



FNQ Regional Organisation of Councils



Annual Report 2024/2025

United Councils, Connected Communities, Stronger Region

Contents

Message from the Chair.....	4
CEOs Operational Summary.....	5
About Us	6
Our Vision.....	6
Our Mission	6
FNQROC Organisational Chart.....	7
Regional Advocacy	8
Delegations.....	8
Submissions	8
Presentations.....	9
Representation on external committees / working groups.....	9
Year in Review	11
Climate Resilience Coordinator	11
Key Initiatives Delivered.....	11
Securing Resources for the Region	11
Advocating for Our Unique Climate Needs	12
Building a Community of Practice	12
Project Delivery.....	12
Workshops and Webinars.....	14
Strategic Infrastructure Coordinator	15
FNQ Regional Roads and Transport Group (FNQ RRTG).....	15
Meetings	17
FNQ RRTG LRRS Network	17
Statewide Capability Development Funding	17
Technical Tour – Etheridge Shire Council	18
Regional Water Alliance	20
FNQ Regional Water Capability Plan.....	20
Operational	22
Biosolids.....	23
Drinking Water Quality Management Plan Audits.....	23
Natural Asset Management and Sustainability Coordinator	24

Natural Asset Management Technical Committee.....	24
Animal Management Technical Committee	25
Regional Mountain Bike Strategy Steering Committee	25
Land Protection Fund and State Oversight Group.....	25
Disaster preparedness for natural assets	26
GBR and Water Quality Improvement	26
Regional Waste Management Plan Coordinator	26
Strategic Progress	26
Operational Progress	27
Representation at External Events	27
Procurement Coordinator	28
Regional Procurement Arrangements.....	28
Regional Contract & Procurement Documentation	32
Procurement and Contract Management Training	32
Regional Procurement Advisory Committee.....	32
Financial Statements.....	33
Contact Information.....	34

Message from the Chair

Write content here...reflections on the past year, key achievements and strategic direction for the future

CEOs Operational Summary

Write content here...

Overview of operations and performance, highlights of challenges and opportunities and organisational priorities moving forward

About Us

The Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC) is charting a collaborative and future-focused path, with member councils working together to address the region's most pressing long-term challenges and opportunities. Through shared planning and strong regional leadership, FNQROC is driving strategic action across critical areas such as resource recovery, water security, environmental sustainability, transport and social infrastructure. Realising the region's full potential depends on enduring partnerships with State and Federal Governments, supported by aligned policy, funding and deliver frameworks. Together we can build an inclusive infrastructure that supports a thriving, connected FNQ for generations to come.

Achieving this vision requires coordinated, evidence based strategies that anticipate future climate realities and protect the region's natural and economic assets. A united regional voice must champion the safeguarding of critical infrastructure corridors, the strengthening of biosecurity capacity, and the prioritisation of resilience in the face of intensifying natural hazards. Proactive investment in disaster resilient social infrastructure and the recognition of water as foundational to regional development are key to ensuring that no community is left behind. FNQROC's forward thinking approach embraces both innovation and preparedness, ensuring every FNQ community not only survives but thrives amid the challenges and changes ahead.

Our Vision

Prosperous, sustainable and connected councils in Far North Queensland – where councils collaborate, and communities thrive.

Our Mission

Advocate on behalf of, and foster cooperation and resource sharing between FNQROC member Councils

FNQROC Organisational Chart



Regional Advocacy

Delegations

In August 2024 the FNQROC Board undertook a Queensland State Delegation where we met with 22 Ministers and Shadow Ministers inclusive of the Premier. The full delegation report can be [found here](#).



Figure 1 FNQROC State Delegation - August 2024

Submissions

- FNQ Regional Plan
- Parliamentary Committee on Northern Australia inquiry into energy, food and water security
- Consultation paper proposed amendments to the telecommunications Powers and Immunities Framework
- Regional Development Australia Tropical Economic Development Strategy
- Queensland Sport Strategy 2025 - Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tropical North Queensland Regional Mountain Bike Strategy).
- Qld Waste Strategy 2025-2030

Presentations

- *Sharing our experience and strengthen collaboration with researchers, practitioners, and climate alliances* - Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society Conference,
- *Sharing our experience and strengthen collaboration with researchers, practitioners, and climate alliances* - National Adaptation Conference
- *QWRAP Achievements & Activities* – QLD Water Chair & Coordinators Workshop – August 2024
- *FNQ Regional Water Capability Plan* – QLD Water Annual Forum – August 2024
- *Working Together* - Whitsunday, Isaac & Mackay Water Alliance – November 2024
- *FNQ Regional Water Capability Plan* – QLD Water Skills Forum – March 2025
- *Long Term Analysis of the role of Dams* – Regional Development Australia, Regional Water Forum – May 2025
- *Cat and horse management lessons and learnings in FNQROC* - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Animal Management Workshop — Tropical Public Health Unit- October 2024
- *Regional Plan and Regional Mountain Bike Strategy* - joint presentation T Sydes & Darlene Irvine to Infrastructure Associate of Queensland Inc Annual Forum - November 2024
- *Tropical North Queensland Regional Mountain Bike Strategy - 2024-2034* - Tablelands Regional Council Workshop - November 2024
- *Far North Queensland Cat Management Workshop*- forum convenor- November 2024.
- *Far North Queensland Regional Aquatic Biosecurity Workshop*- workshop facilitator – May 8, 2025.
- *Queensland Mountain Bike Forum*, Blue Sky Trails, Outdoors Queensland, Cairns Institute – forum convener- May 20, 2025.
- *FNQROC natural assets and climate resilience update* - LGAQ NRM Forum – Atherton, June 18, 2025.
- *Connectivity, resilience and Economic Growth* - Regional Infrastructure Taskforce for Infrastructure Advisory Queensland — June 2025

Representation on external committees / working groups

- Quarry Material Native Title Update Group
- Qldwater Sewerage and Water Environmental Advisory Panel (SWEAP)

- Qldwater Consortium for Research and Advocacy on Emerging Contaminants (qCRAC).
- Qldwater Strategic Priorities Group (SPG)
- Environment Functional Recovery and Resilience Group - DETSI
- State Oversight Group – Land Protection Fund – Biosecurity Queensland
- Research Review Committee – Biosecurity Queensland
- Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan Working Group – OGBR
- Spectacled Flying Fox Recovery Team
- Cassowary Recovery Team
- Littoral Rainforest Recovery Team
- Queensland Wetlands Network – DESI
- Wet Tropics Waterways Partnership – Terrain NRM
- Wet Tropics Waterways Technical Working Group – Terrain NRM
- Active Travel Network – Cairns Regional Council
- Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program Reference Committee – WTMA
- Amazon Frogbit Working Group
- Regional Leadership Network
- Smart Green Economy
- FNQ Trade and Investment Group
- LGAQ Road and Transport Advisory Group

Year in Review

Climate Resilience Coordinator

The Climate Resilience Technical Committee (CRTC) continues to strengthen Far North Queensland's capacity to respond to climate challenges through collaboration, evidence-based planning, and community engagement. Over the past year, FNQROC delivered 20+ initiatives, including the Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, Aboriginal Shire Council Emissions Reduction Action Plans, and a Community Emissions Reduction Media Kit, helping councils track emissions, plan mitigation actions, and empower local communities. Targeted workshops and webinars enhanced council readiness for disasters, low-emission transport, and climate risk assessment, while advocacy at state and national forums ensured FNQ's unique climate risks are represented. FNQROC successfully secured \$50,000 in regional funding to continue facilitating the Technical Committee and has applied for over \$1M through additional grants to enable councils to take informed action on climate mitigation and adaptation.

Key Initiatives Delivered

- Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory & Communications Media Kit
- Aboriginal Shire Council Emission Reduction Action Plan
- Disaster Preparedness Workshops
- Rivers to Reef Climate Alliance Action Plan
- Natural Area Disaster Preparedness Plan
- Knowledge Sharing Sessions

Securing Resources for the Region

Through the Queensland Climate Resilience Council's program, we secured \$50,000 funding for the Climate Resilience Coordinator to continue facilitating the Climate Resilience Technical Committee. To strengthen regional climate resilience and build adaptation to drought and heatwaves, we have applied for more than \$1M in funding through three programs:

- Regional Drought Resilience Plan Scheme (Wet Tropics & Gulf Hinterland)
- Queensland Climate Resilient Councils Program – Implementation
- Disaster Ready Fund – Round Three

We supported Western Sydney ROC's Disaster Ready Fund grant to expand the 'Cool Suburbs' heat adaptation urban planning and development tool for Far North Queensland's climate, helping governments and industry assess heat resilience in future developments and make evidence-based decisions to manage heat impacts.

Advocating for Our Unique Climate Needs

At the **national level**, we contributed to the National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan through three workshops with federal agencies—ensuring FNQ’s specific risks and needs are represented in national strategies.

At the **state level**, we participated in the Queensland Climate Resilient Councils (Q CRC) Forum, advocating for sustainable funding and support to increase the capacity of regional and remote councils to identify risks and implement impactful adaptation actions.

Building a Community of Practice

FNQROC facilitated 26 initiatives, including webinars, workshops, presentations, and quarterly CRTC meetings with 14 participating organisations (including seven local councils). Presentations were also delivered to elected members from Cairns Regional Council, Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council, Hope Vale Shire Council, and the Cassowary Coast Regional Council Natural Assets Management Committee.

Responding to a knowledge gap identified by the CRTC, the Climate Resilience Coordinator undertook a three-day Power Purchase Agreement training program, sharing insights with both the CRTC and FNQROC Procurement Technical Committee.

Project Delivery

Alongside targeted workshops and webinars, FNQROC has led the delivery of strategic projects that strengthen regional climate resilience, address priority risks, and provide councils with tools and frameworks to act. These projects span adaptation, mitigation, and transition, ensuring our region is well-positioned to respond to climate challenges and secure future funding.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Program (2023–2026)

Under the *Rivers to Reef Climate Action Plan 2021–2026*, FNQROC and the Climate Resilience Technical Committee have led a coordinated regional approach to measuring, reporting and communicating greenhouse gas emissions.

The *Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory* captured corporate emissions across eleven councils, with seven councils collaborating through a collective tender to share resources and reduce costs. *Great Barrier Reef Foundation* funding supported participation by Hope Vale, Wujal Wujal, and Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Councils, ensuring all communities could contribute despite resource constraints.

FNQROC’s regional summary of 2023–24 corporate emissions from 11 councils totalled *82,616.1 tonnes CO₂-e*. Waste (44%), electricity (21%), and fuels (19%) were the top three

contributors across scopes 1 and 2. A dedicated GHG emissions dashboard and customised calculators equip councils to track emissions in-house, supporting stronger climate management and informed decision-making.



Figure 2 GHG Emissions Results presentation to Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council elected members

Building on these insights, the three Aboriginal Shire Councils developed their first *Emissions Reduction Action Plans*, aligned with state targets. Councillor workshops and tailored communications tools strengthened local understanding of emissions results and provided a roadmap for future mitigation.

Finally, a *Community Emissions Reduction Media Kit* was created to empower councils to raise awareness and encourage community participation in climate action, translating regional data into tangible local engagement.

Expanding the FNQ Rivers to Reef Climate Action Plan

The original Rivers to Reef Climate Action Plan was developed through a pilot program funded by the first round of QCRC, involving four councils. The second round of funding supported an expansion of the plan, including a strategic review via two online workshops. Members reviewed existing actions and identified new local priorities, leading to Croydon, Douglas, and Cassowary Coast Regional Councils integrating locally relevant actions into the regional plan. Eleven new mitigation actions and 20 adaptation actions were prioritised to ensure future funding aligns with regional needs.

Regional Drought Resilience Plan – Gulf Hinterland & Wet Tropics

The regional drought resilience plans for the Gulf Hinterland and Wet Tropics were approved by Federal and State Ministers in March 2025. Working closely with Natural Resource Management (NRM) partners, we submitted three funding applications aligned with the plans, including proposals for new NRM drought resilience officer positions and projects targeting landholders, businesses, and council infrastructure. While awaiting outcomes, we continue to strengthen relationships with key partners through the Climate Resilience Technical Committee.

Piloting the Natural Area Disaster Preparedness Plan

In partnership with Cassowary Coast Regional Council, FNQROC is piloting the region's first Natural Area Disaster Preparedness Plan. The plan incorporates online mapping of

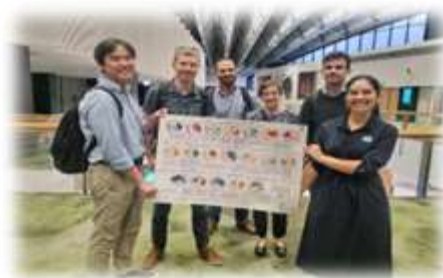
Local High Value Environmental Areas and high-risk biosecurity sites, supported by standard operating procedures to help councils streamline processes and safeguard the environment during disaster response and recovery. Insights from this pilot will inform a regional framework to guide other councils in developing their own plans. To date, the Climate Resilience Coordinator has attended three Local Natural Asset Management Technical Committee meetings and delivered a Local High Value Environmental Areas workshop to progress the plan's development.

Workshops and Webinars

To strengthen council capacity and foster cross-sector collaboration, FNQROC facilitated targeted workshops and webinars that addressed key climate resilience challenges—from transitioning to low-emission transport, to managing heat risks, improving climate risk assessment skills, and testing disaster preparedness.

- **Disaster Preparedness Workshops: Natural Assets & Animal Management**– 20 November 2024
To strengthen council readiness for climate-related emergencies, workshops were delivered to test disaster management processes and identify opportunities to improve operational efficiency—reducing impacts on staff, services, and communities during response and recovery. An online scenario covering a High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak, severe heatwave, and bushfire was conducted for Natural Asset and Animal Management teams, enabling councils to trial their Disaster Management Plans and pinpoint priority actions.
- **Knowledge Sharing Session with Ergon Energy: Electric Vehicles in FNQ and Council's Role** – 22 November 2024
With transport making up the majority of community emissions in the FNQROC region, this session explored how councils can support the community's transition to electric vehicles. In partnership with Ergon Energy, we shared the latest on network readiness and charging infrastructure, followed by insights into current EV charging locations in FNQ and examples of how other councils are enabling the shift to low-emission transport.
- **Knowledge Sharing Session with WSROC: Living With Heat & Humidity** – 27 February 2025
Building on our 2024 online knowledge-sharing series, this session featured the Heat Resilience Project Manager from the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WESROC). The discussion strengthened cross-regional collaboration and led to FNQROC supporting WESROC's grant application to expand the Cool Suburbs Assessment tool for use in FNQ's unique climate.
- **Knowledge Sharing Workshop with Queensland Treasury: Climate Risk Assessment Tools** – 27 June 2025

In partnership with Queensland Treasury's Future Climate Science team, this workshop brought together council officers and non-government practitioners to explore climate modelling tools. Participants gained practical skills in interpreting climate projections to inform local risk assessments and long-term planning.



Strategic Infrastructure Coordinator

FNQ Regional Roads and Transport Group (FNQ RRTG)

Membership

- Cairns Regional Council
- Cassowary Coast Regional Council
- Cook Shire Council
- Croydon Shire Council
- Douglas Shire Council
- Etheridge Shire Council
- Mareeba Shire Council
- Tablelands Regional Council
- Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
- Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
- Department of Transport and Main Roads (Far North Region)

Positions

RRTG Chair	Cr Barry Hughes (ESC)
RRTG Deputy Chair	Cr Kevin Davies (MSC) – from July 2024 to January 2025 Mayor Angela Toppin – from January 2025 to June 2025
Technical Committee Chair	David Fletcher (TRC) – from July 2024 to January 2025 Khubaib Khan (CSC) – from January 2025 to June 2025
Technical Coordinator	A Hancock (FNQROC)
RTAPT/LGAQ Representatives	Jarrold Hellmuth (LGAQ) Mike Furniss (LGAQ) Tanya Lindenberg (TMR) Susan Barlow (TMR – from July 2024 to October 2024)

Summary

The Roads and Transport Alliance is the formative cooperative arrangement between TMR and local government to invest in and regionally manage Queensland’s Roads and transport network. The intent of the Alliance is to enable regional thinking and cooperation between neighbouring Local Governments. RRTGs work to collaboratively to regionally plan for and prioritise investment on road and transport infrastructure, including the allocating of the overall TIDS funding to the highest priority projects and identifying opportunities for financial efficiencies.

There is a requirement for each local government member to nominate one elected member as their delegate plus an alternative delegate should the nominate elected member be unable to attend. Teleconference facilities are provided at each meeting to enable representatives to attend via teleconference as opposed to in person, significantly reduce travel time and costs.

In 2024-25 the TIDS budget was just over \$6M, which included the annual ATSI TIDS allocations for Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Councils.

The 2024-25 TIDS program was delivered successfully, with just under 100% of project funds expended against twenty-seven projects.

Meetings

The FNQ RRTG Board met five times, including once online in 2024-25, with any urgent action items managed between meetings via a flying minute.

The FNQ RRTG Technical Committee met six times in 2024-25.

FNQ RRTG LRRS Network

During 2024-25, there were no changes to the LRRS network.

Statewide Capability Development Funding

In addition to the annual TIDS allocation there is also funding available to member councils via the Statewide Capability Development Fund (SCDF). This fund supports improvements in road stewardship, capability and capacity with needs identified via a Capability Agreement and Action Plan. Projects that took place in 2024-25 which were supported by SCDF funding were as follows:

- *Procurement & Contract Management Training*

Two training workshops were delivered by Ochre Legal in Cairns in 2025. The workshops focused on Construction Contract Management and Goods & Services Procurement using the FNQROC /Ochre Legal suite of documents with a total of sixty-two council staff from eight member councils attending the sessions over two days.

- *Drainage for Road Design & Unsealed Road Training - Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia, Queensland (IPWEA – QNT)*

Two training workshops were delivered by the IPWEA-QNT in Cairns. The first workshop was for Drainage on Road Design and the second was Unsealed Roads. The sessions were attended by twenty-seven council officers from seven member councils.

- *TIDS Project Management Tool*

In late 2023 the RRTG endorsed the recommendation of the RRTG TC to engage Shepherd Services to develop a new TIDS Program Management Tool. This tool replaced the existing MS Excel-based systems and aims to facilitate better management, create efficiencies, and provide a robust audit trail for the TIDS program. It will be web-based database with GIS capabilities, tailored to the needs of both the RRTG and the RRTG TC. The development of the PMT tool was largely completed in 2024-25 and is in use across the region and discussions are now taking place with the Department of Transport and Main roads regarding their implementation of the tool.

- *Road Treatment Study*

In late 2023, the FNQROC Board requested a study be undertaken into the whole of life cost pricing for different seal types across the region to better inform councils project planning and purchasing decisions. Following a procurement process, Philip Hunt of Engineering Services Australia was engaged to undertake the study and the project has commenced. The final report is expected to be available by the end of 2025.

- *Aerodrome Safety Audits*

Whilst not funded by the SCDF, following successful completion of regional aerodrome safety audits over the last couple of years, the FNQ RRTG TC requested annual safety audits continue to be undertaken regionally and in 2023-24 Aerodrome Design Services were engaged to complete audits for the next three years on behalf of participating councils.

Technical Tour – Etheridge Shire Council

A crucial element of the RRTG TC activity is the annual technical tour which provides the technical committee with the opportunity to view TIDS projects across the region. It is also an opportunity to the committee to share project experience and innovative solutions to problems/ sharing problems with a view gaining additional ideas. The technical tour also helps the technical committee to understand the variations between council areas and the networks they support. In September 2024, the technical committee headed West to view projects undertaken by Etheridge Shire Council together with a trip to Gilbert River Bridge accompanied by the RRTG Chair, Cr. Barry Hughes.

The Gilbert River Bridge is a low-level single lane bridge on the Gulf Development Road which is an essential corridor in our region supporting economic growth (agricultural, mining and tourism), food and supplier (lifeline route) to the Gulf and connecting our communities.

The Gulf Development Road is an essential corridor recognised by the Federal Government designation as a Road of Significant Importance (ROSI). Despite this, the Gilbert River Bridge remains a dangerous section of this road shared by road trains, commuters, and tourists alike and subject to closures due to water levels cutting off access to the Gulf and beyond. The need for the development of a business case for upgrading this bridge was raised at the FNQROC State delegation in March 2025 and funding was announced in the budget 2025-26 for the development of a business case for the Savannah Way focused on upgrading the Gilbert River Bridge.

Representatives from both Transport and Main Roads (TMR) and Local Government Association Queensland (LGAQ) attended the tour which also included a tour of the Genex Kidston Pumped Storage Hydro Project. This 250MW project involves the conversion of

two large disused pits that made up the old gold mine being converted into a world-first pumped storage hydro project, using the abandoned mine. It is the first of its kind to be developed in over 40 years, combined with multi-stage solar and wind renewable energy assets underpinning the Kidston Clean Energy Hub.



Figure 3 Under the Gilbert River Bridge



Figure 4 Road Train on Gilbert River Bridge



Figure 5 Genex Kidston Pumped Storage Hydro Project

Regional Water Alliance

FNQ Regional Water Capability Plan

The FNQ Water Alliance with support Queensland Treasury Corporation, the Department of Local Government and Water and Jobs Queensland, developed a Regional Water Capability Plan which was endorsed by the FNQROC Board in October 2024. The Plan aims to identify capability gaps within the water sector and assess potential options for member councils. It provides a list of scalable and achievable short, medium, and long-term strategic initiatives and actions that enable councils to address capability challenges in the delivery of services and deliver transformative outcomes for FNQROC.

This Regional Water Capability Plan is a crucial strategic plan for FNQROC, serving as a strategic guide to enhance the delivery of services across the region. Its importance lies in addressing key capability challenges faced by member councils through fostering council collaboration and driving regional partnerships, providing strategic alignment across the region, guiding policy reform and improvement, leading investment decisions through contextualising the region's specific needs and priorities and highlighting any funding and resourcing support required from the Government to reach the desired future state of service capability.

The water and wastewater sector in regional areas, particularly in Far North Queensland is currently grappling with significant capability challenges that hinder the effective

delivery of safe and reliable services. These challenges stem from a complex interplay of internal and external factors which restrict the operational efficiency of services providers and their ability to meet the needs of the community. The region's unique geographical diversity, coupled with aging infrastructure and rapid population growth, exacerbates the difficulties in service delivery.

As demands evolve due to regulatory changes and heightened customer expectations it becomes increasingly critical to enhance the operational effectiveness of these services.

Recognising the diverse capacities and contents of FNQROC member councils, the strategic initiatives detailed in the Plan have been crafted to be both scalable and achievable, ensuring that they deliver holistic value to the region.

Following extensive engagement with FNQROC member councils, eleven strategic initiatives have been developed, each accompanied by corresponding implementation actions. These initiatives are designed to effectively guide member councils in executing the overall strategy. The strategic initiatives are as follows:

1. **Establish common operating systems**, platforms, and tools - standardising processes to improve efficiency
2. **Regional water data sharing** - facilitating collaboration through shared data resources
3. **Standardised SOPs, work instructions, templates, and processes** - creating uniformity in operations
4. **Standardised water and wastewater asset and design and specification** - ensuring consistency in infrastructure development
5. **Strategic awareness of water and wastewater service delivery** - enhancing understanding of service delivery dynamics
6. **Prudent and efficient water and wastewater services in FNQ** - promoting sustainable practices
7. **Establishing regional market buying power for FNQ** - leveraging collective purchasing to reduce costs
8. **Driving change in water and wastewater grant funding** - advocating for improved funding mechanisms
9. **Building capability in risk-based decision making across FNQ** - enhanced decision-making frameworks
10. **Building maturity in asset management and planning across FNQ** - strengthening asset management practices
11. **Building and sustaining a strong water workforce for FNQ** - fostering workforce development and retention

The focus for the coming year and beyond is now implementing the initiatives and actions outlined in the Plan which necessitates a coordinated effort, resourcing, and investment from Councils, the State Government, and key stakeholders over time. A suggested roadmap provides a structured approach to the enabling actions and timing under each initiative, serving as a critical tool for guiding the execution of strategic initiatives across short, medium, and long-term horizons.

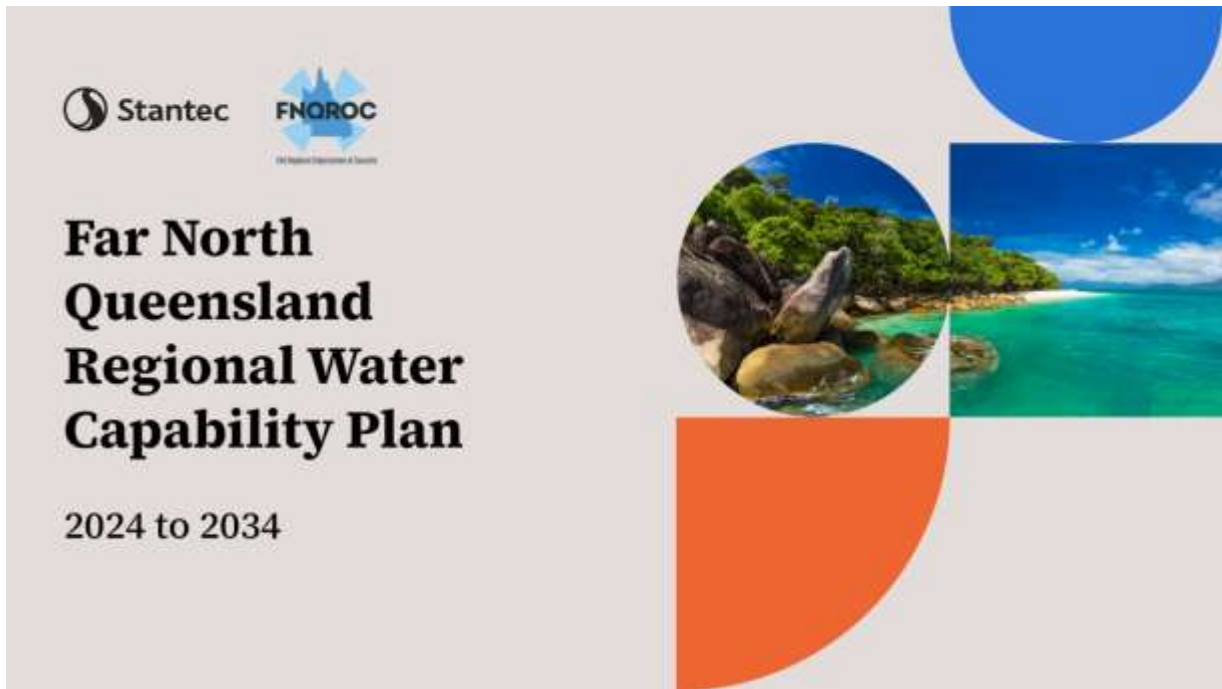


Figure 6 FNQ Regional Water Capability Plan

Operational

The FNQ Water Alliance has been active as a key committee of the FNQROC since 2011 and actively participated in the Queensland Water Alliance Program (QWRAP) since 2012. QWRAP is a partnership between Queensland Government, Queensland Water and local councils deliver sustainable, safe, secure, and reliable urban water and sewerage services to regional and remote communities.

The Regional Water Capability Plan provided the impetus for the FNQ Water Alliance to formalise coordinator funding via QWRAP for the 2024-25 financial year and beyond.

The FNQ Water Alliance met four times in 2024-25 in Cairns. These meetings are attended by councils, QLD Water, QLD Health, the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers and LGAQ.

Biosolids

Biosolids are treated sewage sludges and are the major by-product of the wastewater treatment process. They have a high nutrient value and can condition soil, improving its structure and water retention qualities. Biosolids are currently beneficial reused across our region under a collective procurement arrangement which has been in place since 2015 but the lack of suitable contractors, proposed price increases and increasing regulatory uncertainty have provided the impetus to reconsider the way Councils deal with biosolids. Whilst preliminary enquiries have been made into emerging technologies and the use of biosolids, biosolids are not currently considered suited to either traditional organics processing or thermal processing due to uncertainty in changing regulations and end-markets.

In the short term, FNQROC has been busy assisting the six participating Councils with negotiating the rates and terms and conditions of a new contract with the current contractor. Longer-term, there is a risk that changes to the End of Waste Code may impact the suitability of biosolids for beneficial reuse. This is a risk to the entire water industry nationwide and we are working to stay up to date with the outcomes of studies by several large water utilities and other potential disposal options.



Figure 7 Beneficial Reuse of Biosolids

Drinking Water Quality Management Plan Audits

We released a Request for Quote for a suitable contractor to undertake Regional Drinking Water Quality Management Plan (DWQMP) Audits on behalf of ten member Councils in

2024-25. Drinking water providers are required to prepare a DWQMP under the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008, and these plans must be audited every four years. It makes sense to undertake these audits using a collective procurement arrangement to increase efficiency and potentially benefit from economies of scale. The appointment of a single contractor also provided the opportunity for the contractor to identify key themes, which they then shared with the Water Regulator at a recent regional workshop.

Natural Asset Management and Sustainability Coordinator

The natural asset management and sustainability role represents the interests of the FNQROC across the environmental and natural resources space including biosecurity (pests and weeds); water quality; the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics World Heritage Areas; landscape repair & restoration; biodiversity conservation/planning, nature-based tourism and climate change actions relating directly to the portfolio.

The role facilitates the Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee (NAMAC), the Animal Management Technical Committee (AMTC) and the Regional Mountain Bike Strategy Steering (MTBSC) Committee, which bring officers of member councils together with state agencies and external partners to progress shared regional goals and initiatives.

The regional interests of the FNQROC are also represented through participation and support for councils in a wide range of local, regional, State and national advisory groups and committees. The role also incorporates spatial planning program communications using GIS across the other technical portfolios of FNQROC.

Alongside the NAMAC AMTC, and the MTBSC, the role works to deliver the [FNQROC Regional Natural Asset Strategy, FNQROC Regional Animal Management Strategy, and the Tropical North Queensland Regional Mountain Bike Strategy](#).

Natural Asset Management Technical Committee

The Natural Asset Management Advisory Committee (NAMAC) meets on a quarterly basis. The primary legislative driver of the committee is the Queensland *Biosecurity Act 2014* in addition to the Community and Environment sections of Local Laws, but elements of the Queensland *Nature Conservation Act*, *Vegetation Management Act* Commonwealth *Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act* and others also define the roles and responsibilities of councils the role supports.

The NAMAC comprises representatives from member Councils, Terrain NRM, Cape York NRM, Gulf Savannah NRM, Wet Tropics Healthy Waterways and Biosecurity Queensland (QDPI).

Animal Management Technical Committee

The Animal Management Technical Committee (AMTC) meets quarterly. It brings together animal management/local laws officers and managers from across the region with Queensland Health (Tropical Health Unit), RSPCA and AMRRIC to partner on regional shared issues and programs.

The committee's work supports councils in executing their responsibilities and services under the Animal Management (Dogs & Cats) Act 2008, Animal Care and Protection Act 2001, Biosecurity Act 2014 and the Local Government Act 2009.

Regional Mountain Bike Strategy Steering Committee

The Regional Mountain Bike Strategy Steering Committee (MTBSC) meets quarterly to guide the delivery of the Tropical North Queensland Regional Mountain Bike Strategy.

The Strategy guides the regional vision of Tropical North Queensland as a sustainable world-class mountain biking destination for our local communities and visitors alike. To deliver the vision, the region needs to grow its current trail offerings and modernise their management to remain competitive on the world stage and diversify our regional economies with a truly unique destination mountain bike experience. The strategy received the Outdoors Queensland Local Government Achievement Award 2024.

After collating the regional infrastructure funding needs for mountain bike trails to inform FNQROC's regional advocacy the steering committee are currently focusing on sustainable trail maintenance models and refining data sets and mapping to support trail expansion projects. In addition, a regional adventure trail working group will be established in the second half of 2025 to assist to formalise and promote the regions multi-day and adventure tourism credentials.

Following on from the inaugural event in 2024 FNQROC teamed up with Outdoors Queensland and Blue Sky Trails in May 2025 to deliver the Queensland Mountain Bike Forum during Crankworx Cairns 2025.

Land Protection Fund and State Oversight Group

The NAMAC is one of Queensland's 12 regional subcommittees that develop priorities and guide the delivery of the Land Protection Fund Co-investment model (formerly referred to as precept payments). FNQROC represents our regional sub-committee at the State Oversight Group (SOG).

The primary role of the SOG is to assist in developing and determining investment of the Land Protection Fund in biosecurity research state-wide. Local governments contribute around \$2.2m annually into the fund, which compliments the direct State investment of approx. \$4m. Overall, the FNQROC sub-committee councils (excluding Croydon and Etheridge, which lie in the NWROC grouping) contribute just over \$250,000 to the fund annually, so it is of crucial importance that we collaborate to ensure councils and

communities are receiving value for money via targeted and required R&D. FNQROC will be participating in the planned review of the Land Protection Fund and Contribution Methodology in the second half of 2025.

Informed by two regional workshops focusing on cat management and aquatic biosecurity the NAMAC and the AMTC will be partnering to seek funding from the fund to research the impacts and management options for feral and peri-urban cats and improving our response and readiness to aquatic invasive plants and animals.

Disaster preparedness for natural assets

FNQROC has continued the collaboration with Terrain NRM and other regional partners in the delivery of new tools and approaches to managing the risk to natural assets during natural disasters and response. In October 2024 a scenario planning exercise convened by FNQROC's natural assets and climate resilience coordinator provided councils natural assets and animal management teams with an opportunity to test their systems and response which are activated in natural disasters. A follow up exercise will be undertaken in the latter half of 2025.

GBR and Water Quality Improvement

FNQROC and member councils continue to support the delivery of the Wet Tropics Waterways Partnership and [Report Card](#). FNQROC is a member of the Partnership Group as well as the Technical Working Group, which provides advice on the interpretation and messaging behind the report card as managing and developing the indicators and metrics the annual report is based on. FNQROC and the Wet Tropics Waterways team are currently working with the whole of GBR Strategic Technical Working Group to undertake a full review of an aquatic weeds.

Regional Waste Management Plan Coordinator

Strategic Progress

Following the endorsement of the FNQROC Regional Waste Management Plan (RWMP) by the FNQROC Board in June 2023, several key milestones were achieved:

- Appointment of a Regional Waste Management Plan (RWMP) Coordinator in September 2024.
- Continuation of the RWMP Technical Committee, with representatives from all 11 member councils, agreeing to meet quarterly.
- Adoption by the FNQROC Board of a governance framework whereby the RWMP Coordinator, in consultation with the RWMP Technical Committee, facilitates implementation of RWMP across member councils.
- Endorsement of the RWMP 1–3 Year Implementation Plan by the FNQROC Board in March 2025.



Figure 8 Implementation Workshop

Operational Progress

In February 2025, the RWMP Coordinator facilitated an Implementation Workshop to develop a detailed 1–3-year action plan. The workshop delivered consensus on seven priority actions:

- Development of a Regional Waste Education and Engagement Plan.
- Enhancement of regional data management capacity.
- Advancement of regional resource recovery initiatives.
- Strengthening of waste infrastructure support.
- Improvement of kerbside recycling programs.
- Expansion of organic resource recovery efforts.
- Exploration of energy-from-waste solutions for residual waste.

The Regional Waste Management Technical Committee convened three times during 2023–24, with meetings held both online and in Cairns.

Representation at External Events

FNQROC actively represented the region at key industry forums, including:

- The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia (WMRR) at the 2024 Australian Resource Recovery Conference in Adelaide.
- The Local Authority Waste Management Action Committee (LAWMAC) at its 2024–25 quarterly meeting in Townsville, where members explored advancements in waste management and resource recovery, reinforcing the region’s commitment to innovative and sustainable solutions.

Procurement Coordinator

The Procurement Coordinator role has been in place since 2012 and is funded by the contributions of member Councils made on the following basis:

Cairns, Cassowary, Cook, Douglas, Mareeba and Tablelands contribute \$25,000 annually; this amount is less than previously identified savings per Council.

The remaining Councils contribute 20% of savings made through their involvement in FNQROC procurement activities.

The FNQROC mandate for procurement is:

- Where there exists a limited supply for a product and/or service.
- Where member Councils are competing against each other for the same goods and/or services.
- Where products or services could be scheduled to provide an improved service delivery.
- Where member Councils would benefit from the sharing of knowledge and collaboration.

Collective procurement arrangements enable participating member Councils to achieve economies of scale on pricing and eliminate risk for individual Councils competing against one another for limited supplier resources. They often also involve a commitment from the supplier to ensure works are completed to agreed timeframes. Whilst there are several Councils involved in the collective procurement arrangements, each Council forms a contract with the supplier and the delivery of the contract is administered by FNQROC.

The FNQROC Contract Process Guide – Regional Procurement Contracts can be accessed via the [Regional Procurement Portal](#) .

Regional Procurement Arrangements

Regional Bitumen Reseal

Councils undertake an annual bitumen reseal program to maintain their road network to a suitable standard. This process is required to prevent moisture from penetrating through deteriorated bitumen seals into the underlying pavement, which causes damage such as rutting and potholes.

The annual Bitumen Reseal Program was successfully delivered again this year with four (4) member councils participating. The program involved sealing over xx m² of road, which required approximately xx liters of bitumen and total contract value was \$xx m.



Figure 9 Bitumen Resealing by fgf Bitumen Crew

The 2025/26 Bitumen Reseal Program is expected to cover approximately 1 million m² of road and will require over 1.2 million litres of bitumen, and estimated contract value is \$6.3m¹. The program will be delivered across four (4) FNQROC member councils' shires.

Additionally, Councils involved in this arrangement benefit from appointing a qualified and experienced Program Coordinator to oversee the program's delivery.

Regional Water Chemicals – Supply & Delivery

The contracts for the supply and delivery of Sodium Hypochlorite and Liquid Aluminum, the most used chemicals by both Water and Wastewater areas of councils, have been made under a collective procurement arrangement since 2012. The contracts for 2022/23 and beyond see arrangements that extend to the supply of Citric Acid, Aluminum Chloralhydrate and Liquid Sodium Hydroxide.



Figure 10 Open day at Coogee Chemicals Depot

Eleven member councils continue to participate in this arrangement, which not only continues to offer good value for money but also the added benefit of centralised contracts management provided by FNQROC. In addition to this, FNQROC facilitates supplier and Council collaboration in areas including improving processes for the supply and use of particular water chemicals.

Collectively, councils used approximately 2.8 million litres of Sodium Hypochlorite, costing \$2.45 million, and over 944,000 litres of Liquid Alum, costing \$684,000, this year.

¹ Regional Bitumen Reseal Contract is schedule of rates contract and is subject to change as the sum of the products ascertained by multiplying the rates by the corresponding quantities in the price schedule.

Collection & Disposal of Ferrous Metal & Used Lead Acid Batteries (ULABs)

This arrangement has been in place since 2015, involving eleven member councils. The arrangement intends that ferrous metal and ULAB (predominantly car battery) stockpiles are managed at acceptable levels and that Councils receive a fair and certain value for the materials.

The contracts are based on a supplier-led collection schedule with pricing linked to metal market fluctuations. In the financial year 2024/25, over 12,131 tonnes of ferrous metal, valued at \$962,000, and over 282 tonnes of ULABs valued at \$140,000, were collected across the region. Additionally, just over 193 tonnes of non-ferrous metal, valued at \$364,623, were collected.

By working with all stakeholders, FNQROC strives for continuous improvement in all processes to add maximum value for participating Councils.



Figure 11 stockpile of metal at Cassowary Coast Regional Council, South Mission Beach Waste Management Facility

Removal and Beneficial Reuse of Biosolids

Biosolids are treated sewerage sludge and the major by-product of the wastewater treatment process. They can be beneficially used for several purposes when treated and managed appropriately.

Many Council member Wastewater treatment plants produce biosolids that currently meet the stabilisation criteria required for beneficial reuse.



Figure 12 Arkwood spreading nutrient rich biosolids onto farmland

The collective arrangement focuses on streamlined pricing and ensuring consistent contract terms are provided across the region to achieve efficiency benefits to suppliers and Councils alike. Six (6) member councils participated in this arrangement, below is a summary of collection volumes in the last two (2) financial years.

	2023/24	2024/25
Number of Councils	6	6
Annual Quantity (t)	35,251	36,554*
Amount (\$)	3,151,595	4,661,082*

* 2024/25 figures are based on actual collection data for 10 months, further 2 months are extrapolated.

Regional Sewer Relining



Figure 13 Works on sewers at night are sometimes required for high-flow sewer to minimise disruption to residents.

Councils undertake annual in-situ sewer relining works to maintain their sewer reticulation network. For the 5th year running, participating councils came together to deliver their programs under a collective procurement arrangement established by FNQROC.

The regional collaboration also means that we now have a much better understanding of our relining activities and the challenges faced in maintaining the sewer network. In addition, as a region, we now have some consistent data and are better placed to leverage emerging technologies and investment.

Regional Contract & Procurement Documentation

All FNQROC member councils continue to have access to a comprehensive suite of regionally consistent procurement and contract documents. The suites provide council officers with easy access to a range of documents that balance protection with the need for commerciality and practicality. The documents are intended to be fair and reasonable, in simple plain English and easy to understand.

The most recent Regional Contract and Procurement Document suite update included branded documents for twelve (12) member councils of FNQROC. The documents can be located on the FNQROC website.

Procurement and Contract Management Training

Two (2) training workshops were delivered by Ochre Legal across the region in 2025. The workshops focused on Construction Contract Management and Goods & Services Procurement using the FNQROC /Ochre Legal suite of documents.

Regional Procurement Advisory Committee

The Regional Procurement Advisory Committee operate under the consistent objective of all FNQ Advisory Committees:

- Building & Maintaining Partnerships
- Sharing Information
- Identifying and/or facilitating training and skill development
- Identifying emerging and future issues and opportunities
- Advising FNQROC Board on policy and procedures
- Engaging external parties such as LGAQ, Local Buy, State & Federal Government, Suppliers etc.

This year FNQROC Procurement has been busy supporting both our member councils and various partners in raising knowledge and understanding of both procurement and contracts by delivering information sessions.

Financial Statements

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