



Cassowary Coast Regional Council
Advocacy Plan 2024-2025



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.



Advocacy Plan 2024-2025

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Cassowary Coast: The most liveable tropical community

We are very privileged to live in an exceptional part of Tropical North Queensland in the heart of two 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.

In 2022 and 2024, Council conducted Community Scorecards with extensive consultation, engaging over 4,150 community members to provide feedback and ideas on future priorities. The insights gathered from these consultations are reflected through the Community Scorecards and is reflected in Council's Advocacy Priorities.

Council is proud to take forward our community's priorities and aspirations through our operational and strategic functions including our 2024-2025 Advocacy Plan. We sincerely thank the community for engaging with us to ensure that we are able to work together to realise our vision through to an integration of environmental stewardship, social advancement and economic prosperity.

We will continually seek to work with all levels of governments, industry, business, and community to build resilience and support improving social, economic and environmental outcomes to meet the needs of current and future generations.



Cr Teresa Millwood
Mayor
Portfolio: Advocacy



Andrew Graffen
Chief Executive Officer



Cr Nicholas Pervan
Deputy Mayor
Portfolio: Infrastructure Services



Cr Ellen Jessop
Portfolio: Waste and Resource Recovery



Cr Trudy Tschui
Portfolio: Community, Culture and Liveability



Cr Chris Littlemore
Portfolio: Water and Wastewater



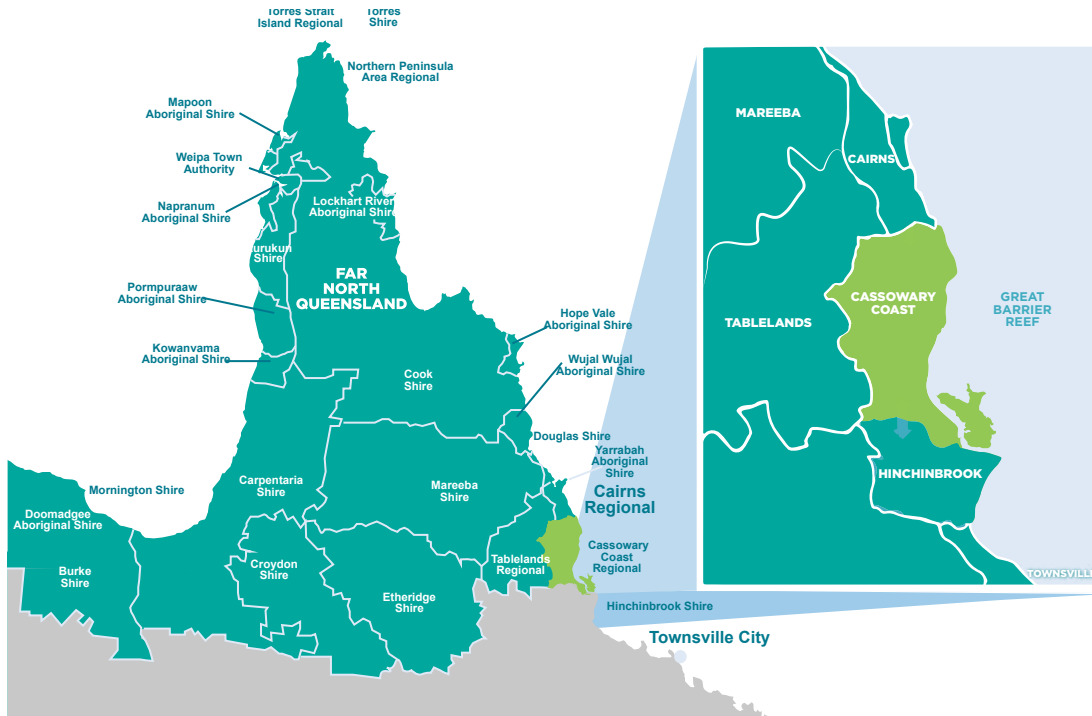
Cr Jeff Baines
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Cr Renee McLeod
Portfolio: Economic Development and Tourism



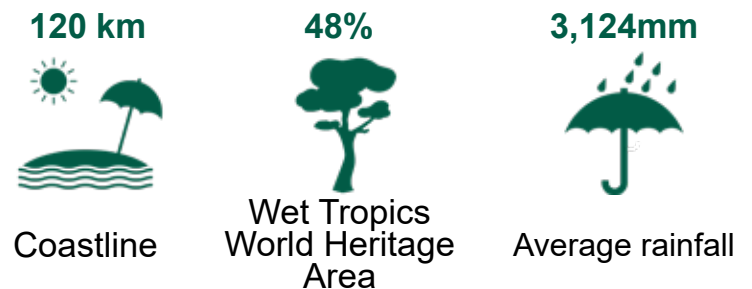
Cassowary Coast - Fast Facts



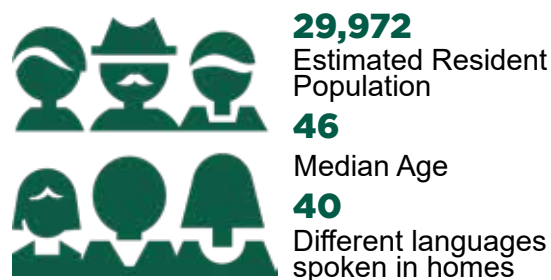
OUR REGION



OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



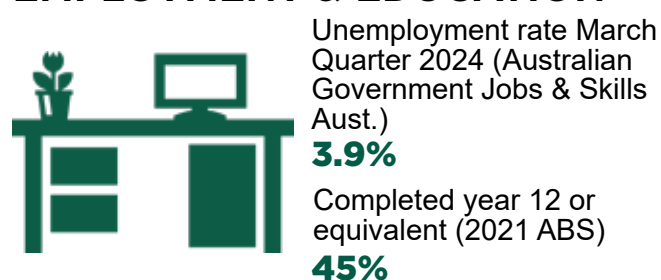
OUR COMMUNITY



TOP INDUSTRIES



EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION



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 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 2023 of 29,972 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. We have a diverse population with over 40 languages other than English spoken at home.

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 was \$1,95 Bn (2023 NIEIR) 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 11.7%, Retail Trade 9.1%, Education and Training 8.4% and Manufacturing 8.0%. 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.



Highlights of Council's Successful Advocacy Outcomes (2023 and 2024)

The following outcomes highlight the success of Council's advocacy in 2023 and 2024, made possible with support from the State and Commonwealth Governments and the Cassowary Coast community.

Port Hinchinbrook Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP) \$7 million funding shortfall

In August 2024, the Queensland Government committed \$7 million to cover a funding shortfall for the Port Hinchinbrook STP, complementing the \$12.3 million already allocated by State and Commonwealth Governments.

Primary Health Care

The Cardwell Family Practice, threatened with closure in August 2023, remained open due to intervention from all levels of government, including Council. In November 2023, the Federal Minister for Health announced that one of the first sites for innovative and localised interventions to address the health needs of Australians in Thin Markets will be within the Cassowary Coast. This will provide direct service delivery improvements for Cardwell and Mission Beach.

Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (CHAS) Funding and Implementation

The Queensland Government has provided \$300,000 for Beach Nourishment Works at South Mission Beach and Cardwell under the CHAS program to address the long-term impacts of erosion.

Cassowary Coast University Centre

In late 2023, the Vocational Partnerships Group and Cassowary Coast Regional Council established a Regional University Hub (RUSH) in Innisfail. The Centre started operations in August 2024, following successful Federal funding.

Mission Beach Town Centre Revitalisation

The Federal Government has provided \$7.9 million for the completion of the Mission Beach Town Centre Revitalisation project. This is in addition to funding provided by the Queensland Government and funding applied from Council's own sources.

Kurrimine Beach Boat Ramp Funding

In May 2023 the Queensland Government announced an upgrade to the Kurrimine Beach Boat Ramp with construction scheduled to commence in March 2025 and be completed by September 2025.

Improving resilience of Unsealed Road Network (Implementation of the Reef 2050 Plan)

Cassowary Coast Regional Council participated in the Cleaner Road Runoff Project which was delivered through the Local Government Association of Queensland and is part of the Reef Guardian Councils Rescue Plan funded by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. Grandadilla Road, El Arish was selected to review stormwater management practices on rural (unsealed) roads, stormwater drain design and road surface treatments to reduce sediment loss.

Cardwell Tropical Mountain Bike Trails Project

In July 2024 the Queensland Government committed \$150,000 to the Cardwell Tropical Mountain Bike Trails Project to support increased participation in mountain biking and hiking activities. This builds on completion of the Business Case for the \$13 million project and the funding support from the Cardwell community and the Queensland Government. Council is currently preparing a funding application for Stage 3 Due Diligence (est. \$2.5 million).

Resilient Water Infrastructure – Cassowary Coast Leak Reduction Project

In September 2024, Cassowary Coast Regional Council was awarded \$8 million through a partnership between the Queensland and Australian Governments supplemented by Council's own funds of \$978,000 for the Cassowary Coast Leak Reduction Project. This initiative will involve upgrading water mains by replacing sections of ageing pipelines across regional towns and installing infrastructure to detect and manage future leaks. The project aims to achieve substantial water savings of approximately 588 megalitres per annum.



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.

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 which was endorsed at the Local Government Meeting on 25 May 2023.

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.

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.

The township of Cardwell is currently not seweraged 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 support of \$250,000 (estimated) to progress investigations for the provision of reticulated sewerage infrastructure in Cardwell.**

¹ Australian Water Infrastructure Audit 2019



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 inland², 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 ha³.

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 decline⁴.

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 people⁵.

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).



Currently, the National Feral Pig Action Plan is not resourced to complete any actions and the National Feral Pig Coordinator, who delivered the Action Plan, was funded only until the end of June 2023. The outcomes cannot be delivered without appropriate resourcing from all levels of government and industry. Cassowary Coast Regional Council undertakes regular activities in accordance with our operational and strategic commitments. Council has strongly demonstrated our commitment to delivering on the National Feral Pig Action Plan with the allocation of \$130,000 in the 2024-2025 operational budget. Council has recently appointed a part-time coordinator (0.5 FTE) for a 4 year term.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks priority funding for a full-time 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 for a further 3 years subject to review and evaluation.

² (Queensland Government, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Feral Pig Fact Sheet, 2022)

³ Department Agriculture and Fisheries

⁴ Acil Allen Consulting, Report to Biosecurity Qld 3 August 2018 Panama TR4 Program Review Final Report

⁵ Australian Sugar Milling Council

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 vacancies at 2022⁶.

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 demand⁷.

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.

² 2022 Skills Priority List Key Findings Report, National Skills Commission.

³ Local Government Workforce & Future Skills Report Australia September 2018. Australian Local Government Association.



Waste Management, Kerbside Collection

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks support for the implementation of a co-mingled kerbside recycling collection service aimed at significantly reducing landfill waste and aligning with Queensland's waste management objectives

Council is committed to aligning our waste management practices with the Queensland Government's Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy including 2050 Waste Reduction Targets, and the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011.

Council aims to promote waste avoidance, resource recovery, and the transition to a circular economy across our operations and with business, industry, and community. In accordance with the Queensland Government's policy and legislative settings and Council's Waste Management Framework we are focused on reducing waste generation, increasing recycling rates, and minimising environmental impacts within our World Heritage environments through shared responsibility and sustainable practices.

Our region currently faces challenges in waste management with high transportation costs, limited access to recycling facilities and remanufacturing centres, and the socio-economic disadvantage of large sections of our community; all of which are barriers to effective resource recovery.

In response, Council aims to transition our community from traditional waste collection methods to a focus on recycling through the new Kerbside Collection contract which introduces kerbside recycling in February 2025. This strategic shift is crucial for improving recycling rates and diverting waste from landfill, thereby reducing environmental and social impacts.



The decision not to apply for past grant funding such as Local Government Levy Ready Grant Program, Regional and Remote Recycling Modernisation Fund and the Regional Recycling Transport Assistance Package reflects a practical assessment of our capabilities and readiness to utilise such funds effectively for waste management initiatives at the times when the funding rounds were open.

Council is focusing on building infrastructure and operational systems in partnership with our kerbside collection service provider, JJ Richards. This collaborative effort encompasses waste collection logistics, community education programs, and sustainable disposal methods, all aligned with Queensland Government strategies.

Council is seeking financial support to sustain and expand our waste management initiatives which will enable us to fulfill our commitment to environmental sustainability and resource efficiency while advancing towards a zero-waste society in Queensland.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council requests support in implementing a co-mingled kerbside recycling collection service across our region. This initiative, costing \$933,820 excluding GST, includes the rollout of yellow lid co-mingled recycling bins and a comprehensive 24-month education program. By investing in these efforts, Council aims to achieve significant waste diversion from landfill, contributing towards Queensland's 2050 targets of a 25% reduction in household waste, 90% waste recovery, and 75% recycling rates.



Essential 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 0.5% (October 2023). As identified in the Cassowary Coast Regional Council Local Housing Action Plan 2024-2029, 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 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 'essential' housing⁸ to attract and retain professionals essential to the fabric of communities.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is currently working with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning and Public Works (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 essential housing in the Cassowary Coast region.

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

⁸ Such as Healthcare, Education, Emergency Services and Public Sector.



Cyclone Reinsurance Pool and Insurance Affordability for Households and Small Businesses

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks the claims period for cyclone and cyclone-related flood damage arising during a cyclone event which lasts from the time a cyclone begins until after the cyclone ends (the Cyclone Event Period) to be increased from 48 hours to 168 hours (7 days), and consideration of a range of other factors to improve the affordability of insurance premiums for households and small businesses.

The Australian Government's Cyclone Reinsurance Pool commenced on 1 July 2022 and is administered through the Australian Reinsurance Pool Corporation. The Cyclone Pool is designed to make property insurance more affordable and accessible for households and small businesses by reducing the cost of reinsurance (which is a significant cost) and is backed by annually reinstated \$10 billion Federal Government Guarantee.

The Cyclone Pool covers home strata and small business policies and includes –

- *residential home and contents, including landlord insurance and farm residential cover;*
- *residential strata, including mixed-use strata schemes (where 50 per cent or more of floor space is used mainly for residential purposes); and*
- *commercial property policies with \$5 million or less total sum insured across risks covered by the pool (property, contents, and business interruption)⁹.*

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) monitors prices, costs and profits of relevant insurance cover to evaluate the impact of the Cyclone Pool for households and small businesses over a 5 year period. The ACCC report for 2022-2023 found that *policyholders in northern Australia are paying, on average, substantially more for their home insurance compared to the rest of Australia¹⁰*. Insurance prices in northern Australia remain high and increased in 2022–23, but by less than in the rest of Australia. At the time of the issue of this report insurers were still joining the Cyclone Pool so the impacts of the Pool would not be fully known until subsequent reporting periods.

Severe Tropical Cyclone Jasper (STC Jasper) and the extended period of record rainfall that followed impacted areas from Cape York to Townsville in December 2023. *The Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) reported staggering 7-day rainfall totals, with some areas recording over 2,000 mm (78.7 inches) of rain and the Insurance Council of Australia declared the event an Insurance Catastrophe¹¹*. The cyclone declaration was made by the BoM on 10 December 2023 at 4.00pm AEST and the Cyclone Event ended on 14 December 2023 at 12.00am AEST with the claims period for the Cyclone Event ending on 16 December 2023 at 12.00am AEST¹². The highest record 24-hour totals were recorded on the morning of the 18 December¹³ which was well outside the declared Cyclone Pool Event dates with the current legislated 48 hour period.

The extension of the Cyclone Event Period from 48 to 168 hours would be in line with standard reinsurance contracts and, in the case of STC Jasper, would make the scheme more fit for purpose and likely contribute to improving the affordability of insurance premiums for households and small businesses.

Reduction in duties and levies on insurance premiums also has the potential to increase the affordability of insurance premiums. *In Queensland the addition of GST and stamp duties adds 19.9% to the base premium for a household policy. Having phased out insurance duties in 2016, consumers in the ACT are in a markedly better off position with only the GST charged on premiums*¹⁴.

Incentives for policy-holders to mitigate insured risks (buildings and contents) can also add to enhanced resilience and potential premium reductions. For example, extension of the eligibility criteria for the Household Resilience Program¹⁵ has the potential to provide a wider range of opportunities for households and businesses to participate in this program and deliver long term benefits to the community.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is seeking:

1. The claims period for cyclone and cyclone-related flood damage arising during a cyclone event which lasts from the time a cyclone begins until after the cyclone ends (the Cyclone Event Period) to be increased from 48 hours to 168 hours (7 days) in line with standard reinsurance contracts.
2. Reduction in duties and levies on insurance premiums to increase the affordability of insurance premiums for households and small businesses.
3. Incentives for policy-holders to mitigate insured risks (buildings and contents) such as an extension of the eligibility criteria for the Household Resilience Program.



⁹ <https://arpc.gov.au/reinsurance-pools/cyclone/>

¹⁰ Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Insurance Monitoring. Second Report December 2023.

¹¹ <https://www.reinsurancene.ws/cyclone-jasper-sparks-australian-floods-expected-losses-in-the-hundreds-of-millions-of-aud-usd-aon/>

¹² <https://arpc.gov.au/reinsurance-pools/cyclone/declarations/#declarations>

¹³ Severe Tropical Cyclone Jasper (02U). The Bureau of Meteorology. 2-17 December 2023 Vikash Prasad. Tropical Cyclone Environmental Prediction Services.

¹⁴ The Impact of Government Duties on Household Insurance. Insurance Council of Australia. November 2019.

¹⁵ <https://www.qld.gov.au/housing/buying-owning-home/financial-help-concessions/household-resilience-program/about-household-resilience-program>

Community Safety Funding (Criminal Proceeds Confiscation)

The Community Safety Plan for Queensland recognises that the best way to keep Queensland communities safe is by intervening early and preventing crime in the first place¹⁶. Community Safety is a basic tennent underpinning livable and resilient communities as articulated through the Cassowary Coast Community Scorecard 2024 which had engagement of over 2,300 community members and has Safety and Crime Prevention amongst the Top 10 community priorities.

Council asks the Queensland Government to establish a funding program (which Local Government is eligible to make application to) to be drawn from Criminal Proceeds Confiscation to fund initiatives that prevent or minimise criminal activity, or support the victims of crime or community safety.

The Queensland Government has ongoing budgetary and policy initiatives that are focused on keeping communities safe including additional policing resources, home and vehicle security, youth crime focus and responding to victims of crime. This initiative would provide an additional avenue for local governments, QPS and community to collaborate to build collaborative, place-based solutions in response to the public safety issues that the community considers a priority.

Recorded offences against persons and property in Queensland have increased in 2021-22 when compared with 2020-21. Offences against the person recorded a 46.3% increase and offences against property recorded a 12.9% increase (QGSO).

Western Australia Department of Justice delivers a Criminal Property Confiscation Grants Program with a grant maximum of \$200,000 per project with matching contributions from applicants.

The program objectives are to fund projects and new initiatives that are designed to prevent or reduce drug related criminal activity and the abuse of prohibited drugs; implement services and other assistance to victims of crime; aid law enforcement through the implementation of community safety and crime prevention initiatives.

In July 2022, the Western Austalian Program awarded 27 applications to receive funding of \$983,045 and included delivery of outreach services, delivery of activities such as public art and community gardens, direct intervention for victims of domestic violence, and direct psychological support for families and bereaved impacted by homicide.

Council asks the Queensland Government to establish a funding program (which Local Government is eligible to make application to) to be drawn from Criminal Proceeds Confiscation to fund initiatives that prevent or minimise criminal activity, or support the victims of crime or community safety.

¹⁶Community Safety Plan for Queensland, Queensland Government ⁵ Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.
Cassowary Coast Regional Council Advocacy Plan 2024-2025



Resilient Road Infrastructure (Unsealed Roads)

Unsealed roads play a crucial role in the infrastructure of Cassowary Coast Regional Council, comprising over 44% of the road network spanning 527 kilometres. These roads are vital for connecting communities and facilitating the region's predominant agricultural industries, including sugar cane, banana, and cattle production. However, maintaining these roads to a satisfactory standard poses significant challenges, exacerbated by the region's high annual rainfall exceeding 3 metres. As climate change intensifies, these challenges are projected to escalate, demanding innovative approaches to ensure road resilience and sustainability.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council recognises the imperative to enhance the resilience of our unsealed road network in the face of escalating climate risks and the need to provide value for money infrastructure for our community. (Council's 2024-25 Operational Budget provides for \$3.2m being 20% of road network maintenance.)

The development and adoption of the Cassowary Coast Regional Council Unsealed Roads Improvement Plan in late 2022 underscores Council's commitment to integrating proactive strategies into core operations. This plan not only aims to mitigate climate change impacts but also seeks to optimise road service levels efficiently and cost-effectively.

The agricultural sector, a cornerstone of the region's economy, relies heavily on unsealed roads for transporting produce. Ensuring safe and reliable access is paramount for the sector's sustainability and growth. Moreover, the environmental impact of road runoff on the Great Barrier Reef necessitates a strategic approach that includes advanced computer modelling and environmentally sustainable materials. By focusing on innovative and emergent technologies, such as recycled materials and enhanced assessment methodologies, Council aims to reduce sediment runoff and deliver improved environmental outcomes.

Collaboration with other local governments and government agencies, including Transport and Main Roads, is pivotal in testing and validating new technologies across diverse geographic and demographic landscapes through the industry-accepted Transport Infrastructure Product Evaluation Scheme (TIPES). By sharing knowledge and resources and evaluation through TIPES, Council aims to maximise the benefits of these innovations for broader communities to support socio-economic and environmental resilience.

Through advocating for this partnership and evaluation approach, Council aims to foster a proactive approach to infrastructure management that not only meets current needs but also anticipates and adapts to future challenges posed by climate change. Through shared commitment and collaborative innovation, Council and our partners can pave the way for resilient, safe, and sustainable unsealed roads that serve as a cornerstone of community prosperity and environmental stewardship in regional and remote communities.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks a collaborative partnership with the Queensland Government and other local governments to bolster the resilience of its unsealed roads. This partnership seeks to:

- Assess and trial best practice, innovative, and emergent treatments and maintenance technologies for unsealed roads through the Transport Infrastructure Product Evaluation Scheme and taking into account each region's unique characteristics.
- Deliver value for money by optimising operational costs while ensuring the reliability and safety of the road networks.
- Provide socio-economic benefits by supporting regional development through agricultural productivity and community connectivity.
- Promote environmental sustainability through reduced sediment runoff and enhanced protection of the Great Barrier Reef.



¹⁷ <https://www.arrb.com.au/tipes>

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 Cooktown¹⁸.

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 exports¹⁹.

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 simulations²⁰.

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 critical²¹.

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 scale²¹.

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 1²². 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.

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 Priority Development Area (PDA) is a means to achieve this. PDAs 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.

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



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 Priority Development Area to fully exploit opportunities that deliver long term sustainable economic benefits to region.

¹⁸ Ports North Annual Report 2021-2022

¹⁹ www.portsnorth.com.au/mourilyan/ and Ports North Master Plan

²⁰ Ports North Master Plan

²¹ Ibid

²² www.tmr.qld.gov.au/projects/bruce-highway-innisfail-cairns-innisfail-bypass-plan-and-preserve-corridor

Innisfail CBD Revitalisation (Strategic Masterplan Implementation)

The Innisfail CBD proudly embraces and celebrates First Nations' culture and 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 have gone 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 endorsed a new Economic Development Strategy which "talks-to" the Innisfail CBD Strategic Masterplan.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council undertook an extensive engagement process and continue to engage 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 was completed in mid-2023 with a staged implementation endorsed at the Local Government Meeting of 26 October 2023 and commenced in 2024. This will progress over the long-term as per the initial vision of the Masterplan.

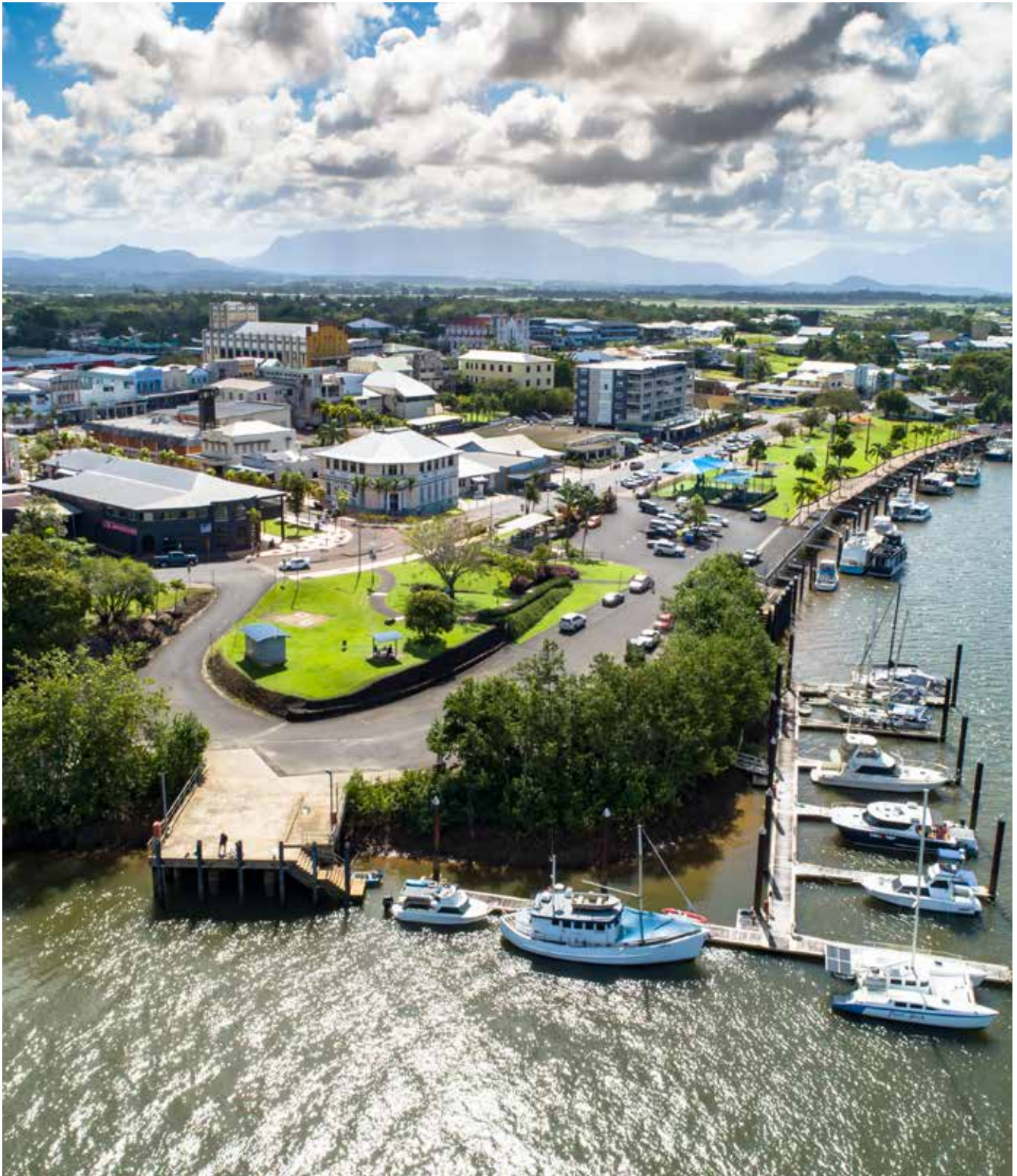
The Property Council of Australia recognises that CBDs have been central to national productivity, innovation and investment and that reimaging our CBDs will be critical to Australia's economic recovery. It is with this approach that Council continues to embark on the Innisfail CBD Revitalisation Project 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.

²³ Reimaging our Economic Powerhouses: How to Turn CBDs into central experience districts. Property Council of Australia.

²⁴ 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.

Cassowary Coast Regional Council seeks a contribution of \$200,000 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. This will position Council to be “shovel-ready” to apply for State and Federal Funding Programs as opportunities arise with the addition of a robust business case to support staged implementation, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the Cassowary Coast region.



APPENDIX 1: About Our Advocacy

Cassowary Coast Regional Council Advocacy

Council's advocacy is a vital function that bridges the gap between our community and other levels of government. By engaging with the community, adhering to governance and compliance frameworks, and strategically advocating for local needs, Cassowary Coast Regional Council plays a crucial role in ensuring that local priorities are recognised and supported at state and federal levels. This advocacy ensures that the unique needs of our community are addressed, contributing to sustainable, inclusive, and effective local governance and strengthening communities.

1. Three Levels of Government and Their Distinct Roles

Council's advocacy is strategically focused in accordance with the distinct roles of each level of government and will, more often than not, involve collaboration between the differing levels of government and community stakeholders including industry.

Federal Government Responsibilities:

- **Infrastructure:** Manages large-scale projects like national highways and infrastructure of national significance, ensuring connectivity and economic development at a macro level.
- **Health and Social Services:** Oversees the national health system, including Medicare and public health initiatives, affecting how state and local health services are structured and funded.
- **Defence and Security:** Responsible for national defence, border security, and related policy areas, which have indirect implications for local emergency services and community safety.
- **Economic Management:** Controls major economic levers, including income tax, GST, and trade policies that influence local economies indirectly.

State Government Responsibilities:

- **Education and Healthcare:** Directly manages schools and hospitals, which are critical services for local communities. Local governments often advocate for more state resources in these areas to address local needs.
- **Transport and Infrastructure:** Oversees state-controlled roads, rail networks, and housing, areas where local councils frequently seek collaboration for improvements.
- **Law Enforcement and Justice:** State governments are responsible for policing, justice, and corrective services, which directly impact community safety and local crime prevention strategies.

Local Government Responsibilities:

- **Core Services:** Provides essential services like waste management, water supply, sewerage, and maintenance of local roads, footpaths, and cycleways, which directly impact daily life in communities.
- **Community Facilities and Spaces:** Manages libraries, recreation facilities, open spaces, and community halls that are vital for local engagement, social cohesion, and community wellbeing.
- **Local Laws and Regulation:** Enforces local regulations, including those related to animal management, noise control, and public health, tailored to the specific needs and preferences of the community.
- **Advocacy for Community Priorities:** Local governments act as the voice of the community, advocating for local priorities to higher levels of government.

2. Council Governance, Planning and Sustainability Framework

Local councils are governed by a range of planning and strategic documents that guide their operations and advocacy efforts:

- **5-Year Corporate Plan:** Sets the strategic direction for the council, reflecting the community's long-term vision and aspirations.
- **Annual Operational Plan:** Lays out specific actions and projects to be undertaken within a financial year, directly aligning with the strategic goals set in the corporate plan.
- **Long Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan:** Ensure sustainable financial management and strategic upkeep of council assets, crucial for long-term service delivery and infrastructure maintenance.
- **Risk Management Framework:** Helps identify, assess, and manage risks to council operations, including those related to advocacy efforts and external engagements.
- **Annual Operational and Capital Budgets:**
 - The Annual Capital Budget focuses on funding for long-term investments and infrastructure projects. This budget outlines expenditures on assets and projects that have a useful life extending beyond one year and typically involve significant costs.
 - The Annual Operational Budget is a crucial financial document for local governments, detailing the allocation of resources required to support day-to-day operations and deliver essential services within a fiscal year. This budget encompasses the ongoing expenses of running the council, including salaries, utilities, maintenance costs, and operational supplies.
- A broad range of other strategic and operational policies, plans and strategies.

3. Legislation and Compliance Frameworks

Local governments must navigate a complex legal environment that governs their operations and advocacy roles:

- **Local Government Act and Regulation:** Establish the powers, responsibilities, and governance requirements of local councils, providing the legal framework for advocacy actions.
- **Local Government Sustainability Framework:** Guides councils in managing resources sustainably, including financial, social, and environmental considerations.
- **Acts and Compliance Requirements:** Councils must also comply with legislation that affects their operations, such as Environmental Protection Act 1994, Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995, Land Act 1994, Local Government Electoral Act 2011, Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2009, A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999, Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012, Human Rights Act 2009, Right to Information Act 2009, Work Health and Safety Act 2011, Industrial Relations Act 2016, Information Privacy Act 2009, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 and the Native Title Act 1993, amongst many others.

4. Community Engagement

Effective advocacy is grounded in robust community engagement, ensuring that the council accurately represents the community's needs and priorities:

- **Community Scorecard and Surveys:** Tools like community scorecards gather direct feedback from residents on council performance and local issues, informing advocacy priorities.
- **Stakeholder Engagement (e.g., YourSay):** Platforms that involve citizens in decision-making processes, such as public consultations, forums, and online feedback mechanisms.
- **Councillors:** Councillors play a key role in engaging with residents, addressing concerns, and bringing local issues to the council's attention.
- **Customer Service:** Customer service teams handle feedback, complaints, and service requests from the public which also highlights community issues and areas of concern.

5. Advocacy: Bridging Local and Higher Government Levels

Key Elements of Local Government Advocacy:

- **Influence on Policy and Funding:** Councils advocate for local needs by engaging with state and federal policymakers, highlighting the unique challenges faced by their communities. This can include advocating for funding, legislative changes, or policy adjustments that align with local priorities.
- **Building Strategic Partnerships:** Successful advocacy often involves building partnerships with other councils, regional bodies, non-governmental organisations, industry and representative organisations and the private sector to amplify the community's voice. Cassowary Coast Regional Council is an active participant and contributor to organisations and forums such as LGAQ, FNQROC, RDA, Reef Guardian Councils, Advance Cairns and TTNQ¹ at operational and strategic levels from both officers and councillors.
- **Navigating External Legislation and Strategies:** Advocacy is also about ensuring that state and federal policies, such as those related to environmental protection or economic development, reflect the local context and do not impose undue burdens on the community.

Examples of Advocacy in Action:

- **Securing Funding for Local Projects:** For instance, a council may advocate for state or federal grants to support local infrastructure projects like upgrading sewerage treatment plants or replacing street lighting such as Port Hinchinbrook Normalisation including the replacement of the sewerage treatment plant.
- **Policy Change for Local Benefit:** Advocacy efforts might focus on changing state regulations that impact local businesses or securing exemptions where local circumstances differ significantly from broader state or national conditions.
- **Community Engagement to Strengthen Advocacy:** Using community engagement data and outcomes, councils can present compelling cases to higher governments, backed by evidence of local support and need, to push for action on specific issues. Council's bi-annual Community Scorecard has played an important role in articulating community priorities which Council has successfully actioned.

Figure 1 shows a broad approach to Local Government Advocacy in Action with examples of some of the areas where advocacy is undertaken .

¹ Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC), Regional Development Australia Tropical North (RDATN), Reef Guardian Councils, Advance Cairns and Tourism Tropical North Queensland.

Figure 1: Local Government Advocacy in Action






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