

Minutes of the 175th FNQROC Board Meeting

Meeting No	175
Meeting Name	FNQROC Ordinary Board Meeting
Date	2 December 2025
Time	10.30pm
Venue	Cairns Regional Council

REPRESENTATIVES

CHAIR	Cr Angela Toppin AM, Mayor	Mareeba Shire Council
	Cr Barry Hughes, Mayor	Etheridge Shire Council
	Cr Teresa Millwood, Mayor	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
	Cr Lisa Scomazzon, Mayor	Douglas Shire Council
	Cr Amy Eden, Mayor	Cairns Regional Council
	Cr Robyn Holmes, Mayor	Cook Shire Council
	Cr Trevor Pickering	Croydon Shire Council
	Cr Alister Gibson, Mayor	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
	Cr Daryl Sexton, Mayor	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
	Cr Dave Bilney, Deputy Mayor	Tablelands Regional Council

CEO'S

Mr Brian Joiner, CEO	Cook Shire Council
Mr Peter Franks, CEO	Mareeba Shire Council
Dr Nikola Stepanov, CEO	Tablelands Regional Council
Mr Scott Osman, CEO	Douglas Shire Council
Mr Ken Gouldthorp, CEO	Cairns Regional Council
Ms Jacqui Cresswell, CEO	Croydon Shire Council
Mr Andrew Graffen, CEO (online)	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Mr Ken Timms	Etheridge Shire Council
Mr Michael Miller, CEO	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council

OBSERVERS

Cr Matthew Tickner	Division 2, Cairns Regional Council
Mr Benton Wecker	Lead Intergovernmental Relations LGAQ
Ms Tamarah Moore	Lead, Public Health and Waste Management LGAQ

Emily Reid
Mr Terry James MP

Region Manager, Department of Local
Government, Water and Volunteers
Member for Mulgrave

FNQROC STAFF

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

3270. MEETING OPEN AND WELCOME

The meeting commenced at 10.26pm

The Chair welcomed everyone to the last meeting for 2025 and acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which we met and paid respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

The Chair also welcomed Mr Michael Miller, the new CEO for Yarrabah Aboriginal Council.

Mayor Toppin also thanked the CEO and staff for their efforts during the year.

3271. APOLOGIES

Cr Ramon Jayo, Mayor	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Cr Mary Brown, Deputy Mayor	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
Cr Rod Marti, Mayor	Tablelands Regional Council
Mr Graham King, CEO	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
Mr Lew Rojahn, A/CEO	Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
Cr Bruce Gibson	Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council

3272. BOARD PRESENTATIONS

3272.1 Presentation from Leanne Erakovic, CEO Australian Banana Growers Council

Presentation provided with Minutes.

Key Points;

- DAFF have allocated the resources to move into the next phases re Philippines' request to supply bananas to Australia
- Australia does not have a supply and demand problem

- ABGC have invited DAFFS technical team to come to FNQ to understand the biosecurity standards, practices and how the region works, before they go to the Philippines.
- DAFF advised that they are working on an issues paper to provide more info about their process – at this stage, DAFF have no confirmed date of release, but the understanding is that there will be approximately 60 days to respond to the draft report.
- ABGC have made a targeted effort to build relationships over the past three years and are committed to advocating for the Australian banana industry, it is critical that there is an understanding across what the industry does. There is incredible public support, which is crucial for the work in the coming months.

Questions from the floor;

- Ms Nikola Stepanov enquired if there is an expectation that DAFF would only accept banana imports from regions where no disease is evident, and how are the diseases spread?

Ms Erakovic advised that diseases are prevalent across the Philippines. Moko is a bacteria found in the fruit itself and rots the fruit – it would cost an estimated \$134M per year to contain. Diseases can be spread through the soil, water movement and insects. There is no spraying regime which can fix the problem. In the Philippines, areas are farmed until they no longer can be, then they move onto another area.

ABGC are planning to release a Spotlight on Diseases paper by end of December, providing an in-depth article. The paper will be available online and in hard copy.

The Chair acknowledged Emily Reid joining the meeting.

3272.2 Benton Wecker LGAQ, Lead Intergovernmental Relations (LGAQ)

The Chair noted the Policy Executive Meeting held prior to LGAQ.

Key points:

- Inconsistency to freight subsidies, reflecting on cost of goods
- The Cemeteries investigation continues – extensive research has been done, including models of non-permanent sites
- State campaign on behalf of members
- The Cost Shifting Survey

From the floor:

- It was noted that there is ongoing public confusion around Council responsibilities - there is a campaign to highlight the work that Councils do and what is State/Federal responsibility.
- Advocacy is often misinterpreted as responsibilities by the community, clear guidelines are needed as to who the community should contact in particular circumstances.
- Councils identified they find it difficult to ascertain who to talk to in the state department.

Ms Darlene Irvine noted that in previous years, there was a link to the State Government directory within the LGAQ website which was an effective resource to find out the best contacts, but it is no longer available.

3272.2 ACTION - Mr Benton Wecker will follow up on the State Government directory link through the LGAQ website.

Mr Wecker gave an overview of the Briefing Report circulated prior to the meeting.

Additional points;

- The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) Enviromon product will no longer be accessible effective June 2026 – it is noted that this will be an issue for Council's disaster management processes. The LGAQ have worked closely with Minister Leahy and met with Minister Kirsty McBain in Canberra to discuss the impacts to Councils. LGAQ will meet with BOM CEO in a couple of weeks and will be pushing hard to retain free live access to Onerain for councils. Request for Councils to reach out with feedback, if they have already switched to the new system, Onerain.
- Another submission re cost shifting and financial sustainability
- State and Federal budgets are coming up –campaign on TIDS receiving up to \$100 million per annum – continuing to put out videos and information services
- Some changes in the Empowering Councils Bill which have not been drawn from member feedback – one being that Councillors must resign if they run for State Parliament. This has been put out to members to get a contemporary view to accurately reflect members position on the matter.

From the floor:

- Discussion re:
 - BOM
 - Biosecurity Costs
 - DRFA – delay in funding release
 - Clarity re SES over to Police
- Cr Teresa Millwood noted that she would like to see the cost shifting report expanded, not just about funding for tasks shifted to councils, but also councils handing back the responsibilities which they've taken on from the State.
- Cr Barry Hughes highlighted the impacts of floods on major freight infrastructure from Cook, Mareeba, Etheridge, Croydon, river systems and emphasised the need for strong leadership by LGAQ to push back on the BOM.

Mr Wecker assured the Board that it is a high priority and feedback will be provided once the meeting with the BOM CEO has taken place.

- Dr Nikola Stepanov – councils want to know costs and asked for those not currently registered users of Enviromon, can they still access the program?
- Cr Robyn Holmes questioned if consideration could be given to review the allocation of disaster relief funding being provided via independent groups – can the funds be

issued directly through Councils so that they receive the full amount and are able to coordinate recovery on the ground.

Mr Wecker confirmed that all works within the remit of council should be funded directly.

- Cr Teresa Millwood noted the importance of the timeliness of issuing disaster relief funding and providing Councils with the ability to use the money – in particular, releasing funds retrospectively, when recovery works have already been carried out.

3273. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

MOVED: Cr Lisa Scomazon

SECONDED: Cr Teresa Millwood

That the Board:

Moves the minutes of the 174th FNQROC Board meeting held on Thursday 2 October 2025 to be confirmed and adopted.

CARRIED

3274. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Action items from 2 October 2025 FNQROC Ordinary Board Meeting

Meeting	Action	Responsible person
3223b (Dec 2024)	To enable FNQROC endorsement of the TNQ Economic Development Strategy (TEDS), the CEO is to work with the Economic Development Technical Committee to review and provide recommended amendments to RDA TN. Once completed to the satisfaction of the Technical Committee the FNQROC Board will review and endorse. Comments provided to RDA TN 4 June 2025 – awaiting response from RDA TN	Darlene Irvine, CEO and RDA TN
STATUS	Completed - See Item 6.1	
3238c (June 2025)	FNQROC CEO to bring forward a recommendation to the FNQROC Board on progressing the asset criticality assessment.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
STATUS	Completed - See Item 6.3	
3255c	When the State and Federal sitting dates have been published for 2026, calendar invites are to be sent to Mayors ASAP for State delegation first half of 2026 and Federal delegation in August 2026. On hold. FNQROC Board meetings will be in Brisbane or Canberra if delegations full on the same projected date.	Darlene Irvine, CEO

STATUS	Ongoing - 2026 sitting dates yet to be announced. DI Proposed 11-13 August with FNQROC Board Meeting during the mayoral delegation. Go to March for State delegation - agreed	
3262a	FNQROC to provide LED rollout data projection on smaller areas. e.g. Silkwood, Mission Beach and El Arish	Darlene Irvine, CEO
STATUS	Complete – councils to contact maria with asset numbers and she will be able to get this information for you.	
3262b	FNQROC to follow up if there will be a tariff and charge amendment to councils, following completion of LED Replacement Program. DI to send out spreadsheet with Minutes	Darlene Irvine, CEO
STATUS	Completed - Yes there will be and the change differs depending on asset ownership. A detailed explanation will be shared with councils.	
3262c	Can Ergon let councils know when they have transitioned streetlights to LED so councils can inform their communities?	Darlene Irvine, CEO
STATUS	Completed - Contact details for Fiona Wright will be shared with member councils. Fiona can arrange their access to LightMap which is a program the Public Lighting team manage for the Ergon Network. There is then a visual and way of mapping the lights location and type.	
3265	The CEO to draft a letter from FNQROC to the Department seeking the release of the Draft FNQ Regional Plan for public consultation.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
STATUS	Completed	
3266a	FNQROC to invite ABGC to speak at the next meeting.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
STATUS	Completed	

3275. BOARD REPORTS

3275.1 B116 – RDA Tropical Economic Development Strategy (TEDS)

Ms Irvine provided an overview of the report, advising that:

- This is completion of the action from December 2024 for the Economic Development Technical Committee to work with Darlene to draft changes to ensure the TEDS reflected priorities.
- The process was undertaken at the same time as the FNQ Regional Plan review so that the TEDS reflected this.
- The Economic Development Technical Committee supported the attached draft.

- The TEDS is a federal requirement of each of the RDA's and when she returned from a year's leave one of the issues raised was that the TEDS didn't reflect local government priorities and it would be advantageous if our priorities are included.
- Ms Irvine advised that she has been actively working with and sought feedback from each Councils' Economic Development Officers, who have provided data.

From the floor:

- Concerns raised about the RDA TN consultation process with Councils,
- Questions were raised about RDA TN mandate – what is their role?
- Clarity is required on what is the role of RDA, where should/is their focus.
- Want to see collaboration with TCICA
- Cook – 7 communities not 4.
- Cr Amy Eden noted that such reports have merit on a Federal level for reading by advisors and bureaucrats, and that they tie in with white paper review.
- The Chair reiterated the value in collaborating on the strategy as it carries weight in Federal Government.

Ms Irvine advised that there is no deadline to update the document, it is an existing document, and she will continue to work with RDA TN to advise on the items which need to be updated to reflect a truly collaborative document for Board endorsement.

- Cr Barry Hughes suggested RDA TN be invited to a FNQROC Board meeting.

3275 ACTION: FNQROC to invite RDA TN to FNQROC Board Meeting to discuss review of TEDS, ongoing consultation with councils and what is their role/focus.

3275.2 B117 – Animal Management Options Paper

Mr Travis Sydes gave an overview of the report, proposing an options paper for a deeper dive into transforming how we currently manage domestic animals.

Key Points:

- Stepping away from compliance only, to a more human centred approach.
- Need to respond to existing processes – intervention – fencing – re-fencing – animal surrendering – animal adoption
- Best practice is needed to assist council's currently swamped and working reactively – creating a strategic response to set them up to work proactively.
- Onus is on local government to initiate necessary change within the community.
- Offer more info to community about what future decisions in animal management might be
- Lots of great examples globally – rarely small steps, rather large steps have a bigger impact

- Reduce animal management costs to councils
- Improve recognition of roles and responsibilities
- To be developed in conjunction with RSPCA, LGAQ and remote and rural indigenous communities.

From the floor;

Ms Nikola Stepanov declared a potential COI, as a voluntary Board member of RSPCA.

- There was discussion around the benefits to each member councils.

Mr Sydes noted that it depends on the nature of interaction with community on registering animals – possibly different set up in terms of animal ownership, and having work animals – more advantage for councils who are experiencing animal management issues, particularly seeing an increase in cat ownership but noted that there is cross over between wandering stock, bio security and domesticated cats.

MOVED: Cr Dave Bilney

SECONDED: Cr Teresa Millwood

That the Board:

Allocate \$35,000 from reserves to engage a suitably qualified consultancy to develop an *Animal Management Options Paper*.

CARRIED

3275.3 B118 – Water & Wastewater Asset Criticality Assessment – Options Analysis

Amanda Hancock gave an overview of the paper.

Key points:

- FNQ Water Alliance were asked to initiate a water asset criticality assessment, and invited the consultant who did the SWQROC assessment to the Water Alliance meeting.
- All councils are in different stages but desk top analysis of what we've got would be beneficial
- The project is significant and the costs to undertake the SWQROC are significant – SWQROC ~\$1.2million. Intention is to look at the options to stage a similar project.
- Funding application just requires a motion from the Board to apply for funding.

MOVED: Cr Barry Hughes

SECONDED: Cr Amy Eden

That the Board:

Approves an application to the Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program (QWRAP) for funding up to \$50,000 to undertake an options analysis to progress the regional asset criticality assessment as recommended by the FNQ Water Alliance.

3276. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Financial Report Year to date

MOVED: Cr Trevor Pickering

SECONDED: Cr Barry Hughes

That the Board:

Adopts the Profit and loss and Balance Sheet reports for the period 1 July 2025 to 26 November 2025.

CARRIED

3277. INFORMATION FOR THE BOARD

3277.1 FNQ Regional Plan Update

FNQROC CEO provided a verbal update.

Key points:

- The Draft plan was released 12 November 2025 with submissions due 5 January 2026
- We raised the timeline for consultation however the Minister believed we have had a significant time with the draft plan before release.
- A draft submission was shared with Mayors and CEOs 28 November 2025
- Give the timeline, it was agreed at the last Planners meeting (25 November) that:
 - councils would cover local issues and FNQROC will take on regional view.
 - Where local and regional issues do not compete, the FNQROC CEO offered to include council issues in the regional submission where necessary.
- Due to council closedown, it is planned to submit the regional submission by 24th December.
- The Plan still effectively had the minimum 60 hectare rule in but we believe we can get the wording amended to take this out.
- The plan is light/silent on four key areas:
 - Kuranda Range Road (future proofing) infrastructure needs
 - Water
 - Digital Connectivity
 - Social community infrastructure, and
 - energy
- There was discussion and clarification around the changes which have been made to the Plan.

- Cr Amy Eden requested reference be included around the blue highway (shipping) and that the alternative to Trade Hub included the term 'Indo pacific' (Page 11).
- Dwelling vs housing was raised and why we chose housing. Dwelling has been used in numerous strategies. MS Irvine advised that she would get some clarity on that.

The Chair thanked the Mayors who were able to attend the Regional Plan launch event.

There was general discussion around effective methods for engaging the community to review the plan and provide feedback. One suggestion which had worked in other councils was to tell everyone that it's a secret and not to tell anyone.

3277.1 ACTION: FNQROC CEO to clarify why housing as a term has been chosen over dwelling in our draft submission on the FNQ Regional Plan.

3277.2 State Delegation

FNQROC CEO advised that the draft delegation briefing is underway, identifying issues such as:

- Remote & Rural Special Economic Zone (R&R-Sez)
- Commitment to commence Regional Growth Strategy
- Tourist Levy
- Public Transport
- Birthing in Cooktown
- Consultation on closing the gap service delivery
- Rates – State buildings and housing not rateable
- Impact of leasehold going to State Lands – losing ratable properties
- Waste in National Parks and the council cost impost.
- Transferring to State.

Other matters were requested for inclusion;

- Removing State charges from Rates Notices i.e. Fire Levy
- Fatigue management in regional and remote health services area
- Keeping kids in the region for schooling
- Country Road Connect

The Chair strongly encouraged Mayor's to attend the delegation as there is power in numbers.

Given the 2026 State sitting dates haven't been released as yet, it was believed that March would be a better month than February.

3277.2 ACTION: FNQROC CEO to formalise the draft Delegation Brief and share with the Board.

3277.3 Incoming / Outgoing Correspondence

3277.3.1 Incoming

3277.3.2 Outgoing

- Federal members we met with in October
- Michael Healy MP
- Bob Katter MP
- Shane Knuth MP
- David Kempton MP
- Robbie Katter MP
- Terry James MP
- Bree James MP
- Matt Smith MP
- Darling Downs and South West Queensland Council of Mayors
- North Queensland ROC
- Central Queensland ROC
- Greater Whitsunday Council of Mayors
- Remote Area Planning and Development Board
- North West Queensland ROC
- South West Queensland ROC
- Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance Inc.
- Wide Bay Burnett ROC

FNQROC CEO noted discussions around the Medicare Levy and encouraged everyone to reach out if they need anything to be added to R&R-SEZ

Cr Amy Eden noted that there had been discussions in Canberra about securing trades and services.

NOTED

3278. CEO REPORT

FNQROC CEO gave a brief update on the CEO report which was taken as read.

- Mayor Holmes asked about a number of the actions taken being associated with FNQ Regional Plan which didn't cover all councils.

Ms Irvine advised that the Draft FNQ Regional Plan was going to be the template for all reviewed regional plans going forward and she would assist those councils when their plans are reviewed.

NOTED

3279. FNQROC MEETINGS

3279.1 Minutes of FNQROC Advisory Committees: -

- **FNQROC Regional Roads and Transport Technical Committee #141 – 15 October 2025**
Minutes – [available on website](#)
Next Meeting – 29 January 2026
- **FNQROC Regional Mountain Bike Steering Committee #4 – 17 October 2025**
Minutes – [available on website](#)
Next Meeting – 13 February 2026
- **FNQROC Regional Waste Management Plan Technical Committee #7 - 23 October 2025**
Minutes – *will be available on website*
Next Meeting – 12 December 2025
- **FNQROC Natural Asset Management Technical Committee #64 - 31 October 2025**
Minutes – [available on website](#)
Next Meeting – 5 March 2026
- **FNQROC Animal Management Technical Committee #23 - 7 November 2025**
Minutes – [available on website](#)
Next Meeting – 6 February 2026
- **FNQ Regional Water Alliance #44 – 7 November 2025**
Minutes – [available on website](#)
Next Meeting – 20 February 2026
- **FNQROC Climate Resilience Technical Committee #10 – 14 November 2025**
Minutes – *will be available on website*
Next Meeting – 30 January 2026
- **FNQ Regional Roads and Transport Technical Committee #142 – 14 November 2025**
Minutes – [available on website](#)
Next Meeting – 29 January 2026
- **FNQROC Regional Planners Meeting #83 – 25 November 2025**
Minutes – will be available on the website
Next Meeting - TBD

NOTED

3279.2 Minutes of Confidential Meetings

- **FNQROC Bitumen Reseal Contract Meeting #2 - 15 October 2025**
Minutes – *available on request*
Next Meeting – 9 December 2025

- **FNQROC Sewer Relining + Sewer and Manhole Condition Assessment Meeting - 12 November 2025**
Minutes – *available on request*
Next Meeting – TBA
- **FNQROC 25/26 Sewer Relining Meeting #2 - 19 November 2025**
Minutes – *available on request*
Next Meeting – TBA
- **FNQROC Regional Procurement Advisory Committee #48 - 28 November 2025**
Minutes – *available on request*
Next Meeting – 20 February 2026

NOTED

3280. GENERAL BUSINESS

- Cr Robyn Holmes asked why Cook wasn't part of the Rural & Remote Compact which was raised with Minister Leahy at our 10am meeting – Minister Leahy advised she would get back to Mayor Holmes.
- FNQROC CEO called from suggestions for away Board meetings for 2026. It was agreed that the June Board Meeting will be hosted by Douglas Shire Council.
- Mr Scott Osman advised that he has been doing some work with the AICD who are delivering some bespoke sessions in Brisbane and can also deliver them in FNQ, depending on numbers (min 12 people max 25). Full course being delivered in Cairns in June at an approximately cost of \$8K.

3280 ACTION: FNQROC to share AICD courses with the Board with interested parties to respond to Scott Osman – CEO Douglas Shire Council.

3281. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 12th February 2026, 10.30am at Cairns Regional Council.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 12.30 pm.



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Cr Angela Toppin AM
FNQROC Chair

ATTACHMENT 1

Actions from Board Meeting held on 2 December 2025

Meeting	Action	Responsible person
3255c	When the State and Federal sitting dates have been published for 2026, calendar invites are to be sent to Mayors ASAP for State delegation first half of 2026 and Federal delegation in August 2026.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Ongoing - 2026 sitting dates yet to be announced.		
DI Proposed 11-13 August with FNQROC Board Meeting during the mayoral delegation.		
Go to March for State delegation given we don't have February dates - agreed		
3272	Mr Benton Wecker will follow up on the State Government directory link through the LGAQ website.	LGAQ
3275	FNQROC to invite RDA TN to FNQROC Board Meeting to discuss review of TEDS, ongoing consultation with councils and what is their role/focus.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3277.1	FNQROC CEO to clarify why housing as a term has been chosen over dwelling in our draft submission on the FNQ Regional Plan.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Completed – 4 th December – dwelling has been selected to be consistent with the Regulation		
3277.2	FNQROC CEO to formalise the draft Delegation Brief and share with the Board.	Darlene Irvine, CEO
3280	FNQROC to share AICD courses with the Board with those interested to contact Scott Osman – CEO Douglas Shire Council	Darlene Irvine, CEO
Completed 4 th December		