



**AUGUST 2023**  
**FEDERAL**  
**PRIORITIES**

FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND, NORTHERN AUSTRALIA'S  
LARGEST AND FASTEST GROWING REGION.

# 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 252,000 square kilometres with a population of approximately 280,330<sup>1</sup> and gross regional product is \$16.75 billion<sup>2</sup>. Unemployment for the 2020 December quarter was 6.5%.

The communities within the twelve 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

Resilient transport infrastructure to ensure connectivity across the region is essential if FNQ is to have sustainable economic growth and development. To realise the vast known and untapped economic potential, we need to enhance the existing road and port infrastructure within the region.

### WATER

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

### ENERGY

Energy reliability is being enhanced by installation of renewable utility scale green energy production and battery storage at remote and fringe off grid locations. Consideration needs to be given to policy settings that support the sustainability/upgrading of existing Ergon networks to cater for reverse power flow into the grid.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia (3218,0)

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) 2018.

## ENVIRONMENT

Our regions' 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 was valued at over \$3.1 billion dollars. This is in addition to the contributions from the regions' 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.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the digital divide which accelerated the move towards online service provision for health, education and other government support services. Residents in areas with poor, or no connectivity, or limited access to computers are even more disadvantaged due to expectations they can access services remotely/digitally.

# FNQ AT A GLANCE

**\$16.65B**  
**GRP**



**26,261**  
**LOCAL BUSINESSES**

**EXPORTS 21/22:**



**\$2.7B**  
**AGRICULTURE**



**\$2.3B**  
**TOURISM SALES**



**\$1B**  
**MINING**



**\$1.2B**  
**MANUFACTURING**

**POPULATION**  
**285,510**



**SEIFA INDEX OF  
DISADVANTAGE**  
**510 to 981**  
(2021)

**41**

**MEDIAN AGE**

**11.2%**

**FIRST NATIONS  
POPULATION**

**9.9%**

**ON JOB SEEKER OR  
YOUTH ALLOWANCE**  
(MAY 2022)



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of where we live and work and throughout Far North Queensland. We pay respects to elders past, present and emerging, and the enduring connections to Country and culture.

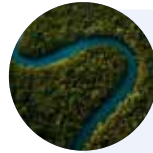
# FNQ REGIONAL PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE:



## INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE REVIEW

In undertaking this review, we would also ask the Federal Government to consider:

- a) The impact on program delivery and construction programs in areas with a regular wet season (funding from December to April)
- b) Regular stream grants are much more efficient as councils can plan their capital programs and the money goes where it is needed, not just to the Councils who can afford great grant writers.
- c) The continuation and increase in funding of allocation-based programs, such as R2R and LRCI (with simplified reporting, such as what is required under LRCI)
- d) Local Government own source roads expenditure obligation under R2R is difficult for smaller, financially constrained councils to fulfil.
- e) Streamline application and reporting processes for IIP projects.
- f) The new Growing Regions application process is quite complex, with projects needing to be 'construction ready', however the turnaround in applications is around 6 months. In the current economic climate, holding rates fixed for this period will be problematic.
- g) The continuation of a ROSI type program to provide the full efficiency outcomes for HPV's and the national supply chain.
- h) Dedicated funding program aimed at increasing high productivity vehicles (HPV) access to and from gazetted transport routes with a regional focus on Ootann Road and Richmond-Croydon Road being local government owned road train routes.



## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

We very much appreciate Financial Assistance Grants up front, we are seeking consistent application of the upfront payment model to enable us to plan our annual budget appropriately and review our long-term financial plans accordingly.



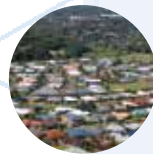
## ROAD INVESTMENT

- Cairns/Mareeba Access – Kuranda Road Range.
- First And Last Mile – Heavy Vehicle Productivity Routes.
- May Federal Budget Related to Roads – Thank you for the continuing funds for critical road infrastructure programs.



## HOUSING FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Story telling: Yarrabah, Hope Vale and Wujal Wujal.



## SOCIAL HOUSING

Story telling.



## COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDER SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY

The viability of the community housing sector needs equal and urgent consideration.



## WATER

Acknowledgement and thank you for the \$107.5mil commitment to the Cairns Water Security Stage 1.

### WATER SECURITY FOR REGIONAL AND REMOTE FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

Further information regarding Water Security for Regional and Remote First Nations Communities.

### NATIONAL WATER INITIATIVE – PRICING POLICY

Within the National Water Initiative, pricing policy:

- a. Recognise the economic life of a dam as 100 years, and
- b. Recognise irrigators are not the sole economic beneficiaries of bulk water supplies and make changes to the pricing policies that reflect/ acknowledge indirect economic beneficiaries.

### BULK WATER (AGRICULTURAL)

Story telling: Etheridge Agricultural Precinct and Lakeland Dam progress.



## INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Regional story telling.

### EDUCATION

Story Telling: Yarrabah School



## HEALTH

Story telling.

### HEALTH AND AGED CARE

Regional story telling.

**RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH** Regional story telling and FNQROC supports the Better Health NQ proposal to deliver new place-based primary health care solutions to regional and remote areas. We support a State and Federal Government 'blended funding' model for BHNQ, providing \$1.85million over two years for the project implementation and feasibility.

### INDIGENOUS HEALTH

Regional story telling.



## CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

Regional story telling and Cassowary Coast Regional Council Reef Trust Application.

### DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC

Regional listening given our position to Asia and the Pacific and Request - \$100,000 matched funding to partner with Cairns Regional Council and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive Cairns and Far North Queensland Defence Industry Strategy.

### SMART GREEN ECONOMY



## RESOURCE RECOVERY

FNQROC has developed a resource recovery Plan (RRR Plan) which presents a series of actions to collaboratively deliver resource recovery outcomes and provide positive impact across 11 member councils.

# INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE REVIEW

In undertaking this review, we would also ask the Federal Government to consider:

- i) The impact on program delivery and construction programs in areas with a regular wet season (funding from December to April).
- j) Regular stream grants are much more efficient as councils can plan their capital programs and the money goes where it is needed, not just to the Councils who can afford great grant writers.
- k) The continuation and increase in funding of allocation-based programs, such as R2R and LRCI (with simplified reporting, such as what is required under LRCI).
- l) Local Government own source roads expenditure obligation under R2R is difficult for smaller, financially constrained councils to fulfil.
- m) Streamline application and reporting processes for IIP projects. (On a related matter, TMR who manage the program on behalf of the Australian Government have recently advised that they will no longer provide the templates for reporting, which will now be left up to Councils.)
- n) The new Growing Regions application process is quite complex, with projects needing to be 'construction ready', however the turnaround in applications is around 6 months. In the current economic climate, holding rates fixed for this period will be problematic.

We understand the Federal Government is undertaking an Infrastructure Pipeline review and we comprehend the reasoning behind this. With the review not estimated to be completed now until October, by the time we are advised we will be heading into our wet season which means we won't be able to plan to start until February/March. Our wet season generally runs from December to April. Our construction programs plan around this. It would be appreciated if some of these project reviews could be fast tracked so we can plan around our wet season and enable funding expenditure and community and industry benefits of these programs to be realised.

## Local Government Projects under the Infrastructure Pipelines Review:

### ● ROADS OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Mareeba – Cairns to Northern Territory Border Corridor Upgrade – Ootann Road Upgrade (Mareeba Section) - \$3,322,500 total project value, \$2,658,000 Australian Government. On a side note, Ootann Road rated the highest in ROI through the CSIRO Transit Program of all the Beef Roads assessed.

### ● ROADS TO RECOVERY

All Councils – 2023/24: various projects intended to be adopted as part of the upcoming budgetary process however now awaiting Australian Government Review.

### ● BRIDGES RENEWAL PROGRAM

Mareeba – Round 8 – Upgrade of Barron River Bridge at Oak Forest Road, Mona Mona \$400,000 total project value, \$320,000 Australian Government funding.

### ● LOCAL ROADS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mareeba – Phase 3 – various projects intended to be adopted as part of the upcoming Council Budgetary process, however now awaiting Australian Government review.

Cairns, various projects with a total value of \$2.8mil.

# FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

**REQUEST:** We very much appreciate Financial Assistance Grants up front, we are seeking consistent application of the upfront payment model to enable us to plan our annual budget appropriately and review our long-term financial plans accordingly.

Restoring Financial Assistance Grants to 1 percent is important. This is much needed untied grant that is vital to local governments. We all know local governments are closest to the people and consequently, we're obligated to deliver a broad scope of community services which is tying up more and more of our rates base (if we have one). In Queensland, local governments are responsible for over 280 unique services. Financial Assistance Grants supports us to provide and maintain more than \$150 billion in public assets for our communities and economic growth.

While this advocacy effort continues, application of financial assistance grants is causing some issues to local governments. We are aware that the 2023/24 contribution will be provided to local governments 30 June 2023. This will make many councils in Queensland look to be financially sustainable. What we don't know is if the 2024/25 contribution will be provided 30 June 2024 or if it will go back to being disbursed in four equal quarterly instalments again. If it goes back to four equal quarterly instalments again, many councils in Queensland will appear financially unsustainable when we do the 2023/24 financial statements.

# ROAD INVESTMENT

FNQROC would like to thank and acknowledge the level of Federal Government investment in our road network. Particularly, Cape York Package, Roads of Strategic Importance, Cairns Ring Road and Bruce Highway upgrades.

## ● CAIRNS/MAREEBA ACCESS - KURANDA RANGE ROAD

**DISCUSSION:** Kuranda Range Road is still a priority. The region is currently renewing our Statutory Regional Plan which will further articulate the importance of this corridor.

Kuranda Range Road (Kennedy Highway, Cairns/ Mareeba section) links Smithfield with Kuranda and is the coastal gateway to Mareeba, Atherton Tablelands, Cape York and Gulf. The road has been technically described as low geometric standard, exceeding capacity with unplanned closures on average 1.3 times per week. A recent State Government report states an average of 44 unplanned closures per year.

We are grateful that the Federal Government has recognised the importance of this corridor and committed \$210mil during the election campaign. We would like to ensure this investment is positioned in the right place to future proof this vital economic corridor.

We need to clearly identify a solution for increased capacity and heavy vehicle efficiency thus increasing safety and economic investment and reducing supply chain costs and carbon emissions. The solution may be enhancements on the current Kuranda Range road or the construction of a new road and it is important that the funding is channelled to the best solution identified.

## ● FIRST AND LAST MILE – HEAVY VEHICLE PRODUCTIVITY ROUTES

**REQUEST:** Dedicated funding program aimed at increasing high productivity vehicles (HPV) access to and from gazetted transport routes with a regional focus on Ootann Road and Richmond-Croydon Road being local government owned road train routes.

Greater access for High Productivity Vehicles (HPVs) has been a high priority for government, industry, freight operators and end users of freight services because of the productivity gains and cost savings they generate. However, many freight journeys commence and or end on local roads, and an inability to operate HPVs for the entire journey from origin to destination can substantially reduce the gains which would otherwise be achieved.

The program should specifically look at deficiencies which restrict access to the existing heavy vehicle network in the following situations:

- Primary Production – Deficiencies in roads which connect from the heavy vehicle network to primary production locations to processing centres i.e. farms to feedlots, sugarcane to mills, mine sites to refinement facilities.
- Improved Connectivity – Deficiencies in roads which provide a connection between two existing heavy vehicle routes and would benefit freight if access is improved.
- Community Access – Deficiencies in roads that provide a singular road freight lifeline to vulnerable communities.

In Far North Queensland there are 18 strategic roads (predominately local government owned) identified in the FNQ Regional Road Investment Strategy which could enable HPVs to operate for the entire journey.

**Two routes have been identified as critical to future road freight movements; these are:**

- Ootann (Almaden-Gingerella) Road which connects the Kennedy Highway and Burke Developmental Road, and
- Richmond-Croydon Road which connects the Gulf Developmental Road to the Flinders Highway.

## ● MAY FEDERAL BUDGET RELATED TO ROADS

Thank you for continuing funding for critical road infrastructure programs.

We note:

- Black spot is static at \$24.3m/year
- Bridges Renewal increases from \$16m to \$37.7mil
- Local Roads and Community Infrastructure decreases and ceases from 2026/27
- ROSI decreases to \$79.1mil in 2026/27
- Heavy vehicle safety and productivity program increases from \$14mil to \$21.8mil
- Roads to recovery is static at \$101.7mil

To give an indication of the need for these projects, in our region on local government owned roads (based on 2020 costs):

- To realise productivity improvements, we need \$472.3 million (Table 1)
- Our immediate network deficiency (only on regionally important roads) is \$69.48 million (Table 2)
- 20 year investment to meet fatigue deficiencies (only on regionally important roads) is \$133.32 million (Table 2).

**With the constant shifting of costs on to local government and with many of these roads having limited or no rate payers, it is difficult for councils to justify investment to their rate payers.**

**Table 1 - Local Government Roads - Productivity Improvement Investment opportunities (in alphabetical order)**

Road	Local Government Area	Improvements	Total
Ootann Road (Almaden – Gingerella Road)	Mareeba / Tablelands	PBS level 4 Full sealing	\$85.46
Battlecamp Road (Endeavour Valley Road to Isabella-Mclvor Road)	Cook	PBS level 3	\$2.35
Beantree Road	Tablelands	PBS level 2	\$0.15
Burketown-Normanton Road	Carpentaria	PBS level 4 Sealing of unsealed sections	\$171.50
Chewko Road	Mareeba	PBS level 2	\$7.14
Davidson Road	Cassowary Coast	PBS level 2	\$1.65
Euluma Creek Road	Mareeba	PBS level 2	\$4.94
Gunnawarra Road	Tablelands	PBS level 4 Sealing of unsealed sections	\$36.32
Ingham-Abergowrie Road	Hinchinbrook	PBS level 2	\$14.59
Maitland Road	Cairns	PBS level 2	\$1.30
Mapee Road	Tablelands	PBS level 2	\$0.51
Martyville Road	Cassowary Coast	PBS level 2	\$0.72
Musgrave-Strathgordon Road (to Pormpuraaw Boundary)	Cook	PBS level 4	\$17.65
North Walsh Road	Mareeba	PBS level 2	\$0.45
Portland Road (first 20.2 Kms)	Cook	PBS level 4	\$3.59
Richmond-Croydon Road	Croydon / Etheridge	PBS level 4 Full sealing	\$115.44
Strathmore Road (first 6.5 Kms)	Etheridge	PBS level 4 Sealing of unsealed sections	\$7.33
Willows Road	Tablelands	PBS level 2	\$1.21
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$472.30</b>

**Table 2 - 20 year Network Deficiency Investment – Local Government Roads**

Road	Local Government Area	Start	End	Immediate (2020-2023)		Future (2024 onwards)
				Capital works to address structural deficiencies (\$'m)	Maintenance works to address fatigue deficiencies (\$'m)	Maintenance works to address fatigue deficiencies (\$'m)
Abbott Street	Cairns	-	1.0		\$1.05	\$1.95
Aerodrome Road	Cassowary Coast	-	1.3		\$0.15	\$0.16
Agate Creek Road	Etheridge	-	12.6	\$0.01		
Airport Avenue	Cairns	-	0.7			\$0.20
Alexander Drive	Cassowary Coast	-	2.6	\$0.26	\$0.04	\$0.60
Aumuller Street	Cairns	-	2.4		\$3.06	\$7.32
Barron Gorge Road	Cairns	-	3.9		\$1.01	\$0.20
Bingil Bay Road	Cassowary Coast	-	7.5	\$0.65	\$0.10	\$1.41
Boar Pocket Road	Tablelands	-	6.2		\$0.17	\$1.16
Brooks Road	Tablelands	-	4.0		\$1.14	\$0.64
Bryant Street	Cassowary Coast	-	1.5	\$0.12		\$1.39
Butler Street	Cassowary Coast	-	0.6	\$0.63	\$0.36	\$0.76
Cape Tribulation Road	Douglas	-	39.8	\$1.14	\$8.25	\$8.36
Cashmere Kirrama Road	Tablelands	-	64.5	\$0.62		
Chettle Road	Mareeba	-	7.5	\$1.36	\$0.15	\$0.66
Chewko Road	Mareeba	-	19.3		\$0.70	\$5.09
Cook Street	Cairns	-	1.0		\$4.28	\$1.83
Cooks Lane	Hinchinbrook	-	8.4		\$0.06	\$0.29
Curtain Fig Tree Road	Tablelands	-	4.4		\$0.21	\$1.20
Danbulla Road	Tablelands	-	25.8	\$1.07		
Dean Road	Cassowary Coast	-	1.2	\$0.05	\$0.12	\$0.46
Draper Street	Cairns	-	0.3		\$0.61	\$1.22
East Barron Road	Tablelands	-	7.7		\$0.34	\$1.72
Einisleigh - Forsayth Road	Etheridge	-	66.9	\$0.09		
Elphinstone Pocket Road	Hinchinbrook	-	2.7			\$0.07
Euluma Creek Road	Mareeba	-	11.6		\$1.59	\$2.62
Fitzgerald Esplanade	Cassowary Coast	-	0.7		\$1.09	\$0.55
Florence Street	Cairns	-	0.4		\$0.16	\$0.48
Flying Fish Point Road	Cassowary Coast	-	5.1	\$0.01	\$0.64	\$2.92
Four Mile Road	Hinchinbrook	-	1.6	\$0.50	\$0.03	\$0.22
Furber Road	Hinchinbrook	-	0.2		\$0.03	\$0.03
Glendinning Road	Tablelands	-	3.0		\$0.05	\$0.37
Grace Street	Cassowary Coast	-	0.9		\$1.02	\$1.71
Grove Street	Tablelands	-	1.1		\$0.48	\$1.51
Gunnawarra Road	Tablelands	-	51.2	\$0.03		
Hansen Road	Tablelands	-	5.8	\$0.01		\$1.11
Hastie Road	Tablelands	-	2.3		\$0.35	\$0.95
Hawkins Creek Road	Hinchinbrook	-	26.9		\$0.17	\$2.23
Hoare Street	Cairns	-	1.5			\$2.78
Hussey Road	Cairns	-	3.2		\$0.07	\$0.11
Johnston Road	Douglas	-	1.0		\$0.07	\$0.24
Junction Road	Tablelands	-	3.4		\$1.94	\$0.07
Kamerunga Road	Cairns	-	1.6		\$0.20	\$2.03
Kennedy Creek Road	Cassowary Coast	-	6.7	\$0.01	\$0.09	\$0.32
Kenny Street	Cairns	-	0.4	\$0.34		\$2.00

Road	Local Government Area	Start	End	Immediate (2020-2023)		Future (2024 onwards)
				Capital works to address structural deficiencies (\$'m)	Maintenance works to address fatigue deficiencies (\$'m)	Maintenance works to address fatigue deficiencies (\$'m)
Lake Eacham Road	Tablelands	-	2.3			\$0.28
Lake Morris Road	Cairns	-	15.3		\$4.42	\$3.73
Lake Placid Road	Cairns	-	1.2			\$0.44
Lake Street	Cairns	-	2.9		\$1.49	\$3.01
Lannercost Extension Road	Hinchinbrook	-	5.9		\$0.10	\$0.69
Lawson Street	Tablelands	-	0.5			\$0.05
Leadingham Creek Road	Mareeba	-	13.0		\$1.01	\$1.54
Maitland Road	Cairns	-	3.5		\$0.03	\$0.12
Marks Lane	Tablelands	-	5.4	\$0.01	\$0.05	\$0.61
Mcilwraith Street	Hinchinbrook	-	1.2		\$1.56	\$2.28
Menzies Street	Hinchinbrook	-	0.4		\$0.95	
Middle Murray Road	Cassowary Coast	-	6.2		\$0.31	\$1.16
Monument Street	Tablelands	-	0.5		\$0.20	\$0.05
Morris Street	Cassowary Coast	-	0.4	\$0.04		\$0.84
Mossman Gorge Road	Douglas	-	4.2		\$0.53	\$1.42
Mount Fox Road	Hinchinbrook	-	23.1		\$2.95	\$1.92
Mount Peter Road	Cairns	-	0.5		\$0.03	\$0.03
Mourilyan Road	Cassowary Coast	-	2.5			\$4.69
Mundoo Road	Cassowary Coast	-	0.5			\$0.25
Munro Street	Cairns	-	1.2		\$0.07	\$0.32
Murray Falls Road	Cassowary Coast	-	3.2		\$0.22	\$0.66
Myola Road	Mareeba	-	4.3		\$0.63	\$6.06
North Head Road	Etheridge	-	43.1	\$0.04		
North Walsh Road	Mareeba	-	2.0		\$0.19	\$0.48
Palm Avenue	Hinchinbrook	-	0.3			\$0.27
Pine Creek Road	Yarrabah	-	6.4		\$2.79	\$7.32
Redlynch Intake Road	Cairns	-	9.6	\$0.18	\$1.82	\$8.55
Sawmill Road	Yarrabah	-	0.7		\$0.17	\$0.87
Sluice Creek Road	Tablelands	-	3.7		\$0.12	\$0.45
Springmount Road	Mareeba	-	22.8	\$1.13	\$1.07	\$2.76
Taylor's Beach Road	Hinchinbrook	-	6.6		\$0.20	\$1.24
The Boulders Road	Cairns	-	5.4		\$0.19	\$0.89
Theresa Creek Road	Tablelands	-	15.2		\$0.75	\$2.54
Tolga-Kairi Road	Tablelands	-	6.7		\$0.10	\$0.88
Tully Falls Road	Tablelands	-	38.6	\$0.20		
Tully Gorge Road	Cassowary Coast	-	50.3	\$5.26	\$1.24	\$7.60
Undara Road	Etheridge	-	14.1	\$0.01	\$0.35	\$0.14
Upper Murray Road	Cassowary Coast	-	8.3			\$0.96
Valmadre Street	Cairns	-	0.4		\$0.14	\$0.28
Venables Crossing Road	Hinchinbrook	-	0.7		\$0.10	\$0.05
Wallaman Falls Road	Hinchinbrook	-	34.7		\$0.34	\$4.25
Walter Lever Estate Road	Cassowary Coast	-	6.2		\$0.64	\$0.86
Wharf Street	Cairns	-	0.6		\$0.41	\$1.42
Wongabel Road	Tablelands	-	7.0		\$0.39	\$1.55
Workshop Road	Yarrabah	-	1.2		\$0.35	\$0.87
<b>TOTALS</b>				<b>\$13.79</b>	<b>\$55.69</b>	<b>\$133.32</b>



# HOUSING FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Some of the almost 20 residents who live among three dwellings on a single property. Photo: Isaac McCarthy, The Cairns Post.

## ● STORY TELLING – YARRABAH, HOPE VALE AND WUJAL WUJAL

We've told the story before, COVID health restrictions, 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. While there are distinct differences in public housing needs between discrete Indigenous communities such as Yarrabah, Wujal Wujal and Hope Vale, and Indigenous populations living in urban areas such as Cairns, it is detrimental to their:

- Health outcomes (Indigenous peoples are living on average 20 years less than non-Indigenous peoples). This is unsurprising when you consider a standard issued hot water system cannot support 6 or more people. The dishes are washed in cold water, the showers are cold.
- Education (space to learn, space to sleep, ability to get to school).
- Employment (ability to sleep well at night and then go to work).

The lack of stable and safe housing is a particularly disruptive force in the lives of children and youth. Is it any wonder they are angry and lashing out.

### We'd like to introduce you to some of these families:

Here are some of the almost 30 people (one large family) who live among three ramshackle huts constructed of corrugated iron and wood. The foundations of one of the dwellings has begun to break down so it has been propped up by a jack. One of these huts sits beneath a large mango tree, a home for snakes. They are building a fourth structure to accommodate their growing family numbers.

The buildings' walls and floors are water stained and carry the distinct smell of mould growth.

A communal toilet and washing machine sits inside a shed at the centre of the property.



Dellaroy Fourmile outside her old home with daughters Melita and Ainsley. Ms Fourmile and her husband raised 12 children in this house, without bedrooms. Photo: Isaac McCarthy, The Cairns Post.



Colin Fourmile stands in his kitchen.  
Photo: Isaac McCarthy, The Cairns Post.



Davina and Colin Fourmile live with daughters Selena and Alicia in a one-bedroom house. Photo: Isaac McCarthy, The Cairns Post.

Mr Fourmile works for the council's water and waste department. He lives in a one-bedroom house with his wife and two daughters. His wife is a special needs teaching assistant and his daughters are schooled at Mount Peter (40km away). It is common for a snake to fall on the roof, slither through the metal sheets and then drop on his family while they sleep.

Mr Fourmile is desperate to move his family to new and safe accommodation but there is no availability. He has been on councils housing register since 2006 but recently informed he was no longer considered high priority.

These are some of the lucky ones. There are residents who are living in huts with no water, no electricity and no sewerage.

Indigenous families in indigenous communities are hopeless in their pursuit of shelter. It is a common adage, "you cannot be what you cannot see". The restrictions and lifestyles our indigenous communities are subjected to would never be tolerated in urban areas.

**Don't profit from our history and culture while we languish to survive. We need the Federal and State Governments to work together to give us a roof over our head, a toilet, hot water to shower and wash our dishes and a bed to ourselves. What will our First Nations Olympic Legacy be in 2032? Don't let housing of our First Nations people be Queensland's hidden Olympic secret.**

Utilising census statistics for population numbers is fraught with danger and only aides in hiding the truth. Whilst there has been a focus on getting these completed by indigenous communities there are a number of factors which will always be difficult to overcome:

- a. there is a high number of people disengaged with the process and importance. They don't trust the government, and
- b. rents are linked to household income; they are not going to tell you if there are more people living there than should be.

Population forecasts are also fraught with danger. Forecasts are calculated from numerous data sources including:

- a. population trends
- b. registered births and deaths
- c. land supply (to which indigenous communities have little to none)
- d. generalised birth rates (which is set at 2.1 for Qld for the high population growth projection. However, the 2021 fertility rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women was 2.34 births per woman.



**YARRABAH** is currently trying to manage a catastrophic housing crisis with over half the population homeless. There are anecdotally 4,000 people living in the community with 376 social houses and 306 people waitlisted. It is estimated that the community will need more than 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.

### WUJAL WUJAL

Draft local housing action plan identifies:

- that unpublished Electoral Commission (AEC) data maybe undercounted by as much as 20.9%.
- Census data from 2021 indicates that 24.2% of houses are overcrowded requiring additional bedrooms.
- Social housing – existing (utilised) and approved (registered) need awaiting a home.

	Current Social Housing Stock	Wujal Wujal Housing Applications*
		35 Approved Housing Applications
1 Bedroom	8	8
2 Bedroom	20	8
3 Bedroom	44	11
4 Bedroom	18	1
5 Bedroom	1	2
6 Bedroom	0	0
7 Bedroom	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>TOTAL BEDROOMS REQUIRED</b>		<b>71</b>

\*Current December 2022

### HOPE VALE

- It is Council's view that a reduction in the overcrowding of housing is the fundamental investment in closing the gap. This investment in housing services results in better housing, economic, health and educational outcomes.
- 65.2% of multi-family households have 6 or more residents.
- 22% of households in Hope Vale are overcrowded "Department of Housing, May 2023"

	Current Social Housing Stock	Hope Vale Housing Applications*
		83 Approved Housing Applications
1 Bedroom	10	40
2 Bedroom	53	21
3 Bedroom	135	15
4 Bedroom	69	6
5 Bedroom	3	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>TOTAL BEDROOMS REQUIRED</b>		<b>146</b>

\*Current December 2022



# SOCIAL HOUSING

Among other factors, the housing crises faced by many community councils is a key driver of mobility to service centres such as Cairns, Mareeba and Mossman. 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 Far North Queensland, the demand for social housing continues to outstrip housing stock, compounded by a vacancy rate of 1.0% overall (SQM Research, May 2023).

## Our social housing needs are rapidly increasing:

	2020	2022
<b>Rental vacancy</b>	1.7% (Herron Todd White)	0.6% (SQM Research)
<b>DHPW Social Housing Register (Excludes Yarrabah)</b>	4,975 (3,411 (68.5%) Indigenous)	6289 (4,582 (72.85%) Indigenous)
<b>No. of Properties needed</b>	2370	3041

Appropriate housing as we all know is the necessity to address:

- Health (life expectancy).
- Education (attendance and performance).
- Youth crime, and
- Employment (participation rates).

## Acknowledgement of recent budget announcements:

Thank you for:

- increasing the maximum rates of Commonwealth rent assistance by 15%
- Additional funding of \$67.5mil in the 2023/24 to boost homelessness funding to States and Territories. To support the provision of homelessness services through the national housing and homelessness agreement.
- \$25.4mil to establish a homelessness support program to support homeless peoples access to primary care services.

# COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDER SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY

While acknowledging the range of additional concessions to reduce the cost of living for people on the lowest income brackets to access and sustain social and affordable housing, **the viability of the community housing sector needs equal and urgent consideration.**

Sector advice highlights that under Queensland's current model Community Housing Providers largely rely on an income stream of the rental receipts of social housing tenants to manage their portfolio. These rents are calculated at 25% of a tenant's assessable income plus any Commonwealth rental assistance they may be eligible for. From this slim buffer, CHPs must fund responsive and planned property repairs, rates, insurances, together with all organisational and staff related costs – all increasing exponentially and many at above CPI. In many cases there is no, limited, or unstable additional funding received to meet this wide spectrum of costs.

Community Housing Providers are being positioned as the key delivery mechanism within both Federal and State housing supply investment initiatives. Council endorses that this specialist sector is most effective at achieving sustainable housing outcomes for at risk cohorts and seeks an urgent and joint approach between all tiers of government to ensure not only ongoing policy implementation effectiveness, but CHPs are supported to build the necessary capacity and capability to deliver housing outcomes for what are most often the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our communities



# WATER

The region acknowledges and thanks the Federal Government for the \$107.5mil commitment to the Cairns Water Security Stage 1.

As an update, Cairns Regional Council has resolved to award an Early Contract Involvement (ECI) agreement to two parties, and that phase is now halfway to completion. In addition, the formal Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) negotiations are underway. It is anticipated commencement of the Design and Construct phase in early 2024.

## ● WATER SECURITY FOR REGIONAL AND REMOTE FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

**REQUEST:** Further information regarding Water Security for Regional and Remote First Nations Communities

We welcome the governments \$150million to improve water security for regional and remote First Nations Communities. With three communities, two of which are in dire straits in relation to water and wastewater, we are keen to understand if this is only for bulk water storage or urban supplies as well.



## ● NATIONAL WATER INITIATIVE – PRICING POLICY

**REQUEST:** Within the National Water Initiative, pricing policy:

- c. Recognise the economic life of a dam as 100 years, and
- d. Recognise irrigators are not the sole economic beneficiaries of bulk water supplies and make changes to the pricing policies that reflect/ acknowledge indirect economic beneficiaries.

While there appears to be a change in attitude within the National Water Grid and state agency personnel on the assessment procedures for investment in dams, the National Water Initiative pricing policy does not reflect this.

**Our study into the long-term economic benefits of dams (over 30 years old) shows that:**

- a. Population grows 2-3 times the rate of an area without a Dam.
- b. Agricultural production growth has been 60%-80% compared to 0%-10%.
- c. The security of water has been fundamental in providing resilience to communities (changes of markets, policy and economic conditions).
- d. The security of water has provided other public and private sector investment in subsequent infrastructure (i.e. transport and manufacturing industry).

In perusing a 'user pays' approach to capital and operational cost recovery, it is potentially understating the broader group of beneficiaries and trying to burden those (irrigators) directly using the water. There should be a cost component of the infrastructure that the State and Federal Government accept as the mechanism for broadly dispersing the costs to beneficiaries.

## ● BULK WATER (AGRICULTURAL)

**STORY TELLING:** Etheridge Agricultural Precinct and Lakeland Dam progress.

## ● ETHERIDGE AGRICULTURE PRECINCT

Etheridge Shire is seeking to develop a regional agricultural precinct which fosters high value cropping and beef production on dry land and irrigated pastures. The intent is to streamline key issues such as water allocation, vegetation management, native title, land tenure and the EPBC Act approvals and requirements.

## ● LAKELAND IRRIGATION AREA SCHEME

### UPDATE ON PROGRESS.

The detailed Business Case is due for completion May 2023. Benefits identified for the region include:

- Access to reliable, adequate and affordable water supply capable of supporting horticulture and broadacre cropping;
- Servicing up to 10,000 ha of arable freehold land expanding the ability to grow higher value and more diverse range of crops
- Prosperity through increased agricultural activity and associated indirect benefits such as increase in population, transport and value add.



# INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

Regional story telling

## ● EDUCATION

### STORY TELLING – Yarrabah School

The Yarrabah Kindy (Prep), Primary School and High school are currently on 3 different locations. **The buildings of all 3 campuses are over 50 years old and require constant maintenance (the high school has spent the entire years maintenance budget in the first term).** The schools are connected to ADSL1, the primary school is next to a cemetery and the High School only goes to year 10.

Yarrabah Council is undertaking a masterplan to develop a residential subdivision that will include the planning for a new P-12 campus that is woven into the new residential estate.

At this stage, it is hoped that the \$440,000 required for the masterplan can be funded through the State Government and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC).

**Council and the community are looking for the federal government to provide financial support in 2023-24 and 2024-25 budget for:**

- **Earthworks and infrastructure to develop the school site, and**
- **Construction of the new P-12 Campus.**

At this stage Yarrabah does not have a design and estimates the cost for a new school for 400-600 students is approximately \$30mil which could be done in two stages. This estimate does not include costs for internet and smart classroom connectivity. Land acquisition is not required.

While this is early stages and the costs are yet to be formalised, we would like to make the Federal Government aware of our vision and keep you informed as we progress with the aim of federal support in the future.

(Extracted from Buri Gumun – (one Fire), One People, One Journey Towards Educational Success)

**Yarrabah State School was officially opened on 23rd April 1966. During the 55 years, minimal changes have been made to the existing infrastructure. The introduction of Secondary schooling in 1982 was the last big infrastructure development to the school facilities.**

**Concerns noted during Yarning Circle included:**

**CULTURAL** – The facility is built adjacent to the community's historical burial ground. The cultural belief is that this is causing unrest in the spirits of the ancestors, escalating local staff's belief and they're uncomfortable in the work environment.

**CLEANLINESS** – The health and hygiene of the facilities are extremely poor. Cleanliness of areas surrounding the classrooms are poor with rubbish un-collected for days, even weeks.

**CONDITION** – Continual maintenance and repairs for water damaged rooms. Inappropriate security making the facility look like a jail. Rusting awnings and rotten flooring. Rusting water pipes are producing contaminated drinking water.

**If all 466 students attended school the existing facilities would struggle to meet the demand.**

# HEALTH

- **HEALTH AND AGED CARE**

Regional story telling

- **RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH**

Regional story telling

- **HEALTH SERVICES FOR RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS**

FNQROC supports the Better Health NQ proposal to deliver new place-based primary health care solutions to regional and remote areas. We support a State and Federal Government 'blended funding' model for BHNQ, providing \$1.85million over two years for the project implementation and feasibility

- **INDIGENOUS HEALTH**

Regional story telling

## ● COLLABORATIVE AND PLACE-BASED PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Current service delivery models are failing regional communities resulting in diminishing health and wellbeing outcomes and increasing burdens on hospital facilities. Gaps in critical services also have a negative impact on liveability and the ability to attract and retain families to regional and remote areas, potentially contributing to long-term economic decline within regions. Collaborative, place-based solutions for primary health care are urgently needed.

The lack of General Practitioners and poor levels of Medicare funding for other skilled health providers such as Nurse Practitioners is creating an inequitable health service across our nation and is known to lead to poorer health outcomes for people living in regional and remote communities. It has been shown that for every \$1 invested in prevention, \$14 is saved in subsequent public health interventions<sup>3</sup>.

The shortage in rural General Practitioners has been a problem for some years, increasing the pressure on our hospital system. There is a need for an adequate doctor-to-patient ratio to provide the appropriate level of care that exists in metropolitan areas.

Gaps in critical services results in poorer health outcomes of the population, as well as have a negative impact on the liveability and ability to attract and retain families to regional and remote areas.

FNQROC supports the North Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) through the Better Health NQ Alliance to prioritise funding of a new primary health care solution to address the growing crisis in the rural primary care workforce and primary care access in rural and remote areas of North Queensland. It is envisaged that this will provide an opportunity for regional areas to forge the way forward in primary healthcare reform by co-commissioning Local Primary Health solutions across 6 demonstration sites for national primary care funding reform in rural and regional areas:

- Tablelands
- Mission Beach and Tully
- Cardwell
- Western Corridor (Richmond/Hughenden)
- Bowen
- Clermont

The service model is a localised, hub and spoke approach consisting of multi-disciplinary primary care teams that are regionally managed with clinical supervision and draw on the latest technology platforms. Funding sources are a combination of Local, Federal, State government and private providers with the NQPHN at the centre of care coordination, design and implementation in partnership with all stakeholders (local community, clinicians, health services, all levels of government, workforce agencies and education providers).

Within the North Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) catchment, 10 general practices (6%) have closed since early 2021, the majority citing difficulties recruiting GPs and other primary health care staff.

FNQROC communities, along with many other rural and regional areas in Australia, are losing or have limited access to medical services. This is exemplified by:

- a. The town of Mission Beach has not had a General Practitioner since late 2021 and other clinics have closed their books to new patients.
- b. Tablelands has an aging GP cohort with fears they cannot be replaced, and many of the current clinics are not taking on new patients
- c. 2020/21, 44.6% of all presentations to the Mossman Hospital emergency department were 'GP type' presentations.
- d. Many of our communities serviced by a resident nurse and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Health service issues are complex and solutions are not blanket. The proposal aims to improve the current situation with place-based solutions.

<sup>3</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28356325/>

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

Regional story telling and Cassowary Coast Regional Council Reef Trust Application

## ● DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC

**REQUEST - \$100,000 matched funding to partner with Cairns Regional Council and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive Cairns and Far North Queensland Defence Industry Strategy.**

Defence is a significant stakeholder in the development of Northern Australia and Cairns is the regional hub for defence and national security activity in Far North Queensland. This strategy will guide the ongoing development of, and investment in, defence support industries in the region. It will also guide coordinated activities across all three tiers of government to ensure the region sustainably responds to the outcomes/objectives of Plan Galileo and the Defence Strategic Review.

## ● SMART GREEN ECONOMY

The region has been working on a Smart Green Economy, the current focus areas are:

- Net Zero Systems (renewables)
- Circular Economy, and
- Biodiversity and Carbon Markets.

# RESOURCE RECOVERY



**FNQROC has developed a resource recovery Plan (RRR Plan) which presents a series of actions to collaboratively deliver resource recovery outcomes and provide positive impact across 11 member councils.**

We have committed to sharing and cooperating to minimise waste and maximise resilient and effective resource recovery systems for FNQ. What is clear is we face a range of challenges driven by changing policy, large transport distances, low economies and scale, lack of local markets, community behaviours and capacity to pay and lack of infrastructure or ageing assets.

Without support and planning, the region has low capacity to meet the State and Federal targets and improve regional resource recovery.

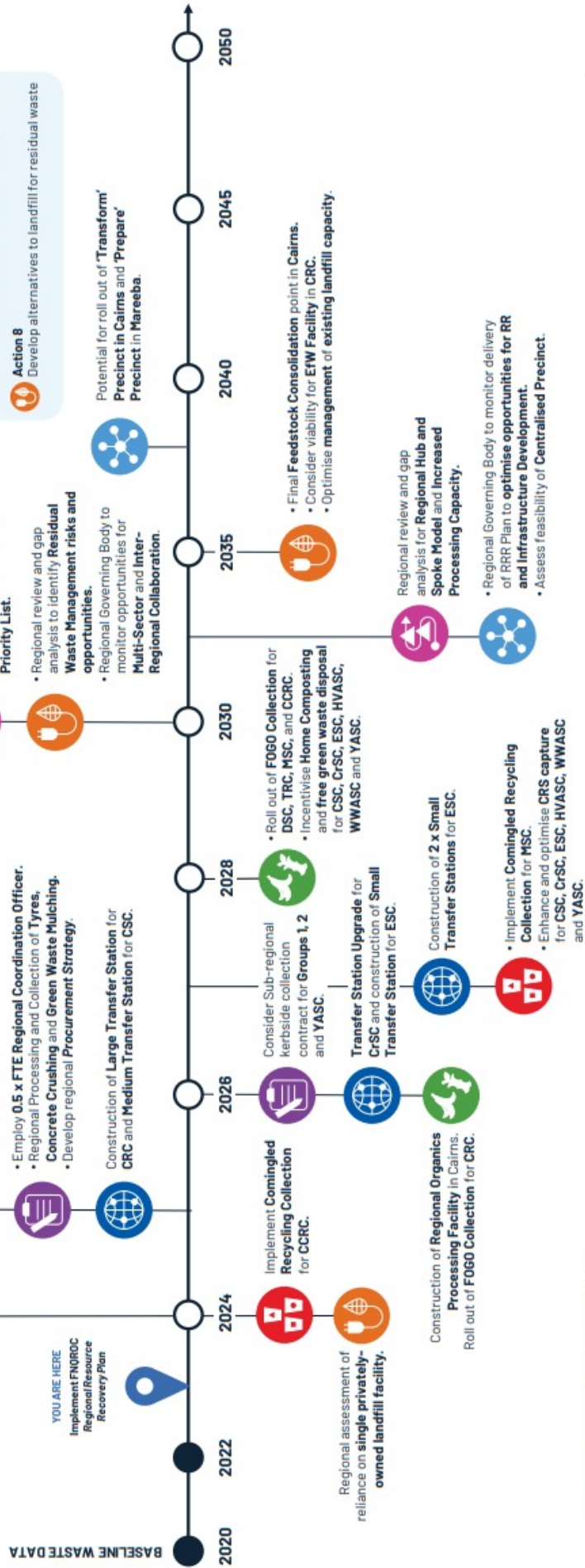
Our implementation roadmap is ambitious but with support it can be achievable.

# RRR Plan implementation roadmap



**Legend**

- Action 1** Step-change in customer engagement
- Action 2** Optimise regional servicing arrangements
- Action 3** New transfer station facilities and closure of facilities with regulatory or environmental issues
- Action 4** Enhance kerbside collection approach
- Action 5** Maximise diversion of organic waste from landfill
- Action 6** Optimise regional network of resource recovery facilities
- Action 7** Develop centralised resource recovery precinct
- Action 8** Develop alternatives to landfill for residual waste







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