

REGIONAL PLAN AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

# Far North Queensland

2026



**DELIVERING  
FOR QUEENSLAND**



**Queensland  
Government**

The Department of State Development, Infrastructure 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.

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## Minister's foreword

*I am committed to delivering new regional plans, with supporting infrastructure plans, covering every corner of Queensland within this term of government. This is a significant program across the entire state and no previous government has had the ambition or resolve to achieve this in a single term. It's work we need to do to give more Queenslanders a place to call home.*

This regional plan is the first of its kind, with the infrastructure plan embedded to provide a wholistic understanding of what's needed to support growth for Far North Queensland (FNQ).

As part of my commitment to review regional plans, I have promised to work in close partnership with the local governments in each region. This is the first of those regional plans, developed for and with the eight local governments of FNQ (the region). I acknowledge the time and effort invested by these local government in developing this plan with the state.

Rich in natural beauty and economic potential and home to the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics World Heritage Areas (WHAs), the region is not just iconic, it's growing fast. By 2046 we expect the population to reach to nearly 380,000 people and that growth brings both opportunity and responsibility.

This regional plan is about delivering for the people of the region. It's about ensuring that growth is managed with foresight, that infrastructure keeps pace, and that housing is available when and where it's needed.

We are not interested in vague promises, we're focused on practical outcomes.

That's why we've declared the Mount Peter Priority Development Area (PDA) to fast-track housing, infrastructure and essential services when and where they're needed the most. In addition, the Residential Activation Fund (RAF) is unlocking housing across the region. In the 2025-26 State Budget we committed to a new Barron River Bridge, as well as upgrades to health and education services, improvements to the Bruce Highway and funding for sport and recreation including the Smithfield Bike Trail expansion and enhancements to the Manunda Sports precinct.

We're backing the region's strengths in tourism, agriculture, and emerging industries like defence, marine and aerospace. But we're also addressing the challenges head-on.

The Queensland Government has set a clear target: one million new homes by 2044. The region will play a key role in achieving that.

We're also protecting what makes the region special. The region's two WHAs are non-negotiable. This plan includes strong protections for scenic landscapes and ecotourism opportunities.

This plan is a blueprint for action. It's designed to be flexible, responsive, and grounded in reality. Together, we'll ensure the region continues to thrive, economically, socially, and environmentally.

Let's get on with it.

### JARROD BLEIJIE MP.

Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations.



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## A plan prepared in partnership

The Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2026, including the Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan 2026 provided at Appendix 1, has been prepared in partnership with the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils and the following local governments located within the region:

- Cairns Regional Council • Cassowary Coast Regional Council • Douglas Shire Council
- Etheridge Shire Council • Mareeba Shire Council • Tablelands Regional Council
- Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council • Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council

Chapter 1

# *The plan for Far North Queensland*

# Vision

## 20 years and beyond

**FNQ will build upon its reputation as the powerhouse of northern Australia, excelling as a global hub for tourism, environmental protection, and agriculture.**

The region will embody resilience where outstanding biodiversity and landscape values, including the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics WHAs, are not only cherished but actively preserved for current and future generations.

The region will be highly accessible and connected, ensuring rapid responses to emerging challenges and global trends. Proximity to the Asia-Pacific will provide strategic advantages, together with strengths in agricultural production, tourism, healthcare, social assistance and hospitality sectors. The region's economy will expand and diversify as a service provider to other centres and cities. Emerging and innovative industries will be at the forefront of the region's economic development. People and industries will be early adopters of new technologies, while sustainable practices and entrepreneurial spirit will integrate economic growth with environmental stewardship.

Social infrastructure and services, including healthcare and education, will be accessible to all, including during times of disaster recovery, through careful forward planning and investment in critical infrastructure and supporting technologies in the right locations. This will ensure that the built form and growth pattern for the region will respond to natural hazard risks.

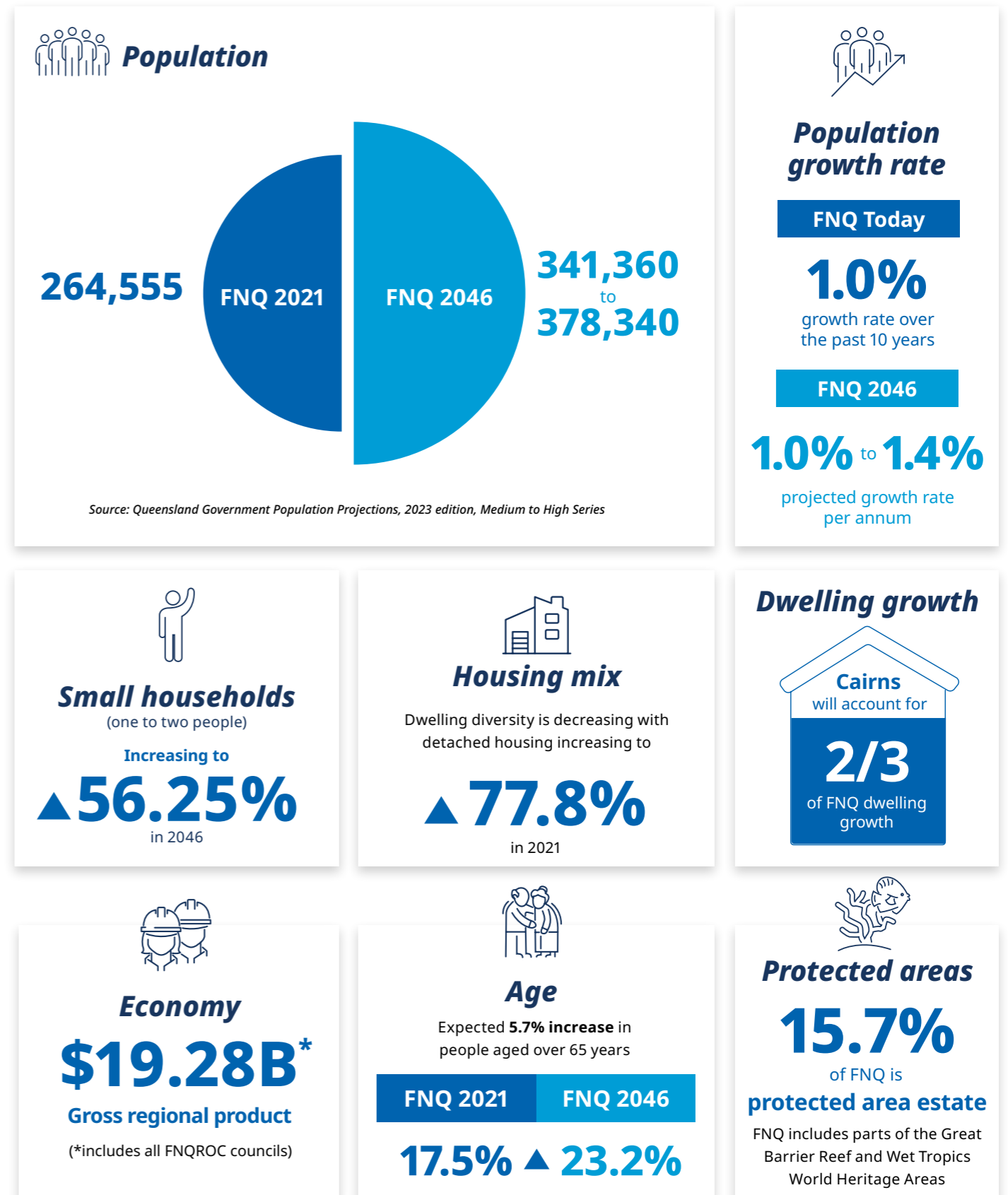
To support continued prosperity, the region will attract and retain talent and employment from across the globe. It will cater to the needs of younger people and

families through attractive housing types of varying densities, a quality public realm and an alluring outdoor lifestyle.

The rural landscape continues to shape the region's identity, providing a distinctive geographic reference point for residents and visitors alike. As a local and global food bowl, the region supports diverse forms of agricultural production, underpinned by innovative and sustainable land management practices. Rural areas are valued not only for their scenic significance, but also for supporting enterprise diversification and value-added production, ensuring agriculture remains a viable, resilient, and attractive livelihood into the future. Strategic land use planning will play a role in safeguarding agricultural land and water resources, contributing to long-term water security and the sustainable growth of the region's agricultural economy.

The vision for the region's future will be achieved through collaborative effort, ownership and action, focused on realising long-term strategic planning aspirations that will support the region and its communities now and into the future. The region's governance will be underpinned by highly connected communities and the many voices of the region's people.

## Far North Queensland snapshot





# Regional context

The region encompasses the eight local government areas (LGAs) of Cairns Regional Council, Cassowary Coast Regional Council, Douglas Shire Council, Etheridge Shire Council, Mareeba Shire Council, Tablelands Regional Council, Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council and Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council. The regional boundary and LGAs are shown in **Map 1**.

The region is experiencing a range of environmental, social and economic changes that require consideration through regional planning responses. **Map 2** identifies key strategic linkages within the region, along with key economic sectors.

## **1. Regional growth and housing**

Current analysis indicates that the region retains sufficient capacity to accommodate growth to 2046, though a greater mix of housing types are needed and contingency within the Cairns LGA is limited if growth accelerates. Other major centres in the region, including Atherton, Mareeba and Tully, offer more resilient growth options. Planning to identify suitable land to accommodate future urban growth beyond 2046 will be critical over the coming years.

## **2. Regional economy**

The region's economy is growing and well-positioned for further expansion. The region's economy is diverse, with strengths in tourism, agriculture, mining, tropical expertise, and emerging industries like energy and defence. Its proximity to the Asia-Pacific is central to its role as a northern gateway. Leveraging its strengths across these sectors and their connections allows the region to be globally connected yet self-reliant.

## **3. Environment and biodiversity**

The region is home to two extensive WHAs and is the only place in the world with two interconnected WHAs. The region is globally recognised for its biodiversity. Its character and lifestyle are defined by its natural beauty, opportunities for outdoor living and nature-based recreational activities.

## **4. Infrastructure networks**

Resilient infrastructure is essential to the region's liveability and economic productivity. The importance of regional transport connectivity is demonstrated during severe weather events, particularly those which disrupt key sections of the Palmerston, Captain Cook and Kennedy Highways. These events highlight vulnerabilities in infrastructure networks, including community isolation and the impacts on transport and freight networks, emphasising the urgent need for investment in resilient infrastructure.

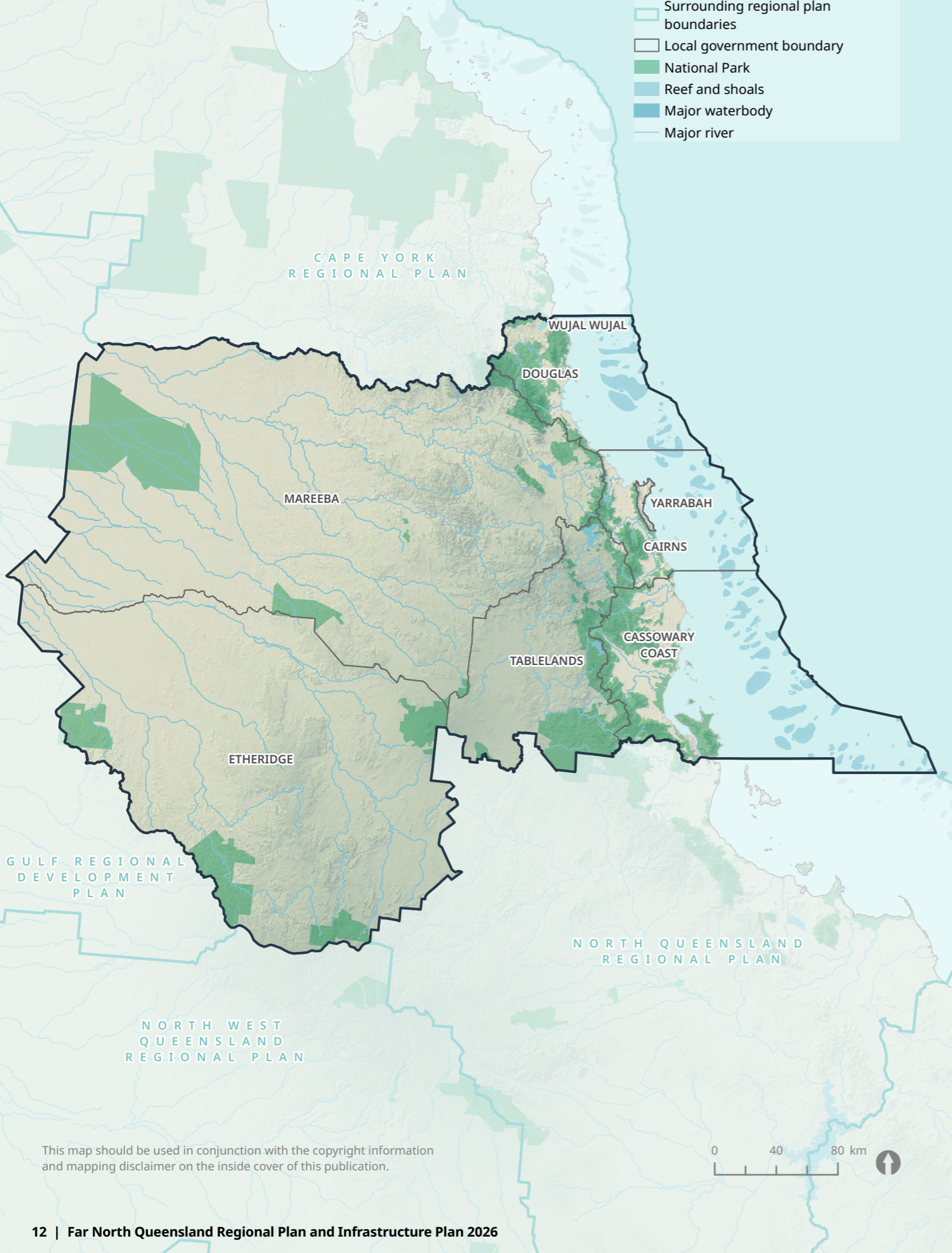
Strategic upgrades to ports, highways, public transport—especially in Cairns—are underway. Water security and energy expansion are priorities to support future growth and sustainability.

Strategically located in proximity to the Asia-Pacific, the region is positioned to continue to build its reputation as a northern gateway. The region has historically leveraged these advantages in agriculture and tourism, together with industries such as health, tropical science and mining. With forecasted growth in knowledge and corporate industries, the region is looking to build upon its traditional expertise in applied industries and defence to further its reputation as an emerging leader in Australia's economy.

Strategic inter-regional, domestic and international connections are depicted on **Map 3** and **Map 4**.

**Map 1**  
The local government areas of Far North Queensland

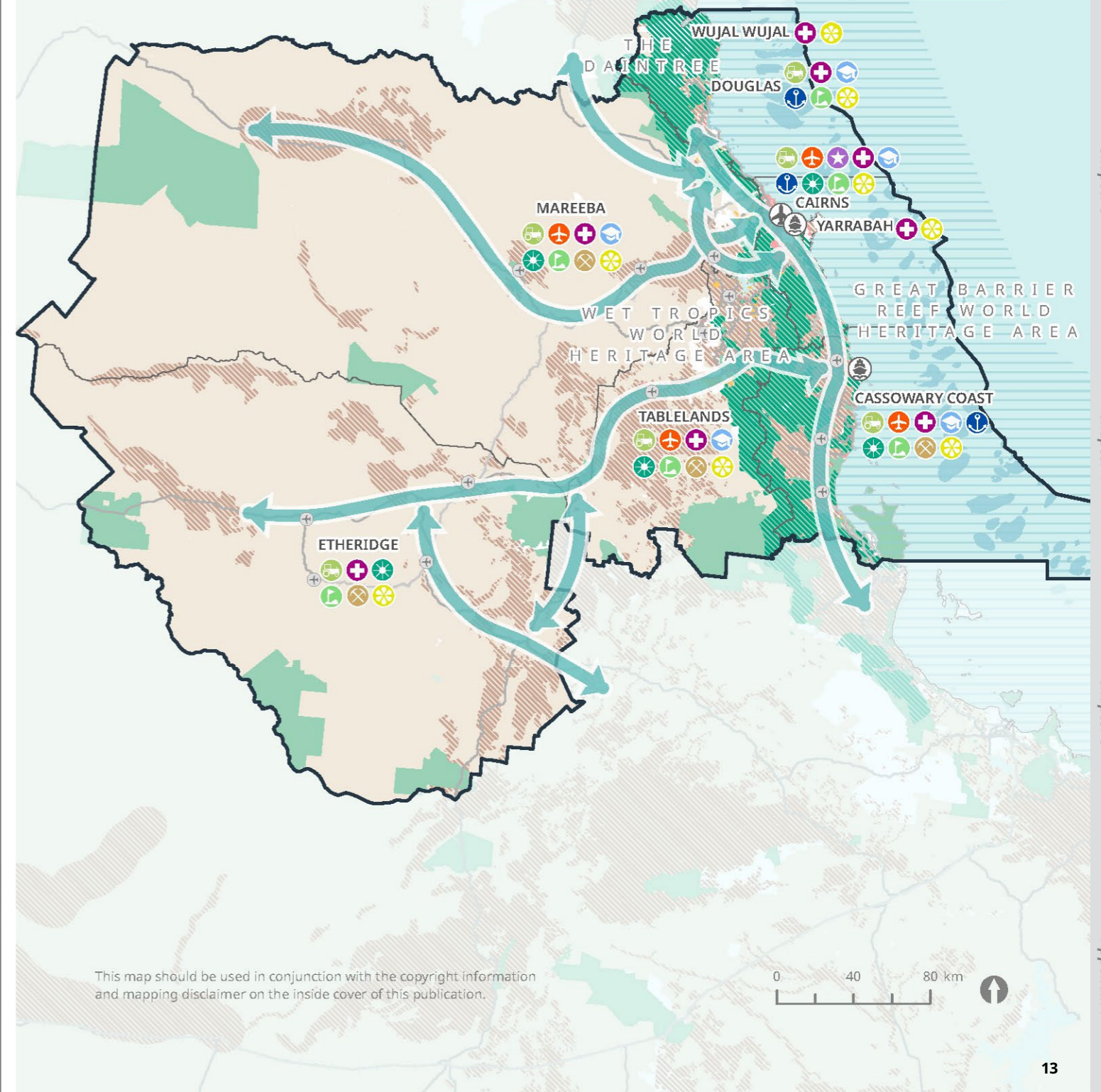
- Legend**
- Far North Queensland Regional Plan boundary
  - Surrounding regional plan boundaries
  - Local government boundary
  - National Park
  - Reef and shoals
  - Major waterbody
  - Major river



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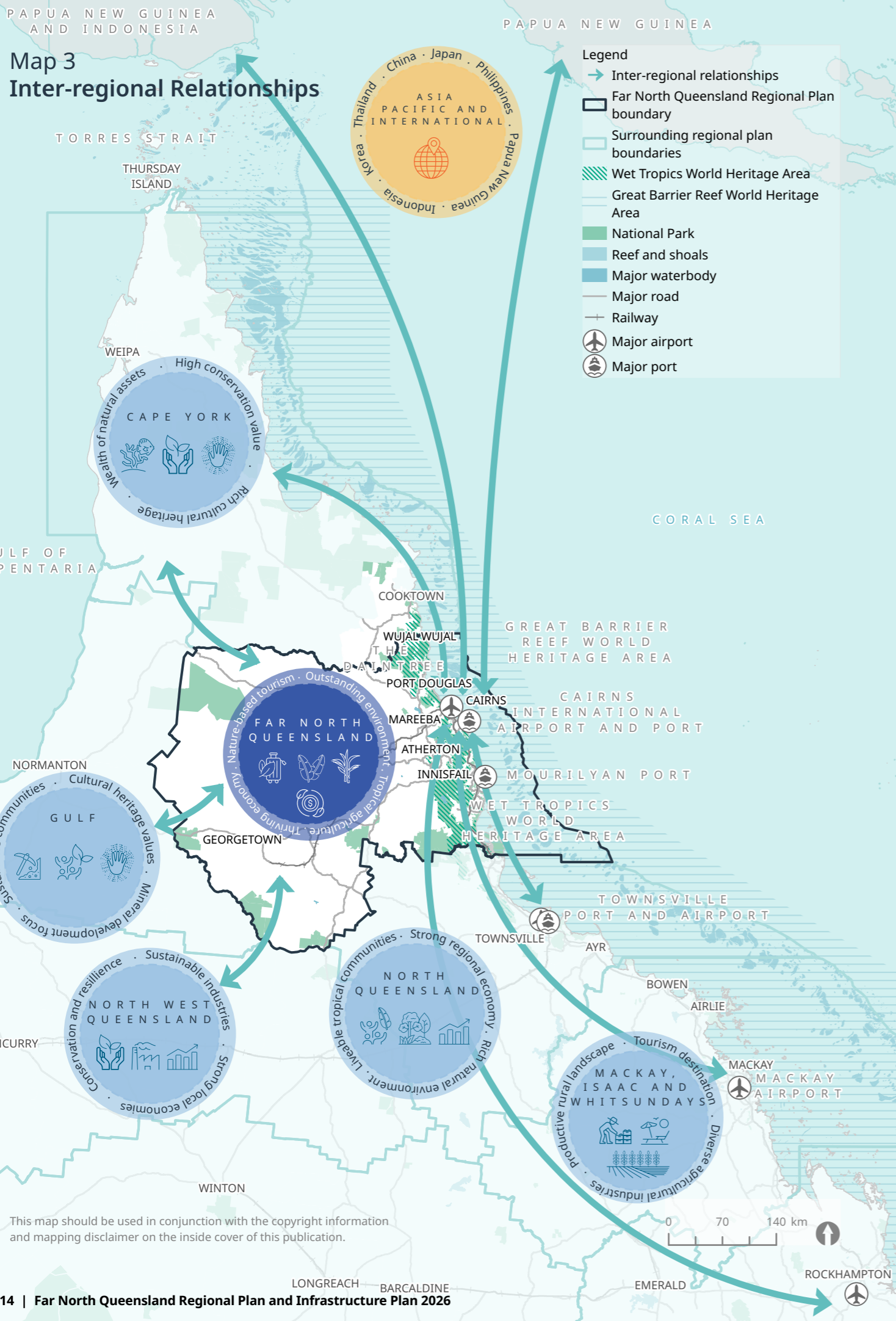
**Map 2**  
Regional Context

- Legend**
- Sectors**
- Agriculture
  - Aviation
  - Defence
  - Health
  - Knowledge, Education and Training
  - Marine
  - Renewable Energy
  - Sport, Recreation and Events
  - Mining
  - Tourism
- Regional economic assets**
- Port
  - Major airport
  - Airport / aerodrome
- Regional land use categories**
- Urban Footprint
  - Rural Living Area
  - National Park
  - Wet Tropics World Heritage Area
  - Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area
  - Agricultural land
  - Rural activities
  - Local government boundary
  - Far North Queensland Regional Plan boundary
- Other symbols**
- Intra-regional relationships
  - Railway
  - Major road



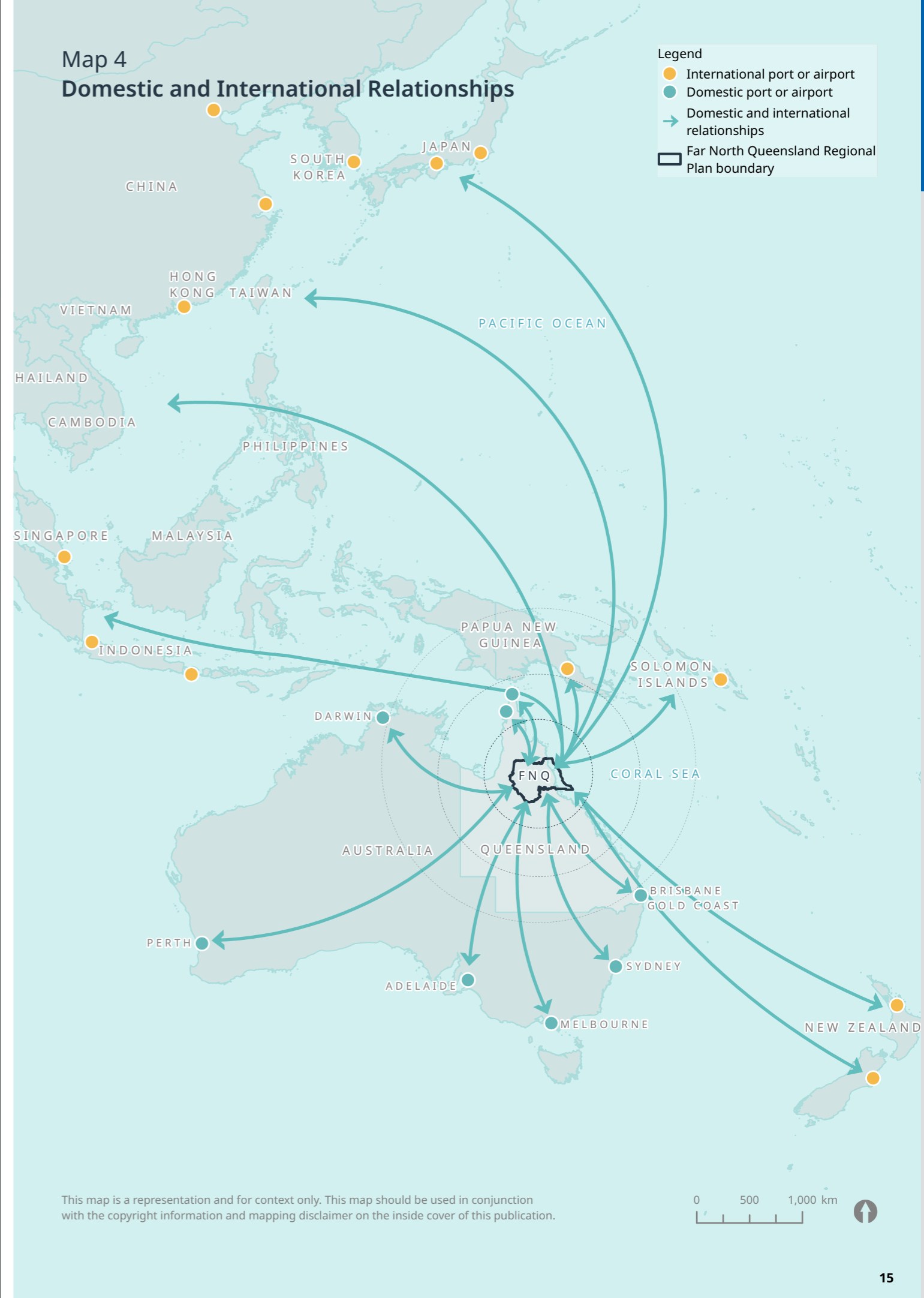
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### Map 3 Inter-regional Relationships



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### Map 4 Domestic and International Relationships



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# Local government narratives

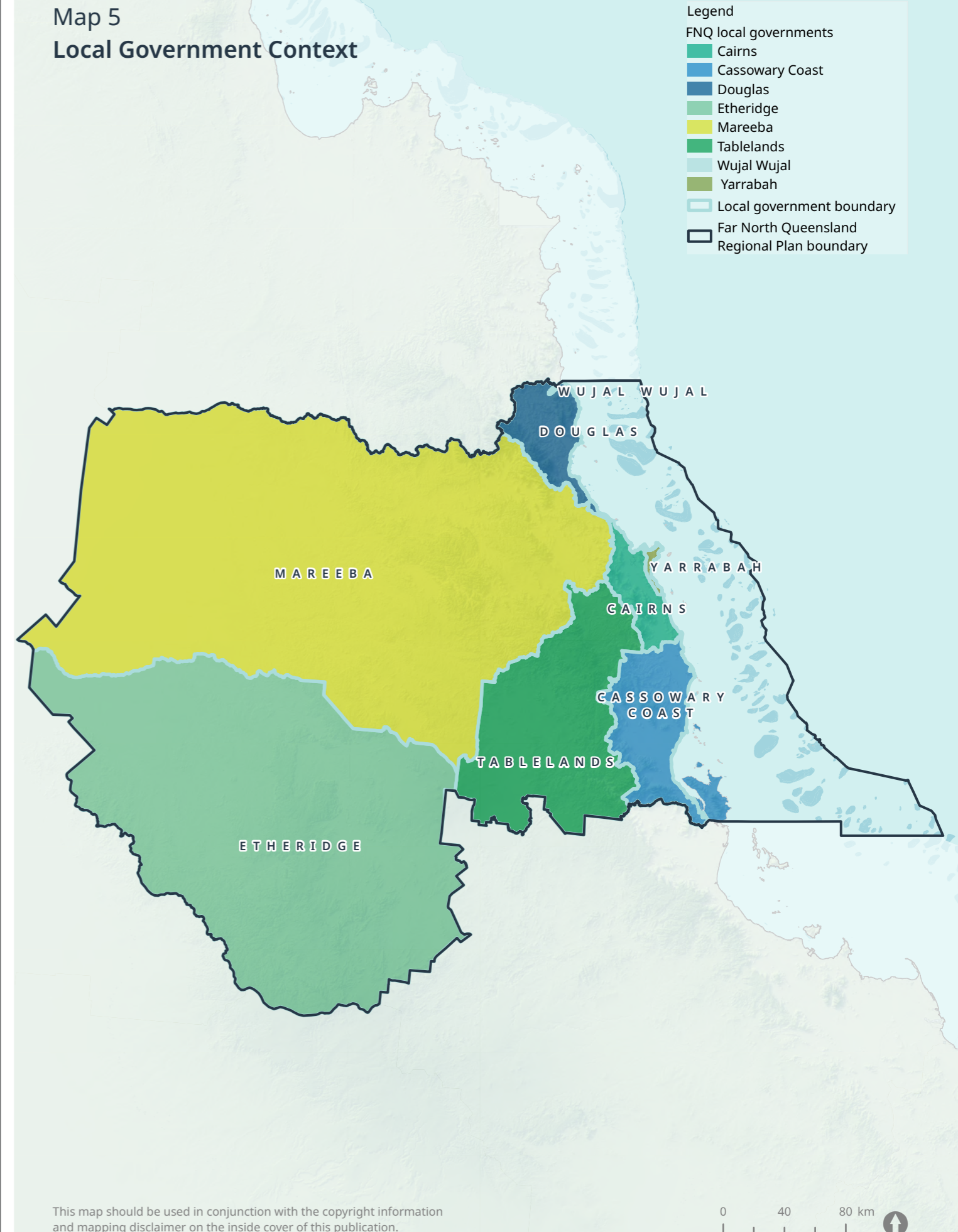
The region is large and diverse, with a wide range of urban, rural and remote communities, set within distinct natural landscapes.

The size of each LGA and the considerable distances between them, as shown on **Map 5**, contribute to varied community needs, service delivery contexts and development patterns.

The description of the eight local governments on the following pages highlights key characteristics, strengths and challenges. All population and dwelling data is sourced from Queensland Government Statisticians Office, unless otherwise noted.

Cairns	
<p><b>Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>169,310 in 2021 (estimated)</li> <li>231,165 to 259,745 in 2046 (projected)</li> </ul> <p><b>Dwellings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>70,475 in 2021</li> <li>93,370 to 102,530 in 2046</li> </ul>	<p><b>Major industries by employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health care and social assistance</li> <li>Accommodation and food services</li> <li>Retail trade</li> </ul> <p><b>Industry specialisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodation and food services</li> <li>Public administration and safety</li> <li>Transport, postal and warehousing</li> </ul>
Douglas	
<p><b>Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12,445 in 2021 (estimated)</li> <li>15,290 to 16,695 in 2046 (projected)</li> </ul> <p><b>Dwellings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6130 in 2021</li> <li>8665 to 9685 in 2046</li> </ul>	<p><b>Major industries by employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodation and food services</li> <li>Retail trade</li> <li>Health care and social assistance</li> </ul> <p><b>Industry specialisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodation and food services</li> <li>Administrative and support services</li> <li>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> </ul>
Mareeba	
<p><b>Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23,175 in 2021 (estimated)</li> <li>28,685 to 31,505 in 2046 (projected)</li> </ul> <p><b>Dwellings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9340 in 2021</li> <li>11,530 to 12,535 in 2046</li> </ul>	<p><b>Major industries by employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>Health care and social assistance</li> <li>Education and training</li> </ul> <p><b>Industry specialisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>Mining</li> <li>Public administration and safety</li> </ul>
Wujal Wujal	
<p><b>Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>285 in 2021 (estimated)</li> <li>310 to 335 in 2046 (projected)</li> </ul> <p><b>Dwellings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90 in 2021</li> <li>110 to 115 in 2046</li> </ul>	<p><b>Major industries by employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public administration and safety</li> <li>Arts and recreation services</li> <li>Health care and social assistance</li> </ul> <p><b>Industry specialisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public administration and safety</li> <li>Arts and recreation services</li> <li>Health care and social assistance</li> </ul>

Cassowary Coast	
<p><b>Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>29,525 in 2021 (estimated)</li> <li>31,600 to 33,155 in 2046 (projected)</li> </ul> <p><b>Dwellings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13,775 in 2021</li> <li>17,155 to 18,535 in 2046</li> </ul>	<p><b>Major industries by employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>Health care and social assistance</li> <li>Retail trade</li> </ul> <p><b>Industry specialisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>Manufacturing</li> <li>Electricity, gas, water and waste services</li> </ul>
Etheridge	
<p><b>Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>725 in 2021 (estimated)</li> <li>630 to 675 in 2046 (projected)</li> </ul> <p><b>Dwellings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>255 in 2021</li> <li>No major change projected in 2046</li> </ul>	<p><b>Major industries by employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>Public administration and safety</li> <li>Accommodation and food services</li> </ul> <p><b>Industry specialisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>Public administration and safety</li> <li>Electricity, gas, water and waste services</li> </ul>
Tablelands	
<p><b>Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26,490 in 2021 (estimated)</li> <li>30,335 to 32,530 in 2046 (projected)</li> </ul> <p><b>Dwellings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12,180 in 2021</li> <li>15,330 to 16,630 in 2046</li> </ul>	<p><b>Major industries by employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>Healthcare and social assistance</li> <li>Retail trade</li> </ul> <p><b>Industry specialisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</li> <li>Mining</li> <li>Education and training</li> </ul>
Yarrabah	
<p><b>Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2600 in 2021 (estimated)</li> <li>3345 to 3700 in 2046 (projected)</li> </ul> <p><b>Dwellings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>455 in 2021</li> <li>760 to 900 in 2046</li> </ul>	<p><b>Major industries by employment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health care and social assistance</li> <li>Public administration and safety</li> <li>Education and training</li> </ul> <p><b>Industry specialisations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public administration and safety</li> <li>Arts and recreation services</li> <li>Health care and social assistance</li> </ul>



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Industries by employment and industry specialisations (specialisation ratio) - ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile



# Cairns Regional Council



Cairns Esplanade Lagoon (Cairns)  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

## Local government area statistics

 **Area**  
**1690 km<sup>2</sup>**

 **Key centres**

**Cairns City, Earlville,  
Edmonton and Smithfield**

**Other communities include**  
Babinda, Clifton Beach, Gordonvale,  
Manoora, Manunda, Mount Sheridan,  
Redlynch and Westcourt

### Unique lifestyle values

Cairns is a vibrant, tropical area that is situated between the Coral Sea and the surrounding mountain ranges, characterised by lush rainforests, scenic coastlines, and rural landscapes. It has strong cultural significance with vibrant First Nations and multicultural communities.

Cairns also serves as the key regional hub, functioning as the economic, administrative, health and tourism centre for the region.

Cairns' built environment is characterised by its tropical design and natural landscaping that embed tropical urbanism principles. Development is designed to support outdoor lifestyle and connections to the environment, while ensuring thermal comfort and resilience.

Enhancing tree canopy cover and urban greening, providing covered walkways and outdoor areas, and protecting natural waterways are crucial to mitigate urban heat effects.

## Cairns Regional Council economic overview

### Economic opportunities

As the primary gateway to iconic natural attractions, Cairns plays a vital role in both domestic and international tourism. It is also a critical logistics and trade hub, with a major airport and seaport facilitating transport, exports, and regional connectivity.

Cairns underpins several of the region's major industries including health, tourism, agriculture, marine services and defence. Its strategic location and infrastructure make it essential to the functioning and development of the region.

Tourism has long been a pillar of the Cairns economy, driven by nature-based experiences, ecotourism, key areas such as the Cairns northern beaches, and a major international airport and seaport that connect Cairns with Australia and the world. Agriculture is also a pillar of the Cairns economy, particularly sugar cane farming and processing through the Mulgrave Mill.

Cairns enjoys a diverse industry base that includes health care and social assistance as the largest industry by employment, accommodation and food, education and construction. Cairns also has emerging strengths in the marine, defence and aviation sectors, which each support high-value jobs and wider regional capabilities.

Cairns provides major health, education and government services, including Cairns Hospital, James Cook University, Central Queensland University, Dugurrdja Precinct, TAFE Queensland and other research facilities.

Cairns City is a major freight and distribution hub at the terminus of the Bruce Highway and North Coast rail line, with sea and air connections through the Cairns Seaport and Cairns Airport.

Cairns City plays a vital role in servicing broader FNQ, Cape York and Gulf communities and is a gateway to Papua New Guinea, the South Pacific and East Asia.

Cairns City is supported by major centres at Smithfield, Earlville and Edmonton, with Edmonton intended to support projected growth in the Southern Growth Corridor.

The Cairns South State Development Area (SDA) provides a location for regionally significant industrial development to support the long-term needs of a growing diversified regional economy.

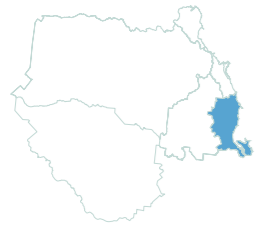
### Environmental features

Cairns is internationally renowned for its natural beauty. It is the gateway to the UNESCO World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics, cementing itself as a world-renowned tourist destination.

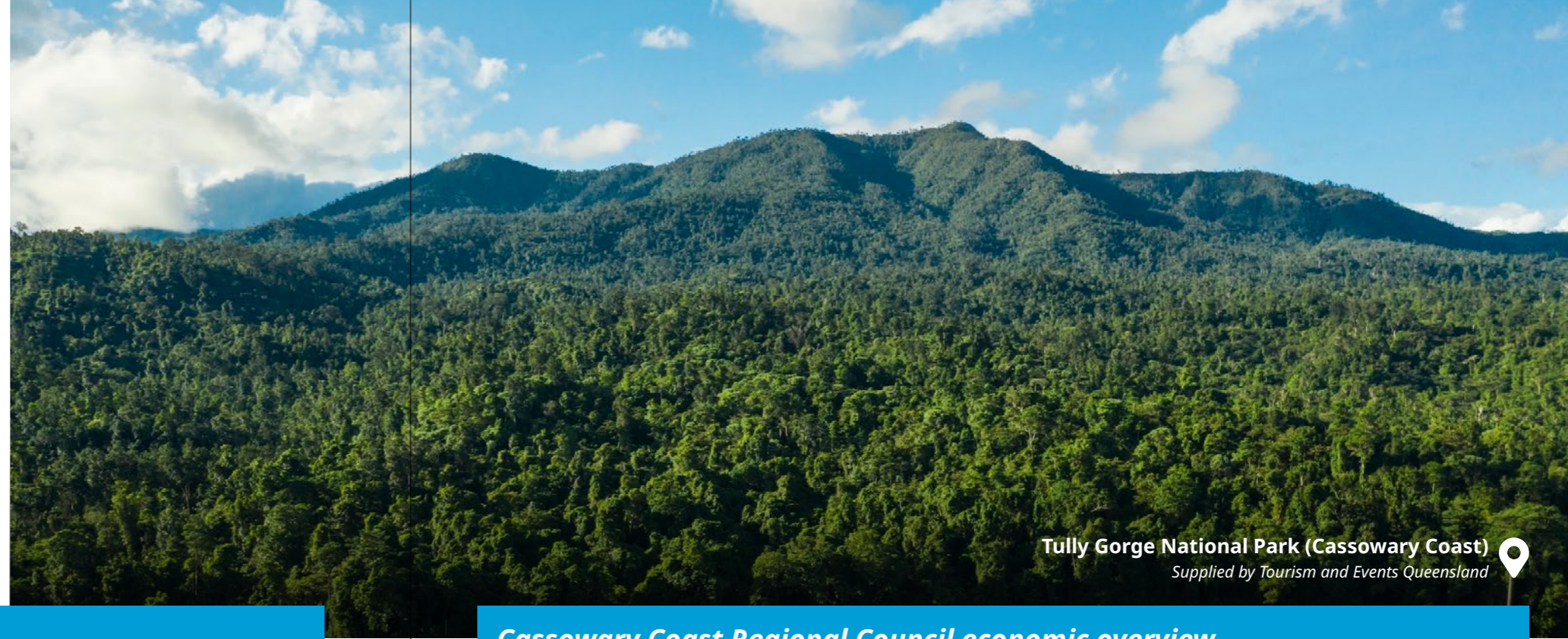
Cairns' blue-green elements shape the region and its unique tropical identity. Blue-green infrastructure is recognised and valued to protect ecosystem services, enhance resilience to natural hazards and mitigate urban heat.

### Infrastructure

Continuous investment in infrastructure, such as healthcare (including the Cairns Hospital Master Plan that describes the service and capacity expansion required to continue delivering quality care), education, recreational facilities, water, roads, telecommunications, utilities and public amenities is essential for increasing hazard resilience and supporting population and economic growth and connectivity within Cairns and more broadly across the region.



# Cassowary Coast Regional Council



Tully Gorge National Park (Cassowary Coast)  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

## Local government area statistics



Area

4688 km<sup>2</sup>



Key centres

Cardwell, Innisfail, Mission Beach (including Wongaling Beach, South Mission Beach and Bingil Bay), Tully

Other communities include

Coquette Point, El Arish, Ety Bay, Euramo, Feluga, Flying Fish Point, Hull Heads, Jumbun, Kurrimine Beach, Mena Creek, Mourilyan, Murray Upper, Silkwood, South Johnstone and Tully Heads

## Unique lifestyle values

The Cassowary Coast provides a relaxed lifestyle with a vibrant and prosperous community.

Cassowary Coast is home to First Nations peoples and a multicultural community, giving it a unique cultural landscape and a strong foundation for community resilience.

Its tropical rainforest climate makes the Cassowary Coast one of the wettest regions in Australia.

Cassowary Coast is strategically positioned between the two largest population centres in northern Australia, Cairns and Townsville, and is connected to the Atherton Tablelands and Cape York.

Innisfail is the major centre on the Cassowary Coast and is known for its Art Deco heritage. Tully is the next largest town and is centred on the town's sugar mill. Historically, tourism has been concentrated at Mission Beach and Dunk Island. Cardwell is the gateway to Hinchinbrook Island. There are defence training areas at Cowley Beach and jungle training at Tully.

Key initiatives include revitalising the town centres of Innisfail, Tully and Mission Beach, rejuvenating Dunk Island and restoring Port Hinchinbrook as a thriving destination.

The Queensland Government has declared a Provisional Priority Development Area (PPDA) at Port Hinchinbrook to restore the area as a thriving tourism, commercial and residential precinct. The PPDA addresses long standing infrastructure and planning challenges and facilitates critical infrastructure works, including the restoration of navigability of the waterways, Stony Creek canal and access channels.

## Cassowary Coast Regional Council economic overview

### Economic opportunities

The Cassowary Coast is a diverse coastal sub-region with an economic base built on agriculture. Sugarcane and bananas are pillars of the economy.

The future prosperity of the Cassowary Coast relies on supporting the traditional agricultural industry and enhancing economic diversity. Priority industries include agribusiness and food production, transport and logistics, bioeconomy and circular economy, renewable energy and other value-added products. There are also opportunities to develop a range of sustainable, nature-based, adventure, cultural and ecotourism experiences across the Cassowary Coast.

Opportunities for industrial land are facilitated at Goondi Bend (Innisfail) and Tully. The future growth of the Port of Mourilyan and Mundoo aerodrome is planned to support freight and logistics. There are also opportunities for high-purity silica extraction, processing and multi-user infrastructure to grow the critical minerals value chain. This will enable the export of high-purity silica via Mourilyan Port.

The Cassowary Coast has knowledge and health precincts at Innisfail Hospital, Tully Hospital, TAFE Queensland Innisfail campus and the South Johnstone Research Facility. A Regional University Study Hub has been established in Innisfail, supporting access to higher education.

The Cassowary Coast is focused on growing a stronger, resilient and more sustainable economy that will create jobs, attract investment and will deliver greater prosperity for the region into the future.

### Environmental features

Cassowary Coast is a globally important biodiversity hotspot and natural heritage region. Its value lies in its pristine, diverse ecosystems, ecological functions and the way these natural assets support both nature and people. Cassowary Coast features two interconnecting World Heritage listed ecosystems, the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics. These natural landscapes not only provide critical corridors between tropical rainforests, melaleuca swamps and mangrove forests, as well as connecting mountain and sea, but they are also culturally significant as the lands and seas are traditional country for First Nations peoples.

### Infrastructure

The Bruce Highway and the Great Green Way provide critical connections to both centres and southern markets. The Palmerston Highway provides critical freight linkages to the Atherton Tablelands and beyond (the Einasleigh Uplands, the Gulf and Cape York Peninsula). With access to the national rail network, a deep-water port at Mourilyan and an aerodrome at Mundoo, this junction of transport infrastructure is unique and provides a strong foundation for future growth.



# Douglas Shire Council

Oak Beach, Port Douglas (Douglas)  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

## Local government area statistics

 Area  
2428 km<sup>2</sup>

 Key centres

**Mossman, Port Douglas**

Other communities include

Cape Tribulation, Cooya Beach, Cow Bay, Daintree Village, Degarra, Newell Beach, Wangetti and Wonga Beach

### Unique lifestyle values

Douglas Shire is a sub-region of extraordinary natural beauty ranging from just north of Ellis Beach in the south to the Bloomfield River, approximately 60 kilometres north of Cairns. The area is defined by its stunning coastline along the Coral Sea, the Daintree Rainforest, Mossman Gorge and its proximity to the Great Barrier Reef and its rich cultural heritage.

The Douglas Shire is made up of a number of coastal settlements, each with unique roles and contributions characterising the region's lifestyle.

The Douglas Shire is home to both the Eastern Kuku Yalanji and Yirrganydji people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land and sea and have fostered a strong identity in the shire and the region.

## Douglas Shire Council economic overview

### Economic opportunities

Given its exceptional natural beauty and attractions, the Douglas Shire's economy is driven by tourism.

Douglas Shire is Australia's most tourism reliant economy, making up 80 per cent of its regional economic revenue. Douglas Shire's tourism industry contributes more than 20 per cent of the region's total tourism revenue.

Investment in infrastructure that supports and develops the visitor economy is essential for the sector to maintain and grow its competitive advantage.

Agriculture, primarily cropping, also plays an important role in the Douglas Shire's economy. Sugarcane has historically made up 82 per cent of agricultural production. Aquaculture, grazing, horticulture and alternative crops make up the remaining.

Carefully planned emerging industries, such as alternative energy production, are critical to securing further agricultural activity. Opportunities to diversify and strengthen the visitor economy are essential for economic growth and community resilience for Douglas Shire and the broader region.

Douglas Shire has sufficient land to accommodate residential and employment growth, including vacant urban land at Mossman and Port Douglas. North of the Daintree River is primarily existing residential and nature-based tourism with some agriculture opportunities in line with the unique ecological values and characteristics of the locality.

The Douglas Shire has a range of settlements, each contributing to the shire's distinct character. Mossman and Port Douglas are the largest urban settlements. These two district centres are in close proximity and have complementary roles and functions.

Mossman retains its distinct sense of place as an agricultural centre. It is the administrative centre with a regional secondary school, hospital, courthouse and government services. The agglomeration of agricultural and industrial services remains in Mossman.

Port Douglas is a renowned and iconic international tourism destination with a strong service sector and distinct sense of place retaining its coastal village atmosphere over time. Opportunity exists to investigate

diversifying marine industry by establishing a Marine Industry Precinct on Dickson Inlet and expanding an activated waterfront precinct closer to the marina.

The Douglas Shire includes numerous residential settlements located down the coastline from Degarra in the north to Wangetti in the south. Wonga Beach, Newell Beach and Cooya Beach are the significant coastal settlements each contributing to its unique identity.

### Environmental features

The Douglas Shire features two interconnecting World Heritage listed ecosystems, the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics.

The tropical climate, beaches, rivers, reefs and rainforest are complemented by world class tourist attractions and experiences making the Douglas Shire iconic and an integral part of the regional economy.

Fertile and robust agricultural land is abundant and rife for opportunity.

There is a deep commitment to protecting the natural environment for the use of future generations while honouring the past in the Douglas Shire.

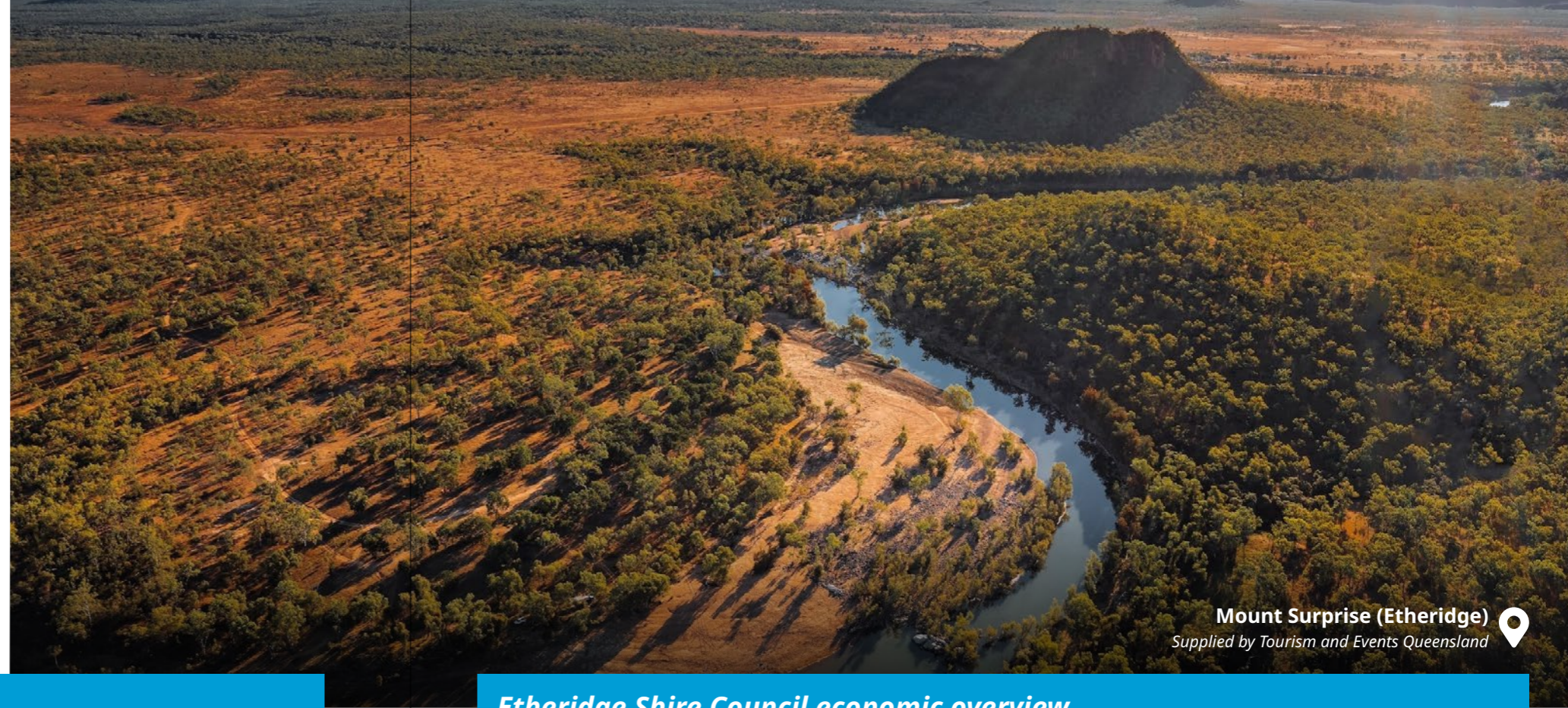
### Infrastructure

Further development of infrastructure in Douglas Shire will foster continued prosperity. Further investment in roads and transport systems as well as resilient water and wastewater infrastructure is critical for growth and sustainability.

Key infrastructure projects include the Port Douglas water reservoir duplication, Mossman and Port Douglas wastewater treatment plant and network upgrade, Port Douglas Waterfront Precinct, Rex Range Road improvement, Captain Cook Highway improvement between Cairns and Port Douglas, extension of trunk water main to enable expansion of Wonga Beach, and the development of hiking and biking trails such as the Wangetti Trail to Port Douglas connection. An opportunity to address seasonality exists for a potential convention centre in Port Douglas which allows diversification from the tourism market.



# Etheridge Shire Council



Mount Surprise (Etheridge)  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

## Local government area statistics

 **Area**  
**39,199 km<sup>2</sup>**

 **Housing**

The 2023 edition Queensland Government Population, Household and Dwelling projections for Etheridge Shire forecast a decline over the next 20 years. However, the Kidston Clean Energy Hub, the Gilbert River Agricultural Scheme and the industrial precinct proposed at Georgetown have the potential to contribute to reversing the declining population trend. Etheridge Shire is therefore expected to experience growth over the next 20 years.

 **Key centres**  
**Georgetown**

Other centres and communities include Einasleigh, Forsayth, Kidston, Mount Surprise and Oak Park

### Unique lifestyle values

Etheridge Shire lies in the heart of the Savannah Gulf region of FNQ, with strong links to the Gulf of Carpentaria, as well as North and North-West Queensland. It covers a vast area from the Great Dividing Range in the east to Gregory Range in the west and is dissected by the Gilbert, Einasleigh and Etheridge rivers. Etheridge is a unique and diverse area that offers a range of rural and remote experiences for visitors and locals.

The administrative and service centre of Etheridge Shire is Georgetown, with other communities including Forsayth, Einasleigh, Mount Surprise, Kidston and Oak Park accessible, weather permitting, primarily by road, with some limited rail and air connections.

Etheridge Shire provides its residents and visitors with access to a range of primary health, education and community facilities. However, the shire's remote location and low population base means residents travel to Mount Isa, Townsville or Cairns for higher-order services and facilities.

## Etheridge Shire Council economic overview

### Economic opportunities

Etheridge Shire is well-positioned to take advantage of its strategic location to service and link the Gulf, North-West, North and FNQ regions. Its economy will continue to build upon strengths in the agriculture and mining industries.

The main agricultural activity is cattle grazing, however other agricultural opportunities are also being investigated on the Gilbert River as part of a proposed Etheridge Agricultural Precinct. Renewable energy and critical minerals are emerging as future growth areas.

There is a large, currently undeveloped industrial area at Georgetown that will be of strategic importance for both industrial and agricultural growth and diversity in the shire and the wider Gulf area.

Tourism is focused on Etheridge Shire's natural attractions. The Savannah Way and Savannahlander provide important road and rail connections bringing tourism to the shire. Some of the notable natural attractions include Undara Volcanic National Park, the Agate Creek and O'Brien's Creek fossicking areas, Cobbold and Copperfield gorges, and Talaroo Hot Springs. Georgetown includes a heritage precinct and the TerrEstrial Centre (Mineral Collection and UnEarth Etheridge Exhibit).

The Kidston Clean Energy Hub is repurposing existing infrastructure at an old gold mine to develop pumped

storage hydro (250 MW), solar farm (50 MW), battery storage facility (250 MW) and a dedicated transmission line (275 kV).

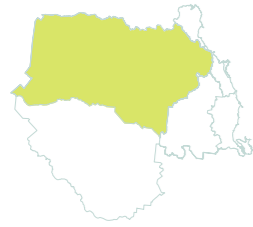
### Environmental features

Etheridge Shire features unique ecosystems including the Einasleigh Uplands and Gulf Plains bioregions, where remnant vegetation is mostly intact. Diverse landscape features include national parks, gorges, savannah lands and rich mineral deposits dating back 1.7 billion years, including evidence of geological volcanic activity.

### Infrastructure

The Gulf Developmental Road, the Kennedy Developmental Road and the Gregory Developmental Road are progressively being widened and sealed, enhancing freight, visitor and educational connections to Croydon, Charters Towers and Hughenden. Georgetown's central location at the base of the Cape York Peninsula, halfway between the Coral Sea and the Gulf, provides opportunities to connect to surrounding regions by road and air.

The shire's strategic location provides opportunities and advantages for future economic growth. Investment in infrastructure is critical to strengthening and enhancing this strategic locational advantage.



# Mareeba Shire Council



Mareeba (Mareeba)

Supplied by State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

## Local government area statistics

 **Area**  
53,491 km<sup>2</sup>

 **Key centres**  
Kuranda and Mareeba

**Other communities include**  
Almaden, Biboohra, Chillagoe, Dimbulah, Irvinebank, Julatten, Koah, Mount Carbine, Mount Molloy, Mutchilba, Speewah and Watsonville

### Unique lifestyle values

Mareeba is a shire of diversity with a vibrant, multicultural population and landscapes that vary from World Heritage rainforest and the Great Dividing Range in the east, to dry savannah grasslands and the Staaten River in the west.

Mareeba Shire's multicultural fabric is woven from its rich First Nations heritage and from residents originating from over 75 nations who have chosen to make Mareeba their home.

Mareeba Shire is the largest local government by area in FNQ with most of the population residing in the Mareeba and Kuranda townships, together with a range of smaller, rural and remote communities, each with an individual role and character.

Sustainability and self-sufficiency are core to the Mareeba Shire's ethos, reflected in the community's reliance on the fertile soils and Tinaroo Dam (which is located in the Tablelands Regional Council LGA) for horticulture to the large grazing holdings in the shire's west.

Locals and visitors cherish the outdoors, embracing a warm climate that invites exploration of nearby rainforests, wetlands and outback landscapes. Mareeba Shire is a transport and services hub for the Cape York Peninsula and Gulf of Carpentaria, featuring a strategic airport, ample industrial land and multiple highway junctions. Kuranda continues to be an important tourism destination, connected to Cairns by the Kuranda Scenic Railway, Skyrail cableway and the Kennedy Highway.

The unique lifestyle values of the shire continue to attract economic and population growth.

## Mareeba Shire Council economic overview

### Economic opportunities

Agriculture remains the backbone of Mareeba Shire's economy. The shire is one of Australia's largest tropical fruit-producing regions. Reliable water from Tinaroo Dam and extensive agricultural land resource allows for continued growth in agriculture.

Improved transport, freight and distribution infrastructure and support industries will be critical to growth in domestic and export markets.

The Mareeba Industrial Park is an essential agricultural services and logistics hub, attracting significant investment in the coming decades.

Tourism is another pillar of the shire's economy, leveraging its diverse landscapes and natural beauty. Attractions such as the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway, Chillagoe Caves, Tropical Savannah and Wetland Reserve and rich birdlife draw self-drive visitors, grey nomads and birding enthusiasts.

The airport's strategic location, near Cairns yet outside controlled airspace, supports flight training, aircraft maintenance, and agricultural aviation. The Tom Gilmore Mareeba Aviation Industrial Precinct offers aviation unique growth opportunities.

The shire's population growth drives demand for housing, health and childcare services. This demographic shift supports construction and service industries.

Infrastructure investments, including water treatment upgrades and road improvements like the Palmerston

Highway and Kuranda Range Road further unlock economic potential in mining, agriculture and trade.

Djabugay Aboriginal Corporation has aspirations for their site at 1496 Kennedy Highway, Kuranda and are exploring the potential for a range of uses to support sustainable development and improved environmental, economic and social outcomes, along with economic opportunities within the broader Kuranda region and Din Din Barron Gorge National Park.

### Environmental features

Mareeba Shire boasts rich and diverse environmental features at the intersection of World Heritage rainforests, savannah landscapes and rugged outback terrain. National parks such as Barron Gorge, Dinden, Kuranda and Chillagoe-Mungana Caves protect these pristine environments, showcasing ancient rainforests, dramatic limestone formations and granite gorges.

### Infrastructure

Mareeba Shire requires targeted infrastructure investment to support its expanding population, economic aspirations and environmental resilience. These include upgrading roads and transport links to improve connectivity. Increased digital connectivity is crucial, as is investment in water supply infrastructure and efficient waste management systems. Expanding healthcare, education facilities and vocational training centres will support the growing population, while boosting tourism infrastructure will help attract residents and visitors.



# Tablelands Regional Council

Atherton Forest Mountain Bike Park (Tablelands)  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

## Local government area statistics



Area

11,293 km<sup>2</sup>



Key centres

Atherton, Malanda, Ravenshoe, Tolga and Yungaburra

Other communities include

Herberton, Innot Hot Springs, Kair, Millaa Millaa, Millstream, Mount Garnet, Peeramon, Tarzali, Walkamin and Wondecla

### Unique lifestyle values

The Tablelands is one of the region's most defining landscapes, where fertile volcanic plateaus, crater lakes, rainforests and highly productive agricultural land come together to form exceptional environmental, cultural and economic value. Its temperate climate, rich natural assets and network of vibrant rural towns and villages contribute to a highly liveable environment that continues to attract residents, workers and visitors.

Atherton, Malanda, Ravenshoe, Tolga, Yungaburra and surrounding communities each play an important role in supporting services, industry and lifestyle across the region. The Tablelands' strong sense of place, outdoor recreation opportunities and deep First Nations connections remain central to its identity and regional significance.

Atherton is recognised as a major growth front for the Tablelands LGA. Its established service role, strategic location and reduced exposure to coastal natural hazards position Atherton to accommodate long-term housing, employment and supporting infrastructure.

## Tablelands Regional Council economic overview

### Economic opportunities

Agriculture is a cornerstone of the Tablelands' economy and is of state and national importance. Its fertile soils, reliable climate and well-established agricultural industries support major production in beef, dairy, horticulture and cropping. These industries underpin regional prosperity and contribute significantly to domestic supply chains and national food security.

Growing opportunities in agribusiness, value-adding, processing, renewable energy and emerging technologies will further strengthen the Tablelands' economic base. Efficient transport and distribution connections are essential to supporting this growth and ensuring long-term competitiveness.

The Tablelands also provides essential health, education, training and government services. The Atherton Hospital and associated allied health services are of regional significance. With its established service role and capacity for expansion, Atherton is well placed to accommodate future residential, industrial and service-based growth, particularly as coastal centres face increasing physical and environmental constraints.

Tourism continues to expand as a major economic contributor, leveraging the Tablelands' unique natural assets— crater lakes, waterfalls, rainforests, scenic drives, mountain-bike trails and cultural landscapes. The Tablelands is also home to historical townships connecting visitors to the past and catering for an emerging drive tourism market.

### Environmental features

The Tablelands contains some of Queensland's most significant environmental assets including rainforests, savannah landscapes, crater-lake ecosystems, volcanic formations and biodiversity rich water catchments. These landscapes support vital ecological functions for the broader region, including wildlife habitat, water supply, landscape connectivity and resilience.

The Tablelands forms a central link in the region's biodiversity network, with ecological corridors that connect rainforest remnants, riparian systems, agricultural landscapes and protected areas. These nature corridors support the movement of wildlife, maintain genetic diversity and increase landscape resilience to natural hazards and other pressures.

The Tablelands' rivers, lakes and catchments, including Lake Tinaroo, are critical to sustaining agriculture, communities and natural environments. Protecting water quality, soil health and biodiversity is fundamental to maintaining the area's environmental integrity and long-term sustainability.

The Tablelands' environmental features also support a strong tourism economy, offering opportunities for low-impact, environmentally sensitive experiences that reinforce the natural character and identity of the region.

### Infrastructure

Continued investment in regionally significant infrastructure is essential to support the Tablelands' growing role within the region. Upgrading the Palmerston Highway is critical to supporting workforce mobility, emergency access, freight efficiency and resilience and the broader economic integration of the region.

Long-term water security is a key regional priority, enabling future housing supply, agricultural expansion and industrial development. Investment in water storage, treatment and distribution is fundamental to the Tablelands' resilience and capacity to support growth.

Improved digital connectivity, expanded health and education facilities and upgraded tourism and recreation infrastructure will support liveability, economic development and community wellbeing across the Tablelands.



# Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council

## Local government area statistics

 Area  
12 km<sup>2</sup>

 Population

Population estimates for Wujal Wujal vary, with data from the Wujal Wujal Primary Health Care Centre indicating the population of 419 people in 2023. Figures derived from service-based administrative data can differ from official population statistics, largely due to differences in how populations are counted and who is defined as a resident. The higher count in the health administrative data may reflect undercounting in the Census of Population and Housing.

 Key centres  
Wujal Wujal

### Unique lifestyle values

Wujal Wujal is a picturesque area located in the south-eastern part of Cape York Peninsula, Queensland. The environment is characterised by its rich cultural heritage and stunning natural landscapes. Wujal Wujal is home to the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people, who have a deep connection to land and sea.

Wujal Wujal, meaning “many falls” in the Kuku Yalanji language, is a small, discrete Aboriginal community in the Bloomfield Valley in the region.

The community maintains a strong connection to Country, culture and language. It welcomes visitors to its land and offers various cultural and tourism experiences.

Classified as remote, Wujal Wujal is located on the Traditional Country of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people.

Wujal Wujal's remote location, topographic constraints and land tenure mean developable land is limited.

Physical constraints, including flooding risk, bushfire hazards and steep slopes, present challenges to the construction of new housing.

Wujal Wujal has the second-largest average household size in the region. Housing is the most pressing need in the community now, having fundamental effects on all other areas of community life and individual and intergenerational health and wellbeing.

A lack of housing impacts peoples' ability to stay in the community, and new housing is required to meet the changing needs of the population — particularly the high number of younger people needing homes of their own.

There is a need for new housing types while ensuring dwelling designs are climatically and culturally appropriate.

Wujal Wujal faces complex challenges, but residents want to grow their community and increase housing and economic opportunities.



Wujal Wujal (Bloomfield) Falls (Wujal Wujal)  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

## Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council economic overview

### Economic opportunities

Wujal Wujal is one of Australia's largest discrete and socio-economically disadvantaged Aboriginal communities.

The township of Wujal Wujal provides services to the local community.

The major industries by employment in Wujal Wujal are public administration and safety, arts and recreation services and healthcare and social assistance. The environment and culture of Wujal Wujal provide opportunities for a sustainable tourism industry.

Traditional arts and artefacts showcase local First Nations peoples' unique cultural identity. Sharing traditional knowledge with visitors and cultural tourism experiences play a crucial role in both preserving the community's cultural knowledge, stories and practices, while also contributing to the local economy.

Natural attractions such as the Bloomfield Falls, Roaring Meg Falls and other historic and cultural heritage attractions also support experiential tourism.

### Environmental features

The scenic landscapes of Wujal Wujal include lush rainforests and the Bloomfield River, which are Traditional Country for the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people.

The environment is also characterised by diverse wildlife and conservation efforts, making it a unique and valuable area for both cultural and natural heritage.

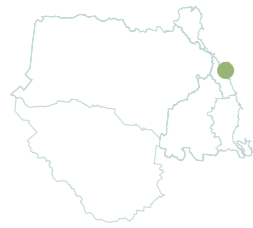
**The Eastern Kuku Yalanji rangers manage land and sea Country of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji Indigenous Protected Area around Wujal Wujal, Mossman and Shipton's Flat.**

Wujal Wujal is adjacent to the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef WHAs.

### Infrastructure

Wujal Wujal is vulnerable to isolation during disaster events, which impacts housing and access to essential services like healthcare and education. Targeted investment in infrastructure is essential to increase the communities' resilience and limit servicing constraints, including access routes for health, food supply and evacuation. Future infrastructure priorities include flood resilient housing, upgrades to essential buildings to withstand natural hazard events, a community resilience centre, water and wastewater network upgrades, and transport infrastructure improvements for critical access routes such as Shipton's Flat Road.

Future infrastructure enhancements will be a catalyst for economic growth and improve quality of life, social participation and long-term liveability for the community.




# Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council

## Local government area statistics

 **Area**  
159 km<sup>2</sup>

 **Population**

Population estimates for Yarrabah vary. Data from the Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service suggest the population is closer to 4500 people. Figures derived from service-based administrative data can differ from official population statistics, largely due to differences in how populations are counted and who is defined as a resident. The higher count in the health administrative data may reflect undercounting in the Census of Population and Housing.

 **Key centres**  
Yarrabah town

### Other communities include

Djenghi, Djilji, Mourigan, Oombunghi and Reeves Creek. Smaller housing settlements are spread throughout the Shire such as Buddabadoo, Bukki, Judil, Kunjurra and Wungu.

## Unique lifestyle values

Yarrabah is in a valley between Mission Bay and the Coral Sea to the east and Oombunghi Beach to the south.

Topographic and tenure constraints mean that there is very limited land in Yarrabah that is developable. Much of the developed land is within the Council Deed of Grant in Trust area, with smaller scale development on land owned by the Gunggandji Peoples for land in the northern part of the Shire and the Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji Peoples for land in the southern part of the Shire.

Yarrabah is a linear community, with most services spread across a 7 kilometre spine. The town centre, at the northern end of the Shire, provides many services including government offices, retail, education, and health care. Other essential services, arts, culture, sport and recreation facilities are spread along Back Beach Road.

Back Beach Road connects Yarrabah township at Mission Bay to Oombunghi Beach, Buddabadoo and Grey Peaks National Park.

Yarrabah is a vibrant hub that celebrates its rich First Nations heritage and is home to a close-knit community. The community is characterised by its cultural events, traditional art displays, and a strong sense of cultural identity, making it a significant focal point for residents and visitors.



Welcome Sign, Yarrabah (Yarrabah)  
Supplied by Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council

## Yarrabah Shire Aboriginal Shire economic overview

### Economic opportunities

Yarrabah is one of Australia's largest discrete and most socio-economically disadvantaged Aboriginal communities.

Its cultural heritage and natural surroundings however, provide opportunities to promote tourism, offering visitors an authentic insight into local First Nations peoples' knowledge, history, cultural practices and arts.

Economic development priorities include securing land for housing and business, enabling infrastructure, supporting small businesses, creating local businesses and pursuing on Country tourism opportunities. Yarrabah also has plans for the redevelopment of the Town Centre.

The Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji peoples have aspirations for their land to the south and are exploring the potential for sustainable development opportunities to support improved environmental, economic and social activities.

Future growth is being planned for the Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji precinct at Bloomis Point and Balamba near the Yarrabah township.

### Environmental features

The community is located between two World Heritage listed areas, being the rainforests of the Wet Tropics along the ranges to the west and the Great Barrier Reef to the north and east. Yarrabah contains a great diversity of environments including the forested slopes of the Murray Prior Range, grassy coastal plains, freshwater wetlands, beaches, mangroves, salt pans and rocky headlands.

### Infrastructure

Although only 10 kilometres directly east of Cairns, the drive from Cairns to Yarrabah is a 50 kilometre trip by road. The Yarrabah Jetty provides opportunities for ferry, barge and tourism access.

While Yarrabah performs regional service roles, it is a significantly underserved community, requiring targeted investment in social, community and enabling infrastructure.

Future infrastructure enhancement will be a catalyst for economic growth and improved quality of life. This could include resilient water, wastewater, electricity, telecommunication and transport infrastructure upgrades, as well as a P-12 school.



Chapter 2

# *Purpose and effect*

# Purpose

*The regional plan sets out the Queensland Government's proposed 20-year strategic plan for the region, led by a long-term vision, to guide future growth and support the region's prosperity and sustainability.*

Regional plans guide how a region grows and responds to change. This is achieved by setting out integrated planning and development assessment policies about matters of state interest.

The regional plan allocates all land in the region into one of three regional land use categories (RLUC): Urban Footprint, Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area (RLRPA) or Rural Living Area (RLA). This promotes the delivery of efficient urban and rural residential growth and a well-planned urban form, and supports economic agglomeration and the protection and sustainable use of the region's natural assets, landscape and productive rural areas.

The Queensland Government, in partnership with local governments, recognises the need for a coordinated update to policy outcomes since the previous regional

plan's release in 2009. The regional plan outlines contemporary policy directions to address statewide and region-specific challenges while supporting the region's resilience, growth, existing environment and projected changes over time.

The regional plan is a critical component of the Queensland Government's planning framework and forms part of the Queensland Government commitment to delivering one million new homes by 2044.

While planning policy is only one part of solving current housing pressures, the regional plan serves as a key statutory instrument providing strategic direction on housing supply. Delivery of homes relies on collaboration between the state and local governments as well as industry and the community.

# Effect

*The regional plan is a long-term strategic plan to guide land use planning within the region and has been prepared by the Queensland Government, in partnership with local governments, under the Planning Act 2016 (Planning Act). It includes the FNQ Infrastructure Plan (the infrastructure plan) provided at Appendix 1.*

Under the Planning Act, the regional plan advances a range of state interests defined in the State Planning Policy (SPP) by providing context, defining key outcomes and establishing planning strategies and directions to achieve place-based outcomes.

The regional plan sits within Queensland's planning framework and informs:

- the making and amending of local government planning schemes
- the assessment of development applications under the Planning Act
- infrastructure planning, prioritisation and funding decisions made by state and local governments and other infrastructure agencies

- other plans, strategies and programs, including non-statutory processes that may influence change, growth and resilience in the region
- the assessment of certain types of resource activities or regulated activities as defined under the *Regional Planning Interests Act 2014* (RPI Act).

Depending on the circumstances, the regional plan may be relevant in the assessment of a development application. To the extent of any inconsistency, the regional plan applies instead of a local planning instrument.

The department's interactive mapping system displays appropriate spatial information for the region and forms part of the regional plan.

# How to read this plan

Chapter/ Appendix	What	Read this to understand...
<b>1</b> The plan for Far North Queensland	Outlines the long-term vision for the region and outlines the planning context, including regional challenges and opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The vision for the region's growth and change.</li> <li>✓ The relationship between the region and neighbouring regions.</li> <li>✓ The regional and local government land use and planning context.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> Purpose and effect	Describes the statutory role of the regional plan within Queensland's planning system, including how it must be considered in planning schemes and development assessment. This chapter also explains how to navigate and interpret the regional plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How the regional plan sits within Queensland's planning framework.</li> <li>✓ How regional plans advance state interests by providing regional context, defining key outcomes and establishing planning strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> Regional growth pattern and areas of regional interest	<p>Describes how all land in the region is allocated into one of three regional land use categories: Urban Footprint, RLRPA and RLA.</p> <p>Details the policy and spatial allocation of land to areas of regional interest (under the RPI Act) including priority agricultural areas and priority living areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The regional pattern of growth, and where different types of development are encouraged, limited or managed.</li> <li>✓ Where and how resource activities in the region, including minerals and critical minerals are managed through the planning framework.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b> Policy outcomes and strategies	<p>Outlines how the regional plan will guide future growth and support the region's prosperity and sustainability.</p> <p>Outlines how the regional plan will guide future growth and support the region's prosperity and sustainability.</p> <p>Details the outcomes and strategies that will ensure the region will achieve its vision under the five key policy themes: Housing, thriving economy, ecotourism and biodiversity, healthy and liveable communities and infrastructure (through the infrastructure plan).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The goals of each theme and the policy outcomes it seeks to achieve.</li> <li>✓ Policy outcomes and strategies that apply to the region as a whole and to specific LGAs.</li> <li>✓ Potential implementation actions under the regional plan.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b> Delivery	Outlines how the regional plan will be implemented, including development assessment, plan making, and monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How implementation will occur through Queensland's planning framework.</li> </ul>
<b>Appendix 1:</b> Infrastructure Plan	Outlines how the infrastructure plan will guide future growth and support the region's prosperity and sustainability through infrastructure planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The outcomes and strategies that will ensure the region will achieve its vision in respect of infrastructure needs and priorities.</li> </ul>

Chapter 3

# ***Regional growth pattern and areas of regional interest***



## Regional growth pattern

*The FNQ Regional Plan 2009 introduced RLUC across the region, including an Urban Footprint and RLA to manage residential growth and protect regional landscapes and rural production values.*

Due to the extent of land originally allocated for urban and rural residential expansion, the RLUC in the regional plan have undergone only moderate changes since its gazettal in 2009, as they are generally effective at both facilitating growth in the right locations and achieving strategic goals, including protecting environmental and agricultural values.

The regional plan retains the RLUC and allocates all land in the region into either:

- RLRPA
- Urban Footprint
- RLA

RLUC provide a preferred pattern of growth for the region, ensuring there is enough land to support future housing and employment needs, while continuing to protect the region's rural and natural landscapes. These categories are shown on the RLUC map (**Map 6**) and spatially represented on the department's interactive mapping system. Further details on the RLUC are provided below including the relevant intent, description and principles (methodology). RLUC, including Urban Footprint, must be reflected in local planning instruments and considered in decision-making, however no specific provisions in the Planning Regulation 2017 are proposed to accompany them.

Though the region has continued to experience average annual population growth of one per cent over the past 15 years, each LGA (included in the FNQ Regional Plan 2009) retains sufficient capacity within the existing Urban Footprint and RLA to accommodate

forecast urban growth until 2046. The regional plan nonetheless includes moderate changes for mapped Urban Footprint and RLA. These changes generally reflect approved development outcomes, scheme amendments and cadastral changes but do not represent the large-scale inclusion of new land, with the exception of the Cairns South SDA that was declared in 2018.

For Cairns, meeting housing supply targets within the remaining land supply in the Urban Footprint to 2046 will require a range of housing types, including detached and attached homes. Further details on growth and housing outcomes sought within the RLUC are provided in Chapter 4.

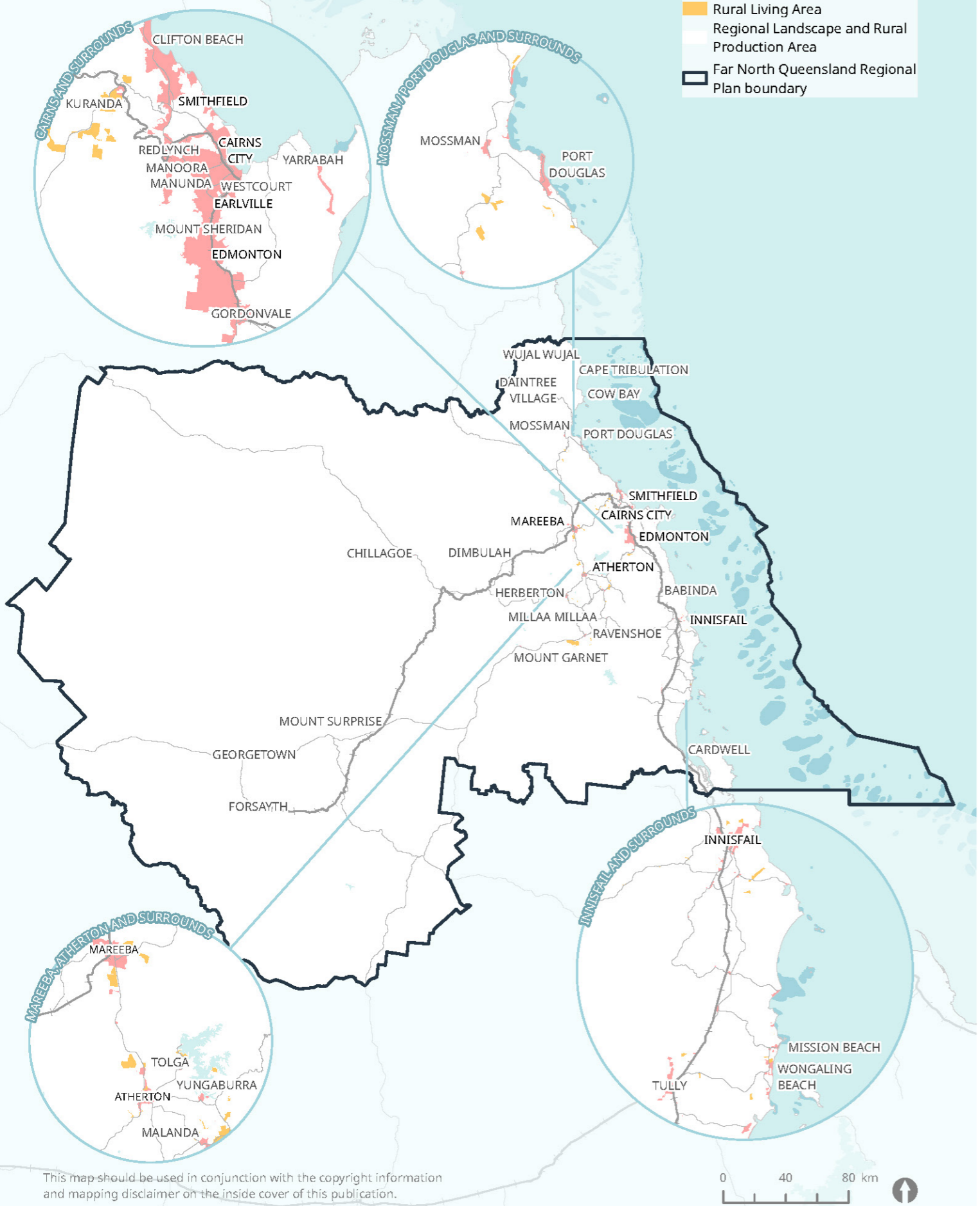
For the region to plan beyond 2046 and achieve the ambition outlined in the vision, future planning will need to investigate growth outside the Urban Footprint and RLA where it is practically feasible recognising planning, infrastructure, environmental and market constraints.

RLUC will need to be considered by local governments during plan-making activities. Where there is greater demand for land outside the Urban Footprint to meet housing needs to 2046, local governments may propose to allocate land to a zone that is inconsistent with the intention of the RLUC. Any such proposals must be supported by an assessment against the relevant RLUC principles and justification for any inconsistency is to be provided to the state government for review and approval, as part of the state interest review process.

Map 6  
Regional Land Use Categories

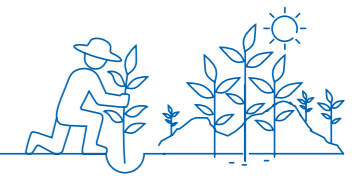
Legend

- Regional land use categories
- Urban Footprint
- Rural Living Area
- Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area
- Far North Queensland Regional Plan boundary



This map should be used in conjunction with the copyright information and mapping disclaimer on the inside cover of this publication.

# Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area



## Intent

The RLRPA is a large and important part of the region, surrounding the Urban Footprint and RLA. It provides important values that help sustain the region socially, culturally, economically and environmentally. All land outside of the Urban Footprint and RLA is contained within the RLRPA.

The intent of the RLRPA is to:

- support development and economic growth of rural communities and industries

- protect the values of this land from encroachment by urban and rural residential development
- protect natural and cultural assets and regional landscapes to ensure appropriate use and management.

The RLRPA includes lands that have regional landscape, rural production or other non-urban values and protects these areas from encroachment by inappropriate development, particularly urban or rural residential development.

## Description

The RLRPA supports and protects the region's landscapes and its rural production values. It is crucial to the region as it sustains regional biodiversity and agricultural production, provides outdoor recreation space, and supports key economic industries such as agribusiness, critical minerals, tourism, recreation and creative industries.

The RLRPA includes:

- rural and related economic activity
- prime agricultural land, including priority agricultural areas
- water catchments, water storages and groundwater resources
- regional landscapes and natural environments including regional biodiversity corridors, Strategic Environmental Areas (SEAs), strategic rehabilitation areas (SRAs) and Matters of State Environmental Significance (MSES)
- the Wet Tropics WHA
- cultural and landscape heritage values
- national parks, conservation parks, resource reserves and other conservation and protected area tenures
- natural economic resources including mineral and extractive resources and forestry plantations (including those on state forest)

- native forests (including state forest areas)
- wetlands, salt marshes and mangroves
- essential wildlife habitat including for endangered species such as the southern cassowary and mahogany glider
- beaches, islands and other coastal areas
- outdoor recreation, ecotourism and regional open space areas
- peri-urban activities, being activities that are of a nature that is typically undertaken in an area located between rural and urban areas, usually located near to urban areas
- small-scale residential areas.

Natural assets in the RLRPA, including natural economic resources such as prime agricultural land, need protecting and managing to ensure they are used sustainably to improve their capacity to provide ecosystem services, increase the region's resilience and support the region's population.

Some parts of the RLRPA may be needed for future urban growth in the longer term. These areas are protected from development or further fragmentation that would prejudice their long-term ability to accommodate urban growth.

# Urban Footprint



## Intent

The Urban Footprint identifies land in which the region's urban development needs to 2046 can be accommodated in a way that is consistent with the outcomes and strategies of the regional plan.

## Description

The Urban Footprint incorporates the full range of urban uses including housing, industry, business, tourist facilities, infrastructure, community facilities and other integral components of well-planned urban environments such as local areas for sport and recreation and urban open space.

The priority for developing land in the Urban Footprint is to accommodate future urban growth. However, the Urban Footprint is not an urban zone and does not imply that all land can be developed for urban purposes.

For example, state forests and remnant vegetation will continue to be protected and managed under relevant state legislation, including the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*, *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and *Forestry Act 1959*.

The Urban Footprint may include land unsuitable for urban purposes or additional development activity due to constraints including high ecologically significant waterways, hill slopes, scenic amenity, open space, and land constrained by flooding, bushfire or landslide.

The Urban Footprint includes several small urban centres. These generally have, or are intended to have, a township-type zoning under the local government planning scheme or primarily contain residential zoning. The level of infrastructure and service provision is generally low and may be limited to a school, hotel or shop. These small urban centres have an important role in servicing the region's rural communities.

The Urban Footprint also includes some areas designated or already developed for rural and rural residential purposes that are located near urban services and facilities. Local governments should investigate these areas for urban redevelopment opportunities as part of their planning scheme reviews.

The regional plan relies on local government planning schemes to determine the most suitable zone for each land parcel within the Urban Footprint. The development assessment process determines the extent and suitability of development on each site.

The Urban Footprint also contains several areas that have been underutilised for a substantial period. Many have not transitioned to a serviced urban zone since they were first included in the Urban Footprint. One important way of delivering the intent of the regional plan is to investigate these areas and unlock their urban development potential in the short to medium-term.

Local government planning schemes, structure plans or master plans are the primary mechanisms for establishing the future use of land and the preferred sequencing of development within the Urban Footprint.

## Urban Footprint principles

The principles considered in defining the Urban Footprint include:

1. The Urban Footprint is a tool for managing, rather than simply accommodating, regional growth.
2. The Urban Footprint promotes a compact growth pattern and consolidates urban development within established communities.
3. Opportunities to increase capacity within the Urban Footprint take priority over expanding its boundaries in subsequent regional plan review processes.
4. The Urban Footprint boundary is generally:
  - a. cadastral-based or otherwise clearly defined, preferably using a major feature such as a road or stream to provide a clear boundary and buffer between urban and non-urban land uses.
  - b. consistent with existing planning scheme designations, where appropriate.
5. During periodic reviews of the regional plan, and based on whether the Queensland Government or local government identifies a need for more urban land, new areas may be considered for inclusion in the Urban Footprint or urban zoning where they:
  - a. are physically suitable
  - b. are either a logical expansion of an urban area (physically connected with existing urban areas) or of sufficient size to provide social and economic infrastructure efficiently
  - c. have ready access to services and employment
  - d. maximise the use of committed and planned urban infrastructure
  - e. are separated appropriately from incompatible land uses
  - f. exclude areas with an unacceptable risk from natural hazards
  - g. exclude areas containing predominantly Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) or MSES and the regional biodiversity network, including the Wet Tropics WHA
  - h. achieve an appropriate balance of urban development in the FNQ region and associated sub-regions
  - i. maintain a well-planned region of urban areas, towns and villages
  - j. minimise impacts on natural economic and cultural resources
  - k. avoid irrevocable impacts on important, sensitive natural and cultural environments, including First Nations cultural heritage, in and outside the area
  - l. provide physical and social infrastructure efficiently including public transport
  - m. address specific land use needs such as industrial land provision or facilitating Return to Country by Traditional Custodians.

# Rural Living Area



## Intent

The RLA comprises only locations that are currently used, or planned to be used, for rural residential development.

It consolidates rural residential development in suitable locations, providing housing and lifestyle options while limiting the impacts of inefficient use of land on other values, functions and opportunities in the region. Generally, these areas are already designated for future rural residential purposes in planning schemes.

## Description

The RLA is an important land use management tool for the region. It contains some existing rural residential areas, or land suitable for future rural residential development, in locations with good access to regional employment and suitable infrastructure and services.

Focusing new rural residential development in the RLA is important to facilitate higher priority growth and new major infrastructure, during and beyond the life of this regional plan, in a cost effective and orderly manner. It also minimises the impact of rural residential development on:

- current and future productive rural activities—for example, agriculture, intensive animal industries and extractive resources
- opportunities to accommodate special or hard-to-locate activities
- natural assets and biodiversity values including corridors and habitat linkages
- land required for potential future long-term growth options
- future infrastructure requirements.

It is not intended that the RLA continually expands between regional plan reviews or in all future reviews of the regional plan. Any expansion of rural living outside the RLA requires justification against the RLA principles through local government plan making activities.

## Rural Living Area principles

The principles considered in defining the RLA include:

1. The RLA manages rural residential development to avoid constraining long-term potential future urban growth and infrastructure needs.
2. The RLA supports existing and/or new rural residential development in consolidated and well-defined communities that have good access to employment and services.
3. To prevent further intensification and fragmentation of areas that may not have been well-planned or located considering other RLA principles, not all existing rural residential development is included in the RLA.
4. The RLA avoids increasing the area of existing or potential conflict with higher-priority rural uses.
5. The RLA is not located where it would threaten planned or established intensive animal industries, extractive resource activities, valuable mineral resource activities, or other hard-to-locate uses.
6. The RLA does not include land that is suitable for agricultural production or predominantly contains MNES, MSES, SRAs or regional biodiversity corridors.
7. The RLA, and access to and from this area, is not subject to unacceptable risk from natural hazards such as flooding, bushfire and landslide.
8. The RLA does not compromise the ecological values of water resource catchments or areas containing regional scenic amenity values.
9. Necessary infrastructure is available, or can be provided practically and cost-effectively, to support rural residential development.
10. The whole-of-life costs of development are considered for any land included in the RLA.
11. The boundary of the RLA should be:
  - a. cadastral-based or otherwise clearly defined, preferably using a major feature such as a road or stream to provide a clear boundary between rural residential and other land uses.
  - b. consistent with existing planning scheme designations, where appropriate.

# Areas of regional interest

*The growth in resource activities, alongside the ongoing importance of agricultural and development activities, requires careful planning to manage competing land use interests. Areas of regional interest are identified in the regional plan to support the balanced management of agricultural, resource and development activities.*

The region is historically renowned for its mineral resources such as gold, tungsten, and silver, with the resource sector continuing to be a high value-adding industry in the region. The international demand for critical minerals is rapidly rising and the region has deposits of a variety of in-demand critical minerals including tin, copper, gold, cobalt, nickel and tungsten. The region is recognised as a leading destination for mining and resources investment and as Australia's gateway to Asian markets.

Mining activities are undertaken according to the requirements of various resources legislation with the majority covered under the *Mineral Resources Act 1989*. Mining is prohibited in the Wet Tropics WHA under the Wet Tropics Management Plan 1998, made under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*.

This chapter is relevant for the assessment of applications under the RPI Act for a regional interests development approval (RIDA). A RIDA may be required for resource activities or regulated activities proposed to occur within an area of regional interest.

The regional plan identifies two areas of regional interest for the region: priority agricultural areas (PAAs) and priority living areas (PLAs). The PAA applies under both the RPI Act, and under the Planning Act (non-resource activities) during local plan making and development assessment (to the relevant extent). The PLAs only apply under the RPI Act.

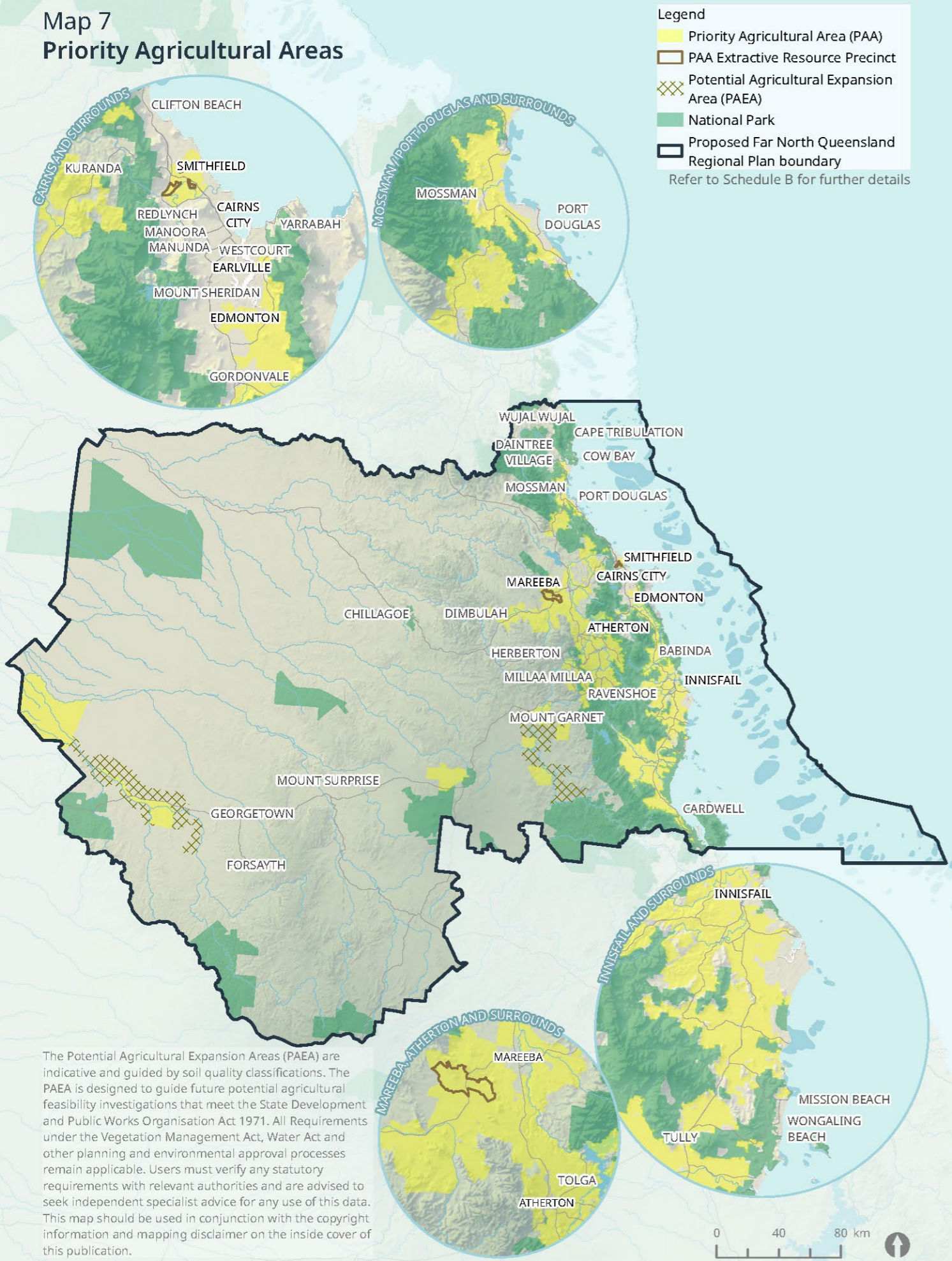
The region also contains part of the Gulf Rivers Strategic Environmental Area (SEA) which is prescribed in the Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014 (RPI Regulation).



Wolfram Camp Mine (Mareeba)

Supplied by Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development

Map 7  
Priority Agricultural Areas



## Priority agricultural areas

The agricultural sector is a cornerstone of the regional economy, providing essential support to regional markets and contributing significantly to the economic vitality of the area. This region's well-established and robust agricultural practices not only cater to the needs of the regional community and beyond but also play a pivotal role in sustaining the regional economy. Ensuring that the region's prime agricultural land is maintained is vital to protect the natural resources the agricultural industry depends on. Protecting these areas sustains the region and provides for its future food and fibre security. Although the Mossman Mill has closed, the agricultural land in this area remains valuable and should be protected for continued use in other local mills or for alternative cropping opportunities, including the production of Sustainable Aviation Fuels. This ensures the land continues to contribute to the region's economic and environmental sustainability.

The co-existence of agriculture and resources is important to the Queensland economy. The loss of highly productive agricultural activities is not desirable within the region due to the:

- high productivity of prime agricultural land in the region
- proximity of these highly productive agricultural activities to a large domestic market
- good accessibility to transport and international markets
- importance of a strong local timber supply to provide vital construction material for housing.

Development in these areas for the purpose of resource activities, however, may occur if approved by government.

PAA have been identified in strategic clusters of the most regionally significant agricultural production areas which contain various Priority Agricultural Land Uses (PALUs) (**Map 7**). Any resource activity seeking to operate in these areas must demonstrate that it can co-exist with the PALUs without affecting their current or future ability to operate, including the infrastructure essential to the operation of the PALUs.

PALU encompasses land uses from two classifications: the Australian Land Use and Management Classification and the National Standards for Primary Production and Processing of Dairy Products and Specific Cheeses.

Sub-categories under the Australian Land Use and Management Classification (Version 8, October 2016) published by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) are:

- 3.1 – Plantation forestry
- 3.3 – Cropping
- 3.4 – Perennial horticulture
- 3.5 – Seasonal horticulture
- 4.1 – 4.6 – Production from irrigated agriculture and plantations
- 5.1 – Intensive horticulture
- 5.2 – Intensive animal husbandry

Sub-categories under the National Standards for Primary Production and Processing of Dairy Products and Specific Cheeses, as regulated by Safe Food Production Queensland Licensing, are:

- Land use location for Dairy Farming Production (Standards 4.2.4 and 4.2.4A of the Australia New Zealand Food Standard Code)

The policy outcomes and strategies in Chapter 4 seek to address potential conflicts between existing agricultural land uses within the region and opportunities in the resource and development sectors.

PAA ensure:

- the region's agricultural sector continues to grow with certainty and investor confidence
- PALUs are protected within the PAA
- the continuation and growth of agricultural sector production in the PAA.

The PAA Extractive Resources Precinct encompasses two Key Resource Areas (KRAs): Dimbulah Road (KRA 151) and Barron River Flats (KRA 10). These areas are recognised for their existing agricultural production, which is part of the broader PAA, and their sand extraction activities that coexist with agriculture. The policy for the PAA Extractive Resources Precinct is detailed in the thriving economy chapter, specifically under policy outcome 4 - rural economies. This policy supports the sustainable management and coexistence of agricultural and extractive resource activities. Schedule B - PAA Extractive Resource Precinct map shows the precinct in more detail.

Potential Agricultural Expansion Areas (PAEAs) are clusters where new and expanded agricultural developments may be feasible. These areas consider the location of high productive soils (Agricultural Land Classification Class A and Class B land); strategic cropping areas identified under the RPI Act; existing agricultural operations and their potential economic value to the region; and the proximity of existing and proposed infrastructure. PAEAs include land that is potentially suitable for crops, limited crops, pasture and non-agricultural land. New or expanded agricultural production in PAEAs would be subject to relevant statutory requirements and approvals.

## **Protection of the dairy industry in the region**

The dairy industry is a defining feature of the region's economy, shaping its identity and contributing significantly to its economic vitality. In particular, the Atherton Tablelands has a rich history of dairy farming as the mainstay for local communities and the economy. The industry plays a significant role in adding value through downstream processing, much of which occurs close to regionally important farming areas, generating economic activity in the region. The industry is also a critical enabler of broader agricultural production, including the consumption of locally grown high-value feedstocks such as grain.



The region is one of the few remaining regions in Queensland where milk is still processed locally, supporting employment, contributing to economic diversity and providing an important regional source of dairy products. Growing farmgate prices and increased demand for milk nationwide provides a positive outlook for the dairy industry. This industry is now positioned to capitalise on strengthening dairy market conditions including an increased demand for specialty dairy products such as organic and bio-dynamic products. A stronger industry will provide greater opportunity for allied farming uses such as agritourism and the growth of on-farm agricultural production and processing activities.

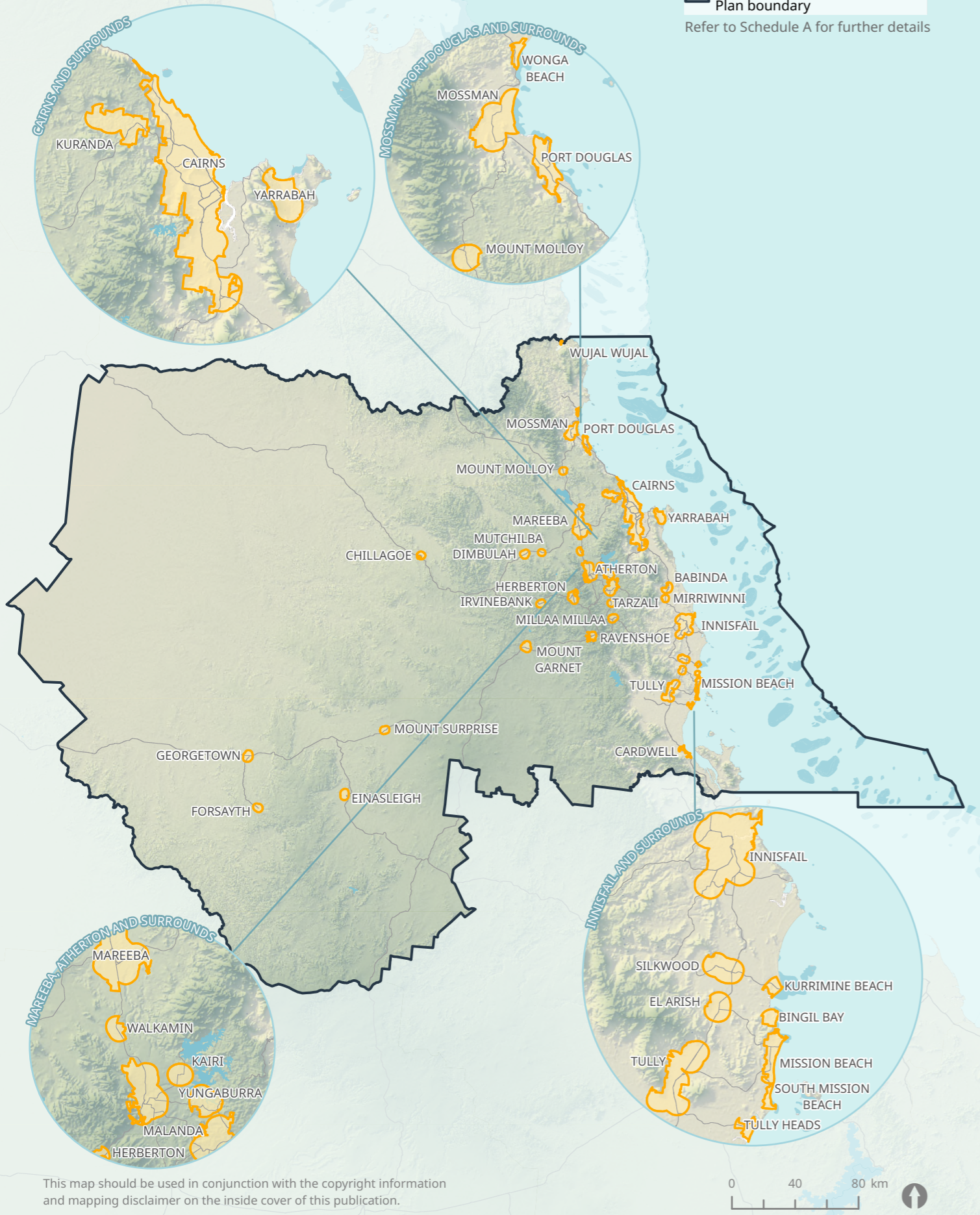
Embracing emerging technologies such as robotics and artificial intelligence will improve the industry's productivity and foster the development of regional manufacturing and food processing. The dairy industry's resilience and opportunity for innovation position it as a key player in the region's economic future, underscoring the need for continued support and investment.

PAA mapping is crucial for providing protection and ongoing growth in the industry. The mapping identifies significant clusters of high-value, intensive agricultural land uses, ensuring their continued contribution to the region's economic health and the state's long-term food security requirements. The mapping will also seek to safeguard the areas utilised by industry, including throughout the Southern Tablelands' localities of Malanda, Millaa Millaa, Ravenshoe and Atherton. Protection of agricultural land will not only conserve the industry's legacy but also promote its development and adaptation in an ever-changing economic landscape. It is a strategic commitment to continue the region's reputation as a leader in agricultural practices and as a custodian of its rich agricultural legacy. As a PALU, dairying will be prioritised when assessing applications for non-agricultural activities in a PAA, to ensure existing PALUs are not compromised.



Map 8  
Priority Living Areas

Legend  
 Priority Living Area  
 Far North Queensland Regional Plan boundary  
 Refer to Schedule A for further details



This map should be used in conjunction with the copyright information and mapping disclaimer on the inside cover of this publication.

## Priority living areas

The region has experienced rapid growth since the early 1980s. Cairns City will continue to grow, along with regional towns, particularly Mareeba, Atherton, Innisfail and Tully. Population centres across the region depend on natural systems and regional and rural landscapes to contribute to the region's liveability, health, lifestyle and amenity. Managing the interaction between this growth, the natural environment and resource activities is a key consideration for maintaining community amenity and long-term settlement viability.

PLAs have effect through the RPI Act, which regulates proposed resource activities such as mining and petroleum that generally are not regulated through the Planning Act and local government planning schemes. PLAs give communities, via their local government, a say on how these proposed activities may or may not impact on a town's amenity and wellbeing.

PLAs within the region are shown in **Map 8** and Schedule A. PLAs include key urban areas and localities with populations that are generally equal to or greater than 200 people, likely to experience growth over the next 20 years and have a two kilometre buffer applied around the identified area. PLAs do not identify a future growth pattern for a town and do not have any effect under the Planning Act.

Any resource activity proposed within the PLA must demonstrate that the location, nature and conduct of the activity is compatible with the planned future for the area. This is completed through an application process established under the RPI Act. Importantly, all resource activity proposals within a PLA must be publicly notified.

The relevant regional outcome and associated policies in Chapter 4 seek to ensure the region's communities can connect to their social and physical environments, both constructed and natural, and support their social needs without unreasonable conflicts with the resource sector.

PLAs:

- protect and prioritise the growth potential of the region's settlements, population-supporting assets and amenity over resource activities
- safeguard areas required for the long-term growth of the region's communities from the irreversible impacts of resource activities in the PLA
- protect water storage infrastructure and the functionality of associated water catchments in the PLA
- protect the regional and rural landscape amenity of the PLA from material impacts of resource activities.

## Strategic environmental areas

The region contains part of the Gulf Rivers SEA which is prescribed in the RPI Regulation. The Gulf Rivers SEA is characterised by the following environmental attributes:

- the natural hydrologic processes of the area
- the natural geomorphic processes of the area
- the functioning riparian processes of the area characterised by native riparian vegetation associated with watercourses, estuaries, lakes, floodplains and wetlands
- the functioning wildlife corridors of the area
- the natural water quality in the watercourse channels and aquifers and on flood plains in the area characterised by physical, chemical and biological attributes that support and maintain natural aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

Chapter 4

# ***Policy outcomes and strategies***



# Policy outcomes and strategies

*The policy outcomes and strategies contained in this chapter are a central part of the regional plan's policy framework, with a focus on achieving the overall vision for the region.*

This chapter is set out under the five themes of housing, thriving economy, ecotourism and biodiversity, healthy and liveable communities and infrastructure (through the infrastructure plan).

Each theme includes policy outcomes for the region (what is needed) which are to be delivered through the corresponding strategies (how to get there) outlined. Where required, policy outcomes and strategies are identified for selected LGAs and are not applicable across the region. Where the policy outcomes and strategies do not identify a specific LGA, they are to be applied across the region.

Policy outcomes and strategies across the five themes are interrelated and are intended to work collectively to support integrated planning outcomes.



 **Curtain Fig Tree, Yungaburra (Tablelands)**  
Photographer: Sara J Wright

## Theme 1: Housing



**Goal:**

Adequate residential land is supplied in well-located, infrastructure-supported areas, and meets the needs of current and future residents

**Policy Outcome:**

1. Regional growth pattern
2. Housing supply
3. Rural towns and villages

## Theme 2: Thriving economy



**Goal:**

The regional economy thrives and is supported by high employment self-containment, planning for regional activity centres, industrial land that meets economic and employment needs, and management of natural economic resources.

**Policy Outcome:**

1. Economic growth and diversification
2. Regional centres, precincts and sectors
3. Regional industrial land and regional economic assets
4. Rural economies

## Theme 3: Ecotourism and biodiversity



**Goal:**

The region's unique biodiversity, terrestrial and aquatic natural assets, including the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef WHAs, are protected, enhanced and connected to improve ecological functioning.

**Policy Outcome:**

1. Ecotourism
2. Regional water quality
3. Regional landscapes and biodiversity

## Theme 4: Healthy and liveable communities



**Goal:**

All of the region's communities are vibrant, healthy and inclusive, reflecting the region's tropical character and active lifestyle while being resilient to natural hazards.

**Policy Outcome:**

1. Community identity and wellbeing
2. Natural hazards and safety

## Theme 5: Infrastructure (FNQ Infrastructure Plan 2026)



**Goal:**

Transport and health infrastructure is efficient, resilient and supports economic growth, while water resources and energy systems are appropriately managed.

**Policy Outcome:**

1. Transport
2. Water
3. Energy
4. Digital connectivity
5. Social and community infrastructure

*Note that the relevant policy outcomes and strategies for infrastructure are contained in Appendix 1: FNQ Infrastructure Plan 2026.*



# Theme 1 Housing



**Trinity Beach (Cairns)**  
Supplied by Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

**The Queensland Government is securing Queensland’s housing foundations by accelerating supply, supporting home ownership, and enabling community-led solutions. In the FNQ region, this means delivering new homes faster, providing a place to call home for more Queenslanders.**

The RAF is a \$2 billion Queensland Government initiative investing in trunk and essential infrastructure to unlock land supply, accelerate delivery of residential developments and address critical housing shortages across Queensland. At least 50 percent of funds will be invested outside of South East Queensland, across regional, rural and remote communities. For FNQ, this will address housing supply challenges by delivering the enabling infrastructure that unlocks land supply to allow new housing to be delivered.

The region is the fastest-growing region in northern Australia. Ensuring sufficient planned housing supply presents complex challenges that require coordinated regional action. By 2046, the region’s population is expected to grow from 264,555 (2021) to between 341,360 to 378,340 people, requiring between

34,455 and 48,485 new homes - about 1380 to 1940 annually. The regional plan outlines strategies for managed growth and resilience, guided by the vision.

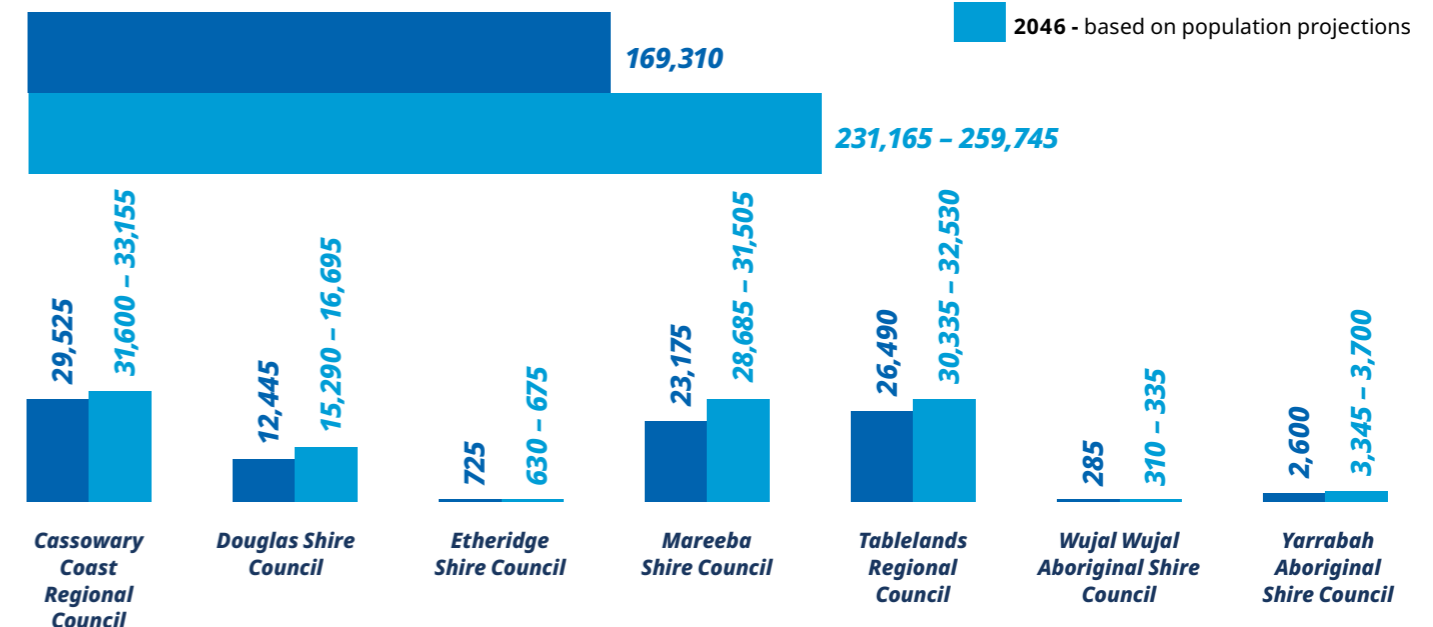
Population and dwelling projections used in the regional plan are based on the 2023 edition Queensland Government Population, Household and Dwelling Projections. Given the dynamic nature in regional, rural and remote areas, and the impacts of visitor and transient workers, the medium to high series is used to encompass a range of possible growth futures. Low series projections are available but should be used with caution, especially in small communities where there is higher uncertainty about future growth and limited planning information.

**Figure 1** shows projected population growth by LGA.

## Far North Queensland’s Current and Projected Population

### Cairns Regional Council

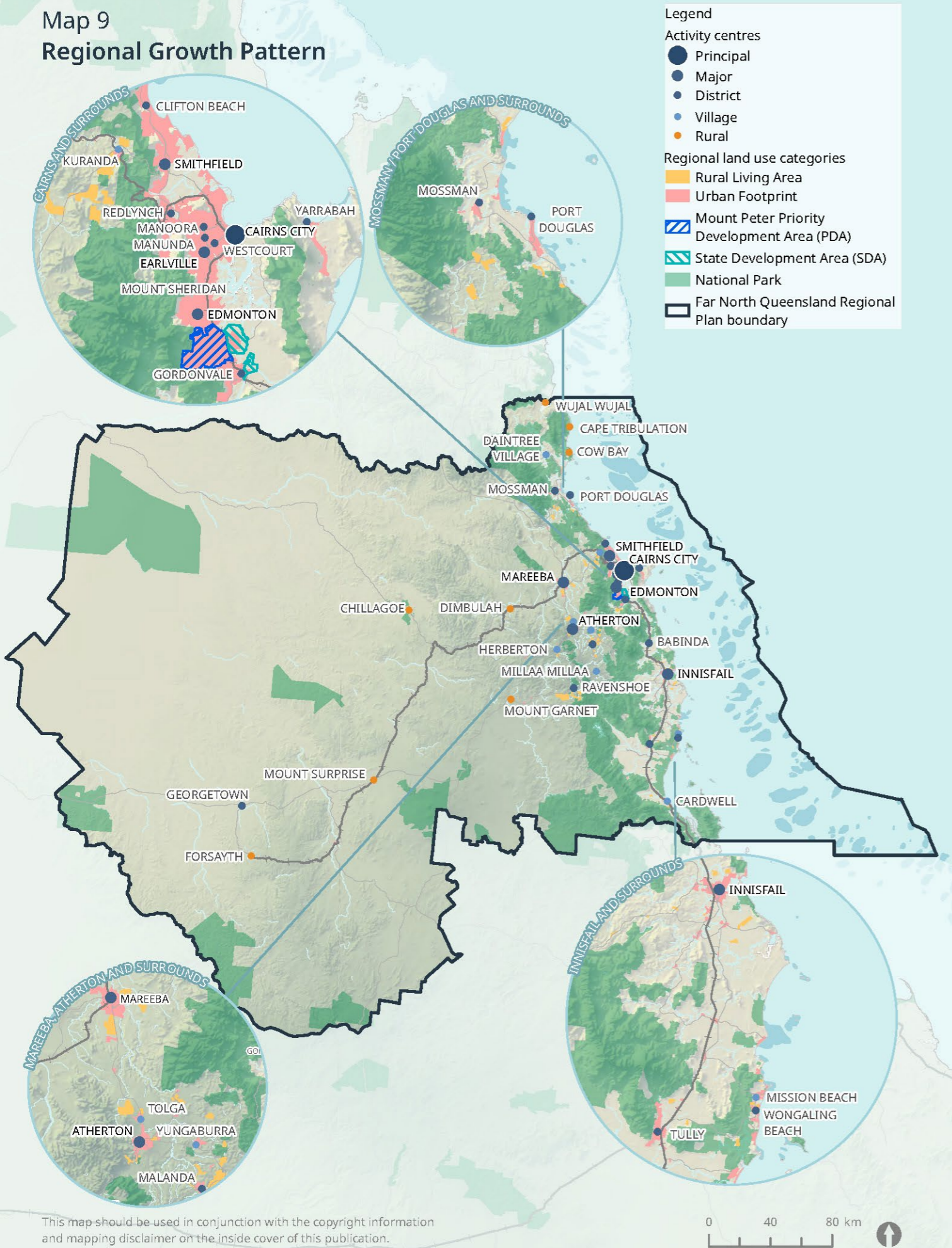
**Legend**  
■ 2021 - estimated resident population  
■ 2046 - based on population projections



**Figure 1 - FNQ’s Current and Projected Population**

Source: Queensland Government Population Projections, 2023 edition, Medium to High Series

# Map 9 Regional Growth Pattern



This map should be used in conjunction with the copyright information and mapping disclaimer on the inside cover of this publication.

## Policy Outcome 1

### Regional growth pattern

The region's preferred regional growth pattern, as shown in **Map 9**, provides certainty for government, industry and the community. It outlines where new development can occur and ensures growth efficiently utilises infrastructure and is resilient to natural hazards. New development should be contained within the Urban Footprint, avoid areas of intolerable risk and protect rural and environmental values.



## Policy Outcome 2

**Housing supply**

Growth will be concentrated in Cairns, where developable land supply and the provision of infrastructure require more housing near transport, jobs and services. Other LGAs will see steady population growth, while sustaining populations in remote areas remains a priority.

Dwelling supply targets for each LGA for 2031 and 2046 are provided in Figure 2. These are based on dwelling supply projections which include both occupied and vacant private, permanent dwellings. Private, permanent dwellings include structural dwellings (for example, houses, flats, townhouses) but exclude temporary dwellings (for example, tents, caravans, houseboats). Non-private dwellings (for example, hotels, hospitals, boarding schools, workers' accommodation) are not included in these dwelling projections. It is recognised that non-private dwellings account for a proportion of current and future dwelling supply in the region, particularly in key tourist and seasonal worker destinations across the region.

Planning has a limited impact on a range of factors that influence housing supply, including market influences, interest rates and construction costs. However, allowing for sufficient land for supply as well as a range of dwelling types in well-located areas plays a critical role in shaping long-term housing outcomes.

Changing household structures including more single-person households, couples without children and an ageing population, are also reshaping housing need across the region. To meet evolving preferences, a shift towards a range of different housing typologies is required.

Opportunities to increase densities across the region will need to be explored, including in established suburbs that are not subject to natural hazards, or where the risks are tolerable and can be mitigated.

In new development areas, increased densities should be considered where a mix of housing types can meet the needs of the community and complement infrastructure capacity, including transport, water supply, wastewater, stormwater and parks.

A key strategy for increasing housing, particularly in Cairns, is the implementation of Tropical Urban Villages (TUVs). These are mixed use residential and employment areas designed to maximise the efficient use of land with higher self-containment. TUVs offer residents access to essential services such as groceries, healthcare and education, within a 10-minute walk or ride. TUVs are transit-oriented, pedestrian and cycle friendly communities centred around a public transport stop or station and surrounded by higher density housing, employment or a range of mixed uses.

The Queensland Government has taken a major step forward to support housing supply in the Cairns Regional Council area with the declaration of a new PDA at Mount Peter. Mount Peter is a key location in meeting projected housing demand over coming decades for both residents of Cairns and the broader region.

Safe and secure housing is essential to supporting the wellbeing and aspirations of First Nations peoples in the region. In First Nations communities, housing must accommodate a wide range of family types, from single-person households to large, multi-generational families. Return to Country planning scheme provisions are one approach to facilitating social and economic opportunities for First Nations peoples to Return to Country and sustainably manage their environments, lands, waters and cultures.

Strategic planning must balance natural hazard risks and environmental values, particularly in remote communities where developable land is constrained.



**Etheridge (Etheridge)**  
Supplied by Etheridge Shire Council

## Policy Outcome 3

**Rural towns and villages**

Rural towns and villages play an important role in the region's distinct identity, economy, and community life. Focusing new development in rural towns and villages is important to sustain and grow these communities. Planning should protect their character, ensure access to more housing and maintain active main streets. This requires well-integrated rural workers' accommodation and carefully planned expansion that respects rural and environmental values, infrastructure capacity, and the long-term viability of each community.

A stable rural workforce is essential for industries like agriculture, mining, tourism, and government services such as public health and education, making safe, accessible accommodation for workers a priority. The regional plan supports transitional housing types, such as modular units or temporary camps, and encourages the use of existing infrastructure where possible.

The regional plan supports rural workers accommodation in the RLRPA and RLA, provided that the scale of accommodation does not detract from the viability of nearby rural towns and villages.

## Policy outcomes and strategies

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Policy Outcome 1 <b>Regional growth pattern</b></p> <p>Ensure adequate residential land supply in well-located areas where land is supported by appropriate infrastructure.</p>	<p>1.1 Maximise the efficient use of land within the Urban Footprint.</p> <p>1.2 Ensure new residential development is serviced by appropriate infrastructure and services, having regard to infrastructure resilience and whole-of-life-cycle costs.</p> <p>1.3 New residential development is responsive to the tropical and sub-tropical climates of the region and avoids areas of intolerable risk.</p> <p>1.4 Accommodate new rural residential development primarily in the RLA. New rural residential development occurs in the Urban Footprint only where the land is unsuitable for urban use and occurs in the RLRPA where justified against the RLA principles through local government plan making activities.</p>
<p>Policy Outcome 2 <b>Housing supply</b></p> <p>Ensure housing supply meets the full spectrum of housing demand within the region to respond to the needs of current and future residents.</p>	<p>2.1 Plan for and achieve the dwelling supply targets in <b>Figure 2</b>.</p> <p>2.2 Achieve a mix of housing types appropriate to local context and need, in both new and established communities, through a range of housing typologies shown in <b>Figure 3</b>.</p> <p>2.3 Increase medium-density residential development in proximity to public and active transport corridors, Major Regional Activity Centres (MRACs) and/or regional precincts shown on <b>Maps 10, 11 and 13</b>.</p> <p>2.4 Facilitate the delivery of higher density residential development in the principal regional activity centre (PRAC) identified on <b>Maps 10 and 13</b>.</p> <p>2.5 Promote dwelling and neighbourhood design that is responsive to local climate and resilient to natural hazards.</p> <p>2.6 Enable new models and forms of housing including dwelling type, size and modern methods of construction in both new and established communities.</p> <p>2.7 Maintain a minimum four years of approved residential land supply and a minimum 15 years of residential land supply that is appropriately zoned for urban and/or township purposes and planned to be serviced.</p> <p>2.8 Local governments to work with the Queensland Government to investigate future areas for regionally significant long-term land supply outside the Urban Footprint to accommodate growth beyond 2046.</p> <p>2.9 Facilitate the delivery of more safe, secure, affordable and culturally appropriate First Nations housing.</p> <p>2.10 Facilitate strategic planning outcomes for First Nations housing, including in Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah, considering natural hazard risks, biodiversity and cultural values.</p> <p>2.11 Support the aspirations of First Nations peoples to sustainably Return to Country by facilitating planning scheme amendments.</p>

### Potential implementation activities – housing strategy 2.8

It is intended that implementation of housing strategy 2.8 will be a shared task with responsibilities coordinated across a range of key stakeholders, including local governments. While these potential implementation activities are currently not funded they could comprise of two core components of work, being:

- FNQ regional growth strategy
- Integrated land use and infrastructure planning

Each component is described further below.

#### FNQ regional growth strategy

- An option for future delivery could include the Queensland Government working in partnership with local governments, state agencies, industry and other key stakeholders to develop a long-term growth strategy for the region. The strategy would identify a sustainable long-term growth pattern including locations potentially suitable for urban expansion after the year 2046, factoring in for natural hazards, environmental values and other constraints.
- The FNQ regional growth strategy would seek to identify potential future growth areas to inform appropriate planning scheme provisions or other planning tools (Ministerial Infrastructure Designations, PDAs etc.) to support long-term growth.

#### Integrated land use and infrastructure planning

- The FNQ regional growth strategy could be underpinned by integrated land use and infrastructure planning that incorporates population and dwelling demand modelling and allows for scenario planning for future development options.
- This option would involve the Queensland Government, in collaboration with local governments and state agencies, identifying and developing indicators to assist with monitoring key aspects of the region's success, in particular, dwelling supply. Consideration would need to be given to both long-term and short-term indicators as well as tracking land use prioritisation given effect under the RPI Act.

**Policy Outcomes** | **Strategies**

**Cairns Regional Council LGA only**

- 2.12. Facilitate infill development to increase the supply of a range of housing typologies identified in **Figure 3** to support the implementation of TUVs. This includes increased supply of attached dwellings in and around:
  - a. principal, major and district regional activity centres (e.g. Cairns City, Edmonton, Westcourt)
  - b. strategic precincts (e.g. James Cook University Nguma-bada, Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct)
  - c. public and active transport corridors (e.g. Mulgrave Road, Sheridan Street, Lake Street)
  - d. established suburbs where there is an acceptable or tolerable natural hazard risk, such as the Cairns inner suburbs, northern beaches (Smithfield to Palm Cove) and the Southern Growth Corridor (Edmonton to Gordonvale).

**Cassowary Coast Regional Council LGA only**

- 2.13. Facilitate infill development to increase the supply of a range of housing typologies, focusing on:
  - a. established areas of Innisfail and Tully
  - b. existing village nodes in Mission Beach and areas west of Cardwell provided that existing ecological corridors including cassowary habitat are maintained.

**Douglas Shire Council LGA only**

- 2.14 Facilitate infill development to increase the supply of a range of housing typologies, focusing on Port Douglas and Mossman.
- 2.15 Limit new development north of the Daintree River while supporting Return to Country initiatives. New development must consider serviceability and ensure local character and unique ecological values are protected.

**Mareeba Shire Council LGA only**

- 2.16 Facilitate infill development to increase the supply of a range of housing typologies, focusing on the Mareeba town centre.
- 2.17 New development in Kuranda must ensure local character and unique ecological values are protected.

**Tablelands Regional Council LGA only**

- 2.18. Facilitate infill development to increase the supply of a range of housing typologies, focusing on:
  - a. the Atherton town centre, Priors Creek as well as around the Atherton Showgrounds and the Atherton Hospital
  - b. serviced land in proximity to existing centres, services and community facilities in Malanda, Ravenshoe, Tolga and Yungaburra.

**Policy Outcome 3  
Rural towns and villages**

Rural towns and villages provide for growth that supports economic viability and protects ecological significance.

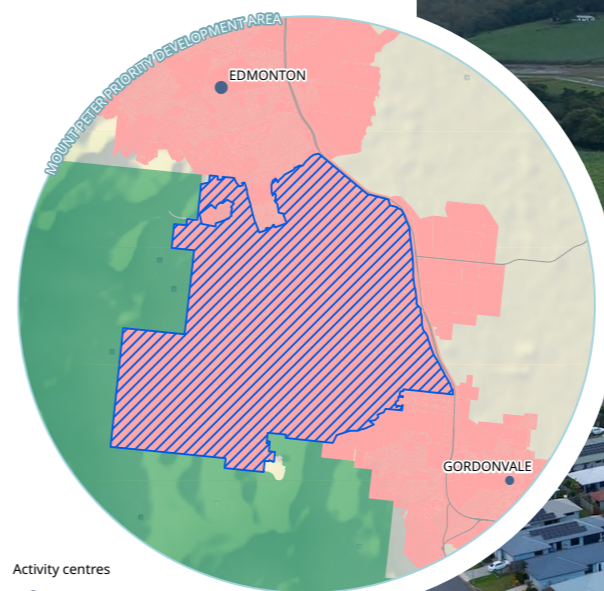
- 3.1 Promote sustainable growth in rural towns and villages where it can be supported by appropriate infrastructure and services, prevents the fragmentation of rural land, and preserves regional landscapes and areas of environmental significance.
- 3.2 Support suitable accommodation types within rural towns and villages for seasonal workers, including those employed by government services and the tourism, agricultural and construction sectors.
- 3.3 Rural workers' accommodation should support regional economic viability. In the RLRPA and RLA, rural workers accommodation may be established where necessary to support operations, provided that the scale of accommodation does not detract from the viability of nearby rural towns and villages.

## Mount Peter Priority Development Area

Mount Peter has been identified for many years as a key location to accommodate future urban growth in the Cairns region.

In response to ongoing advocacy from Cairns Regional Council, the Queensland Government has declared Mount Peter a PDA. This declaration is a significant milestone that unlocks new opportunities to fast-track the coordinated planning and delivery of housing, infrastructure and essential services.

The PDA designation enables Economic Development Queensland to lead land use and infrastructure planning in collaboration with local and state agencies, ensuring that development is well-sequenced, infrastructure-ready and aligned with broader regional planning goals. The Mount Peter PDA will play a critical role in supporting the sustainable growth of Cairns.



Activity centres  
 ● Major  
 ● District  
 Priority Development Area (PDA)  
 ▨ Mount Peter PDA  
 Regional land use categories  
 ■ Urban Footprint  
 ■ National Park  
 ■ National Park



**Mount Peter Housing Estate (Cairns)**  
 Supplied by Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

# Housing supply

The Queensland Government household and dwelling projections 2023 edition have been adopted as the dwelling supply targets for the regional plan.

Figure 2 shows the dwelling supply targets for the region, based on Queensland's projected dwelling supply for 2031 and 2046 under the 2023 edition Queensland Government Population, Household and Dwelling projections, medium and high series.

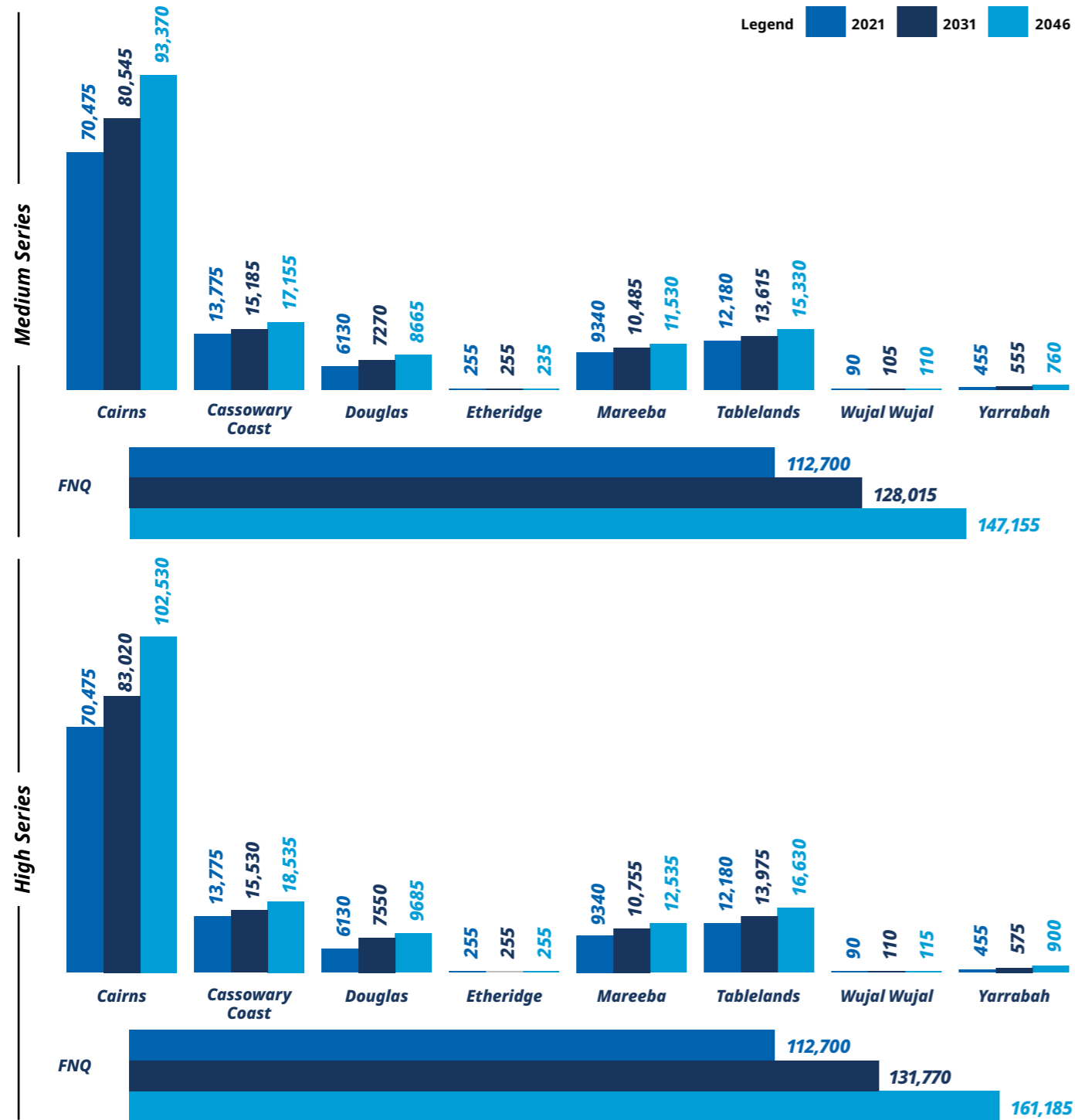


Figure 2 - Queensland Government household and dwelling projections 2023 edition; 2021 dwelling figures sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census of Population and Housing; Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional population, 2021.

Dwelling supply projections include both occupied and vacant private, permanent dwellings. Private, permanent dwellings include structural dwellings (for example, houses, flats, townhouses) but exclude temporary dwellings (for example, tents, caravans, houseboats). Non-private dwellings (for example, hotels, hospitals, boarding schools, workers' accommodation) are not included in these dwelling projections. It is recognised that non-private dwellings account for a proportion of current and future projected dwellings in the region, particularly in key tourist and seasonal worker destinations across the region. Current dwelling supply and projected dwelling demand are estimates and reflect private supply only and require further validation in close consultation with local governments to reflect community needs more accurately.

Figure 3 depicts a range of housing typologies, including low to medium-density housing that supports compact, walkable communities.



Figure 3 - Housing typologies



Theme 2

# Thriving economy



**The region's economy is shaped by its globally significant natural assets and its strategic location connecting Australia and the Asia-Pacific. While globally connected, the region must also strengthen economic self-reliance and supply-chains to ensure long-term resilience.**

The city of Cairns serves as the principal regional activity centre (PRAC) with Innisfail, Mareeba, and Atherton as major regional activity centres (MRAC), all supporting FNQ, Cape York, Torres Strait and Gulf communities. The region's location supports its growing role as a defence hub and centre for marine and aerospace maintenance, repair and overhaul services, transport, pilotage and training. The region is also well-positioned to produce Sustainable Aviation Fuels. By leveraging its strengths, resolving investment barriers, and prioritising strategic infrastructure, the region can achieve sustainable growth that balances development, liveability, and environmental stewardship.



Skyrail Rainforest Cableway (Cairns)

Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

Policy Outcome 1

## Economic growth and diversification

The region's economy has continued to diversify over recent decades. The growth of the knowledge economy, alongside the traditional strengths of agriculture and tourism, continues to improve employment opportunities across the region. Supporting the health industry as one of the largest employers in Cairns will remain a priority, including through the delivery of the Cairns Health Masterplan. Natural assets, traditional land management and environmental practices (particularly in the Wet Tropics) also provide a solid economic foundation, while aviation, marine, defence, tropical expertise, energy, and agritourism will continue to grow. The potential to mine critical minerals is also increasing, particularly in the western parts of FNQ including Etheridge Shire, the Tablelands region and Mareeba Shire.

Critical opportunities for First Nations peoples include access to housing, health, education and employment opportunities, as well as support for local businesses and maintenance of cultural values and connections. Economic participation and continued growth in the number of First Nations businesses not only benefits communities directly but also contributes to a more resilient, diverse and inclusive regional economy. Improving First Nations peoples' economic participation through access and opportunity is critical for achieving better social and economic outcomes for both First Nations peoples and the broader regional community.



Cooya Beach (Douglas)  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

Policy Outcome 2

## Regional centres, precincts and sectors

The region contains an inter-connected network of regional activity centres. Regional activity centres are vital to the delivery of a sustainable pattern of development. They are economic engines and focal points for social interaction and public life, contributing greatly to local identity, sense of place and lifestyle. However, a challenge lies in supporting and activating key precincts through infrastructure, service delivery and population growth in appropriate locations within the regional growth pattern. The region has a range of existing and emerging sectors that are critical to driving regional economic growth, innovation and investment around regional centres and precincts.

Policy Outcome 3

## Regional industrial land and regional economic assets

Regional Industrial Land is critical to achieving many of the region's goals relating to job creation, economic growth and innovation. It supports a range of industries and uses including freight, transport, manufacturing, waste and the circular economy. There is sufficient supply of industrial land across the region, particularly in Mareeba.

Despite this, there is a need to ensure industrial land is responsive to regional economic needs and the population growth predicted for Cairns in the medium-term, particularly in the Southern Growth Corridor at Edmonton and in the Edmonton business and industry area. This is in addition to Cairns South SDA, which is primarily for the long-term supply of larger footprint and hard-to-locate medium and high-impact industrial and logistic uses.

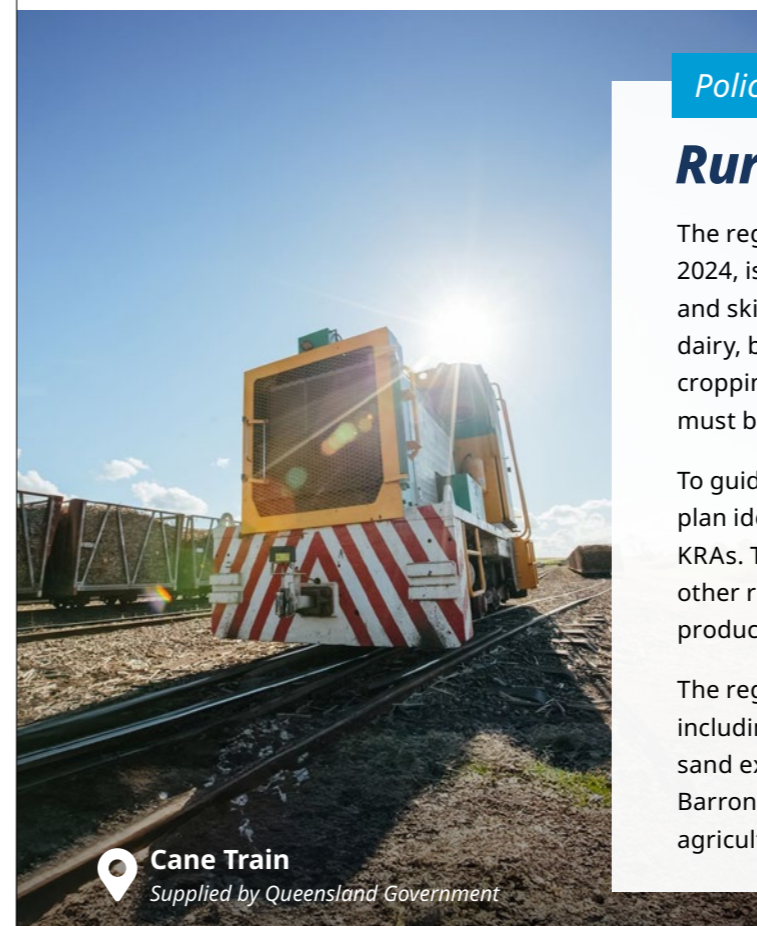
Policy Outcome 4

## Rural economies

The region's agricultural sector, valued at an estimated \$1.8 billion in 2024, is supported by fertile soils, a tropical and sub-tropical climate and skilled workforces. Key industries include sugar, bananas, mangoes, dairy, beef and aquaculture. Strategic areas like the Mareeba-Dimbulah cropping region and Atherton Tablelands are nationally significant and must be protected.

To guide land use and manage competing interests, the regional plan identifies PAAs, Priority Agricultural Land Uses (PALUs), and KRAs. These tools ensure that agriculture, extractive industries and other rural activities can coexist without compromising the region's productive capacity.

The region also contains valuable mineral and extractive resources, including silica sand, copper and tungsten. Sustainable mining and sand extraction, particularly in areas like the Dimbulah Road and Barron River Flats KRAs, are supported where they align with agricultural uses and environmental values.



Cane Train  
Supplied by Queensland Government

## Policy outcomes and strategies

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p><b>Policy Outcome 1</b>  <b>Economic growth and diversification</b></p> <p>Support a thriving, diverse and resilient regional economy with enhanced opportunities for economic participation of First Nations peoples.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Consolidate and expand the region's competitive advantages, specialisations and supply chains by facilitating and responding to new economic opportunities including the growth of knowledge intensive industries.</li> <li>1.2 Support the co-location of compatible land uses, such as industry, education, commercial, retail and other employment activities, near major transport corridors, as indicated in <b>Map 12</b>.</li> <li>1.3 Protect the region's major national and international gateways including the airport and ports, and the strategic road, freight and passenger transport systems, from encroachment of incompatible land uses.</li> <li>1.4 Provide an adequate supply of land to accommodate future growth in aerospace and marine uses at airports and seaports.</li> <li>1.5 Where appropriately located and compatible with existing and surrounding uses, facilitate opportunities for innovation and value-adding in the RLRPA by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) enabling primary production, critical minerals, extraction and processing, energy, circular economy, bioeconomy, ecosystem services, and tropical expertise</li> <li>b) supporting home-based businesses, cottage industries, on-farm processing, agritourism and emerging enterprises.</li> </ol> </li> <li>1.6 Identify and safeguard suitable land for future-focused industries, such as health and innovation precincts, advanced manufacturing and low impact infrastructure, to ensure strategic separation from incompatible uses.</li> <li>1.7 Land use planning supports initiatives that enhance First Nations enterprises, economic development and engagement in the regional economy, including within Economic Areas (<b>Map 13 [insets 1, 2, 3 and 4]</b>).</li> <li>1.8 Foster innovative and local industry to build regional economic resilience that supports the FNQ, Cape York and Torres Strait regions.</li> <li>1.9 Support land use planning outcomes that enable the expansion of employment and training initiatives with and for First Nations peoples, including in housing construction and cultural tourism led by First Nations peoples.</li> </ol> <p><b>Cairns Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.10 Protect strategic industrial land, and facilitate the expansion of the marine, aerospace and defence sectors at the: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Cairns Marine Precinct and Common User Facility at Cairns Port, including for maintenance, repair and overhaul purposes</li> <li>b. Eastern Aviation Precinct and Service Commercial Business Park at Cairns Airport</li> <li>c. Defence Precinct at HMAS Cairns, including for growth in future naval capability and sustainable defence industry with allied/support services.</li> </ol> </li> <li>1.11 Enhance the role and function of tourism villages along the Northern Beaches by ensuring that new development protects and enhances the destination performance.</li> </ol> <p><b>Cassowary Coast Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.12 Support the critical minerals value chain in the region including opportunities for high-purity silica extraction, processing and multi-user infrastructure to enable the exportation of high-purity silica via Mourilyan Port.</li> </ol>

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p><b>Policy Outcome 2</b>  <b>Regional centres, precincts and sectors</b></p> <p>Facilitate planning for the regional activity centres and sectors that promote collaboration, innovation and investment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Support the preferred regional growth pattern, and promote self-containment and service delivery, through a regional network of activity centres (<b>Map 10 and Tables 2 and 3</b>).</li> <li>2.2 Consolidate the growth of regional precincts and sectors (<b>Map 11 and Table 3</b>) and enable their intensification to drive investment, research and development.</li> <li>2.3 Identify and support existing and emerging regional precincts and sectors (<b>Map 11 and Table 3</b>) including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. marine</li> <li>b. aviation</li> <li>c. health</li> <li>d. knowledge, education and training</li> <li>e. defence</li> <li>f. agriculture</li> <li>g. sports, recreation and events</li> <li>h. tourism</li> <li>i. energy</li> <li>j. industry including waste management.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2.4 Support the co-location of mutually supportive and value-adding activities in regional activity centres, precincts and sectors (<b>Maps 10 and 11 and Tables 2, 3 and 4</b>) that do not compromise the primary function of the precinct.</li> <li>2.5 Ensure future regional infrastructure planning recognises and supports regional activity centres, precincts and sectors.</li> <li>2.6 Achieve a walkable, accessible, mixed-use urban form in proximity to regional activity centres to encourage interaction, collaboration and activation.</li> </ol> <p><b>Cairns Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.7 Focus significant economic activity, employment and services in and around the Cairns PRAC, supported by the international airport, seaport, Cityport and hospital.</li> <li>2.8 Promote renewal in the Cairns city centre, as the PRAC, by concentrating growth, investment and land use change with growing creative and event precincts including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Cairns Art Gallery Precinct</li> <li>b. Cairns Museum</li> <li>c. Cairns Performing Arts Centre and Munro Martin Park</li> <li>d. Bulmba-ja Arts Centre</li> <li>e. Cairns Convention Centre</li> <li>f. Tanks Art Centre and Cairns Botanical Gardens</li> <li>g. Cairns Showgrounds, Barlow Park and Screen Queensland Studios: Cairns</li> <li>h. Cityport Waterfront Precinct</li> <li>i. Health and Innovation Precinct as part of the Cairns Hospital Masterplan.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2.9 Promote priority employment growth areas in the Southern Growth Corridor to improve self-containment, including at: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Edmonton town centre</li> <li>b. Edmonton business and industry area</li> <li>c. Cairns South SDA.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## Policy outcomes and strategies

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p><b>Policy Outcome 3</b>  <b>Regional industrial land and regional economic assets</b></p> <p>Industrial land supply is available to meet existing and future economic and employment needs and opportunities.</p>	<p>3.1 Promote sub-regional employment and service delivery through regional industrial areas and regional economic assets (<b>Maps 12 and 13 and Tables 5 and 6</b>).</p> <p>3.2 Ensure an adequate supply of suitable and appropriately located and serviced industrial land is available to accommodate anticipated local and regional demand.</p> <p>3.3 Protect existing and planned industrial lands from encroachment by incompatible land uses (<b>Maps 12 and 13 and Table 4</b>).</p> <p><b>Cairns Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <p>3.4 Facilitate development of industrial land in the Southern Growth Corridor of Cairns, particularly in the Edmonton Business and Industry Area and Cairns South SDA.</p> <p><b>Cassowary Coast Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <p>3.5 Investigate the future growth of freight and logistics at the Port of Mourilyan and Mundoo aerodrome.</p> <p><b>Douglas Shire Council LGA only</b></p> <p>3.6 Facilitate industrial land uses at the Mossman Mill industrial area.</p> <p><b>Mareeba Shire Council LGA only</b></p> <p>3.7 Facilitate industrial land uses at Mareeba Industrial Park and Mareeba Airport Aviation Industrial Park.</p> <p><b>Etheridge Shire Council LGA only</b></p> <p>3.8 Facilitate the development of industrial land at Georgetown to meet future agricultural needs.</p>
<p><b>Policy Outcome 4</b>  <b>Rural economies</b></p> <p>Support emerging industries and technologies, directly associated with rural and agricultural lands, that enhance rural prosperity.</p>	<p>4.1 Promote rural economies by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. recognising and protecting Priority Agricultural Land Uses (PALUs) as the primary land use in PAAs, supporting agricultural diversification and growth, agricultural value-adding opportunities and allied industries in rural land within the RLRPA, including cleared areas within PAAs (<b>Map 7</b>)</li> <li>b. ensuring prime agricultural land is maintained to sustain the region and provide for its future food and fibre security</li> <li>c. avoiding non-agricultural uses in PAAs, except for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) compatible <i>infrastructure purposes</i>, or</li> <li>(2) <i>rehabilitation purposes</i> where located on marginal or unsuitable land and the rehabilitation purposes do not adversely impact the productive agricultural capacity of the PAA. Rehabilitation purposes must be ancillary to and complement agricultural land uses, while enhancing and value-adding existing agricultural capacity</li> </ul> </li> <li>d. protecting key resource areas, mining and extractive industries, and associated processing operations from conflicting land uses and supporting with appropriate infrastructure (<b>Map 14</b>).</li> </ul> <p>4.2 PAA Extractive Resources Precincts are protected from encroachment by sensitive and incompatible uses.</p>

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
	<p>4.3 Despite policy 4.1.c, sand extraction in the PAA Extractive Resources Precinct is supported where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. extraction is compatible with existing and neighbouring agricultural production</li> <li>b. extraction areas are returned to a condition suitable for agricultural production for PALUs, or where that is not possible, extraction voids are returned to viable, value-adding uses that support rural economies.</li> </ul> <p>4.4 Support rural economic diversification by enabling land use outcomes that accommodate diverse economic activities (such as agribusiness, agritourism, critical minerals, ecotourism, ecosystem services, outdoor recreation and rural industries) where these activities maintain a direct connection to the rural, natural or resource value of the surrounding area.</p> <p>4.5 Investigate potential agricultural precincts in PAEs across the region, balancing the need for food production with protection of WHAs and other environment values; impacts on natural resources (such as water and minerals); and the need for housing and infrastructure to support communities.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> For further information relating to PALUs and PAAs refer to Chapter 3.</p> <p><b>Cairns Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <p>4.6 Facilitate food manufacturing and fresh produce exports, through the Regional Trade Distribution Centre and the Cairns Manufacturing Hub, to capitalise on the primary production strengths of the wider FNQ region.</p> <p><b>Etheridge Shire Council LGA only</b></p> <p>4.7 Investigate the potential for an Etheridge agricultural precinct on the Gilbert River.</p>

### Cairns South State Development Area

The Cairns South SDA was established to facilitate economic growth and diversification of the Cairns economy as well as job creation to support the long-term needs of the Cairns region. The Cairns South SDA provides land for regionally significant industrial development over two separate areas.

The northern part of the Cairns South SDA is located east of the Bruce Highway between Edmonton and Gordonvale at Wrights Creek and will enable the development of industries that require large blocks of land, extended operating hours and separation from sensitive land uses. Being adjacent to the Bruce Highway and North Coast Line, this part of the SDA offers a key opportunity to support anticipated trends and growth in the rail freight sector, including increased volumes of freight and longer trains.

The southern part of the SDA is located adjacent to the Mulgrave Mill in Gordonvale and will support future diversification plans for the Mulgrave Mill, including industrial development opportunities that value-add to the sugar refining process.

The SDA is declared under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 Act* (SDPWO Act) and regulated under the Cairns South SDA Development Scheme. A person may only carry out regulated development in the Cairns South SDA in accordance with the SDPWO Act and the Cairns South SDA development scheme.

# Regional centres, precincts and sectors

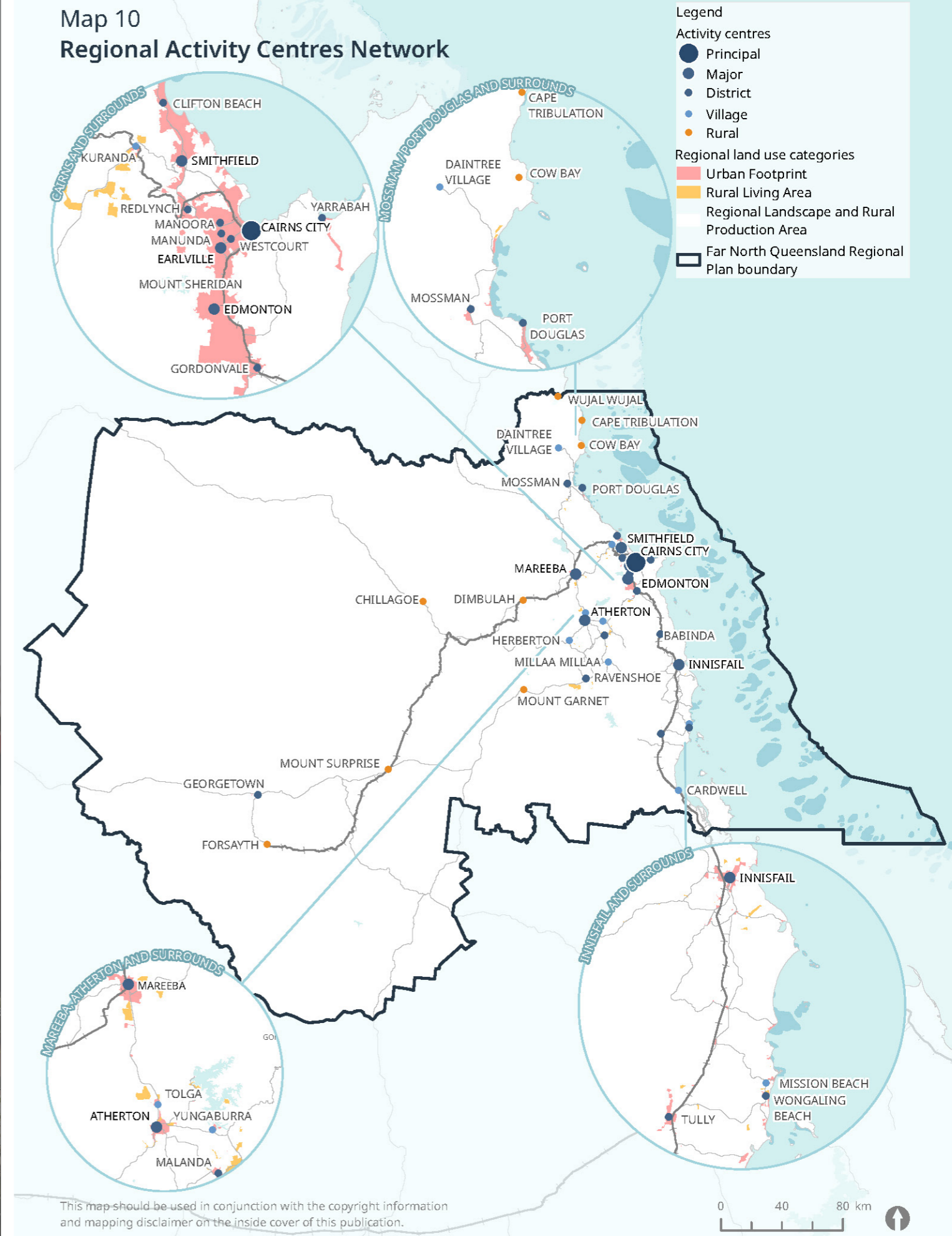
## Regional activity centres network

The regional activity centres network includes regionally significant centres that support a concentration of activity including business, employment, research, education, services and higher-density living (see Table 1, Table 2 and Map 10). They are typically centred in the Central Business District (CBD) of a city or the main street/s of a town and provide a range of essential services and facilities.



**Mareeba Heritage Centre (Mareeba)**  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

Map 10  
Regional Activity Centres Network



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Table 1 – Regional activity centres network

Regional Activity Centre	Description
<b>Principal regional activity centre (PRAC)</b>	<p>The principal regional activity centre, Cairns City centre, is a key focal point for employment and services. This centre provides a diversity of mixed uses, including administrative community, cultural, tourism, recreation, entertainment and service centres of regional significance.</p> <p>To compete in a competitive global market, Cairns City supports economically significant areas that specialise in outward-focused sectors and services, such as professional, health, education, cultural and recreational services.</p> <p>The PRAC is both a creative and knowledge hub, while giving its workforce and residents access to high-order retail and hospitality functions and cultural and entertainment facilities.</p> <p>As a major trip generator, Cairns City centre forms the core of the public transport network and is a key node in the regional public transport system.</p>
<b>Major regional activity centre (MRAC)</b>	<p>Major regional activity centres are focal points for sub-regional employment, as well as the delivery of sub-regional services. They accommodate government branch offices or service centres of sub-regional significance and are within the public transport network.</p> <p>They also contain major concentrations of business and related activities, cultural, community and entertainment facilities and support convenience retail uses that meet the needs of their sub-regional catchments.</p> <p>As well as their traditional service roles, growth and commercial development increasingly support creative and knowledge-intensive businesses to meet the demands of a changing economy.</p>
<b>District regional activity centre</b>	<p>District regional activity centres contain a reasonably large concentration of business, employment, retail, community activities and population. They provide a range of convenience retail and urban services and may contain a small district or branch offices of government and other government services such as police, fire and ambulance.</p> <p>These centres may also contain a hospital, secondary school and provide a range of cultural and entertainment facilities such as a museum, sports parks, café and community hall.</p>
<b>Village activity centre</b>	<p>Village activity centres are distinct communities in rural areas that have a strong village character and links with the rural production and regional landscape values. They contain a concentration of business and employment that primarily service tourism and/or primary production industries. Village activity centres may contain some retail, government services, entertainment and community facilities.</p>
<b>Rural activity centre</b>	<p>Rural activity centres are small, relatively remote concentrations of business and employment centres in rural areas with small populations. Rural activity centres may have services disproportionate to the current population given population fluctuations associated with resource extraction and distances from other centres.</p> <p>Future service provision may change, for example, due to improving technologies. Rural activity centres have an important role in servicing rural communities and provide a focal point for business, community events and social interaction.</p>

Table 2 – Regional activity centres

Local Government Areas	Activity centres
<b>Cairns Regional Council</b>	<p><b>Principal regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cairns City</li> </ul> <p><b>Major regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smithfield • Edmonton • Earlville</li> </ul> <p><b>District regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clifton Beach • Redlynch • Mount Sheridan • Manunda • Manoora • Westcourt • Gordonvale • Babinda</li> </ul>
<b>Cassowary Coast Regional Council</b>	<p><b>Major regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innisfail</li> </ul> <p><b>District regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tully • Wongaling Beach</li> </ul> <p><b>Village activity centre</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mission Beach • Cardwell</li> </ul>
<b>Douglas Shire Council</b>	<p><b>District regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mossman • Port Douglas</li> </ul> <p><b>Village activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daintree Village</li> </ul> <p><b>Rural activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cape Tribulation • Cow Bay</li> </ul>
<b>Etheridge Shire Council</b>	<p><b>District regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Georgetown</li> </ul> <p><b>Rural activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forsyth • Mount Surprise</li> </ul>
<b>Mareeba Shire Council</b>	<p><b>Major regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mareeba</li> </ul> <p><b>Village activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kuranda</li> </ul> <p><b>Rural activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dimbulah • Chillagoe</li> </ul>
<b>Tablelands Regional Council</b>	<p><b>Major regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Atherton</li> </ul> <p><b>District regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ravenshoe • Malanda</li> </ul> <p><b>Village activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yungaburra • Tolga • Herberton • Millaa Millaa</li> </ul> <p><b>Rural activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mount Garnet</li> </ul>
<b>Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council</b>	<p><b>District regional activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yarrabah</li> </ul>
<b>Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council</b>	<p><b>Rural activity centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wujal Wujal</li> </ul>

## Regional precincts and sectors

The region has a range of existing and emerging sectors in marine, aviation, health, knowledge, education and training, defence, agriculture, sport, recreation and events, tourism, energy and mining that are critical to driving regional economic growth. Sectors can be represented as isolated locations (sector places) or form part of a cluster (sector clusters) or precinct as shown on **Map 11**.

**Table 3** identifies emerging and growing precincts and sectors that are regionally, state or nationally significant. As precincts and sectors continue to develop, they will help grow, diversify and strengthen the regional economy and foster a skilled workforce. Regional precincts and sectors have strong connections with the principal and major regional activity centres.

There are also existing, and potentially emerging, agricultural precincts across the region. These agricultural precincts are represented by the PAA and PAEAs in Chapter 3 – Areas of Regional Interest (refer to **Map 7**).



**Mental Health Unit (Cairns)**  
Supplied by Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

**Table 3 – Regional precincts and sectors**

Map Ref	Precinct (Level 1)	Sector cluster (Level 2)	Sector places (Level 3)
1	Cairns	1.1 Aviation	Cairns Airport (1.1a)
		1.2 Defence	HMAS Cairns (1.2a) Regional Maintenance Centre North East (1.2b)
		1.3 Health	Cairns Hospital (1.3a) Cairns Private Hospital (1.3b) Dugurrdja Precinct (1.3c)
		1.4 Knowledge, education and training	Central Queensland University, Cairns campus (1.4a) James Cook University, Bada-Jali campus (1.4b) Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (1.4c) TAFE Cairns Campus and Manufacturing Hub (1.4d)
		1.5 Marine	Cairns Seaport (including Cairns Marine Precinct – Common User Facility) and Cityport (1.5a)
		1.6 Sport, recreation and events	Cairns Esplanade (1.6a) Cairns Racecourse (1.6b) Cairns Convention Centre (1.6c) Barlow Park multi-sports facility (1.6d) Cairns Showgrounds (1.6e) Cazalys Stadium (1.6f) Cairns Art Gallery (1.6g) Cairns Performing Arts Centre (1.6h) Bulmba-ja Arts Centre (1.6i) Cairns Museum (1.6j) Screen Queensland Studio, Cairns (1.6k) Munro Martin Parkland (1.6l) Cairns Botanical Gardens (1.6m)
2	Cairns Northern Beaches	2.1 Knowledge, education and training	James Cook University, Nguma-bada (Smithfield) campus (2.1a)
		2.2 Renewable energy	Barron Gorge Hydro (2.2a)
		2.3 Sport, recreation and events	Smithfield MTB Park (2.3a)
3	Cairns Southern Corridor	3.1 Health	Gordonvale Memorial Hospital (3.1a)
		3.2 Knowledge, education and training	Sugar Research Australia (Meringa) (3.2a)
		3.3 Renewable energy	Mulgrave Mill (3.3a)
4	Douglas	4.1 Health	Mossman District Hospital (4.1a)
		4.2 Knowledge, education and training	Daintree Rainforest Observatory (4.2a)
		4.3 Marine	Port Douglas Marina (4.3a)
		4.4 Sport, recreation and events	Mossman Showgrounds (4.4a) Port Douglas Sports Complex (4.4b)
5	Mareeba	5.1 Aviation	Mareeba Airport (5.1a)
		5.2 Health	Mareeba Hospital (5.2a)
		5.3 Knowledge, education and training	Mareeba Research Facility and TAFE Mareeba (5.3a-5.3b)
		5.4 Renewable energy	Mount Emerald Wind Farm (5.4a) Tableland Green Energy Power Plant (5.4b)
		5.5 Sport, recreation and events	Mareeba Rodeo (5.5a) Mareeba Showgrounds (5.5b) Davies Creek MTB Park (5.5c) Springmount Raceway (5.5d)



Mango Farm (Mareeba)  
Supplied by Mareeba Shire Council

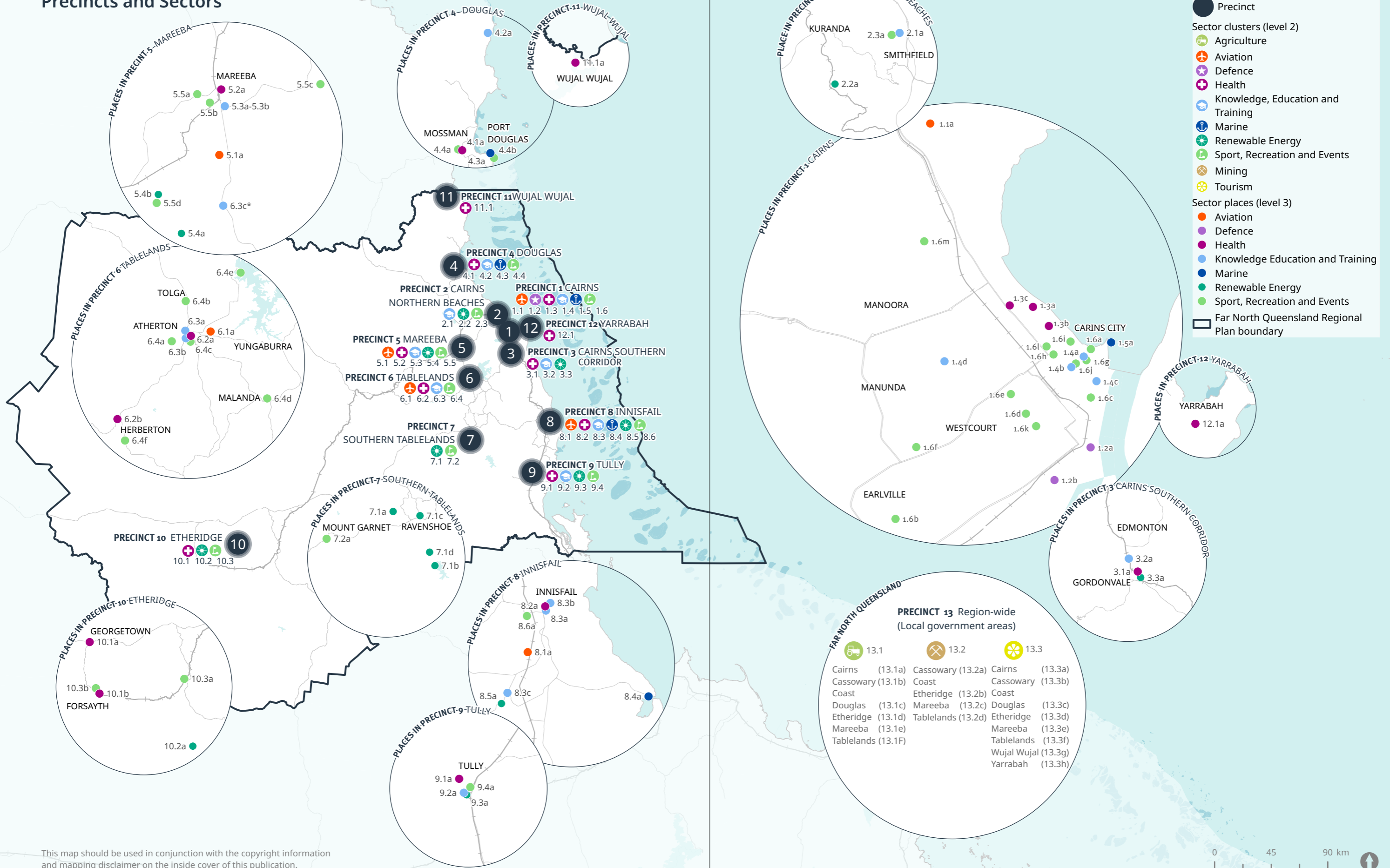
Table 3 – Regional precincts and sectors (cont.)

Map Ref	Precinct (Level 1)	Sector cluster (Level 2)	Sector places (Level 3)
6	Tablelands	6.1 Aviation	Atherton Aerodrome (6.1a)
		6.2 Health	Atherton Hospital (6.2a) Herberton Hospital (6.2b)
		6.3 Knowledge, education and training	Tablelands University Centre (6.3a) TAFE Atherton Campus (6.3b) Walkamin Research Facility (6.3c)* *shown in Mareeba Precinct 5 inset map due to spatial location
		6.4 Sport, recreation and events	Atherton MTB Park (6.4a) Atherton Racecourse (Tolga) (6.4b) Atherton Showground (6.4c) Malanda Showgrounds (6.4d) Tinaroo Falls Dam (6.4e) Wondecla Showgrounds (6.4f)
7	Southern Tablelands	7.1 Renewable energy	Kaban Green Power Hub (7.1a) Koombooloomba Dam (7.1b) Windy Hill Wind Farm (7.1c) Kareeya Hydro Power Station (7.1d)
		7.2 Sport, recreation and events	Mount Garnet Racecourse (7.2a)
8	Innisfail	8.1 Aviation	Mundoo Aerodrome (8.1a)
		8.2 Health	Innisfail Hospital (8.2a)
		8.3 Knowledge, education and training	Cassowary Coast University Centre (8.3a) TAFE Innisfail campus (8.3b) South Johnstone Research Facility (8.3c)
		8.4 Marine	Mourilyan Port (8.4a)
		8.5 Renewable energy	South Johnstone Sugar Mill (8.5a)
		8.6 Sport, recreation and events	Innisfail Racecourse (8.6a)

Table 3 – Regional precincts and sectors (cont.)

Map Ref	Precinct (Level 1)	Sector cluster (Level 2)	Sector places (Level 3)
9	Tully	9.1 Health	Tully Hospital (9.1a)
		9.2 Knowledge, education and training	Sugar Research Australia Tully (9.2a)
		9.3 Renewable energy	Tully Sugar Mill (9.3a)
		9.4 Sport, recreation and events	Tully Showgrounds (9.4a)
10	Etheridge	10.1 Health	Georgetown Primary Health Centre (10.1a) Forsyth Primary Health Centre (10.1b)
		10.2 Renewable energy	Kidston Clean Energy Hub (10.2a)
		10.3 Sport, recreation and events	Einasleigh Racecourse (10.3a) Charleston Dam (10.3b)
11	Wujal Wujal	11.1 Health	Wujal Wujal Primary Health Care Centre (11.1a)
12	Yarrabah	12.1 Health	Yarrabah Emergency Services (12.1a)
13	Region-wide	13.1 Agriculture	Cairns LGA (13.1a) Cassowary Coast LGA (13.1b) Douglas LGA (13.1c) Etheridge LGA (13.1d) Mareeba LGA (13.1e) Tablelands LGA (13.1f)
		13.2 Mining	Cassowary Coast LGA (13.2a) Etheridge LGA (13.2b) Mareeba LGA (13.2c) Tablelands LGA (13.2d)
		13.3 Tourism	Cairns LGA (13.3a) Cassowary Coast LGA (13.3b) Douglas LGA (13.3c) Etheridge LGA (13.3d) Mareeba LGA (13.3e) Tablelands LGA (13.3f) Wujal Wujal LGA (13.3g) Yarrabah LGA (13.3h)

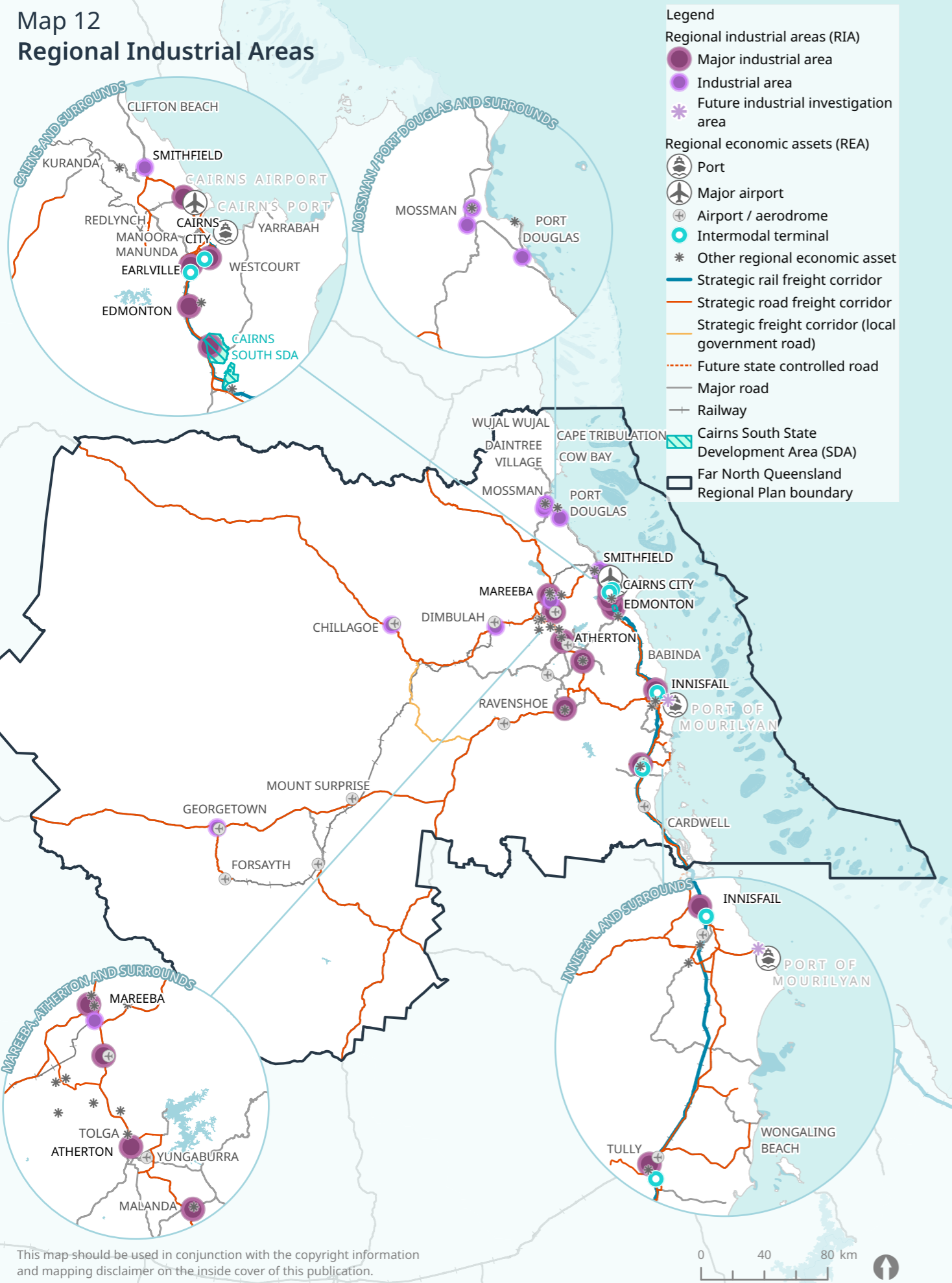
# Map 11 Precincts and Sectors



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Map 12  
Regional Industrial Areas



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# Regional industrial areas and regional economic assets

Table 4 identifies regional industrial areas (RIAs), comprising major industrial areas, industrial areas and future industrial investigation areas (refer to Maps 12 and 13). Table 5 identifies regional economic assets (REAs) (refer Maps 12 and 13).

Table 4 – Regional industrial areas

Local government areas	Regional industrial area	Area type	Map reference
<b>Cairns Regional Council</b>	Bungalow Industrial Area	Major industrial area	RIA1
	Portsmith Industrial Area	Major industrial area	RIA2
	Cairns South SDA	Major industrial area	RIA3
	Edmonton Business and Industry Area	Major industrial area	RIA4
	Stratford - Aeroglen (Cairns Airport) Industrial Area	Major industrial area	RIA5
	Woree Business and Industry Park	Major industrial area	RIA6
<b>Cassowary Coast Regional Council</b>	Smithfield Industrial Area	Industrial area	RIA7
	Goondi Bend Industrial Area	Major industrial area	RIA8
	Tully Industrial Area	Major industrial area	RIA9
<b>Douglas Shire Council</b>	Mourilyan Industrial Investigation Area	Future industrial investigation area	RIA10
	Craiglie Industrial Area	Industrial area	RIA11
	Mossman South Industrial Area	Industrial area	RIA12
<b>Etheridge Shire Council</b>	Mossman Mill Industrial Area	Industrial area	RIA13
	Georgetown Industrial Investigation Area	Industrial area	RIA14
<b>Mareeba Shire Council</b>	Mareeba Airport Aviation Industrial Park	Major industrial area	RIA15
	Mareeba Industrial Park	Major industrial area	RIA16
	Chillagoe Industrial Estate	Industrial area	RIA17
	Dimbulah	Industrial area	RIA18
	Mareeba South	Industrial area	RIA19
<b>Tablelands Regional Council</b>	Atherton Industrial Estate	Major industrial area	RIA20
	Malanda Industrial Area (Dairy Factory and Pioneer Avenue)	Major industrial area	RIA21
	Ravenshoe Industrial Area	Major industrial area	RIA22

Table 5 – Regional economic assets

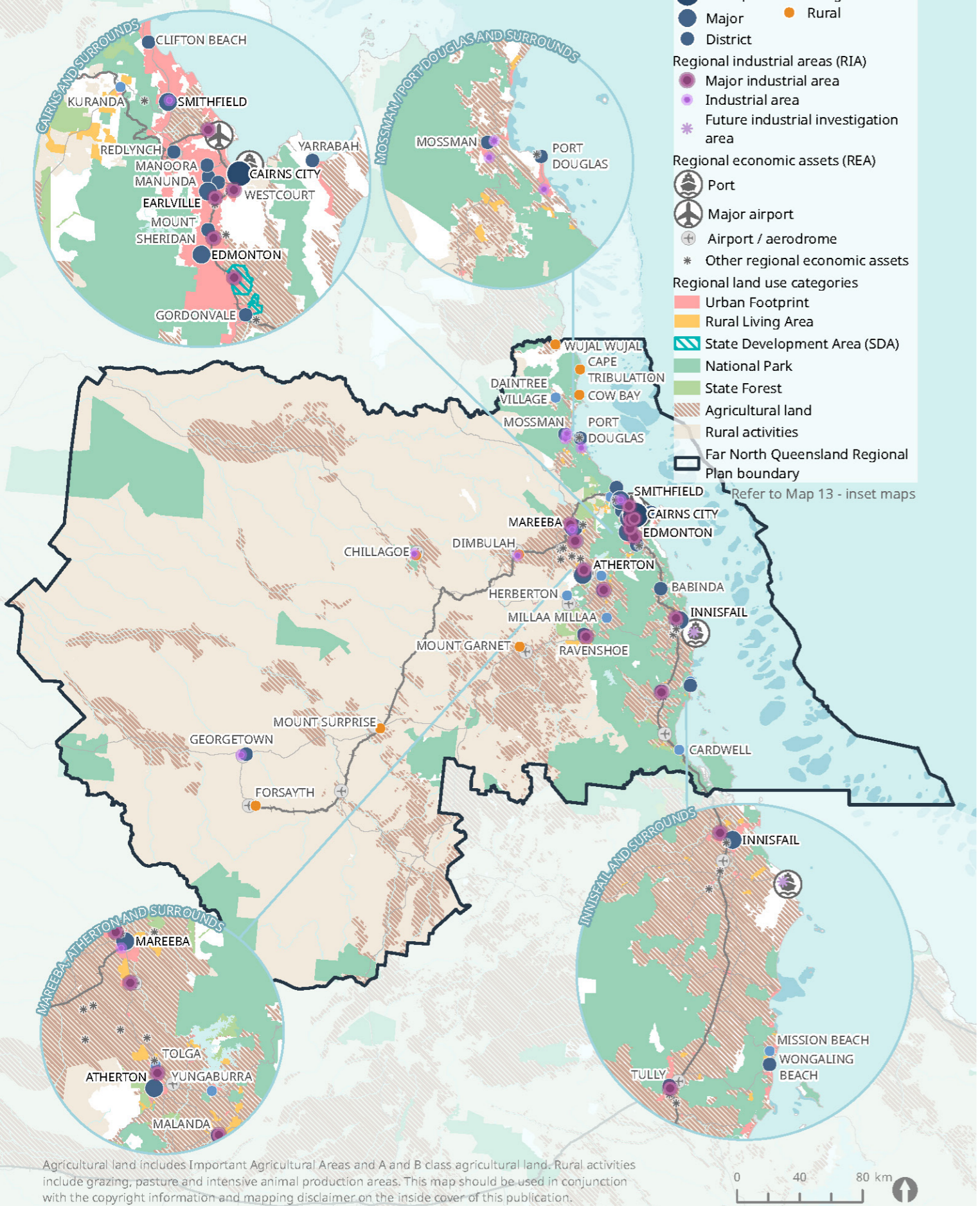
Local government area	Regional economic asset	Area type	Map reference
<b>Cairns Regional Council</b>	Cairns Airport	Major airport	REA1
	Cairns Seaport and Cityport	Port	REA2
	Portsmith Intermodal Terminal	Intermodal terminal	REA3
	Woree Intermodal Terminal	Intermodal terminal	REA4
	Queerah Explosives Magazine Reserve	Explosives magazine reserve	REA5
	Mulgrave Central Mill	Mill	REA6
	Kuranda Scenic Rail/Sky Rainforest Cableway	Rail/cableway	REA7
<b>Cassowary Coast Regional Council</b>	Cardwell Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA8
	Mundoo Aerodrome (Innisfail)	Airport/aerodrome	REA9
	Tully Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA10
	Port of Mourilyan	Port	REA11
	Innisfail Intermodal Terminal	Intermodal terminal	REA12
	Tully Intermodal Terminal	Intermodal terminal	REA13
	Wangan Foundry	Iron and brass foundry	REA14
	South Johnstone Sugar Mill	Mill	REA15
	Tully Sugar Mill	Mill	REA16

Table 5 – Regional economic assets (cont.)

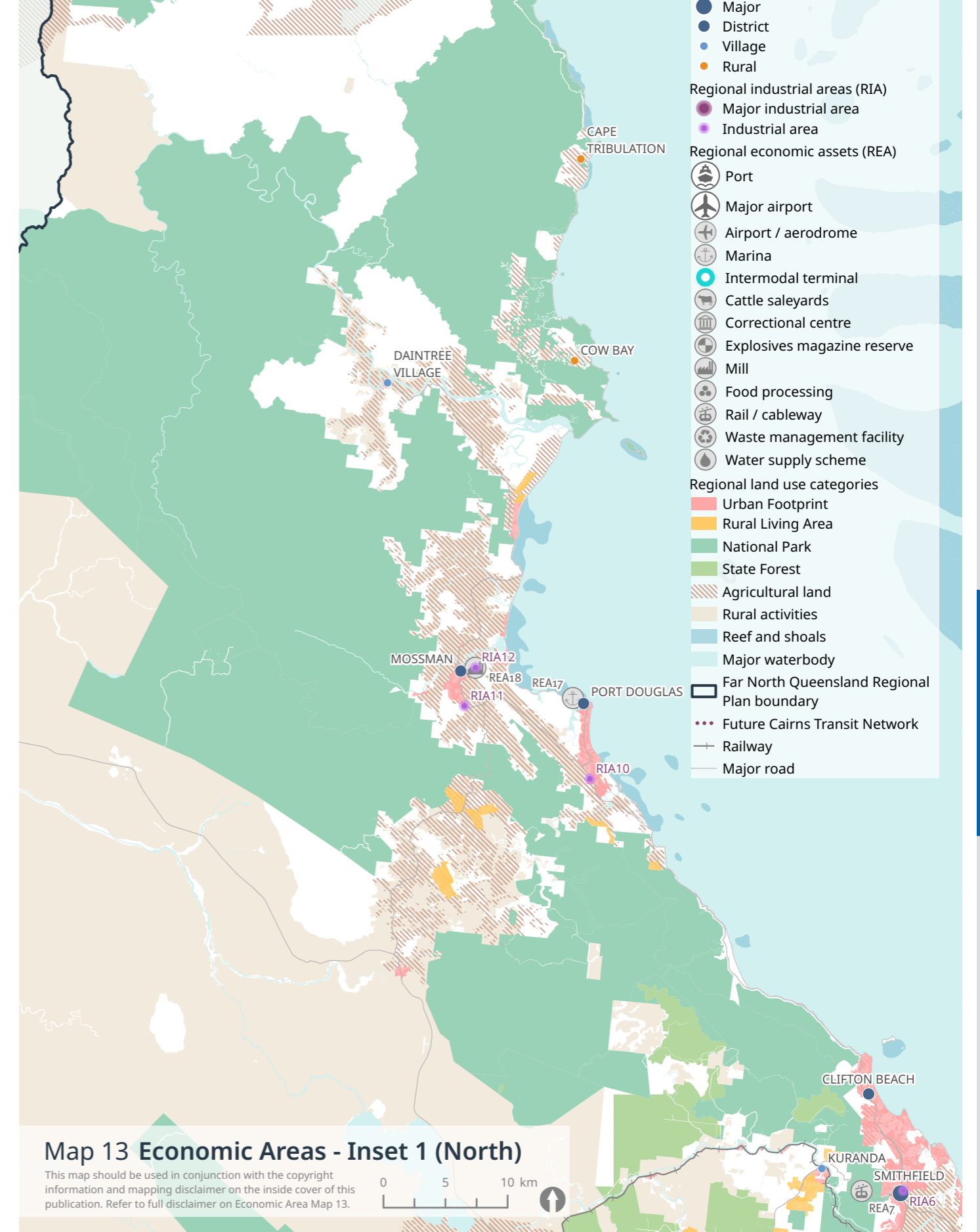
Local government area	Regional economic asset	Area type	Map reference
<b>Douglas Shire Council</b>	Port Douglas Marina	Marina	REA17
	Mossman Sugar Mill	Mill	REA18
<b>Etheridge Shire Council</b>	Georgetown Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA19
	Einasleigh Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA20
	Forsyth Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA21
	Mount Surprise Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA22
<b>Mareeba Shire Council</b>	Mareeba Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA23
	Lotus Glen Correctional Centre	Correctional centre	REA24
	Mareeba poultry processing	Food processing	REA25
	Mareeba Sawmill	Mill	REA26
	Tableland Sugar Mill	Mill	REA27
	Kuranda Scenic Rail/Sky Rainforest Cableway	Rail/cableway	REA7
	Mareeba Saleyards	Saleyards	REA28
	Springmount Waste Management Facility	Waste management facility	REA29
	Mareeba Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme (including Tinaroo Dam)	Water supply scheme	REA30
	Chillagoe Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA31
<b>Tablelands Regional Council</b>	Dimbulah Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA32
	Mareeba Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme (including Tinaroo Dam)	Water supply scheme	REA30
	Atherton Airport	Airport/aerodrome	REA33
	Malanda Dairy Factory	Food processing	REA34
	Tolga Peanut Processing Plant	Food processing	REA35
	Ravenshoe Saw Mill	Mill	REA36
	Rocky Creek meat processing	Abattoir	REA37
	Herberton Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA38
	Mt Garnet Aerodrome	Airport/aerodrome	REA39



### Map 13 Economic Areas



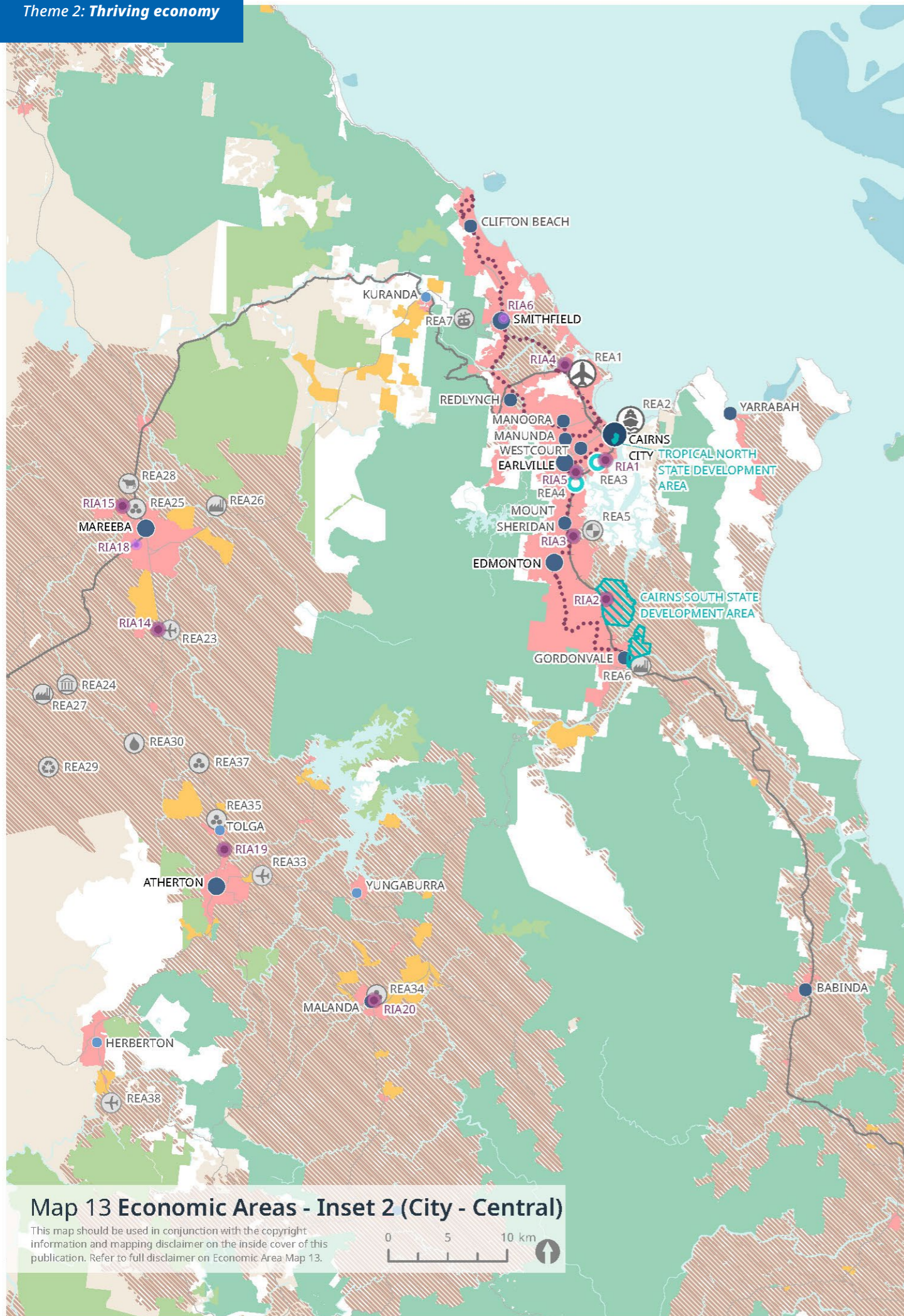
Agricultural land includes Important Agricultural Areas and A and B class agricultural land. Rural activities include grazing, pasture and intensive animal production areas. This map should be used in conjunction with the copyright information and mapping disclaimer on the inside cover of this publication.



Map 13 Economic Areas - Inset 1 (North)

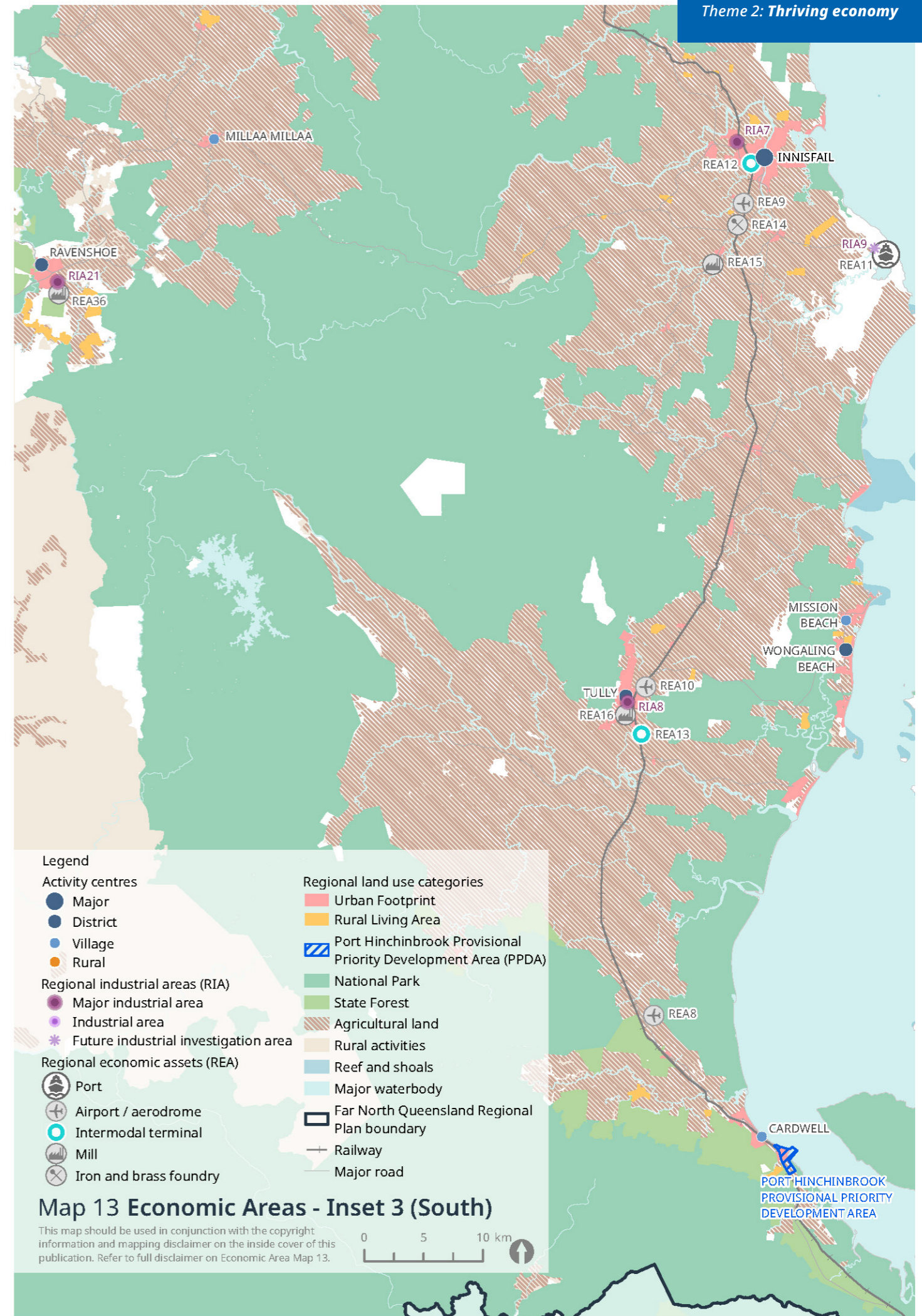
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**Map 13 Economic Areas - Inset 2 (City - Central)**

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**Legend**

**Activity centres**

- Major
- District
- Village
- Rural

**Regional industrial areas (RIA)**

- Major industrial area
- Industrial area
- Future industrial investigation area

**Regional economic assets (REA)**

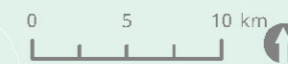
- ⚓ Port
- ✈ Airport / aerodrome
- 🚚 Intermodal terminal
- 🏭 Mill
- ⚙ Iron and brass foundry

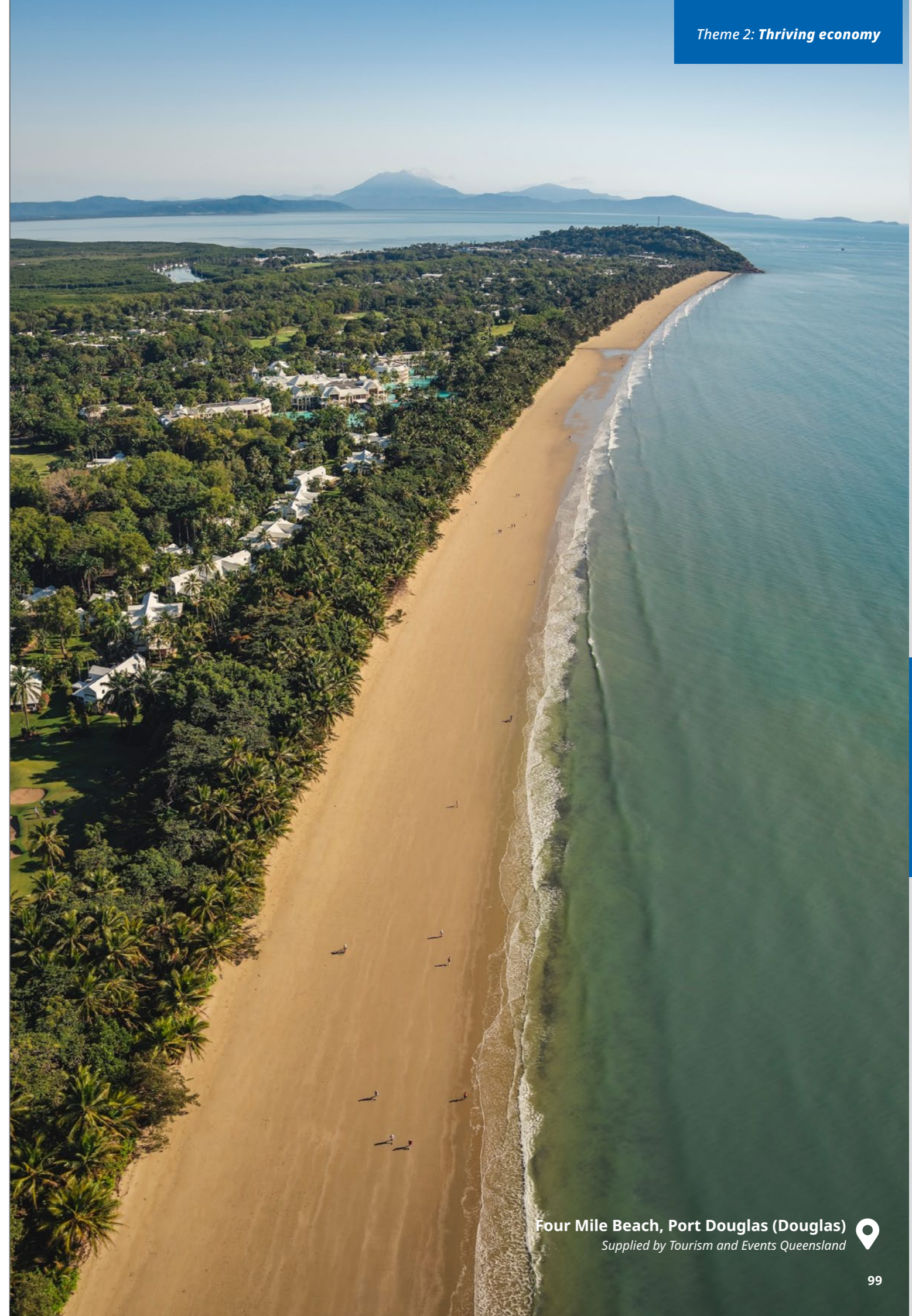
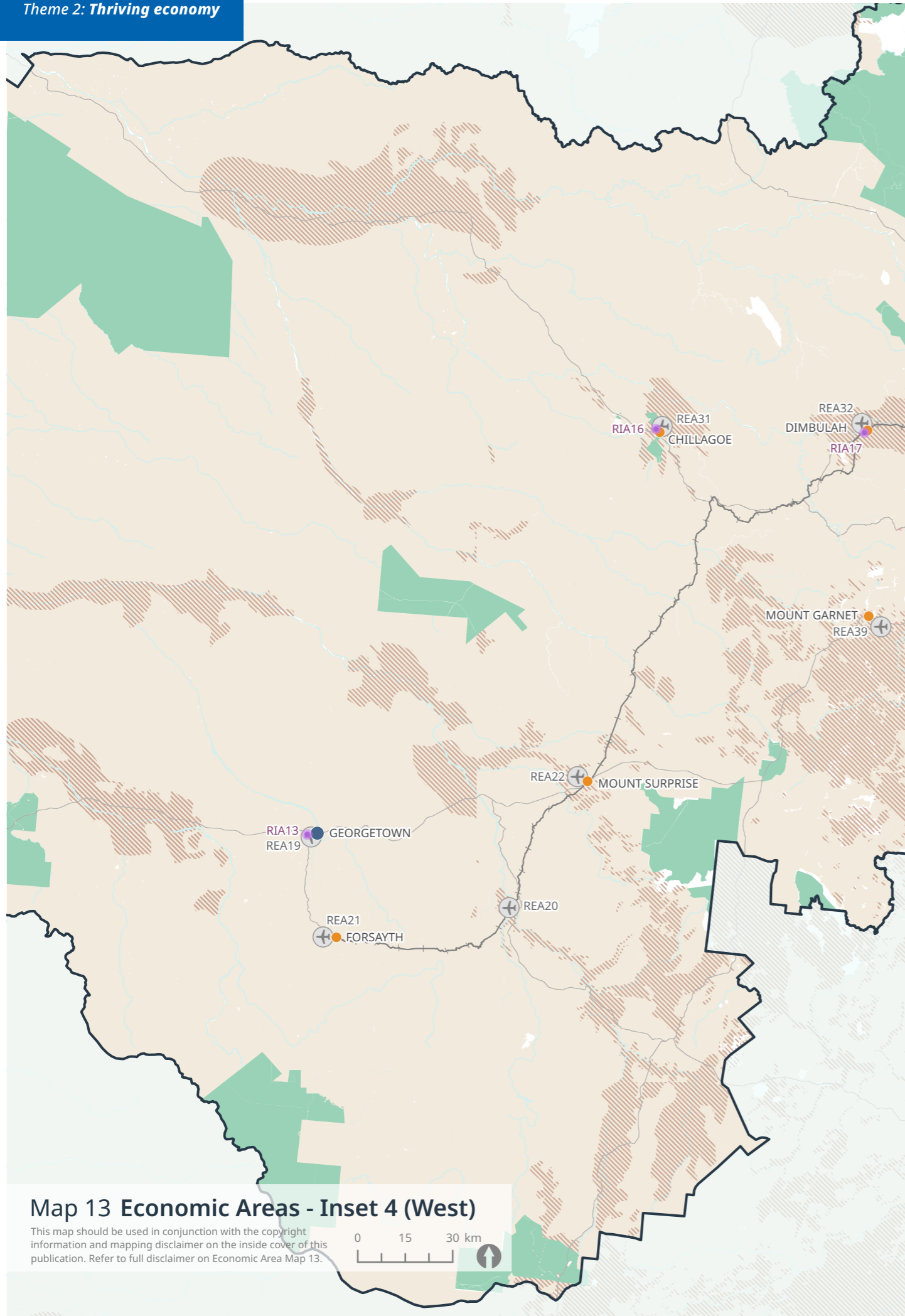
**Regional land use categories**

- Urban Footprint
- Rural Living Area
- Port Hinchinbrook Provisional Priority Development Area (PPDA)
- National Park
- State Forest
- Agricultural land
- Rural activities
- Reef and shoals
- Major waterbody
- Far North Queensland Regional Plan boundary
- Railway
- Major road

**Map 13 Economic Areas - Inset 3 (South)**

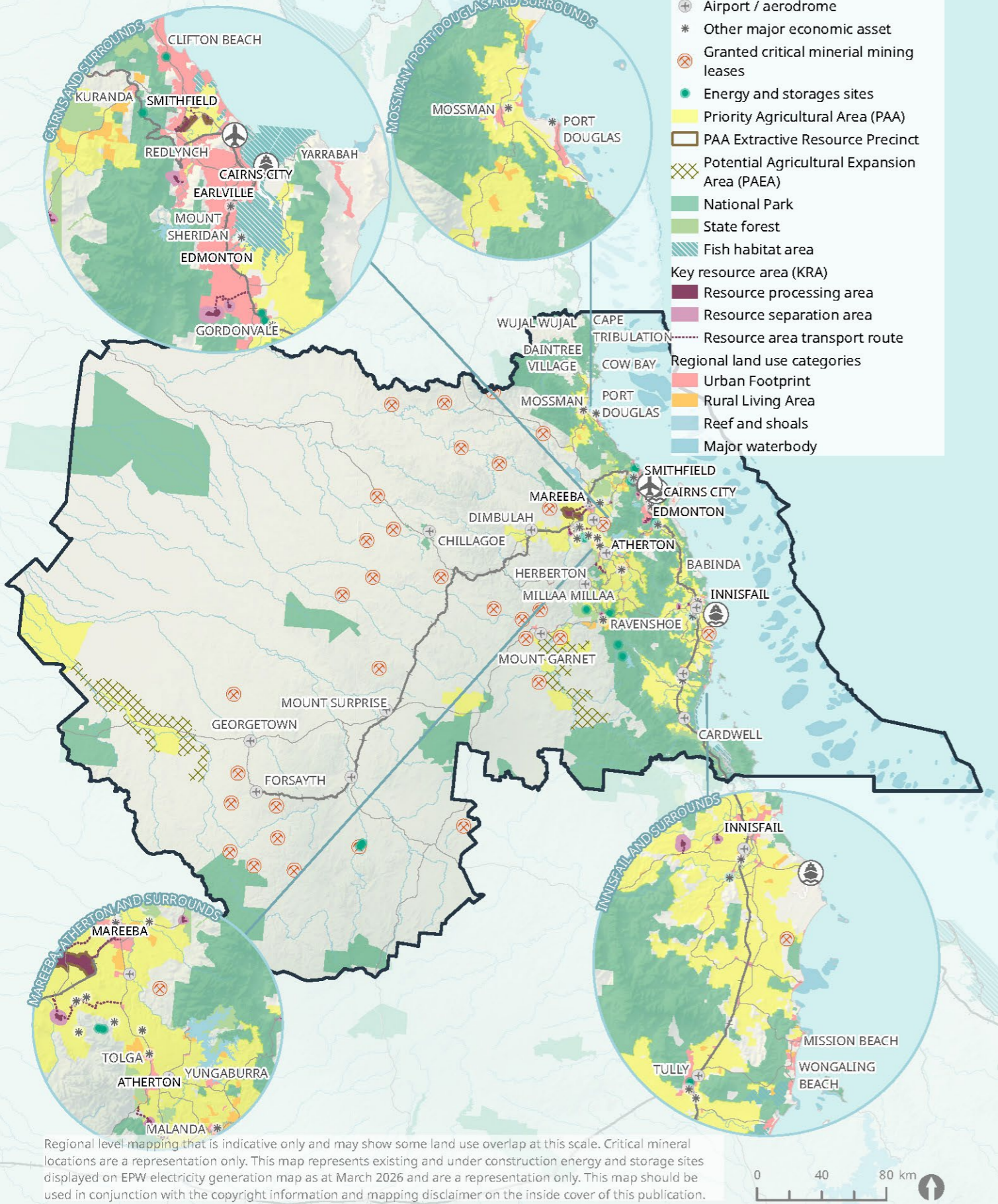
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**Four Mile Beach, Port Douglas (Douglas)**  
 Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

Map 14  
Rural Economies and Natural Economic Resources



Regional level mapping that is indicative only and may show some land use overlap at this scale. Critical mineral locations are a representation only. This map represents existing and under construction energy and storage sites displayed on EPW electricity generation map as at March 2026 and are a representation only. This map should be used in conjunction with the copyright information and mapping disclaimer on the inside cover of this publication.

# Rural economies and natural economic resources

## Agriculture

The region has a critical role in Australia's agricultural industry and expertise in tropical agriculture and fisheries. The region grows a range of high-quality and nationally significant agricultural products including sugar cane, bananas, mangoes, avocados, other tropical fruit and vegetables, dairy, beef cattle, poultry and aquaculture.

PAA have been identified across the region (refer **Map 7**). The ongoing protection of natural economic resources and the avoidance and resolution of potential land use conflicts arising between competing resource assets (as well as with other land uses) is essential to ensuring their sustainable management. New PAAs have been identified from Cardwell to Cairns, the Tablelands, Mossman, Gilbert River and Mareeba-Dimbulah.

PAEAs are indicative clusters of soil quality and some existing agricultural land, intended to guide future potential agricultural feasibility investigations. Potential agriculture precincts are being investigated, including a proposed new precinct at Gilbert River as part of a proposed Etheridge Agricultural Precinct. PAEAs have the potential to enhance regional economic growth while contributing to food and water security through sustainable and innovative practices. Subject to further consideration, expansion areas have the opportunity to showcase a balance between environmental stewardship with economic prosperity, delivering long-term benefits for the region.

## Mineral and extractive resources

Natural economic resources also include mineral resources such as critical minerals and extractive resources used in the construction and building industries. The mining and resources sector delivers significant economic benefits to the region and has potential to grow with critical minerals. Most of the region's mining operations are in Mareeba, Etheridge and Tablelands LGAs as shown on **Map 14**. There are many undeveloped mineral deposits and resource areas across the region (such as silica on the Cassowary Coast) with the potential to support future mining activities. Considering such potential as part of the future planning and development of road freight routes and port connections is a key opportunity to position the region to support new mining projects.

State significant extractive resources, known as KRAs, contain essential construction materials such as sand, gravel, rock, clay and soil, and are identified and protected through the State Planning Policy to support development, infrastructure delivery and post-disaster recovery. Located close to market to ensure economic viability and supply reliability, KRAs play a vital role in providing materials for homes, hospitals, schools, factories, and infrastructure including energy, roads, railways, ports, and dams. There are a range of KRAs in the region, with only two identified for sand resources, where agricultural land uses and sand extraction continue to co-exist within the Dimbulah Road and Barron River Flats KRAs.

## Sand extraction and agriculture

Agricultural land uses and sand extraction co-exist at Dimbulah Road and Barron River Flats KRAs. The sand in these locations is widespread and extraction areas will move over time. Balancing and integrating the state interests in agriculture and extractive resources is critical to ensure these interests are compatible. The agricultural and extractive industries in FNQ have been constructively managing these interactions in the past. It is important that this positive engagement continues as these areas are a significant resource for construction materials and for agricultural production in the region. These arrangements may be formalised in lease agreements or with the landowner's consent. Policy is included within the regional plan to continue the support of co-existence of sand extraction and agriculture.



Theme 3  
**Ecotourism and biodiversity**



**FNQ is home to two WHAs: the Wet Tropics WHA and the Great Barrier Reef WHA. Most of the region comprises of tropical savannah characterised by rugged terrain, ancient rock formations, expansive open woodlands, wetlands and rainforests.**

The Wet Tropics WHA forms part of the Wet Tropics bioregion, one of the most significant bioregions in the world. It supports the highest level of biodiversity of any region in Australia with more than 3300 species of plants (700 of which are endemic to the area) and more than 700 species of vertebrate animals (including at least 88 species found nowhere else on earth).

Beyond the Wet Tropics bioregion, the FNQ region boasts the diverse ecosystems of the Einasleigh Uplands, Gulf Plains and Cape York Peninsula bioregions, each contributing to region’s diverse environmental identity (**Map 15**).

The Great Barrier Reef WHA is the world’s largest and most diverse coral reef system and features outstanding biodiversity of international significance. Its catchment ecosystems play a critical role in maintaining the high biodiversity, aesthetic and cultural values of the Great Barrier Reef.

The natural beauty of the regional landscape, outdoor living opportunities and availability of nature-based recreational activities are all vital components of the region’s character, lifestyle and economy. The biodiversity and national parks support the sustainability and community health of the region. The region enjoys a strong and established tourism industry based on reef, rainforest, nature-based tourism and ecotourism.

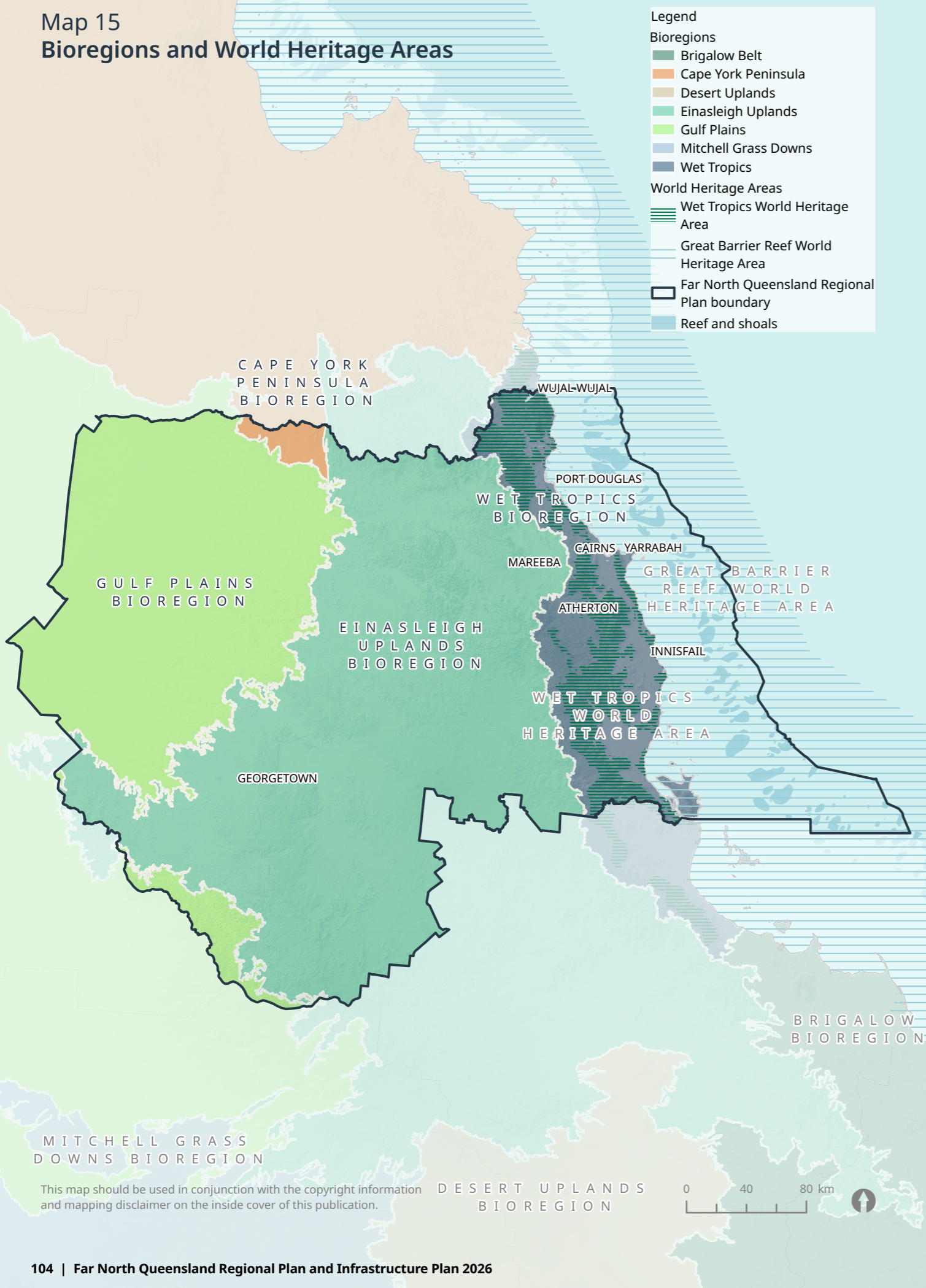
Strong regional partnerships will be essential in achieving regional planning outcomes. Recognising and integrating First Nations knowledge will play a pivotal role in shaping responsive, adaptive policies that address evolving environmental challenges, while fostering a deep connection to Country.



**The Wet Tropics WHA contains:**

- 40%** of Australia’s **BIRD** species
- 30%** of Australia’s **MAMMAL** species
- 60%** of Australia’s **BUTTERFLY** species
- 20%** of Australia’s **REPTILE** species
- 21%** of Australia’s **CYCAD** species
- 29%** of Australia’s **FROG** species
- 65%** of Australia’s **FERN** species
- 30%** of Australia’s **ORCHID** species

Map 15  
Bioregions and World Heritage Areas



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DESERT UPLANDS BIOREGION

0 40 80 km

Policy Outcome 1

### Ecotourism

The natural environment is a major economic and social asset to the region that contributes to tourism and quality of life.

Ecotourism is a cornerstone in FNQ, offering nature-based experiences across the iconic landscapes of the region. The region should continue to leverage its biodiversity and natural environment to attract visitors from across the globe, making ecotourism a key competitive advantage for the state.

Ecotourism (as defined in the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*) can and will be used as a strategic pillar for managing and protecting the region's unique biodiversity, as well as offering potential to generate further employment, empower local communities including First Nations groups, and enable new opportunities for ecotourism operators.

Policy Outcome 2

### Regional water quality

Water supports people, agriculture, animals and plants, and is central to the health of the region's ecosystem as it connects places, processes and species. The protection and improvement of water quality sustains economic and social activities and ensures ecological health for present and future generations. In the region, there are many highly valuable ecological systems, including the internationally recognised Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics WHAs.

The region's catchment ecosystems play a critical role in maintaining the high biodiversity, aesthetic and cultural values of the Great Barrier Reef. Waterways and wetlands have important biodiversity, ecological values, wildlife corridors, amenity and flood management values. They also play a significant role in capturing and processing pollutants from water flowing into the reef lagoon, providing pathways for fish and other aquatic species to migrate and providing habitat for species including birds. Riparian vegetation plays a role in maintaining bank stability, retaining sediment, and filtering or transforming nutrients and other chemicals from overland flow.

Adopting best practice water management approaches and supporting integrated catchment management is essential for protecting the health and ecological functions of regional water quality.

Policy Outcome 3

### Regional landscapes and biodiversity

FNQ's regional landscapes support a broad range of rural, natural and social uses including agriculture, biodiversity, natural resources, cultural practices, outdoor recreation and tourism. The regional landscape also maintains scenic amenity, coastal hillslopes and cultural landscapes.

The region's landscapes and natural areas have important cultural significance for various communities. It is critical that these regional landscape values are maintained and enhanced for future generations and remain limited from fragmentation. Land and waterway fragmentation in the RLRPA has cumulative impacts which may contribute adversely on the region's economic potential, environmental health, community wellbeing, agricultural and rural land uses and the regional biodiversity network.

The region's biodiversity values are central to ecological functioning and strengthen the region's capacity to adapt to environmental change. Preserving, connecting, and enhancing the region's exceptional biodiversity is essential to reversing the decline of threatened and endangered species, while also strengthening the relationship between people and nature across economic, social and environmental contexts.

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity corridors and identifying strategic rehabilitation areas (SRAs) provides opportunity to improve ecological functioning and corridor connectivity. Establishing a regional biodiversity network also helps maintain ecosystem resilience by enhancing landscape (including waterway) connectivity and preserving topographic diversity.

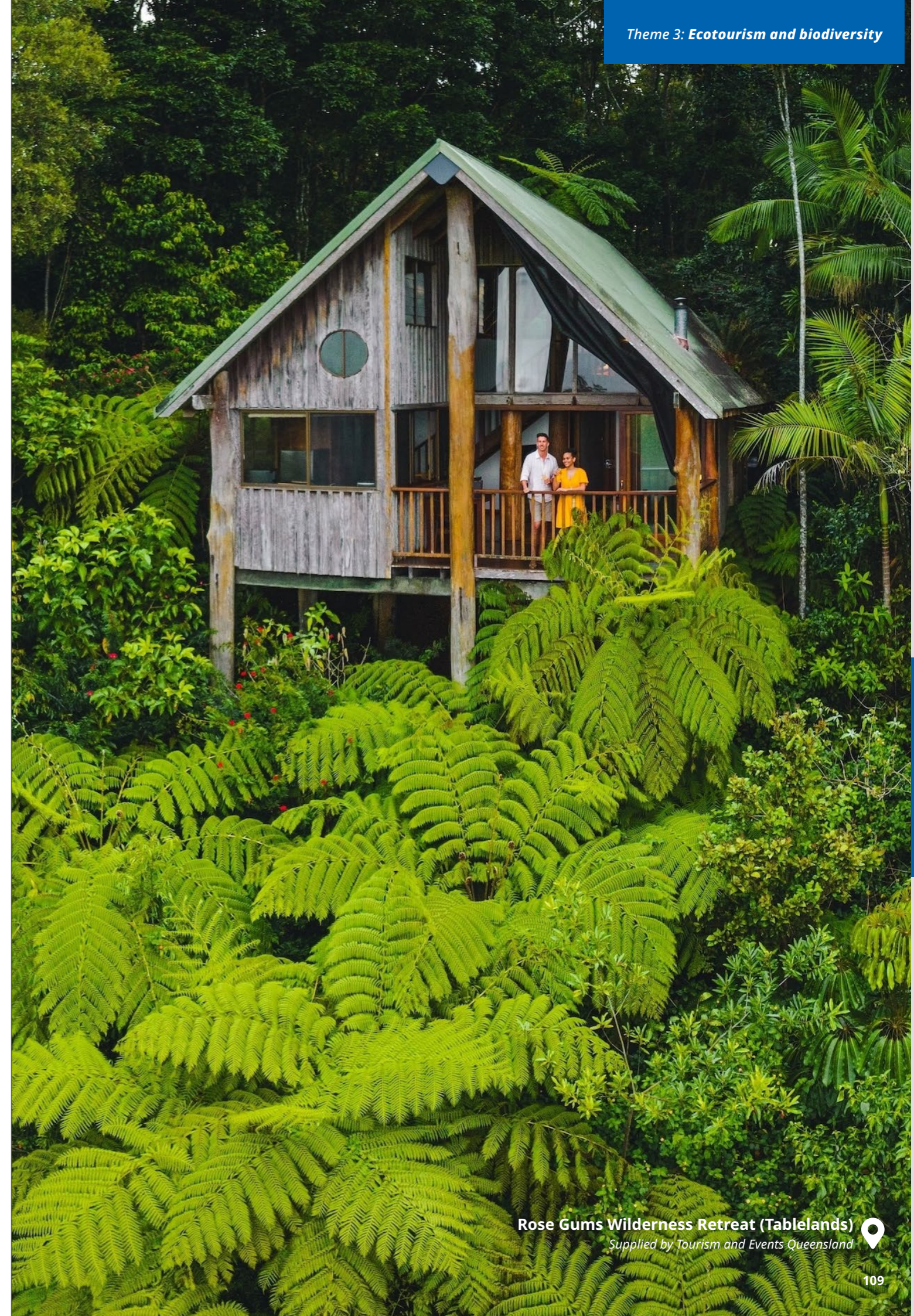
The 'Wet Tropics WHA – Special Management Area' depicted on **Map 16** identifies an area of high scenic amenity sensitivity for the purpose of considering wind farm development adjacent to the Wet Tropics WHA. The mapping is intended to inform assessment of the suitability, siting and design of wind farm proposals in accordance with State Code 23: Wind farm development.

## Policy outcomes and strategies

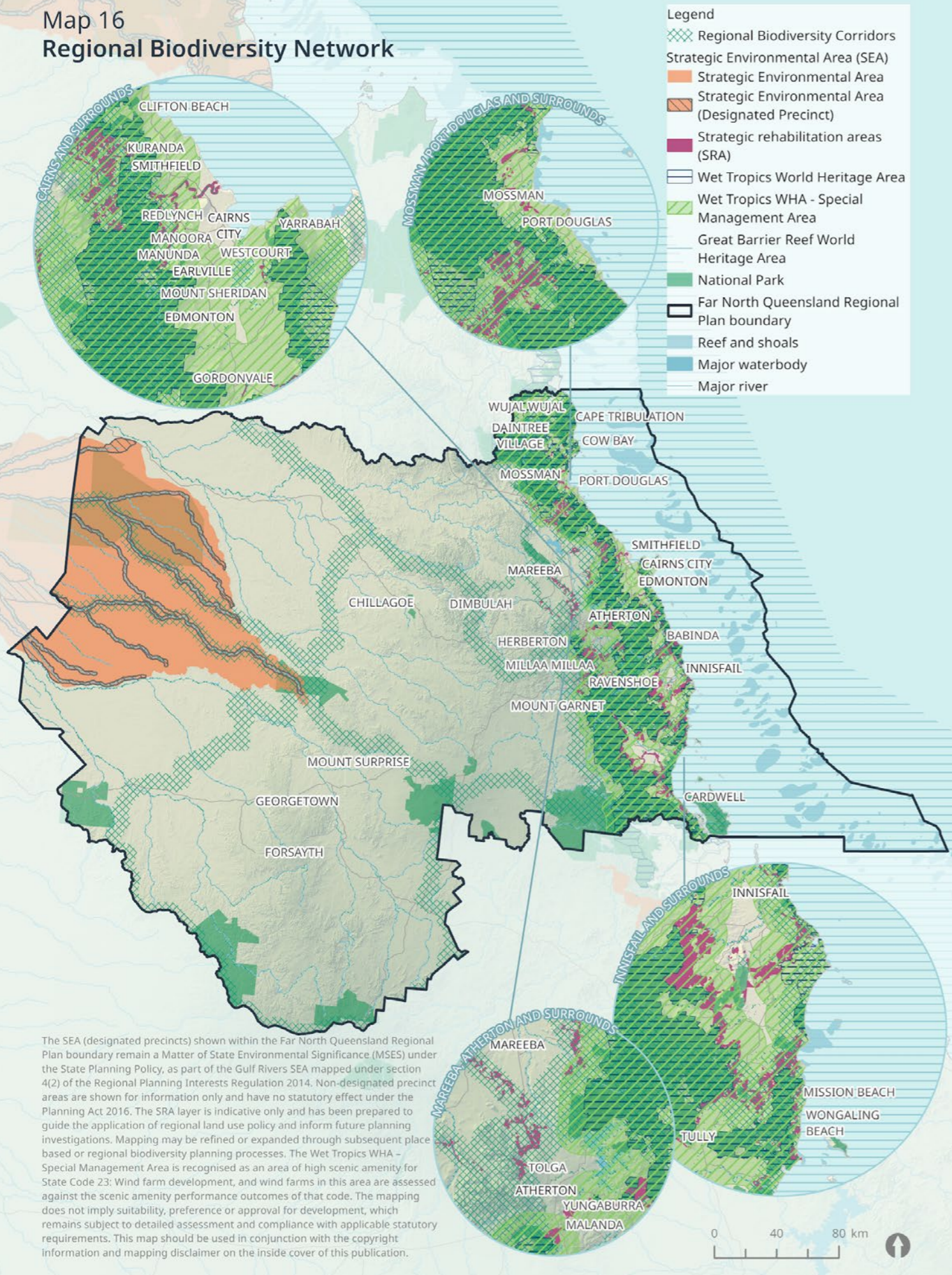
Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p><b>Policy Outcome 1</b> <b>Ecotourism</b></p> <p>The region supports and protects a well-established tourism sector that provides a range of ecotourism and nature-based tourism options, centred on reef, rainforest and cultural experiences.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Support the region as a world-class tourism destination including by:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. protecting the natural environment as a pillar of the region’s tourism sector and brand</li> <li>b. accelerating and diversifying ecotourism to complement the iconic assets of the GBR, Wet Tropics and Einasleigh bioregion</li> <li>c. identifying, promoting and supporting additional cultural tourism experiences to ensure the region is one of Australia’s leading First Nations tourism destinations.</li> </ol> </li> <li>1.2 Identify and protect nature-based tourism routes and destinations that support low impact development while protecting ecological values and access to natural assets.</li> <li>1.3 Integrate tourism land use planning by ensuring accommodation supply and transport access near key attractions.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Policy Outcome 2</b> <b>Regional water quality</b></p> <p>Land use planning supports the protection of the physical condition, ecological health, environmental values and water quality of surface water and groundwater systems, including waterways, wetlands, estuaries and waters of the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Adopt best practice water management approaches in urban, rural and natural areas of the region to enhance and protect the health and ecological functions of waterways, wetlands, estuaries and waters of the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.</li> <li>2.2 Support integrated catchment management through nature-based solutions that improve natural hazard resilience, erosion control and water quality of the catchment and the Great Barrier Reef.</li> <li>2.3 Ensure planning and development decisions support the protection of environmental values and meet or exceed water quality objectives for regional surface water, groundwater, wetlands and the Great Barrier Reef outlined in the Environmental Protection (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) Policy 2019.</li> </ol>

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p><b>Policy Outcome 3</b> <b>Regional landscapes and biodiversity</b></p> <p>The environmental, cultural, social and economic features that comprise the region’s unique tropical and rural landscapes are identified and supported through land use outcomes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote long-term land management; and</li> <li>• Maintain landscape character,</li> </ul> <p>while planning across the region is informed by regional biodiversity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve ecological functioning; and</li> <li>• Reflect the intrinsic environmental values that underpin the region’s social and economic assets.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Identify the region’s natural values, natural resources, cultural heritage, and outdoor recreation values in land use planning.</li> <li>3.2 Maintain the integrity of the region’s regional landscapes including inter-urban breaks, scenic amenity and coastal hillslopes.</li> <li>3.3 Enable opportunities for primary production, renewable energy, ecosystem services, outdoor recreation and tourism in the RLRPA that are appropriately located and compatible with long-term sustainable land management practices.</li> <li>3.4 Prevent further fragmentation of the RLRPA to protect economically viable agricultural and rural land uses, and/or the regional biodiversity network. Unless a minimum lot size for the land is otherwise stated in a local government planning scheme, reconfiguring a lot within the RLRPA should not occur if it creates lots smaller than 60 hectares, unless one of the following exceptions applies:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. it is a boundary realignment that does not create additional lots, it does not result in additional rural lifestyle or rural residential purpose lots, it improves agricultural efficiency, it facilitates conservation outcomes or it resolves boundary encroachments; or</li> <li>b. it creates one additional lot solely for infrastructure purposes; or</li> <li>c. it is part of a local government planning scheme amendment that is consistent with the RLA principles in Chapter 3.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3.5 Protect the ecological values, landscape character and scenic amenity of the hillslopes including within the Cassowary Coast Regional Council, Douglas Shire Council, Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council and Yarrabah Shire Council areas.</li> <li>3.6 Planning and decision making considers the regional biodiversity network (<b>Map 16 and Table 6</b>) to:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. improve ecological processes and biodiversity conservation outcomes</li> <li>b. Identify opportunities for revegetation</li> <li>c. increase resilience of natural habitats</li> <li>d. avoid natural habitat fragmentation and support ecological connectivity.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
	<p>3.7 Opportunities are facilitated to revegetate the SRAs shown on <b>Map 16</b> to strengthen corridor connectivity and build natural landscape adaptation.</p> <p>3.8 Development in the Wet Tropics WHA, and areas directly adjoining or ecologically connected to the Wet Tropics WHA, does not cause adverse impacts on scenic amenity, regional biodiversity corridors and SRAs.</p> <p>3.9 High risk biosecurity sites (such as waste management facilities, areas cleared of native vegetation and areas undergoing development) are planned for in a way that manages the risks of pests and diseases.</p> <p>3.10 The area depicted as 'Wet Tropics WHA – Special Management Area' on <b>Map 16</b> is recognised as an area of high scenic amenity for the purposes of State Code 23: Wind farm development. In this area, development for wind farms is assessed against the scenic amenity performance outcomes of State Code 23.</p> <p><b>Cairns Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <p>3.11 Sustain the Barron River Delta as an inter-urban break to maintain scenic amenity values and flood storage capacity, while allowing for compatible non-urban activities such as agriculture (sugar cane), key resource activities (sand extraction) and rehabilitation within SRAs.</p> <p>3.12 Protect the ecological values, landscape character and scenic amenity of the hillslopes by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifying areas likely to have hillslopes of gradient 1:4 and 1:6</li> <li>limiting reconfiguring a lot on land steeper than 1 in 4 (25%) and on ridgelines</li> <li>limiting development on land steeper than 1 in 6 (16.6%) and on ridgelines.</li> </ol> <p><b>Douglas Shire Council and Cairns Regional Council LGAs only</b></p> <p>3.13 Enable opportunities to progressively rehabilitate SRAs in areas which do not diminish the viability of agriculture but provide genuine biodiversity improvements on appropriate areas of land. This may be achieved by rehabilitation of degraded riparian corridors and wetlands or poor quality areas of agricultural land.</p>



Map 16  
Regional Biodiversity Network



The SEA (designated precincts) shown within the Far North Queensland Regional Plan boundary remain a Matter of State Environmental Significance (MSES) under the State Planning Policy, as part of the Gulf Rivers SEA mapped under section 4(2) of the Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014. Non-designated precinct areas are shown for information only and have no statutory effect under the Planning Act 2016. The SRA layer is indicative only and has been prepared to guide the application of regional land use policy and inform future planning investigations. Mapping may be refined or expanded through subsequent place based or regional biodiversity planning processes. The Wet Tropics WHA - Special Management Area is recognised as an area of high scenic amenity for State Code 23: Wind farm development, and wind farms in this area are assessed against the scenic amenity performance outcomes of that code. The mapping does not imply suitability, preference or approval for development, which remains subject to detailed assessment and compliance with applicable statutory requirements. This map should be used in conjunction with the copyright information and mapping disclaimer on the inside cover of this publication.

# Regional biodiversity network

The regional biodiversity network shown on **Map 16** identifies areas that currently contribute to, or have future potential to contribute to, the maintenance of ecological processes and biodiversity at a regional scale.

The relationship between various biodiversity values forms an important regional biodiversity network that complements MSES and includes areas such as SEAs, SRAs, regional biodiversity corridors, the Wet Tropics WHA, the Great Barrier Reef WHA and national parks (**Table 6**). Collectively the regional biodiversity network reflects FNQ's status as a highly biologically diverse region.

The regional biodiversity network supports, and is supported by, the state interest for biodiversity in the SPP, as indicatively shown on the SPP Interactive Mapping System as MSES. MSES includes protected areas under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

**Table 6 - Regional biodiversity network**

Components	Description
<b>Strategic environmental areas (SEAs)</b>	An SEA is an area of regional interest under the RPI Act. Each SEA is identified in the RPI Regulation or a regional plan. Through the RPI Act, the Queensland Government seeks to manage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the impact of resource activities and regulated activities on SEAs</li> <li>the coexistence of potentially competing activities in SEAs.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic rehabilitation areas (SRAs)</b>	SRAs are areas where rehabilitation would result in strategic long-term biodiversity conservation outcomes. They include a mixture of remnant vegetation, regrowth, disturbed, modified and cleared land, and represent current significant gaps in habitat continuity.  SRAs are, or may in future be, important links in wildlife corridors that connect core areas of remnant vegetation, including east-west or north-south connections of both state and regional significance.
<b>Wet Tropics World Heritage Area</b>	The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area means the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area described in the World Heritage list kept under the World Heritage Convention.
<b>Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area</b>	The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area means the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area described in the World Heritage list kept under the World Heritage Convention.
<b>National parks</b>	In FNQ, national parks include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National parks</li> <li>National parks (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land)</li> </ol>
<b>Regional biodiversity corridors</b>	Areas that support the functioning of all ecosystem components across the landscape, supporting long-term population viability and increasing ecosystem resilience. They include areas that maintain terrestrial and aquatic ecological and evolutionary processes at a landscape scale and maximise connectivity between large tracts of remnant vegetation.  Regional biodiversity corridors can include vegetated areas and cleared areas where rehabilitation or restoration of habitats and connections between remnant areas of vegetation will improve regional biodiversity connectivity.

## Strategic rehabilitation areas

SRAs are identified within, or adjacent to, corridors where there are gaps or vulnerabilities in habitat continuity, and where focussed planning, management and rehabilitation can play a significant role in enhancing special ecological values associated with the area. These areas are identified to provide a focus for protecting existing vegetation, for consolidating habitat and for increasing habitat connectivity across vulnerable areas. The objectives for SRAs are to limit incompatible land use intensification, retain all remaining remnant and disturbed vegetation, promote rehabilitation and allow compatible land uses only where they directly protect or enhance the ecological values of the SRA.

The protection and rehabilitation of ecosystem connectivity, including SRAs, are vital to the long-term protection and enhancement of the region's biodiversity. The ongoing protection and viability of the Wet Tropics WHA and other areas of Matters of State Environmental Significance (MSES) strongly depends on improving connectivity.

Local governments are encouraged to identify and describe the Matters of Local Environmental Significance in their LGA. Local natural values could be identified by a strategy which identifies and refines environmental values such as SRAs identified in regional plans.

SRAs have been mapped to support land use policy application and to focus further place-based planning. Indicative mapping of these areas is shown in **Map 16** for the eastern part of the region and there is potential to refine this mapping, and/or map additional areas, in response to place-based or regional biodiversity planning.

Rehabilitation activities, within riparian corridors, could include revegetation, weed and pest management, fire management, water quality improvements, habitat protection agreements and wildlife crossing infrastructure.

Across the region, rehabilitation is delivered by multiple stakeholders across a range of tenures for a wide variety of purposes. The Wet Tropics Restoration Alliance was

established to assist coordination of this, in recognition that restoration needs to be scaled up across the region in response to habitat loss. Landholders make an invaluable contribution to biodiversity conservation in the region. The SRAs include a range of agricultural lands, many of which are already being managed for biodiversity outcomes. Any rehabilitation works are intended to be voluntary and will occur through landholder's involvement and agreement.

Inclusion of land within a SRA may provide strategic short and long-term advantages for landholders in terms of access to funding from natural resource management and offset programs, as detailed under the *Environmental Offsets Regulation 2014*. This, in turn, may lead to economic diversification opportunities and the strengthening of rural economies.

Identification of additional SRAs, and refinements to the indicative mapped SRAs, can be initiated by local government and identified through a collaborative process involving relevant stakeholders and supported by

appropriate technical expertise in biodiversity corridors. Ideally, the identification of SRAs should be undertaken collaboratively and agreed to by stakeholders including the community, industry and state and local governments. New SRAs should meet the following criteria:

- the land or waterway has an ecological relationship with, or contains special ecological values associated with, the corridor areas it connects
- the land or waterway has the potential to significantly contribute to the ecological values of the corridor it is within if focused corridor planning, management or rehabilitation is feasible and was applied.

In a regional context, rehabilitation outside of SRAs is also important. The mapped SRAs do not encompass all areas that may be appropriate for rehabilitation, particularly local rehabilitation areas that may be identified through more fine-grained local planning.



Southern Cassowary, Daintree Rainforest (Douglas)  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland



## Theme 4

# Healthy and liveable communities

*FNQ is home to people who have been in the region for generations and those who have just arrived, people young and old, families of all types, socio-economically disadvantaged groups and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.*

Many are drawn to the region's outstanding tropical environment and outdoor lifestyle, rich cultural landscapes, and diverse economic opportunities. A challenge for the region will be preserving these qualities, while delivering housing, infrastructure and services to meet the diverse needs of the region's growing and ageing population for generations to come.

This theme focuses on opportunities to improve responsiveness to the region's resilience, enhance sense of identity and improve quality of life, health and wellbeing. The importance of integrating cultural considerations into strategic land use planning to better reflect the aspirations, knowledge, traditions and culture of First Nations communities is a central focus of the policies within this theme. Building resilience against more severe natural hazards is integral for this region and has been incorporated into the policy directions.

The healthy and liveable communities theme aims to guide the region towards a future that is vibrant, inclusive and resilient, ensuring it remains a thriving and dynamic community for all.

Policy Outcome 1

## Community identity and wellbeing

The delivery of good design and well-planned communities is fundamental to delivering safe, vibrant, healthy and liveable communities. Maintaining built form that reflects local character, and the regions' varying climates, strengthens a sense of place and identity.

Parts of the region, such as the Einasleigh Uplands, experience a tropical savannah climate with distinct wet and dry seasons but also seasonal dryness and fire regimes. In contrast, Cairns experiences a distinctly tropical climate. New development must respond to local climate by incorporating both dwelling and neighbourhood design that manages seasonal extremes and maximise ventilation and shade.

To promote wellbeing and liveability in the region, social infrastructure needs to be coordinated across all levels of government and cater to diverse community needs in both urban and non-urban contexts.

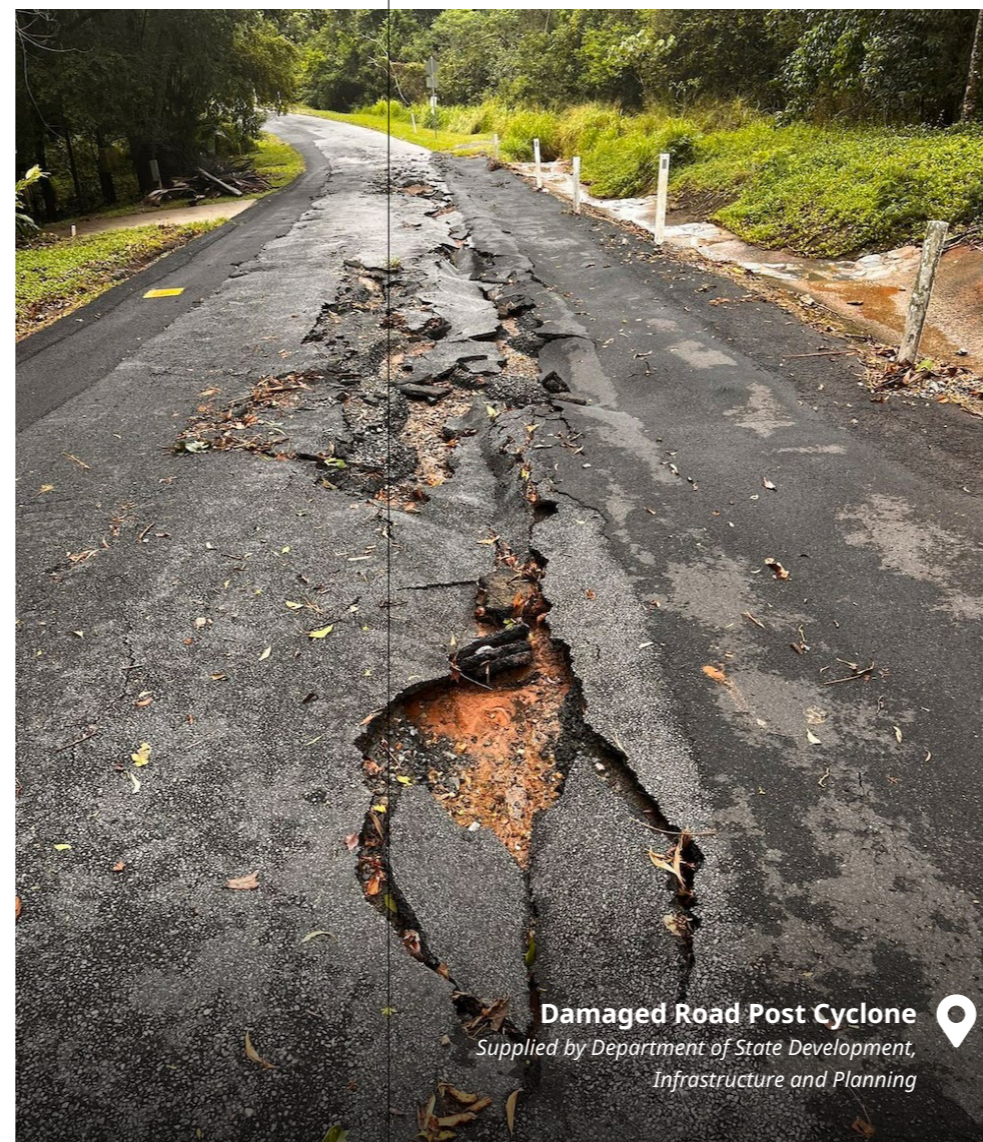
The region is home to many First Nations peoples who hold deep connections to the region's land, sea and sky dating back millennia. These communities play an important role in protecting, managing and enhancing the region's natural and cultural resources.



Mandungalbay Ancient Indigenous Tours (Cairns)  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland



Landslide  
Supplied by Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning



Damaged Road Post Cyclone  
Supplied by Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

Policy Outcome 2

## Natural hazards and safety

The region has long experienced the impacts of extreme weather including droughts, bushfires, floods, heatwaves, severe storms, cyclones and coastal inundation. Events such as tropical cyclones cause widespread flooding and damage to infrastructure networks, driving focus to create a more resilient and sustainable region.

Improving the region's resilience to natural hazards will require longer-term policy and practice change. Towards this aim, the regional plan includes policies to improve resilience to natural hazards over time across existing and new urban areas, including infill areas.

## Policy outcomes and strategies

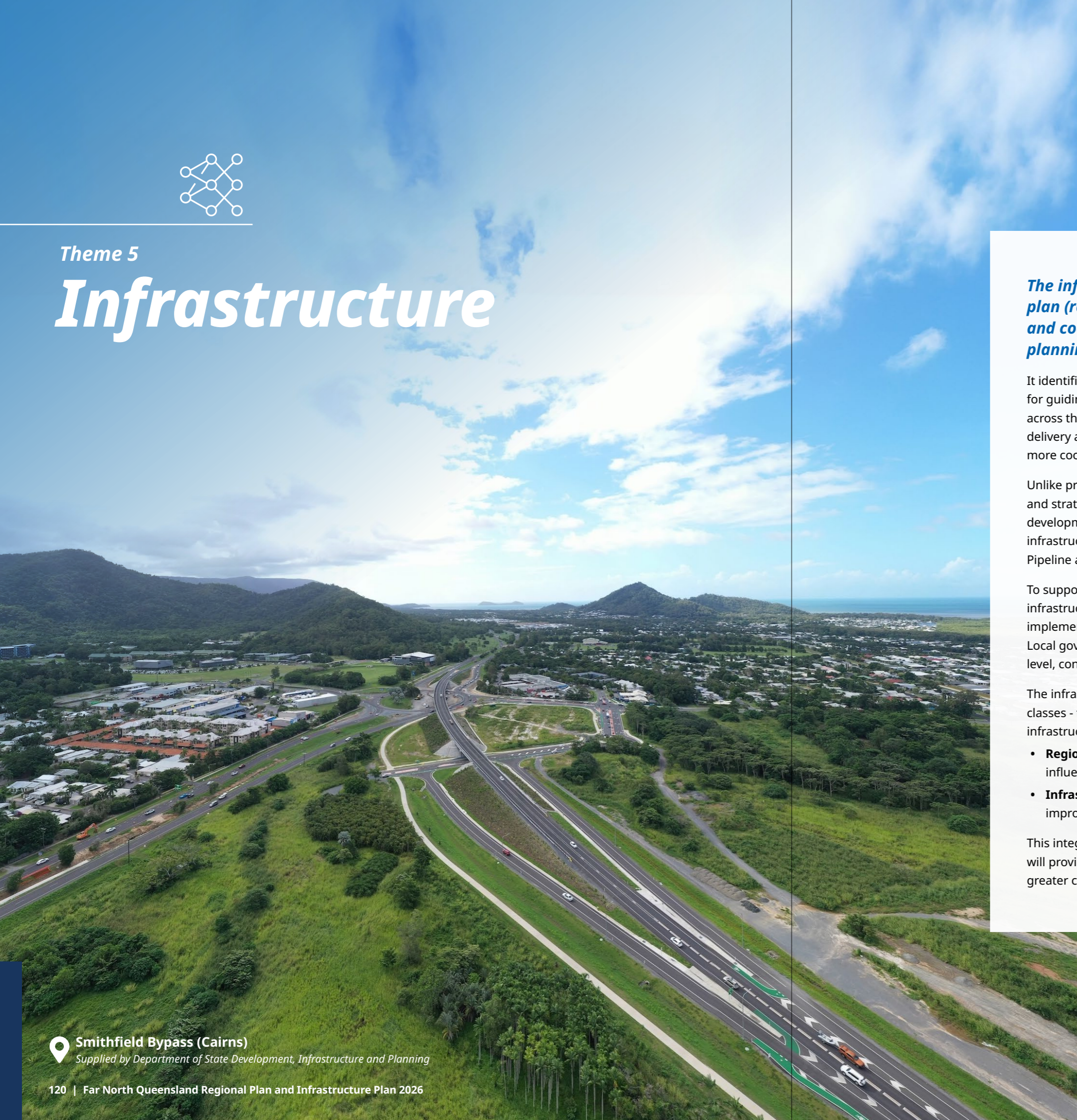
Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Policy Outcome 1</p> <p><b>Community identity and wellbeing</b></p> <p>Communities are vibrant, healthy, inclusive places that contribute to the region's sense of place, character and active outdoor lifestyle and reflect First Nations culture, knowledge and traditions.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Maintain the region's unique tropical character and regional identity by delivering well-designed development in accordance with QDesign (2018) and QCompanion (2021) design principles and integrating the key design concepts into local government planning schemes.</li> <li>1.2 Design inclusive, safe and comfortable local environments that preference healthy lifestyles and encourage active community participation and positive social behaviour by considering:                         <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. universal design, accessibility and equity in urban design</li> <li>b. placemaking principles in accordance with QDesign and QCompanion, including shared spaces for collaboration and adaptability</li> <li>c. increased walkability through accessible footpaths and access to open/green spaces</li> <li>d. the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design – Guidelines for Queensland (2021)</li> <li>e. the design attributes in the Healthy Places, Healthy People Framework (2021)</li> <li>f. the planning and design approach in Movement and Place (2024)</li> <li>g. mitigation against the impacts of urban heat and ultraviolet radiation exposure.</li> </ol> </li> <li>1.3 Encourage culturally informed land use planning which recognises and supports First Nations peoples' connection to Country, cultural values and traditional knowledge and incorporates Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs), where possible.</li> <li>1.4 Integrate outcomes of First Nations-led plans and studies into planning schemes and regional strategies.</li> <li>1.5 As a part of local planning scheme reviews, consider land and infrastructure that is underutilised and is not required for future broader community use, and identify how it can be used to support economic, cultural and social outcomes, including for First Nations peoples.</li> <li>1.6 Identify and protect state and local landscape, heritage and cultural assets including Indigenous landscape values and, where appropriate, integrate or adaptively re-use them in buildings, streets and spaces.</li> </ol> <p><b>Cairns Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.7 High frequency, reliable public transport and active transport options, supporting activation of Tropical Urban Villages, are achieved through implementation of the Cairns Transit Network and the coordinated development of the Active Transport network between the Department of Transport and Main Roads and Cairns Regional Council.</li> </ol>

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Policy Outcome 2</p> <p><b>Natural hazards and safety</b></p> <p>Communities are resilient to natural hazards.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Prepare and integrate assessments of risk including flood, bushfire, landslide and coastal hazards, into local strategic planning, zoning and development decisions, including for infrastructure development, so that:                         <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. development in new urban areas avoids areas of intolerable risk</li> <li>b. infill areas are only considered where a tolerable (or preferably acceptable) level of natural hazard risk can be achieved</li> <li>c. existing urban areas subject to intolerable risk are identified, and planning responses for these areas support long-term risk management outcomes by facilitating a staged withdrawal of development and infrastructure as risks increase over time, or the coordinated delivery of adaptation measures where ongoing occupation can be safely managed</li> <li>d. infrastructure planning is responsive to natural hazard risk, including ensuring broader connectivity to transport, support services, community networks and essential goods supply chains remain functional during and immediately after natural hazard events.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2.2 Recognise the contribution of areas with natural features, greenspace and water to mitigating extreme weather events and incorporate these features in urban design and the preferred growth pattern for the region.</li> <li>2.3 Incorporate heatwave, extreme heat and urban heat considerations into land use planning and urban design, including urban greening, building orientation and cross-ventilation, light-coloured roof materials and pavements.</li> <li>2.4 Support active transport and improve pedestrian comfort by mitigating against the impacts of urban heat and ultraviolet radiation exposure, through increased tree canopy cover.</li> </ol> <p><b>Cairns Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.5 Increase tree canopy cover to progress towards a minimum of 50% within the Urban Footprint at a neighbourhood scale by 2046.</li> </ol>



## Theme 5

# Infrastructure



*The infrastructure plan is an appendix to the regional plan (refer to Appendix 1) providing a comprehensive and coordinated framework for infrastructure planning and delivery.*

It identifies regionally significant infrastructure needs and is the primary tool for guiding infrastructure investment and statutory infrastructure planning across the region. It is intended to inform strategic infrastructure planning and delivery across all levels of government, industry, and community, supporting a more coordinated and sequenced approach to infrastructure investment.

Unlike previous iterations, the infrastructure plan now includes policy outcomes and strategies that will be integrated through local planning schemes and development assessment processes. This marks a shift from previous regional infrastructure plans that focussed on the Queensland Government Capital Pipeline and strategic guidance to inform infrastructure planning.

To support this new approach, infrastructure policies and strategies in the infrastructure plan are called up in Chapter 5 – Delivery, ensuring clear implementation pathways and alignment with regional land use outcomes. Local governments will be key partners in applying these policies at the local level, contributing data and insights to support ongoing monitoring and review.

The infrastructure plan is structured around the following infrastructure classes - transport, water, energy, digital connectivity and social and community infrastructure. Transport projects are categorised as either:

- **Region-shaping Infrastructure (RSI):** Transformative investments that influence land use, economic development, and regional connectivity
- **Infrastructure Enhancing Strategies (IES):** Targeted upgrades that improve safety, resilience, and service efficiency.

This integrated approach to land use and infrastructure planning in the region will provide for a more coordinated and streamlined planning process, creating greater clarity and certainty for stakeholders and the community.

Chapter 5

# Delivery



 **Millaa Millaa Lookout (Tablelands)**  
Supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland

## Making it happen

*The regional plan establishes a strong basis for better planning and development in the region. The value of the regional plan will be largely determined by how successfully its policies and strategies are supported and implemented by government, industry and the community.*

The existing planning framework is the primary tool for the implementation of this plan. This includes local government plan making and development assessment.

Delivery of this plan will also rely on other tools that sit outside of the planning framework including, for example:

- Legislation and statutory instruments such as the *Economic Development Act 2012* and *State Development Public Works Organisation Act 1971*.
- Non-statutory instruments, such as Regional Transport Plans that define the intended development of transport systems across regions.
- Funding mechanisms from federal and state governments under existing initiatives.



## Application of regional policies

As a state planning instrument, the regional plan's land use policies are applied through Queensland's planning framework. Regional plans are given effect through the Planning Act which requires local governments to consider regional plans when preparing their local planning schemes and through development assessment. The RPI Act considers land use policies in relation to resource activities that generally occur outside the Planning Act and local government planning schemes.

Additionally, the SPP sets out the Queensland Government's interests in planning and development. The regional plan contextualises these state interests, where required, to provide the planning and decision-making framework specific to the region.

Sitting within this framework, the regional plan guides strategic planning and decision-making for all levels of government and industry across a range of sectors. In doing so, the regional plan is applied on the ground through:

- land use planning by state and local governments, including local government planning schemes and joint planning initiatives
- the assessment of development applications made under the Planning Act
- infrastructure planning, prioritisation and funding decisions made by all levels of government and other infrastructure agencies
- the assessment of certain types of resource activities or regulated activities, as defined under the RPI Act
- other plans and programs, including non-statutory processes, that may influence change and growth management in the region, including economic development strategies, natural resource management, conservation programs and regional tourism strategies.

The relationship between state, regional and local planning is summarised in **Figure 4**.

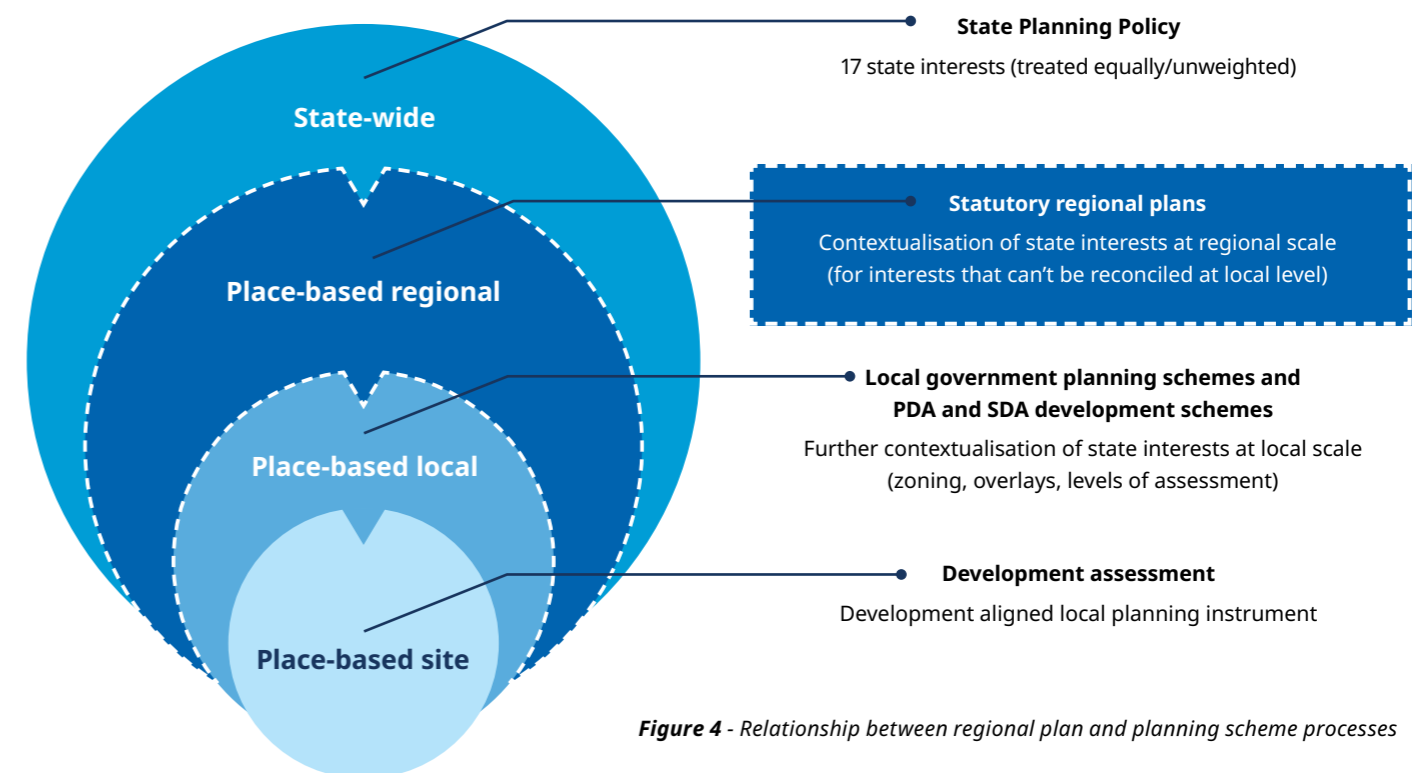


Figure 4 - Relationship between regional plan and planning scheme processes



### **Barr Creek Bridge (Mareeba)**

Supplied by Department of State Development,  
Infrastructure and Planning

## **Development assessment**

In accordance with the Planning Regulation 2017, proposed development is to be assessed against or have regard to the following parts of the FNQ Regional Plan and Infrastructure Plan 2026, to the extent relevant:

- Chapter 3: Regional growth pattern and areas of regional interest
- Chapter 4: Policy outcomes and strategies
- Appendix 1: Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan

Where the regional plan is relevant in the assessment of a development application, the proposed development will conflict with the regional plan if it does not comply with the above sections.

The only exceptions are the following matters, which are intended to assist local governments in plan making and to be implemented through planning schemes. They are not intended to be implemented in an ad-hoc way through assessment of individual development applications, whether as a “relevant matter” or on any other basis:

- Dwelling supply targets
- Tree canopy target (Cairns Regional Council LGA only)

To avoid any doubt, the vision in Chapter 1 is not relevant to development assessment, whether as a “relevant matter” or on any other basis. That content from Chapter 1 reflects a long-term vision for the region, which is intended to be achieved over time through planning instruments rather than through assessment of individual development applications.

## **Plan making**

Under the Planning Act, regional plans are statutory instruments that articulate state interests at a regional scale. Regional plans inform the preparation and amendment of local government planning schemes. Local governments must ensure their planning schemes appropriately reflect and advance the regional plan. Both the SPP and the regional plan are used to determine whether a local government planning scheme incorporates state interests.

In accordance with the Planning Regulation 2017, local governments are to ensure their planning schemes appropriately integrate the following parts of the FNQ Regional Plan and Infrastructure Plan 2026, to the extent relevant:

- Chapter 3: Regional growth pattern and areas of regional interest
- Chapter 4: Policy outcomes and strategies
- Appendix 1: Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan

## **Monitoring**

Monitoring is essential to establish what is happening now and what may happen in the future. It is also important to compare these trends against existing policies and targets to determine what needs to be done.

To successfully achieve the regional plan intent, tracking of performance and progress against the policy outcomes sought by the regional plan is required.

The regional plan’s implementation will be monitored to evaluate the progress of themes, policy outcomes and strategies, and highlight significant regional achievements and milestones.

## Appendix 1

# FNQ Infrastructure Plan

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## Introduction

The Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan forms part of the regional plan and is a strategic infrastructure planning document that provides a long-term, place-based framework for identifying and prioritising regionally significant infrastructure across the region. It guides how a region grows and responds to change by setting out integrated planning and development assessment policies about matters of state interest.

Covering a diverse geography from Cardwell to Wujal Wujal, the infrastructure plan supports the region's growth and resilience by guiding infrastructure investment that aligns with community needs, economic opportunities, and land use policies under the regional plan.

The infrastructure plan reflects the Queensland Government's commitment to coordinated infrastructure delivery and complements broader state initiatives such as the Queensland Government Infrastructure Pipeline (QGIP).

The infrastructure plan is structured around two key components:

- **Regional Infrastructure Policies:** These outline policy outcomes and strategies for infrastructure types including transport, water, energy, digital connectivity and social and community infrastructure. They reflect planning priorities and are aligned with the themes set out in the regional plan.
- **Future Infrastructure Planning Considerations:** This section presents future infrastructure planning considerations for the region and may include infrastructure priorities and proposals that are currently unfunded.


As an appendix to the regional plan, the infrastructure plan plays a critical role in its implementation. Its scope includes both policy-led and asset-led approaches for better alignment through land use and infrastructure planning. Infrastructure policies and strategies within the infrastructure plan are intended to be integrated into local planning schemes and given due regard in development assessment processes.

These policies are referenced in the regional plan (refer to Chapter 5 – Delivery), ensuring statutory application and alignment with regional land use planning. This integration strengthens the planning framework and supports a more coordinated and strategic approach to infrastructure delivery across the region.

The FNQ Infrastructure Plan 2024 covers a wider geographical area than this infrastructure plan, including the LGAs within both the FNQ and Cape York regional planning regions. The FNQ Infrastructure Plan 2024 will remain in place until such time that the Cape York Regional Plan (incorporating the Cape York Infrastructure Plan) is updated. The FNQ Infrastructure Plan 2026 will override the FNQ Infrastructure Plan 2024 in the FNQ region, to the extent of any inconsistency.

# Infrastructure planning in Queensland



 **Tropical Reef Shipyards (Cairns)**  
Supplied by Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

## Regional Infrastructure Plans

Regional Infrastructure Plans (RIPs) provide a place-based approach to ensure regionally significant infrastructure needs are considered and prioritised. In addition, the next generation of RIPs (commencing with the FNQ Infrastructure Plan 2026) will play an important role in regional planning, forming part of regional planning documents and therefore a statutory instrument under the *Planning Act 2016*.

RIPs are intended to inform the strategic planning of all levels of government, business and industry to support a more coordinated approach to sequencing and prioritising infrastructure planning and investment.

While state infrastructure agencies are accountable for their respective infrastructure projects and program, RIPs enable the Queensland Government to take a strategic and coordinated approach to the capital program and the State's infrastructure investment in regional areas in the face of emerging and future productivity, supply chain and workforce challenges.

Infrastructure is the backbone to boosting productivity, growing our economy creating jobs, improving liveability, driving innovation and building strong and resilient communities. Place-based infrastructure plans for the regions help to make this happen.

## Queensland Government Infrastructure Pipeline

The QGIP demonstrates the government's commitment to statewide and regional priorities through a periodically updated pipeline of infrastructure in planning and delivery.

The QGIP provides industry with visibility of the State Government's infrastructure pipelines across key infrastructure classes in the region to provide greater clarity and confidence and help inform industry preparedness, including supply chain and workforce planning. The infrastructure plan will inform future updates to the QGIP.

The QGIP is an interactive dashboard of state infrastructure opportunities across Queensland. It contains two datasets:

- the delivery pipeline outlining state infrastructure commitments over the next four years
- the planning pipeline which includes proposals that are at a planning stage. These are proposals moving through different stages of assessment by the Queensland Government. All proposals in planning stage are subject to government consideration and final investment decisions.

The QGIP dashboard provides access to infrastructure project information in an interactive and user-friendly format. Information is accessible online and can be searched and filtered by information like region and infrastructure class.

The QGIP dashboard is publicly available from the below website:

<https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/infrastructure/projects-and-programs/queensland-government-infrastructure-pipeline>

# Regional infrastructure policies and future planning considerations



1	KENNEDY HIGHWAY
Atherton	31
Herberton	49
Malanda	51
Ravenshoe	83



## Kennedy Highway (Mareeba)

Supplied by Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

## Transport

### Policy Outcome 1

### Transport networks and infrastructure

Far North Queensland boasts a well-established road transport network that is crucial for the connectivity and economic prosperity of the region. The region includes connections to Cape York, the Gulf of Carpentaria and other parts of Queensland and Australia. The network is being enhanced through Region-shaping Infrastructure (RSI) and Infrastructure Enhancing Strategies (IES) to ensure effective regional connections, with progressive sealing of connections to Cape York, the Gulf, and inland Queensland. The region is also home to Cairns Airport, the largest airport outside of a capital city, which provides international and domestic air services essential to the tourism and agricultural industries, and plays a critical role in supporting access to healthcare services by communities in the Far North and surrounding regions.

Outside Cairns, there are fewer public and passenger transport options, and most residents rely on private vehicles to access employment, healthcare, education and essential goods and services. High volumes of traffic along coastal corridors, between inland and coastal centres, and to remote communities underscore the urgent need for safe, resilient and reliable road networks. This vulnerability has been demonstrated during recent severe weather events, which have disrupted key sections of the Palmerston, Captain Cook and Kennedy Highways. Ensuring that transport networks are fit for purpose and resilient to extreme weather events is of paramount importance within planned improvements to the transport network. It is crucial to consider the identification of future transport options in line with anticipated economic and population growth, and to explore opportunities beyond currently planned and funded infrastructure projects that could further enhance regional connectivity, prosperity and resilience to disasters.

### Policy Outcome 2

### Strategic links and supply chains

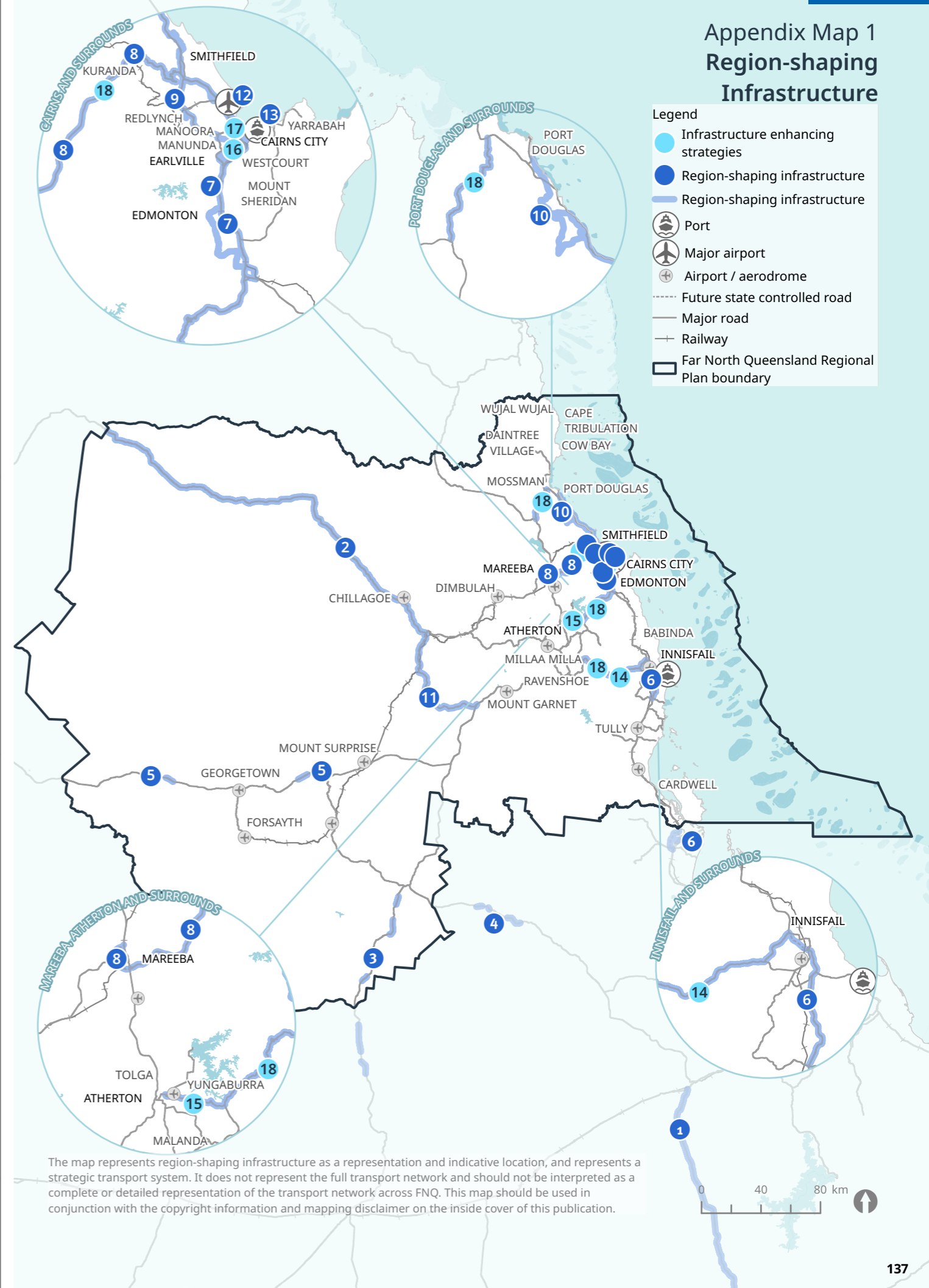
The transport network is a critical backbone for the region's economy, extending beyond its freight and commercial transport function to support a variety of industries. The region comprises diverse economic drivers including established tourism, agriculture and mining sectors. Emerging industries such as marine, aerospace, education and tropical health and expertise are creating new economic opportunities and should be in proximity to existing and planned regional transport corridors.

Cost and service efficiencies can be achieved through improved integration of infrastructure, land use and economic planning. Coordinated land use and transport planning enhances access to services, facilitates regional economic development and supports community wellbeing. To further strengthen regional supply chains and unlock economic potential, future planning should also explore opportunities for new and improved transport linkages between coastal centres and the hinterland.

## Policy outcomes and strategies

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p><b>Policy Outcome 1</b>  <b>Transport networks and infrastructure</b></p> <p>Safe and efficient transport infrastructure is provided that minimises impacts on biodiversity values, is resilient to extreme weather events, and supports housing supply and economic growth.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan for transport infrastructure (including those identified on <b>Appendix Map 1</b> and <b>Appendix Table 1</b>) that supports the economic objectives for the region, minimises impacts on biodiversity values and is resilient to extreme weather events.</li> <li>Support the tourism potential of the region by improving accessibility and amenities on key tourism transport routes with a focus on the self-drive market (tourists who travel independently by vehicle).</li> <li>Provide safe, convenient, accessible and legible cycle and pedestrian networks, including on-road and off-road routes, to meet the needs of all cyclists, pedestrians and people using mobility devices in line with the Far North Queensland Principal Cycle Network Plan and Queensland Walking Strategy.</li> <li>Develop an integrated and accessible transport system to support connected and sustainable communities.</li> </ol> <p><b>Cairns Regional Council LGA only</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A comprehensive review of the Local Government Infrastructure Plan (LGIP) occurs as a matter of priority to ensure the Priority Infrastructure Area identifies sufficient urban area for the provision of trunk infrastructure to accommodate 10 to 15 years of growth for non-rural purposes.</li> <li>The review of the LGIP is integrated with infrastructure planning for the Cairns South SDA, the Mount Peter PDA, the Cairns Hospital Master Plan, and the Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct Structure Plan.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Policy Outcome 2</b>  <b>Strategic links and supply chains</b></p> <p>Strategic linkages to domestic and international markets through road, rail, air and sea are identified, protected and enhanced through co-location of allied industries and infrastructure.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support improvements to the strategic freight network including intermodal terminals between rail, road, air and sea transport, through land use planning that protects freight corridors and enables efficient connections, as indicated in <b>Appendix Map 2</b>.</li> <li>Locate industry and freight-dependent development in proximity to regional transport corridors, to facilitate access to markets and labour, as indicated in <b>Appendix Map 2</b> and <b>Map 12</b>.</li> <li>Co-locate industries to minimise transport requirements and increase resilience to severe weather events, as indicated in <b>Appendix Map 2</b> and <b>Map 12</b>.</li> </ol>

## Appendix Map 1 Region-shaping Infrastructure



The map represents region-shaping infrastructure as a representation and indicative location, and represents a strategic transport system. It does not represent the full transport network and should not be interpreted as a complete or detailed representation of the transport network across FNQ. This map should be used in conjunction with the copyright information and mapping disclaimer on the inside cover of this publication.

## Region-shaping infrastructure

RSI is focused on strategically shaping the future trajectory of land use in the region and includes infrastructure that is:

- Necessary to realising the growth pattern set in the regional plan.
- Necessary for the resilient, efficient and safe movement of people to access employment and essential services as well as the movement of goods across the region and sub-regions.
- A significant funding requirement across multiple levels of government.
- Of regional economic and social significance.
- Enhancing inter-regional and wider connections.

RSI goes beyond addressing capacity and safety challenges and instead is focused on improving connectivity between regional activity centres, regional precincts, regional industrial areas and regional economic assets to promote economic growth.

Additionally, RSI supports residential growth including increased density in key locations and encourages better use of existing infrastructure as people shift to more sustainable transport modes. Key infrastructure investments in transport to support key sectors, such as the ecotourism, aerospace, marine sectors and health, are also identified as RSI.

RSI has been identified to align with the preferred growth pattern in the region through to 2046 and include projects that will deliver additional capacity to existing infrastructure to make the most of investment in the region's transport system.

These RSI are not intended to present a definitive list of all transport infrastructure required to support growth to 2046 and instead represent projects that meet the criteria outlined in this section and should be considered in land use planning.

Appendix Table 1 – Region-shaping infrastructure

Map Ref	Region-shaping infrastructure	Relationship to regional outcomes
1	<b>Inland Freight Route</b> (second Bruce Highway)	The 1185km Inland Freight Route proposal is for a viable north-south alternative to the Bruce Highway, forming a critical freight corridor, particularly during extreme weather events. Early works have commenced on the Inland Freight Route and key feeder roads. The Gregory Developmental Road will connect FNQ and the Inland Freight Route.
2	<b>Burke Developmental Road</b> (Normanton – Dimbulah)	The Burke Developmental Road has been progressively sealed between Almaden and Chillagoe. This improves resilience, reliability and productivity, reduces travel times and improves safety. These works strengthen connections between FNQ and the Gulf of Carpentaria. Planning has commenced on the Burke Developmental Road upgrade strategy which will identify a program of progressive, prioritised upgrades to the link to facilitate future resilience, safety and capacity improvements.
3	<b>Kennedy Developmental Road</b> (Lynd – Hughenden)	New sealing on the Kennedy Developmental Road between Lynd and Hughenden improves inter-regional connection between northern Queensland and FNQ. The route is a vital transport link for cattle and tourism.
4	<b>Gregory Developmental Road</b> (Charters Towers – Lynd)	The Gregory Developmental Road upgrades are improving travelling conditions and flood resilience, particularly heavy vehicles. These works strengthen connections between FNQ, northern Queensland and the Inland Freight Route in collaboration with its primary Kennedy Developmental Road connection.

Map Ref	Region-shaping infrastructure	Relationship to regional outcomes
5	<b>Gulf Developmental Road</b> (Normanton – Mount Garnet)	The Gulf Developmental Road is the principal freight and tourism route connecting Carpentaria Shire with the Bruce Highway, via the Kennedy Highway. The works will widen single lane sections to two lanes. Priority planning for the upgrade of the low immunity, one lane Gilbert River Bridge will provide improved access reliability and safety.
6	<b>Bruce Highway</b> (Ingham to Innisfail): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ingham to Innisfail (Gairloch Floodway)</li> <li>• Future Innisfail bypass</li> <li>• Future Ingham to Cardwell Range Deviation</li> <li>• Bruce Highway Targeted Safety Program</li> </ul>	The Bruce Highway is a crucial freight and commuter transport route in Queensland, connecting centres between Brisbane and Cairns. These projects help improve safety, improve flood resilience, improve capacity over the long-term and provide fauna crossings. The Bruce Highway Targeted Safety Program will invest \$9 billion in safety upgrades of the Bruce Highway across Queensland. This will target wide centreline treatment, narrow bridges and other safety treatments.
7	<b>Bruce Highway, Cairns Southern Access Corridor and Cairns Bruce Highway Upgrade Master Plan:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage 5 Foster Road upgrade intersection</li> <li>• Bentley Park interchange</li> <li>• Deppeler Road interchange</li> <li>• Future Earlville bypass</li> <li>• Future stages of Cairns Bruce Highway Masterplan</li> </ul>	The Cairns Bruce Highway Upgrade Master Plan provides the long-term upgrade strategy for the Bruce Highway from Wrights Creek, south of Edmonton to Draper Street, near the Cairns city centres for urban growth within the southern corridor over the next 30 years. Stage 5 of the Cairns Bruce Highway Upgrade master plan is progressing. Stage 5 involves a grade separation upgrade at the Bruce Highway and Foster Road intersection in Cairns. The \$225m project is jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments. The declaration of the Mount Peter PDA in 2025 will continue to drive need for continued investment in all modes of transport including road capacity upgrades, passenger transport infrastructure and connectivity of suburban active transport networks to the Cairns Southern Cycleway and the Cairns South SDA.
8	<b>Kennedy Highway, Cairns to Mareeba:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kuranda Range Road: Barron River bridge risk management program</li> <li>• Kennedy Highway, (Cairns to Mareeba), new Barron River Bridge</li> <li>• Overtaking lanes at priority locations</li> <li>• Safety upgrades</li> <li>• Future Mareeba heavy vehicle bypass</li> </ul>	The Kennedy Highway is a key freight, commuter and tourism corridor between Cairns and Mareeba. Future considerations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue planning and design for the new Barron River Bridge at Kuranda, which will be constructed on a new alignment downstream from the existing bridge. The \$490m project (jointly funded by the Queensland and Australian Governments) will feature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Wider traffic lanes meeting modern design standards.</li> <li>» A separated active transport pathway for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility device users.</li> <li>» Roadworks on the approaches to the bridge.</li> <li>» A new turnaround facility at the top of Kuranda Range Road.</li> <li>» Construction is expected to begin in 2028 and be completed by 2031.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue to progress a suite of safety and resilience focused upgrades on the Kuranda Range, as part of the \$262.5m funding commitment for the Kuranda Range Road Upgrade, safety and resilience improvement project (jointly funded with the Australian Government).</li> <li>• Continue to progress planning and design for a future heavy vehicle bypass of Mareeba.</li> </ul>

Map Ref	Region-shaping infrastructure	Relationship to regional outcomes
9	<b>Cairns Western Arterial Road, Redlynch Connector Road to Captain Cook Highway, duplication</b>	Duplicating the remaining two-lane sections of the Cairns Western Arterial Road, between Redlynch Connector Road and Captain Cook Highway, will reduce traffic congestion and enhance network resilience by providing an alternative to the Captain Cook Highway. It will also deliver new and improved active transport infrastructure.  Progress master planning for future upgrades to Cairns Western Arterial Road including Earlville Bypass to identify priorities for future upgrades.
10	<b>Ecotourism and recreational trails, including:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wangetti Trail proposed route</li> <li>Tropical North Queensland Regional Mountain Bike Strategy 2024-2034</li> </ul>	Iconic and unique trails foster active and ecologically sustainable tourism. Trails for walking and mountain biking will enhance local recreational opportunities and attract visitors on an international scale.
11	<b>Ootann Road Upgrade (Mareeba Section)</b>	Although a local government road, Ootann Road is an important regional freight link that is mostly unsealed and narrow. Unreliable access for road trains creates lengthy detours across winding mountainous routes, adding over 250km per trip.  This project will progress the upgrade of the road to provide a more efficient, resilient and safer freight system, facilitate economic expansion in the region and significantly reduce travel time. The project will extend existing sealed sections of the road and raise its standard to a nine-metre-wide two-lane seal, enabling better heavy vehicle access and delivering a strategic link between northern Australian industry and southern markets.  This project is divided into two project sections (both local roads), led by Tablelands Regional Council and Mareeba Shire Council in their respective LGAs. Both local governments have received funding from the Australian Government to facilitate the works.
12	<b>Cairns Eastern Aviation Precinct</b>	This project is planned to include new aeronautical stands, aeromedical and emergency response facilities, aircraft maintenance and repair common-user hangar, training facilities, and renewable fuel and energy production.
13	<b>Cairns Marine Precinct (CMP) Common User Facility</b>	The CMP and the marine industry more broadly are of major economic importance to Cairns and FNQ. The growth of the sector is key to the diversification of the region and will be influenced by maintenance and sustainment opportunities from the Royal Australian Navy.  The CMP Common User Facility will deliver a significant uplift in regional maritime repair and overhaul capability and capacity, addressing existing infrastructure shortfalls and supporting the operational requirements of defence and allied partners.  In addition to supporting upgrades to HMAS Cairns, the CMP Common User Facility will enable broader economic benefits by strengthening Cairns' role as a regional hub for maritime maintenance, sustainment and associated industries, supporting diversification and long-term growth of the local marine sector.

## Infrastructure Enhancing Strategies

IES focus on projects and strategies that, while not transformative in the same way as RSI, still play a crucial role in the region's development and connectivity. These projects are essential for maintaining or improving the existing infrastructure network.

The criteria for IES include:

- Projects that enhance connectivity, resilience and accessibility within the region.
- Strategies with substantial investment, often involving multiple levels of government funding.
- Planning for projects that enhance the movement of people and goods, including upgrades to existing corridors and safety improvements.
- Projects that promote sustainable transport modes and improve network resilience.

IES projects align with the preferred growth pattern in the region through to 2046, ensuring the transport system remains efficient, safe, and capable of supporting the region's growth.

Appendix Table 2 - Infrastructure Enhancing Strategies

Map Ref	Infrastructure Enhancing Strategies	Relationship to regional outcomes
14	<b>Palmerston Highway Upgrade Strategy</b>	As recommended in the Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) is undertaking detailed planning for an upgrade strategy for the Palmerston Highway.  This strategy outlines the roadmap for progressive upgrades to the Palmerston Highway to improve freight, safety, capacity and resilience, thereby enhancing its significant function and role as the only B double freight route directly connecting the coast with the Tablelands within the region.
15	<b>Range Road Resilience Upgrade Strategy</b>	The upgrade strategy will plan for improved resilience and other road safety enhancements at priority locations, to support efficient travel and enhance safety. It will support commuter travel between Cairns and the Tablelands.
16	<b>Cairns Transit Network</b>	The Cairns Transit Network is a long-term vision for public transport. It is the first busway planning project of its kind in regional Queensland. It aims to improve public transport in Cairns by giving buses priority, either in separate bus lanes or dedicated bus-only lanes (busways).  Progress priority bus station upgrades at key nodes with safe connectivity to the active transport networks.

Map Ref	Infrastructure Enhancing Strategies	Relationship to regional outcomes
17	<p><b>Captain Cook Highway (Cairns CBD – Smithfield) Master Plan:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stage 1 Lily Street and Aeroglen Drive</li> <li>Staged future upgrades from Aeroglen Drive to the intersection of the Captain Cook and Kennedy Highways, and Mount Milman Drive in Smithfield</li> <li>Staged future cycleway from Arnold Street to the shared pathway on the Smithfield Bypass</li> </ul>	<p>The Captain Cook Highway, Cairns to Smithfield Upgrade Master Plan, will identify priority upgrades between the corner of Comport and Draper Streets in Cairns CBD to the intersection of the Captain Cook and Kennedy Highways, and Mount Milman Drive in Smithfield (approximately 15.5km) to reduce congestion on a key regional corridor. The master plan is proposed to be staged.</p> <p>In addition to the Captain Cook Highway, Cairns CBD to Smithfield Bypass Masterplan is progression of the planning for Smithfield Bypass Stage 2. Stage 1 provided significant travel time and safety benefits for commuters from the Northern Beaches. Continued investment in Stage 2 duplication of the Smithfield Bypass will further improve travel times and safety.</p>
18	<p><b>Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mossman to Mount Molloy Road (Rex Range)</li> <li>Kennedy Highway (Cairns to Mareeba) including Kuranda Range Road (Cairns to Kuranda)</li> <li>Gillies Range Road</li> <li>Palmerston Highway</li> </ul>	<p>The Cairns to Northern Tablelands Access Strategy sets out a clear roadmap of short and medium-term actions and operational improvements that can improve connectivity and reliability of the corridors. This includes infrastructure upgrades for resilience and safety, to reduce the frequency of disruptions, including the number and duration of closures from weather events and vehicle incidents. The Strategy also highlights the need for further work to determine the best future corridor and when it is needed.</p>



**Kuranda Range (Cairns)**  
Supplied by Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

## Appendix Map 2 Key Freight Routes and Connections



This map represents a strategic transport system. It does not represent the full transport network and should not be interpreted as a complete or detailed representation of the transport network across FNQ. This map should be used in conjunction with the copyright information and mapping disclaimer on the inside cover of this publication.



## Future planning considerations

The infrastructure plan outlines committed projects and strategies through RSI and IES, aligned with policy outcomes and strategies to support regional growth and development. This ensures transport planning reflects updated strategies and priorities, including the efficient movement of people and goods across vast geographies and dispersed communities. Planning for future transport options in the medium to long-terms requires consideration of opportunities and emerging transport proposals beyond currently funded initiatives to further enhance regional connectivity, resilience, and prosperity.

For the region, the unfunded and emerging transport proposals that require consideration includes potential upgrades to strategic freight corridors, improved intra-regional connections, and resilience focused investments in response to extreme weather events. Future planning should explore opportunities for improved connectivity between coastal centres and hinterland communities, particularly where transport corridors can support sectors like tourism, agriculture, and mining as well as the transportation of goods through multimodal hubs like the Cairns port and airport, as well as the Mourilyan harbour.

This strategic approach will enable governments at all levels to explore innovative and coordinated transport solutions while remaining responsive to evolving community needs and economic opportunities.

### Cairns Southern Growth Corridor

Appropriate servicing of the Cairns Southern Growth Corridor is of regional economic and social significance and is critical to unlocking development potential for both the future residential population and significant employment generating uses.

Coordinated planning and the delivery of the infrastructure required to service the Mount Peter PDA, the Cairns South SDA and the broader Cairns Southern Growth Corridor will identify a pathway for the staged delivery of infrastructure and support informed investment decisions for the Cairns Southern Growth Corridor.

### Key considerations for future transport infrastructure in Far North Queensland include:

- Continuing to invest in new and upgraded infrastructure to support the sea freight operation, enhance connectivity between Cairns and communities in Cape York and the Torres Strait, and maximise benefits to the community.
- Bolstering regional connectivity by delivering ongoing upgrades through the Bruce Highway Upgrade Program, as well as delivering priority safety upgrades through the Bruce Highway Targeted Safety Program.
- Upgrading strategic freight corridors to ensure continued operation of supply chains following extreme weather events.
- Improving road access between Cairns, Mareeba and the Southern Tablelands to support future population and economic growth up to and beyond 2046.
- Identifying and addressing safety, access and capacity issues at key intersections and along the transport network, including risks and constraints associated with the existing cane rail infrastructure in Mount Peter.
- Improving the resilience of road and rail networks to ensure safe, efficient and effective transportation of goods and products to and from ports, as well as the safe transportation of essential goods (medical supplies for example).
- Ongoing upgrading, widening and sealing key regional roads to enhance connectivity for freight, visitors and locals.
- Enhancing airport infrastructure (including runways and terminal facilities) to continue promoting connectivity for tourism, industry trade, and to support health related air transfers and access to specialist medical services.

### Far North Queensland Regional Transport Plan

Transport infrastructure planning for the region is directed by the *Far North Queensland Regional Transport Plan* (FNQRTP) developed by the DTMR.

The FNQRTP is a public planning document that defines the intended development of the transport system across the region over a 15-year horizon in a way that supports regional goals for the community, the economy, and the environment. The FNQRTP considers all modes of transport, regional demographic and industry changes, local government land use and transport planning.

The current FNQRTP was published in 2019. DTMR monitors, periodically reviews and updates the FNQRTP to ensure it remains current and relevant.

### Port of Cairns and the Port of Mourilyan 30-Year Two-Port Master Plan

Far North Queensland Ports Corporation Limited (trading as Ports North), a Government Owned Corporation (GOC), is responsible for managing several regional and remote ports across the region. Ports North is progressing the *Port of Cairns and the Port of Mourilyan 30-Year Two-Port Master Plan* outlining detailed plans for land use, infrastructure and operational decisions at Cairns and Mourilyan.

This plan outlines future development considerations at each Port including:

- **Port of Cairns:** Opportunities for a tourism and commercial precinct, expanding cargo operations and leveraging opportunities from the Cairns Marine Precinct expansion (including for marine and defence industries).
- **Port of Mourilyan:** Opportunities to accommodate demands for additional mineral and agricultural exports.

### Queensland Freight Delivery Plan (2026)

DTMR is developing the Queensland Freight Delivery Plan to drive innovation and improve freight systems across the state, with a focus on regional growth and productivity.

# Water

## Policy Outcome 1

### Sustainable water management

The region is grappling with mounting pressure on its water resources due to population growth and the complexities of servicing small communities. Existing infrastructure must be resilient and sustainable to meet current demands, especially as extreme rainfall events disrupt water intakes and compromise potable supply.

To secure the region's future water needs, a multifaceted sustainable water management approach is required—optimising existing resources, implementing demand management, recycling, and developing new infrastructure such as dams and weirs. Prioritising ecological sustainability and avoiding protected areas is vital for new water sources and water infrastructure, in line with statutory obligations under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, *Water Act 2000*, and *Forestry Act 1959*. Strategic projects like the Cairns Water Security Project (Stage 1) and the Mossman River Water Intake initiative exemplify efforts to bolster urban and regional resilience, while the regional water assessments aim to identify opportunities for supporting regional growth.

### Policy outcomes and strategies

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Policy Outcome 1 <b>Sustainable water management</b></p> <p>Sustainably managing water resources to meet current and future water needs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Sustain regional water supply security through enhancements to existing infrastructure, new infrastructure and non-infrastructure solutions.</li> <li>1.2 Sustainably manage water in the region to provide for urban and agricultural uses, and the environment.</li> <li>1.3 Protect water supply and wastewater assets from development that may compromise their ongoing operation. This includes identifying and protecting land required for future water infrastructure to support urban and agricultural needs, including in the Cairns Southern Growth Corridor.</li> <li>1.4 New development incorporates measures that reduce water demand and limit pressures on regional water and wastewater infrastructure.</li> </ol>

## Future planning considerations

Water infrastructure planning in the region is increasingly focused on ensuring long-term security and resilience in the face of population growth, climate variability, and regional development pressures. Responding to these challenges requires integrated strategies that promote sustainable water management, including demand reduction, recycling, and alternative supply sources.

The Tablelands Regional Water Assessment and the Gulf Regional Water Assessment will help inform the delivery of the Queensland Government's broader water agenda. A Water Security Plan for Queensland is currently under development to outline the strategic direction and actions being taken by the Queensland Government, with the support of community and industry partners, to strengthen water security and support a growing economy. Investment decisions about projects can then be considered at the right time and in the context of Queensland's full water portfolio setting.

Future planning considerations need to consider projects for additional urban and industrial water supplies to support both existing communities and future growth, particularly in areas with limited access to potable water. The feasibility of these projects is primarily dependent on the availability of water and the development of supporting infrastructure.

### Key considerations for water infrastructure in Far North Queensland include:

- Developing water resource and infrastructure to enable industry development, particularly for agriculture (i.e. bulk water supply infrastructure to support primary industries, to activate industrial land, including the Cairns South SDA).
- Upgrading and securing sustainable drinking water supply, waste treatment plants and sanitation infrastructure assets, including local government assets.
- Ensuring water and sewer infrastructure capacity is sufficient to meet the needs of current and future residents, as well as tourists and local communities in peak tourism periods. This includes planning for infrastructure needs to facilitate development within the Mount Peter PDA and Cairns South SDA.

As part of preparing the Mount Peter PDA Development Scheme, Economic Development Queensland is working with the Cairns Regional Council, industry, utility providers and state agencies to ensure infrastructure is planned, funded and delivered. The infrastructure will include transport (road, public transport and active transport), water, sewer, open space, community facilities and stormwater management. This work is in collaboration with the Office of the Coordinator-General ensuring infrastructure requirements and strategy are coordinated to service and integrate the Mount Peter PDA and Cairns South SDA within Council's infrastructure network.

- Planning for water infrastructure that is resilient against environmental hazards and disasters.
- Planning for potential infrastructure proposals for the Etheridge Agricultural Precinct at the Gilbert River, and improvements on the Tablelands through the Mareeba-Dimbulah scheme.

### Statewide Water Security Plan

The Queensland Government has committed to developing a new statewide water security plan which will set key actions and strategic directions to improve water security and support economic growth. The Water Security Plan is being developed by the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWV) and will guide future investments into water infrastructure and regional development, including within Far North Queensland.

DLGWV has identified several key considerations that will inform the development of the new water security plan including:

- Delivering long-term water infrastructure to support regional supply and economic growth.
- Planning for population growth and water use to support housing, health, industry and community needs.
- Identifying potential opportunities to build dams and weirs.
- Improving access to clean drinking water and infrastructure.
- Affordability for water users and unlocking water to support agricultural development.
- Strengthening the disaster resiliency of communities.
- Helping water users to reduce input costs, including water for food and fibre production.
- Protecting the Great Barrier Reef through environmental action, partnering with landholders and industry-led best management practice programs to reduce run-off to the Great Barrier Reef and improve water quality.

The Water Security Plan will be completed in conjunction with the review of all 23 Regional Water Plans (including four within the region), which sets out how water resources are sustainably managed and allocated within key catchments.

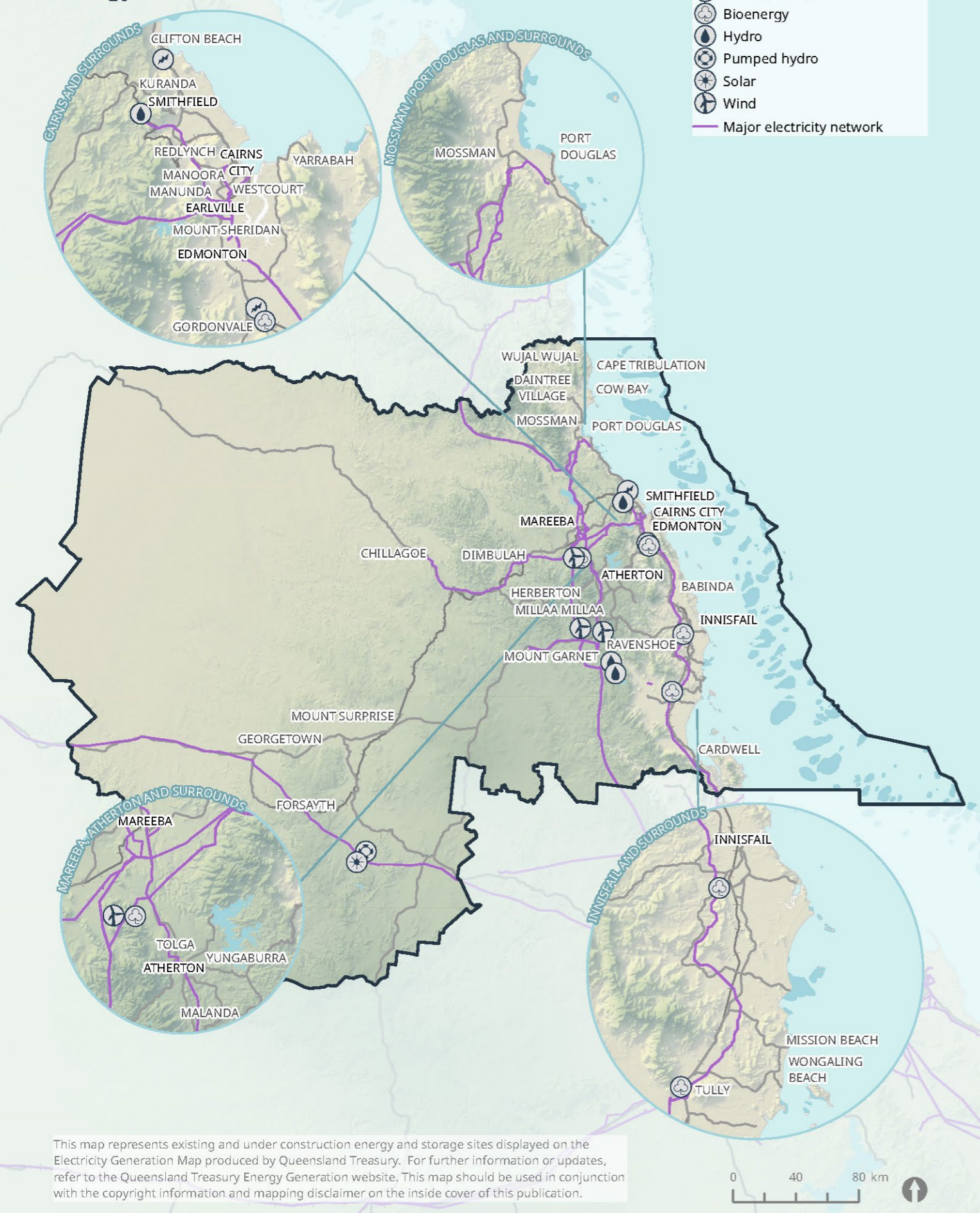
# Appendix Map 3 Energy

**Legend**

Energy and storages sites

- Battery storage
- Bioenergy
- Hydro
- Pumped hydro
- Solar
- Wind

Major electricity network



This map represents existing and under construction energy and storage sites displayed on the Electricity Generation Map produced by Queensland Treasury. For further information or updates, refer to the Queensland Treasury Energy Generation website. This map should be used in conjunction with the copyright information and mapping disclaimer on the inside cover of this publication.

# Energy

## Policy Outcome 1

### Energy

During 2025, a series of changes were made to Queensland planning framework to introduce a community benefit system and enhance development assessment requirements for certain renewable energy land uses under the *Planning Act 2016*. The amendments made wind farms, large-scale solar farms and large-scale battery storage facilities impact assessable by the Queensland Government and subject to a community benefit system. The changes mean that both a social impact assessment and a community benefit agreement must be completed prior to lodging a development application for these renewable energy development types. Impact assessment requires development applications to be publicly notified, and are subject to third party appeal rights. These planning reforms ensure wind farms, large-scale solar farms and large-scale battery storage facilities contribute benefits and align with host community expectations as well as meeting land-use planning objectives.

### Policy outcomes and strategies

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p><b>Policy Outcome 1 Energy</b></p> <p>Achieving an affordable, reliable and sustainable energy system by supporting the delivery of energy projects in a responsible manner and in appropriate locations.</p>	<p>1.1 Protect strategic energy corridors and substations, including the Cairns-Townsville transmission line and supporting infrastructure at Woree and Tully, from the encroachment of development that may interfere with its current and future operation.</p> <p>1.2 Support sustainable energy opportunities that value-add to the agricultural industry, including optimising the use of bagasse from sugar mills for efficient cogeneration or use in the production of biofuels.</p>

## Future planning considerations

The regional plan and infrastructure plan play a critical role in unlocking energy potential by aligning land use and infrastructure planning.

CleanCo's hydroelectric power stations at Kareeya, Koombooloomba and Barron Gorge will continue to utilise the abundant Far North Queensland water resources to power Queensland industries.

The lessons learnt from Energy Queensland Far North Queensland microgrid projects at Mossman Gorge and Jumbun will help shape supply and boost reliability, power quality, and community resilience to other fringe-of-grid and remote communities in future.

Future planning must also consider uncommitted and emerging proposals that leverage the region's natural assets and agricultural base. Opportunities include the expansion of bioenergy from agricultural biomass, including bagasse from sugar mills, and the development of pumped hydro and solar projects such as the Kidston Clean Energy Hub.

The regional plan provides for protection of scenic amenity values by mapping an area of interest around the Wet Tropics WHA where impacts from incompatible renewable energy projects require additional consideration. This strategic approach ensures that planning for renewable energy infrastructure contributes to economic diversification and community resilience without unacceptable adverse impacts to communities, amenity or environmental values.

### Key considerations for future energy infrastructure in Far North Queensland include:

- Leveraging opportunities to support agricultural activity.
- Progressing smaller, manageable pumped hydro projects.
- Ensuring the delivery of affordable, reliable and sustainable energy to Queenslanders through the national energy grid.

**Appendix Map 3** provides an indicative overview of existing and under construction energy and storage sites in the region.

## Energy Roadmap

The Queensland Government has released an Energy Roadmap which includes:

- \$400 million Queensland Energy Investment Fund and Queensland Investment Corporation (QIC)'s new Investor Gateway to drive private sector investment in new energy generation and firming projects.
- \$1.6 billion Electricity Maintenance Guarantee to improve our current energy assets.
- Clear decision-making framework for the operation of state-owned coal assets, balancing system needs, asset integrity, and economic viability.
- Expanded QIC oversight of pumped hydro projects to ensure a coordinated approach to assessment and investment in longer duration energy storage.
- \$10 million to catalyse further investment in distribution network community batteries to help manage minimum system load when solar generation is high and grid demand is low.
- Establishment of Regional Energy Hubs to put downward pressure on development costs.
- Regional Energy Hub declarations will be responsive to new market led energy investment, based on private sector interest and development activity, and aligned with community expectations.
- Development of a new code of conduct for renewable energy developers to guide responsible behaviour and set community expectations.



Wharf Street, Cairns (Cairns)  
Supplied by Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

# Digital connectivity

## Policy Outcome 1

### Digital connectivity

Beyond roads, fast and reliable telecommunications are vital. Digital connectivity underpins economic growth, supports remote learning and work, and improves access to services, especially in rural and remote areas. Investing in robust telecommunications will help ensure residents can fully participate in the economy and community life. Far North Queensland has untapped potential for the development of an array of agribusiness, tropical expertise and tourism products, which can be exported from the region. A reliable communication network will also support efficient and effective employment, government service delivery, education, health, workplace health and safety and social wellbeing.

Improved digital connectivity will play a critical role in planning for infrastructure services and needs based on population growth, economic trends and environmental factors.

### Policy outcomes and strategies

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Policy Outcome 1 <b>Digital connectivity</b></p> <p>Enhance regional connectivity and resilience by facilitating access to reliable, high-speed telecommunications infrastructure.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Facilitate the provision of high-speed, reliable and affordable telecommunications infrastructure across urban, rural and remote communities to support service access, economic development and disaster resilience.</li> <li>1.2 Promote compact and strategically located development patterns that optimise investment in telecommunications infrastructure and enable efficient service delivery.</li> <li>1.3 Protect sites and corridors for telecommunications infrastructure in growth areas and high-risk locations, such as the Cairns Southern Growth Corridor, Mareeba, Atherton and Wujal Wujal.</li> <li>1.4 Promote co-location of telecommunications infrastructure with other utilities and in established infrastructure corridors to optimise land use efficiency and service reach.</li> </ol>

### Future planning considerations

While the Queensland Government does not have a direct role in infrastructure planning and delivery for telecommunication and digital infrastructure assets, the State provides a key collaborative role in working with stakeholders to advocate for and progress projects to enhance digital connectivity within Queensland and the region. Infrastructure delivery partners include infrastructure asset owners, such as telecommunication carriers and the National Broadband Network (NBN) Co, with the Australian Government responsible for legislation, regulations and delivery.

Digital connectivity is increasingly recognised as a foundational enabler of regional development, economic diversification, and community wellbeing across regional Queensland. Digital infrastructure is a critical component of integrated infrastructure networks, with policy outcomes focused on ensuring reliable, fast, and affordable telecommunications access. This is particularly important for supporting agribusiness innovation, remote service delivery, and emergency response capabilities.

Future planning requires consideration of uncommitted and emerging infrastructure proposals aimed at addressing regional disparities in digital access, including infrastructure to improve mobile coverage in underserved areas, expansion of high-speed broadband networks, and integration of digital infrastructure into land use planning frameworks.

#### Key considerations for future digital infrastructure in Far North Queensland include:

- Deploying remote mobile network solutions, to enhance telecommunication and internet performance in remote and challenging environments (including during disasters).
- Deploying satellite communications for emergency services, to ensure reliable and efficient communication during disasters.
- Enhancing digital connectivity and internet access for regional businesses, including by expanding telecommunication services and reducing black spots.
- Enhancing digital connectivity to bridge gaps in healthcare services and enhance virtual service delivery.

# Social and community infrastructure

## Policy Outcome 1

### Social and community infrastructure

Social and community infrastructure refers to facilities, services and networks that support the quality of life and wellbeing of our communities. This includes facilities and services related to housing, health, education, justice, and recreation. To promote wellbeing and liveability in the region, social and community infrastructure needs to be coordinated across all levels of government and cater to all people.

As a priority, further consideration could be given to improving access to services in regional and remote locations through collaborative planning for fit-for-purpose and place-based approaches, including multipurpose and co located models of service, where appropriate.

## Residential Activation Fund

The \$2 billion RAF is unlocking land supply for new housing across Far North Queensland and the rest of the state. By investing in trunk water, sewer, stormwater and roads, and essential higher order power supply and telecommunications infrastructure, RAF enables locally approved residential developments to progress, and new homes to be built.

### Policy outcomes and strategies

Policy Outcomes	Strategies
<p>Policy Outcome 1 <b>Social and community infrastructure</b></p> <p>Social infrastructure is planned and delivered to support the diverse needs of local communities and enhance liveability for residents and visitors.</p>	<p>1.1 Plan for accessible social infrastructure to meet the diverse needs of the community to an appropriate standard in urban, regional and remote locations.</p> <p>1.2 Plan for infrastructure to support a regional network of outdoor recreation experiences that enhance liveability for residents, attract visitors and support cultural and experiential tourism (such as other nature-based experiences, ecotourism, sports, arts and event tourism).</p> <p>1.3 Structure planning for emerging settlement patterns identifies sufficient urban area for new schools.</p>

### Future planning considerations

Social and community infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting liveable, inclusive and resilient communities across Far North Queensland. As the region experiences population growth and demographic change, there is increasing demand for co-located, multipurpose community facilities that enhance service delivery efficiency and accessibility, where possible.

### Health

The Queensland Government’s priorities in developing healthcare infrastructure are outlined in *The Hospital Rescue Plan*, which identifies key projects to be delivered to boost Queensland’s healthcare system, including the Cairns Hospital expansion to increase bed capacity, enhance service provision and support collaboration with tertiary education providers. The plan is part of Queensland Health’s capital program, which delivers built infrastructure and digital technologies to support safe, high-quality healthcare. Across the region, this program is supporting a range of health infrastructure initiatives, including hospital redevelopments, mental health facilities, staff accommodation and service enhancements in both major centres and regional communities. Investment decisions are driven by clinical service need, future healthcare demand and capital maintenance requirements and guided by consumer expectations within an ever-changing environment.

With demand on Queensland’s public health system expected to grow, Queensland Health continues to strategically position itself to respond to these pressures, enabling the delivery of public health services in fit-for-purpose infrastructure such as hospitals, community health hubs, ambulance stations, residential mental health facilities, residential alcohol and other drugs facilities and staff accommodation.

#### Key considerations for future healthcare infrastructure in Far North Queensland include:

- Delivering the Cairns Hospital expansion to deliver more overnight beds, increase service provision, enhance collaboration with tertiary education providers, and integrate health, education, and research facilities to meet growing demand in the region, and attract industry partners and investment.
- A visionary 30-year masterplan for the Cairns Hospital has set the pathway forwards to revitalise the CBD and transform the city into a health, education and innovation precinct through collaboration with industry and tertiary education providers. A 40 bed surgical and innovation centre, multi-storey car park and health administration building form part of the more than \$1 billion investment set to be delivered by 2031.
- Maintaining and enhancing existing regional, rural, and remote health facilities to strengthen service delivery outside major centres and ensure equitable access to healthcare that meets the future healthcare needs of First Nations and other regional communities.
- Providing resilient and reliable road, air and sea connectivity to enable the safe transportation of patients, medical supplies and healthcare workers.
- Accessing resilient and reliable telecommunications and digital connectivity infrastructure to enable virtual and more accessible and equitable healthcare.
- Improving resilience of health infrastructure to disasters, increasing self-sufficiency, and supporting the continued transition of Cairns Hospital to a full tertiary hospital.
- Delivering future new or expanded health facilities should consider prospective public and private partners, parking for health facilities in a precinct-wide context, and increasing demand for co-located, multipurpose community facilities that enhance service delivery efficiency and accessibility.

## Education and Training

When planning for new schools, the Queensland Government considers a range of factors including the capacity of the existing network, the ability to expand existing schools, population growth, high priority needs for student and staff safety, and land availability. These reviews inform the decision to establish new schools at the appropriate time and in the correct location. This planning work undertaken by the Department of Education is an important step in prioritising future investments in new school infrastructure.

The Department of Education conducts ongoing strategic planning for new schools throughout Queensland, collaborating with local governments and the non-state sector in areas experiencing significant population growth. This approach facilitates consultation with stakeholders from state and local government, non-government education representatives, and the Queensland Government Statisticians Office.

TAFE Queensland works in collaboration with government, industry, and communities to deliver training that supports economic growth and community prosperity. This includes ensuring that infrastructure projects enable contemporary and flexible training to be delivered.

### Key considerations for future school and training infrastructure in Far North Queensland include:

- Delivering infrastructure upgrades across the region to improve resilience at identified flood-prone schools.
- Enhancing TAFE service delivery through a hub in Cairns to engage candidates transitioning into, or returning to, the TAFE teaching workforce.
- Delivering the expansion to the Great Barrier Reef International Marine College in Cairns, to expand training opportunities within the maritime industry.
- Delivering infrastructure enhancements to sports infrastructure for student and community use as part of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, for example Barlow Park.
- Supporting integrated health related education, training and research.

## Justice and Public Safety

A range of Queensland Government agencies are responsible for infrastructure delivery for justice and public safety assets.

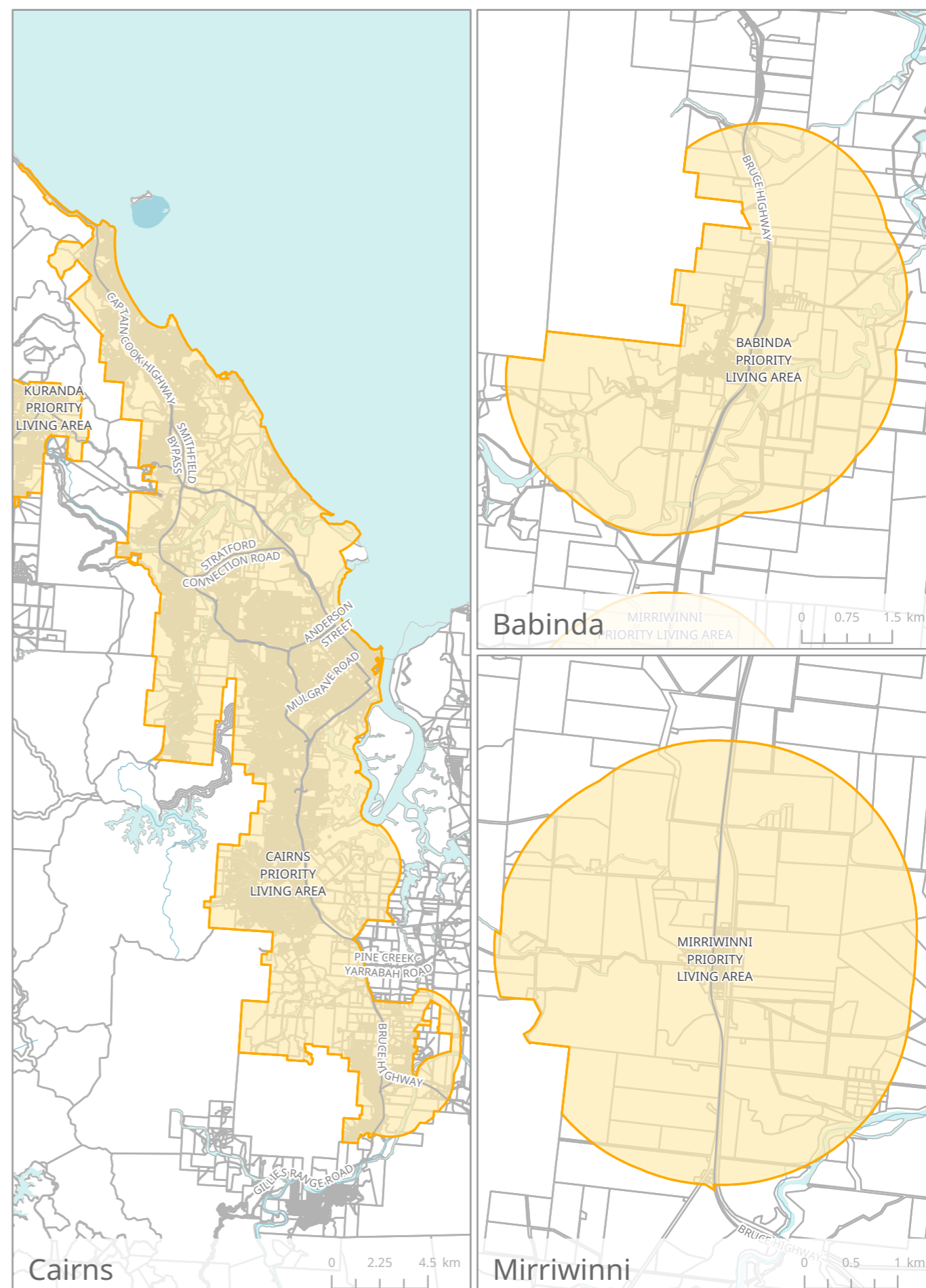
This infrastructure includes:

- Courthouse developments and improvements (under Queensland jurisdiction).
- Police facilities (stations, watchhouses) and aviation assets.
- Correctional centres.
- Fire and rescue stations and rural fire service infrastructure.

### Key considerations for future justice and public safety infrastructure in Far North Queensland include:

- Delivering new, and upgrading current, infrastructure for justice and emergency services, such as police stations, the Cairns Courthouse and Watchhouse and the Fire Communications Centre at Cairns, to bolster community safety.
- Delivering upgrades to court infrastructure to improve digital capacity and identify opportunities for enhancing security infrastructure.
- Delivering infrastructure, such as fire and rescue stations, that enhance emergency response capabilities for the region.
- Considering the regional growth pattern, including major growth areas such as Cairns, Mareeba and Atherton, to ensure justice and public safety infrastructure planning responds to current and future population distribution and service demand across the region.

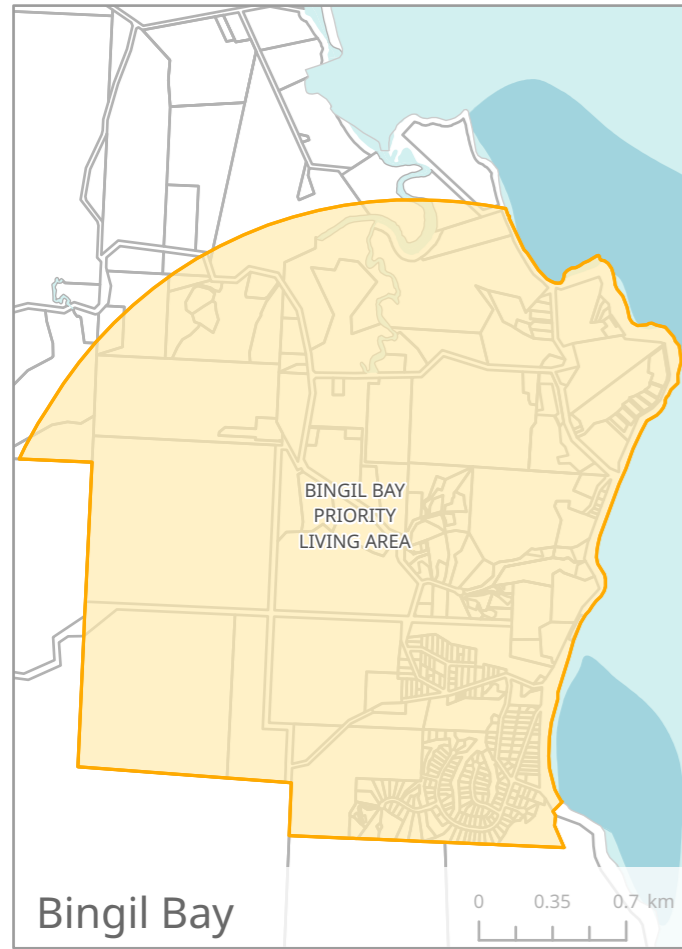
## Schedule A - Priority Living Areas inset series



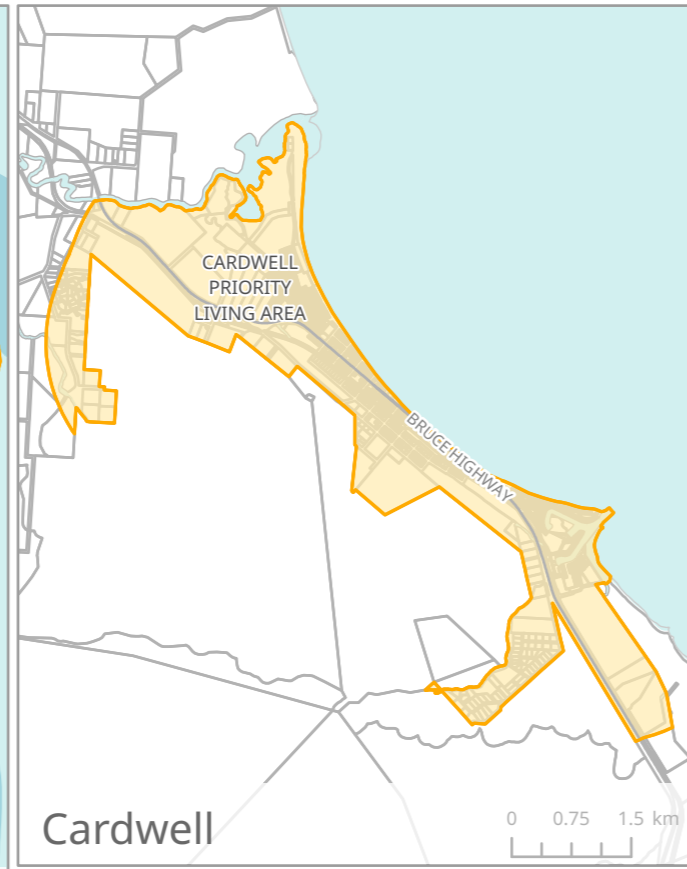
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Cairns Regional Council - Priority Living Areas

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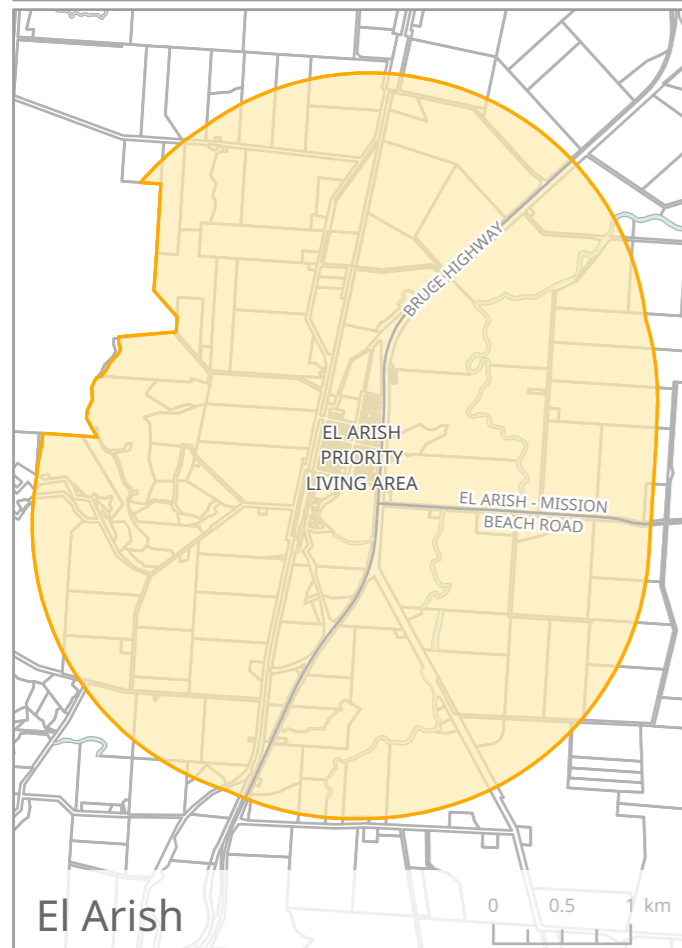
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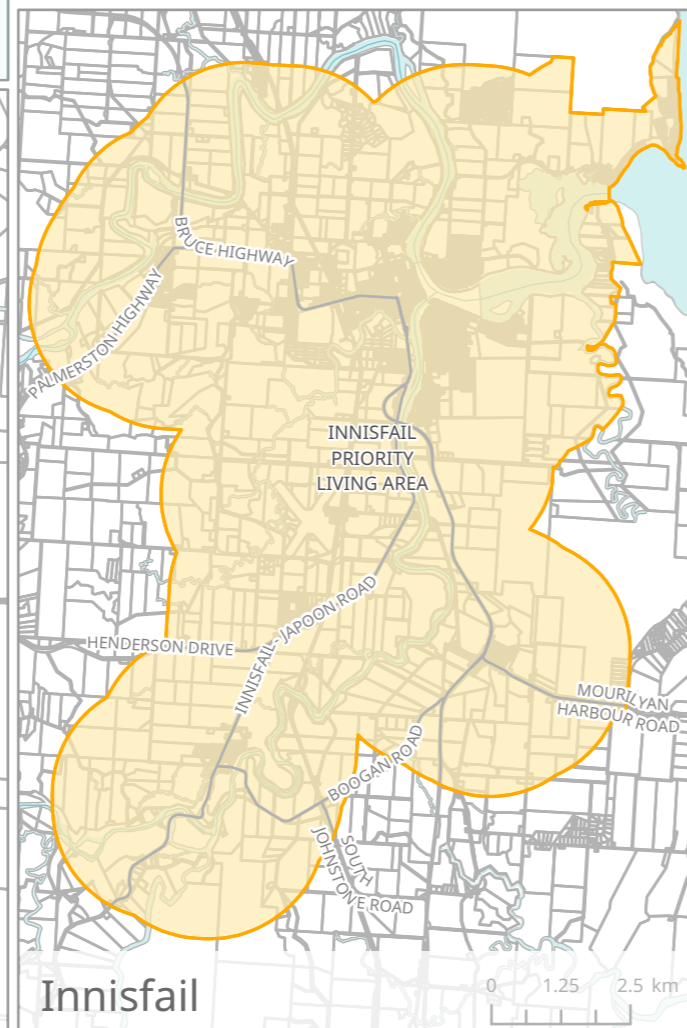
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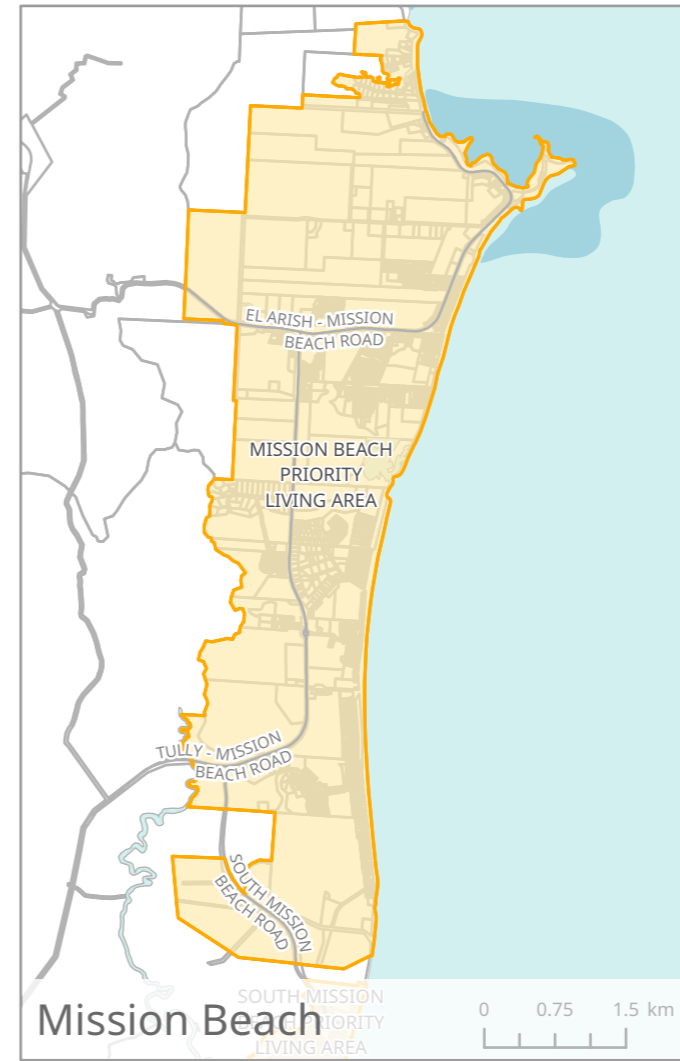


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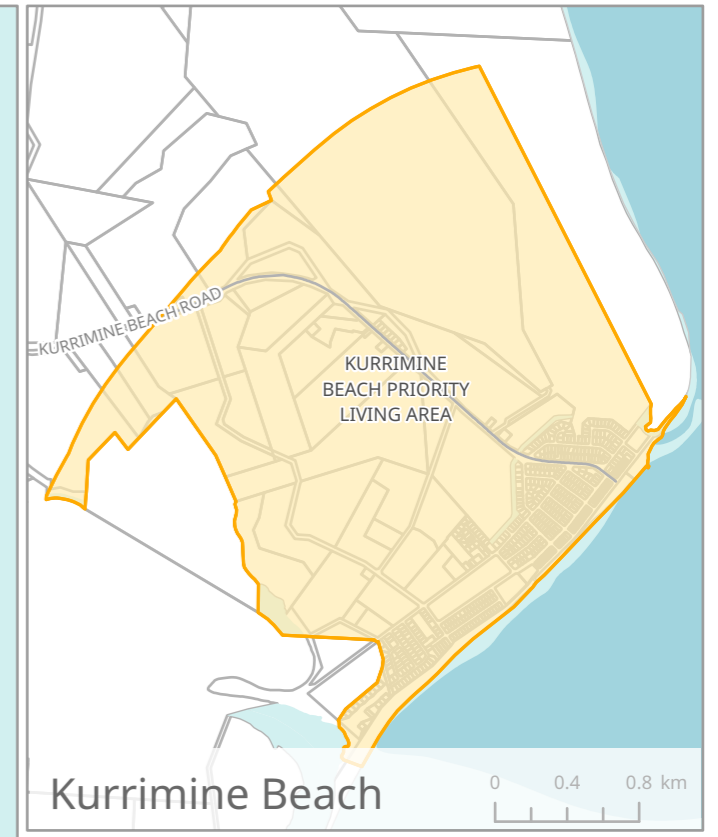
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Cassowary Coast Regional Council - Priority Living Areas

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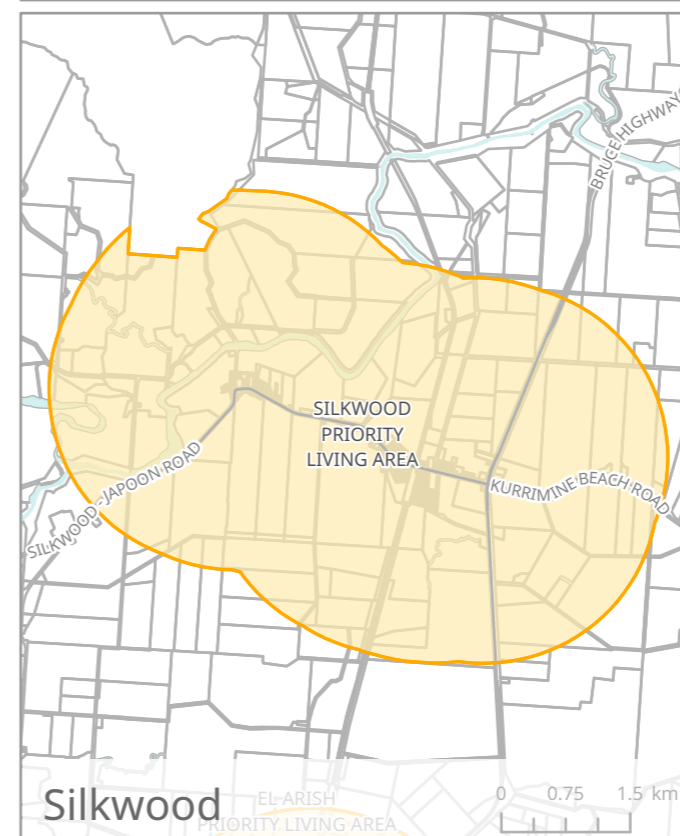
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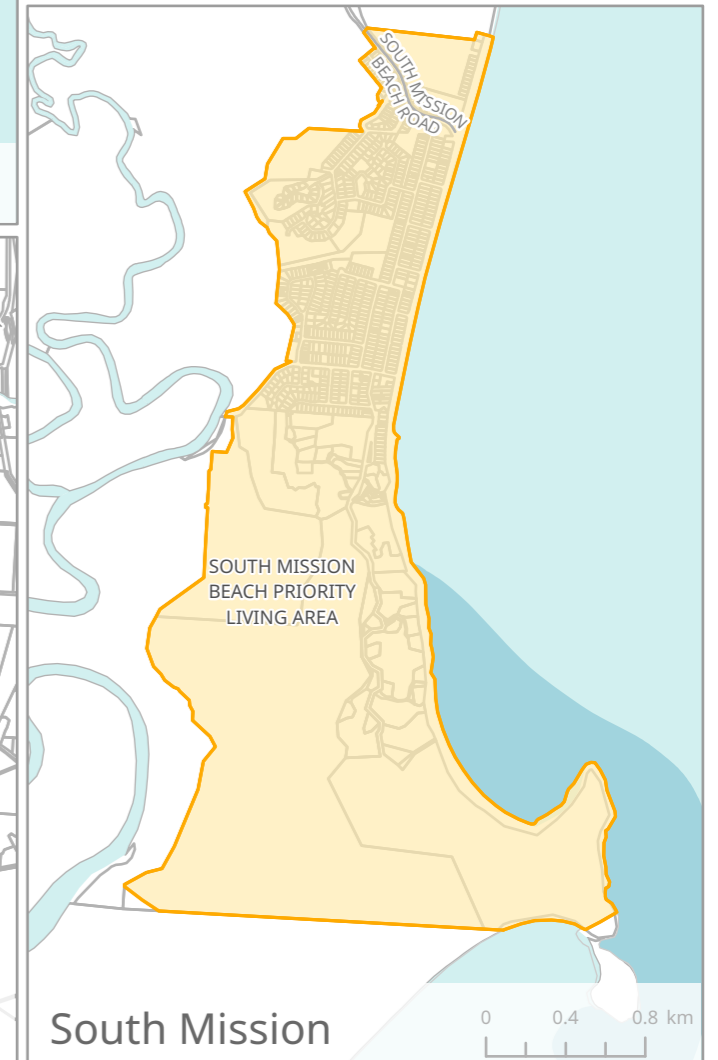
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Kurrimine Beach



Silkwood

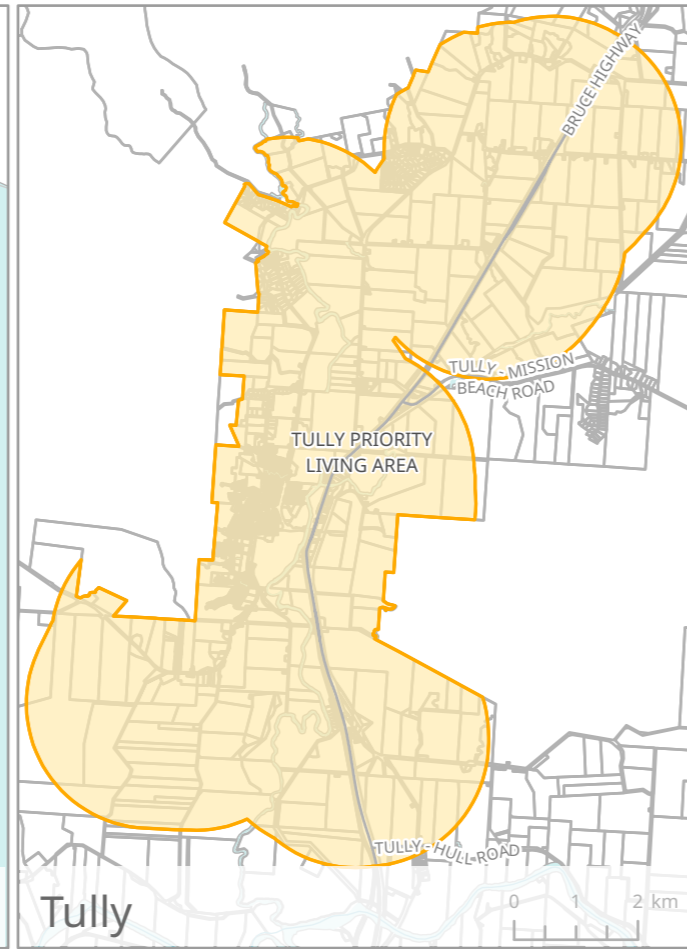
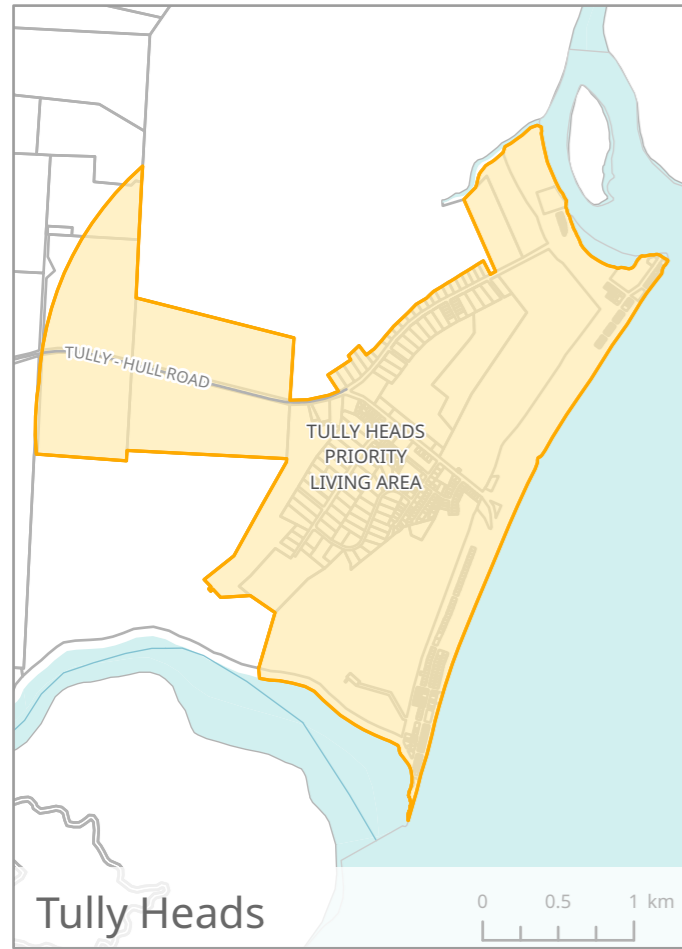


South Mission

Schedule A  
Cassowary Coast Regional Council - Priority Living Areas

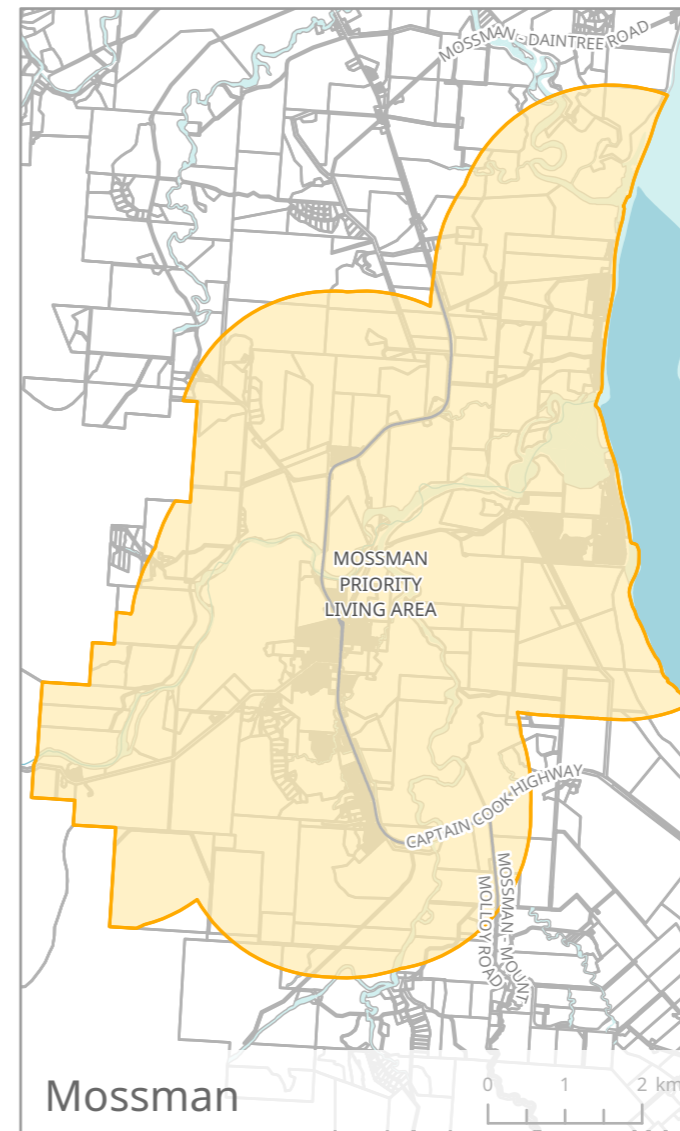
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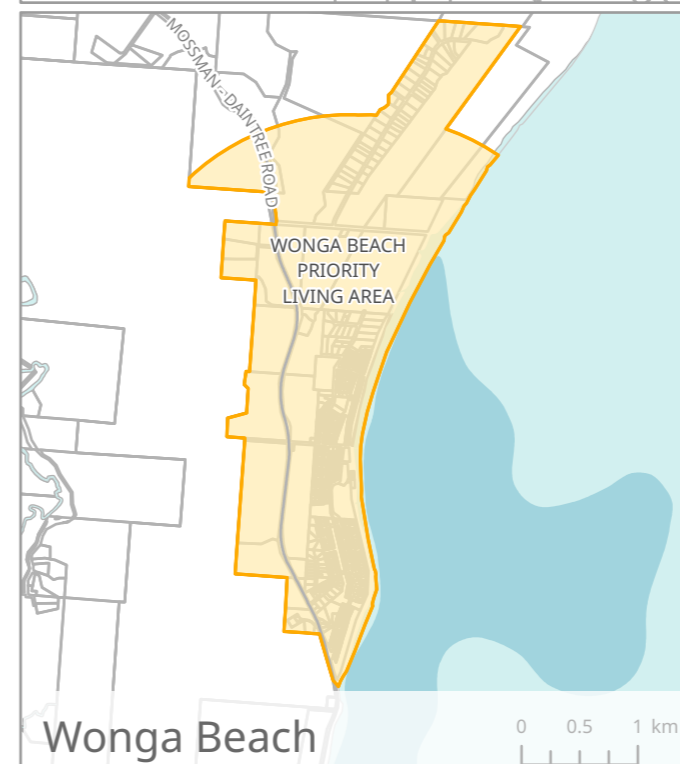


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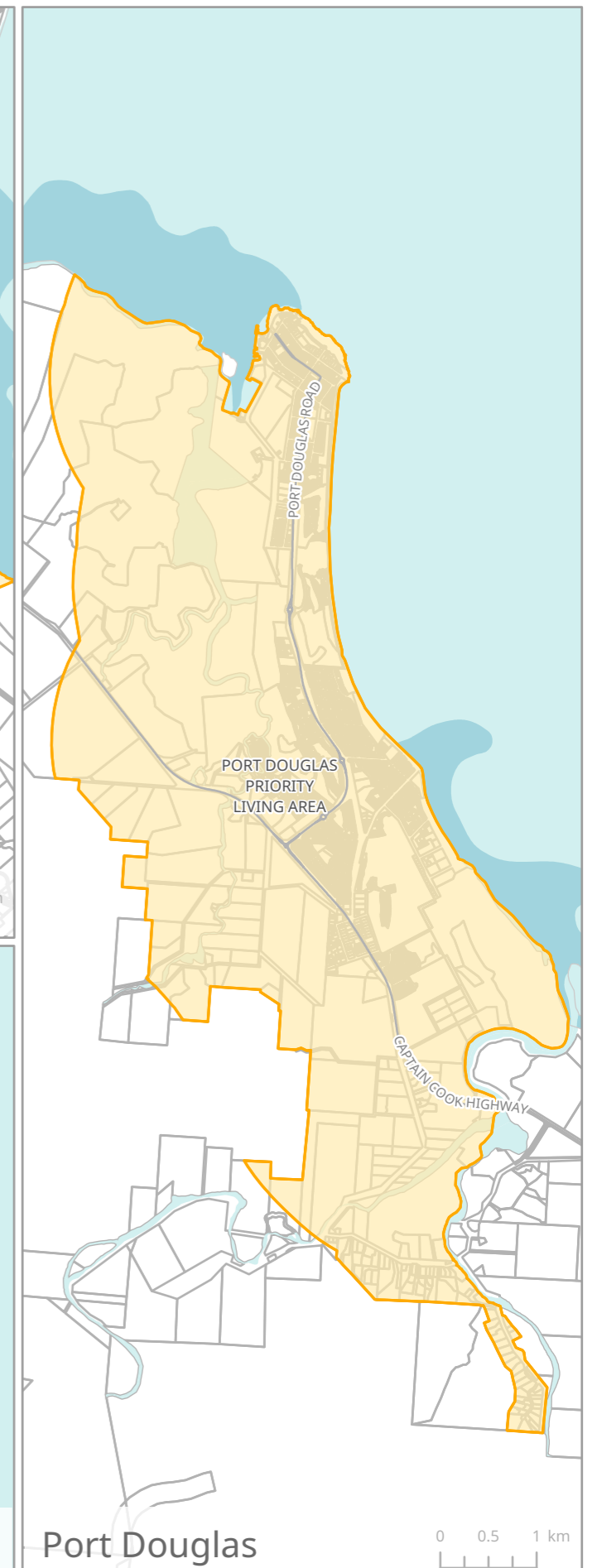
Tully



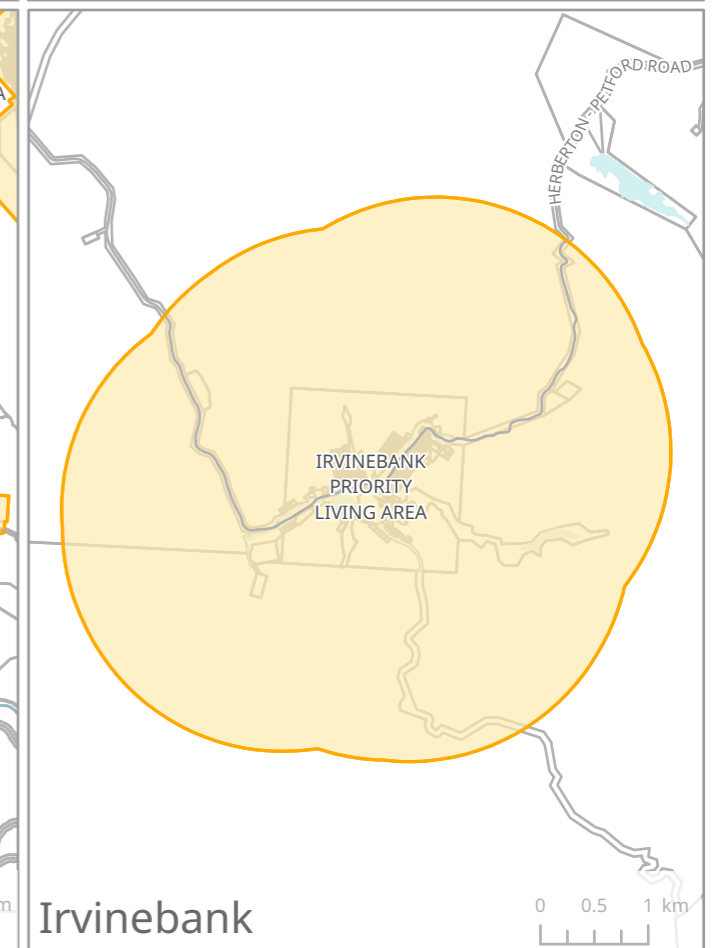
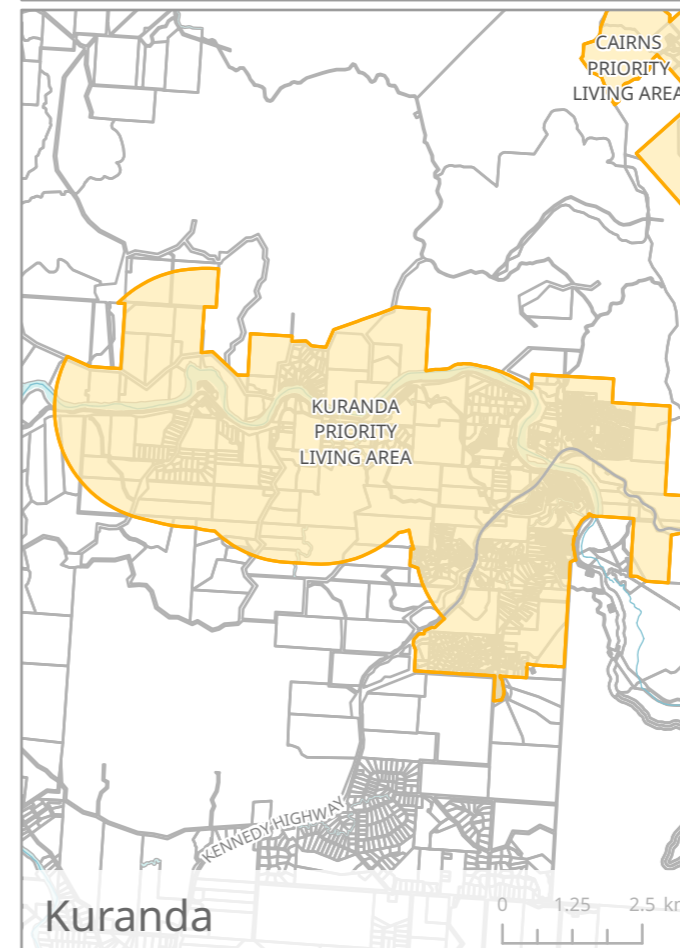
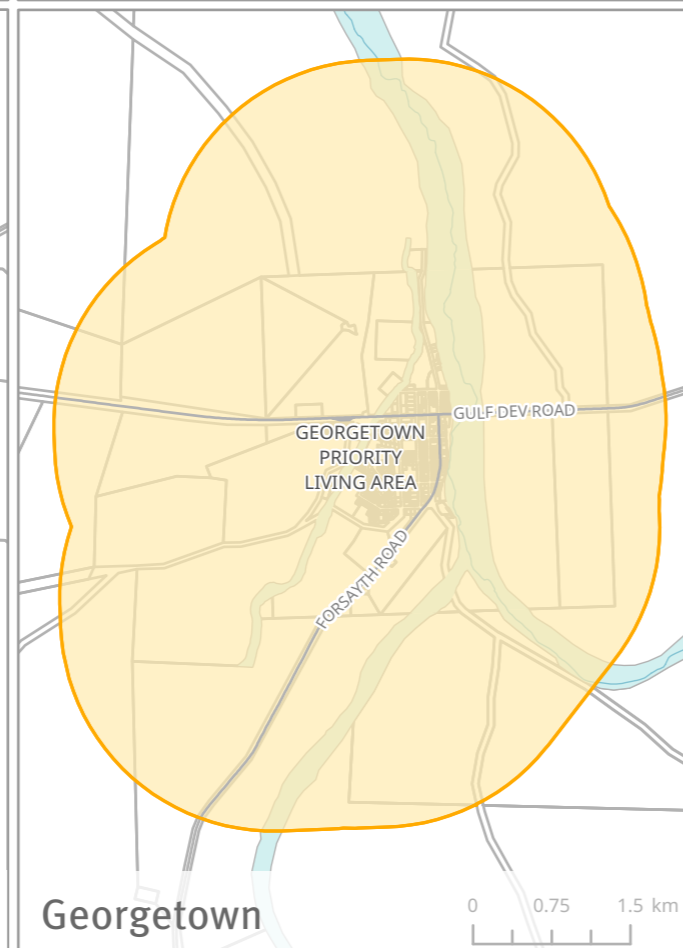
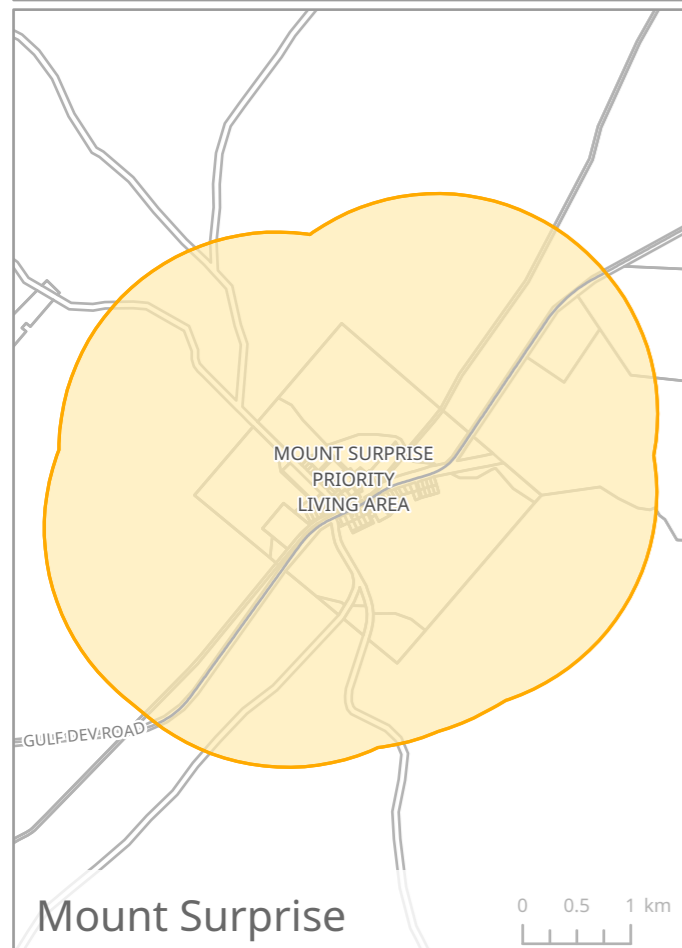
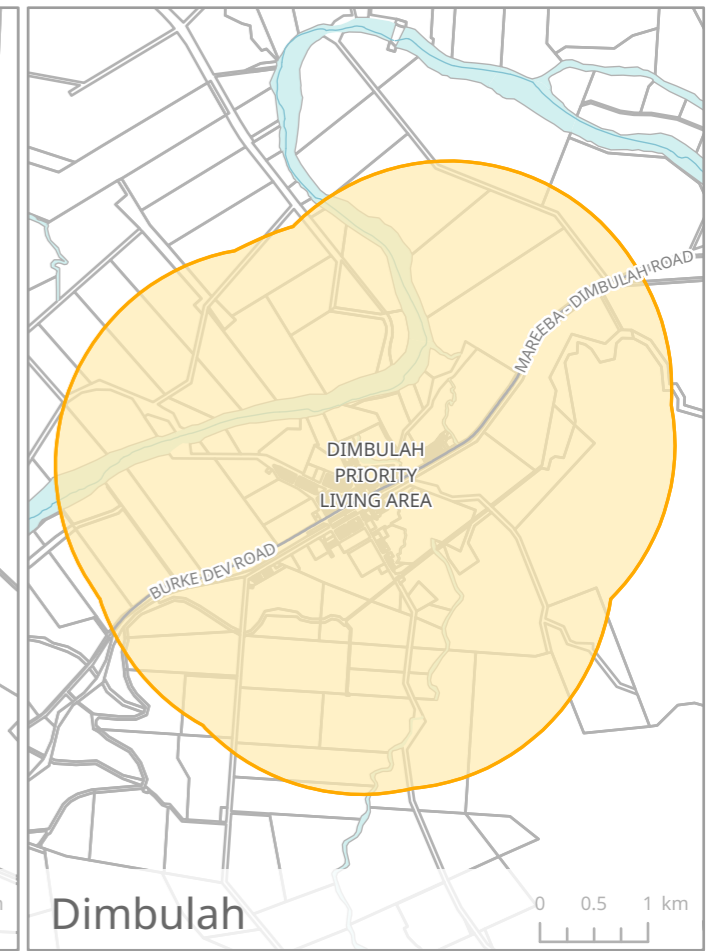
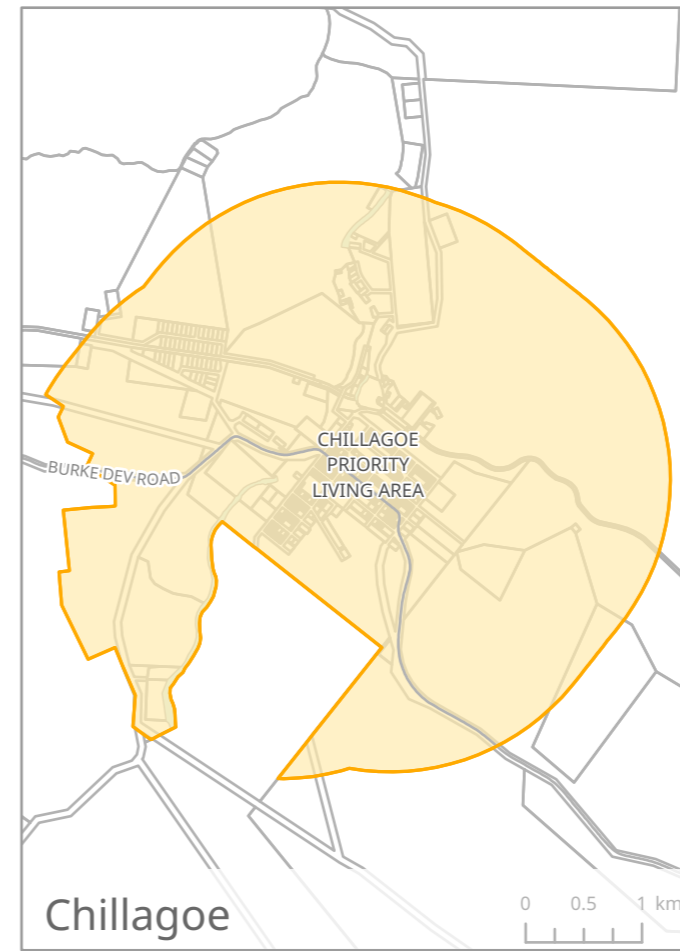
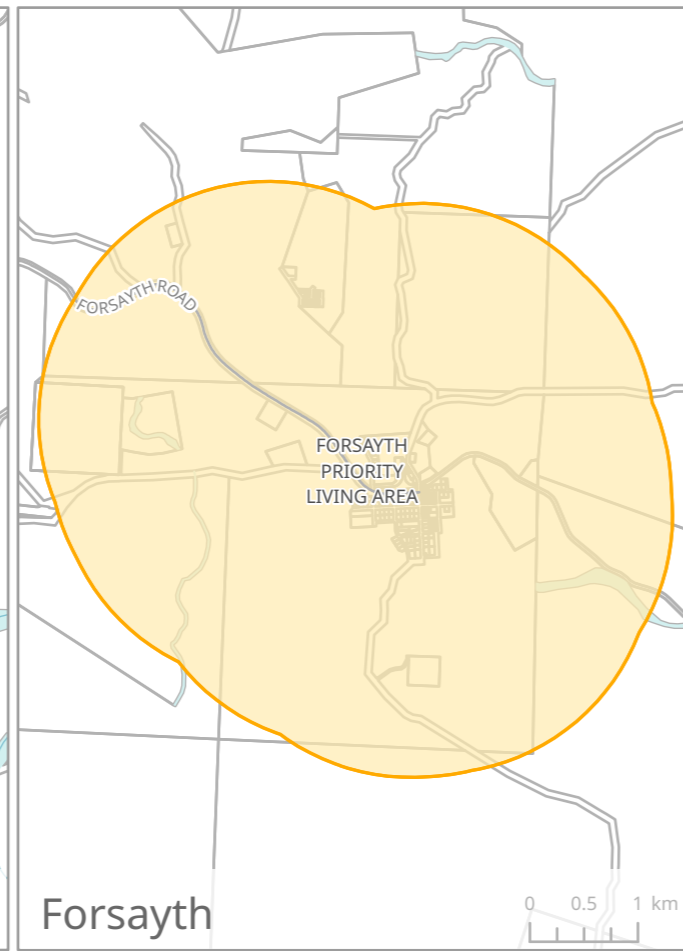
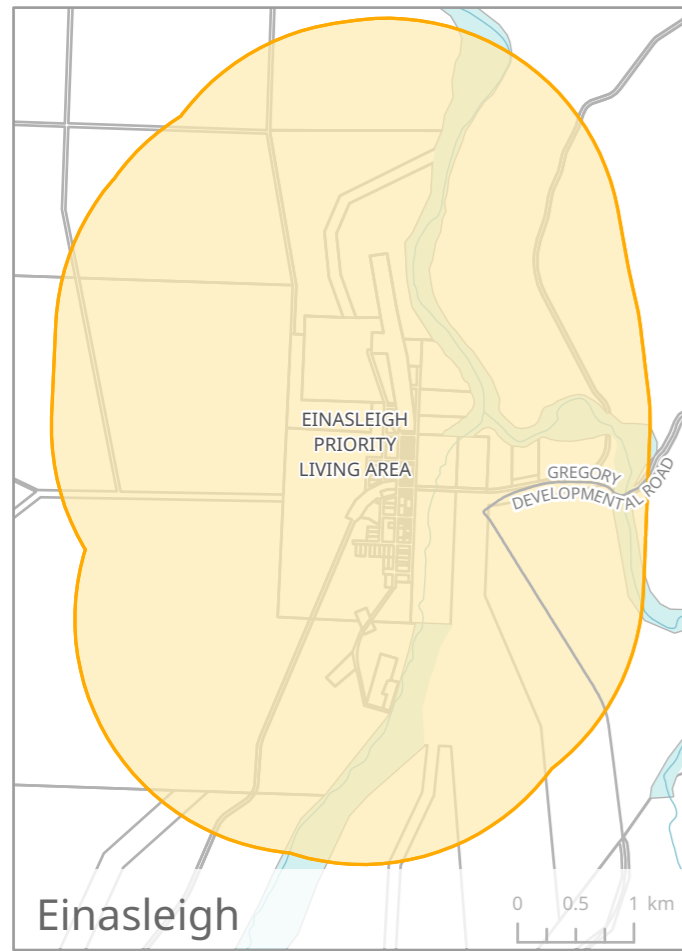
Mossman



Wonga Beach



Port Douglas



Schedule A  
Etheridge Shire Council - Priority Living Areas

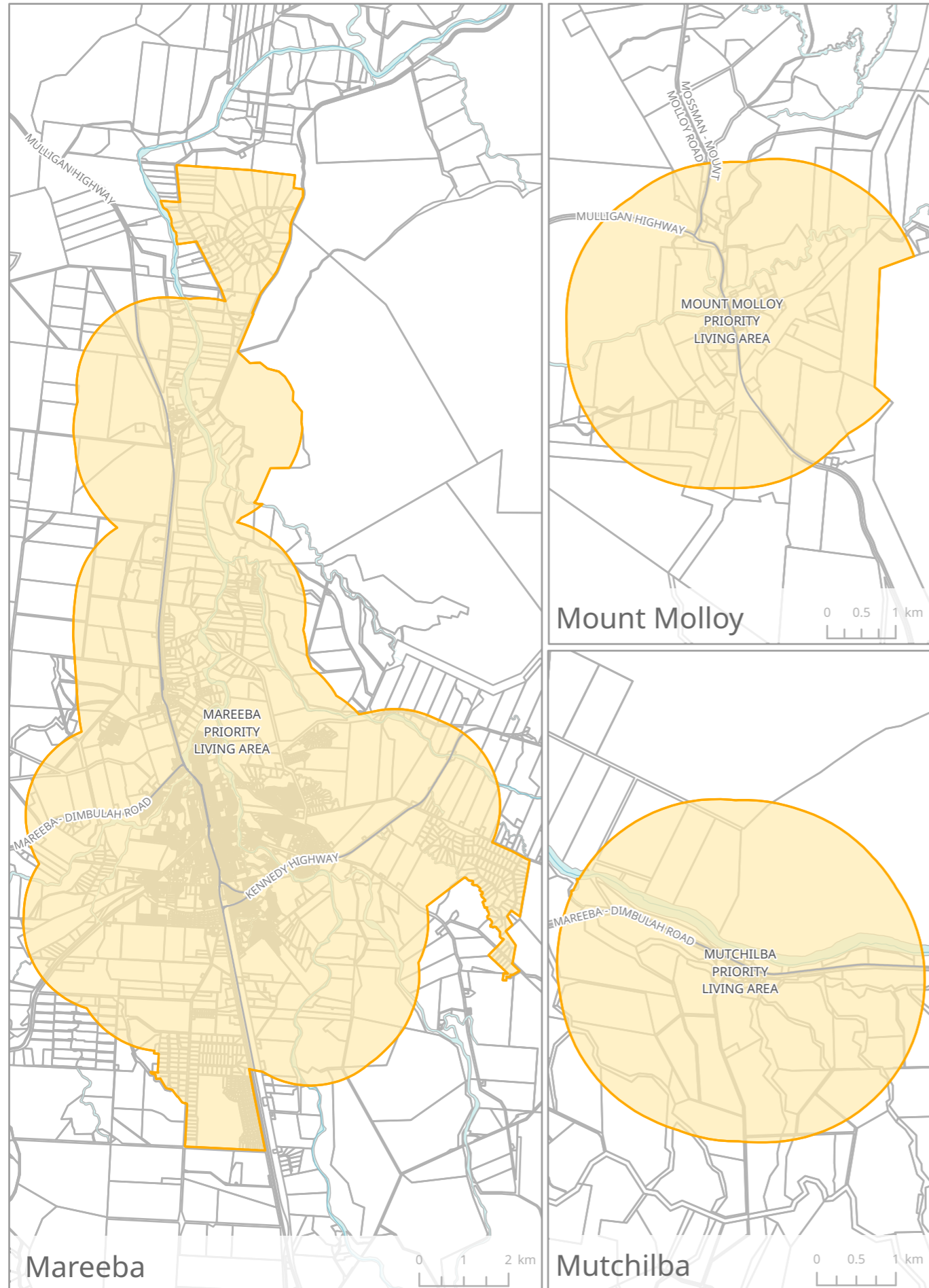
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Schedule A  
Mareeba Shire Council - Priority Living Areas

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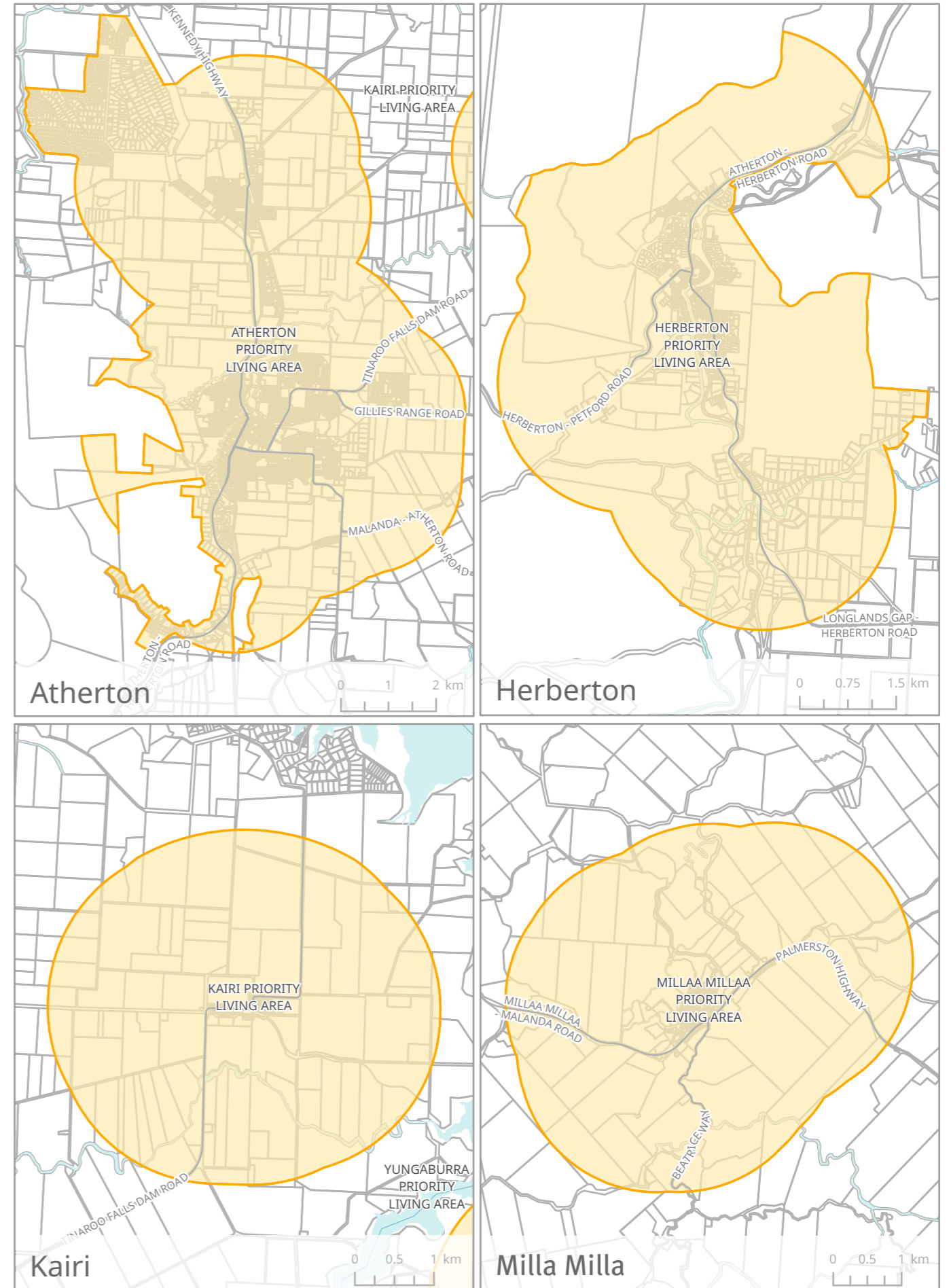
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Schedule A  
Mareeba Shire Council - Priority Living Areas

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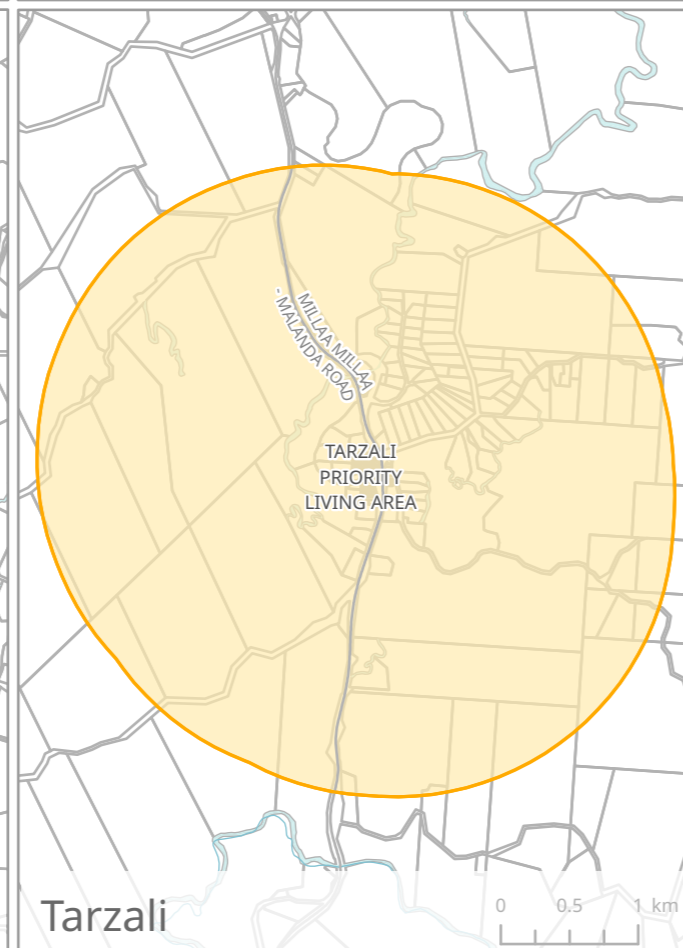
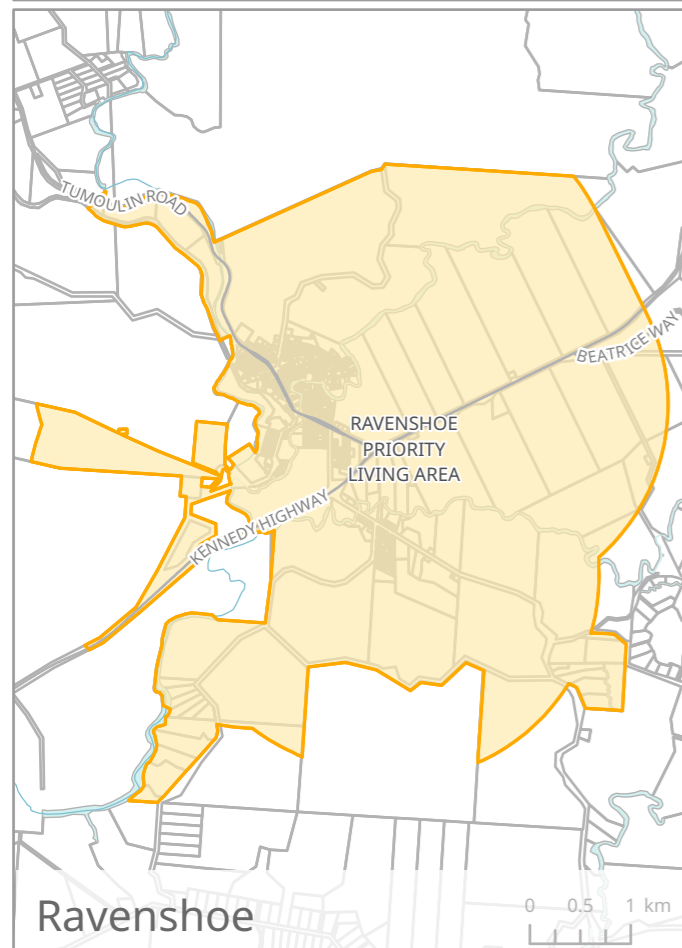
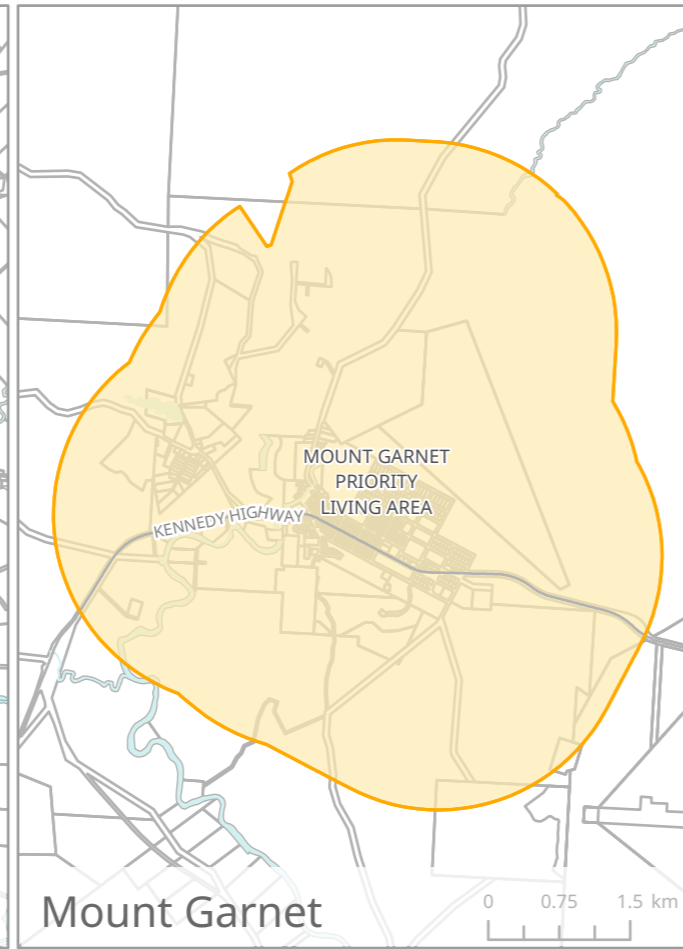
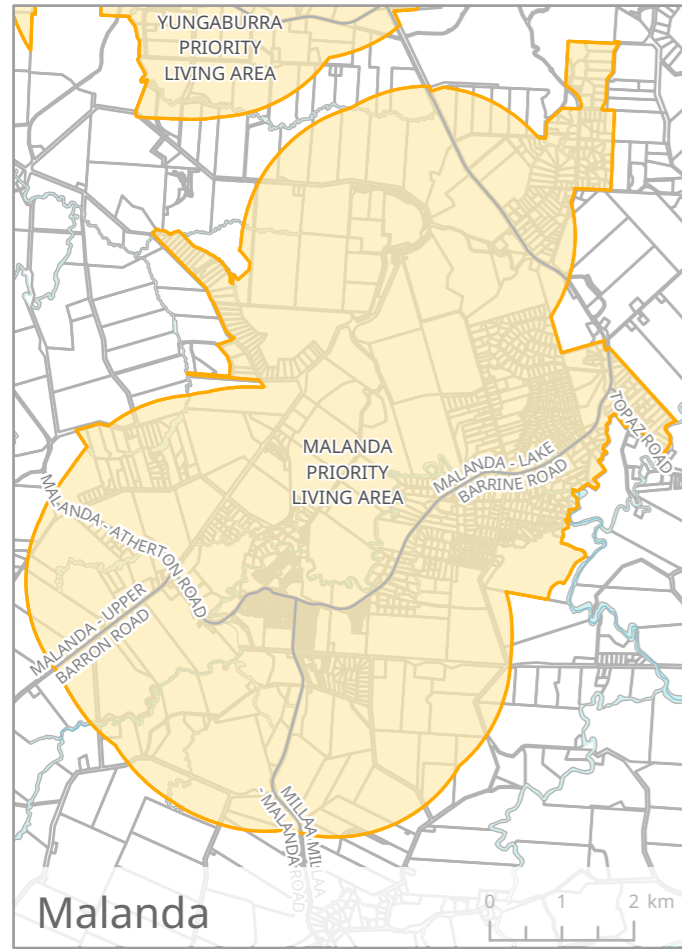
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Schedule A  
Tablelands Regional Council - Priority Living Areas

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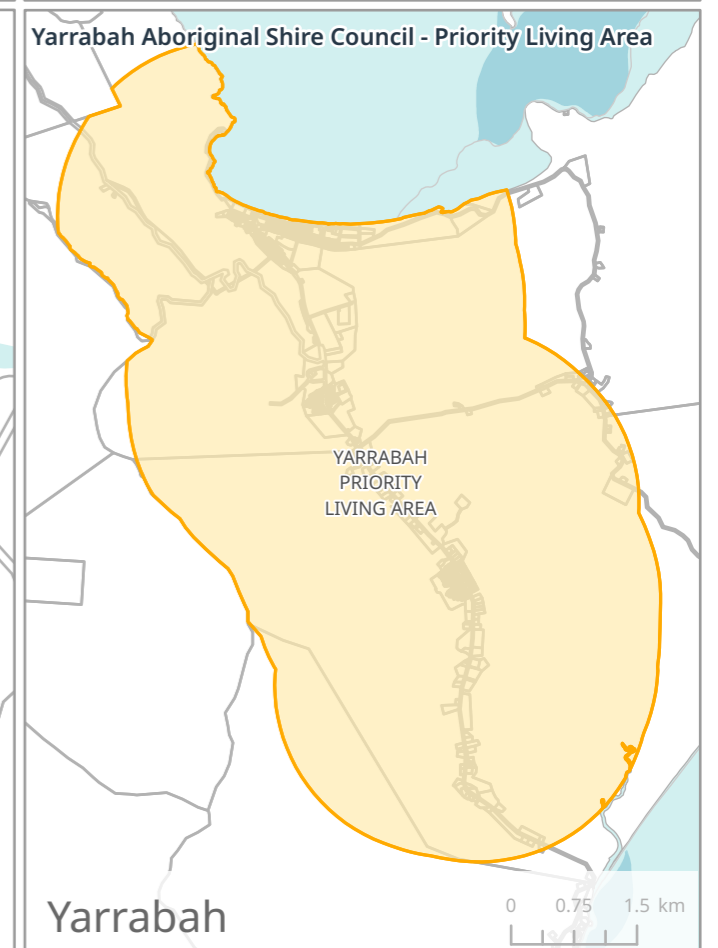
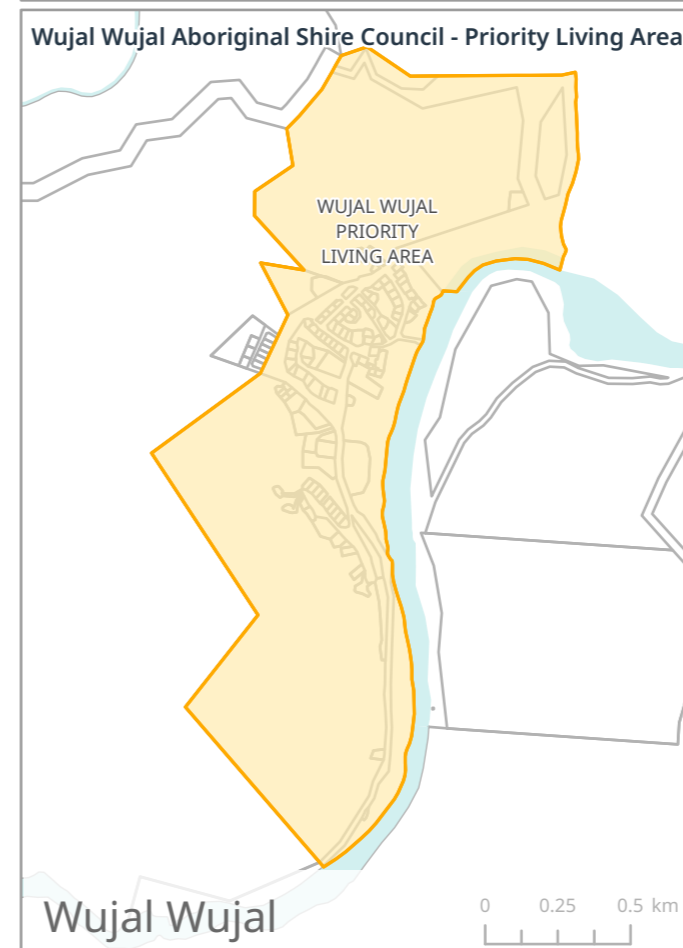
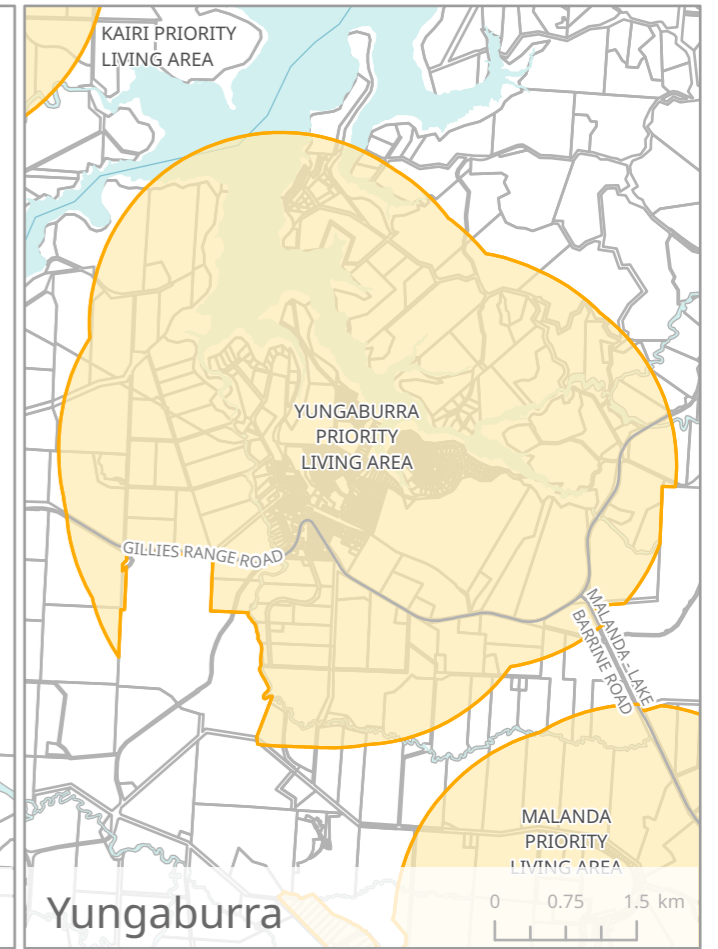
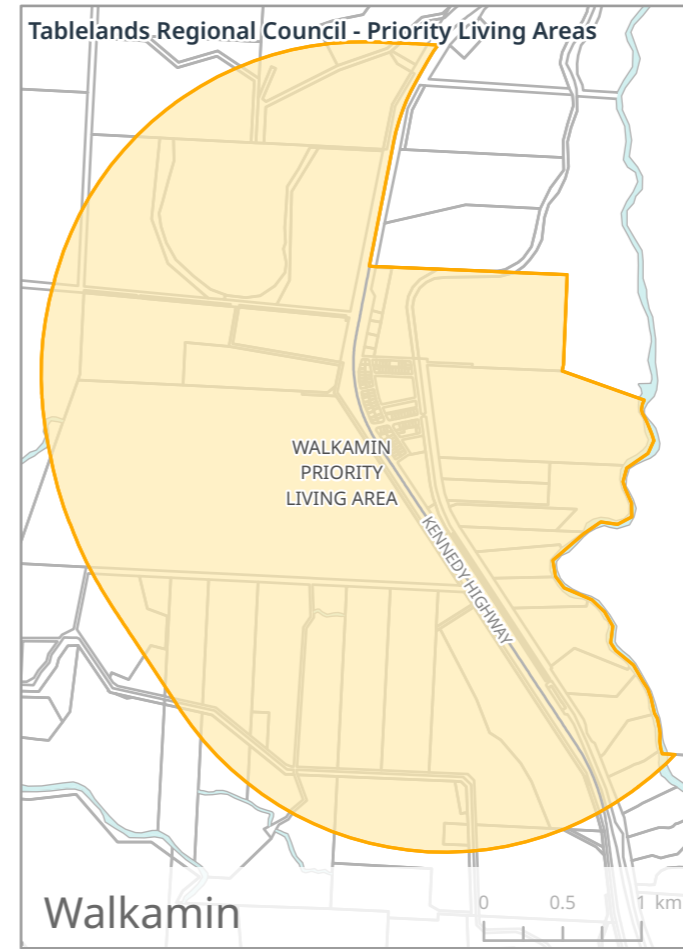
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Schedule A  
Tablelands Regional Council - Priority Living Areas

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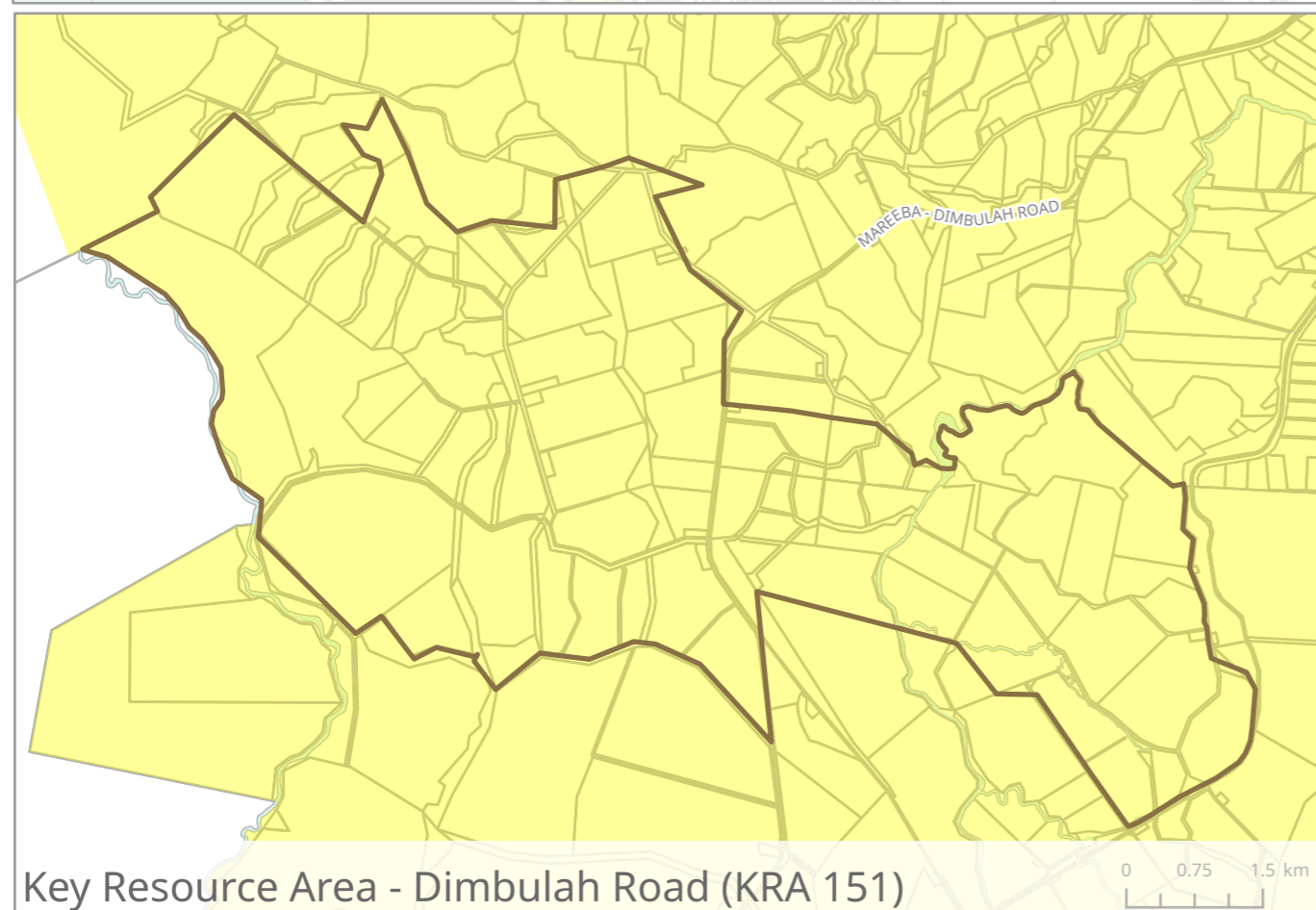
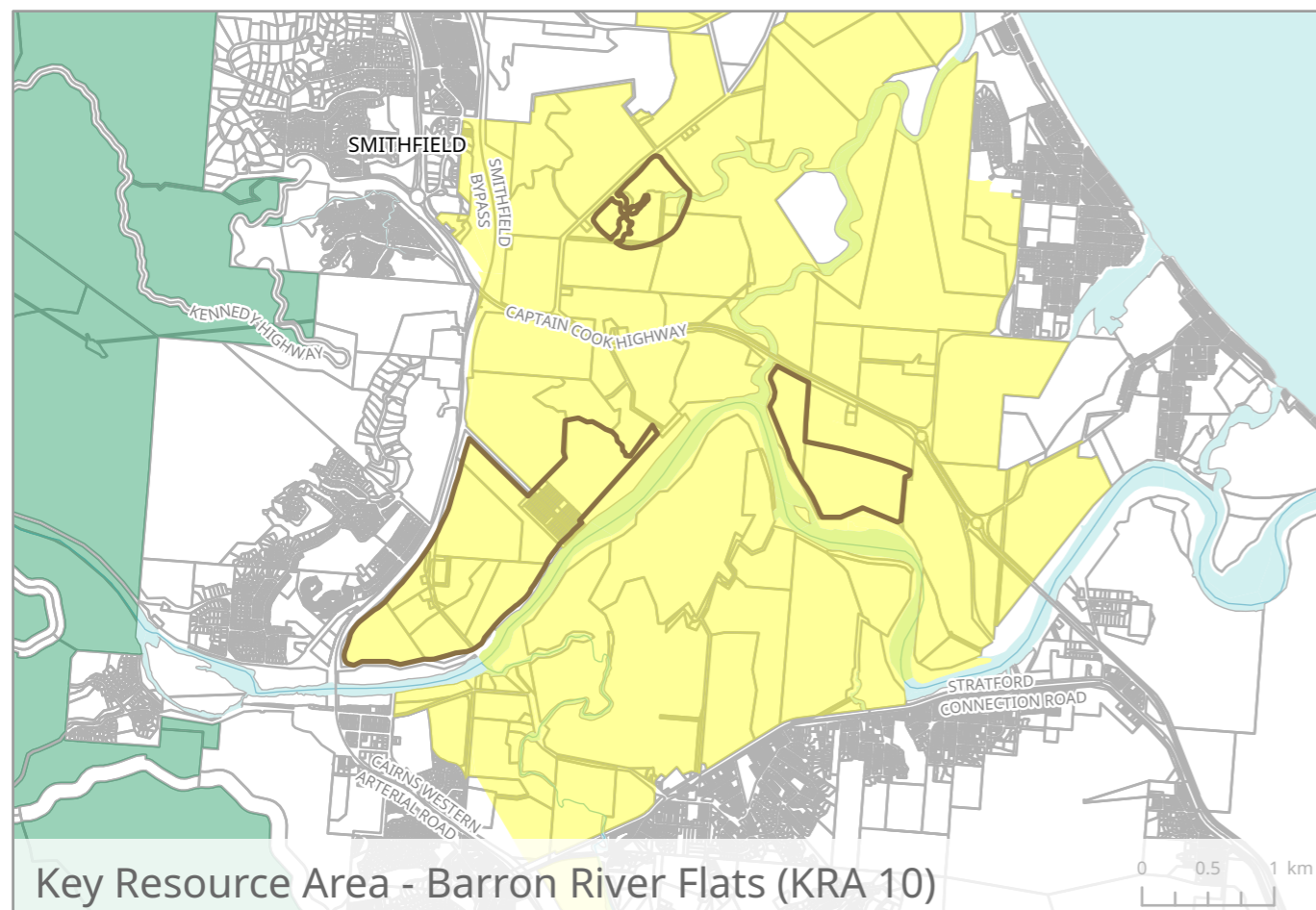


Schedule A  
Priority Living Areas

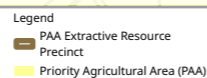
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## Schedule B - Priority Agricultural Area - Extractive Resource Precincts



Schedule B  
Priority Agricultural Area (PAA) - Extractive Resource Precinct



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## Acronyms

Acronym	Term
<b>CBD</b>	Central business district
<b>DTMR</b>	Department of Transport and Main Roads
<b>FNQ</b>	Far North Queensland
<b>ILUA</b>	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
<b>KRA</b>	Key Resource Area
<b>LGA</b>	Local government area
<b>LGIP</b>	Local Government Infrastructure Plan
<b>MRAC</b>	Major regional activity centre
<b>MSES</b>	Matters of State Environmental Significance
<b>PAA</b>	Priority agricultural area
<b>PAEA</b>	Potential Agricultural Expansion Area
<b>PALU</b>	Priority Agricultural Land Uses
<b>PDA</b>	Priority Development Area
<b>PPDA</b>	Provisional Priority Development Area
<b>PLA</b>	Priority living area
<b>PRAC</b>	Principal regional activity centre
<b>RAF</b>	Residential Activation Fund
<b>REA</b>	Regional economic asset
<b>RIA</b>	Regional industrial area
<b>RLA</b>	Rural Living Area
<b>RLRPA</b>	Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area
<b>RLUC</b>	Regional Land Use Categories
<b>RSI</b>	Region-shaping Infrastructure
<b>SDA</b>	State Development Area
<b>SPP</b>	State Planning Policy
<b>TUV</b>	Tropical Urban Village
<b>WHA</b>	World Heritage Area

# Glossary

This glossary provides the meaning of some terms used in the regional and infrastructure plan. Terms not included in the glossary should be given their ordinary meaning unless they are defined in the *Planning Act 2016* or *Planning Regulation 2017*.

Term	Definition
<b>Active transport</b>	Physical activity undertaken as a means of transport, such as walking or cycling.
<b>Agriculture</b>	As defined in the SPP.
<b>Agritourism</b>	<p>A form of immersive tourism that connects people to agricultural products or produce, delivered on farming land through a direct “hands on” experience. Agritourism can be made up of a variety of elements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combining tourism and agriculture into a product or service, such as “paddock to plate” dining.</li> <li>• Products or services that attract members of the public to visit farms, such as events or accommodation.</li> <li>• Providing recreation, entertainment and or educational experiences related to an agriculture enterprise.</li> </ul> <p>Agritourism ventures can vary in scale and may include a wide range of experiences including winery visits, farm stays, retreats and camping, food experiences through cafes and farmgate stalls, and activities such as self-fruit picking, education, animal interactions, recreational fishing and nature-based experiences.</p>
<b>Agricultural Land Classification (Classes A and B)</b>	As defined in the SPP.
<b>Areas of Regional Interest</b>	As defined in the <i>Regional Planning Interests Act 2014</i> .
<b>Amenity</b>	The quality of a location or landscape which makes it pleasant or agreeable, or which contributes to a comfortable and pleasant life.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The variability of all living organisms, at all levels of organisation, including genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity. This includes organisms from terrestrial, aquatic, marine and other ecosystems and the ecological complexes they live in.
<b>Blue-green infrastructure</b>	Connected networks of green (vegetated) and blue (water-based) spaces integrating natural, built and engineered systems, supporting ecological functioning, water management and urban sustainability.
<b>Demand management</b>	<p>Demand management consists of measures that are intended to make better use of existing infrastructure by modifying consumer behaviour, rather than directing limited resources towards major new or upgraded infrastructure. Demand management initiatives can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational or incentive measures to bring about voluntary changes to consumer behaviour, including reductions in use.</li> <li>• The introduction of technology to make better use of existing resources.</li> <li>• Restrictive pricing measures designed to reflect the true cost or increase the comparative attractiveness of alternatives.</li> <li>• Service intervention levels.</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
<b>Dwelling supply targets</b>	The dwelling supply targets indicate the supply to 2046 that is planned for by the FNQ Regional Plan 2026 and which needs to be planned for in local government planning schemes. Actual construction of dwellings will depend on changing population growth and economic circumstances over time.
<b>Ecotourism</b>	<p>As defined in the (<i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>), being tourism that is ecologically sustainable and primarily focused on experiencing an area in a way that fosters understanding, appreciation and conservation of the area and its natural and cultural values.</p> <p>Note: ecotourism is a subset of nature-based tourism, which refers to a much broader range of tourism activities which uses or promotes values, landscapes, spaces and experiences found in natural areas.</p>
<b>Extractive resources</b>	Extractive resources means natural deposits of sand, gravel, quarry rock, clay and soil extracted from the earth’s crust and processed for use in construction. The term does not include a mineral under the <i>Mineral Resources Act 1989</i> , section 6.
<b>Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)</b>	Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) are voluntary agreements between Native Title parties and other people or bodies about the use and management of areas of land and/or waters. ILUAs are established under the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> . Some of the outcomes of ILUAs include the development of cultural centres, education trust funds, co-management of national parks, commitments to Indigenous employment and the creation of parks and reserves.
<b>Indigenous landscape values</b>	<p>Indigenous landscape values include areas that hold cultural, spiritual and environmental significance for First Nations peoples and Traditional Custodians.</p> <p>These areas consist of boundaries, pathways, totemic and iconic species, food and medicinal species, spiritual landscapes, women’s and men’s places, ceremonial places, battle sites, meeting and keeping places, healing places, mission sites, habitation sites and water places.</p>
<b>Infill development</b>	New development that occurs within established urban areas where the site or area is either vacant or has previously been used for another urban purpose.
<b>Infrastructure purpose</b>	<p>An infrastructure purpose means one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a cemetery</li> <li>• a crematorium</li> <li>• a detention facility</li> <li>• emergency services</li> <li>• an environmental facility</li> <li>• major electricity infrastructure</li> <li>• a park</li> <li>• a renewable energy facility</li> <li>• a substation</li> <li>• a telecommunications facility</li> <li>• a utility installation other than a transport service</li> <li>• a wind farm</li> </ul>
<b>Inter-urban break</b>	Non-urban land areas or green space that separate urban suburbs, towns and cities.

Term	Definition
<b>Major regional activity centre (MRAC)</b>	MRACs are focal points for sub-regional employment and the delivery of sub-regional services.
<b>Matters of state environmental significance (MSES)</b>	As defined by the SPP.  Note: Where possible, MSES is indicatively shown on the SPP Interactive Mapping System.
<b>Modern methods of construction</b>	Refers to a range of construction methods that leverage innovative techniques and off-site manufacturing (e.g. factory-built housing) which streamlines processes, reduces construction timelines and minimises environmental impact.
<b>Monitoring</b>	Regular and systematic collection and analysis of data to measure the implementation of FNQ policies and implementation activities.
<b>Nature-based tourism</b>	As defined in the Planning Regulation 2017.
<b>Principal regional activity centres (PRAC)</b>	A PRAC is a key focal point for employment and services.
<b>Priority living area</b>	As defined in the <i>Regional Planning Interests Act 2014</i> .
<b>Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area (RLRPA)</b>	The area shown as 'Regional Landscape and Rural Production Area' on <b>Map 6</b> . This is an area that provides important values that help sustain the region, socially, economically and environmentally. This area protects the values of this land from encroachment by urban and rural residential development, protects natural assets and regional landscapes, and ensures their sustainable use and management. The RLRPA also supports development and economic growth of rural communities and industries.
<b>Rehabilitation purposes</b>	A purpose that involves rehabilitation or restoration of native forestry, wetlands and mangroves on disturbed, modified and cleared lands, including environmental markets or carbon offsets projects. These activities must enhance agricultural productivity by improving land condition, ecosystem services, or soil health.  This also includes farming practices such as establishing vegetative buffers, including tree windbreaks and environmental strips, to reduce windspeed, control soil erosion, minimise evapotranspiration, retain soil moisture, trap sediment, absorb excess nutrients, provide shelter, or create habitats for birds, pollinators, and beneficial insects, that are designed to support farm sustainability and resilience, and increase crop productivity and pasture growth.
<b>Return to Country</b>	Traditional Custodians living on their ancestral lands.
<b>RPI Regulation</b>	Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014.
<b>Rural Living Area (RLA)</b>	The area shown as 'Rural Living Area' on <b>Map 6</b> . This area is intended for consolidated rural residential development in suitable locations providing for housing and lifestyle choice, while limiting the impact of its inefficient use of land on other values, functions and opportunities in a region.
<b>Rural residential development</b>	Large-lot residential development, generally without reticulated sewerage and typically in a rural, semi-rural or conservation setting.

Term	Definition
<b>Rural town</b>	Existing, named and permanent bounded settlements with an urban function in a rural, semi-rural or conservation setting. They usually have a population of 200 or more people. They are generally serviced with reticulated potable water and have two or more social services (such as a church, hall, shop or primary school).
<b>Rural village</b>	Existing, named and bounded settlements with an urban function in a rural, semi-rural or conservation setting. They usually have a population of up to 200 people and at least one social service (such as a church, hall, shop or primary school).
<b>State Planning Policy (SPP)</b>	The State Planning Policy (July 2017).
<b>Social infrastructure</b>	The community facilities, services and networks which help individuals, families, groups and communities meet their social needs, maximise their potential for development, and enhance community wellbeing.
<b>State Development Area (SDA)</b>	As defined in the <i>State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971</i> .
<b>Strategic environmental area (SEA)</b>	As defined in the <i>Regional Planning Interests Act 2014</i> .
<b>Strategic rehabilitation areas (SRA)</b>	The areas shown as 'strategic rehabilitation areas' on <b>Map 16</b> . These are areas where rehabilitation would result in strategic long-term biodiversity conservation outcomes. They include a mixture of remnant vegetation, regrowth, disturbed, modified and cleared land, and represent current significant gaps in habitat continuity. SRAs are, or may in future be, important links in wildlife corridors that connect core areas of remnant vegetation, including east-west or north-south connections of both state and regional significance.
<b>Urban Footprint</b>	These areas are shown as Urban Footprint on <b>Map 6</b> . This area identifies land within which the region's urban development needs will be met in a way consistent with the outcomes and strategies of FNQ Regional Plan 2026.
<b>Urban greening</b>	The network of natural and semi-natural areas that deliver a range of environmental, economic and social values and benefits to urban places, including protection from flooding or excessive heat or improving air and water quality, while also protecting biodiversity. Examples of urban greening include urban tree canopies, parks and sport fields, nature reserves and wildlife corridors, waterways and wetlands, stormwater harvesting systems, green roofs and walls, and tree-lined streets and pathways.
<b>Urban purpose</b>	As defined in the Planning Regulation 2017.
<b>Waterways</b>	As defined in the <i>Fisheries Act 1994</i> .
<b>Wet Tropics World Heritage Area - Special Management Area</b>	The area depicted as 'Wet Tropics WHA - Special Management Area' on <b>Map 16</b> .



# FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND

*Regional Plan and  
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