

# My Far North Queensland

## Actions for a stronger region

Image: Kay Cash Photography

### Building stronger regions

The Queensland Government has released the *Queensland Regionalisation Strategy (QRS)* to ensure population growth is well managed and its benefits are shared across the state.

The QRS aims to encourage economic development across Queensland's regions and strengthen and diversify local economies. To do this, it identifies a range of actions which will be implemented across the state.

The statewide actions are supported by a set of actions for each region. The actions contained in this document are a snapshot of projects that will support and encourage economic growth in the Far North Queensland region and sustain its enviable lifestyle.

Together, the QRS, these regional actions and the *Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2009–2031* will maximise future opportunities for the region, setting strong foundations for regional growth and development.

### Far North Queensland region

The Far North Queensland region is renowned for its spectacular scenery and unique biodiversity. The region's natural assets make it a global destination for tourism and a world leader in the emerging field of tropical expertise. The region is rich in mineral assets. Broadening the horizons of key industries and finding innovative ways to capitalise on growing markets in the Asia-Pacific will see the region secure its place as a global trading hub.

Opportunities to mix work, leisure and family life in Far North Queensland makes

the region attractive to new residents. The region's population is forecast to continue growing at a rate of 1.4 per cent each year to 2031.

Long-term priorities identified to promote the growth of the Far North Queensland region include:

- supporting a diversified economy
- supporting innovation across the economic zones of tropical expertise, tourism, agriculture and energy
- developing a strong skills base and connecting people to employment
- improving transport infrastructure
- continuing to position the region as a service and supply hub for the Asia-Pacific.

The key to Far North Queensland's increasing success is in capitalising on the region's natural advantages.

The region is at the heart of the tropical expertise economic zone. Over decades, the region has accumulated knowledge about the application of technologies and products in a tropical environment. Growing economies in the tropical world present opportunities and sell this expertise to new markets.

Adding value to the region's agricultural produce and increasing the farming sector's productivity will capitalise on the world's growing demand for high-quality food.

Research and investment into renewable energy solutions will support the shift to clean energy and also expand opportunities in the region.

Investment in new and renewed tourism products and experiences are critical to the industry's competitiveness and also builds

local amenity.

Diversifying from these natural strengths, the region is developing strong aviation, marine, and research and training sectors. Significant mining projects in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Western Cape York and the North East Minerals Province presents an opportunity to become an industry service hub. The region's supply of skilled labour also makes it an ideal base for fly-in/fly-out operations for resource projects.

A strong and industry-relevant skills base is fundamental to realising these opportunities for Far North Queensland. The region's education sector is strongly linked to industry strengths and attracts international researchers and students.

Working with industry to provide training pathways for young people and those looking for work is vital to ensuring that everyone across the region has access to the opportunities that growth brings.

Prosperous economies and communities rely on strong infrastructure. Maintaining the liveability of urban centres and ease of access within the region is a priority as the population grows. Improving access to markets and increasing resilience during weather events are priorities for transport infrastructure.

There are opportunities to expand the range and specialisation of health care services in the region. New technologies will also allow for health care to be delivered in new ways, particularly to remote communities across the region. Timing the upgrade and expansion of social infrastructure, transport infrastructure, and health and community services are all priorities.

Key actions outlined in this document support the priorities for the Far North Queensland region.

# My Far North Queensland Our Queensland



Population: 280 147 (2010)  
 Queensland Public Service jobs: 14 100 (2011)  
 Projected population: 378 600 (2031)  
 Land area: 22% of Queensland

## Action categories



Infrastructure and services



People



Business



Partnerships

These icons represent some of the planned actions across the region.

## Key



Port



Airport



Defence Force base



Railway




Highway or road



# Regional actions for Far North Queensland

The Queensland Government, in partnership with business, industry and other levels of government will deliver on the actions in this plan. **These are just some of the actions planned or underway in the region in the short, medium and long term.** To find out what other projects are happening in your region visit [www.waytogrow.qld.gov.au](http://www.waytogrow.qld.gov.au)

Action	What	Why	When	
	<b>Infrastructure and services: Ensuring regional Queensland emerges more resilient from natural disasters and anticipates future growth to improve productive capacity and sustain long-term growth.</b>			
	Cairns Base Hospital redevelopment	Major redevelopment providing additional infrastructure and services including 168 new beds.	Increase capacity for cardiac care, day surgery, intensive care, birthing, aged care, rehabilitation, mental health and pathology services.	1–4 years
	Cairns Entertainment Precinct	Undertake planning for the proposed development of the Cairns Entertainment Precinct next to the new cruise ship terminal.	Stimulate the economy, provide jobs, promote creative industries, assist tourism including business tourism, and allow Cairns residents to enjoy diverse artistic and cultural performances.	1–4 years
	Cairns Transit Network—City Place Bus Station	Redevelop the existing Lake Street transit mall into a modern and efficient city bus station.	Improve capacity, reliability and accessibility of the bus network and create a more pedestrian and cycle-friendly environment.	1–4 years
	Wrights Creek Bridge upgrade	Widen existing bridge and approaches to provide wider traffic and cycle lanes.	Improve road safety, traffic flow and provide for cyclists.	1–4 years
	Cairns industrial estate program	Undertake preliminary planning for a Cairns regional industrial estate.	Meet expected future demand for industrial land in the region to help facilitate economic growth.	1–10 years
	Bruce Highway Cairns Southern Access Corridor (stages 1, 2 and 3)	Provide additional traffic lanes between Gordonvale and the Cairns CBD including construction of new interchanges.	Improve road safety and traffic capacity on heavily trafficked southern approach to Cairns.	1–20 years
	Bruce Highway Mulgrave River Bridge southern approach upgrade	Raise the 2.5 km southern approach to Mulgrave River Bridge at Gordonvale.	Improve traffic reliability in times of flooding.	5–10 years
	Bruce Highway realignment at Eubenangee Swamp	Realign highway at Eubenangee Swamp National Park.	Improve road safety and freight efficiency by upgrading narrow and winding sections of the highway.	11–20 years
	<b>People: Promoting regional communities as centres offering residents the full range of opportunities in life through career and education, as well as the amenities that contribute to liveability.</b>			
	Cyclone shelters	Construct multipurpose community buildings with Category 5 cyclone protection at Edmonton, Port Douglas, Weipa and Tully.	Improve access to safe and easily identified emergency shelters in the event of extreme weather conditions with community uses available at other times.	1–4 years
	Long-term housing	Construction of dwellings in Far North Queensland under the Long-Term Housing Program and under the Nation Building Social Housing Initiative in Malanda, Atherton, Mareeba, Kuranda, Mt Molloy and Yungaburra.	Increase supply of secure and affordable social housing.	1–4 years
Region wide action	Far North Queensland Greenspace Network Plan	Develop a Far North Queensland Greenspace Network Plan to secure more land for public recreation by 2020.	Protect lifestyle, environment and places to play. Guide planning and investment in greenspace to help manage growth.	1–4 years
Region wide action	Remote Indigenous housing	In partnership with Commonwealth and local governments, roll out the <i>National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing</i> .	To address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and severe housing shortages in remote Indigenous communities.	1–10 years
Region wide action	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community access	Improve access for remote Cape York communities through a program of roadworks with support for Indigenous workers to gain Certificates in Civil Construction (Road Construction and Maintenance).	Improve road access to support isolated and remote communities, enhance liveability and provide access to services. Provide training and employment for Indigenous construction workers.	1–20 years
Region wide action	Resource workforce development	Partner with resource industry and local government to assist people in areas of high unemployment to find a job in the resource sector.	Enable local people to develop skills and gain employment in the resource sector.	Ongoing
Region wide action	Indigenous participation	Facilitate greater economic participation, employment and training opportunities for Indigenous communities including implementation of the Queensland Resource Council Memorandum of Understanding and the <i>Western Cape Regional Partnership Agreement</i> .	Maximise employment opportunities for Indigenous people.	Ongoing

	Action	What	Why	When
	<b>Business: Supporting businesses to attract new investment to generate sustained employment opportunities and strengthen the economic base.</b>			
	Promoting the Gilbert River region	Work with regional economic development organisations to promote the agricultural industry and attract investment in the Gilbert River region.	Support the growth of the agricultural industry so it can remain competitive into the future.	Ongoing
Region wide action	Growing economic links with the Asia-Pacific	Continue to develop Cairns as a major business hub for the Asia-Pacific through export opportunities in industries like tropical expertise, marine, tourism, aviation, food and education.	Diversify and grow the regional economy to improve the resilience and liveability of the region.	Ongoing
Region wide action	Connecting Far North Queensland and its workforce to resource sector employment	Work with regional economic development organisations to promote the Far North region to Northern Australia and nearby international mining markets as a point for labour hire and to influence mining sector employees to relocate to Cairns.	Connect available labour to resource jobs and encourage people to move to Cairns.	Ongoing
Region wide action	Connecting businesses to Papua New Guinea mining opportunities	Assist Far North Queensland businesses to identify opportunities arising from growth in PNG-based mining.	Diversify and grow the regional economy to improve the resilience of the region.	Ongoing
Region wide action	High-speed broadband and the digital economy	Provide information to companies on new technologies and ways of doing business in a digital economy.	Improve the productivity and competitive advantage of local businesses.	Ongoing
Region wide action	Fostering the growth of tropical expertise	Foster the establishment and growth of tropical expertise industries by engaging with universities and industry networks to coordinate and promote research and development and international trade opportunities.	Diversify and grow the regional economy to improve the resilience of the region.	Ongoing
Region wide action	Investment attraction	Complement investment attraction activities with new regional website content that provides investors with information on the areas of industry growth and investment opportunity in Far North Queensland.	Diversify and grow the regional economy to improve the resilience and liveability of the region.	Ongoing
Region wide action	Tourism opportunity plans	Provide the region with support to implement the <i>Tropical North Queensland Tourism Opportunity Plan</i> and <i>Queensland's Outback, Gulf and Western Downs Tourism Authority Plan</i> .	Assist the tourism industry to grow and remain competitive into the future.	Ongoing
	<b>Partnerships: Fostering partnerships at the local, state and national levels to promote coordination and drive local leadership.</b>			
	Construct a new TAFE Trade Training Centre	Provide additional trade training facilities at the Cairns Campus of the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE.	Provide the facilities to increase skills to supply industry.	1–4 years
	Mareeba Airport redevelopment	Work with Tablelands Regional Council on the strategic redevelopment of Mareeba Airport to capitalise on opportunities in general aviation maintenance and flight training.	Work together to capitalise on the high demand for aviation training as well as attract significant industry investment to Mareeba, boosting the economy and creating local jobs.	1–4 years
	Cairns as an Australian Defence Force base	Promote Cairns as a location base for the Australian Defence Force in Northern Australia.	Diversify and grow the regional economy to improve the resilience and liveability of the region.	Ongoing
Region wide action	North West Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy	Finalise and implement the North West Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy.	Continue the strong partnership approach to the long-term planning of Far North Queensland's residential, commercial, rural and industrial water needs to achieve the best possible environmental, social and economic outcomes.	1–4 years
Region wide action	<i>Far North Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy</i>	Implement the <i>Far North Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy</i> .	Continue the strong partnership approach to the long-term planning of Far North Queensland's residential, commercial, rural and industrial water needs to achieve the best possible environmental, social and economic outcomes.	Ongoing
Region wide action	Marketing regional Queensland	Work with regional leaders to promote the benefits of living and working in Far North Queensland.	Attract residents into the region to drive growth in Far North Queensland.	Ongoing
Region wide action	<i>Far North Queensland Regional Plan</i>	Continue to implement the <i>Far North Queensland Regional Plan</i> and governance arrangements including the regional planning committee.	Provide a clear direction for delivering on the region's environmental, social and economic priorities.	Ongoing

## Community feedback

The QRS has been developed to share the benefits of growth across the state and support the economic growth and liveability of each region.

Public consultation was held from July to September 2011 to learn about the Far North Queensland community's vision and ideas for the region. Key issues raised included: diversifying the economy; positioning Cairns as a PNG—Asia-Pacific services hub; training and employment including for Indigenous Australians; improving infrastructure resilience; ease of access within the region including public transport and connections between Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands; and opportunities to be a centre for fly-in/fly-out workforces.

This document has been developed to set the course for government investment into the future and to build a shared vision and plan of action with industry, other levels of government and regional leaders.

## Building on solid foundations

It is vital that regions have the infrastructure, services and other support they need to realise the benefits of growth, while maintaining the unique characteristics and lifestyle that regional Queenslanders value about their local areas.

The Queensland Government has already undertaken a number of projects in Far North Queensland to achieve the outcomes the community wants for the region. These include:

- the redevelopment of the Cairns Cruise Terminal to provide world-class facilities to visiting cruise liners
- the redevelopment of the Port of Cairns foreshore
- construction of the purpose-built marine training college led by the Australian Marine Training Network Cairns and jointly funded by the Queensland Government, the Australian Government and Ports North
- construction of the Queensland Tropical Health Alliance building and new dental complex at James Cook University
- the cycleway from Aeroglen to Cairns
- opening Innisfail's replacement Jubilee Bridge providing access across the Johnstone River
- the Cairns Convention Centre upgrade plan
- opening the Innisfail State College and Isabella State School in Cairns
- opening the Mamu Rainforest Canopy Walkway in the Wooroonooran National Park
- sealing and extending the Karumba runway.

These projects, some completed and others ongoing, reflect the positive work already underway to build liveable strong and vibrant communities in Queensland's regions. They provide a solid platform for the proposed regional actions which will build on this work to advance regional development.



Image: Roy Cash Photography

## Jackson and Jackson Refrigeration

Jackson and Jackson Refrigeration is capitalising on its tropical expertise through a thriving refrigeration and air conditioning business. The locally owned company started in 1993 and has since expanded its operations from Cairns into Innisfail and the Atherton Tablelands.

The company developed a solid customer base servicing clients from Townsville all the way to the Torres Strait. Staff numbers have increased from 2 to 45 and the company invests significantly in employee skills and training.

The company has global ambitions and is taking advantage of the Far North's location as a gateway to the growing Asia-Pacific

region. It won a \$1.3 million contract in Pakistan to build a germination chamber as well as seed processing and photo period facilities. These items of equipment are vital to a long-term sugar cane crop improvement. Jackson and Jackson Refrigeration is building on this success and will continue to export its expertise throughout the tropics with opportunities in Iran, Guam and Fiji.

## Implementing the QRS and regional actions

The QRS statewide actions and regional actions represent existing and new actions which together will help meet the Queensland Government's commitment to building stronger, more resilient and prosperous regions. The benefits of regionalisation will be realised in the short, medium and long term.

While many actions will be led by the Queensland Government, local partnerships with business, industry and other levels of government will be critical to their success. The Queensland Government will work with these groups throughout implementation and as part of the review process to ensure actions best meet local

priorities and needs. The actions will be reviewed and adjusted as needed to take account of progress and to address any significant social or economic changes.

The Queensland Government will keep the community informed about progress in implementing both statewide and regional actions.

### Far North Queensland and Torres Strait Regional Development Committee

The Regional Development Australia committees (RDAs) are a joint Australian and Queensland Government initiative to enhance the growth and development of Queensland's regions. RDA committees champion development activities to bring

the greatest benefit to their region and provide critical advice to government on priorities for regional development.

The Far North Queensland and Torres Strait Regional Development Australia Committee provides a link between the three levels of government and builds partnerships with other regional development bodies, community and not-for-profit groups and the private sector. The committee identifies and progresses regional priorities. Areas of focus for the Queensland RDA network include economic recovery, regionalisation, developing regional workforces and capitalising on the National Broadband Network.

## A coordinated approach to planning for the region

The QRS and the actions in this document are closely connected to other plans and activities being undertaken for the region. These include:

### Far North Queensland Regional Plan

The plan identifies land to meet future growth, and enhances and protects the region's natural environment, biodiversity and natural resources. It maintains and enhances the quality of life for existing and future communities, promotes safe, efficient and effective movement of goods and people, and supports a viable and diverse economy with well-located employment opportunities and economic activity centres. For more information visit [www.dlqp.qld.gov.au/fnq](http://www.dlqp.qld.gov.au/fnq)

### Cairns Economic Future Plan 2011–2015

The plan focuses on a regional economy that is better placed to respond to challenges like the impact of the global financial crisis and natural disasters. The plan's priority is to build on existing strong industries, diversify the local economy and get the business environment right.

### Queensland Infrastructure Plan (QIP)

The QIP—one of the statewide actions of the QRS—guides planning, prioritisation and sequencing of infrastructure across the state. It outlines the infrastructure needed to support and further encourage growth across Queensland's major

regional economic zones. It is therefore strongly connected to the QRS and provides detail on the infrastructure which will help meet the outcomes for each region. Visit [www.dlqp.qld.gov.au/qip](http://www.dlqp.qld.gov.au/qip) for more information.

### Bruce Highway Upgrade Strategy (BHUS)

The BHUS—one of the statewide actions of the QRS—is a 20-year masterplan of planned and proposed upgrades to the Bruce Highway to improve safety, increase capacity and transport efficiency and to boost flood immunity and reliability. Visit [www.tmr.qld.gov.au/brucehighwayupgradestrategy](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/brucehighwayupgradestrategy) for more information.

## Skills for mining sector jobseekers

The Queensland Government has committed \$1.2 million to connect eligible Queensland jobseekers into the booming resource sector.

Special 'Resources 101' courses will be available in key regions with 500 funded training places available through TAFE Institutes in Cairns, as well as the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Whitsunday and Wide Bay Burnett.

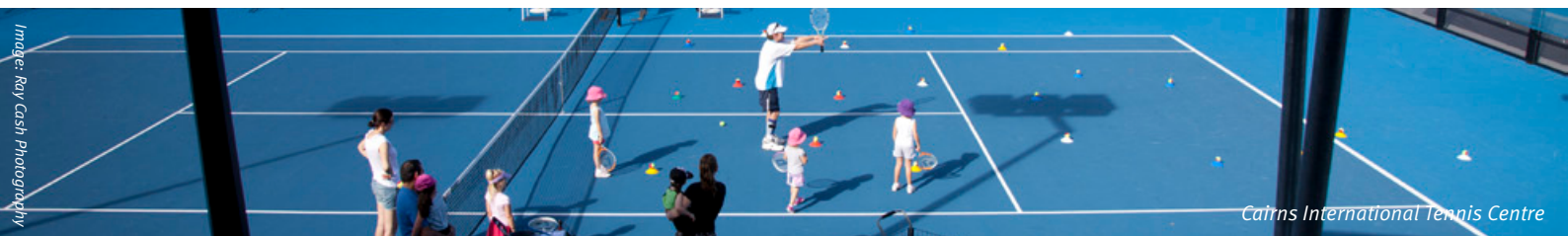
The five-week course gives jobseekers the basic skills they need to start applying for jobs in this booming industry. It includes two main elements; a safety induction designed to provide core risk and safety skills, and skills development designed to provide basic work skills.

The program has been endorsed by the Mining Industry Skills Centre as a general pre-employment skill set to support

work-ready skills for potential job candidates in the resource sector.

This initiative builds employment in the region by providing the mining industry with access to a skilled workforce.

Further, it benefits unemployed and under-employed regional Queenslanders, linking them with real jobs and making sure they can benefit from Queensland's growing economic prosperity.



Cairns International Tennis Centre