



North Queensland Local Government Election Priorities 2020



TOWNSVILLE



CHARTERS TOWERS



HINCHINBROOK



PALM ISLAND



BURDEKIN

FOREWORD

As the tier of government closest to communities, Local Government does not merely deliver services – it shapes neighbourhoods, business and places. Local Government provides the road-map that attracts investment, instills pride and encourages people to relocate to that area. Great cities and towns don't happen by chance – they happen when all levels of government work in partnership with each other, with business and with residents, towards a common goal. It's when these partnerships are in harmony that a region truly fires.

Townsville Enterprise has successfully worked with its five North Queensland Local Councils over the past few years to drive jobs, growth and investment. It is because of these partnerships that projects such as the \$293M Queensland Country Bank Stadium, the \$400M+ water pipeline, the progression of the Hells Gates Dam, the opening of the Galilee Basin and the Museum of Underwater Art are all becoming a reality. More than \$2B of projects have been secured in the past three years and this is a testament to our united advocacy.

Townsville Enterprise values the critical importance of the symbiotic relationship

between these five Local Government Areas in ensuring a strong North Queensland. This is why we have developed a local government platform of priorities that addresses local communities needs whilst continuing to cement our position as a major regional centre in Australia. We acknowledge that there are different local issues in Townsville compared to Burdekin, Charters Towers, Hinchinbrook and Palm Island and this document seeks to address the areas that are important to Townsville and important to our regions.

The region is on the move again, but with unemployment still sitting above 7% and approximately 7,300 people still out of work, we need to work harder to ensure long term job creation now and into the future. Whilst the region continues to battle a range of social and economic local issues, hence our support for the 'Townsville One' initiative addressing crime, we believe the future is still bright for North Queensland.

The list of priorities outlined below has been developed in close consultation with government and industry and represents some simple local measures to help create jobs, stimulate pride and position North Queensland strongly for the future.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

To continue enabling the growth of Townsville North Queensland, Townsville Enterprise is calling on the region's five Local Government Areas to support the following priorities:

BACKING LOCAL BUSINESS AND LOCAL JOBS

Townsville City Council

- › Building on the Basics
- › Attracting Investment
- › Business Engagement
- › Non-residential Pedestal Charges
- › Magnetic Island – The Jewel of the Crown
- › Continue Attracting and Building Events

NORTH QUEENSLAND ECONOMIC GATEWAY

North Queensland Regional Councils

- › Townsville City Council
- › Burdekin Shire Council
- › Charters Towers Regional Council
- › Hinchinbrook Shire Council
- › Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council

Key Enablers

Identified Products and Experiences

Population North

LIFESTYLE AND VISITATION

Tourism 2020 – Talking Up North Queensland



Backing Local Business and Local Jobs

The Opportunity

Business is the engine room of Townsville and need Townsville City Council to be enablers that support and encourage investment and growth.

BACKGROUND

Townsville is a significant economic contributor to the North Queensland and Queensland economy. There are several investment, development and business opportunities that need to be enabled to ensure the region continues to be a thriving economy.

Recent years have presented significant challenges to the Townsville economy. The mining sector experiencing a significant slowdown, natural disasters impacting the region, through flood and drought, and the community through loss of homes and services. It has been an unprecedented period of challenges.

Townsville continues to be a resilient and robust community; however, unemployment for the North Queensland region is at 7.1%, versus 6.1% for the State (SALM, 2019) and 5.2% nationally (ABS, 2019). A healthy, thriving business and investment environment is fundamental to ensuring jobs growth and economic prosperity.

SOLUTION

Townsville City Council is uniquely placed to enable economic growth through the following range of measures:

Building on the Basics

It's important Townsville's image is reflective of its brand and the city is presented in a way that ensures the community feels proud of where they live, business confidence is boosted, and the city can be promoted as an attractive place to invest and relocate to. To help achieve this, small things count as well; which is why Local Government has a leading role in investing into local initiatives that might seem small but can have a significant impact.

In Townsville the efforts and investment in local cleaning and greening initiatives that are designed to make Townsville

shine are important. Clean streets and neighbourhoods, greening programs to ensure our parks and open spaces are attractive, and introducing Business and Community Pride Programs where people are empowered to take responsibility for presentation of their premises are also key. The measured continuation of the Townsville City Council program of re-greening spaces is a tangible way in which the council can support this initiative.

Attracting Investment

Timeliness and streamlining of approvals – Townsville City Council to develop clear and accountable timeframes for turn-around on approvals, including infrastructure agreements. Delays on infrastructure agreements have significant impacts on developers' ability to commence construction.

This isn't just for external investment coming in but also ensuring that locally generated projects make a contribution as well. We should redouble our efforts to ensure local investment can also generate local jobs as part of the overall contributions.

Business Engagement

The State Government has recently implemented Belcarra legislation which requires councils to ensure disclosure of conflicts and a controlled process when dealing with the business community. Feedback from members indicates an opportunity for Townsville City Council to improve engagement while still complying with the legislation. Business wants to work with councils to get the balance right and a proactive strategy to streamline engagement with the business community is a necessary step to keep the local economy improving as quickly as possible.





Non-residential Pedestal Charges

Townsville commercial businesses are currently paying amongst the highest rates for sewerage in the State.

For the accommodation sector, pedestal taxes are prohibiting business growth. These sewerage charges, in addition to increases in insurance premiums and impacts from the Townsville flooding in February 2019, are creating a challenging environment for the accommodation sector and limits development and investment in this sector.

The accommodation industry and broader tourism sector is calling for a freeze on non-residential Pedestal Charges especially while in the rebuilding phase of recovery.

Magnetic Island – The Jewel of the Crown

To capitalise on the true tourism potential of Magnetic Island there is need for a 2030 Magnetic Island Tourism Vision to be undertaken. The scope of this plan should:

- › Provide a strategic blueprint of capital works programs that improves tourism infrastructure across the island and identifies key investment/development opportunities.
- › Enable Magnetic Island to deliver the ‘best of Australia’ tourism experiences by matching the island’s natural beauty with a built environment that improves the appeal of the destination.
- › Increase the economic return from tourism in our region through increased visitation, length of stay and expenditure.
- › Provide a focal point for council, industry, national parks and community to work together.

Recommendation

Townsville Enterprise calls on the Townsville City Council to further support the development, expansion and growth of the local business community through a range of measures, such as balancing a *Building on the Basics* approach to local government responsibilities and working to attract investment into the region that creates meaningful long-term jobs.

TOWNSVILLE CITY COUNCIL

Continue Attracting and Building Events



The Opportunity

North Queensland has the potential to be regional Australia's leading events destination. This will only be achieved with a continued and increased commitment to the development and acquisition of events.

Recommendation

- Funding commitment to the outcomes and actions identified in Townsville City Council's Major Events Strategy
- Continued support towards the Townsville North Queensland Bid Fund

BACKGROUND

Townsville is home to a strong events calendar with long standing destination events such as the Supercars, Professional Bull Riding, Australian Festival of Chamber Music, Townsville Running Festival, Magnetic Island Race Week and the Townsville Triathlon & Multisport Festival all embedded into the fabric of the community. From a tourism perspective, these events have all demonstrated a significant injection of visitation and economic benefit to the region. It is acknowledged Townsville City Council has significantly invested into building and attracting events in recent years and this has had a positive impact for business and the community. Recent additions to the events calendar such as the North Australia Festival of Arts (NAFA) as well as the destination's success in acquiring major events such as the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the Rugby League World Cup is testament to the potential and scale of events that Townsville can attract and/or develop.

With the growth recently seen in the events sector and development of new event facilities (Queensland Country Bank Stadium), there is an opportunity to take a strategic approach to acquiring and developing the Townsville Major Events Calendar. There is opportunity to leverage Townsville's historic success in delivering events to not only grow the major events calendar but to also position

the destination as the events capital of regional Australia.

Townsville currently faces several challenges in its ability to attract, maintain and grow events. Significant consultation with key stakeholders from the events sector has determined a need to streamline the processes and support channels available to events to better enable existing events to grow and for new events to be secured for the city. This has led to the creation of the Townsville Major Events Strategy which has actions and outcomes focused on:

- Positioning Townsville as an Events Destination
- Identifying a structured approach and framework for managing event opportunities
- A strategy for attracting new events and investing in existing ones
- Maximising the potential of existing event assets (built and natural) and identifying the need for new or upgraded event facilities

SOLUTION

Provide financial commitment to delivering on the actions as presented in the Townsville Major Events Strategy.

NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL COUNCILS

North Queensland Economic Gateway



**Townsville
City Council**

**Burdekin
Shire Council**



**Charters Towers
Regional Council**

**Hinchinbrook
Shire Council**



**Palm Island
Aboriginal
Shire Council**

NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL COUNCILS

North Queensland Economic Gateway

It's important for Local Government to balance a focus on the here and now with advocacy and investment into projects and policies of the future. The region has endorsed a list of priorities that grow the economy and enhance the lifestyle of North Queenslanders which candidates and councillors are asked to continue to support. The below priorities have been key components of our State and Federal submissions, as well as identified in the Product and Experience Development Plan launched in 2019.

Townsville

- › Lansdown Eco Industrial Precinct
- › Townsville Ross Creek and Art Precinct Masterplan
- › Strand Urban Development
- › Reef HQ Aquarium Redevelopment
- › Entertainment and Exhibition Centre
- › Drivelt NQ
- › North Queensland Country Club and Equestrian Centre
- › Magnetic Island Walking Trail Development
- › Activation of Castle Hill
- › Year-round major events

Burdekin

- › Burdekin Industrial Land Project
- › Inkerman / Bruce Highway Intersection Upgrade
- › Macro-algae Remediation Project
- › Cromarty Wetlands/Wongaloo Conservation Park
- › New tourism product feasibility
- › Backpacker Market: Adventure Tour Product

Charters Towers

- › Hells Gates Dam
- › Gregory Developmental Road
- › Kernow Charters Towers Development

Hinchinbrook

- › Foreshore Redevelopment
- › Dungeness dredging, replenishment and car park expansion
- › Halifax Heritage Master Plan
- › Wallaman Falls Master Plan
- › Heated Silo Storage Project
- › NQBE Renewable Energy Project
- › Herbert River Weir Project
- › Recreational/Adventure Tourism Product
- › Visitor Wayfinding Signage

Palm Island

- › Retail and Commercial Precinct
- › Trail Network
- › Cultural Precinct
- › Interpretation and Wayfinding Signage
- › Eco-accommodation Development

In conjunction, all regional councils continue to support the Product and Experience Development Plan and commit to monitoring and implementing the actions associated. The current projects and experiences noted as priority for delivery are as follows:

Key Enablers

- › Increased Airline Capacity and Routes
- › Magnetic Island 2030 Tourism Vision
- › Townsville: Queensland Country Bank Stadium
- › Hinchinbrook: Dungeness Marine Access Improvements
- › Palm Island Readiness and Resilience Program
- › Townsville Tourism Marine Precinct

- › Activate the new DNA – Branding
- › Digital Sophistication Program
- › Operator Development and Mentoring

Identified Products and Experiences Regional Collaborations:

- › Paluma to Wallaman Walking Trail
- › Museum of Underwater Art (MOUA)

NORTH QUEENSLAND REGIONAL COUNCILS

Population North



The Issue

In 2018 Townsville achieved modest population growth of 0.6% and North Queensland an even more modest 0.3% growth.

Population targets need to be set to ensure Government and industry are working towards a goal that is backed by an infrastructure, jobs and liveability plan.

BACKGROUND

North Queensland needs the appropriate policy settings in place to retain and attract the population needed to underwrite its future economic growth. The Developing Northern Australia White Paper 2015 recognised that rapid population growth is fundamental to unlocking Northern Australia's economic potential and capitalising on its proximity to the burgeoning economies of Asia and the Tropics.

The broad objective of macroeconomic policy is to contribute to economic and social wellbeing in an equitable and sustainable manner. Unless, as a nation, we are prepared to make a strong commitment to address factors that support the sustainability of regional communities, we will continue to see the exodus of educated and skilled labour to capital cities in pursuit of opportunity and employment.

Governments of the day have a fundamental obligation to ensure

fair and equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity across the nation, supporting and contributing to the regeneration and sustainability of regional cities and communities. If Governments fail to support proactive regional development, they run the risk of economic instability or the establishment of a "two speed" economy. Not since the influence of Australia's mining and resources boom (prior to the impact of the Global Financial Crisis) has our country found itself in the midst of a two-speed economy, this time comprising:

- i. NSW and Victoria (driven largely by Sydney and Melbourne); and
- ii. The rest of Australia (ROA).

The size and relative strength of the NSW and Victorian economies means that economic data presented at the national level is masking weaknesses throughout the ROA, particularly that of regional centres. Without a targeted approach by Government to regional development, the economic divide between southern capitals and regional communities will continue to widen. Australia's southern capital cities are burdened by a lack of affordable housing options and are unable to address cost of living pressures. It would only seem practical that all levels of Government would seek to alleviate this pressure through the decentralisation and relocation of departmental and agency operations to regional centres, seeking to turn the tide of regional emigration.

SOLUTION

1. The Local Governments of North Queensland to consider putting in place a dedicated Population Policy and target.
2. The Population Policy should focus on attracting new business and retaining existing businesses, and should include:
 - › Commitment to invest in the economic infrastructure, social infrastructure and government services needed to support the population target.
 - › A whole-of-government requirement for laws and policies that affect Northern Australia to explicitly consider how they will positively impact population growth targets.
 - › Local Government can access through the State and Federal Governments a range of funding and grant streams, it is critical that this funding is fully utilised for the benefit of the region and local content policies prioritised.
 - › Resources to support a national marketing program and business incentive package to attract businesses to relocate to North Queensland.
 - › Commit to establishing a scheme to retain graduates from the local universities, James Cook University and Central Queensland University, TAFE North and Tec-NQ, ensuring the region has the skilled workforce required to lead economic growth.

Recommendation

Local Governments of North Queensland to consider putting in place a dedicated **Population Policy** and target.

LIFESTYLE AND VISITATION

Tourism 2020 – Talking Up North Queensland



BACKGROUND

Currently the regional tourism and events industry contributes more than \$1.2 billion to the Townsville North Queensland economy, supporting approximately 6,800 local jobs. However, this is earmarked to more than double over the next decade with a number of developments either proposed or under development. For these projects to reach their full potential and drive visitor demand, an increase in tourism marketing activity will be integral to ensure the region is competitive and funding is aligned with other regions in Queensland.

North Queensland's tourism and events industry has seen limited growth over the last 20 years and has struggled to attract and maintain airline routes. Townsville North Queensland's tourism marketing spend is currently one of the least funded in the State. With per capita Local Government funding to the region for tourism marketing currently sitting at approximately \$1.55 per capita in comparison to Mackay at \$3.27, Bundaberg at \$5.66 and Cairns at \$11.03.

In response to the February 2019 monsoon event, Tourism and Events Queensland funded Townsville Enterprise \$500,000 to coordinate a flood recovery tourism marketing campaign over a two-year period. Directly following the monsoon event a national marketing campaign was delivered by Townsville Enterprise which incorporated broadcasts across a national TV breakfast program, holiday packages, a national radio campaign,

a digital and social media campaign, and a partnership with Jetstar. Operators have since reported the 2019 tourism season as one of the best in 10 years, national visitor statistics have seen record growth and the accommodation sector reported year on year growth with occupancy levels between 80% and to 90% from June – August.

In October, the 2019–2024 Townsville North Queensland Tourism Product and Experience Development Plan was launched, in collaboration with all regional councils to set the strategic direction for the region's tourism industry. It identifies enabling strategies that will support tourism growth. Through significant consultation this plan also works to better define our destination's DNA and provides the platform to launch a branding strategy which would redefine and relaunch Townsville North Queensland to the nation through a brand campaign that strongly markets the events calendar and our tourism assets.

SOLUTION

Given the global tourism growth trends and Townsville North Queensland's untapped potential in this sector, it is proposed that all regional councils increase their funding commitment to tourism marketing for the region by an additional \$1M per year under a three-year agreement (this amount to be inclusive of other levels of government and private sector funding). Townsville Enterprise will work with media partners and local operators to further leverage this funding commitment.

The Issues

- Townsville North Queensland is one of the least funded for destination marketing in the State.
- The region requires increased marketing investment with funding comparable to other tourism destinations.
- Over the last 20 years tourism growth in the region has flatlined and the destination has struggled to attract and maintain new airline routes.

Recommendation

Provide a three-year funding commitment of an additional \$1M per year to support a national tourism and events campaign focused on attracting visitors to the region. This will enable the region to ensure its competitiveness with other tourism destinations.

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