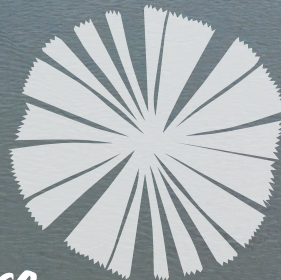




Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Advocacy Plan 2023

One Coast: Cassowary Coast

Focused on our Future





Acknowledgment of Country

Cassowary Coast Regional Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and sea on which we operate, the Mamu, Djiru, Girramay, Gulgnay, Warrgamay, Jirrbal and Bandjin Peoples. We wish to acknowledge our respect for their current and emerging leaders and those in the dreaming. We thank all First Nations people for the contributions they make in building this community.



One Coast: Cassowary Coast

We are very privileged to live in an exceptional part of Tropical North Queensland in the heart of two UNESCO World Heritage areas. Our unique environment is our launching platform to the world, and our Council has a very clear vision to create a sustainable future for our community.

As the Cassowary Coast community continues our COVID-recovery journey, Council is firmly focused on listening to our community, delivering resilient infrastructure and supporting sustainable growth.

During 2022 Council undertook an extensive Community Scorecard consultation process to understand what is important to our community and where we can improve our performance. Over 1850 community members joined the conversation sharing more than 100,000 words to guide Council with future priorities. This initiative resulted in the 2022 Community Voice Action Plan which provided Council with a roadmap to augment and inform our corporate planning framework.



The 2022 Community Voice Action Plan incorporates priority focus areas for Council including our leadership; roads, footpaths and cycleways; health community and youth services; economic development and community safety.

Council is proud to take forward our community's priorities and aspirations through our operational and strategic functions including our 2023 Advocacy Plan. We sincerely thank the community for engaging with us to ensure that we are able to work as one to realise our vision to deliver great service and value, economic growth, opportunity, prosperity and a relaxed lifestyle.

We look forward to working with all levels of governments, industry, business, and community to build resilience and support improving social, economic and environmental outcomes.



Cr Mark Nolan
Mayor
Portfolio: Planning and
Regional Development



Andrew Graffen
Chief Executive Officer



Cr Barry Barnes,
Deputy Mayor
Portfolio: Asset Sustainability



Cr Teresa Millwood
Portfolio: Waste Management
and Innovation



Cr Trudy Tschui
Portfolio: Community and
Culture



Cr Nicholas Pervan
Portfolio: Major Projects and
Organisational Structure



Cr Jeff Baines
Portfolio: Governance,
Environment and Finance



Cr Renee McLeod
Portfolio: Economic
Development and Tourism



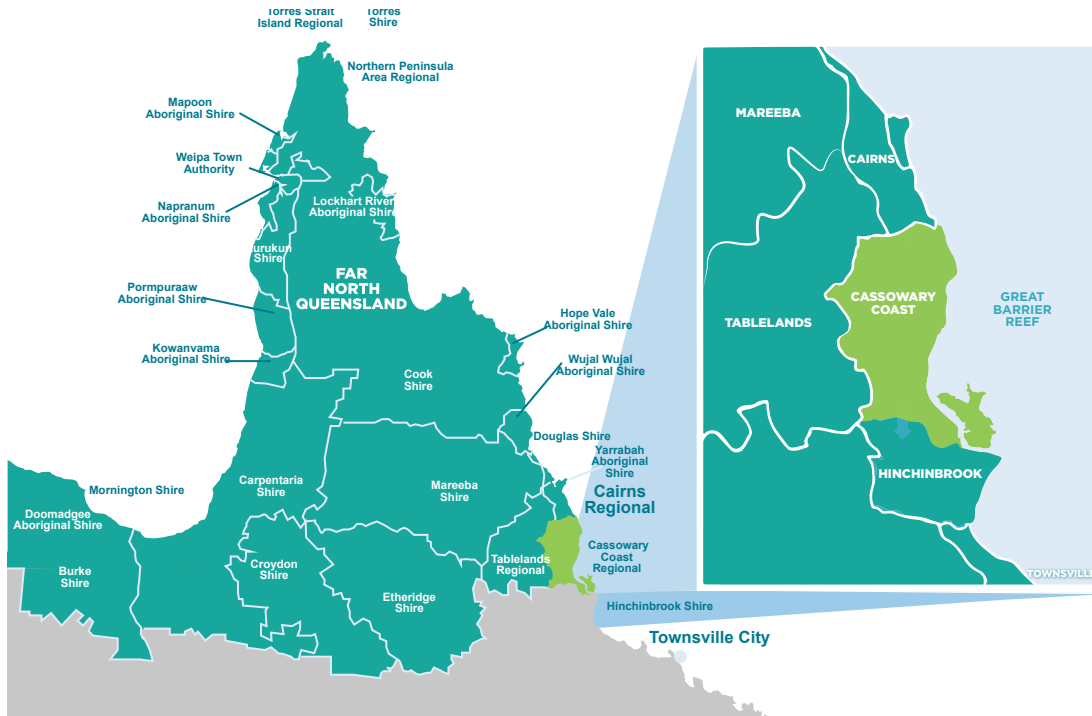


Advocacy Plan 2023

Contents

Cassowary Coast Fast Facts	8
About Us	10
Implementation of the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan)	12
Implementation of Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategies (CHAS)	14
Investment in Water and Sewerage Infrastructure Networks	16
Collaborative and Place-Based Primary Health Care Services	18
Skills and Training - "Grow Our Own Program" (Workforce Development)	20
Key Worker Affordable Housing	23
Localised Priority Implementation of the National Feral Pig Action Plan 2021-2031	24
Strategic Transport and Supply Chain Infrastructure	26
Innisfail CBD Revitalisation (Strategic Masterplan)	28
Kurrimine Beach Boat Ramp	30

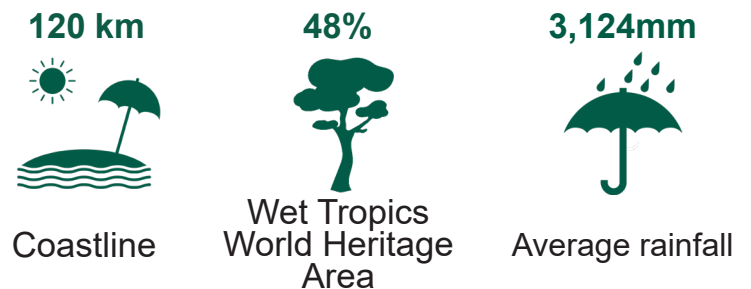
Cassowary Coast - Fast Facts



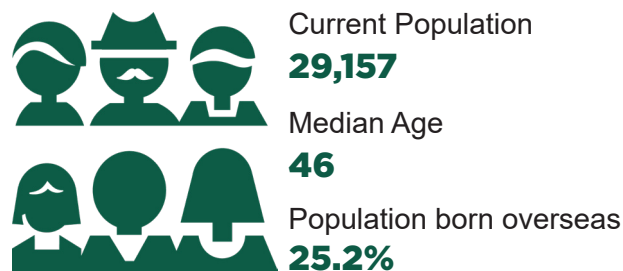
OUR REGION



OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



OUR COMMUNITY



TOP INDUSTRIES



EMPLOYMENT



GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT





About Us

The Cassowary Coast Local Government Area covers 4,688 km² and is only one of a handful of Local Governments that is uniquely positioned in the heart of the two UNESCO World Heritage areas of the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef.

Our coastal and hinterland regions are within the lands and waters of seven Traditional Owner Groups - Mamu, Djiru, Girramay, Gulgnay, Warrgamay, Jirrbal and Bandjin Peoples. In total 60% of the land area of the Cassowary Coast LGA is protected area of parks, forests and reserves.

Our Advocacy Plan highlights the opportunities to collaborate with state and federal governments, industry, business, and community to improve our quality of life and support social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Our location brings additional responsibilities and constraints when the potential impacts of climate change and protection of the world heritage environments is required and expected by community and government, especially when considering the size, demography and economic capacity of our community to deliver on these expectations.

We have an Estimated Resident Population (ERP) at 30 June 2021 of 29,525 with our population expected to increase by 0.4% p/a over 25 years compared with 1.6% p/a increase for Queensland. 11% of our ERP identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples compared with 4.6% for Queensland. We have a greater cohort of ERP aged 65+ being 22.3% when compared to 16.6% for Queensland and a lesser cohort of 59.9% of ERP aged 15-64 compared with 64.5% for Queensland.

The median total family income of \$76,700 p/a is significantly lower (37%) than that of \$105,248 p/a for Queensland, with 9.5% of the ERP being low income families compared with 6.9% for Queensland.

The lower socio-economic status of our ERP is also reflected in the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage with 44% of our ERP in the most disadvantaged quintile compared with 20% for Queensland and 0% of our ERP in the most advantaged quintile; and 16% of families with children having no parent employed compared with 11.4% for Queensland.

The Gross Regional Product in 2020-21 was \$1,582m. Our major employment by industry is Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing being 20.5% compared with 2.6% for Queensland with average weekly earnings of \$1,053 being lower than the all-industries average of \$1,200. This industry generated 2,661 jobs in 2020-21 and 36.3% of all registered businesses in our region.

Other major employing industries include Health Care and Social Assistance 11%, Retail Trade 8.6%, Education and Training 7.9%, Manufacturing 7.5%, Construction 6.6% and Accommodation and Food Services 6.3%. The dominance of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry is reflected in 20% of the workforce occupation being labourers compared with 10.1% for Queensland and 11.5% of our workforce has a professional occupation compared with 21.4% for Queensland.

The Tourism sector is an amalgam of industry sectors including retail trade and accommodation and food services; and is a major sector within the Cassowary Coast with total tourism sales of \$104.5m and value add of \$52.8m in 2020-21.

Within our region 7.7% of persons did not go to school or year 8 or below compared with 4.4% for Queensland; and 47.8% of persons completed year 11 or 12 equivalent compared with 63.6% for Queensland.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) reports on the proportion of children who are either developmentally on track, at risk or vulnerable. AEDC data for 2021 indicates that there is a high level of vulnerability in two or more of the AEDC domains of physical, social, emotional, language and communication within our region being Johnstone region at 18.3% and Cardwell region 18.5% compared with 13.2% for Queensland.

Council's leadership, through our advocacy and actions, is focused on pursuing new, innovative opportunities. We seek to leverage opportunities through strategic partnerships and collaboration between all levels of government, community, and industry and exploit our strategic advantages. We are focused on meeting the social, economic and environmental challenges of the Cassowary Coast region to provide long-term inclusive and sustainable socio-economic outcomes using a place-based, community-first approach.



Implementation of the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan)

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks closer collaboration with State and Federal governments along with the provision of direct funding to deliver priority Reef 2050 Plan Actions and accelerate the reduction of impacts from land-based activities including the addition of road sediment run-off and nutrient enrichment of groundwater and subsoils as a priority strategic action in the Reef 2050 Plan.

The 2050 Reef Plan Investment Priorities include water quality improvement through the Reef Trust Partnership. Priority D.2 Ensure future investment supports priority activities and successful implementation of the plan ...Water quality improvement – invest in projects to reduce pollutants and sediments flowing into the reef and to improve catchment health. The Plan also recognises the role that collaboration between governments and communities plays in delivering the actions.

Federal and State government investment of \$3bn needs to be supported by collaboration, rigorous science, regular monitoring and reporting. Local government is well-positioned to deliver on the outcomes sought in the Reef 2050 Plan through reducing the impacts from land-based activities including road sediment “Hot-Spot” run-off and sewerage upgrades supported by the Plan’s approach of maintaining and enhancing collaboration and effective partnerships between managers, partners and stakeholders.

These initiatives can be delivered with access to funding through the Reef Trust with current work indicating that road sediment run-off and nutrient enrichment of groundwater and subsoils from septic systems impacts on water quality on the Great Barrier Reef (see also Reef Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022 and Water Quality Protection Plan Public Lands Strategy 2009).

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is undertaking a range of land-based measures through the Unsealed Roads Improvement Plan (endorsed at the December 2022 Ordinary Meeting of Council) and sewerage infrastructure maintenance and renewal that will contribute to water quality improvement in the Great Barrier Reef. In accordance with the Principles of the Reef 2050 Plan, these measures are supported by knowledge-based decision making, adaptive management, continual improvement with accountable and transparent governance arrangements.

The Reef Plan identifies that urban land uses can be intensive sources of water pollution, but does not specifically provide for the impacts from road and drainage sediment run-off and nutrient enrichment of groundwater and subsoils as a priority strategic action to reduce impacts from land-based activities.

The Cassowary Coast Regional Council’s unsealed roads network is 525 kilometres which is a high proportion (44%) of total road network of 1202 kilometres. This imposes a greater financial impost on Cassowary Coast Regional Council, and we have a much lesser capacity to bear that cost when compared to the larger regional councils.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is an active participant in the Reef Guardian Councils program and has high level representation at this body in addition to other strategic alliances specifically targeting environmental and climate change issues.

Implementation of the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan) cont.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is seeking:

- 1) Recognition of the role of Local Governments in delivering the outcomes required from the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan through funding and collaboration, specifically through the Reef Guardian Councils program and direct interaction with Cassowary Coast Regional Council.**

- 2) The inclusion of addressing the impacts from road and drainage sediment run-off and nutrient enrichment of groundwater and subsoils as a priority strategic action in the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan to reduce impacts from land-based activities.**



Implementation of Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategies (CHAS)

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks dedicated funding for implementation of priority actions from the CHAS Implementation Plan; and state-wide investment and coordination of actions that would be of benefit to all regional councils such as coastal bathymetry (LiDAR capture), installation and monitoring of additional wave buoys and coastal monitoring (survey).

Since 2016, the State Government has funded the QCoast2100 program, assisting coastal councils to advance coastal hazard adaptation planning and prepare coastal hazard adaptation strategies. Cassowary Coast Regional Council received \$410,555 to develop our CHAS under the QCoast2100 Program and the Strategy is scheduled for completion by mid-2023 (Priority Action #33 CCRC 2022-23 Operational Plan).

The CHAS identifies locations where existing coastal facilities and assets are vulnerable. A whole-of government integrated framework for collective action to manage and adapt to threats and pressures along the coast is required. Coastal foreshore reserves are generally vested in local government who are responsible for their care, control and maintenance. The CHAS also aligns with the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan.

Dedicated funding, provision of data and in-kind expert advice is not freely available to local government to deliver actions identified in their CHAS. The State Government is better placed to coordinate state-wide initiatives that benefit multiple councils, such as coastal bathymetry (like LiDAR capture), installation and monitoring of additional wave buoys, and coastal monitoring (survey), thus allowing individual Councils to nominate their highest priorities for implementation.

Local governments can apply for funding opportunities to implement critical aspects of their local CHAS. This will include coastal management actions that reduce exposure to coastal hazards and risks to preserve Queensland's beaches and foreshores as well as sustainable recreational and tourist use of the coast by assisting in the maintenance of the recreational amenity and provision of public access to the coast. Local governments would also benefit from a state-wide investment in the coordination of initiatives that will benefit numerous Queensland coastal councils, such as coastal bathymetry, installation and monitoring of additional wave buoys, and coastal monitoring.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council's CHAS has a number of priority actions with the highest priority being the Tully Heads Revetmet Wall. This project has an estimated cost of \$2.5 million and will substantially reduce erosion and land subsidence contributing to reducing the impacts of land-based activities as per the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan. This will also contribute to building resilience and long-term sustainability and liveability through adapting and responding to coastal hazard risks and climate change.



Implementation of Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategies (CHAS) cont.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is seeking:

- 1) The Queensland Government lead the establishment of a state-wide framework for the coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Local Governments' Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategies.**

- 2) Following on from the QCoast2100 program for Local Governments to develop their Coast Hazard Adaptation Strategies, that the Queensland Government provide a funding program for Local Governments to implement priority actions from their Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategies.**

- 3) Funding to implement the Tully Heads Revetment Wall works which is the highest priority action under the Cassowary Coast Regional Council CHAS. This project has an estimated cost of \$2,500,000.**

Investment in Water and Sewerage Infrastructure Networks

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks long-term investment by State and Federal governments in critical community water and sewerage infrastructure to support Local Governments' renewal and repair programs (operational and capital expenditure).

Provision of and planning for modern and reliable sewerage and water infrastructure underpins the health and wellbeing of our community and contributes to improved economic and environmental outcomes including delivery of the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan.

Current investment in sewerage and water assets falls well short of the minimum required levels. At current renewal rates, it would take over 170 years to replace mains owned and operated by regional Queensland Councils (approximately 38% of 42,000 km of water mains and 22% of 33,500 km of sewer pipes). Average costs of service provision per connection in regional areas are higher than metropolitan areas, and regional areas lack the capacity to invest in technologies that save costs or improve services. Analysis in regional Queensland has forecast increasing failure of water mains that are approaching the end of their useful life - commencing in the 2020s and peaking in the 2040s¹. Subsidies and funding for regional water and sewerage service providers need to be reinstated to enable regional local governments, for whom full cost pricing is not a possibility, to maintain ageing assets.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council will have a forecast shortfall of \$10 million in the cumulative sewerage and water infrastructure costs just within the next 3 years.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is taking on ownership and management of the Port Hinchinbrook Sewerage Treatment Plant at Cardwell through collaborative arrangements with the State and Federal governments including compulsory acquisition of assets. However, there are immediate and ongoing financial costs which have not been adequately addressed through current arrangements.





Investment in Water and Sewerage Infrastructure Networks cont.

The township of Cardwell is currently not sewered with existing sewage treatment infrastructure consisting of on-site treatment plants (namely septic) of which many have substantial age. To address the ongoing high risk of effluent run-off and leakage into the Great Barrier Reef and health and wellbeing impacts, which this situation poses, Council is seeking to work with State and Federal governments for the provision of reticulated sewerage in Cardwell, including evaluation of options.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is seeking:

- 1) A long-term dedicated forward funding program, similar to the former Water and Sewerage Subsidy Program (WASP) and Building our Regions (BoR) for operational water and sewerage infrastructure expenses, to be established enabling local governments to better forward plan their network infrastructure and more accurately forecast their long-term financial sustainability; improve environmental and service delivery outcomes and mitigate against health risks to the community.**

- 2) Financial contributions to 100% in order to fund a resilient and modern sewerage treatment plant for Port Hinchinbrook so that there is not an additional financial impost on the Cassowary Coast community to address the situation which is a direct result of corporate/developer failures including lack of private investment in critical infrastructure.**

- 3) Financial support of \$250,000 est. to progress investigations for the provision of reticulated sewerage infrastructure in Cardwell.**

¹ Australian Water Infrastructure Audit 2019

Collaborative and Place-Based Primary Health Care Services

Current service delivery models are failing regional communities resulting in diminishing health and wellbeing outcomes and increasing burdens on hospital facilities. Gaps in critical services also have a negative impact on liveability and the ability to attract and retain families to regional and remote areas, potentially contributing to long-term economic decline within regions. Collaborative, place-based solutions for primary health care are urgently needed.

The lack of General Practitioners and poor levels of Medicare funding for other skilled health providers such as Nurse Practitioners is creating an inequitable health service across our nation and is known to lead to poorer health outcomes for people living in regional and remote communities. It has been shown that for every \$1 invested in prevention, \$14 is saved in subsequent public health interventions².

The shortage in rural General Practitioners has been a problem for some years, increasing the pressure on our hospital system. There is a need for an adequate doctor-to-patient ratios to provide the appropriate level of care that exists in metropolitan areas. A Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand survey found that 16.7% of final year medical students listed general practice as their first preference for future specialty in 2017. The same survey in 2021 found that numbers have dropped to 14.7%, the lowest rate in 10 years.

Gaps in critical services result in poorer health outcomes of the population, as well as have a negative impact on the liveability and ability to attract and retain families to regional and remote areas, potentially contributing to long-term economic decline within regions.

Cassowary Coast communities, along with many other rural and regional areas in Australia, are losing or have limited access to medical services, for example, the town of Mission Beach has not had a General Practitioner since late 2021 and other clinics have closed their books to new patients.

Within the North Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) catchment, 10 general practices (6%) have closed since early 2021, the majority citing difficulties recruiting GPs and other primary health care staff.

NQPHN through the Better Health NQ Alliance is urging Government to prioritise funding of a new primary health care solution to address the growing crisis in rural primary care workforce and primary care access in rural and remote areas of North Queensland. This provides the opportunity for regional areas to forge the way forward in primary healthcare reform by co-commissioning Local Primary Health solutions that will be demonstration sites for a national primary care funding reform in rural and regional areas.

The service model is a localised, hub and spoke approach consisting of multi-disciplinary primary care teams that are regionally managed with clinical supervision; and draw on the latest technology platforms. Funding sources are a combination of Local, State and Federal governments and private providers with the NQPHN at the centre of care coordination, design and implementation in partnership with all

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28356325/>

Collaborative and Place-Based Primary Health Care Services cont.

stakeholders (local community, clinicians, health services, all levels of government, workforce agencies and education providers).

Cassowary Coast Regional Council strongly supports the Better Health NQ proposal to deliver new place-based primary health care solutions to regional and remote areas. Council requests that State and Federal Governments support a “blended funding” model for BHNQ, providing \$1.85 million over 2 years for the project implementation and feasibility (including locations within the Cassowary Coast Local Government Area); and recurrent funding post the feasibility analysis.



Skills and Training – “Grow Our Own Program” (Workforce Development)

Skills shortages are particularly acute in local governments in rural and regional areas and State and Federal governments can support ongoing Workforce Development with a focus on “Growing Our Own” through recurrent funding programs ensuring that apprentices and trainees are an integral part of the Local Government workforce.

ABS data shows that the labour market has tightened significantly since 2021 and this generally indicates that employers will increasingly compete for workers, resulting in a greater number of occupations in shortage as employers are unable to fill advertised vacancies³.

An Australian Local Government Association Report in 2018 found that 69% of local governments were experiencing a skill shortage and skill gaps with engineers, urban and town planners, building surveyors, environmental health officers and project managers topping the list of occupations in demand⁴.

The COVID pandemic has exacerbated this with Cassowary Coast Regional Council directly experiencing this over the past 2 to 3 years. Council has had to advertise vacant positions several times to recruit appropriately qualified applicants and has also had to use consultancies and contractors. This has directly led to increased costs, increased workloads and stressors for existing staff.

‘Growing Our Own’ is more important than ever in rural and regional locations and this is supported through State and Federal programs such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW), trainee and apprentice subsidies and fee-free TAFE for priority skills.

Given our high level of socio-economic disadvantage, the Queensland Government’s allocation of \$9 million for local governments across Queensland in 2022-23 has very positive effects meaning improved workforce participation and the provision of tangible skilling and training opportunities for the more disadvantaged community members within the Cassowary Coast region.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council has a strong track record of employing apprentices and trainees and transitioning them to either external employment opportunities or to roles within Council upon successful completion of their apprenticeship or traineeship.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is seeking State and Federal governments continue to fund programs such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work First Start Funding Stream, trainee and apprentice incentives and subsidies, ensuring that there are program-specific criteria for funding allocations to regional areas which local governments can access, providing the opportunity to grow and retain our own workforce, also targeting socio-economic disadvantage within our community.

³ 2022 Skills Priority List Key Findings Report, National Skills Commission.

⁴ Local Government Workforce & Future Skills Report Australia September 2018. Australian Local Government Association.



BEDARRA

FITZROY

MINCHILLO BOOK

WILPRESTON

JCT-Ready for tomorrow

Water Services Corporation

Water Services Corporation

Water Services Corporation

Water Services Corporation

Water Services Corporation

Water Services Corporation

Water Services Corporation

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Water Services Corporation



Key Worker Affordable Housing

Cassowary Coast Local Government Area, along with other rural and regional areas, is currently experiencing a housing crisis with a rental vacancy rate of 0.8% (September 2022). A new approach is required through industry, community and government collaboration to immediately provide quality housing to support regional economic growth.

The availability, diversity and quality of housing has always been inherently linked to communities fulfilling and growing their economic and social potential. However, the emergence of regional housing shortages, rapid house price and rent rises in the past 12 months, falls in rental vacancy rates, a decline in the quantity and quality of housing stock, and a lack of new private investment and development in some regions, has created significant challenges for Queensland communities.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council has introduced measures to encourage residential investment such as the differential rating categories for non-principal place of residence and Council's Development Incentive Scheme and other Operational Plan 2022-23 measures.

Many Queensland councils are going above and beyond their roles and responsibilities and directly delivering services and housing, in order to support and retain people in their local communities. The release of the Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021–2025 and the establishment of the Housing Investment Fund are both welcome initiatives, especially the stated intent to “work with regional councils to increase and diversify the supply of housing, including opportunities for alternative government and non-government investment and incentives”.

While this action is very much supported, further work is still required to ensure the broadest range of housing issues and solutions are addressed and assessed, including ‘key worker’ housing to attract and retain professionals essential to the fabric of communities.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is currently working with the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (the Department) and regional stakeholders to move Council's social housing portfolio to other provider(s) that are appropriately resourced to deliver a holistic service to housing clients; providing greater value including wrap around case-management services that positively contribute to increased health and wellbeing for housing clients.

Council's social housing portfolio has a combination of direct council ownership and joint ownership with the Queensland Government and the value of Council's equity is an estimated \$3.4m.

This circumstance offers a unique opportunity for the State Government and Council to explore new and innovative investment models to deliver much-needed key worker housing in the Cassowary Coast region.

Through divestment of our social housing portfolio, Cassowary Coast Regional Council is seeking to enter discussions with the Queensland Government to fully explore innovative investment models by leveraging Council's equity in our social housing portfolio to deliver much-needed key-worker housing in the Cassowary Coast region.

Localised Priority Implementation of the National Feral Pig Action Plan 2021-2031

Feral pig eradication is critical to protecting key agricultural industries within the Cassowary Coast region. Feral pigs cause over \$106m damage to Australia's agriculture industry each. The greatest concentration of feral pigs is on the larger drainage basins and swamp areas of the coast and inland⁵, that is, a large proportion of Cassowary Coast agricultural land, primarily bananas and sugar cane. Priority resourcing is required to implement the National Feral Pig Action Plan.

Feral pig eradication in the Tully Valley (within the Cassowary Coast region) is critical to protecting the banana industry and preventing the spread of Panama TR4 (soil-borne fungal disease). Approximately 92% of Australian bananas are produced in Far North Queensland between Cardwell and Cairns with the total land under banana production in the Cassowary Coast Local Government Area (CCRC LGA) being 8,332 ha⁶.

Panama TR4 poses a significant threat to Queensland's banana production and the livelihoods of growers and those in the banana supply chain. The cessation of the banana industries in Queensland would cause significant economic and social disruption to the local government areas of Mareeba and Cassowary Coast where the population is dependent on agriculture and the provision of the local service industry for employment and wealth generation. The lack of employment opportunities combined with low skills levels will result in poor economic and social indicators including high unemployment and population decline⁷.

Feral pigs also cause extensive damage to cane crops with the sugar industry Gross Value Add to the Cassowary Coast region was \$346m in 2020-21, employing 1,651 people⁸.

Pig activity degrades water quality, creating erosion and further exacerbating sediment run-off into the Great Barrier Reef. Feral pigs are a threat to livestock as they can carry foot and mouth disease and African swine fever. Feral pigs are opportunistic omnivores that exploit a variety of food sources. They occupy a diverse range of habitats including semi-arid areas, forests, sub-alpine regions, tropical rainforests, floodplains and wetlands and under favourable conditions can reproduce all year.

Feral Pigs cause over \$106 million in damage each year to Australia's agricultural industry, environment and social values. They damage crops, fences, compete with livestock, act as biosecurity vectors (Panama TR4, exotic weed seeds etc), prey on native wildlife and can impact on culturally significant sites.

In 2021, an inquiry into the impact of feral deer, pigs and goats in Australia was completed by the Senate which, along with 16 other recommendations, recommended that "... as priority control programs for feral deer, pigs and goats are identified, Commonwealth, State and Territory governments should ensure that adequate long-term funding is appropriated to enable successful implementation of those programs. This will include programs developed under the National Feral Pig Action Plan and proposed National Feral Deer Action Plan" (Recommendation 15).



Localised Priority Implementation of the National Feral Pig Action Plan 2021-2031 cont.

Currently the National Feral Pig Action Plan is not resourced to complete any actions, and the National Feral Pig Coordinator, who delivers the Action Plan, is funded to the end of June 2023. The outcomes required cannot be delivered without appropriate resourcing from all levels of government. Cassowary Coast Regional Council undertakes regular activities in accordance with our Operational Plan 2022-23 and strategic commitments.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks priority funding for a coordinator to be based within the Cassowary Coast region to enable priority implementation of the National Feral Pig Action Plan 2021-2031, ensuring that there is sustained action and investment over the long term in accordance with the Plan. Council is seeking a collaborative funding model with equitable contributions from industry and state, federal and local governments for an estimated \$200,000 per annum for an initial period of 3 years with an option of a further 3 years subject to review and evaluation.

⁵ (Queensland Government, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Feral Pig Fact Sheet, 2022)

⁶ Department Agriculture and Fisheries

⁷ Acil Allen Consulting, Report to Biosecurity Qld 3 August 2018 Panama TR4 Program Review Final Report

⁸ Australian Sugar Milling Council

Strategic Transport and Supply Chain Infrastructure

Within the Cassowary Coast Local Government Area is road, rail and port infrastructure of national, state and regional significance. A “new” approach is required to link and develop strategic transport and supply chain infrastructure to deliver long-term economic benefits to the Cassowary Coast region and Far North Queensland.

Far North Queensland Ports Corporation, trading as Ports North, is a Queensland Government Owned Corporation responsible for the development and management of the declared Ports of Cairns, Cape Flattery, Karumba, Mourilyan, Skardon River, Quintell Beach, Thursday Island, Burketown and Cooktown⁹.

Located within the Cassowary Coast region, the Port of Mourilyan exports raw sugar (500,000-600,000 tpa) and molasses (324,000-659,000 tpa) from the Innisfail, Babinda, Tully and Atherton Tableland sugar growing districts. It comprises onshore sugar and molasses handling and storage facilities and a single sugar loader and associated wharf located within a sheltered natural harbour. A new state-of-the-art stockpile facility has facilitated the export of iron ore from a local mine, the first shipment of which left for Southern China for steel production in May 2016. The port also includes a livestock export facility and has the capacity to expand into new medium-bulk cargo exports¹⁰.

The Ports North Master Plan seeks to establish Mourilyan Port as the port for future growth in bulk trade including raw sugar and mineral resources. There is also an opportunity for an additional fuel import facility and low volume livestock trade to occur in the future. There is existing wharf and land capacity at Mourilyan for increased throughput of mineral resources. Further development opportunities include increased loading rates, extending the existing wharf and investigating requirements for additional berth, swing basin and channel capacity subject to vessel simulations¹¹.

Key road transport routes for the Port of Mourilyan include access to the Bruce Highway as well as the Palmerston Highway, which links the port to the Atherton Tablelands. Given the expected growth in trade volumes at the Port of Mourilyan associated with mineral resources and bulk commodities, establishing improved road transport linkages between these locations will be critical¹².

The Port of Mourilyan is not connected to the North Coast Rail Line, but there is a freight connection at Innisfail. Presently, Pacific National freight trains stop daily at Innisfail to drop off and pick up wagons/containers but there is no freight hub operation of any scale¹³.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads is undertaking an Innisfail Bypass Planning Study for the Bruce Highway (\$9m – Federal \$7.2m and State \$1.8m) as per Figure 1¹⁴. This is to identify and preserve a corridor for a future bypass as there is currently no funding available for construction.

Within the National Land Transport Network (National Land Transport Network Determination 2020) the Bruce Highway and East Coast Rail are identified. Supporting this nationally-identified infrastructure are road and port infrastructure including the Palmerston Highway, Mourilyan Port and state and local government-controlled roads which together provide an unconnected, unsafe and inefficient freight and supply chain network within the Cassowary Coast region (note that Mourilyan Port is not identified as a priority port under the Sustainable Ports Development Act 2015).

Strategic Transport and Supply Chain Infrastructure cont.

The FNQROC Jacobs Regional Roads Investment Strategy May 2021 identified strategic corridor investigations including the Palmerston Highway linking the Port of Mourilyan and Innisfail to the Tablelands and beyond as a core priority to deliver economic benefits to the region. The study recommends that an Innisfail Transport Hub/Freight Network with improved road access between the Palmerston Highway and the Port of Mourilyan, and through the township of Innisfail be included as part of the Innisfail Bypass – Plan and Preserve Corridor Project.

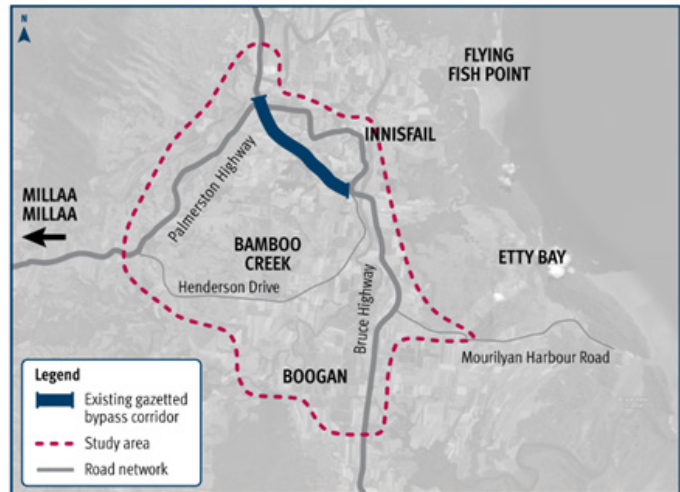


Figure 1 – Bruce Highway (Innisfail-Cairns), Innisfail Bypass, plan and preserve corridor map.

The Study also provides that development of an appropriate site for a multi-modal transport hub south of the township of Innisfail is encouraged. The planning scheme identifies that the Port of Mourilyan has the potential to play a greater role in the economic diversification of the region. The establishment of uses complementary to the activities of the Port of Mourilyan are encouraged in the industry precinct at Mourilyan and, in particular, at the Mourilyan Harbour locality.

Supporting the developing of a Transport Hub, the Cassowary Coast Regional Council Airport Masterplan Stage 2 provides for development at Mundoo Airport to become a commercial transport/freight industrial hub with a range of activities possible in the field of warehousing, repair and light industry . In addition, potential opportunities such as a FIFO hub and tourism development aligned with the freehold sale of Dunk Island in 2022 have been identified.

To maximise economic benefits that will result from the development of transport and supply chain infrastructure as outlined, development of an industrial hub is also required, and a State Development Area (SDA) could be one means to achieve this. SDAs provide efficiencies and best-practice in land use planning and management and provide the high-level government to government strategic partnership required to attract national and international investment.

Underpinning the sustainable development of transport infrastructure are the goals of the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan which ensure that there is an integrated approach to development and that the values of the Great Barrier Reef are protected.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks an expansion of the Innisfail Bypass Planning Study for the Bruce Highway, currently being undertaken by the Department of Transport and Main Roads, to include investigations for the feasibility of the development of strategic infrastructure for the establishment of an Innisfail Transport Hub and expansion opportunities for the Port of Mourilyan and Mundoo Airport and a State Development Area to fully exploit opportunities that deliver long term sustainable economic benefits to region.

⁹ Ports North Annual Report 2021-2022

¹⁰ www.portsnorth.com.au/mourilyan/ and Ports North Master Plan

¹¹ Ports North Master Plan

¹² *ibid*

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ www.tmr.qld.gov.au/projects/bruce-highway-innisfail-cairns-innisfail-bypass-plan-and-preserve-corridor

Innisfail CBD Revitalisation (Strategic Masterplan)

The Innisfail CBD is the largest retail precinct within our Local Government Area and services the Cassowary Coast and Southern Cairns regions, in addition to providing a welcoming precinct for visitors. The Innisfail Masterplan was endorsed by Council in 2018 and, with many short-term projects completed, major recommendations are currently undergoing an extensive stakeholder engagement process to provide Council with direction to inform further concept developments and detailed design to progress to staged implementation pending available funding.



The Innisfail CBD proudly embraces and celebrates the Art Deco heritage of our community and is strategically located on the junction of the North and South Johnstone Rivers; providing diverse business, shopping, leisure, and cultural connection opportunities which will be strategically exploited through the Innisfail CBD Revitalisation Project.

The Strategic Masterplan was developed in 2018 through a unique collaboration between Cassowary Coast Regional Council, James Cook University (final year Bachelor of Planning students), design consultants and community. This collaborative partnership across academia, local government, industry and community produced a masterplan that provides the ongoing redevelopment vision and strategic framework for the revitalisation of the Innisfail town centre which has been progressively implemented by Council since 2018.

Council is now at a point in the implementation phase where we are going back to our community and broader stakeholders to re-visit and refresh the Strategic Masterplan to ensure that it is reflective of the community's aspirations; and to identify and develop new investment and economic opportunities as we move into the post-COVID environment. In addition to this project, Council has committed \$150,000 in our 2022-23 operational budget to progress a new Economic Development Strategy which will "talk-to" the Innisfail CBD Strategic Masterplan.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is undertaking an extensive engagement process to ensure that there is strong community involvement that listens to our stakeholders who we are engaging with through accountable and transparent methods including the appointment of a Stakeholder Reference Group, representing the diversity and depth of our stakeholders.

The engagement phase of Innisfail CBD Revitalisation (Strategic Masterplan) Project is scheduled for completion in mid-2023 with a staged implementation to commence in 2024 and progress over the long-term as per the initial vision of the Masterplan.

The Property Council of Australia recognises that CBDs have been central to national productivity, innovation and investment and that reimaging our CBDs will be critical to Australia's economic recovery. It is with this approach that Council continues to embark on the Innisfail CBD Revitalisation Project to ensure that we create quality places and spaces attracting more people and activity, strengthening our community, the businesses that serve them and our economy as a whole, supporting Council and our community to collectively address the relative socio-economic disadvantage of our community.

Key to delivering value to our community and stakeholders, attracting investment and leveraging funding opportunities is the need for an independent and quantifiable assessment of the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits that the project will deliver and we are seeking government support to progress this aspect of the Innisfail CBD Revitalisation Project.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks a contribution of \$100,000 to conduct an assessment of the potential economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes of the Innisfail CBD Revitalisation (Strategic Masterplan), providing Innisfail the opportunity to continue the journey towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

¹⁸ Reimaging our Economic Powerhouses: How to Turn CBDs into central experience districts. Property Council of Australia.

¹⁸ Identifying and valuing the economic benefits of 20-minute neighbourhoods. Prepared for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning by the Placemaking Economics Group, RMIT University.

Kurrimine Beach Boat Ramp

Kurrimine Beach is located south-east of Innisfail within the Cassowary Coast Local Government Area and is a popular location for visitors and locals offering high value environment and recreation attributes being bounded by Kurrimine Beach and Maria Creek National Parks to the north and south and inner fringing reef of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park only 500 metres offshore. Modern and safe boat ramp facilities are urgently required to cater for increased commercial and recreational usage and to mitigate the ongoing environmental impacts of poor infrastructure.

Recreational fishing in Australia is an important leisure activity. It provides economic and social benefits to the Australian community. It's part of life for Australians of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds²².

Recreational fishers make a substantial contribution to the local economy with a total estimated expenditure on recreational fishing of \$52.4m in 2019-20 in the Wet Tropics, generating 223.5 FTE jobs²³. In 2018 an estimated 1 in 5 Australian adults when fishing at least once, with no significant change during the COVID pandemic²⁴. This is reflected in the high level of usage of the Kurrimine beach boat ramp by visitors and residents of the Cassowary Coast region.

Kurrimine Beach has private and public infrastructure to support recreational and commercial water-based activities and the boat ramp is critical public infrastructure that is failing to meet current and future needs. The lack of suitable boating infrastructure at Kurrimine Beach continues to cause economic loss to the local community in addition to the detriment to the environment. Council and the community are seeking -

- Upgrade of the existing boat launching facility including extension of the existing ramp, addition of a new lane, new heavy duty suspended boat ramp with slats and fixed pontoon/walkway
- Upgrade of the existing car park to increase and formalise the number of trailer parking spaces (preferably for 50 vehicles and trailers), included a dedicated rigging area
- Boat wash down, fishing cleaning and fish disposal facilities
- Additional sheltered tables and chairs

The existing boat ramp has severe structural and design deficiencies including a load limit of 5 tonnes, single lane access on a 1.2 metre plus tide, limited on-land parking and insufficient length. These deficiencies severely limit accessibility for recreation and commercial users, cause long-term environmental impacts and create public safety issues.

In times of low tidal conditions and over-utilisation many users are using tractors to launch and retrieve vessels sometimes up to 50 metres from land in waist-deep water. This causes environmental damage in addition to users being exposed to crocodiles, marine stingers, sharks and jellyfish. Shortness of the ramp also contributes to environmental damage with increased turbidity and erosion resulting from users attempting to drive boats onto trailers.

During periods of peak demand such as the annual Kurrimine Beach Family Fishing competition which attracts up to 1,000 entries, overutilisation of the boat ramp causes on-land and on-water congestion, with heightened frustrations and potential for serious confrontations between users.

The current land facilities have very limited parking, do not have a wash-down area, fish cleaning or fish disposal facilities, or a designated rigging area. There are also inadequate sheltered tables and chairs in the vicinity of the boat ramp which does not provide suitable amenities for day visitors to stay and recreate at Kurrimine Beach.

The current boat ramp acts as a groyne, and has contributed to coastal erosion to the north of the site near Council's caravan park. A significant amount of land within the caravan park reserve has been lost to erosion over the years and Council currently allocates about \$25,000 per annum on beach nourishment.

The Cassowary Coast Draft Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy identifies vulnerabilities and risks associated with the Kurrimine Beachfront area including the boat ramp location. Proposed Adaptation Actions include community infrastructure planning and management of park, road and utility assets. Other actions include ongoing environment management which a well-designed boat ramp can support.

The lack of suitable boating infrastructure at Kurrimine Beach continues to cause economic loss to the local community in addition to ongoing negative environmental impacts. Cassowary Coast Regional Council and the Kurrimine Beach community are committed to actively collaborating with the State to progress this matter.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council asks the Queensland Government to continue to work with Council and the community to finalise the designs and prioritise construction of the Kurrimine Beach Boat Ramp to provide safe, accessible and fit-for-purpose facilities to meet the current and growing demands of both commercial and recreational fishers and boaters; providing social, economic and environmental benefits to the community.

²²<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/fisheries/recreational>

²³ Economic Contribution of Recreational Fishing by Queenslanders to Queensland. A Report for Fisheries Queensland. 30 June 2021. Prepared by BDO.

²⁴National Social and Economic Survey of Recreational Fishers 2018-2021. Fisheries Research & Development Corporation.






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