

Minutes of the 173^d FNQROC Board Meeting

Meeting No	173
Meeting Name	FNQROC Ordinary Board Meeting
Date	7 August 2025
Time	10.00am – 1.20pm
Venue	Cairns Regional Council

REPRESENTATIVES

CHAIR

Cr Barry Hughes, Mayor	Etheridge Shire Council
Cr Bruce Gibson, Mayor	Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
Cr Daryl Sexton, Mayor	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
Cr Alister Gibson, Mayor	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Cr Rod Marti, Mayor	Tablelands Regional Council
Cr Trevor Pickering, Mayor	Croydon Shire Council
Cr Lenore Wyatt, Deputy Mayor	Mareeba Shire Council
Cr Lisa Scomazzon, Mayor	Douglas Shire Council
Cr Teresa Millwood, Mayor	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Cr Amy Eden, Mayor	Cairns Regional Council
Cr Robyn Holmes, Mayor	Cook Shire Council
Cr Ramon Jayo, Mayor (Online)	Hinchinbrook Shire Council

CEO'S

Mr Andrew Graffen, CEO	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Ms Jacqui Cresswell, CEO (Online)	Croydon Shire Council
Mr Scott Osman, CEO	Douglas Shire Council
Mr Brian Joiner, CEO	Cook Shire Council
Dr Nikola Stepanov, CEO	Tablelands Regional Council
Mr Mark Kelleher, Interim CEO	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council

OBSERVERS

Cr Mary Brown, Deputy Mayor (Online)	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Ms Lucy Greene	Manager, Intergovernmental Relations LGAQ
Mr Benton Wecker	Lead Intergovernmental Relations LGAQ
Mr Jarrod Cowley-Grimmond	Deputy Director General, Water Resource Management Division, Dept Local Government, Water and Volunteers
Mr Grant Stidiford	Chair, FNQ Regional Leadership Network, DNRM, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development
Ms Kitty Mostyn	Department Home Affairs
Ms Leonie Cunningham	Department Home Affairs
Mr Terry James MP	Member for Mulgrave

FNQROC STAFF

Ms Darlene Irvine	Chief Executive Officer
Mr Travis Sydes	Natural Asset Management & Sustainability Coordinator
Ms Amanda Hancock	Regional Strategic Infrastructure Coordinator
Ms Maria Anselmo	Regional Climate Resilience Coordinator
Ms Liz Wakelin	Executive Support Officer
Ms Ieva Pradal	Regional Procurement Coordinator
Ms Bhakti Devi	Regional Waste Management Plan Coordinator

The meeting commenced at 10:02am

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which we met and paid respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Cr Hughes also welcomed Liz Wakelin, FNQROC Executive Support Officer, to the organisation.

APOLOGIES

Cr Angela Toppin, Mayor	Mareeba Shire Council
Mr Richard Wright, CEO	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
Mr Peter Franks, CEO	Mareeba Shire Council
Ms Kiley Hanslow, CEO	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council

1. Presentation by Grant Stidiford (DESBT) and Chair, FNQ Regional Leadership Network.

Grant Stidiford introduced himself and gave an overview of the FNQ Regional Leadership Network which has replaced the Regional Managers Coordination Network.

(A copy of the presentation will be shared with the Minutes)

Questions from the floor:

- Economic Development is key to sustaining councils and Red Tape Review, where does that fit into this model and how can it alleviate regional and rural councils?
 - Mr Stidiford noted that State is currently focussed on Safety, and that Economic Development will be looked at from a whole of region perspective, requiring a consistent narrative across the region to be identified to take to Brisbane. Mr Stidiford identified housing and access to public infrastructure as the most significant current challenges, with workforce issues—particularly support for councils and broader attraction and retention—being a key concern.
 - It was agreed that further discussion is required around the Red Tape Review. The need for alignment with strategic priorities and elevation of FNQ's voice was noted.

ACTIONS:

3247a: FNQROC CEO to share recently adopted regional priorities with the FNQ Regional Leadership Network.

2. Presentation by Jarrod Cowley-Grimmond, North Region Water Resource Management, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers.

Jarrod Cowley-Grimmond gave an overview of:

- The current Governments commitments
- Water Plan Reviews
- Unlocking water project.
- Expressions of interest for unallocated water.
- Purpose of proposed changes is to support farmers through dry periods.

10.32am Mayor Amy Eden joined the meeting.

Questions from the floor:

- Enquiry was made about the meaning of the 10% trigger level on the Barron water plan.
 - Previously there was no level under 50%, once levels were below this you weren't able to access any of your entitlement. Now there is a 10% entitlement access available when it was dry.

- It was raised that there is frustration regarding unallocated supplies in the Gilbert River - 500K unused due to red tape and bureaucracy, which has a detrimental impact on Economic Development.
- Question was made about sleeper licences, and what the government was going to do with these. The Herbert is 100% allocated but this allocation is not being used, which is also hindering economic growth.
 - Mr Cowley-Grimmond highlighted a 'use it or lose it' clause designed to prevent water from being held without use. He also noted that part of the project involves investing in improved measurement systems to better understand and manage sleeper licences.

(A copy of the presentation will be shared with the Minutes)

3. Ms Kitty Mostyn and Ms Leonie Cunningham, Assistant Director Counter Foreign Interference Partnerships, Dept of Home affairs.

Leonie Cunningham presentation highlighted:

- What was foreign interference
- Who was at risk
- Some case studies
- Vectors for Foreign Interference in Local governments:
 - Information
 - People, and
 - Infrastructure
- How to report and how they can help

(A copy of the presentation will be shared with the Minutes)

Questions from the floor:

- It was queried if the incidents described in one of the case studies were verified – Ms Mostyn advised that they are anecdotal only, due to communication challenges, and verification is required.
- In another case study, it was noted that elected officials are permitted to offer personal opinions. Ms Mostyn agreed but also noted the importance of being aware of the risk to Cr's as officials, and the Foreign Arrangements Scheme is to help Cr's understand they may be influenced.
- It was suggested that there was a void in regional and remote areas which needed to be filled i.e. Cape and Torres Islands. Ms Cunningham advised that there is no tidy solution, nothing can be done from a policy or legislative position but agreed that there is a need to fill the void, which would be based on feedback and information shared from the region.
- It was observed that there is a close association/overlap with biosecurity. First national communities are put under pressure as first responders to incursions and

other activities and enquired what consideration is given by the Home Affairs to address this. Ms Cunningham acknowledged the vulnerabilities of the northern Australian coastline and that lack of preparedness, and responsibilities being placed in the hands of first nations communities which needs to be addressed.

- It was noted that Pajinka Lodge was nearly sold to the Chinese, it was suggested that Home Affairs should address Native Title groups, they have a lot of different types of people coming through the Cape and they need to understand.

4. Mr Terry James, Member for Mulgrave representing Minister Leahy

Mr James provided an update on key matters:

- Depreciation review to be announced tomorrow
- Red Tape Reduction - the report is completed and with the Minister – it will be going to cabinet next month, with expected release around October. There are over 1,000 recommendations.
- Review of water plans – review will be carried out prior to the next election.
- River Improvement Trust – funding has been restored, with 10% increase.
- Cook – funding for arts centre approved.
- Residential activation fund – money coming through, await announcement before proceeding. Mr James was advised of the challenges presented of announcing at same time of the budget cycle.
- QRA and betterment funding, councils are encouraged to have their Local Resilience Action Plans up to date.
- 'Adult crime, adult time' has seen results.
 - It was commented that parents should be made accountable to ensure their kids were at school. If they are receiving an allowance to take care of their children and they weren't perhaps this could be considered further.
- Police funding - \$147.9 to bolster QPS new state of the art taser, additional tyre deflation devices etc
- Crime prevention schools – Gold Coast, Townsville, Rockhampton and Ipswich.
- Play On sports vouchers no means testing, One voucher per child 5-17YO.

Mr James advised that he would like to attend FNQROC meetings on an ongoing basis.

- Cr Hughes noted that the Georgetown Police Station is condemned and they are struggling to keep police staff, some of the \$147.9m would help to build new police station in Georgetown as the current position untenable.
- Mr James was asked about the potential for implementation of Castle Law. Mr James noted that it is unlikely to progress.
- Re 50cent fares, there was concern over the financial loss and potential impact on growing public transport in other areas i.e. Mossman to Port Douglas. They have a provider but can't get a subsidy. It was also noted there was no public transport in Babinda, and you could extend this to Innisfail.

- Mr James was aware of this and will take it back.
- Mayor Millwood – advocate for public transport on Cassowary Coast due to barriers, low social economic area, residents needing to get to medical appts, etc. Mr James agreed more work is needed on public transport in the region.
- Mayor Eden – requested holistic look across the area, including train transport.
- Mayor Eden also noted that the River Improvement Trust currently has 600 projects, and acknowledged the increase but concerns that it may not be sufficient, council was continually funding more, and it was another example of cost shifting.
 - Mr James asked for the details such as costs associated with River trusts and cost shifting to councils.
- Mayor Eden enquired about and update on Office of Independent Assessor (OIA) reforms. Mr James does not have at this point, he will look into and advise.

ACTIONS:

3247b: Mayor Eden to provide Mr James examples of River Improvement Trust costs and the additional cost impediments (cost shifting) to councils.

3247c: Mr James to provide an update on the OIA reforms

5. Presentation from Lucy Greene, Manager Intergovernmental Relations, LGAQ

Lucy Greene gave an overview of the Briefing Note, which was taken as read. She did expand on:

- Quarterly meeting with Minister Leahy – 13 different items discussed. In particular, child safe standards effective 1 Oct. Local government will be impacted by those standards. LGAQ have requested extension for local Government, and templates for implementation measures.
- Cost shifting data to be updated - increased by 178% since last survey. Request for Councils to provide info.

Cr Hughes noted the lack of focus on maintenance projects by the Government and suggested utilising the \$10m currently available in the budget for the Savannah lander line, as it's an important driver of the economy.

The Chair thanked the presenters and asked them to leave, with the exception of Mr Terry James and LGAQ.

3248 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Cr Eden noted Cr Tickner should be noted as an Observer in the Minutes.

MOVED: Mayor Rod Marti

SECONDED: Mayor Lisa Scomazzon

That the Board:

Moves the minutes of the 172nd FNQROC Board meeting held on Thursday 5 June 2025 to be confirmed and adopted, subject to Cr Tickner being moved from representative to observer.

CARRIED

3249 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Action items from 5 June 2025 FNQROC Ordinary Board Meeting

Meeting	Action	Responsible person
3220	FNQROC CEO to look further at investing FNQROC savings with QTC	Darlene Irvine, CEO On hold until financial delegation reviewed.
<p>Status: papers for signing are with Mr Peter Franks and Mayor Toppin after the financial policy was adopted at the last meeting.</p>		
3223b	To enable FNQROC endorsement of the TNQ Economic Development Strategy (TEDS), the CEO is to work with the Economic Development Technical Committee to review and provide recommended amendments to RDA TN. Once completed to the satisfaction of the Technical Committee the FNQROC Board will review and endorse. Comments provided to RDA TN 4 June 2025 – awaiting response from RDA TN	Darlene Irvine, CEO and RDA TN
<p>Status: In progress. After comments were provided RDA TNQ advised it would be including the Innovation Strategy in the Tropical Economic Strategy. This strategy was not included in our original detailed review.</p>		
3235a	QTC advised they will provide further information to answer the following two questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the impact of reducing Copper String, and • With regard to Beef Tariffs, what opportunities are available to enable those in the industry to get on the front foot with other markets? 	QTC
<p>Status: Completed emails sent to councils</p>		

Meeting	Action	Responsible person
3238a	FNQROC CEO to identify what the CSO is for Etheridge and other councils in the region	FNQROC CEO
Status: Waiting on response from QTC		
3238b	FNQROC CEO to request from Ergon the programmed rollout to switch streetlight to LED by 30 June 2030.	FNQROC CEO
Status: Completion date Q3 2028. Maria Anselmo to follow up with Ergon as to timeframes for individual areas as part of Ergons maintenance program. Darlene Irvine noted pay issues, government increased minimum pay amounts for Ergon works, causing pay complexities for organisations working for both Ergon and councils.		
3238c	FNQROC CEO to bring forward a recommendation to the FNQROC Board on progressing the asset criticality assessment.	FNQROC CEO
Status: To be held over to the October board meeting – the technical committee hasn't met, the next meeting is due 15 th August 2025.		
3238d	The FNQROC CEO to finalise the FNQROC Strategic Priorities ready for publication.	FNQROC CEO
Status: Completed link to website can be found here		
3245a:	The impact of the Universal Principle and Child Safety Standards on councils and the resource required be referred to LGAQ and the Policy Executive.	LGAQ / Policy Executive
Status: Completed Issue raised and being escalated by LGAQ		
3245b	FNQROC CEO to send out updated calendar invites for the December Board meeting and Christmas Dinner	FNQROC CEO
Status: Completed		

3250 BOARD REPORTS

Nil

NOTED

3251 NEW/UPDATED POLICIES

1. New – Use of Generative Artificial intelligence

Policy withdrawn – to be used as in internal guideline under administrative procedures.

ACTION:

3251a: Mr Graffen to share CCRC AI Guideline policy.

2. Reviewed – Policy No. 9 Issuing of Letters of Support

MOVED: Mayor Robyn Holmes

SECONDED: Mayor Lenore Wyatt

That the Board *endorses amended Policy No. 9 FNQROC Letters of Support with an amendment to the 'All other' process response time being amended from 3 working days to 7 working days*

CARRIED

3. Reviewed – Policy No. 8 - FNQROC Advocacy

MOVED: Mayor Trevor Pickering

SECONDED: Mayor Darryl Sexton

That the Board *endorses the FNQROC Policy No. 8 – FNQROC Advocacy*

CARRIED

3253 DISCUSSION TOPIC

Nil

NOTED

3254 FINANCIAL REPORTS

1. Financial Report Year to date

- 1.1 Profit & Loss Statement 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025
- 1.2 Balance Sheet as of 30 June 2025
- 1.3 Profit and Loss Statement – 1 July 2025 – 29 July 2025
- 1.4 Balance Sheet as at 29 July 2025

MOVED: Mayor Rod Marti

SECONDED: Mayor Trevor Pickering

That the Board:

- 1. *Adopts the unaudited Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025*
- 2. *Adopts the Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet – 1 July 2025 – 29 July 2025*

CARRIED

3255 INFORMATION FOR THE BOARD

1. CEO Report (New)

FNQROC CEO gave an update on the new CEO report. She acknowledged it was long but wanted to ensure the Mayors, particularly the new ones were kept abreast of the topics we work on between meetings. It will be taken as read with discussion only if clarification is needed or CEO needs to highlight any issues.

MOVED: Mayor Barry Hughes

SECONDED: Mayor Lisa Scomazzon

That the Board receives the CEOs Report

CARRIED

2. Draft Federal Advocacy Brief

FNQROC CEO presented the draft outline for the Federal Delegation for feedback.

12.46pm Mayor Jamo left the meeting.

- Recommendation to focus on specific individual stories, for authenticity of issues raised.
- Proposed higher tax zone rebate to entice people to relocate to the region.

RESOLVED:

That for the 2026 delegations:

- a. *State delegation to occur in the first half of 2026, and*
- b. *Federal delegation to occur in August 2026.*

1.10pm Cr Wyatt left the meeting.

ACTION

3255a: FNQROC CEO to provide a copy of the draft advocacy brief with the minutes.

3255b: FNQROC CEO to seek a copy of the tax zone rebate/offset incentive advocacy brief from Advance Cairns or Gulf Savannah Development to share with the Board.

3255c: When the State and Federal sitting dates have been published for 2026, calendar invites are to be sent to Mayors ASAP for State delegation first half of 2026 and Federal delegation in August 2026.

3256 INCOMING/OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

1. Incoming

Nil

NOTED

2. Outgoing

Nil

NOTED

3257 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1. Minutes of FNQROC Advisory Committees: -

- **FNQ Regional Roads and Transport Committee #140** – 25th July 2025
Minutes – *available on website*
Next Meeting – 19 September 2025

NOTED

- **Natural Asset Management Technical Committee # 63-** 25 July 2025
Minutes – *available on website*
Next Meeting – 31 October 2025

NOTED

- **FNQROC Climate Resilience Technical Committee #9** – 1 August 2025
Minutes – *will be available on website*

NOTED

2. Minutes of Confidential Meetings

- **FNQROC Regional Procurement Technical Committee #46** – 13 June 2025
Minutes – *available upon request*

NOTED

3258 GENERAL BUSINESS

LGAQ Motions

Mayor Millwood noted motions that CCRC are taking to the LGAQ – to be shared with the group.

ACTION:

3258a Councils to forward their LGAQ motions to FNQROC CEO to be shared with member councils to aide in support for the motion.

October FNQROC Board meeting in Atherton

Mayor Marti shared next meeting logistics:

- Arrive Wednesday (1 October) afternoon, dinner in the evening.
- Thursday (2 October) morning tour, FNQROC board meeting at lunchtime.

ACTION:

3258b: FNQORC CEO to share booking arrangements for FNQROC Board meeting in Atherton with Mayors and their EAs so that their rooms can be booked.

3259 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 2nd October 2025, at Tablelands Regional Council.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 1.20pm.


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Cr Barry Hughes
FNQROC Deputy Chair

ATTACHMENT 1

Actions from Board Meeting held on 7 August 2025

Meeting	Action	Responsible person
3220 (Dec 2024)	FNQROC CEO to look further at investing FNQROC savings with QTC	Darlene Irvine, CEO On hold until financial delegation reviewed.
3223b (Dec 2024)	To enable FNQROC endorsement of the TNQ Economic Development Strategy (TEDS), the CEO is to work with the Economic Development Technical Committee to review and provide recommended amendments to RDA TN. Once completed to the satisfaction of the Technical Committee the FNQROC Board will review and endorse. Comments provided to RDA TN 4 June 2025 – awaiting response from RDA TN	Darlene Irvine, CEO and RDA TN
3238a (June 2025)	FNQROC CEO to identify what the CSO is for Etheridge and other councils in the region	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3238b (June 2025)	FNQROC CEO to request from Ergon the programmed rollout to switch streetlight to LED by 30 June 2030. Maria Anselmo to follow up with Ergon as to timeframes for individual areas.	Maria Anselmo, Climate Resilience Coordinator
3238c (June 2025)	FNQROC CEO to bring forward a recommendation to the FNQROC Board on progressing the asset criticality assessment. Held over to the October board meeting.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3247a:	FNQROC CEO to share recently adopted regional priorities with the FNQ Regional Leadership Network.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3247b	Mayor Eden to provide Mr James examples of River Improvement Trust costs and the additional cost impediments (cost shifting) to councils.	Mayor Eden
3247c	Mr James to provide an update on the OIA reforms	Mr James MP
3251a	Mr Graffen to share CCRC AI Guideline policy.	CCRC CEO
3255a:	FNQROC CEO to provide a copy of the draft advocacy brief with the minutes.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3255b:	FNQROC CEO to seek a copy of the tax zone rebate/offset incentive advocacy brief from Advance Cairns or Gulf Savannah Development to share with the Board.	Darlene Irvine, CEO

3255c	When the State and Federal sitting dates have been published for 2026, calendar invites are to be sent to Mayors ASAP for State delegation first half of 2026 and Federal delegation in August 2026.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3258a	Councils to forward their LGAQ motions to FNQROC CEO to be shared with member councils to aide in support for the motion.	All Councils and Darlene Irvine, CEO
3258b	FNQORC CEO to share booking arrangements for FNQROC Board meeting in Atherton with Mayors and their EAs so that their rooms can be booked.	Darlene Irvine, CEO