

Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan

Regional Priorities

Discussion paper for feedback
Not government policy

February 2023

The Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning connects industries, businesses, communities and government (at all levels) to leverage regions' strengths to generate sustainable and enduring economic growth that supports well-planned, inclusive and resilient communities.

Copyright

This publication is protected by the Copyright Act 1968.

Creative Commons licence

Public domain (CC0)



This work, except as identified below, is licensed by the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC0) 4.0 Australia licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit creativecommons.org.au

You are free to copy, communicate and adapt this publication as long as you attribute it as follows:

© State of Queensland, the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, February 2023

Third party material that is not licensed under a Creative Commons licence is referenced within this document. All content not licensed under a Creative Commons licence is all rights reserved. Please contact the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning /the copyright owner if you wish to use this material.

Translating and interpreting service



If you have difficulty understanding a document and need an interpreter, we provide access to a translating and interpreting service. You will not be charged for this service. To contact the Translating and Interpreting Service, telephone 131 450 and ask them to telephone the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning on +61 7 3328 4811.

Disclaimer

While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, to the extent permitted by law, the State of Queensland accepts no responsibility and disclaims all liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses (including direct and indirect loss), damages and costs incurred as a result of decisions or actions taken as a result of any data, information, statement or advice, expressed or implied, contained within. To the best of our knowledge, the content was correct at the time of publishing.

Copies of this publication are available on our website at www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au and further copies are available upon request.

Contact us

☎ +61 7 3328 4811 or 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
✉ info@dsgmip.qld.gov.au
🌐 www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au
✉ PO Box 15009, City East, Queensland 4002
🏠 1 William Street, Brisbane 4000

Source number D23/21521

Far North Queensland regional priorities

Purpose of the regional priorities

The regional priorities provide a framework to maximise the economic strengths of the Far North Queensland (FNQ) region and inform coordinated planning at all levels. These priorities and the supporting evidence base will guide state government decision-making in developing the Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan (FNQIP) and statutory Regional Plans.

The regional priorities reflect the current opportunities, aspirations of the community, economic issues and environmental values including climate change. Importantly, these priorities integrate input from First Nations stakeholders, resulting in a coordinated, strategic and culturally aware approach to inclusive economic growth. The regional priorities will be delivered by infrastructure priorities identified by the state government that reflect the enablers outlined for each of the nine regional priorities

Approach

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken across the region to assist in identifying the economic and liveability opportunities and challenges to inform this paper. Stakeholder engagement included five workshops held in Cairns, Atherton, Cooktown, Weipa and Thursday Island. A further virtual workshop was held for those stakeholders unable to attend workshops in person.

The purpose of the workshops was to identify the key economic opportunities and challenges across the region's priority industries. A wide range of participants attended the workshops and included representatives from local industry, local governments, not-for-profit groups, business owners, peak bodies and First Nations stakeholders such as prescribed body corporates.

Stakeholder engagement has confirmed the key industries for FNQ as agriculture and agribusiness, marine, tourism and health care and social assistance, with a number of secondary industries. The emerging green economy industries, including renewable energy, biodiversity offset and carbon abatement, resource recovery and bio futures, were also identified as enablers for existing industries to compete in the future low carbon economy. Stakeholder engagement further identified key enablers for economic prosperity that relate to liveability and community well-being. These include a skilled workforce, housing, water, land, health, energy, digital, transport and policy. These stakeholder insights are reflected in the regional priorities detailed on the following pages.

A background paper was prepared to inform the regional priorities which examines key economic opportunities that leverage the region's competitive strengths to propel the regional economy, attract new investment and support sustainable employment creation and job pathways. Informed by stakeholder engagement, this place-based approach to investment and policy considers the balance of strengths and opportunities unique to the FNQ region.

Your feedback

The Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (DSDILGP) is seeking feedback on the regional priorities via survey. This survey will be used to refine the regional priorities and inform the development of the FNQ Regional Infrastructure Plan.

Survey responses close Friday 24 February 2023.

Next steps

Following the refinement of the nine regional priorities to reflect feedback, we will work with state agencies to identify the infrastructure priorities. This work will inform the FNQIP that is anticipated to be delivered mid-2023.

20-year outlook

Over the next 20-years there are key drivers of change that have the potential for substantial and transformative impact on the region. These drivers will shape long-term investment and strategic and policy directions of the FNQIP. Each of the regional priorities and associated infrastructure initiatives will respond to these drivers of change – decarbonisation, adaption to climate change, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's empowerment, defence and health.

Decarbonisation

Moving towards net zero emissions is driving a transformation in energy markets to renewable sources of energy. Queensland's generation mix is transforming to include more wind, solar and storage to meet energy demand and emissions targets. The Northern Renewable Energy Zone will be critical in enabling this transition. To support the transition there will likely be increased investment in low-emission assets and infrastructure, primarily transport, power and buildings.

The energy transformation will help drive electrification, decarbonise resources and create new industries in the region. Decarbonisation will drive growth in renewable energy, critical minerals, resource recovery, biofutures and carbon abatement markets. Established industries will adopt innovative approaches to low-emission business models. This may encourage greater uptake of agi-tech innovations as some consumers move away from emissions-intensive products. FNQ has natural endowments to potentially yield a competitive advantage in these emerging clean energy industries and markets.

Adaption to climate change

Extreme and unprecedented weather events pose a significant risk for the region. The frequency and scale of natural disasters is expected to impact the natural and built environment, energy supply and critical infrastructure, inundating low-lying areas, isolating remote communities, displacing coastal communities, disrupting supply chains and preventing access to essential services. The region's key industries agriculture, marine, fishing and tourism, will need to innovate and adopt new technologies to manage the impacts of a changing climate. Resilient infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting communities to withstand, respond to, and recover from natural disasters. Planning for resilient infrastructure has the potential to significantly reduce disaster costs. Climate adaption and resilience will be critical to protect the region's biodiversity, future economic prosperity and sustain livable communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's empowerment

The landscape for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has the potential to transform significantly within the 20-year horizon. For Far North Queensland, land and sea rights determinations will see expansive areas of the region handed back to the Traditional Owners. The Path to Treaty – a shared journey underway between the Queensland Government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous people – is a key reform with the ultimate goal of negotiating a treaty, or treaties. The proposed referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament, if successful, will further provide Indigenous communities a path to help inform policy and legal decisions that impact their lives, leading to more effective results

Through greater empowerment and improved frameworks there is an opportunity for greater economic inclusion and liveability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Far North Queensland. Closing the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians will continue to remain a priority, with health outcomes impacted by food security, housing, access to health services and climate change.

Defence

Geo-political tensions in the Asia-Pacific region have been increasing in recent years, and Northern Australia is of increasing strategic importance for defence. These events have led to record-level defence spending, in Australia and globally, and increasing collaboration and cooperation across matters of security, technology and defence capability.

The Royal Australian Navy's Patrol Boat presence in Cairns and the maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) of vessels locally plays an essential role in protecting Australia's northern maritime borders. Further investment in

defence in the region will encourage prime contractors serving defence to locate logistics infrastructure closer to key defence user facilities.

Health

An ageing population and a growing interest and expenditure in personal health and wellbeing are key drivers of future demand for accessible, specialist medical services and tailored community-based healthcare facilities such as community health facilities and digital healthcare initiatives. People living in rural and remote areas of Australia experience poorer health outcomes, higher rates of chronic disease and lower life expectancy than those living in metropolitan areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified existing health challenges around the burden of chronic illness and mental health in the region.

The region has a comparative advantage in tropical health, Indigenous health and health service delivery in regional, rural and remote settings. These demographic, cultural and geographic factors will continue to drive demand in the health and social assistance sector.

Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan

The FNQIP will have a 20-year outlook and a 10-year planning horizon, identifying strategic economic and social priorities with supporting infrastructure priorities. The FNQIP is one of seven Regional Infrastructure Plans being developed to support implementation of the *State Infrastructure Strategy 2022*.

The FNQIP is structured around the Infrastructure Plan Framework and nine regional priorities. The FNQIP will assist in aligning planning, investment and delivery of infrastructure, programs and services across state and local governments and provide clear direction to the private sector on regional economic development priorities. It recognises the importance of liveability and the environment in supporting economic opportunities and identifies risks and challenges FNQ faces in taking advantage of these opportunities.

Structure of the FNQ Infrastructure Plan

Infrastructure Plan Framework To deliver a balanced approach to investment in FNQ, reflecting the state-wide objectives identified in the State Infrastructure Strategy.
Regional priorities (9) Aligned to the Infrastructure Plan Framework several regional priorities reflect the unique characteristics of FNQ and set out where FNQ wants to be in 20 years.
Infrastructure priorities The enablers identified in this document will be further refined in the Regional Infrastructure Plan to deliver the nine regional priorities.

The boundary of the FNQIP includes:

- » Aurukun Shire Council
- » Cairns Regional Council
- » Cassowary Coast Regional Council
- » Cook Shire Council
- » Croydon Shire Council
- » Douglas Shire Council
- » Etheridge Shire Council
- » Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
- » Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council
- » Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council
- » Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council
- » Mareeba Shire Council
- » Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council
- » Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council
- » Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council
- » Tablelands Regional Council
- » Torres Shire Council
- » Torres Strait Island Regional Council
- » Weipa Town Authority
- » Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
- » Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council

The boundary for the FNQIP includes two Statutory Regional Plans - Far North and Cape.

Infrastructure Plan Framework

Infrastructure Plan Framework will deliver a balanced approach to planning and investment in FNQ. These reflect the state-wide objectives identified in the State Infrastructure Strategy and take a sustainable approach to economic prosperity and liveability.

Infrastructure Plan Framework

Encourage jobs, growth and productivity	Develop regions, places and precincts	Enhance sustainability and resilience	Adopt smarter approaches
--	--	--	---------------------------------

Regional Infrastructure priorities

Under the Infrastructure Plan Framework, nine priorities were identified that reflect the unique characteristics of FNQ and outline where the region wants to be in 20 years. These regional priorities are informed by consultation with regional stakeholders and a review of the region's existing strategic documents and available data. The regional priorities leverage FNQ's competitive strengths in emerging industries and support traditional industry strengths.

Regional infrastructure priorities

1. A leader in tropical agriculture	5. A livable region with well-serviced communities	7. A thriving green economy	8. Streamline engagement to empower the region
2. A prosperous marine and fishing industry	6. Housing to support liveability and attract a skilled workforce		9. Governance to maximise community benefit
3. A leader in experiential and cultural tourism			
4. A growing aviation sector			

The regional priorities will guide and enable coordinated infrastructure planning and prioritise investment by state agencies, local government and industry, as well as inform prioritised investment by the Australian Government. The regional priorities will align other state-wide policies and strategies through a place-based planning approach. These regional priorities will also inform land use planning considerations as part of the review of relevant statutory Regional Plans for the region.

As a guide for strategic infrastructure investment over the long term, the regional priorities are ambition statements, detailing what future success looks like, the actions required and desired outcomes. These regional priorities will inform the infrastructure priorities for the region captured in the FNQ Infrastructure Plan.

Infrastructure priorities

The nine regional priorities will be delivered by regionally significant infrastructure priorities (e.g. projects, programs and policies) identified and delivered by the state government. These will reflect the enablers outlined for each of the nine regional priorities and seek to build on existing work being delivered or planned in the region.

The FNQIP is anticipated to be finalised mid-2023.

1. A leader in tropical agriculture

Ensure that the region remains a **leader in tropical agriculture** by delivering innovative approaches to realise new agricultural opportunities and to improve climate change resilience.

Highly suitable soils and abundant rainfall over a wide area make FNQ a productive place for agriculture. The region’s tropical climate supports a range of high-quality and nationally significant tropical agricultural products including sugar cane, fruits, nuts and seafood, supported by good market access and established supply chains. Processing agricultural products (agribusiness) adds value, generating greater economic activity in the region. Food product manufacturing accounts for over a third of employment in the region’s manufacturing industry.¹

Opportunities

- » Increase local value-add to agricultural products
- » Renewable energy to support greater profitability
- » Greater uptake of agri-tech and improved digital connectivity

Challenges

- » Natural disaster resilience
- » Workforce shortages and lack of supporting housing
- » Managing biosecurity threats

Enablers

Infrastructure	
Water	Greater access to, and volumes of, water to the agriculture sector to enable increased productivity.
Energy	Access to affordable electricity to reduce the cost of agriculture and agribusiness (food production).
Transport roads, airports, maritime	Improving access to export hubs and markets to support the ongoing competitiveness of the broader sector. This includes road, air and marine transport network investments to improve the efficiency of freight movements and reduce costs to the supplier.
Common user facilities	Greater capacity for the local processing for exports to enable increased uplift for product value in the region.
Digital	Improving digital access to enable innovation in agricultural production, from robotics to activating pumps and operating machinery to connecting with customers and suppliers.
Infrastructure optimisation	Greater adoption of new technologies and innovation in the sector to support more efficient use of existing water resources.
Land	
Land	Suitable land for agriculture to provide a greater opportunity for increased agricultural production.
Human Capital	
Skills	A workforce strategy to increase education and training pathways within the region. This would support the development of modernised career pathways for agribusiness, supporting innovation and future job growth in the agricultural sector.
Policy	
Promotion	Increased regional brand promotion to highlight the differentiators of the region - a clean, green, pristine brand; promoting a positive environmental and animal welfare narrative.
Financial Capital	
Funding	Additional capital to enable businesses to expand operations and improve productivity. Private investment can also contribute where companies identify opportunities.

¹ Economic Advisory, Economic and Policy Futures Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (August 2022). *Regional Economic Profile: Far North Queensland*.

2. A prosperous marine and fishing industry

Grow the **marine industry** and support the **fishing industry** to enable more significant economic opportunities the Cairns Marine Precinct as well as in coastal and island communities.

FNQ is a gateway to the Pacific Ocean, the Arafura Sea and the Gulf of Carpentaria. These areas have extensive fisheries and tourist attractions and contain key shipping routes. The sea is a vital means of transport accessibility for the Torres Strait Islands people and communities on the coastline of Cape York, with supplies being provided through seaborne deliveries. Sea country is very important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, carrying the same cultural importance as land.

The manufacturing and MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) sectors are prominent, with the Port of Cairns servicing about 15 per cent of Australian registered vessels and almost 80 per cent of north Queensland vessels over 15 meters, as well as many vessels registered internationally.² The growth of MRO sectors is linked to the growth in defence, commercial fishing, tourism and freight and transport sectors.

Defence facilities in FNQ, like HMAS Cairns Naval Base, are strategically located due to the region’s proximity to South-East Asia, China and the Pacific Islands. Commercial fishing is a key industry across the region and the maintenance of vessels generates activity in the marine industry. Marine transport enables tourists to travel by boat to the Great Barrier Reef. The marine industry will benefit from an increase in superyachts, cruise ships and recreational fishing as tourism in the region grows. Freight and logistics is an important industry as the ocean is vital for transporting goods and people around Torres Strait.

The marine industry also supports the education and research sector. FNQ has a number of marine-related education providers, including public and private colleges that provide courses in maritime operations and universities that undertake marine biology research and other features of the Great Barrier Reef.

Opportunities

- » Increased defence presence in FNQ
- » Increased cruise ship visitation
- » Expansion of ports of Cairns and Mourilyan
- » MRO of vessels and boat building
- » Growing fishing industry
- » Leverage focus on 2032 Olympics to increase superyacht visitation

Challenges

- » Skilled workforce shortages
- » Maintenance of shipping channels
- » Maritime infrastructure in smaller communities

Enablers

Infrastructure	
Transport Maritime	Improving access and capacity of marine infrastructure to support vessel access (jetties, boat ramps, pontoons), protection of maritime assets (harbours, breakwaters, wave attenuators and training) walls and vessels and waterway access and navigation (dredging of channels, rivers and river mouths; installation of navigation aids).
Common user facilities	Greater MRO capacity in the Cairns Marine Precinct to enable the expansion of manufacturing and maintenance activities.
Land	
Land	Improving land-use planning around the Port of Cairns to facilitate an expansion, permitting large vessels to visit the port. Similar work at Mourilyan can expand bulk goods exports.
Human Capital	
Skills	Expansion of marine technical training for FNQ, including Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area, to increase local skills needed for employment opportunities.

² Pwc. (2022) Cairns Marine Precinct Infrastructure Investment: Detailed Business Case.p4

3. A leader in experiential and cultural tourism

Attract international visitors, retain and grow domestic tourism and improve accessibility in the region by strengthening **experiential tourism** including nature-based, arts, culture and sports tourism offerings.

FNQ includes two World Heritage Areas (the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics), numerous national parks and the traditional lands of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the two oldest living cultures. The warm weather, leisurely lifestyle, world-class facilities and services make the region attractive to travellers from Australia and around the world. These assets provide visitors with the opportunity to immerse themselves in nature and the culture and traditions of its distinct communities, providing an opportunity for experiential tourism that drives word of mouth and repeat visits. Building from this strong foundation, FNQ has grown other tourism offerings including eco-tourism and nature-based tourism, First Nations cultural tourism, sports tourism, agritourism and culinary tourism.

Opportunities

- » Explore new First Nations cultural tourism experiences
- » Establish alternative tourism experiences
- » Leverage focus on 2032 Olympics to increase tourism to the region

Challenges

- » Perception of and actual effects of climate change
- » Reconnecting to global markets post COVID-19
- » Cost of providing facilities to remote locations
- » Labour and skilled workforce shortages

Enablers

Infrastructure	
Transport road, airports, maritime	Additional domestic and international flights and cruise ships to increase access to the region and support increased visitor numbers. Increasing sealed road access to allow access by two-wheel drive vehicles enabling more tourist visits.
Digital	Improving digital access in remote communities to enable online bookings and contactless payments, road safety messaging and meet visitor expectations of digital connectivity.
Sport	Investment in training facilities and venues to provide a platform for growth in long-term sports tourism, driven by travelling teams, showcasing events and hosting tournaments.
Cultural	Establish a First Nations art gallery and cultural trail of art centres, particularly in Cape York and Torres Strait, to attract increased tourism.
Water and Sewer	Increasing the capacity of water and sewerage networks in remote areas to meet the needs of tourists and local communities in peak tourism periods.
Land	
Land	Effective management and enhancement of natural assets through Natural Resource Management can help retain the natural beauty of the area.
Human Capital	
Skills	A workforce strategy to meet short-term seasonal workforce demands. Growing business management and governance capability of First Nations businesses to enable higher quality services to meet market requirements and improve the competitiveness of the industry.
Policy	
Promotion	A coordinated approach to developing and promoting sub-regional brands to help small businesses with limited resources develop and grow. A major event and event acquisition strategy could include diverse types of tourism offerings and boost the region's events calendar with events and festivals, building year-round visits.
Financial Capital	
Revenue	Innovative revenue streams to assist local governments to provide facilities for visitors.

4. A growing aviation sector

Grow the aviation industry to enable efficient movement of people and freight both domestically and internationally which will support high-value jobs in the region.

Aviation is vital for moving people and freight, facilitating tourism, agriculture, mining and emergency services. Given the large distances and occasional road closures, aviation provides essential links between remote FNQ communities.

Cairns Airport is vital to FNQ, with direct flights carrying passengers and freight to domestic and international destinations. There is a need to rebuild key tourism markets such as Japan, to offset the recent loss of the Hong Kong and mainland China markets triggered by the COVID pandemic.

The region has several established Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO) manufacturers and Cairns’ proximity to Asia presents a major competitive advantage in attracting new international business in MRO and composite manufacture. The global composites industry is expected to grow by 8.8 per cent per annum, with the Asia Pacific market anticipated to be worth USD \$7.4 billion by 2027.³

The region has an established aviation education sector teaching all aspects of flight, including maintenance, engineering and remote piloting (drones). With travel from Indo-Pacific countries anticipated to grow by 35 per cent⁴, FNQ is well-placed to provide training to support this growth, especially Mareeba Airport which has recently been upgraded to expand MRO and training operations.

Opportunities

- » MRO and composites manufacture expansion at Cairns and Mareeba
- » International route development to support tourism markets
- » Biofuels for aviation
- » Transferable skills to support Defence platform systems maintenance
- » Aviation skills training and accreditation

Challenges

- » Upgrading airports and runways
- » Attracting and retaining skilled workers

Enablers

Infrastructure	
Airports	Upgrade airports to enable safe and more efficient transport and expansion of passenger and freight services as well as MRO and composite manufacturing.
Human Capital	
Skills	A workforce strategy to increase education and training pathways within the region. This would support the development of upstream technology in the space industry, growing the local space industry.
Land	
Land	Suitably located land to enable the expansion of airports and aerospace related activities.

³ Grand view research, 2020. Composites Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Product Type (Carbon fiber, Glass Fiber), By Manufacturing Process (Layup, Filament, Injection Molding, Pultrusion), By End-Use, By Region, And Segment Forecasts, 2022 – 2030. Accessed at <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/composites-market>
⁴ Queensland Government. (2022). Queensland Aerospace 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan. <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/industry/priority-industries/aerospace> p21

5. A liveable region with well-serviced communities

Enhance livability in the region by improving health and education services, food and energy security and digital connectivity.

Infrastructure facilitates liveability through supporting services such as education, health services and community services. Access to these and other services supported by infrastructure is essential to enable FNQ communities to reach their potential and participate in the economy.

Health, food security, education and digital connectivity are key aspects to support liveability in FNQ. Greater access to health services can address poorer health outcomes, higher rates of chronic disease and lower life expectancy experienced by people living in rural and remote areas of Australia compared than those living in metropolitan areas. In many remote communities, food is expensive, rarely fresh with basic food items sometimes unavailable. This is primarily experienced in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Road access supports the delivery of many of the liveability components. Road closures in the wet season and substandard roads limit access which then impacts the delivery of, or access to, health, education and food.

Improving digital connectivity for FNQ will enable access to remote working, telehealth services, virtual education, customers for businesses and personal connections. Digital connectivity will enable industries to thrive and underpin innovation, increase connectivity and education in remote communities and help the region retain and attract a highly skilled workforce.

Increased training programs in the region may support the retention of a skilled workforce. Currently, residents leave FNQ to access education opportunities outside their community or the region.

Housing is a key component of liveability and considered in Regional Priority 5.

Opportunities

- » Preventative health initiatives
- » Improving digital health services accessibility
- » Aligning training programs to key industries
- » Improving transport connectivity

Challenges

- » Access to services both by transport and digitally
- » Lack of available housing for the workforce
- » Climate change impacts on health
- » Poor digital connectivity
- » Increasing the range and breadth of locally available tertiary courses

Enablers

Infrastructure	
Transport	Improving transport connections to enable better access to health and education services and improve food security.
Digital	Improving digital access in regional and remote communities to enable telehealth access. Improving digital connectivity also helps health services providers to operate effectively and assists with access to education.
Health	Improving health infrastructure in regional and remote areas, including community hospitals and community clinics (primary health facilities), can provide basic and some specialist health care locally.
Housing	Providing housing which meets the needs of people and communities will support industry in attracting and retaining workers.
Human Capital	
Skills	Expand and promote social services training opportunities to meet demand and upskill the local workforce.
Policy	
Policy	Consider the delivery of health services at the local and regional level to improve the regional healthcare system.
Coordination	Greater integration of community, early years, health, disability and employment services into schools utilising place-based responses. This enables multiple and flexible use of facilities by the wider community.

6. Housing to support liveability and attract a skilled workforce

Improve the supply and diversity of **housing** in the region to support livability and attract and retain a skilled workforce.

Housing plays a critical role in the labour market allowing workers to move geographically to fill labour needs. Suitable, available and affordable housing enables workers to move to and remain within a region, aiding businesses in attracting and retaining staff and providing flow-on benefits for the local economy. Facilitating diverse and affordable housing supply in FNQ will support greater labour mobility, help address skills attraction and retention and lift economic output across all industries.

Overcrowding is a significant issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with overcrowding rates increasing with remoteness. In remote areas 26 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are living in overcrowded housing, increasing to 51 per cent in very remote areas. Overcrowding in remote and very remote areas is much higher compared to Cairns which reflects the Queensland average.

Climate change will disproportionately impact the health of vulnerable people. Resilient housing can mitigate some of these climate impacts improving the population’s health.

Opportunities

- » Resilient housing to support improved health outcomes.
- » Housing to support a seasonal workforce in the agricultural industry.
- » Housing diversity to provide greater choice.
- » Innovative and modular construction methods in remote locations.

Challenges

- » Access to housing for the workforce to attract and retain a skilled workforce.
- » Overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.
- » Planning for future residential demand in constrained urban areas like Cairns and surrounds.

Enablers

Infrastructure	
Housing	Providing housing that meets the needs of people and communities to support industry in attracting and retaining workers.
Land	Appropriately serviced and tenured land to support housing supply, in both urban areas and in remote and very remote communities.
Utilities water, sewer and electricity	Providing utilities, including potable water supply, sewerage and electricity, to enable the development of housing or the densification of housing.

7. A thriving green economy

Establish FNQ as a leader in the **green economy** to attract domestic and global investment and support local industry to transform to a low carbon future.

A low carbon future is essential to support future economic prosperity and community wellbeing in the region. A transition of the key industries in the region as part of the green economy will further unlock industry potential and enhance the established regional brand to enable economic prosperity in the region. By leveraging renewable energy resources, natural assets, traditional land and sea management practices and the established land management industry, the region can successfully transition to a low carbon economy.

Green economy opportunities across the region include natural resource management, renewable energy, biodiversity offsets and carbon abatement markets, resource recovery and biofutures. Decarbonising existing industries is essential to support future economic prosperity and community wellbeing in the region. The long-term adoption of low carbon business models not only reduces input cost for industries allowing them to remain competitive but improves environmental credentials of the businesses.

Opportunities

- » Natural resource management expansion
- » Renewable energy and energy exports
- » Decarbonising the local industries
- » Biodiversity offsets and carbon abatement markets
- » Resource recovery and biofutures
- » First Nations cultural knowledge to assist with effective resource management

Challenges

- » Control of invasive species
- » Community support and end-of-life impacts for solar and wind farms
- » Access to renewable energy sites
- » Carbon market uncertainty and land use uncertainty
- » Potentially land use conflict between green economy industry ambitions

Enablers

Infrastructure	
Energy transmission, generation and storage, microgrids	Upgrading the energy grid in FNQ to unlock additional renewable energy capacity in the region by enabling projects to connect to the grid. Investment in generation to provide greater security of supply of renewable energy to grid and subsequently the energy market. Delivery of micro-grids to enable remote communities to obtain energy independence and reduce their high reliance on diesel generation.
Human Capital	
Skills	A skilled workforce for natural resource management to support a connection to culture for First Nations people and local employment opportunities on Country. A skilled workforce is required to deliver the offsets or carbon abatement in line with industry standards/ methodology.
Market information	A coordinated approach to market information to increase the flow of information to farmers and traditional land managers to understand current policies and how they can participate in the new market (e.g. through abatement technologies, carbon markets and biodiversity offsets).
Land	
Land	Land is required to maintain or expand NRM to strengthen the natural asset base, enable carbon and biodiversity markets, support large-scale renewable energy development and resource recovery precincts, including buffer zones.
Policy	
Legislation	Legislation includes commitments by both the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Continued policy intervention including supporting early-stage technology development to enable the commercial viability of next generation production facilities for resource recovery and biofutures.
Financial capital	
Capital	Ensuring there are governance and capital available to support investment for natural resource management.

8. Streamline engagement to empower the region

Streamline engagement by the State Government and empower FNQ stakeholders, including First Nations people, to ensure stakeholder perspectives are captured, investment is fit-for-purpose and alignment across service delivery areas is maximised.

The FNQ region is geographically large and diverse, covering approximately 270,000 square kilometres and represents 16 per cent of Queensland’s total land area. The region has 20 LGA’s, the Weipa Town Authority and over 38 Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) entities. Ensuring that stakeholder views are accurately reflected across the region is challenging due to the large number of stakeholders and that stakeholders can have conflicting objectives.

In addition to the number of regional stakeholders, at any time, there are significant activities being delivered in the region by all levels of government and the private sector. There can be a lack of visibility within and across governments and the private sector in regard to activity in the region, leading to projects being considered in isolation and over-consultation of the community.

Opportunities

- » Maximise the benefits of investment through effective project design and coordination
- » Improve resource efficiencies and impact of effective engagement with stakeholders
- » Greater empowerment of stakeholders
- » Fit-for-purpose infrastructure

Challenges

- » Large and diverse number of stakeholders in the region
- » Lack of visibility across infrastructure project delivery
- » Cost of maintaining local government infrastructure that may not be fit-for-purpose
- » Perceived lack of local empowerment

Enablers

Policy	
Governance	Coordination and collaboration between entities to re-shape stakeholder consultation which may consider improved information transparency, visibility of stakeholders and consultation in the region and improved access to existing information regarding stakeholder ambitions.

9. Governance to maximise community benefit

Deliver improved governance and coordination of investment in the region, particularly remote areas Cape York and Torres Strait, to maximise community outcomes such as skilling and employment.

Construction associated with the delivery of infrastructure projects is important for regional and remote communities; it is a key opportunity to enhance community development. The region has seen the positive impacts of job creation and economic stimulus as a result of transformative infrastructure projects and flow-on civil development. Throughout the lifecycle of infrastructure projects there is an opportunity to improve, expand and simplify current practices and processes to deliver improved benefit to communities and cost savings. One way to improve these processes is through governance. Governance is the organising framework that allows discrete investments, stakeholders and strategic intents to be drawn together in an environment of authority, accountability, stewardship and leadership.

Opportunities

- » Reduce the overall capital costs and identify cost efficiencies in the delivery of infrastructure through the delivery of pipeline transparency and certainty.
- » Maximise the ability for local businesses to support the delivery of projects in the region.
- » Improve the infrastructure pipeline visibility to support investment decisions by businesses.

Challenges

- » Overlapping project delivery creates market pressures and limits opportunities for local suppliers.
- » Limited local skilled workforces to support construction.
- » Significant challenges of attracting skilled workers to remote projects.
- » Limited ability to complete the skilling program due to gaps in the pipeline.

Enablers

Policy	
Governance	Improving coordination and collaboration between entities to increase the transparency and certainty of the infrastructure pipeline in the region.

Discussion Paper

Department of State Development,
Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
PO Box 15009 City East Qld 4002 Australia
Tel 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
info@dsdilgp.qld.gov.au
www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au
Connect with us @GrowingQld

