Far North Queensland is a special place, renowned for its stunning scenery and high biodiversity. The region attracts numerous visitors and new residents each year, drawn by the reef, rainforest and relaxed tropical lifestyle.

It is predicted that the region will grow by over 100,000 new residents over the next 20 years. While such growth can bring economic prosperity, if not properly managed it could result in adverse impacts on the region, placing unacceptable pressures on natural resources and communities. The Queensland Government is committed to providing a suitable framework that will support the region's needs for employment and housing affordability. This plan seeks to provide the necessary planning frameworks that afford continued growth for the region, ensuring that industries such as the tourism and agricultural industries will continue to stimulate the region's economy.

In 2006, the Queensland Government committed to the development of a statutory regional plan for Far North Queensland, to provide a strong planning framework to manage the anticipated growth in the region. This would be the first statutory regional plan to be prepared outside of South East Queensland.

The consultation process resulted in more than 960 submissions. The high number and complexity of submissions reflect the challenges in planning for future urban and rural growth and economic prosperity in the region. At the same time, the plan provides a framework which maintains the region's established agricultural land use potential and its strong tourism focus, within the region's international obligations to protect two World Heritage areas.

The Bligh Government is committed to addressing the big challenges faced by the Far North Queensland region. The plan is a result of an extensive two phase consultation approach with the community. The draft Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2025 was released for public comment on 9 May 2008 and a further consultation report was released in October. This approach was used to ensure that the community were provided with sufficient time to discuss, carefully consider and submit their feedback about the plan's content.

The final Far North Queensland Regional Plan incorporates numerous suggestions and improvements to address the issues raised through the consultation process.

This is a plan for the future to manage growth and maintain strong, sustainable and liveable communities. The designation of an urban footprint across the region will assist in managing the growth of the region, through limiting urban sprawl and out of centre growth. The urban footprint—0.5 per cent of the region—will provide a 20-year land supply, ensuring housing affordability in the region. However, the bulk of the region—99.4 per cent—is designated as a regional landscape and rural production area, protecting areas of significant environmental value (such as the World Heritage areas) and natural resources for primary production, tourism, extraction and mining, through a minimum subdivision size.

The Far North Queensland Regional Plan reflects the combined efforts of government and the community in establishing a plan that will provide a stronger future for existing and new communities in the region.

Its successful implementation relies on cooperative and collaborative efforts between all tiers of government, industry and the community.
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PART A—Introduction

Background

Queensland is the fastest growing state in Australia and the most regionalised. The Queensland Government has developed an active regional planning program to address land use planning issues at a regional level, and prepare regional communities for the challenges of rapid population growth, climate change and oil vulnerability.

The Far North Queensland (FNQ) Regional Plan was developed under section 2.5A.15 of the Integrated Planning Act 1997 (IPA). It is the first statutory regional plan to be developed outside a major metropolitan area. It builds on the former non-statutory regional plan—Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2010 (FNQ 2010).

While managing urban growth is a key focus, the FNQ Regional Plan also addresses various rural and natural resource management issues with a land use planning component.
Effect of the statutory regional plan

The FNQ Regional Plan is the pre-eminent plan for the FNQ region and, therefore, takes precedence over all other planning instruments. The effect of the FNQ Regional Plan is established under section 2.5A of IPA as follows:

• For the purpose of the IPA, the FNQ Regional Plan is a state interest.
• Under the IPA, if there is any inconsistency with another plan, policy or code, including another planning instrument made under state legislation that affects the FNQ region, the FNQ Regional Plan prevails.
• If state agencies prepare or amend any plans, policies and codes that relate to the FNQ region, they must reflect and align with the regional plan.
• All planning development decision-making processes must account for the regional plan’s regulatory provisions, including
  - state government plans and policies
  - local government planning schemes, and other plans and policies
  - planning and development processes under the IPA
  - development applications made under the Integrated Development Assessment System (IDAS) of the IPA.

In the development assessment process, applying the regional plan's associated regulatory provisions must occur in addition to any matters applying under a planning scheme for assessing and determining a development application.

If a local government planning scheme materially contradicts the regional plan, the planning scheme must be amended to align with the regional plan.

The FNQ Regional Plan also guides state agencies on future infrastructure and service provision through Queensland Government-agreed principles, policies and programs.

The FNQ Regional Plan does not replace economic, environmental or social plans, such as conservation or tourism plans, or strategies. It incorporates regional planning policies that directly and indirectly achieve economic, environmental and social outcomes to accomplish ecological sustainability for the FNQ region and, in doing so, meet the objective of section 1.2.1 of IPA.

In developing the regional plan, policies with a land use planning focus that the government can deliver through a range of IPA planning tools, such as planning schemes, priority infrastructure plans and IDAS, have been named land use policies.

The plan's desired regional outcomes cannot be achieved through the above land use planning mechanisms alone. To achieve the region’s vision, the Queensland Government must implement the strategies and actions of aligned plans, such as the natural resource management plan for FNQ. The specific policies that will be implemented through these aligned plans have been named aligned strategies.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship of the FNQ Regional Plan with other statutory and non-statutory planning programs.

![Figure 1: Relationship of regional plan with other plans and strategies](image-url)
Purpose of the regional plan

The Queensland Government intends the FNQ Regional Plan to guide and manage the region’s development over the next 20 years to realise its 2020 vision for Queensland (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2008) and address key regional environmental, social, economic and urban objectives.

Over the past decade, the FNQ region has experienced continuous growth in resident population, visitation, economic activity and urban development. The region’s tourism industry expansion and the national trend of population movement north along the Australian east coast have driven this growth.

The government expects this growth to continue over the next 20 years and beyond. The regional plan will help manage this growth in the most sustainable way to protect and enhance the quality of life in the region.

This plan incorporates a comprehensive policy framework making decisions about managing the region’s development during this growth period.

The plan:

- identifies sufficient developable land to meet future growth
- prepares for growth in a way that progresses the Queensland Government’s Q2 objectives, and protects and enhances the region’s natural environment, biodiversity and natural resources
- resolves conflicts between state and local planning policies at a regional level
- establishes sound urban development principles that support a compact, well-serviced and efficient urban form
- promotes infrastructure delivery that is timely and cost-effective, and supports community and economic development
- maintains and enhances the quality of life for existing and future communities
- ensures the region’s growth is responsive to the possible impacts of climate change and oil vulnerability
- promotes safe, efficient and effective movement of goods and people, and facilitates access to places and services
- supports a viable and diverse economy with well-located employment opportunities and economic activity centres
- gives the private sector greater certainty of future growth and development objectives when they make business investment decisions.

Planning period

The FNQ Regional Plan provides a framework with which to manage growth, change, land use and development in the region to 2031.

The plan also considers the region’s potential management needs beyond 2031 to ensure planning decisions made during the plan’s life do not compromise our ability to meet longer term needs. The plan’s land allocation for future urban growth is based on projections of medium growth to 2031.

Preparation

The regional plan was prepared jointly between all levels of government and key community groups. The interests of these groups are represented on the FNQ Regional Coordination Committee (FNQRCC), which was involved in the development of the regional plan. The function of a regional coordination committee is to advise the state, through the regional planning Minister, about the development and implementation of the region’s statutory regional plan. In addition, key stakeholder groups and government agencies contributed through the FNQ Regional Organisation of Councils, advisory panels, a technical working group and planning workshops.

The preparation of the regional plan drew upon the widely consulted and accepted FNQ2010, endorsed by state and local government through the former FNQ Regional Planning Advisory Committee in 2000. The plan also relied on current desired environmental outcomes contained in FNQ local government planning schemes as well as other state and local government plans, policies and strategies.
The regional plan has been prepared in accordance with chapter 2.5A of IPA which sets out the required procedure that the regional planning Minister must follow in preparing and making the regional plan.

The key steps include:

- preparing a draft plan
- making the draft plan available for public consultation for a minimum of 60 business days
- considering all properly made submissions on the draft plan
- consulting with the FNQRCC
- The public consultation period for the draft regional plan concluded on 8 August 2008, resulting in over 960 submissions. A consultation report was released on 28 October 2008 that summarised the issues raised during the public comment period. Additional targeted consultation of four strategic issues identified in the consultation report concluded on 28 November 2008. The strategic issues were:
  - biodiversity conservation
  - protection of waterways and water quality
  - provision of industrial land
  - subdivision and boundary realignments outside the urban footprint.

All properly made submissions were carefully analysed and the draft plan substantially amended to take into account many of the suggestions raised through the consultation process. This final regional plan responds to the community’s concerns and aspirations for the region.

Application, implementation and review

The regional plan is a statutory instrument under the Statutory Instruments Act 1992 and a planning instrument under IPA. It has a direct effect in its own right, and indirect effect through the amendment and alignment of local government planning schemes and state plans and policies.

Local government planning schemes are the primary mechanisms for planning and managing the urban form. Maximising the performance of planning schemes and applying “best practice” will be critical to providing efficient and effective regional communities.

The desired regional outcomes and policies of the regional plan will be monitored and used in the review of the plan which will be undertaken at least every 10 years. The regional planning Minister can amend the regional plan at anytime under the procedures set out in IPA. Performance indicators will be developed to measure the progress in implementing the plan’s policies, regulations and targets.

The Far North Queensland region

The regional plan applies to the following local government areas within the FNQ region:

- Cairns Regional Council
- Tablelands Regional Council
- Cassowary Coast Regional Council
- Yarrabah Aboriginal Council
- Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Council.

For the purposes of the regional plan, the FNQ region also includes Queensland offshore waters that are part of those local government areas.
Other FNQ regional planning documents

The FNQ Regional Plan is supported by a range of documents including:

- the FNQ Regulatory Provisions
- the Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan
- guidelines and codes associated with regional policies and regulatory provisions
- maps indicating areas where specific regional policies or regulatory provisions apply.

The status of these documents will vary depending on the enabling legislation and planning intent applied in the FNQ Regional Plan. The planning intent and statutory basis is set out in each document.

Definitions

Terms used in this document are as defined in IPA, unless otherwise specified in the regulatory provisions or glossary.

Structure of the plan

The regional plan is set out under the following sections:

- Part A Introduction—The preamble describes the statutory nature of the regional plan and its process of evolution from the current non-statutory plan. The plan's purpose, land use planning focus and its relationship with other plans is highlighted, as are the processes for plan preparation, public consultation, implementation and review, as required under IPA.
- Part B Regional vision—The vision statement encapsulates the desired future for the region.
- Part C Strategic directions—The strategic directions describe a new approach based on managing rather than responding to growth and establish the broad principles that must be adopted to achieve the vision.
- Part D Regional land use pattern—This section describes the preferred settlement pattern to accommodate growth for the next twenty years, provides guidance at a subregional level on the timing and location of growth, establishes the land use categories for the region and includes the justification for and application of the regulatory provisions.
- Part E Regional policies—The underlying principles, desired regional outcomes and regional policies described in this section will guide land use planning decisions in FNQ and must be reflected in all relevant plans, policies and codes being prepared or amended by state or local governments in FNQ. The regional policies are also considered a state interest with respect to consideration of local government planning schemes and development applications under IPA. Explanatory notes are provided to assist in the understanding and interpretation of the policies. Aligned strategies are those that will assist in achieving the region's vision and desired regional outcomes, but are delivered through a range of mechanisms outside IPA.
- Part F Implementation, monitoring and review—The governance arrangements for implementation and review of the regional plan are described in this section.
PART B—Regional vision

The Queensland Government has framed a 2020 vision in *Toward Q2: Tomorrow’s Queensland*. The vision focuses on five key themes for Queensland communities:

- **Strong**—create a diverse economy powered by bright ideas
- **Green**—protect our lifestyle and environment
- **Smart**—deliver world-class education and training
- **Healthy**—make Queenslanders Australia’s healthiest people
- **Fair**—support a safe and caring community.

The vision for the FNQ region builds on these elements and defines the community’s long-term aspirations for the region. It is a conceptual image of the type of lifestyle the community wishes to have in 20 years and protect for future generations. The vision is written as though time has moved forward and describes the region as it will be in 20 years time.

The regional vision for Far North Queensland is for a stronger, more liveable and sustainable community, where:

- the region’s outstanding biodiversity and stunning landscape features are valued and protected.
- residents of Far North Queensland have a strong sense of community and feel safe, happy, healthy and able to enjoy a relaxed tropical lifestyle in a range of settings from urban to rural. The region continues to grow in prosperity and attracts national and international residents and visitors who seek a variety of lifestyle, employment, investment and holiday choices.
- the economy is vibrant, robust and diverse, firmly based on the principles of ecologically sustainable development.
- Cairns forms the heart of an efficient and sustainable settlement pattern that protects natural, cultural and agricultural values, addresses the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and is supported by high level infrastructure, facilities and services.
- the Traditional Owners of the region and their cultural values are acknowledged and respected.
- people are well educated, well informed and resilient to the anticipated impacts of climate change and oil vulnerability.
FNQ regional vision explained

The vision was developed through contributions from many people, including members of the FNQ Regional Coordination Committee, technical working group and advisory panels and the community.

The FNQ region’s outstanding natural areas, particularly the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage areas, are protected and preserved. The region is known for its best practice environmental and natural resource management. Through understanding and appreciating the ecological processes that support the region’s natural environment, governments, industry and the community are willing to work cooperatively to conserve these natural values.

The region’s thriving economy benefits the whole community and offers a wide range of business and employment opportunities. Diversification into alternative and innovative technologies in areas such as health, education, manufacturing, natural resource management and tropical expertise build on the region’s historical economic drivers and maximise economic prosperity across the region. The tourism economy is innovative, diversified and equitably distributed and the region continues to be recognised as a world class ecologically sustainable tourism destination.

People are happy and healthy and have a strong sense of community, identity and place. The Traditional Owners of the region are recognised and respected and a harmonious mix of cultures ensures the region offers a multicultural experience. The region’s unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural diversity is protected and progressed, and artistic and cultural experiences that bring people together are abundant.

The community is well-informed and educated. People recognise the impacts climate change and rising oil prices will have on the region, and are well prepared for these. The region comprises a diversity of built communities surrounded by open green spaces which complement the tropical climate and natural surrounds, with building designs catering for the extreme climatic events currently experienced and projected for FNQ. The location of industrial and employment centres maximise access to markets while minimising negative impacts on the community and environment. The region has become resilient to the impacts of oil shortages and, in doing so, has created opportunities for economic gains and stronger and healthier communities.

Appropriate planning ensures that urban and rural communities are linked by an efficient and affordable transport network which gives people real choices about how they travel. A range of sustainable and affordable housing options are available which enhance tropical character and are accessible to services and community facilities. These features encourage walking and cycling; healthy lifestyle options which minimise overall transport demand, and reduce the region’s vulnerability to oil scarcity and climate change impacts.
During the next 20 years, around 100,000 new residents are expected to migrate to the region, including so-called sea changers, tree changers and rain changers. If the FNQ vision is to be achieved, the region will require major changes in the way planning for growth and development occurs. The regional plan's approach is based on managing rather than responding to growth.

The strategic directions outlined in this section describe a number of underlying regional planning principles and take into account current and new drivers for growth. Planning and development must be responsive to these strategic directions to ensure the long-term ecological sustainability of the region.
Planning for climate change and oil vulnerability

 FNQ is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and is likely to experience sea level increase, hotter dry seasons and wetter wet seasons under projected climate change scenarios. Petrol prices are also expected to dramatically increase as global oil supplies diminish. Such changes will adversely affect tourism, agriculture and the tropical lifestyle of the region. The impacts of climate change and rising fuel prices must be addressed and planned for. The future growth of FNQ must ensure that greenhouse gas reductions are achieved in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Strategies must be developed to adapt the region and build its resilience to such impacts.

Urban consolidation and land use efficiency

The current trend to accommodate population growth in new low density suburbs on the fringes of existing towns is impacting on the natural environment and is wasteful of land and infrastructure resources. This trend cannot continue. Clearly defined areas to accommodate future urban growth requirements for the next 20 years need to be identified and protected.

The primary objective in the short term is to ensure future growth in the region predominately reflects the existing urban network and consolidates growth within and immediately adjacent to existing centres. Within future urban growth areas, there must be a move toward affordable housing and more energy efficient and sustainable communities, with a more compact urban form and higher densities in appropriate areas. The trend toward an ageing population and smaller households should be reflected in the range of new housing provided. Increasingly, new growth areas, including Mount Peter and its prospective centres which are a part of the Southern Growth Corridor, will play a significant part in providing opportunities to realise such needs. These considerations will need to become key aspects of the careful planning for such areas.

Higher densities must be achieved in appropriate areas to support the most efficient use of infrastructure and services and facilitate the development of viable communities. This will result in reduced travel times, energy usage and pollution emissions. Planning for urban consolidation will also improve levels of accessibility to services and have fewer detrimental impacts on the region's environmental and natural resource values. New isolated developments and low-density developments such as rural residential should be controlled.

Integrating land use planning with infrastructure planning

Improved integration and coordination of land use planning, infrastructure provision and economic activities at both the regional and local level will significantly improve the efficiencies of providing for future urban development needs. The regional plan determines the preferred settlement pattern for the next twenty years and sets the framework for coordinated and timely delivery of infrastructure and services to support the predicted population growth.

Prior to making commitments about regionally significant infrastructure, the government will undertake a thorough assessment of the infrastructure needs that provide the best overall outcomes for the community. The regional plan will be the dominant planning document for the region. State and local government plans, strategies and policies must be consistent with the regional plan to ensure development meets the needs of the projected population to 2031 and beyond.
Part C–Strategic directions

Maintaining connectivity

Transport networks are critical to connect people and employment centres across FNQ. The corridors that make up a transport network allow for movement by private motor vehicle, public passenger transport, walking and cycling. The connectivity that this provides is vital for strong communities and economies. A well connected transport network can also save travel time and cost and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reduced vehicle travel. Long term planning is required to identify and protect transport corridors from inappropriate development.

Improved connectivity is also vital for conservation of the region’s rich biodiversity. Fragmentation of areas of ecological significance needs to be avoided. These areas include wildlife corridors of state and regional significance that provide north-south and east-west connections. Wildlife corridors are critical for climate change adaptation, particularly for vulnerable species such as the endemic rainforest mammals and cassowaries. The regional plan identifies strategic rehabilitation areas that would link or increase the resilience of wildlife corridors. The protection and restoration of waterways is also an important strategy for improving ecological connectivity and subsequent resilience to climate change.

Promoting a dynamic, robust and diversified economy

While the existing industries need to be promoted and supported, new industries must also be encouraged to diversify the economy. Greater support should be given to entrepreneurial thinking, clean technology industries, increased integration into the global economy and increased productivity through improved skills development.

These goals will be achieved through planning and designing mixed-use developments that foster collaboration and networks between business, industry and research institutions. This will ensure the region is better able to create new jobs and accommodate future population projections with high levels of diversified employment opportunities.

Planning for emergency situations

Urban planning needs to consider the potential for major emergency situations (floods, cyclones, fires, traffic accidents etc.) which will require efficient delivery of emergency services to the community or the evacuation of residents and visitors in affected areas. It is imperative that planning for urban growth includes provision of emergency access between communities and between the coast and the Tablelands and considers the need for emergency routes, utilities and services required in times of disaster.

Maintaining and enhancing the tropical character through land use planning and innovative design

The FNQ region is unique and this is reflected by the number towns and villages in the region that provide distinct and individual local experiences to residents and visitors. Urban development should not result in urban sprawl or loss of the region’s character and identity.

Innovative and sustainable building designs that increase energy and water use efficiency whilst reflecting the region’s tropical flavour should be adopted through improved building codes and style guides.

Limiting growth pressures on the coast

Coastal development is vulnerable to a range of natural hazards such as erosion, sea level rise, storm tide inundation, flooding or cyclones. Significant benefits will be gained by reducing growth pressures in sensitive and high risk coastal areas. Adequate urban opportunities and housing options must be provided in other less sensitive parts of the region.

Decreased development pressures on coastal areas will come from the combined effect of consolidating growth in the Cairns area, encouraging higher densities through infill and redevelopment, promoting decentralisation in appropriate areas and providing future growth opportunities on the Tablelands. These measures will also provide good outcomes when considering the effects of climate change and sea level rise.

Facilitating growth in Mount Peter

The greatest proportion of growth to the region will occur in the Cairns area. While there will be significant growth in existing areas through infill and redevelopment, the Mount Peter Master Planned Area, immediately east of Edmonton and the area west of the Bruce Highway between Edmonton and Gordonvale, will accommodate the majority of the new
growth in Cairns. Mount Peter represents some of the last remaining developable land in the Cairns area that has relatively few natural constraints. It is important that development ensures the best outcomes with respect to:

- dwelling densities
- infrastructure
- public transport
- employment
- industry and commercial needs
- urban open space needs
- greenhouse gas emissions and oil vulnerability.

The Mount Peter Declared Master Planned Area presents an opportunity to investigate and plan for innovative housing and centres-based facilities, services and integrated housing options. This includes a range of centres which provide viable opportunity for transit orientated communities to develop around those centres and minimise the need for private car-based travel outside of the population catchment that is serviced by the centre. The planning and development of Mount Peter should take priority over any other new large greenfield development proposed in the region and should account for the strategic outcomes sought by this regional plan.

New development is expected to provide for a wide range and choice of housing types, location and densities to meet the needs of the community and to complement priority infrastructure investment, particularly for roads, public transport and transit oriented communities.

Achieving employment self-containment

Local employment self-sufficiency must be encouraged to maximise local containment of the workforce. This means people live and work in the same general area, rather than spending long periods of time commuting between their home and place of employment. Achieving higher levels of self-containment results in reduced travel distances and expenses, reduced congestion on the overall network, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. It is also retains greater levels of expenditure in the local economy and fosters a stronger sense of community. The social vision of self-containment is of a people who mostly live, work, shop, and recreate in a defined area.

The concept of self-containment is also likely to have implications for the future role of regional centres within the context of their intended population catchments and in the manner in which they relate and impact on each other. This will notably be the case with regard to large adjoining regional activity centres and will need to be carefully considered in the future planning of proposed centres in the region so that the strategic aims of the regional plan are not compromised.

Planning for large growth areas, such as Mount Peter, should include strategies to encourage local employment self-sufficiency and maximise resultant local containment of the workforce.
The population of FNQ is projected to increase by nearly 100,000 people over the next 20 years. Various urban settlements will grow as a result, with increasing demand for urban services and infrastructure. Growth will need to be carefully managed to maximise land use and infrastructure efficiency, address demographic changes and protect the region's unique landscape and rural production values. This requires a good understanding of the rate of population growth, the age structure of the population and their housing preferences.

The regional plan sets a regional land use pattern based on a preferred pattern of development. This defines the desired future spatial structure that best achieves the desired regional outcomes. Subregional narratives provide further detail on future growth directions across the five local government areas.

The FNQ Regulatory Provisions designate all land in the region into one of three regional land use categories: regional landscape and rural production area; urban footprint; rural living area. The intent of each regional land use category is described in this section.
Population trends

Population growth

FNQ has grown by nearly 110,000 people over the last 30 years, from 111,320 in 1976 (DIP, 2007a) to 220,687 in 2006 (DIP, 2008a). The largest absolute increase was in Cairns Regional Council, with moderate increases in other local government areas (figure 4).

In 2006 Cairns Regional Council contained about two thirds of the region’s resident population (67 per cent), followed by Tablelands Regional Council (20 per cent), Cassowary Coast Regional Council (13 per cent), Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council (1 per cent) and Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council (<1 per cent) (figure 5).

FNQ is one of the fastest growing regions in the State. Between 2001 and 2006 FNQ had the third highest growth rate and absolute growth outside SEQ (DIP, 2008a). This growth has largely been driven by net migration, with natural increases remaining relatively steady (figure 6).

Current population projections for FNQ to 2031 are shown in figure 7 and table 1. High, medium and low series projections have been prepared to consider a range of potential future outcomes.
Figure 6: Components of population change in FNQ
(* excludes Yarrabah and Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Councils, Source: DIP, 2008b)

![Bar chart showing components of population change in FNQ, years 1997 to 2006.]

- Averages 2002-2006
  - NI 1,582
  - ANM 2,824
  - Net migration = 64.1% of growth

Figure 7: FNQ resident population projections to 2031
(* excludes Yarrabah and Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Councils, Source, DIP, 2008b)

![Line chart showing projected population for FNQ, years 2001 to 2031.]

Table 1: FNQ resident population projections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Projected population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>240 359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>252 729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>263 712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>275 085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2031</td>
<td>287 231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* excludes Yarrabah and Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Councils, Source, DIP, 2008b)

The regional plan is based on the medium series projections. This is considered the most likely outcome based on current information, and may translate to approximately 4,000 people moving into the region each year.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders form an important component of FNQ’s population. In 2001 17,533 persons, or around one eleventh of FNQ’s population, were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (DIP, 2007a). This is almost three times the state average and four times the national average.

In 2001 more than half of the region’s Indigenous population were living in Cairns or Yarrabah. More than 80 per cent of Yarrabah and Wujal Wujal’s population were Indigenous. Mount Garnet, Ravenshoe, Herberton, Mossman, Kuranda, Innisfail, Mareeba, Babinda, Tully and Gordonvale also had significant Indigenous populations.

Preliminary population projections have been undertaken specifically for Yarrabah and Wujal Wujal; however, the data is limited and likely to underestimate the full population. Opportunities for improved data collection are currently being investigated.

Non-resident population

Visitors, and in particular tourists, comprise a significant proportion of the region’s population. FNQ is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Australia. In 2001, 18 per cent of the region’s population were visitors. Most visitors were from Australia (58 per cent), although the high proportion of overseas visitors (42 per cent) was nearly double the state average. Around 80 per cent of visitors were staying in Cairns Regional Council, primarily at Cairns and Port Douglas (DIP, 2007a).

Accommodation preferences appear to differ between Australian and overseas visitors. Australian visitors tend to stay in private dwellings such as detached houses, flats, units, caravans and other temporary accommodation, whereas overseas visitors tend to stay in non-private accommodation.

Fly in-fly out mine workers also contribute to the non-resident population. Some mines within the region have semi-permanent accommodation camps however these are unlikely to be recorded as the permanent place of residence. Some FNQ residents alternatively fly in-fly out to mines in other region’s or countries, such as Papua New Guinea.

Age distribution

The age distribution of the region is overall similar to the state average, the greatest difference being a higher proportion of people aged 25-44 and a lower proportion of people over 65 (DIP, 2007a). This largely reflects the age distribution of Cairns Regional Council, and associated employment and education drivers.

Parts of the Tablelands Regional Council and Cassowary Coast Regional Council have a low proportion of people aged 15-24 and a high proportion of people older than 45 relative to the state average.

The age distribution of Yarrabah and Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Councils reflect the higher birth rates and shorter life expectancies of Indigenous communities. These communities have a high proportion of people aged 0-14 and a low proportion of people over 45 relative to the state average.

Overall the region’s population is ageing in line with Australia’s ageing population. While the number of people in each age group will increase with population increases, the relative proportion of people aged 65 and over is expected to double in the next twenty years (figure 8).
Household size

The average household size in FNQ in 2006 was 2.5 persons per dwelling, similar to the state average of 2.6 (DIP, 2008c). Household size was higher in separate houses (2.8) than other dwellings (2.0). Household size is expected to decrease over time with the ageing population and trend towards smaller, particularly single person, households. Current household size projections for FNQ are shown in table 2.

The trend towards decreasing household size means that housing demand will continue to be higher than population growth in FNQ. An estimated 50 000 new dwellings will be required in Cairns, Tablelands and Cassowary Coast Regional Council’s based on current information.

Household sizes in Yarrabah and Wujal Wujal are relatively high, averaging 5.8 and 4 people per dwelling respectively in 2006 (ABS, 2007). Overcrowding and home ownership are significant issues in these communities.

Residential land supply

There is a substantial amount of broadhectare land in the region. Broadhectare land includes land currently zoned for residential purposes that is greater than 0.25 hectare, vacant, suitable and potentially available. Of the 8415 hectares of broadhectare land in the region, nearly two thirds (5462 ha) is zoned for rural residential purposes, and 80 per cent of this is within Tablelands Regional Council. Urban residential land comprises 72 per cent, 12 per cent and 55 per cent of the total broadhectare land available in Cairns, Tablelands and Cassowary Coast Regional Council respectively. Table 3 shows the amount of land available for residential development across the region.
Residential land supply is dynamic and more than 20 years supply has been provided through the regional plan. Supply is influenced by a range of factors such as population growth, demographic changes, availability of broadacre land, rural land fragmentation, dwelling densities, urban land use mix (e.g., demand for industrial land), regional activity centres network and environmental, social and economic policy objectives of the regional plan. Population projections, availability of broadacre land and various other inputs are being monitored to ensure adequate land supply (refer to Part F).

Recent studies indicate that rural lands in FNQ have been significantly fragmented by past subdivisions, particularly in coastal areas such as the Cassowary Coast (DIP, 2007e). Table 4 shows the total number of lots and percentage of lots that are less than 40 hectares in size in each former local government area.

### Table 4: Extent of subdivision by lots (40 ha minimum lot size)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former local government authority</th>
<th>Total number of lots</th>
<th>Number of lots &lt;40 ha (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atherton</td>
<td>1392</td>
<td>1208 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns</td>
<td>2943</td>
<td>2692 (92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardwell</td>
<td>2449</td>
<td>1964 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>1582</td>
<td>1379 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eacham</td>
<td>1727</td>
<td>1023 (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herberton</td>
<td>2069</td>
<td>1443 (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnstone</td>
<td>4279</td>
<td>3972 (93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mareeba</td>
<td>6113</td>
<td>4614 (76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22 554</strong></td>
<td><strong>18 295 (82)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: DIP, 2007e)

Around 20 per cent of the region’s population currently live outside of urban centres and localities on rural lands. The existing range of rural lot sizes provides flexibility for agricultural practices, for example by enabling production of alternative crops with smaller land use requirements.

The regional plan seeks to protect rural lands (see section 2.6) and avoid low density rural residential development (see section 4.6). Future urban land supply has been provided in close proximity to existing urban centres in order to promote compact form, access to services and infrastructure, and land use efficiency.

### Implications of growth for the region

The projected growth in the region could result in significant impacts—both positive and negative. The benefits could include an increase in business activity and diversity, better employment opportunities, and significant improvements in the capacity to support major new services and facilities. However, if growth is unmanaged, it could result in environmental degradation, deterioration of natural resources, increased social problems, diminishing amenity and liveability and costly infrastructure provision (FNQ NRM et al, 2004, Lehrer, 2009).

There is likely to be greater demand for diversity of housing forms to match the needs of a changing household structure, particularly an increase in one and two person households across all adult ages. The workforce will need to increase its level of reliance on older workers if it is to maintain the labour force required to support the region’s economy. These factors are likely to significantly and increasingly influence changes in preferred housing types and location especially in relation to their proximity to services, employment, and leisure opportunities. This is likely to increase the importance of urban design that is based on promoting transit orientated communities in the region and the reliance upon strong, viable activity centres. Such opportunities are expected to be greatest, especially in the areas yet to be developed including the Southern Growth Corridor.

Throughout the region, there has been significant fragmentation of rural land and bushland largely brought about by rural residential development on the urban fringe and in rural areas. Continued heavy reliance on rural residential settlement patterns will not enable the development of optimal residential areas in terms of access to services, efficient use of infrastructure, and protection of natural areas and farm resources. Such development is not a sustainable residential solution for the region in the long term.

As the population increases, there will be increased pressures on services and infrastructure, such as arterial roads, public transport, potable water, local parks, shops and community facilities. While the current and planned power generation capacity of the region is adequate, average household demand for energy is increasing. Total energy consumption by households, industry and transport also generates significant amounts of greenhouse gases, which need to be reduced. The current use of water and energy in the region is also increasing. Efficiency gains from use of water and energy are required to reduce demand, minimise impacts on the environment and to meet the challenges of projected climate change.

Addressing these matters will be a major task for the region as whole, some of which can be achieved either directly or indirectly through regional planning.
Preferred pattern of development

The preferred pattern of development for FNQ defines the future spatial structure of towns and villages across the region that best achieves the regional vision. The preferred pattern of development:

- provides sufficient land to accommodate the projected population growth while promoting compact urban form and associated infrastructure efficiencies
- consolidates urban growth around existing urban settlements, in particular the principal and major regional activity centres and future transit oriented communities
- allocates additional land around specific centres to stimulate growth of those centres
- locates growth areas close to employment nodes and avoids establishment or expansion of satellite towns and suburbs
- promotes flexibility and innovation in urban design and the role of activity centres in accommodating future residents in closer proximity to employment opportunities, services and leisure opportunities
- avoids expansion into areas with significant regional landscape or rural production values or land use constraints.

Approximately two thirds of the region’s population growth, or around 70 000 people, will be accommodated within Cairns. Two thirds of this, or up to 50 000 people, will ultimately live within the Mount Peter Master Planned Area. Regional towns outside Cairns will also continue to grow, with the main growth occurring in Mareeba, Atherton, Innisfail, and to a lesser extent Tully. Opportunities for future growth have also been provided in various smaller urban centres.

By accommodating growth in this way the regional plan will help protect regional landscape and rural production values, increase self-containment, improve energy efficiency, facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change and oil vulnerability, and yield a range of other significant community benefits.

Subregional narratives

Subregional narratives have been prepared for each local government area in FNQ (figure 3) to broadly describe the intended future growth pattern and associated transport infrastructure priorities. The subregional narratives link strategic planning at state, regional and local levels. Local government planning schemes will be reviewed to reflect the subregional narratives planning intent.

The regional land use categories and regional activity centre network referred to in the subregional narratives are described more fully elsewhere in the regional plan.
Cairns

The vibrant, tropical regional city of Cairns forms the urban heart of FNQ. It has the largest population in the region and plays a vital role in servicing the needs of the broader FNQ community. As a tourist destination of international significance, it provides a landing point for visitors attracted by the region’s superlative and diverse natural environment. The associated blend of cultures and focus on relaxed, outdoor living set amongst the tropical, highly scenic wet tropics rainforest and coastal ranges, make Cairns a great place to live and visit.

Significant economic activity and employment is focused in and around the Cairns central business district (CBD). Supporting regionally significant infrastructure includes a major air and sea port, hospital and international conference centre. The CBD will evolve into a tropical transit oriented community with “Cairns-style” character strongly reflected in design and function. Future growth of the CBD will primarily occur via infill and redevelopment on appropriate sites.

Outside the CBD, Cairns suburbs will maintain their unique character and become increasingly self-contained through development of localised economies, centred within regional activity centres and walkable local activity centre networks. Transit oriented communities will also develop to provide attractive and desirable alternatives to car travel.

Cairns currently has a large supply of broadhectare land (see Part D), with much of this located at Palm Cove, Trinity Beach, Smithfield, Redlynch, White Rock and Edmonton. This supply is however likely to be exhausted before 2031. An increasing proportion of dwellings will therefore need to be supplied by infill and redevelopment focused in and around regional activity centres and public transport nodes.

Future growth options for Cairns are limited, with the mountain ranges, Barron and Mulgrave River flood plains, Trinity Inlet, and the coast restraining future development. The hill slopes of Cairns, northern beaches and area east of the Bruce Highway between Edmonton and Gordonvale contain significant regional landscape values that should be protected.

The Mount Peter Master Planned Area is a key regional growth area and will accommodate the bulk of the region’s future growth (see section 4.3). Development in Mount Peter will be concentrated in urban nodes, be separated and linked by open space, and have efficient transport networks. An ultimate population capacity of up to 50,000 should be planned for the Mount Peter Master Planned Area in the longer term. This level of expected development and the strategic requirement to provide a high level of employment opportunity within the Mount Peter Master Planned Area will require a viable network and range of strong activity centres. This may include a major regional activity centre as well other levels of activity centres. The implications of the range of activity centres, including those which may be identified for outside the Mount Peter area, which are likely to best meet the overall strategic aims of the regional plan will need to be carefully considered as part of any structure planning considerations and broader development controls for the area and adjoining areas. The full development of Mount Peter and surrounding areas is likely to go beyond the life of this regional plan.

Cairns’ major regional activity centres, and to a lesser extent district regional activity centres, will play an increasingly important role in terms of employment and economic activity. A significant proportion of new jobs will need to be provided in the Edmonton and Smithfield major regional activity centres. The Edmonton major regional activity centre will be located west of the Bruce Highway and be supported by industry facilities located east of the Bruce Highway.

Additional areas of industrial land are currently being investigated east of the highway to address shortage of supply.

The Smithfield major regional activity centre contains a number of elements, including the James Cook University (JCU) and existing shopping centres and businesses. There are opportunities in the future for additional centre activities, a technology park at JCU and additional industrial land. Integrating these current and future elements to best serve the surrounding communities is a key priority.

Cairns Regional Council

Resident population in 2006: 147,538
Estimated resident population in 2031: 222,640
Principal regional activity centre: Cairns CBD
Major regional activity centres: Smithfield, Edmonton, Earlville,
District regional activity centres: Mossman, Port Douglas, Clifton Beach, Redlynch, Mount Sheridan, Manunda, Westcourt, Mount Sheridan, Gordonvale
North coast

The north coast contains significant areas of good quality agricultural land and areas of high ecological significance, including large areas of the Daintree and other Wet Tropics World Heritage rainforest. The former Douglas shire contains important scenic and ecological values that attract significant tourism. Growth north of Cairns is constrained by a lack of appropriate infrastructure.

Mossman and Port Douglas are the largest urban settlements north of Cairns city. These two district regional activity centres are in close proximity but have different roles and function that result in economic synergies. Mossman is the main administrative, service, agricultural and industrial centre in the north, whereas Port Douglas has a stronger tourism focus.

Mossman currently contains a large supply of broadhectare land. Future development within the district regional activity centre will need to generate additional employment opportunities. Further growth at Mossman and Port Douglas will be constrained given ecological values and infrastructure constraints.

The small Aboriginal settlement at Mossman Gorge has been included within the urban footprint. The regional plan seeks to facilitate the subdivision of existing houses into individual allotments in this locality and future planning scheme amendments to an urban or village zoning.

The coastal settlements of Wonga, Newell and Cooya Beach and various other small urban centres and rural residential developments, including significant areas north of the Daintree River are not intended to grow or increase in density. These communities generally have very low levels of infrastructure provision and significant coastal and environmental constraints. Tourist development north of the Daintree River should be small-scale, nature-based and protect the unique ecological values and local character.

A significant area of land is subject to Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) with the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people. ILUAs are about the use and management of land and waters, and are made between the Traditional Owners and other people. The Eastern Kuku Yalanji ILUA includes an area of Aboriginal freehold for their use in providing some residential and economic potential (NTTT, 2007).

The regional plan seeks to facilitate the objectives of this and other ILUAs in the region. The land in the Eastern Kuku Yalanji ILUA is currently in the regional landscape and rural production area but has been identified as an area requiring further investigation (see section 3.8).

South coast

Gordonvale is a small sugar town south of Cairns centred on the Mulgrave mill. It contains a district regional activity centre supported by a diversity of social infrastructure. It is a heritage town with significant character housing, open spaces and sport and recreation facilities. Any future urban development within Gordonvale should seek to avoid land use conflicts with existing industrial uses (the mill) and maintain Gordonvale’s unique character.

Scope also exists for the Gordonvale area to become serviced by higher order activity centres in the region. This is likely to be the case as the Southern Growth Corridor grows and its centres assume a stronger and increasing capacity to service the surrounding areas. This matter should be taken into account when considering the size, scale, location and potential roles of centres in the Mount Peter area as well as other centres that may have an effect. The ongoing viability of the existing district activity centre at Gordonvale needs to be also considered.

Growth will be constrained in the predominantly agricultural production areas south of Cairns. Minor areas of additional land have been included within the urban footprint at Babinda, and options for redevelopment of state land are also being investigated. It is not intended that Goldsborough Valley, Miriwinini, Bramston Beach and other smaller settlements will grow.
Mareeba

The town of Mareeba has significant future growth potential. It has ample industrial land, a vibrant main street, and a pivotal role in agriculture and mining. Mareeba is relatively unconstrained by good quality agricultural land or areas of ecological significance and is well serviced by road, rail and air infrastructure. It is the primary urban centre for rural families living in the expansive west and north-west parts of the region (figure 2).

The growth of Mareeba is likely to depend on the development of its industrial land for future economic activities in the major regional activity centre. Mareeba and surrounding areas will continue to play an important role in natural resource management and agricultural science. An increasing proportion of dwellings in Mareeba will need to be supplied by infill and redevelopment focused in and around the regional activity centre. This will help sustain the town’s social infrastructure and local business economy.

Mareeba has a considerable broadacre land supply. There is a key regional growth area on the south side primarily consisting of Future Residential zoned land. This area will need to be master planned to ensure appropriate dwelling densities, infrastructure sequencing, transport, open space and waterway networks. An area of Future Residential zoned land on the north side of Mareeba will be protected in the regional landscape and rural production area while investigations into the potential for a local road network and other aspects of suitability are being undertaken.

Additional areas are being investigated for potential future expansion of the Mareeba airport and associated aviation industries to the west.

Atherton

The nearby town of Atherton provides a high level of commercial and retail opportunities as well as industrial, educational, professional and social facilities. It has an important rural industry function and character and is in the “golden triangle”—one of the richest and most diverse agricultural areas in the State.

The long term urban growth option for Atherton has historically been south of the town extending to Hastie Road. While there are clear infrastructure efficiencies in promoting such development contiguous with the established urban area, it will result in the significant loss of good quality agricultural land. A future southern bypass of Atherton, extending between Herberton Road and the Atherton International Club could potentially provide a more appropriate edge to development. An alternative greenfield development option is to be investigated to the west of the town of Tolga on elevated land that is of poorer soil quality.

The Tablelands Regional Council will investigate options to establish whether it would be more desirable to accommodate future growth south of Atherton or near Tolga. The assessment will consider good quality agricultural land, relative benefits associated with a consolidated urban form, access to services and facilities and integration with the established urban area, the efficiency of servicing development and impact on the character of Tolga. The urban footprint may need to be amended once this investigation has been completed.

An increasing proportion of dwellings in Atherton will need to be supplied by infill and redevelopment focused in and around the regional activity centre to minimise further encroachment of residential development on good quality agricultural land. Character housing will be protected to maintain Atherton’s unique character.

Other centres

Kuranda is a small village activity centre set in the rainforest. It will continue to have a specialist tourism focus and focal point for the Cairns—Kuranda railway and Skyrail cable car. Densities will be kept low and building heights limited to maintain the village character and significant areas of ecological significance.

Myola has been the subject of significant investigation and consultation in the past, including the Myola Feasibility Study in 2001, the Myola Planning Study completed in 2006 and detailed studies on the Kuranda Range Road. Myola is not considered necessary for urban development in the life of this regional plan. This position reflects the following considerations:

- there is sufficient land available elsewhere throughout FNQ to accommodate growth within the life of this plan
- the plan’s policies promote consolidation of population growth around existing urban centres that provide employment and service opportunities
- oil vulnerability and rising fuel process have implications on satellite suburbs
Part D–Regional land use pattern

The proposed urban development at Myola could not be accommodated by the existing Kuranda Range Road and the cost of upgrading the Kuranda Range Road between Cairns and the northern Tablelands is unaffordable in the short to medium term, in a regional and state-wide context.

With its favourable climate, good soils and ample water, the Atherton Tablelands has the potential to provide food security for the region, particularly in the face of climate change and oil vulnerability. There are aspirations for tourism to broaden its base, with a shift from day trips from Cairns to longer stays. Tourism activities will focus on the natural environment, mining and outback experiences. Tourist attractions such as the Savannah Way tourist drive and Misty Mountain walking trails will draw increasing numbers of tourists inland from the coastal plain.

Additional growth has been provided in a number of smaller urban centres to facilitate economic and social aspirations on the Tablelands. This includes Malanda, Ravenshoe, Tolga, Yungaburra, Milaa Milaa, Dimbulah and Chillagoe.

Malanda will consolidate its role as a district regional activity centre and accommodate modest growth. It is intended that this centre will increase in role and function over the life of the plan to support the population of the southern Tablelands and reduce the need to travel to Atherton. The nearby centre of Yungaburra is intended to continue its function as a village in keeping with its strong character values. Urban development on the broadacre land in Yungaburra will need to be staged appropriately and reflect the unique form and character of the existing town.

Additional growth has been provided for at Millaa Milaa to help boost growth and economic activity. Revitalisation of the town’s main street and development of new drivers will be important in attracting and retaining further growth. This may include the development of food industries and nature-based attractions.

Ravenshoe is a key urban centre for the southern Tablelands. This centre supports the rural, tourism and mining activities in the area and provides a range of housing and lifestyle choices and supporting facilities. Ravenshoe will play an increasingly important role in servicing the south-west portion of the Atherton Tablelands. Development of the key regional growth area near the primary school will need to ensure appropriate access to and from the existing town.

Herberton is constrained by topography, tenure and lack of sewerage infrastructure. Any future development will be low key and is intended to reinforce the community focus of the town. This centre supports the rural, tourism and mining activities occurring in the area.

The rural centres of Chillagoe, Dimbulah and Mount Garnet are remote from larger urban centres and provide a range of services to the surrounding rural areas. These centres are likely to increase in importance in supporting mining activity. It is intended that mine workers accommodation be included within the existing towns where possible, or be physically connected where this is not possible. Local sports fields, markets and other activities provide important opportunities for mine workers and the local community to interact socially.
Innisfail

Innisfail is the largest town in the Cassowary Coast and southern part of the region. It contains a major regional activity centre that bustles with economic and social activity set amongst the lively art deco heritage and attractive hilly streetscapes. The activity centre contains a diverse range of commercial, retail and administrative functions and provides a wide range of urban services to the local urban and rural communities. Innisfail is currently the only regional town in FNQ serviced by public transport.

Population growth has been slow in Innisfail over the past decade, particularly after Cyclone Larry in 2006. Flooding constraints associated with the Johnstone River also limit future growth opportunities. A significant area of broad- hectare land has been included in the urban footprint near Reynolds Road to stimulate future growth and economic activity. This is a key regional growth area that will need to be master planned to ensure an appropriate local road network, dwelling mix and density, and achievement of appropriate environmental outcomes.

An increasing proportion of future growth in Innisfail will need to be accommodated by infill and consolidation, particularly within the regional activity centre. Additional infrastructure may be required to achieve higher densities. Urban development will need to protect and reflect the unique character, form and feel of the town.

Innisfail has the potential to become a multi-modal transport hub in the future. It is well connected in terms of road, rail and port infrastructure and provides a strategic linkage between Cairns and Mourilyan Port, the Atherton Tablelands and Mourilyan Port, and Cairns to Townsville south. Additional, suitable industrial land will be identified near Innisfail to create new employment generators. There may be opportunities to link the transport and industrial functions. Potential sites will be investigated in the vicinity of Mungoo and Wangan.

Tully

Tully is a small sugar town south of Innisfail centred on the Tully mill. It contains a district regional activity centre with a large concentration of business, employment and administrative functions. Primary industry activities including agriculture, horticulture, beef cattle, fishing, quarrying and forestry make an important contribution to the local economy.

A significant area of broad- hectare land has been included in the urban footprint north of Tully to accommodate future growth. This is a key regional growth area that will need to be master planned to ensure an appropriate local road network, dwelling mix and density and achievement of appropriate environmental outcomes. Opportunities to protect and revegetate strategic rehabilitation areas, encourage cycling and walking and provide alternative housing options in these areas are to be investigated prior to the area being developed.

Other centres

Mission Beach is located near Tully and consists of North Mission, Wongaling and South Mission Beaches. It occupies a narrow strip of land between the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage areas and contains significant areas of ecological significance including essential habitat of the endangered southern cassowary. The survival of this ecologically important species is critically threatened by continuing habitat loss and car strikes.

The urban footprint at Mission Beach will be constrained to minimise future impacts on ecological values, coastal hazard risks and loss of the village character. Densities are to be kept low and building heights limited to avoid increasing traffic generation and urban impacts. Future development should occur around village nodes and avoid linear form, maintain and restore cassowary habitat, and ensure good corridor connectivity.

Much higher levels of self-containment will need to be achieved in Mission Beach to avoid travel to Tully and Innisfail. Additional local employment generators will need to be developed based on protection and enjoyment of the natural environment, and appropriate development of a district regional activity centre at Wongaling Beach. Car travel will need to be managed and traffic impacts on cassowaries mitigated.

Further south is the town of Cardwell. Growth in this small coastal settlement should be constrained to the existing urban area given land and infrastructure constraints. This will also help protect important ecological values including essential habitat of the mahogany glider and marine species and further risks from coastal hazards. The state land west of Cardwell is currently being used for forestry and its future use will depend on allocation under the Land Act 1994.

There are a number of small coastal and rural settlements in Cassowary Coast where the natural or rural surrounds contribute to valued lifestyle choices. These include Bingil Bay, El Arish, Etty Bay, Flying Fish Point, Kurrimine Beach, Mena Creek, Mourilyan and South Johnstone. These settlements generally have limited infrastructure and urban services and are not intended to grow significantly.

The small Aboriginal settlement at Jumbun south-west of Tully has also been included within the urban footprint. The regional plan seeks to facilitate the subdivision for existing houses to individual allotments in this locality with subsequent planning scheme amendments to change the current zoning to a more appropriate urban or village zoning.
Yarrabah is an Aboriginal community situated on Deed of Grant in Trust land in the valley between Mission Bay and Oombunghi Beach, approximately 10 kilometres directly east of Cairns. A large urban footprint has been designated for Yarrabah. It is not intended that all land within the urban footprint will be used for urban purposes. The allocation of land within the urban footprint for a range of purposes, including residential, open space and conservation, will be determined as Council prepares a planning scheme for the area.

Yarrabah is a district regional activity centre due to the range of services provided by the Council (see section 3.8 and 4.2). Most employment in the area is provided through government services, council and the Community Development and Employment Program. Current community services include the health centre, hospital, child care/ welfare centre, schooling, fire brigade and state emergency services, recreational facilities, youth centre, aged care hostel, women’s centre, community hall and church. Various community service operations provide employment and training opportunities for locals such as a radio station, market garden, tea tree plantation, and the Menmuny museum.

Housing availability, infrastructure and services will continue to improve in this shire to provide the community with appropriate facilities and economic development opportunities. Housing growth will be accommodated along the Oombunghi Road corridor to ensure efficient infrastructure utilisation. This is consistent with the desired coastal outcome of the Wet Tropical Coast Regional Coastal Management Plan (EPA, 2003a).

Wujal Wujal is an Aboriginal community situated on Deed of Grant in Trust land in the Bloomfield Valley on the northern side of the Bloomfield River. It was once the site of a mission. The existing community facilities in this rural activity centre (see section 4.2) include council offices, supermarket, post office, library and traditional knowledge centre, police, community hall, child care, a primary health care centre with helipad and other facilities such as a sports oval, church and primary school nearby.

The Council is the main employer although natural attractions such as the Bloomfield Falls, Roaring Meg Falls and other historic and Aboriginal cultural heritage attractions support a fledgling tourist trade. The nearby Eastern Kuku Yalanji Traditional Owners are likely to progress economic development in some form in the future as their community development planning processes are completed (see section 3.8).

The Wujal Wujal township is expected to grow over the next twenty years, with new housing required to ease overcrowding in existing poorly designed housing and to cater for higher than average population growth. The township is constrained by steep slopes, proximity to the river and flooding during times of extremely high rainfall during the wet season.

The urban footprint for Wujal Wujal includes the current township, and preferred expansion area on the south side of the Bloomfield River towards the historic locality ofDegarra. It is not intended that all of the expansion area be used for urban purposes. The allocation of land for housing and other purposes within the urban footprint will be determined by the Wujal Wujal Council during planning scheme development and/or review that also takes into account constraints of the land.
Transport infrastructure

The Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan provides a review of Queensland Government infrastructure projects and planning activities, and reports on their alignment with the FNQ Regional Plan. Planning and delivery of infrastructure at the regional, district and local levels also occurs through a number of aligned plans, such as the Roads Implementation Program, the Cairns Integrated Public Transport Plan, the FNQ principal cycle network plan and priority infrastructure plans.

Regional FNQ

The provision of transport infrastructure between remote communities of the north and west of the region to the densely populated plains of Cairns presents a range of challenges. The steep escarpment between the Atherton Tablelands and the coastal plains make large scale improvements to transport links very expensive. The Wet Tropics World Heritage area listing and environmental concerns of this and other areas creates additional constraints and expense. There are also challenges in managing road freight to ensure road space is shared effectively between heavy vehicles, passenger vehicles and other road users.

Significant volumes of freight are generated from the rich Atherton Tablelands agricultural land and pastoral holdings west and south of it. Produce is sent to markets and ports on the coast and to the south. Areas west of the Atherton Tablelands (part of the north east minerals province) are rich in minerals deposits. Following the recent growth in mining activity in the North East Minerals Province, exploration in this area is expected to stimulate increased production of mineral ore and concentrate. The roads in the area are generally not designed for this level of freight and accelerated deterioration is likely along with increased safety concerns.

The long term growth of mining is expected to place significant demands on the transport system, particularly roads, used for transporting ore from mine to processing plant and on designated highways for transport of concentrate or metals to the coast for further processing or export, primarily in Townsville. The rail infrastructure in the province is not sufficiently accessible to mining activity to accommodate the growth of mineral related tonnages. There is concern about the capacity of the current road system to accommodate the existing and potential transport of mineral product. Appropriate planning to address demand is important and should consider all transport modes.

The arterial road network outside of Cairns will be a key component in the management of growth over the next twenty years. In particular, the threshold capacities of the existing Bruce Highway, the Kennedy Highway (Kuranda Range) and Captain Cook Highway are major issues for region. Managing traffic volumes on these and other arterial roads within the region may require an innovative approach to planning, design and funding in order to preserve regional environmental and community values.

The Captain Cook Highway between Palm Cove and Port Douglas is constrained and will continue to be maintained as a major scenic route. The car ferry crossing on the Daintree River will continue to limit development north of the river, while the road between the Daintree and Bloomfield Rivers will continue to be a scenic/adventure drive, adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage area.
The significant biodiversity and scenic values of the Mission Beach area are also recognised. The access roads are adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage area and through roads are adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. These will primarily remain as scenic tourist drives and to service existing residential areas and identified resort areas.

The Department of Main Roads (DMR) intends to undertake sufficient investigation to identify and preserve the available options for transport corridors. Any additional corridors may be very expensive and involve social and environmental impacts. The land use and transport strategies of the regional plan need to be fully implemented, so that the need for any additional corridors is delayed as long as possible.

Kuranda Range Road

Investigations have been undertaken regarding substantially improving the road link between Cairns and the Northern Tablelands. A significant consideration was infrastructure cost and affordability of major infrastructure projects. After extensive investigation, planning and community consultation DMR identified a four-lane surface route with extensive bridging as the best solution, determined the footprint, obtained necessary environmental approvals and revised cost estimates based on these factors. However, in 2007, the upgrade was assessed as being unaffordable in the short to medium term. Improvements to the road will, however, occur in the interim.

Cairns

To ease increasing traffic congestion, Cairns requires well integrated transport options that provide attractive alternatives to private car travel. As the last city on the Bruce Highway supply chain, Cairns is dependent on an efficient transport network to support continued growth in the economy.

The overall efficiency of existing and future transport infrastructure relies on land use options that provide densities of population and intensities of land use activities to make public transport viable. To be successful the public transport system must integrate with surrounding land uses, and provide reliable pedestrian connectivity. The development of future centres within greenfield growth areas, including the Mount Peter Master Planned Area, are likely to play a significant role in achieving this strategic aim and will need to be reflected in consideration of the planning for such centres.

The Cairns Integrated Public Transport Plan 2005 (Queensland Transport, 2005a) recommended:

• the introduction of transit/bus lanes and high-frequency bus services in the medium term
• bus lanes on key corridors and bus priority at busy intersections throughout Cairns and high frequency bus services in the long term.

The Queensland Government has commenced planning for a new transit network for Cairns. The network will identify dedicated public transport spines to connect the length and breadth of Cairns.

The Southern Cairns Integrated Land Use and Transport Study 2002 (SCLUTS) (Sinclair Knight Merz, 2002) was a priority action of the Far North Queensland Regional Plan (2000). SCLUTS made recommendations about land use and transport to meet the demands of urban growth south from Cairns to Gordonvale, subject to targeted land use and transport planning outcomes being achieved, including:

• an upgraded highway with priority for public transport vehicles and off road shared commuter cycle paths in the corridor, plus an advanced public transport system
• the Bruce Highway, and the local road network should include provision for public transport, pedestrian and cycle movements
• in the short to medium term the public transport system is likely to be on-road, bus-based transport. In the long term the road-based system should supplement an advanced public transport system. The available corridors for an advanced public transport system are the main line railway corridor, the Bruce Highway corridor, and sections of the sugarcane railway corridors
• an efficient arterial road network is to be provided from the northern end of the Bruce Highway motorway into central Cairns to provide a high level of connectivity to key freight, employment and service centres
• a high-speed, high-capacity, north–south cycleway is to be provided from Gordonvale to the city centre.

In order to achieve the potential community benefits of this settlement pattern, developers and local and state government agencies must commit to the principles of transit oriented communities in Cairns. It will take time to plan for and achieve public transport networks and residential densities around the transit oriented community, and the early delivery of key transit oriented community sites will require policy and infrastructure support.
Priority actions to achieve the FNQ preferred settlement pattern

Short-term (0–5 years)
In the short-term there will be consolidation of the existing development activities and establishment of a framework for medium and long term development. The following activities need to be achieved in the short term:

- establishing the Regional Plan Implementation Group to support the Regional Coordination Committee
- amending planning schemes to ensure consistency with the regional plan
- preparing an infrastructure plan to support the regional plan
- preparing priority infrastructure plans for priority infrastructure areas
- preparing transport network plans for Tablelands and Cassowary Coast Regional Councils
- monitoring residential land activity
- preparing a structure plan for the Mount Peter Master Planned Area which maximises the ability to walk to activity centres, minimises the need for private vehicle-based travel between centres and facilitates transit orientated communities through the urban design of its centres
- preparing master plans for the first staged release of land in the Mount Peter Master Planned Area
- investigating alternative future urban areas at Atherton and Tolga and reviewing the regional plan and regulatory provisions if necessary
- undertaking further investigation and planning to accommodate growth in Mareeba to support its role as a major regional activity centre, including master planning for the southern growth area
- investigating future urban areas on the northern side of Mareeba and reviewing the regional plan and regulatory provisions if necessary
- preparing a master plan for the Edmonton major regional activity centre
- preparing a master plan for the Smithfield major regional activity centre
- implementing the Industrial Land Demand and Supply Study
- investigating additional industrial land sites at Edmonton, Smithfield and Innisfail
- developing economic and employment strategies for regional activity centres and key industry sectors
- investigating the potential for a transport hub to be located near Innisfail
- establishing an intergovernmental transit oriented communities taskforce to progress the planning of transit oriented communities (see Part E, section 8.1)
- planning for a new or refurbished transit mall in the Cairns CBD
- budgeting* for, and delivering public transport infrastructure around the key transit oriented communities sites at Edmonton, Palm Cove, Redlynch, Earlville and Gordonvale
- planning for and developing future transit oriented communities in Cairns, including at Palm Cove, Redlynch, Earlville and Gordonvale
- ongoing staged release of land in the Mount Peter Master Planned Area
- reviewing the preferred pattern of development for FNQ
- designation and investigation of potential future growth areas.

Medium-term (5–15 years)
In the medium term there will be increasing consolidation of the preferred pattern of development and a focus on developing the regional activity economic strategies. The following activities need to be achieved in the medium term:

- budgeting* for, and delivering the public transport infrastructure around the key transit oriented communities sites at Edmonton, Palm Cove, Redlynch, Earlville and Gordonvale
- planning for and developing future transit oriented communities in Cairns, including at Palm Cove, Redlynch, Earlville and Gordonvale
- ongoing staged release of land in the Mount Peter Master Planned Area
- reviewing the preferred pattern of development for FNQ
- designation and investigation of potential future growth areas.

Long-term (15 years and beyond)
In the long term significant focus on consolidation within Cairns and the major regional towns. Significant decisions will be made about the long-term future regional pattern of development. The long-term strategy includes:

- reviewing the Kuranda Range Road upgrade and Myola proposals
- expanding the urban footprint and designating urban growth areas
- a review of urban structure and form of Cairns and regional activity centres to facilitate consolidation
- reviewing existing and developing new or amended economic strategies.

*Projects are subject to the normal state government budget assessment process.
FNQ regulatory provisions

The FNQ Regional Plan 2009-2031 State Planning Regulatory Provisions (FNQ Regulatory Provisions) have been prepared under part 5C of IPA as a stand-alone document to complement and provide regulatory support to the regional plan and assist in implementing the preferred settlement pattern for the region.

The FNQ Regulatory Provisions, which came into effect when they were gazetted, replace the draft State Planning Regulatory Provisions (Regional Plans) May 2008, which were introduced on 9 May 2008. Any development applications that were lodged between 9 May 2008 and the date that the FNQ Regulatory Provisions were gazetted, will be subject to the draft State Planning Regulatory Provisions.

State legislation, local government planning schemes, other planning instruments and local laws may continue to apply in addition to the FNQ Regulatory Provisions. The FNQ Regulatory Provisions prevail to the extent of any inconsistency with other planning instruments under the IPA.

The regulatory provisions aim to regulate certain land use and development throughout the region and outline aspects of development that may not occur in stated locations. The application and intent of the regulatory provisions are described in detail in the FNQ Regulatory Provisions.

Regional land use categories

The FNQ Regulatory Provisions allocate all land into one of three regional land use categories: regional landscape and rural production area, urban footprint and rural living area. These categories provide the spatial context for the preferred pattern of development in the regional plan. They are shown indicatively on maps 1a to 1k, and in more detail on the regulatory maps (1:50 000 and 1:250 000 scale) and associated online mapping. Regional land use category boundaries are based on cadastral, planning scheme or other defined boundaries.

State legislation, local government planning schemes, other planning instruments and local laws may continue to apply in addition to the FNQ Regulatory Provisions. The FNQ Regulatory Provisions prevail to the extent of any inconsistency with other planning instruments under the IPA.

Regional landscape and rural production area

Intent

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

Description

The RLRPA includes land with one or more of the following values:

- good quality agricultural land and other productive rural areas
- natural resources such as mineral and extractive resources and native and plantation forests
- water catchment and groundwater areas
- areas of ecological significance, including
  - endangered and of concern regional ecosystems
  - Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and protected area tenures
• essential wildlife habitat of the southern cassowary and mahogany glider
• wetlands
• beaches, islands and other coastal areas
• outdoor recreation and regional open space areas
• inter-urban breaks.

**FNQ regulatory provisions**
The FNQ Regulatory Provisions restrict the following in the RLRPA:

• further fragmentation of land holdings
• urban development, except within specific urban zonings
• residential development associated with tourist accommodation
• expansion of rural residential development.

The FNQ Regulatory Provisions support diversification of rural economies by allowing a range of developments including:

• small to medium scale tourist activities
• small scale industry, business and community activities
• sport and recreation facilities.

**Urban footprint**

**Intent**
The urban footprint includes land to provide for the region’s urban development needs to 2031.

**Description**
The urban footprint includes existing urban areas and broadhectare land potentially suitable for future urban development. It will accommodate the full range of urban uses such as:

• housing
• industry
• business
• community facilities
• tourist facilities
• sport, recreation and urban open space.

Inclusion of land within the urban footprint does not imply that it can be developed for urban purposes. The urban footprint includes areas unsuitable for urban development because of values or constraints, including areas of high ecological significance, waterways, hill slopes, scenic amenity, cultural heritage sites, and open space, and land constrained by flooding, bushfire, landslide and projected climate change impacts such as storm surge and sea level rise. It also includes rural zoned land for future urban growth. Local government is required to amend the planning schemes to ensure appropriate future use of these lands.

The FNQ urban footprint focuses urban growth in locations that:

• are identifiable urban areas including cities, towns and some small centres
• have or may have infrastructure such as reticulated water and sewer, a local road network, and social infrastructure
• physically connect with existing urban areas
• address specific land use needs such as industrial land provision.

The urban footprint includes a number of small urban centres. These generally have, or are intended to have, a village type zoning under the local government planning scheme, or primarily contain residential zonings. The level of infrastructure and service provision is generally low, and may be limited to a school, pub and/or shop. These small urban centres have an important in servicing the region’s rural communities.

The urban footprint also includes some areas designated or already developed for rural residential purposes that are well located with respect to urban services and facilities. Local government is required to identify potential opportunities to develop or redevelop rural residential areas for urban purposes where this is appropriate.

Inclusion of rural residential land in the urban footprint does not imply that it can necessarily be developed for urban purposes as above.

Local government planning schemes and structure plans for declared Master Planned Areas will be the primary mechanisms for establishing the future use of land and preferred timing of development within the urban footprint.

**Rural living area**

**Intent**
The rural living area comprises locations currently designated for rural residential development in local government planning schemes where further rural residential development is permitted under the regional plan.

**Description**
Rural residential areas contained within the rural living area may be developed for rural residential purposes in accordance with the local government planning scheme and other relevant requirements.

Significant areas of land are already developed or allocated for rural residential development in the region. Land for rural residential purposes is to be restricted to the Rural Living Area to ensure future development is appropriately located and access to services and facilities can be provided.

Some areas of rural residential land that are remote from urban communities or are heavily constrained are within the RLRPA.
FNQ regulatory provisions
The FNQ Regulatory Provisions do not prevent land in the rural living area being developed for rural residential purposes but make applications for urban activities impact assessable. Transitional arrangements provide a window of opportunity for landholders to apply to develop rural residential land within the RLRPA.

Urban growth areas
The FNQ Regulatory Provisions also include urban growth areas to provide for an orderly process for investigating, planning and delivering urban development together with the timely development of infrastructure in FNQ.

Urban growth areas are key broadhectare locations for subdivision and development within the urban footprint. The FNQ Regulatory Provisions allow the Minister to declare urban growth areas in the urban footprint as a Master Planned Area under the IPA, thereby triggering the structure planning process of that Act. The Minister can include new areas by notice in the Government Gazette. The master planning process is described more fully in Part E, section 4.3.