, clean energy, etc.
- Improved social outcomes for our Indigenous communities.

We understand it is not feasible or affordable for government to upgrade all the region's roads to a desired standard. Investment must be targeted to those upgrades that provide the best return for the immediate, medium and longer term.

The recently completed draft Far North Queensland Regional Roads Investment Strategy (FNQ RRIS) provides a roadmap for unlocking FNQ's economic potential through targeted road network investment maximising benefits to the communities and industries of FNQ. (NB - the RRIS Roadmap excludes the four range roads currently under investigation).

The RRIS has assessed over 4,000km of State Controlled roads and 2,000 km of Local Government roads. Roads that are integral to moving people, freight and tourists in the region. To meet existing use standards \$531mil is required to meet immediate priority route deficiencies, of this approximately \$461mil is on State controlled roads.

If \$461mil is allocated over the next four years to remedy immediate priority route deficiencies, economic modelling shows that this will generate increased output of \$324mil, increased GRP of \$133mil and employment increase of 1,066 jobs.

## PRIORITY: ROAD INVESTMENT

Project: Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy



Need to resolve access between East Coast, Tablelands, Gulf & Cape York Peninsula.

### Recommendations:

1. FNQROC seeks delivery of the findings of the \$1.25 million Cairns to Northern Tablelands access strategy which was due for completion mid 2020.
2. FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to work with Local Government in resolving the service requirements to allow the Tablelands, Cape York Peninsula and Gulf economy to grow and prosper.
3. FNQROC seeks commencement of the Preliminary Evaluation and Business Case for Kuranda Range Road (Est \$20mil).

The region has a long history of issues connecting Cairns to the Tablelands, Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf. This connection is vital for; economic growth in the region; access to services for communities serviced by Cairns (Education, Health, etc.) and efficient and safe movement of existing commercial, commuter and tourist vehicles, which has exceeded the capacity on at least one range connector.

The range roads are all through World Heritage areas which makes a solution to the service requirements of the region complex. We realise all four range crossings cannot be upgraded to meet demands. Two of these range crossings, namely Kuranda Range Road and Palmerston Highway, have a priority function for the transportation of goods to and from the Tablelands, Gulf and Cape York Peninsula.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) commenced a study "Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy" which is investigating service requirements of the four range roads connecting Cairns to the Northern Tablelands.

This strategy was due for completion mid 2020 and is yet to be released, however we believe Kuranda Range Road and the Palmerston Highway (for similar and differing reasons) will be the resulting focus.

Over the past 21 years, tens of millions of dollars has been spent on studying these ranges with recommendations remaining unimplemented. It has now been proven that this delay has stifled economic growth in the region.

If we start today on rectifying the safety, capacity and efficiency issues we are currently facing, construction would not commence for at least another three years with the construction process taking in excess of five years. At minimum, that is a further 8 years of economic constraint for this region.

# PRIORITY: WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

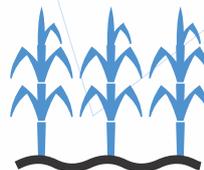
Project: Economic value of Dams over the longer term

# 30+

No study has been undertaken on the Economic Impact of Dams over 30 years

# COST BENEFIT

Analysis into Dam Investment is limited in scope



High Value Crops  
=  
High Margin Transport

## Recommendation:

**FNQROC seeks to inform the Queensland State Government that this study is being undertaken and commit to working with FNQROC to incorporate the findings in future assessments.**

Traditionally when funds are provided for dams there is a requirement to report on the benefits of the dam after a period of 50 years. To our knowledge this has never happened in Australia meaning that the focus when considering the cost benefit analysis is on a reduced 30 year timeframe.

The specification and scope of this study has had input from the Office of Northern Australia and Infrastructure Australia.

Aurecon and FTI Consulting have been engaged by FNQROC to review dams that have been in operation for extended periods of time, with a view to identifying the longer-term benefits that such critical pieces of infrastructure can bring to regions and their communities. These benefits would be in addition to those considered in the original business cases that formed part of the dam approval process.

The approach to this study has been to undertake a series of evidence-based case studies on dams operating for 30 years and longer and compare them to a base case where a dam has been considered but not developed. To provide for realistic and meaningful comparisons, the sites selected for this study have the following characteristics:

- The dam had to be a public sector developed piece of infrastructure (implying a substantive minimum capacity and availability of the water)
- Water was available for commercial use under the prevailing National Water Initiative Pricing Principles (NWIPP) or its predecessors
- The primary function of the dam has been to provide water security for agricultural production
- Potable water supply is an adjunct use, but not the primary use of the water
- Power generation and recreational use are adjunct uses, but secondary uses

The dams and associated regions assessed as Case Studies in this report include:

- i. Rockhampton Region (Base Case where a dam was considered but not constructed. It is noted that the Rookwood Weir on the Fitzroy River has recently been approved for construction)
- ii. Tinaroo Falls Dam – Atherton Tablelands and the Mareeba-Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme (MDWSS)
- iii. Fairbairn Dam – Emerald
- iv. Wellington Dam – Western Australia
- v. San Luis Dam – California, USA

This collection should demonstrate that:

- Traditional Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) for large scale investments in water infrastructure typically takes a relatively inflexible view of the potential benefits because of the inherent information uncertainties in assessing benefits that will evolve over the life of the dam.
- When water security/soil productivity is markedly impacted by investments in water infrastructure, there are potentially transformative impacts on the types of local agriculture available in that region. These changes are dynamic, and not able to be predicted by policymakers at the time of the investment. For example, the global demand boom for avocado was not foreseen by policymakers in the 1950s, but the well irrigated soils of the Tablelands region combined with the region's water security enabled local farmers to pivot to this crop when the domestic tobacco industry declined.

- Transformational changes to local agriculture can have significant upstream and downstream impacts, potentially impacting the breadth and depth of the manufacturing industry and providing critical mass for transport and services industries. In the case of the transport industry, consultation has strongly indicated that high value crops lead to high margin transport that is an important source of local employment.
- Other applications of Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) have well established methodologies that capture a fair swath of the external benefits that may accrue from large scale investments, for example roads. Cost Benefit Analysis of dam investment is more limited in its scope.

This study has commenced with the draft due August 2020.

### Commentary on the Draft Study: Rockhampton vs Tinaroo.

Figure 7, below shows the relative change in productivity for land in both the Rockhampton and Cairns regions over the last 60 years. Figure 7 estimates a per hectare value of agriculture (excluding livestock) in 1955 and 2017. Due to the low confidence in 1955 price data, the series has been presented as an index, with Cairns productivity in 1955 as the baseline. It shows that Cairns agricultural productivity in 1955 was higher than Rockhampton, based on the relative strength of the tobacco and sugar crop relative to grains.

The gap between the two regions grew significantly over the period to 2017 as Cairns shifted away from tobacco, and into the significantly more lucrative crops, such as avocado. The crop distribution in Rockhampton in continued to focus on less water intensive, less valuable crops – largely grains, including a significant share of these for animal consumption. This is not surprising given its minimal investment in water infrastructure.

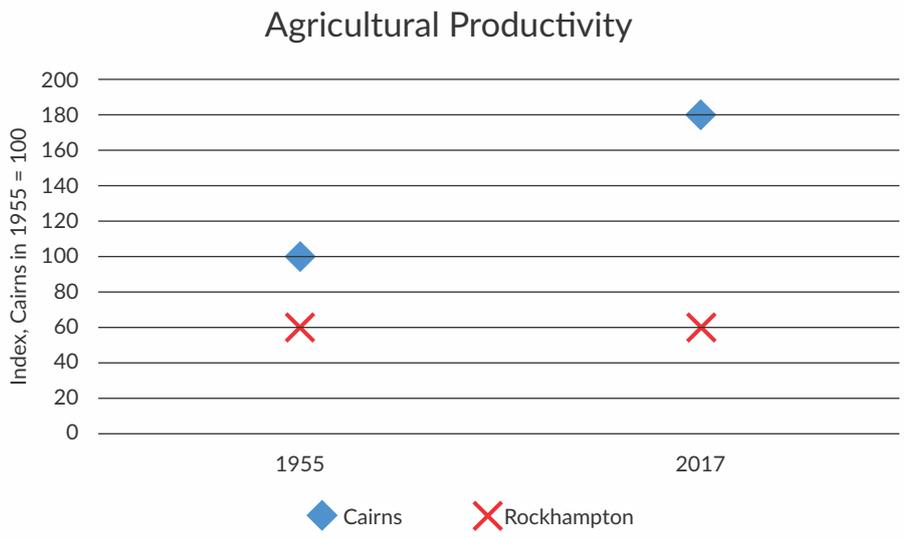


Figure 7: Changing Agricultural Productivity

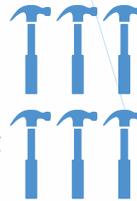
## PRIORITY: WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Project: [Gilbert River Irrigation Project](#)

**BENEFIT  
COST  
RATIO = 1.15**

Based on P90 cost estimates

**2,285**  
FTE jobs ongoing



**+**   
**\$85m  
per year**

### Recommendation:

FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to support Etheridge Shire Council through the next stage of the Gilbert River Irrigation Project to get the project listed as a State Coordinated Project and commence an Environmental Impact Statement estimated to cost \$7.5million.

The Gilbert River Irrigation Project Detailed Business Case, funded by the Maturing the Infrastructure Pipeline Program (MIPP), was recently endorsed by Etheridge Shire Council (20th May 2020). The findings of Detailed Business Case concludes that building a dam on the Gilbert River is technically feasible and economically viable.

The project involves the development of the Gilbert River Dam for Irrigation (primarily) and Water supply (Climate resilience) with a storage of 323.577 ML together with a network distribution of 81.6km.

The Detailed Business Case identifies the project can support 17,990 hectares of new irrigated agriculture, assuming a crop mix of cotton, peanuts, avocados, bananas, citrus, fodder crops and mangoes.

The project will deliver:

- Additional \$85mil/year
- 370 FTE jobs during construction
- 2,285 FTE Operationally and ongoing 779 FTE directly related to agriculture, 1,506 FTE indirectly related i.e. provision of goods and services, transportation, processing, mechanical etc.)

The project has a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 1.15 based on P90 cost estimates.

The next stages are to get the project listed as State Coordinated project and then undertake an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) estimated to cost circa \$7.5 million.

Etheridge Shire Council is a small council with limited resources and will require assistance to progress this significant project.

## PRIORITY: HEALTH

### Project: Kidney Transplant Unit at the Cairns Hospital



Chronic Kidney Disease  
**7x HIGHER**  
in Indigenous Australians

2019	CAIRNS	19
	T'VILLE	7

Kidney Transplant Recipients



A Cairns Unit reduces patient travel to a single or no travel leg



Foundational infrastructure and in-house expertise already exists



CHHHS  
National Indigenous Kidney Taskforce

#### Recommendation:

**FNQROC, with the support of TCICA, seeks the Queensland State Government to prioritise Cairns as the next location for a Kidney Transplant Unit in Queensland.**

The Cairns and Hinterland Health and Hospital Service (CHHHS) footprint covers an area that is home to the highest number (33,812) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, compared to any other Health Service in Queensland. With 14% of the estimated resident population of the CHHHS catchment identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, they are almost 30% of CHHHS patients (admissions to hospital).

The rate of chronic kidney disease among Indigenous Australians is 7 times higher than for non-Indigenous Australians.

The Cairns region has the highest number of patients on dialysis in regional Queensland. In addition, the rate of growth of new patients requiring dialysis in Cairns is twice the national average. In 2018/2019, there were 56 transplant referrals from the Cairns region (one third of these were Indigenous patients).

Last year, 19 patients from the Cairns region received transplants at the Princess Alexandra Hospital (Brisbane). As a comparative, in that same period, 7 Townsville patients received transplants.

The geographical spread of the Cairns and Hinterland Health and Hospital Service (CHHHS) in conjunction with the Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service (TCHHS) captures Cairns and the greater region, along with the Cape and Torres Strait Islands (the catchment for Townsville is far smaller). Cairns currently provides dialysis treatment to a large footprint which captures Thursday Island, Bamaga, Weipa and Cooktown. Most importantly, end stage kidney disease is an illness that disproportionately affects our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

From a logistical standpoint:

- Being able to perform transplants in Cairns would mean that transplant recipients either don't need to travel at all, or only have to undergo a single leg of travel
- The connectivity of Cairns Airport allows organs to arrive quickly, with direct and frequent flights from virtually every location in Australia.

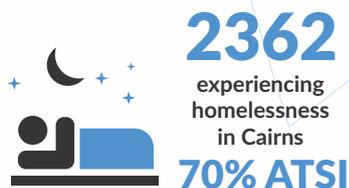
On average, 6 indigenous transplants are performed in Queensland each year. In the past two years, Cairns has averaged 5 indigenous transplant referrals per year.

Cairns already has the in-house surgical and physician expertise, as well as the foundational infrastructure required for a kidney transplant unit. Only relatively minor modification would be required. The Cairns and Hinterland Health and Hospital Service has demonstrated their proactivity in closing the gap, as the only Australian location participating in the National Indigenous Kidney Taskforce.

We strongly urge the Queensland State Government to prioritise Cairns as the next location for a kidney transplant unit in Queensland.

# PRIORITY: SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

## Project: Social Housing



### Recommendations:

1. FNQROC seeks, as a matter of urgency, for the Queensland State Government to work with the relevant councils to deliver on its commitment to Local Housing Plans, to identify land availability, address land tenure issues and progress planning for new subdivisions, ensuring there is a plan for funding of trunk infrastructure to support new housing development now, and into the future.
2. FNQROC, with the support of TCICA, will continue to lobby the Commonwealth to match the \$1.08bil commitment by Queensland State Government.

We thank the State Government for committing \$1.08 billion over 10 years under its Queensland housing Strategy to address Indigenous housing across the State.

The recent COVID health restrictions, including social distancing measures, highlighted the extent of pre-existing social issues which were amplified during the event, including the number of people living homeless and levels of over-crowding. The impacts were particularly acute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. While there are distinct differences in public housing needs between discrete Indigenous communities such as Yarrabah, remote Indigenous community and Indigenous populations living in urban areas such as Cairns, generally this is detrimental to:

- Health Outcomes (Indigenous peoples are living on average 20 years less than non-Indigenous peoples)
- Education (space to learn at home, ability to get to school and digital connectivity)
- Employment (ability to sleep well and have the ability to perform at work)

The lack of stable and safe housing is a particularly disruptive force in the lives of children and youth.

The Remote Housing Review undertaken by the Federal Government in 2017, noted that in Queensland an additional 1,100 homes will be required by 2028 to address population growth and reduce the levels of overcrowding to acceptable levels.

As an example, Yarrabah currently has a catastrophic housing crisis with over half the population homeless. There are 4,500 people living in the community with 364 social houses and 700 people waitlisted. It is estimated that the community will need 235 new dwellings (\$124.6m), associated trunk infrastructure (\$110.75m), upgrades to existing housing (\$14.04m) and repairs and maintenance (\$4.26m) to meet current demand.

The construction and maintenance of housing is a vital source of employment and economic growth within Indigenous communities. When this industry ceases, so does the experience and flow of money within the community, sending people back to government support.

We need a joint commitment to indigenous housing to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortages. FNQROC is prepared to work with Torres and Cape Indigenous Councils Alliance (TCICA), and the Queensland State Government to continue to lobby the Commonwealth to match the \$1.08billion State commitment.

Among other factors, the housing crises faced by many community councils is a key driver of mobility to service centres such as Cairns. This situation places additional pressure on an already over-extended housing and homelessness sector, as well as intersecting crises supports such as domestic violence and emergency relief.

The 2016 Census indicated that 2,362 people identified as experiencing homelessness in the Cairns region, with 238 sleeping rough, 883 residing in over-crowded dwellings and 432 in temporary accommodation. Of this group, 19% were young people (ABS, 2016). In Cairns, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for more than 70% of the homeless population (QCOSS, 2014).

In Cairns, the demand for social housing continues to outstrip housing stock, compounded by a vacancy rate of 1.7% overall (Herron Todd White, January 2020). The current Social Housing Register of need indicates 1639 people on the waitlist (DHPW, 2020).

We understand Local Housing Plans are in development to identify what needs to happen to get new housing built, e.g. land availability, sub-divisions, trunk infrastructure. We also understand that these have not progressed very far. As these are required to support the expenditure of the \$1.08 billion of State Funds we urge the Queensland State Government to ensure these are developed in consultation with the relevant councils as a matter of priority.

## PRIORITY: ENVIRONMENT

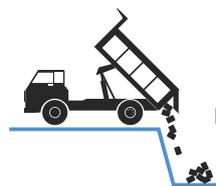
Project: Waste Management Costs generated within Qld State and National Parks



QLD has highest number of National Parks



Policy placing financial strain on rural & remote Councils



Councils unable to meet new licencing requirements for small landfill sites



Illegal dumping will increase in remote areas

### Recommendation:

**FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to accept all associated waste management costs generated within the Queensland National Parks networks, including waste generated by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service works, Service Staff and tourist visitors.**

There are 223 National Parks within Queensland, the highest number of any Australian state or territory. According to a survey conducted by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) in 2012, there are 6.2 million annual terrestrial park visits (to national parks, state forests and QPWS managed areas), and 1.7 million marine park visits. In the local context example, Cook Shire covers an area of over 106,000 square kilometres, with 17% owned by the State and designated as national parks. For instance, Lakefield National Park, a popular tourist destination, is 5,370 km<sup>2</sup> in size.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has adopted a 'no dumping in the park' philosophy for the management of waste in national parks across Cape York Peninsula. As such, tourist visitors are required to carry their own waste for subsequent disposal at formal waste facilities.

In addition, tourist websites direct visitors to waste facilities including the Cooktown, Ayton, Lakeland and Laura Waste Transfer Stations, all of which are only open during restricted hours.

While we understand this policy from a logistics point of view, one of the consequences of this policy is that the burden of managing waste generated within these areas has shifted to small local businesses such as roadhouses, and ultimately to local government, as tourists convey their waste to a drop-off point which becomes the responsibility of Local Governments to manage.

With the introduction of the Waste Levy by the Queensland State Government, an unintended consequence is that small local businesses now incur additional costs (this waste is deemed commercial waste) of at least \$75.00/tonne to manage waste generated by visitors to State and National parks. In the case of Cook Shire, although it is outside of the levy zone, waste is transported to landfills within the levy zone, predominantly Springmount and hence the levy applies, the costs of which are passed on to landfill customers.

The Cape York is large in area with a low population base, to assist in managing small amounts of community waste, council has provided local waste solutions for small pockets of the community being small landfill sites servicing approx. 30 people. As formal waste facilities are in excess of 200km away, these small facilities have also been utilised by tourists, illegal waste collected, and Qld Parks and Wildlife employees.

Recent changes to the Environmental Protection Regulation 2019 now requires all small landfill sites to be licensed. Cook Shire Council will not be able to meet the licensing requirements and therefore these will all need to be closed. Council will now have to collect and transport this material to a Council-operated landfill or waste disposal site, at their expense. Given the very small rate base and resident populations in these remote areas, the vast majority of waste is and will continue to be generated by tourist visitors to the surrounding national parks. As an example, Cook Shire Council has three 10m<sup>3</sup> recycling skip bins located at Marina Plains (Annie River), Port Stewart and Starke River. During the tourist season, these skip bins have to be emptied every two to three weeks to manage capacity.

As a region, we want to encourage responsible management of waste and to mitigate illegal dumping however these policies overlayed on each make this unaffordable and unachievable in our remote areas. This will increase illegal dumping in all National Parks in remote locations, with those councils ill-equipped to manage the result.

## PRIORITY: ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Project: COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Future Resilience



Our Region wants to be part of the State Solution



Hit **first** and hit **hard**!



Direct link between Tourism and Agriculture and their reliance on each other



Locally developed plans should not be ignored

### Recommendations:

1. FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to leave no community behind in the transition out of the COVID-19 impacts and works with councils and regions on existing priorities and innovative initiatives into the future.
2. FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to give due consideration to plans developed by councils, with their communities, in transitioning out of the COVID-19 impacts.

Prior to COVID-19 the FNQ region was the largest and fastest growing in Northern Australia.

COVID-19 has clearly shown the link between tourism and agriculture and their reliance on each other, as a consequence both need to be supported through this pandemic to survive and come out stronger and more resilient.

FNQ and in particular Cairns and Douglas were hit first and hit hard when the borders were closed to international tourists. Experience with the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) tells us our region will be one of the last out of the economic and social impact. While the rest of Queensland rebounded, our region lagged for a number of years behind the state average (unemployment rates, GRP recovery, construction approvals, tourism/visitation numbers, etc).

This region and Local Governments need to be part of the State solution, not a sideline indirect beneficiary.

We ask the State and Federal Government to leave no community behind in the transition out of the COVID-19 impacts and works with councils and regions on existing priorities and innovative initiatives into the future.

Many councils have worked with their communities to identify economic and social impacts and develop solutions. Many of them have identified critical actions to see us through the other side to be stronger and more resilient. We appreciate the support offered by QRA in the development of regional plans but we cannot ignore those local plans which will also have an impact on the success of the region.

FNQROC



13 Local Governments

17% of QLD Councils

316,663km<sup>2</sup>

1235km of eastern seaboard

# Who are we?

## We are the largest & fastest growing region in Northern Australia



WE RANK

279,948 people



(ABS ERP 2019)

inter-census pop. growth



+18,057

hinterland growth



+6,494

number of registered business numbers



employment in marine servicing activities



employment in aviation servicing activities



crops \$1B and growing

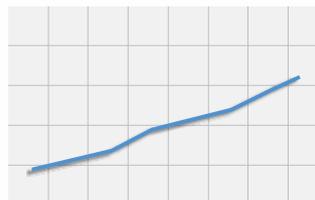


## OUR ECONOMY

GRP



\$16.33B



2016

2017

2018/19

Total Exports \$9.64B

MANUFACTURING



15.9%

increase on 2013/14

## BASE INDUSTRIES - output by industry



TOURISM  
\$3.1B



PRIMARY INDUSTRIES  
\$2.7B



MINING  
\$1.4B



CONSTRUCTION  
\$3.8B



MANUFACTURING  
\$2.8B

## COVID ECONOMIC OUTLOOK



Forecast to fall  
13%

(June Quarter 2020)



Forecast to fall  
8.1%

10,728 local jobs

19,356 including Job Keeper

### 3 TOP SECTORS IMPACTED



Accommodation and food services  
(-3,334 local jobs)



Professional, Scientific and Technical Services  
(-1,288 local jobs)



Education and Training  
(-1,115 local jobs)

source: NIEIR version 1.1 (May 2020)

Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2019. Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id, the population experts.





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