



**2026**

# **STATE DELEGATION BRIEF**

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

# FOREWORD

**United Councils, Connected Communities, Stronger Region.**

## 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 294,194 and gross regional product (GRP) is \$19.84 billion.

FNQROC is charting a collaborative and future focused path with member councils working together to address the regions most pressing long-term challenges and opportunities.

As a region, we are asking for equality not uniformity. Equality doesn't mean receiving exactly the same as metropolitan areas; it means receiving what is fair. It means having a reasonable chance of getting home safely at the end of each day. It means being able to put fresh food on our tables and getting our products to market. It means accessing employment, and receiving timely, reliable health care and education, the basic building blocks of a decent life.

Our population may be smaller, but the value of our lives is not. The contribution regional and remote communities make to Australia's economy, food security, cultural identity and social fabric is profound. Yet we continue to carry the burden of distance, isolation and inadequate infrastructure - challenges that would be unthinkable in metropolitan areas.

**We are simply asking for fairness.**

**For recognition.**

**And for the opportunity to thrive on equal footing.**

By investing in future infrastructure and economic development needs now, the FNQROC region can strengthen Australia's resilience, reducing the long-term burden of natural disasters and bolstering national food security. With the national debt rising, our contribution must be strategic investments that deliver enduring economic, social and security dividends - not just short term infrastructure gains.

# FNQ at a glance

**\$19.84B**  
**GRP**  
(JUNE 2024)



INCREASE OF  
**2.9%**  
ON PREVIOUS YEAR

**26,654**  
LOCAL BUSINESSES

## EXPORTS:



**\$3B**  
AGRICULTURE  
(2023/24)



**\$6.1B**  
TOURISM SALES  
(2023/24)



**\$674M**  
MINING



**\$1.9B**  
MANUFACTURING

**POPULATION**  
**294,194**



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

**41**

MEDIAN AGE

**11.2%**

FIRST NATIONS  
POPULATION

# FNQ REGIONAL PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE



**Regional and Remote Special Economic Zone** - support promotion and further development.

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That the Queensland Government provide funding to commence the Far North Queensland **Regional Growth Strategy** to operationalise the Draft FNQ Regional Plan 2025 and strengthen the effectiveness of future infrastructure, housing and economic investment.

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**Disaster Recovery** update

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**Water and waste water investment**

1. To address the increasing pressures on trunk infrastructure and the significant renewal needs across water and wastewater reticulation systems, we propose the establishment of an annual renewal and upgrade funding program modelled on successful programs such as Works for Queensland (W4QLD) and the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS). A consistent, long-term funding stream is essential to support population growth in our regions and ensure the sustainable, safe and efficient management of water and wastewater services.
  2. We also request that the State makes funding available for treatment plants, pump stations and pipe networks with reduced co-payments, scaled according to the size and financial capacity of councils; reflecting the effective approach used in the early 2000s. This will ensure equitable access to essential infrastructure funding and support councils that simply cannot meet high co-contribution requirements.
- 



**Transport priorities**

1. Clarify the 'triggers' required to establish and support public transport services in regional communities.
  2. Fund the implementation of the Palmerston Highway Upgrade Strategy.
  3. Review Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access study, and
  4. Allocate budget funding to identify and assess existing or alternative access routes between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands to future proof this corridor.
  5. Regular updates on the Gilbert River Bridge developing business case and a commitment to fund a 2-lane replacement bridge that delivers safer, more reliable and flood resilient access.
  6. That the State Government prioritise the Laura River Crossing under Stage 3 of the Cape York Regional Package.
  7. TMR to actively work with local governments in the region to review and update the Regional Road Investment Strategy to guide future transport investment.
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**Marine Development**

1. \$4 million to complete a Masterplan and Detailed Business Case for the Port of Mourilyan Industrial Development Area.
2. A \$300,000 investment is sought to undertake a feasibility study for the Port Douglas Waterfront South Precinct.



### Visitor levy

1. Establish a Visitor Levy Advisory Group through which interested councils can work collaboratively with the State to determine a pathway forward.
2. Amend section 94 of the Local Government Act to provide local Governments with the ability to implement a visitor levy under an opt-in model.



### Closing the gap on service delivery

That First Nations local governments and communities that are predominately First Nations are appropriately resourced and empowered as genuine partners in the decision making, planning and coordination of Closing the Gap initiatives. Providing dedicated resources to First Nations councils will strengthen their capacity for local decision making, service integration and data led community planning, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.



### Government Employee home ownership

The Queensland Government establish a dedicated Rural and Remote Home Ownership Assistance Scheme (RHOAS) for Queensland State Government employees, to enable long term settlement, workforce stability and stronger regional communities.



### Health care outside major centres

1. That the Queensland government identifies funding for the expansion and refurbishment of Mareeba Hospital.
2. That the Queensland Government reviews the upgrade needs and invests in strengthening primary health care capacity across rural and remote communities such as Georgetown, Croydon, and Chillagoe by funding expanded clinical space, additional medical and nursing staff, consistent opening hours, and infrastructure that enables visiting specialists and emergency care to be delivered safely and reliably.
3. Seek transparency in project costing, assurance that budget pressures will not reduce service scope, and a commitment to keep council informed through scheduled updates on planning, design and construction of health facilities and services.



### Fair rating reform

That the Queensland Government introduce legislative reforms to allow councils to levy rates on State owned properties, ensuring fair cost sharing for the local services these properties rely on.



### Dept of Housing – Management of properties and impact on local government resources

How can we work collaboratively with the Department of Housing (DOH) to manage the impact of these properties on tenants and the surrounding community, and improve the perception of DOH properties and their tenants?



### Education in remote communities

The Queensland Government is urged to invest in innovative, place-based education delivery models that allow children to remain in their communities while accessing high quality secondary schooling.



### Waste generated in State and National Parks

1. FNQROC seeks the Queensland State Government to assume all associated waste management costs generated within the Queensland National Parks networks, including waste generated by Queensland Parks and Wildlife service works, service staff and tourist visitors, or
2. Where a significant amount of waste is being driven by National/State Parks and their visitors, that the State government fund rural or remote councils 100% the cost of small scale innovative initiatives to manage waste, or
3. Implement a waste environmental levy on visitors to State and National Parks.



# REGIONAL AND REMOTE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE (R&R SEZ)

## ASK

**Support the promotion and further development of the Regional and Remote Special Economic Zone.**

The proposed Regional and Remote Special Economic Zone (R&R SEZ) provides Queensland with a strategic, place-based mechanism to address long standing demographic, service delivery and economic challenges facing regional, remote and very remote communities.

By targeting incentives to areas defined under the ABS Remoteness Area Classifications, the R&R SEZ would help reverse population decline, reduce reliance on FIFO/DIDO workforces, and improve equity in access to healthcare, education, childcare, housing and digital connectivity.



State leadership in co-designing incentive 'packages' on a sliding scale by remoteness would allow Queensland to tailor response to local conditions, while leveraging Commonwealth measures such as tax offsets, HECS-HELP write-offs, migration programs and finance guarantees to maximise impact.

The Queensland Government can participate through a targeted suite of state led levers aligned with federal incentives. These include (and, in some cases, are already in play) transfer duty concessions for key workers and build to rent housing, payroll tax relief for priority industries, capped regional airfares, insurance stamp duty relief, expanded vocational educational training, apprenticeship and placement pathways linked directly to regional jobs.

For the Queensland Government, the benefits are substantial and enduring. The R&R SEZ would stimulate private sector investment, grow regional economies and populations, and strengthen councils' financial sustainability, leading to more efficient service delivery and reduced long term fiscal pressure. It would support housing and workforce objectives. By championing and co-designing the R&R SEZ, the State can demonstrate leadership in balanced growth, resilience and equity, delivering tangible economic, social and strategic returns for Queensland as a whole.



# COMMITMENT TO COMMENCE REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

## ASK

**That the Queensland Government provide funding to commence the Far North Queensland Regional Growth Strategy to operationalise the Draft FNQ Regional Plan 2025 and strengthen the effectiveness of future infrastructure, housing and economic investment.**

The Draft FNQ Regional Plan 2025 sets a strong long term vision for the region, however Far North Queensland's scale, diversity and risk profile require an additional layer of work to translate this vision into prioritised investable actions.

As the Queensland Government progresses the Cape York Regional Plan and the Gulf Regional Plan, it is essential that these plans are not developed in isolation. Their future land use, economic development, housing, infrastructure and natural hazard considerations will have direct and cascading relationships with the FNQ region – particularly around transport corridors, workforce movements, freight supply chains, energy infrastructure, water security and service delivery to remote and Indigenous communities.

A Regional Growth Strategy is crucial for informed government decision making – where will our future growth be, what infrastructure is needed to enable it? It represents a modest upfront investment that will deliver long-term savings, stronger outcomes and greater certainty for both the Queensland Government and the Far North Queensland community.

A Regional Growth Strategy will ensure:

- Future growth areas are identified,
- Growth locations are linked to specific enabling infrastructure triggers (transport, utilities, social infrastructure), so investment is coordinated rather than fragmented or reactive,
- Housing, workforce and employment growth is coordinated and aligned,
- A risk-based approach to growth which factors in climate, disaster and insurance risks into growth decisions,
- A clear basis to sequence and prioritise funding, and
- A strong, evidence-based foundation for future business cases and funding submissions.



# UPDATE ON DISASTER RECOVERY

CONVERSATION



# FUNDING FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS AND NETWORKS

## ASK

- 1. To address the increasing pressures on trunk infrastructure and the significant renewal needs across water and wastewater reticulation systems, we propose the establishment of an annual renewal and upgrade funding program modelled on successful programs such as Works for Queensland (W4QLD) and the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS). A consistent, long term funding stream is essential to support population growth in our regions and ensure the sustainable, safe and efficient management of water and wastewater services.**
- 2. We also request that the State makes funding available for treatment plants, pump stations and pipe networks with reduced co-payments, scaled according to the size and financial capacity of councils; reflecting the effective approach used in the early 2000s. This will ensure equitable access to essential infrastructure funding and support councils that simply cannot meet high matching requirements.**

### We know this:

- Rapid population growth is placing additional pressure on already stretched water and wastewater systems. A reliable annual funding program would support councils to plan and deliver trunk infrastructure that meets both current and future demand.
- The impending Renewal Cliff is getting bigger. Many councils face a significant backlog of renewals, particularly in water and wastewater networks. A dedicated funding program would enable systematic, planned upgrades, reducing the risk of infrastructure failures and ensuring continuity of essential services.
- Renewing and upgrading water and wastewater infrastructure is vital to the long term sustainability and resilience of regional communities. Ongoing, dependable funding will ensure networks can withstand environmental pressures and continue to deliver safe, reliable services.

Councils are struggling to maintain and replace aging water and wastewater treatment plants and associated networks. Current estimates indicate that more than \$1.2 billion will be required over the next 10 years to address critical water and wastewater asset needs. While limited funding is available, it is highly competitive and typically requires matched contributions. Many FNQROC councils cannot afford to meet these co-funding requirements, nor do they have the resources to prepare competitive applications.

Compounding this challenge, grants for networks and pipe upgrades are exceedingly scarce. As a result, councils are facing escalating financial distress as ageing infrastructure reaches the end of its useful life with frequent breaks and service disruptions. The problem will only intensify, and the scale of renewal now exceeds what communities can reasonably fund.



# TRANSPORT PRIORITIES

## ENABLING PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND

**ASK** Clarify the 'triggers' required to establish and support public transport services in regional communities.

Public transport remains a long standing challenge for communities across our region. Within the Draft FNQ Regional plan the principles underpinning an Urban Footprint explicitly include access to public transport, and Major Regional Activity Centres as *"focal points within the public transport network and for sub-regional employment as well as the delivery of sub-regional services."*

Despite this, the region continues to lack viable and reliable public transport options. We seek clarity from the State on what specific land use, demographic, economic or service-level triggers must be satisfied to enable the establishment of public transport services in our regional communities. This guidance is important to plan and enable equitable access to essential services, employment and education.

## PALMERSTON HIGHWAY

**ASK** Fund the implementation of the Palmerston Highway Upgrade Strategy.

The Palmerston Range is the only B-double route connecting the coast with the Tablelands, Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York Peninsula. Its reliability and resilience are essential for industry, freight, tourism and supply chains. Implementation of the upgrade strategy is critical to maintaining resilience, safety and long-term serviceability.

Investment in this corridor will strengthen regional connectivity, safeguard freight and supply chains, and improve resilience during natural disasters. We request that the State Government prioritise funding to fully implement the Palmerston Highway Upgrade Strategy.

## KURANDA RANGE ROAD

**ASK** a. Review Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access study, and  
b. Allocate budget funding to identify and assess existing or alternative access routes between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands to future proof this corridor.

The release of the Draft FNQ Regional Plan 2025 reinforces the need to revisit and update the Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Study. The study itself recommended review once the updated Regional Plan was released. Given the region's population growth, economic expansion and increasing freight and commuter pressures, it is critical that future access options are assessed with the preferred option progressed. Long term solutions require investment now to ensure growth is not stifled, and connectivity is safe, reliable and resilient between Cairns, the Northern Tablelands and the broader Cape York Peninsula and Gulf of Carpentaria.

# IMPROVING SAFETY AND FLOOD RESILIENCE FOR THE GULF OF CARPENTARIA AND CAPE YORK PENINSULA

**ASK** Regular updates on the Gilbert River Bridge developing business case and a commitment to fund a 2-lane replacement bridge that delivers safer, more reliable and flood resilient access.

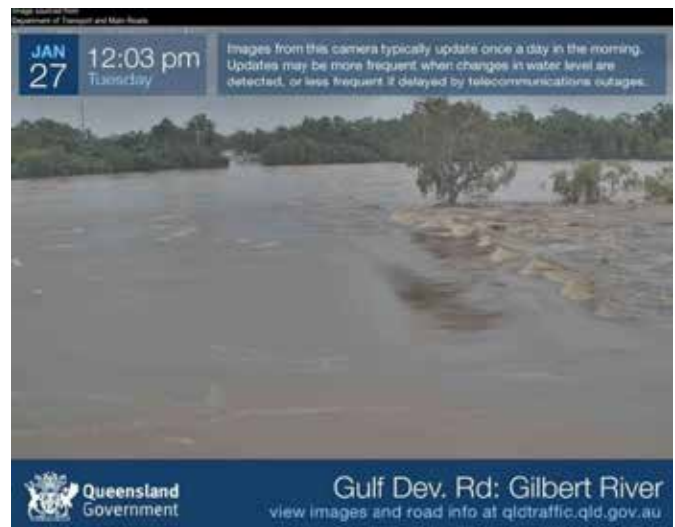
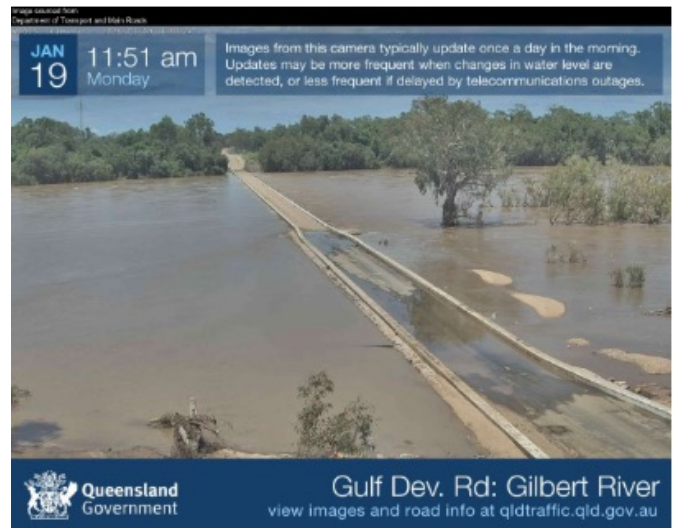
## ● GILBERT RIVER BRIDGE

The Gulf Developmental Road forms part of the Savannah Way (National Tourist Route 1). Beginning at the intersection of the Kennedy Developmental Road and extending through to Normanton, the route spans 396.27km and services as a vital east-west freight and tourism corridor linking the Gulf of Carpentaria with both Cairns and Townsville.

This existing low-level, single lane (3.3 meter) bridge is plagued by significant safety and flooding issues. The approaches on both sides are via crests preventing drivers from seeing the bridge leaving little time to brake before entering the narrow crossing. This creates a highly dangerous situation, particularly when 53.5 metre road trains and caravanners converge in limited visibility conditions.

Traffic volumes have increased slightly since 2017 but the composition of traffic has shifted considerably. Commercial vehicles now account for 40% of all movements, nearly double the proportion from seven years ago. There has also been a 25% increase in short vehicles towing, likely reflecting the continued growth in caravan tourism.

Beyond safety concerns, flooding remains a major constraint on industry and community access. The Gilbert River Bridge is a low-level single lane crossing with steep crests at either end, which becomes impassable during the wet season. When this occurs, freight trucks cannot deliver essential supplies, leaving communities in and between Georgetown, Croydon, Normanton and Burketown without reliable access to food and goods. The resulting disruption also increases government expenditure, as supplies must be flown into Gulf communities. There is no viable alternative road route.



## Laura River Crossing

**ASK** That the State Government prioritise the Laura River Crossing under Stage 3 of the Cape York Regional Package.

Within Cook Shire, the Laura River crossing remains one of the most critical access constraints on Cape York Peninsula. We thank the State Government for committing \$60 million under Stage 3 of the Cape York Regional Package (CYRP), we understand no Federal funding has been allocated to date and we will continue our advocacy for this. Given the strategic and social importance of Cape York's transport network, it is essential that investment prioritises the Laura River crossing upgrade.

As at 20 January 2026, the Laura River Crossing is under more than 5 metres of water, cutting off all road access to Cape York. These prolonged and recurrent flood events isolate nearly 20,000<sup>1</sup> people across the nine Indigenous local government areas, Weipa Town Authority and Cook Shire (excluding Cooktown). For these communities, the Peninsula Developmental Road is not just a transport corridor, it is their primary and often only supply route.

Laura is a critical access route for essential services and produce to the entire Cape York Peninsula, servicing nine Indigenous councils, Weipa and the iconic tourism destination of Pajinka (the Tip). Demand on this route continues to grow.

Between 2019 and 2024, Annual Average Daily Traffic to and from Laura<sup>2</sup> increased by 61%. Within this growth, heavy vehicle movements rose by 83%, reflecting growing freight, construction and service industries. The route has also seen a 148% increase in short vehicles with a trailer; presumably caravans or camping trailers, or boats and ATVs etc; which is unsurprising given the ongoing investment in the Peninsula Developmental Road and the expanding drive tourism economy.



Source: Google Maps, Lucas Engelhardt Sept 2025

1 <https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/profiles/qrp/resident/pdf/0083GG08GEATB8K626D7WL5SSCG46C02DSZ9EPMB6NG30I6RL2117CGSD07MS0AU7A3QY7I8UUBL4CJDEI5D0GVQH7W7EW5DXKUMPP0FWCMB006R7C0G55KPIZYC4NMR/qld-regional-profiles-resident#view=fit&pagemode=bookmarks>  
2 <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/UCL315024>  
<https://profile.id.com.au/fnqroc/population-estimate?WebID=130>  
<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/315011403>  
2 <https://www.data.qld.gov.au/dataset/road-location-and-traffic-data>

### **ASK TMR to actively work with local governments in the region to review and update the Regional Road Investment Strategy to guide future transport investment.**

Far North Queensland's distinct wet season and exposure to extreme weather events regularly impacts road accessibility and network resilience. Limited redundancy, inconsistent standards and deteriorating road conditions continue to constrain the region's economic potential and place communities at risk.

Our network does not function in isolation of who owns the asset and the establishment of the Regional Roads and Transport Group understood this ethos. This ethos is still written today<sup>3</sup> *"Each RRTG includes elected representatives from local governments and the local TMR District Director."*

Together, they:

- Set the Strategic Direction for their region
- Decide on regional infrastructure priorities
- Work across local and stated-controlled transport assets.

*.....Technical committees make recommendations to the RRTGs to make informed decisions.*

Our key challenges aren't a surprise:

- a. Geography and climate
- b. Investment across jurisdictional boundaries
- c. Network safety
- d. Network efficiency and reliability
- e. Competing needs of road users
- f. Population growth and development
- g. Access to affordable transport options.

Opportunities identified in the Draft FNQ Regional Plan 2025 includes agricultural, tourism (\$951mil annual road use value per year<sup>4</sup>), mining, emerging industries and improved Indigenous outcomes cannot be realised without a resilient, reliable transport network.

We acknowledge that upgrading every road across the region is neither feasible nor affordable. Investment must instead be strategic and targeted toward upgrades that deliver:

- Priority upgrades with the highest short, medium and long term returns
- Targeted, evidence-based investment across more than 6,000km of critical State and local roads
- Unlock economic potential
- Improve safety and access for regional communities.

*(Noting that the RRIS Roadmap currently excludes the four range roads).*

In 2019, an estimated \$531mil was required to meet immediate priority route deficiencies - of this, approximately \$461mil was on State controlled roads. With limited funding, continued growth and escalating natural hazard impacts, the need for an updated RRIS to focus our limited resources is now more important than ever.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/about-us/corporate-information/publications/rta-annual-progress-report/about-the-roads-and-transport-alliance>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.fnqroc.qld.gov.au/files/media/original/005/20f/006/8e4/N448\\_FNQROC\\_Regional-Roads-Investment-Strategy\\_13Aug2021-FINAL-300dpi.pdf](https://www.fnqroc.qld.gov.au/files/media/original/005/20f/006/8e4/N448_FNQROC_Regional-Roads-Investment-Strategy_13Aug2021-FINAL-300dpi.pdf)



## MASTERPLAN AND DETAILED BUSINESS CASE FOR THE PORT OF MOURILYAN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA

### ASK

#### **\$4 million to complete a Masterplan and Detailed Business Case for the Port of Mourilyan Industrial Development Area.**

Cassowary Coast has long been an agricultural powerhouse, particularly in sugar cane and banana production. In recent times however, the region has faced increasing economic volatility driven by natural disasters and commodity price fluctuations.

Recognising the need to build a more resilient and diversified economy, the Cassowary Coast Regional Council developed the *Cassowary Coast Economic Development Strategy 2023 – 2033*, which sets out a vision for a strong, sustainable and prosperous future. Central to this vision is the strategic expansion of industrial activity around the Port of Mourilyan, a naturally deep-water harbour with projected trade growth and infrastructure expansion over the coming decades. Council has recently completed a Strategic Business Case for the proposed Port of Mourilyan Industrial Development Area, assessing the viability of establishing a 100 – 200 hectare industrial precinct with direct access to Mourilyan Harbour Road and close proximity to the North Coast Rail line.

This initiative seeks to catalyse economic diversification, strengthen supply chain resilience and unlock long term growth opportunities for both traditional and emerging industries.

The project aligns closely with Federal, State and Local Government priorities. Nationally, it supports major initiatives such as the *Future Made in Australia Plan*, the *Critical Minerals Strategy*, and the *Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Roadmap*. At the state level, it complements the *Queensland New Industry Development Strategy*, the *Bio futures Roadmap*, and the *Advanced Manufacturing Roadmap*. Locally, it is embedded within the Council's Economic Development Strategy, and is consistent with the Ports North 30-year Two-Port Master Plan for the Port of Mourilyan.

With the direct costs estimated at \$213.6 million, indirect costs of \$612.6 million, Gross Value Add (GVA) of \$151.3 million during construction, and an anticipated annual operational GVA of \$574.5 million, further investigation is strongly warranted. Completion of a Masterplan and Detailed Business Case is therefore recommended to refine the development pathway and investment proposition.



# FEASIBILITY STUDY AND BUSINESS CASE – PORT DOUGLAS WATERFRONT SOUTH PRECINCT

## ASK

**A \$300,000 investment is sought to undertake a feasibility study for the Port Douglas Waterfront South Precinct.**

The Port Douglas Waterfront South Precinct presents a significant opportunity to strengthen Far North Queensland's marine maintenance and repair operation capability and reinforce the region's role in the broader maritime supply chain. The precinct has the potential to directly complement the Cairns Marine Precinct which is operating beyond capacity with some key operators working 24 hours a day to meet demand.

Despite these efforts, capacity and capability constraints mean that work that could otherwise be completed locally is now being diverted to Townsville and Darwin. This results in the region losing not only economic activity but also critical trade skills and workforce development opportunities.

In addition to addressing these constraints, the Port Douglas Waterfront South Precinct provides an important opportunity to diversify the local economy. By reducing reliance on tourism and transient employment, the precinct could help stabilise the regional workforce and utilise the existing skillsets remaining in the community following the closure of the Mossman Mill. These transferable, trade-based capabilities, particularly from the agricultural sector, represent an underutilised asset that could be transitioned into marine maintenance, repair and operations.

The Port Douglas Waterfront South Precinct could therefore offer a strategic solution to retain maritime work within Far North Queensland, expand regional capability, and support a more resilient and diversified economic base in Douglas Shire.

The concept masterplan includes:

- Hardstand area of approximately 11,000m<sup>2</sup>
- 200 tonne travel lift for monohull and multihull vessels up to 30m long
- Fully contained water blast areas
- 4 refit sheds up to 30 m
- 4 workshop sheds

The proposed feasibility study will help determine:

- If this type of activity is viable
- Potential infrastructure requirements and costs
- The level of alignment (without competing) with the Cairns Marine Precinct



**CONCEPT MASTER PLAN**

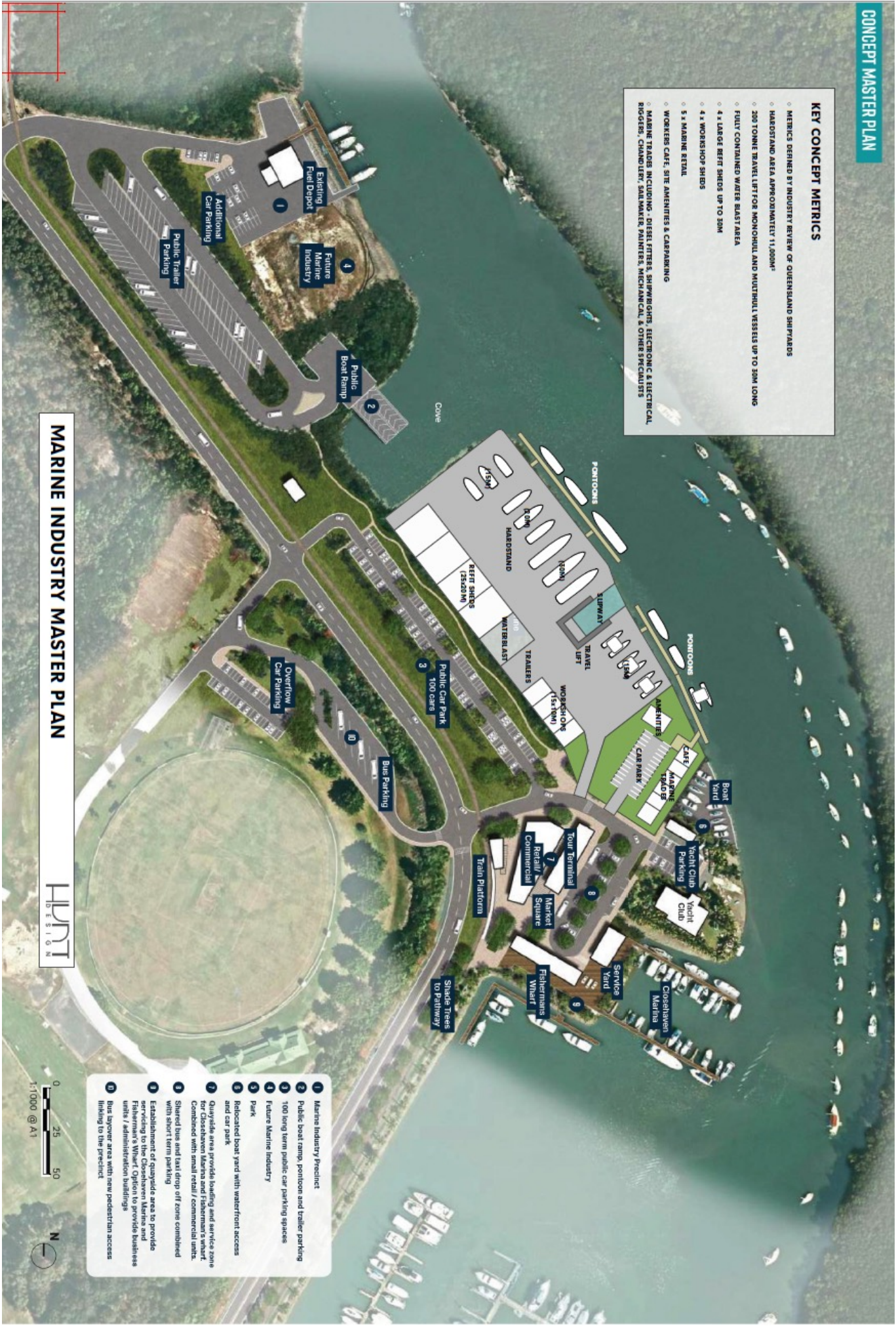
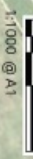
**KEY CONCEPT METRICS**

- METRICS DERIVED BY INDUSTRY REVIEW OF QUEENSLAND SHIPYARDS
- HARBOURLAND AREA APPROXIMATELY 11,000M<sup>2</sup>
- 200 TONNE TRAVEL LIFT FOR MONOHULL AND MULTIHULL VESSELS UP TO 30M LONG
- FULLY CONTAINED WATER BLAST AREA
- 4 x LARGE REEF SHEDS UP TO 30M
- 4 x WORKSHOP SHEDS
- 5 x MARINE RETAIL
- WORKERS CAFE, SITE AMENITIES & CARPARKING
- MARINE TRADES INCLUDING - DIESEL FITTERS, SHIPWRIGHTS, ELECTRONIC & ELECTRICAL, RIGGERS, CHANDLERY, SAILMAKERS, MAINTENANCE, MECHANICAL & OTHER SPECIALISTS

**MARINE INDUSTRY MASTER PLAN**



- 1 Marine Industry Precinct
- 2 Public boat ramp, pontoons and trailer parking
- 3 100 long term public car parking spaces
- 4 Future Marine Industry Park
- 5 Relocated boat yard with waterfront access and car park
- 6 Quayside area provide loading and service zone for Clovelhaven Marina and Fishermen's Wharf. Combined with small retail / commercial units with short term parking
- 7 Establishment of quayside area to provide servicing to the Clovelhaven Marina and Fishermen's Wharf. Option to provide business units / administration buildings
- 8 Bus layover area with new pedestrian access linking to the precinct





# VISITOR LEVY



## ASK

- a. Establish a Visitor Levy Advisory Group through which interested councils can work collaboratively with the State to determine a pathway forward.
- b. Amend section 94 of the Local Government Act to provide local Governments with the ability to implement a visitor levy under an opt-in model.

In 2000, only five countries and around 25 cities worldwide had an accommodation levy in place. Research by the Qld Regional Tourism Network shows that this has increased to 450 + cities across 102 Countries by the end of 2024.

Today, 82% of the top 45 visitor generating countries apply visitor levies on accommodation. These countries account for 86% of global tourism, meaning most visitors are familiar with such charges.

The rationale for introducing a visitor level typically includes:

- a. Tourists place considerable pressure on public assets such as roads, parks, water, wastewater, waste management and public amenities, but do not contribute to the rate base that funds their construction, maintenance and renewal. A visitor levy provides a fairer cost-sharing mechanism.
- b. A coordinated, whole-of-destination tourism advertising strategy is more effective than fragmented efforts. A levy provides a reliable and coordinated funding stream for whole of destination marketings, which benefits all operators and mitigates 'free-rider' challenges that occur when funding relies solely on voluntary contributions.

Work undertaken by Cairns Regional Council on behalf of Queensland local Governments, and presented to the 2022 Local Government Conference (where the motion received 85% support), was based on the following assumptions:

- A 2.5% levy applied to all stays in all 'prescribed accommodation', with councils able to include short-stay residential properties.
- The levy would be collected by the accommodation providers and remitted monthly to Council.
- Councils would have the power to enforce collection and compliance, supported by amendments to the Local Government Act, allowing fines for non-payment.
- Adoption of the levy would be optional, at each council's discretion.
- The levy would be implemented through normal council budget processes, consistent with other rates and charges.

Based on 2019 visitation data, the estimated levy revenue in 2026 would be:

Cairns	\$18.2M
Douglas	\$5.4M
Cassowary	\$0.6M
Cape/Cook	\$0.6M
Tablelands	\$0.1M

An opt-in visitor levy provides a fair, flexible and globally recognised mechanism for funding tourism related infrastructure and destination marketing. Legislative amendments to section 94 of the Local Government Act, supported by a State-led advisory group, will empower councils to reinvest in the visitor economy while safeguarding the financial sustainability of local communities.



# CONSULTATION ON CLOSING THE GAP SERVICE DELIVERY

## ASK

**That First Nations local governments and communities that are predominately First Nations are appropriately resourced and empowered as genuine partners in the decision making, planning and coordination of Closing the Gap initiatives. Providing dedicated resources to First Nations councils will strengthen their capacity for local decision making, service integration and data led community planning, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.**

The Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (released on the 7 February 2024)<sup>5</sup> found that slow progress against socio-economic targets is directly linked to government's failure to prioritise the Priority Reforms, particularly Priority Reform 1: "Formal partnerships and shared decision making".

Despite commitments to co-design, the report concluded that genuine shared decision making is not being realised in practice across most jurisdictions.



The key issues included:

- 1 Governments frequently seek community feedback on predetermined solutions rather than involving them in identifying priorities or co-designing programs.
- 2 First Nations communities continue to experience wasteful government expenditure on programs that are ineffective, duplicative, or poorly aligned to local needs. This stems from insufficient community involvement in prioritisation, program design and service coordination.
- 3 As the level of government closest to communities, First Nations local councils hold deep trust, cultural knowledge and operational understanding of local priorities. They are best positioned to facilitate coordination and drive improvement. However, their potential remains underutilised due to inadequate authority, inclusion and resourcing.
- 4 Local councils are often held accountable when liveability outcomes are not met, despite lacking the resourcing or decision-making power to influence many of the services. This is particularly the case for predominately First Nations communities in areas such as Coen, Laura, Myola and Mossman across the region.

Processes already exist at State and Federal levels to involve councils. Strengthening these processes with real authority and resourcing provides an immediate pathway to implement Priority Reform 1 more effectively.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries-and-research/closing-the-gap-review/report/>



# STRENGTHENING REGIONAL QUEENSLAND THROUGH GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE HOME OWNERSHIP SUPPORT

## ASK

The Queensland Government establish a dedicated Rural and Remote Home Ownership Assistance Scheme (RHOAS) for Queensland State Government employees, to enable long-term settlement, workforce stability and stronger regional communities.

Queensland is facing a persistent and escalating workforce shortage across rural and remote communities. Government agencies including health, education, justice and community services are struggling to attract and retain qualified professionals. While the current Government Employee Housing (GEH) program provides essential rental accommodation, its rental only model does little to promote purchasing their own properties to settle in regional Queensland.

High turnover and ongoing vacancy challenges are eroding service delivery and inflating recruitment and training costs. Without a new approach, workforce shortages will continue to compromise liveability and essential services in regional Queensland.

An example can be found with Health workforce shortages..." ... failure to secure a pipeline of health workers has had major impacts, particularly on rural and remote Queensland with persistent workforce gaps forcing critical community services to close – including birthing services at Biloela and Cooktown since 2022. ... key findings included:

**Regional workforce gaps as high as 50% in some health professions, including allied health roles**

**21% gap in rural and remote medical workforce**

**11% of identified workforce gaps have persisted for more than 12 months**

**72% of workforce growth of the past 10 years has occurred primarily in metro areas."<sup>6</sup>**

It is believed that the introduction of a Home Ownership Incentive Program for Queensland Government employees in rural and remote areas, with the use of financial support equivalent to current GEH rental subsidies, would allow employees to transition from government rental housing to purchasing or building their own home within the community.

This model is proven and based on the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme (DHOAS) which has successfully improved recruitment and retention across the Australian Defence Force by supporting personnel to invest in local communities and build long term stability.

Benefits to the Queensland Government and rural and remote communities include:

- Improved retention of staff across essential service roles
- Reducing long-term housing and recruitment costs
- Stronger regional communities
- Enhanced competitiveness in securing staff, and
- A more resilient workforce across health, education, justice and community services.

<sup>6</sup> <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/103896> (10 November 2025)



# HEALTH CARE OUTSIDE MAJOR CENTRES

## ASK

1. That the Queensland government identifies funding for the expansion and refurbishment of Mareeba Hospital.
2. That the Queensland Government reviews the upgrade needs and invests in strengthening primary health care capacity across rural and remote communities such as Georgetown, Croydon and Chillagoe by funding expanded clinical space, additional medical and nursing staff, consistent opening hours and infrastructure that enables visiting specialists and emergency care to be delivered safely and reliably.
3. Seek transparency in project costing, assurance that budget pressures will not reduce service scope, and a commitment to keep council informed through scheduled updates on planning, design and construction.

Health care services in Queensland's rural and remote communities have been repeatedly overlooked or temporarily band aided while attention and funding are directed to larger regional and metropolitan areas. As a result, these smaller facilities are unable to meet local demand or play their critical role in reducing pressure on major hospitals such as Cairns Hospital.

An estimated 10% of hospital beds are currently occupied by patients who are clinically ready for discharge but cannot leave due to the lack of aged care facilities or a safe home environment. By ensuring consistent services (including guaranteed opening hours), providing wrap around support, and appropriately housing these services locally, the load on Cairns Hospital and other major centres could be significantly reduced.

Without intervention, the gap between need and service availability will continue to grow.

## MAREEBA SHIRE: GROWING POPULATION, INSUFFICIENT HEALTH SERVICES

Mareeba Shire, as part of the Queensland Health Cairns and Hinterland Hospital Health Service District, has experienced strong and sustained population growth (6% between 2016 and 2021) faster than most rural areas in Australia. Despite this growth, health services have not kept pace and now require urgent investment and attention.

Mareeba Shire has a high proportion of residents at greater risk of chronic disease including:

**20.7% of residents are aged over 65**

**14.3% of the population identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (note: these figures are typically under represented)**

**33% of the population living in remote areas of highest socioeconomic disadvantage.**

## COOKTOWN: SIGNIFICANT CAPITAL INVESTMENT, LIMITED SERVICE EXPANSION

The \$200 million committed prior to the 2024 elections is a welcome and much needed investment. However, with construction not expected to commence until 2027, there is growing concern that escalating costs will significantly reduce the project's overall impact. As multiple stakeholders price their respective components, there is a real risk the available funding will fall short – delivering little more than cosmetic upgrades rather than the expanded services which our communities urgently need.

Key demographic indicators include:

**17.8% of residents are aged over 65 years**

**21.2% of the population identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (note: these figures are typically under represented)**

**SEIFA index of 913 indicating high socioeconomic disadvantage**

## GEORGETOWN: REMOTENESS AND CRITICALLY CONSTRAINED SERVICES

In Georgetown, limitations are even more pronounced. Visiting specialists are working in hallways due to a lack of clinical space, emergency capacity is minimal, and the ambulance service is hospital based. The nearest hospital is 311km away in Atherton. In addition to unplanned clinic closures, the weekly doctor day is also unreliable. As an example, weekly doctor visits occur on Thursdays, two days before the visit on the 22nd January, patients were advised no Doctor could be found on the 22nd and their appointments cancelled. These appointments included things such as antenatal, skin cancer treatments, health check-ups etc.

Etheridge Shire Council's demographic indicators include:

**23.1% of residents are over 65 years**

**6.8% of the population identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (note: these figures are typically under represented)**

**The council area has a SEIFA index of 982**

## CROYDON: REMOTENESS AND PRIVACY OF SERVICES

In Croydon the clinic has paper thin walls with no privacy resulting in some patients not wanting to attend, especially for mental health type services, due to town gossip.

Croydon Shire's demographic indicators include:

**18.5% of residents are over 65 years**

**28.7% of the population identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (note: these figures are typically under represented)**

**The council has a SEIFA index of 876 indicating high socioeconomic disadvantage.**

## FATIGUE MANAGEMENT IMPACTS SERVICE AVAILABILITY

Rural and remot communities such as Georgetown, Croydon and Chillagoe face additional service disruptions caused by clinician fatigue management requirements.

For example, Georgetown's primary health centre is staffed solely by a Director of Nursing (DON) from 9am to 4pm daily. If the DON is called out overnight for an emergency, fatigue management protocols prevent them from opening the centre the next day. This is occurring with increasing frequency, resulting in closures for several days each week. This example is not isolated to Georgetown, Croydon and Chillagoe, others have the same issues.

These closures mean community members cannot access routine medical care, ultimately placing their health at risk.





# STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH FAIR RATING REFORM

## ASK

**That the Queensland Government introduce legislative reforms to allow councils to levy rates on State owned properties, ensuring fair cost sharing for the local services these properties rely on.**

We thank the State Government for its movement to enable indigenous local governments to rate property.

While local government has the authority to levy rates on private land to fund local services and infrastructure, it is unable to rate properties owned and used by state governments for public purposes. Nor is it able to rate lands previously rateable but handed back to traditional owners until it is transferred freehold and homes or commercial buildings are built.

Despite these exemptions, these land owners and users rely on the same local infrastructure and community services; waste collection, roads, parks, community services etc. that are funded by ratepayers.



### IMPACTS OF NON-RATEABLE PROPERTIES ON COOK SHIRE COUNCIL

Over the past 12 months, Cook Shire has absorbed more than 50 new State owned social and employee housing properties. While these assets support essential services, none of them are rateable, placing additional pressure on the existing ratepayer base to fund core council operations and infrastructure.

Communities such as Laura and Coen are now predominately composed of State-owned social housing, meaning a significant proportion of properties within these townships generate no rates revenue. This further constrains Cook Shire's ability to provide and maintain equitable services for residents across an already vast and remote region.

In addition, State leasehold land returned to Traditional owners cannot be rated until it is formally transferred to Aboriginal freehold under the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 (Qld).

The cumulative effect of these non-rateable properties is felt far more acutely in rural and remote councils than in regional or metropolitan areas. With small populations spread across large geographies, every rateable property matters, and every non-rateable one shifts a heavier burden onto fewer households.

Providing councils with the ability to levy rates on State owned properties would:

- Improve fairness across the rating system,
- Recognise the genuine cost of providing local services to government properties,
- Strengthen financial sustainability, and
- Support local autonomy and more equitable cost sharing.

**This change would further support councils to meet service demands without placing disproportionate pressure on local households and businesses.**



# DOH MANAGEMENT OF PROPERTIES AND RESOURCE IMPOST ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## ASK

**How can we work collaboratively with the Department of Housing (DOH) to manage the impact of these properties on tenants and the surrounding community, and improve the perception of DOH properties and their tenants?**

Many councils continue to face persistent public health and amenity issues associated with Department of Housing homes, including overgrown properties, management of waste, and excessive, unmanaged or roaming animals.

As an example, in the Cassowary Coast Regional Council there are 183 DOH properties which generate almost half of all customer requests and council response resources, yet the issues remain unresolved.

Compounding this, there are no DOH staff based in the Cassowary Coast to manage or support these properties – despite additional properties coming online.



# STRENGTHENING EDUCATION ACCESS TO KEEP FAMILIES IN REMOTE QUEENSLAND COMMUNITIES

## ASK

The Queensland Government is urged to invest in innovative, place based education delivery models that allow children to remain in their communities while accessing high quality secondary schooling. This could include piloting and scaling specialised online subject teaching across remote areas, ensuring remote families have equitable access to education without sacrificing cohesion, wellbeing or opportunity.

One of the most significant barriers to attracting and retaining families in remote communities such as Croydon is access to quality education. Many remote schools only offer classes up to Year 6, forcing families to make difficult decisions about secondary schooling, often long before they are ready. By Year 7, children typically must transition to either boarding school or distance education.

### BOARDING SCHOOL LIMITATIONS

A large proportion of remote students board away from home because there is no secondary school within a reasonable distance offering the curriculum they need. There are few government run boarding facilities that offer 24 hour care seven days a week, those that are available (Dalby, Weipa and Mt Isa) cannot accommodate the number of students who board away. As a result, many families must turn to costly private options, distance education or move to where their child can get an education and remain in the family environment.

### CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education is an important option but comes with its own set of challenges. It can be particularly difficult for students who have spent their primary years in a face-to-face classroom and have not developed the independent learning skills required for distance learning. By design, distance education cannot fully replicate the social, emotional and cultural benefits of attending a physical school. Furthermore, high school students require a dedicated supervisor - a resource many families simply do not have.

### OPPORTUNITY FOR REFORM?

The rapid transition to remote learning during COVID-19 proved that high quality online education can be delivered at scale. This capability presents a significant opportunity to reimagine education delivery in remote Queensland in ways that support family cohesion and community sustainability.

One promising solution, proposed by the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc<sup>7</sup> is the employment of Specialised subject teachers who deliver online classes across multiple remote schools.

This model would:

- Expand access to a broader curriculum,
- Reduce reliance on boarding,
- Improve equity of educational opportunity,
- Support family to remain in their communities,
- Strengthen population stability and liveability in remote Queensland.

<sup>7</sup> Isolated Children's Parents Association.pdf



# WASTE MANAGEMENT COSTS GENERATED WITHIN QLD STATE AND NATIONAL PARKS

## ASK

- That the Qld State Government accepts all associated waste management costs generated within the Qld National Parks networks, including waste generated by Qld Parks and Wildlife service works, service staff and tourist visitors, or**
- Where a significant amount of waste is being driven by National/State Parks and their visitors, that the State government fund rural or remote councils 100% the cost of small scale innovative initiatives to manage waste, or**
- Implement a waste environmental levy on visitors to national/state parks.**

In total, there are more than 1,000 national parks and other protected areas across Queensland, five UNESCO World Heritage sites and five significant wetlands protected under the international Ramsar convention<sup>8</sup>. According to the State Government<sup>9</sup> in the year ending September 2024, Queensland National Parks attracted 3.2 million domestic overnight visitors (a 7.6% increase since 2022), 2.4 million domestic day trippers and over 1 million international visitors.

Councils by default become the de facto custodians of these significant sites despite having the least resources to fulfil this role. Cook Shire illustrates this challenge clearly; the Shire covers approximately 106,000 square kilometres, with 17% owned by the State and designated as National Parks. Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park alone spans 5,370 km<sup>2</sup> and is a major tourism destination.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has a 'no dumping in the park' philosophy for waste management, requiring staff and visitors to remove and dispose of their own waste at formal waste facilities. Government websites<sup>10</sup> direct visitors to waste facilities in Coen, Archer River, Moreton and the Cooktown, Ayton, Lakeland and Laura Waste Transfer Stations, all of which are only open during restricted hours. While this approach is understandable, it has unintended consequences; small local businesses such as roadhouses, and ultimately to local government, are left to manage the waste tourists bring out of the parks. Tourists typically deposit their

waste at nearby drop-off points which then becomes the responsibility of local governments to manage.

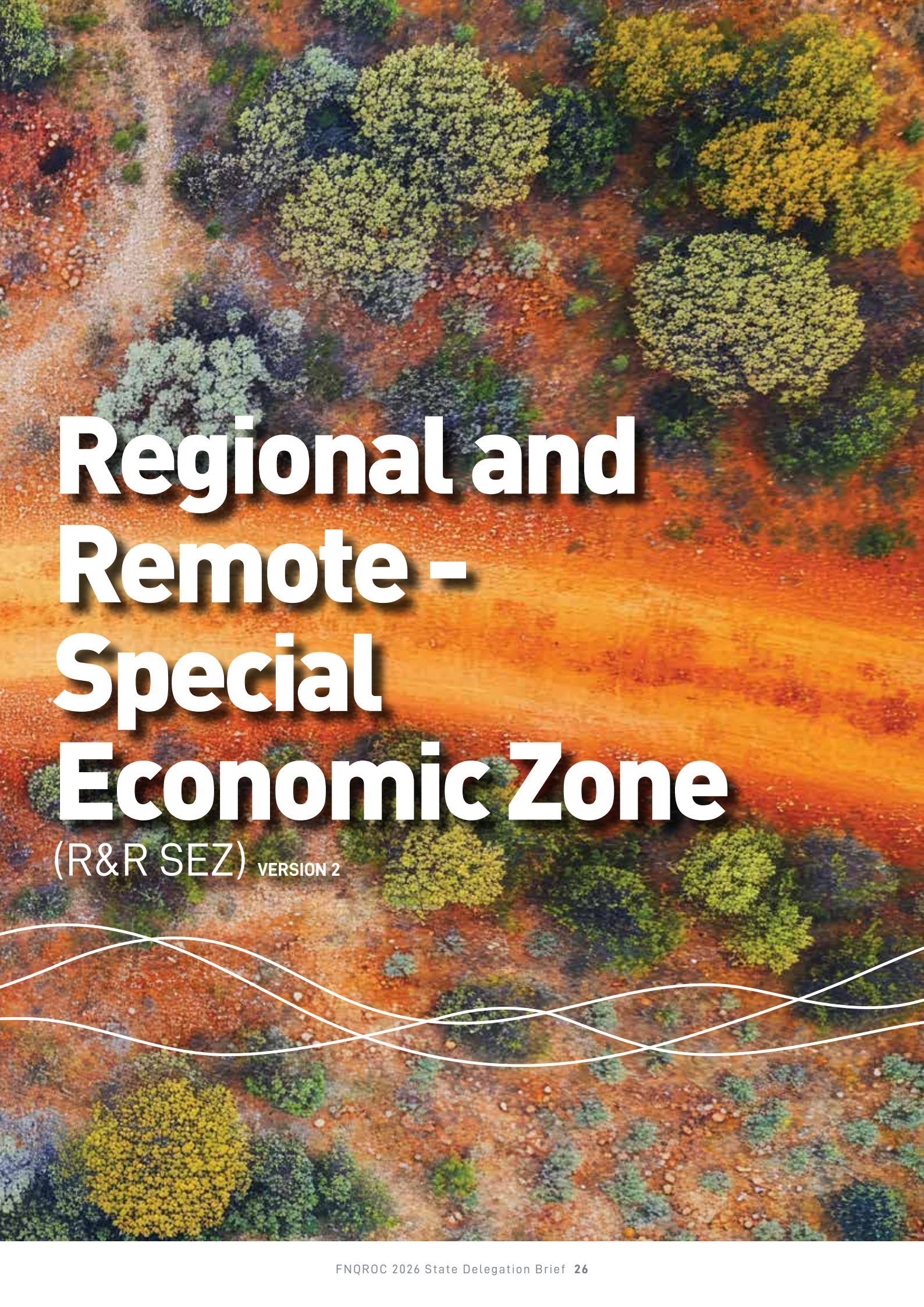
Given the very small rate base and resident populations in these remote areas, the vast majority of waste is generated not by locals, but by visitors to National Parks. As another example, Cook Shire Council maintains three 10m<sup>3</sup> recycling skip bins at Marina Plains (Annie River), Port Stewart and Starke River. During the peak tourism season, these bins must be emptied every two to three weeks simply to keep up with the demand.

The introduction of the Queensland Waste Levy has further exacerbated costs. An unintended consequence is that small local businesses now incur additional charges, at least \$125 per tonne for waste generated by visitors to State and National parks. Although Cook Shire is outside the levy zone, its waste is transported to levy zone landfills, primarily Springmount, meaning the levy still applies. These costs ultimately fall to local ratepayers, despite the waste being overwhelmingly generated by tourists visiting State and National Parks.

Councils like Cook Shire would like to implement innovative solutions such as small scale pyrolysis however they don't have the ability to contribute the 10% currently required under 'Boost Funding'

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/parks/protected-areas/growing-protected-area#:~:text=In%20total%2C%20there%20are%20more,Queensland's%20State%20Downed%20protected%20areas>  
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.stateoftheenvironment.detsi.qld.gov.au/biodiversity/terrestrial-ecosystems/extent-and-rate-of-change-of-protected-areas#:~:text=Visitors%20to%20Queensland%20national%20parks,the%20year%20ending%20September%202024>

<sup>10</sup> See page 26 [https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/150362/cape-york-vg.pdf](https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/150362/cape-york-vg.pdf)

An aerial photograph of a landscape featuring reddish-brown soil and scattered green and yellowish bushes. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Regional and Remote - Special Economic Zone

(R&R SEZ) VERSION 2

# Objective

Establish a Regional and Remote Special Economic Zone (R&R SEZ) to revitalise regional, remote and very remote Australia by addressing structural disadvantages in services, infrastructure, and employment. The R&R SEZ would attract and retain population through a comprehensive package of incentives i.e. financial, professional, lifestyle and infrastructure, encouraging individuals, families and businesses to relocate, invest and grow in the region.

With the upcoming Olympic Games 2032 and continual improvements in liveability in the metropolitan areas, the regions are at real risk of losing skilled individuals to these areas.

#### Tailored incentives can:

- reduce growth pressures on metropolitan areas
- strengthen local communities
- improve council sustainability
- enhance liveability
- deliver much needed skills to rural and remote Australia, and
- boost both State and National productivity

As a minimum, tax rebates/offsets as a base for these regions needs a significant review. The value of current offsets no longer achieves their initial intention of offsetting the costs of living in the region and encouraging populations to move or remain in the region.

Beyond taxation measures, this broad suite of incentives could support the establishment of new enterprises, the expansion of existing businesses, and the creation of vibrant, resilient regional economies.

# Policy Imperatives

## Demographic Renewal

- Reducing workforce, loss of services and reduced community liveability
- Young people leaving for education/employment and not returning
- Reliance on fly/drive in/fly/drive out workforce/services

## Service Equity and Community Wellbeing

- Limited services such as policing, healthcare, education, childcare and aged care
- High rates of suicide<sup>1</sup> and mental health issues
- Higher rates of chronic disease and reduced life expectancy in remote areas

## Infrastructure Foundations

- Limited road, rail and air connectivity raises costs and reduces accessibility
- Unreliable and expensive connectivity limiting education, health and business opportunities
- Lack of affordable, quality housing constrains population growth and workforce attraction
- Inadequate health, education and community facilities

## Economic and Structural Barriers

- Low return on investment (ROI) deterring private sector participation
- High logistics costs, freight and supply chain inefficiencies undermine competitiveness
- Environmental and planning approvals create delays and uncertainty
- Over reliance on a narrow set of industries and resource extraction
- Most raw products leave regions unprocessed, missing higher value opportunities

## Strategic and National Imperatives

- Food, energy and medical supply chain risk
- Underutilisation of inland/northern regions
- Increasing need for resilient infrastructure and adaptive economies in the face of climate and disaster vulnerability
- Significant opportunity to support Traditional Owners in leading economic development

1 Compared with major cities and inner regional areas. In Queensland in 2023, 18.5% of persons died by suicide in outer regional areas, remote areas and very remote areas, however a much smaller percentage of Queensland's population lives in those regions compared with major cities and inner regional areas.

# Benefits

## **Economic Benefits**

- Boost regional and remote economies by stimulating private sector investment and supporting local circular economies
- Attract and retain skilled migrants, professionals, and remote workers to grow the population and expand service delivery
- Encourage regional manufacturing and industry development
- Diversify regional economies by supporting new industries such as renewable energy, critical minerals advanced agriculture, defence supply chains and digital services
- Enhance export competitiveness and position regions for Asian and Indo-Pacific trade, export and manufacturing opportunities

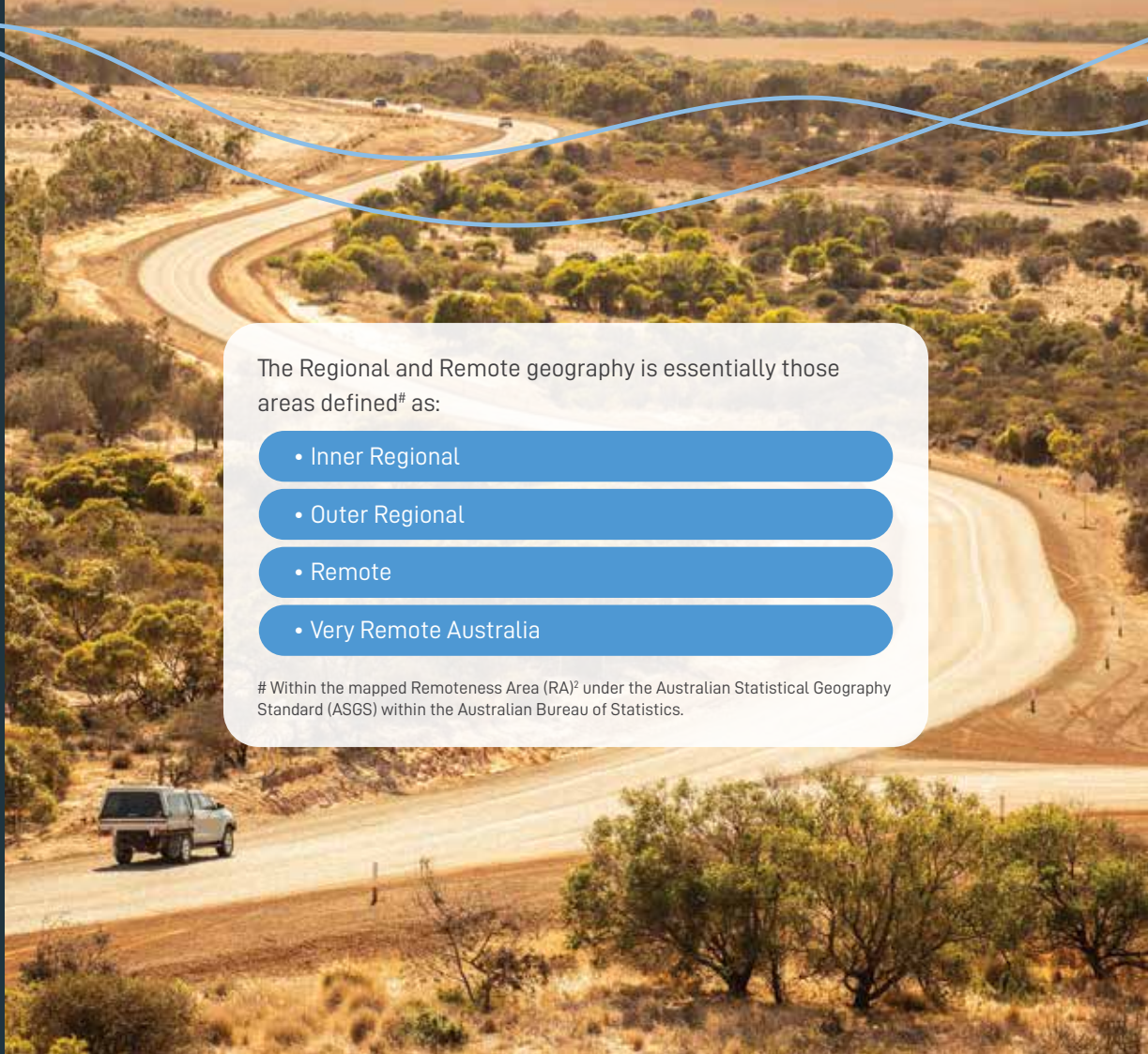
## **Social and Community Benefits**

- Increase regional and remote populations, reducing growth pressures on metropolitan areas
- Improve liveability through investment in housing, infrastructure, digital connectivity and essential services
- Facilitate Indigenous economic participation and partnerships, creating new opportunities for cultural, social and financial prosperity
- Retain young people and families in the region by providing greater education, employment and lifestyle opportunities
- Strengthen local councils and community sustainability through a broader ratepayer base and expanded workforce

## **National Interests and Strategic Benefits**

- Strengthen Australia's resilience by enhancing food security, energy security and supply chain reliability
- Support more efficient and sustainable government service delivery through stronger regional hubs
- Reduce economic and infrastructure pressure on high growth metropolitan areas
- Build resilience in the face of climate, disaster and geopolitical risks
- Position Northern and Inland Australia as a strategic contributor to national security and Indo-Pacific resilience

# Geography



The Regional and Remote geography is essentially those areas defined<sup>#</sup> as:

- Inner Regional
- Outer Regional
- Remote
- Very Remote Australia

<sup>#</sup> Within the mapped Remoteness Area (RA)<sup>2</sup> under the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) within the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

## Industries in scope

- Government services
- Mining & resources
- Transport and logistics
- Agriculture
- Community services
- Agri-food
- Indigenous economic development
- Bio futures/fuels
- Healthcare
- Marine & aviation maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO)
- Education & training
- Tourism & events
- Critical minerals
- Defence
- Advanced manufacturing
- Renewables & transmission

<sup>2</sup> <https://maps.abs.gov.au/index.html>

# Platter of Packages

The following suite of incentives could be tailored to the specific needs of each area based on postcode and applied on a sliding scale according to remoteness, as defined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).

		State Responsibility	Federal Responsibility
<b>FAMILY-CENTRED INCENTIVES</b>			
Relocation	Relocation + retention bundle (for households), eg \$8-12k relocation grant	✓	✓
Childcare subsidy	An extra 15-25% gap subsidy for approved services for first 24 months in R&R SEZ postcodes		✓
Childcare capacity	Capital grants to add places in undersupplied towns, and incentives for extended hours to match shift work	✓ (and local government)	
Isolated Children Allowance	Provision of Isolated child allowance regardless of low socio-economic classification		✓
Refundable tax offset	Capped at \$1,500 per child per annum for approved educational costs		✓
Travel	Travel and accommodation support for remote boarding if it is required	✓	
Vehicle	Car registration discount	✓	
Personal tax	Personal tax incentive, e.g. increased remote area offset/allowance		✓
<b>Professional Attraction and Retention</b>			
HECS-HELP	Write-off of 10% of HECS-HELP debt per year of service in priority roles (health, teaching, engineering, planning etc)		✓
Salary loading	Regional salary loading guidance for state and federal funded roles	✓	✓
Zone Tax Rebate/offset	Zone Tax Rebate/offset Redesign could be replaced with a Zone Living Allowance Rebate. Could be \$5,000+ per adult, \$2,500+ per child, tailored specially for R&R SEZ areas		✓
Residential taxes/utilities	Offset/rebate for rent, mortgage interest or housing costs in approved R&R SEZ postcodes with an annual cap (e.g. \$7,500)	✓	✓
Fringe Benefits Tax	Partial FBT exemption on employer-provided relocation assistance, housing allowances, flights, vehicles, childcare, and flights for R&R SEZ employees. Could be capped at \$25,000 per employee per year		✓
Government Employee Home Ownership Support	Establish a dedicated Remote Home Ownership Assistance Scheme (RHOAS) for Government employees, modelled on the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme but tailored to regional service delivery needs	✓	✓

		State Responsibility	Federal Responsibility
<b>Cost-of-living Relief</b>			
Air travel	Airfare fair-go: capped resident fares on designated regional air routes	✓	
Development charges relief	Targeted headworks rebates for workforce housing and childcare built by employers/consortia	✓	
<b>Housing and Liveability</b>			
Transfer duty	Transfer duty concession for home buyers and build-to-rent projects delivering key-worker housing in R&R SEZ postcodes. Given the high build and logistics costs in very remote regions, full exemption given on transfer duty up to \$600K, with scaled concession beyond \$600K up to \$800K (based on incremental brackets)	✓	
Insurance	Reduction/elimination of Stamp Duty on insurance	✓	
Arts and Culture	Incentives for cultural, arts and live music/festivals to extend their tours into R&R SEZ postcodes	✓	✓
<b>Workforce Pipelines (school → TAFE/university → job → upskill)</b>			
Placement contracts	Guaranteed placement contracts with TAFE/university & employers: final-year placements convert to job offers (with appropriate requirements met), with a retention bonus after 12 months in the role	✓	
VET and apprenticeships	School tech & trades stream: expand VET in schools; paid pre-apprenticeship summer programs	✓	
<b>Workforce</b>			
DAMA	Expand the existing DAMA program to include incentives to move to R&R SEZ postcodes		✓
Qualifications	Harmonise international qualifications/skills across the nation and provide more streamlined transfer of accreditation across a range of fields, including engineering, medical and allied health	✓	✓
<b>Industry Incentives</b>			
Lending	Banks underwritten by Federal Government (i.e. NAIF) so banks may be more prepared to loan to local residents to build/buy a house/business (i.e. lower risk profile of banks so they don't require 70% deposit before approving a loan)		✓
Regulatory Approvals	Streamlined housing development approvals	✓ (and local government)	✓
Manufacturing		✓	✓
Payroll Tax		✓	
Transport and Logistics		✓	✓
Research and Development	R&D tax offset to stimulate rural innovation	✓	✓
Depreciation	Accelerated depreciation of capital	✓	✓
Exports	Subsidy for exports through remote ports/hubs	✓	✓
<b>Health Incentives</b>			
Medicare	Reduction/Elimination of Medicare Levy		✓





**COOK**

**HOPE VALE**

**WUJAL WUJAL  
DOUGLAS**

**MAREEBA**

**YARRABAH**

**CAIRNS**

**CROYDON**

**ETHERIDGE**

**CASSOWARY COAST**

**HINCHINBROOK**

**TABLELANDS**

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.

# SUMMARY OF OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## STRENGTHENING LIVEABILITY AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Far North Queensland (FNQ) is defined by its vibrant communities, rich culture diversity, and outstanding environment. However, persistent housing stress, entrenched disadvantage, systemic underinvestment and increasing climate vulnerability are placing unprecedented pressure on liveability.



## RESILIENT TRANSPORT

Transport is the backbone of Far North Queensland's (FNQ) economy and essential for community wellbeing. The region's vast distances, rugged terrain, and seasonal weather extremes demand a transport network that is resilient, reliable and future-ready. Strategic investment in transport infrastructure is crucial to ensure continued access between rural and remote areas, Cairns, and the wider domestic and international markets. Long term planning must prioritise all-weather connectivity, public transport expansion, freight efficiency, and the protection of critical transport corridors.



## NATURAL ASSETS AND ENVIRONMENT

Far North Queensland's natural assets, including agricultural land, the Wet Tropics rainforests and the Great Barrier Reef, underpin the region's economic strength and global reputation. Ensuring their long-term sustainability requires a proactive, integrated approach that balances the needs of the environment with production and economic growth. Councils recognise that resilient ecosystems are crucial for long-term prosperity and that degradation of these assets' risks diminishing public appreciation of green spaces, tourism and regional economic growth.



## WATER SECURITY

Water security is central to Far North Queensland's (FNQ) long-term sustainability and economic prosperity. The region must move toward an integrated, climate-resilient water management approach that supports urban growth, agriculture, tourism, recreation, and the environment. FNQROC is positioned to lead this shift by advocating for cohesive policy response and investment aligned with regional priorities.



## WASTE

Far North Queensland (FNQ) is on a long-term pathway to waste minimisation and managing waste in a way that delivers lasting environmental, economic, and community benefits.



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