1. Reasons, Objective, Background and Context

1.1 Reasons for Plan
The City of Townsville and the adjoining City of Thuringowa have a combined population of 165,000. Together, they constitute the economic hub and the main port of the dynamic North Queensland region. Since Townsville’s central area and its port are both vital for the future progress of this important area, it is essential that their efficiency and amenity are actively promoted.

Townsville’s central business area and its port lie little more than a kilometre from one another and, along the interface between the two, strong economic growth and the attractiveness of near-city settings with marine access and ocean views, are leading to pressure for construction of economic infrastructure and other industrial, commercial and residential developments.

Furthermore, certain projects which are being planned to improve the efficiency of transport and land use at Townsville’s port would affect industry in the vicinity of the port. A need exists to highlight what effects such projects would have on industry and how any adverse effects might be overcome.

An opportunity exists to guide the development of this interface area during the forthcoming decade so that positive synergies are maximised, negative outcomes minimised and the quality of life of residents and workers improved.

1.2 Objective of Plan
The objective of the Townsville City-Port Strategic Plan is to provide a shared vision which decision makers from responsible agencies could use to guide development so as to achieve an effective and sustainable interface between Townsville’s port area and the adjacent city area. In this way, the port’s operations and efficiencies would be protected and enhanced while the City’s urban amenity and functionality would be improved.

It should be noted that this plan is intended to draw attention to challenges and set goals rather than to define the details of future development. It has no statutory standing nor does it have explicit government endorsement. It is conceptual only, as are the individual projects listed and their graphic representations. The plan is intended to highlight what is achievable in Townsville’s city-port interface area, to outline conflicts that exist and others that could arise, to suggest one option for the scheduling of projects to overcome these conflicts and to present these concepts in as concise a manner as possible.

1.3 Previous Initiatives
The Townsville Port Authority and the Townsville City Council have both recognised the need for a strategy to guide development along the city-port interface. In May 2005, the Port Authority produced the Townsville Waterways Redevelopment Project, a plan “to ensure the security of current and future port activities.” In March 2006, Council produced a proposal document for Townsville Economic Gateway, a project with the objective of “ensuring cooperation and coordination in the development of Townsville’s CBD and port, including the interface between the two and the transport infrastructure necessary to support future growth.”

The Townsville Waterways Redevelopment Project envisaged seven individual development projects in the interface between the city and the port. Of these, business cases were prepared for two, these being:

(a) Townsville Port Marine Precinct (designated herein as the Marine Industries and Boating Facilities Precinct); and
(b) Ross Creek West Bank.

In March 2006, Transport and Treasury requested The Coordinator-General to examine the need for these projects and to undertake a strategic planning exercise on the whole interface between Townsville’s port and its city area.

The Council’s Townsville Economic Gateway proposal document lists 16 projects, mainly within the central city area and the port area, which Council intends to promote because of their perceived favourable effects on Townsville’s economic base and/or its lifestyle attributes. Eleven of these projects are located in or have an effect on the city-port interface and have been considered in this City-Port Strategic Plan.

The above two initiatives and the various proposed projects within them have been extensively discussed among officers of the Townsville Port Authority, Townsville City Council, Queensland Transport, Queensland Treasury, Department of Main Roads and Department of State Development. The Townsville City-Port Strategic Plan takes note of this previous work and builds upon it in the light of recent developments in the area.
1.4 Regional Growth
North Queensland’s population and economy have grown rapidly in recent years. This expansion is set to continue based on a local entrepreneurial culture, the region’s abundant mineral and agricultural resources and the prospects for increasing interaction with the rapidly growing economies of Asia. Furthermore, the Queensland Government is actively promoting and assisting this expansion through its Northern Economic Triangle initiative whereby careful planning will ensure that the area encompassing Townsville, Mt Isa and Bowen will be supplied with the public infrastructure required to support rapid economic growth.

1.5 Link with Port Master Plan
The Department of Infrastructure is participating in the preparation of the Port of Townsville Master Plan which examines and makes recommendations concerning the port’s infrastructure requirements to accommodate anticipated trade volumes over the forthcoming 25 years. Measures have been taken to ensure that the Port of Townsville Master Plan and the Townsville City-Port Strategic Plan are consistent with one another.

1.6 Context for City-Port Plan
Townsville’s port originated not far from its present location because of the protected anchorages for relatively small vessels provided by Ross Creek as it flows into Cleveland Bay. Townsville’s business centre grew up not far from these anchorages. As the need grew for larger vessels, the port moved seawards and breakwaters were built to provide protection. The port is now located on mainly reclaimed lands between the mouths of Ross Creek and Ross River. The port’s boundary lies about one kilometre from the business centre – see Context Plan, page 3.

Freight is currently moved to and from the port by road and rail through residential areas. Planning is well advanced for the Eastern Port Access Corridor (EPAC) which would enable freight to reach the port from the eastern side of the Ross River, thus largely avoiding city areas. This corridor would eventually cater for transport by road, rail, conveyors and pipes. The road component would link the port directly to the Flinders and Bruce Highways and would almost certainly be built first. The rail infrastructure would probably be installed in the corridor a decade or more later. Conveyors and pipes would be installed in connection with the industrial plants for which they were required.

The corridor is planned to pass through the Townsville State Development Area (TSDA), an area of 5000 hectares lying six kilometres from the port and reserved by the State Government for heavy industrial development. Industrial plants, some of which are already located on the TSDA, would be early beneficiaries from the improved access which the corridor would provide to the port.

This City-Port Strategic Plan defines a “Secure Port Area” and a “Port Interface Area” – shown hatched in red and yellow respectively on the Context Plan – see page 3. The Secure Port Area is the zone of core port operations. The Port Interface Area defines the zone where the development projects discussed herein will be located.