



# Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan

*Driving Productivity  
in Australia's Transport Network*

## Overview

June 2017



**Regional  
Development**  
*Australia*

TOWNSVILLE AND NORTH WEST QLD

# A collaborative approach

The Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan (IQ-RAP) has been developed by the collaborative partnership of 49 organisations across regional Queensland. The purpose of the plan is to achieve more strategic, long term planning and funding for inland roads to form a stronger network, better safety outcomes, more efficient supply chains, greater resilience to cope with weather events and to sustain regional communities and industries.

The following partners in the IQ-RAP's development provided their financial support, information, insights and advice to ensure a robust plan that can be used as a planning tool by all levels of government.

- Balonne Shire Council
- Banana Shire Council
- Barcaldine Regional Council
- Barcoo Shire Council
- Blackall-Tambo Regional Council
- Boulia Shire Council
- Bowen Basin Regional Roads and Transport Group
- Bulloo Shire Council
- Burke Shire Council
- Carpentaria Shire Council
- Central Highlands Regional Council
- Charters Towers Regional Council
- Cloncurry Shire Council
- Croydon Shire Council
- Diamantina Shire Council
- Etheridge Shire Council
- Far North Queensland Regional Roads and Transport Group
- Flinders Shire Council
- Gladstone Regional Council
- Gladstone Regional Roads and Transport Group
- Isaac Regional Council
- Longreach Regional Council
- Mackay Regional Council
- Maranoa Regional Council
- Mareeba Shire Council
- McKinlay Shire Council
- Mount Isa City Council
- Murweh Shire Council
- Northern Queensland Regional Development Australia Alliance
- North West Queensland Regional Roads and Transport Group
- Outback Regional Roads and Transport Group
- Paroo Shire Council
- Quilpie Shire Council
- RACQ
- Regional Development Australia Far North Queensland and Torres Strait
- Regional Development Australia Darling Downs South West
- Regional Development Australia Fitzroy Central West
- Regional Development Australia Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday
- Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland
- Richmond Shire Council
- Rockhampton Regional Council
- Rockhampton Regional Roads and Transport Group
- South West Regional Economic Development
- South West Queensland Regional Roads and Transport Group
- Tablelands Regional Council
- Townsville City Council
- Whitsunday Regional Council
- Whitsunday Regional Roads and Transport Group
- Winton Shire Council

The Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads also provided in-kind support through the provision of data and information.



# Introduction by Chair of IQ-RAP Working Group

Cr Rick Britton  
Chair, IQ-RAP  
Working Group  
and Mayor  
Boulia Shire



Queensland is a highly decentralised state with its wealth producing centres scattered widely along the coastal strip but more importantly throughout the interior – from major ports and airports through agriculture and mining, to tourism and services. Queensland is also a critical supplier of food, goods and materials to the major population centres in the south of our continent.

Historically, road transport and subsequent investment has focussed on the Bruce Highway as a single coastal link with east-west 'ribs' serving the hinterlands. This approach has produced significant congestion on the coastal network which is also subject to extremes of climatic impact and the pressure of growing population. The coastal network is also neither designed nor appropriate for the operation of Freight Efficient Vehicles (FEV) which maximise productivity of the freight task.

**The vision for the Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan (IQ-RAP) is to increase the quality and accessibility of the road network to maximise the economic prosperity of inland Queensland, thereby contributing to Australia's productivity, quality of life, safety and equity outcomes.**

The goals of improving productivity and safety on the inland Queensland road network, along with sustaining regional local governments and communities, brought together 33 local governments, 8 Regional Roads and Transport Groups (RRTGs), Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees and the RACQ as a working group to develop a bi-partisan approach to road network planning. This strategic alliance has developed the plan to identify the network and prioritise a program of works over 15 years and beyond. Each of these partners has contributed financially to the project.

IQ-RAP aims to strengthen Queensland's road network by identifying and prioritising for investment upgrade of the more freight efficient inland network by creating a transport 'backbone' in the eastern zone of inland Queensland providing a quality inland link connecting northern Australia to Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

For the western zone, IQ-RAP aims to prioritise improvement of 'ribs' servicing the west's industry and communities and improving access to the 'backbone.'

## The IQ-RAP network

The proposed network is based on previous work of the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR), recent studies and knowledge from local governments. It was chosen for connectivity to all major communities, wealth generating regions and tourism destinations to the west of the Bruce Highway and outside South East Queensland.

Prioritised investment in the IQ-RAP network is necessary to enhance connectivity between communities in western and northern Queensland and address a range of challenges associated with the current condition and the changing demands on the network. It will also deliver benefit to industries and support Australian Government strategies to enhance the productivity of northern Australia, contributing to the Australian economy through providing improved and more direct connectivity to southern markets. For example, the beef industry is highly dependent on the transport network for the timely and efficient movement of stock; delays at times of climatic extremes directly impact productivity.

## Methodology

The IQ-RAP marks the first time a strategic level analysis and prioritisation has been undertaken on a network of around 16,000 kilometres of rural roads, and provides a methodology that can continue to be used to monitor the infrastructure gap and review priorities. It analyses existing data on road and bridge conditions against established TMR intervention and vision standards, and prioritises investment based on the following values:

- » Economic value – Supports economic activity across all industries, and is able to carry heavy freight efficiently in most weather conditions with enhanced safety levels for all users;
- » Strategic intent – Provides stimulus to future economic development;
- » Safety – Carries traffic safely;

- » Access – Ensures roads within the network are of a consistent and adequate quality with predictable travel conditions; and
- » Social value – Connects communities for education, health, employment, business and recreation

The needs and aspirations of road users were considered in the identification and prioritisation of works, which called for:

- » A robust network of inland roads connecting to and providing viable alternative routes to the Bruce Highway, as well as servicing those seeking an inland route to southern states;
- » Roads to be built and maintained to 'fit for purpose' standards; and
- » A prioritised program of works resulting in timely improvements, to meet industry development and operational needs, and continuity of work for dedicated local workforces.

This plan provides stakeholders with a high level assessment of the current road infrastructure in the region, a clear understanding of the future road transport priorities for inland Queensland, and a sensible and staged approach to funding the required improvements.

An implementation plan is proposed to convert this understanding into an agreed and funded plan, and to prepare road authorities for the planning, design and construction activities necessary to undertake projects when funds become available.

Achievement of a realistic program of works based on this plan will both improve transport links within inland Queensland and links to the rest of Australia, it will also reduce traffic pressures on Queensland's populous coastal strip.

I encourage you to consider the opportunities this plan presents and the recommendations that can take Queensland and Australia into the next century of prosperity. For more details on the full plan, please visit [www.rdanwq.org.au](http://www.rdanwq.org.au)

**Cr Rick Britton**  
Chair, IQ-RAP Working Group  
and Mayor Boulia Shire

# What's good for inland Queensland is good for Australia

## AGRICULTURE

The agricultural industry contributes \$13.7 billion and 5% of Gross State Product (GSP) and employs 323,800 people accounting for 14% of Queensland's employment. **Approximately 88% of these jobs are regionally-based.** Significant new agricultural expansion is already planned in much of Queensland based on water resources associated with the major catchments.

## CONSTRUCTION

The construction industry contributes \$14.4 billion and 7.7% of Gross State Product and employs 149,400 people accounting for 8.4% of the Queensland's employment. **Approximately 47% of this industry activity is based outside South East Queensland.**

## GEOGRAPHY

**The scope of the Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan covers 33 Local Governments and 1.4 million km<sup>2</sup>, which equates to 82% of Queensland and 18.5% of Australia.**

The area is more than 20 times the size of Tasmania.

## BUSINESSES

**In 2013-14, there were 97,892 registered businesses outside the Queensland South East corner.**

The majority of these businesses employed 1-4 employees.

## ECONOMY

Queensland's industry and business base is broadly distributed. 52%, that is, **\$140 billion of Queensland's Gross State Product is generated outside Brisbane.**

## UNEMPLOYMENT

While 4-quarter smoothed unemployment in Queensland was 6.5% in the September 2015 Quarter, it reached 7.3% in the inland Queensland region as defined by the scope of the IQ-RAP. **With nearly 28,000 people unemployed and more redundancies and business closures announced since September 2015, the region is facing increasing unemployment, continuing very high youth unemployment at approximately 20% and declining population growth or in the worst case situations declining populations.**



## MINING AND ENERGY

The total economic impact of the minerals and energy sector taking into account direct and indirect benefits in 2014/15 was \$64.8 billion, contributing 21.9% of Gross State Product and employing 365,866 people accounting for 15.7% of the Queensland's employment. **Approximately 40% of this industry activity is based outside South East Queensland.** In regions like North West Queensland, the mining sector accounts for 56.2% of direct and indirect regional employment.

## EXPORTS

**Queensland has more than 15 ports, 7 of which are vitally linked to the Inland Queensland Road network.** Queensland exports \$49.5 billion of goods overseas each year. The major exports include; food and live animals worth \$7.6 billion, mineral fuels \$19.84 billion and non-ferrous metals \$4.25 billion. **A number of export industries have shown considerable growth in value over the past decade – agricultural exports have grown by 104% from 2004/5 to 2014/15 and coal and metal ore exports have increased by 93%.**

## TOURISM

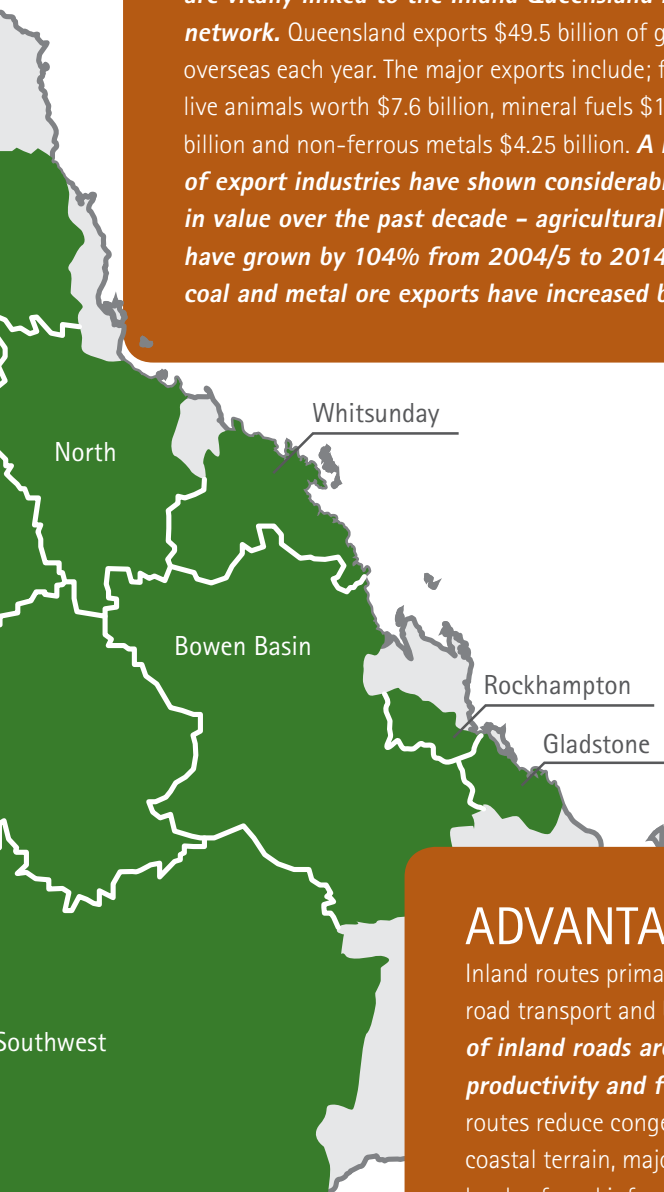
The tourism industry contributes \$23 billion and 7.6% of Gross State Product and employs 131,000 people accounting for 5.6% of Queensland's employment. The sector contributes \$5.8 billion to export earnings and is the second largest export earner in Queensland after coal. **Approximately 40% of this tourism industry activity is based outside South East Queensland.** The international and domestic touring markets now account for 1.3 million visitors to Queensland with annual expenditure of \$1.9 billion.

## POPULATION

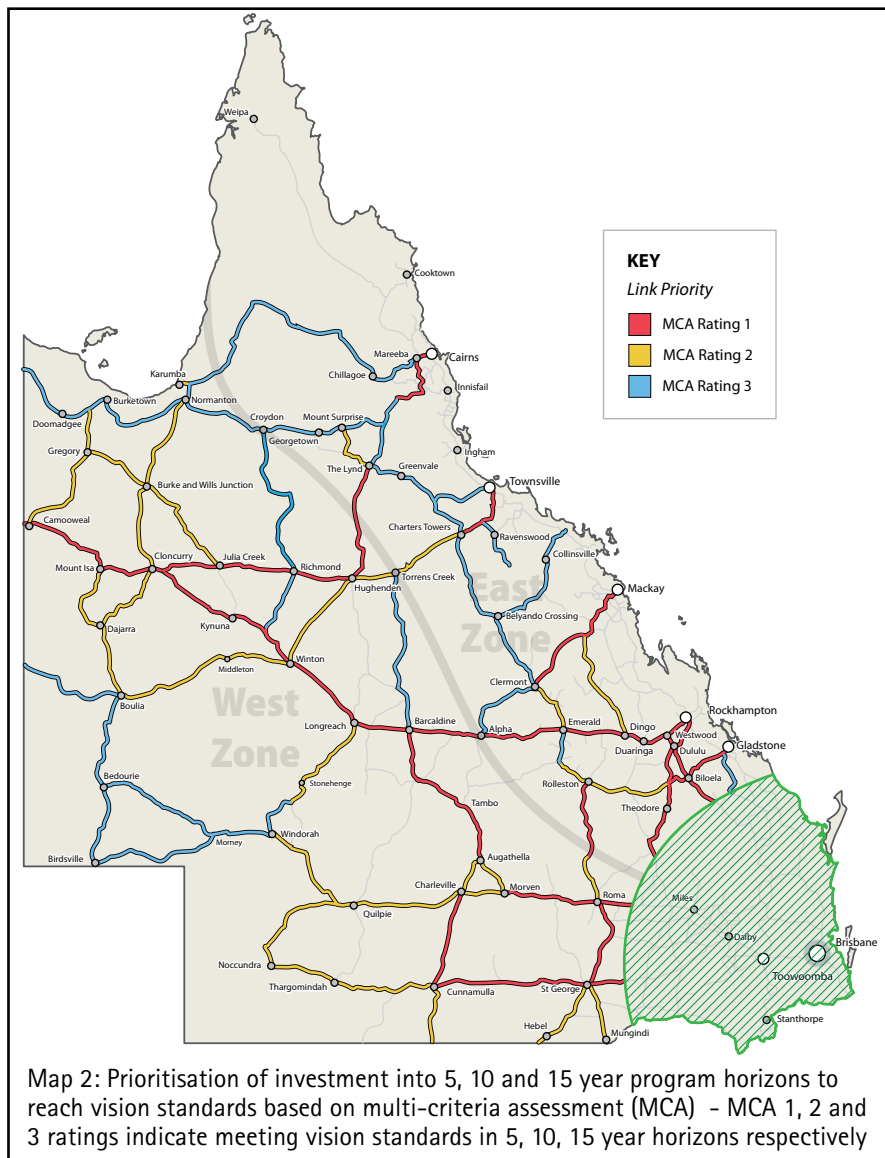
Queensland has a highly decentralised population compared with other States. Queensland's estimated forecast population in 2016 is 4.9 million. **The population outside South East Queensland is estimated to reach 1.6 million by 2036.** This is more than three times the population of Tasmania.

## ADVANTAGES OF INLAND ROUTES

Inland routes primarily pass through smaller population centres traditionally welcoming of road transport and benefit significantly from transport-related industries. **The vast majority of inland roads are designated road train routes which allow for higher freight productivity and fewer heavy/light vehicle interactions.** Efficient and effective inland routes reduce congestion on the populous coastal strip served by the Bruce Highway where coastal terrain, major rivers and more extreme climatic events require significantly higher levels of road infrastructure funding to achieve similar levels of operational efficiency.



# Inland Queensland Road Network Map



## The IQ-RAP network

A multi criteria analysis (MCA) aided in short-listing multiple investment options based on a consistent range of criteria across the entire network. The MCA has been undertaken on a link basis rather than project basis, as it is strategically important that a link is completed to desired standards rather than individual isolated projects.

The MCA has identified just over 3,000 kilometres of road and approximately 300 bridges which require improvement to bring the network up to the vision standard (for road and bridge quality) that was established based on stakeholder engagement.

Prioritisation of investment into 5, 10 and 15 year program horizons (MCA 1, 2 and 3 ratings respectively in the map) is demonstrated in the following table with additional works recommended beyond that.

The IQ-RAP provides a tool for governments to rapidly assess projects for funding based on their priority within the inland Queensland road network, safe in the knowledge that a robust and non-partisan multi criteria analysis has been undertaken.

The IQ-RAP is not a static document, it will require regular revision and review to account for changing economic patterns, improvements in transport best practice and strategic input from other States and Territories regarding broader connectivity to align with developing northern Australia. Updates will also highlight the achievements of IQ-RAP in attracting funding and the projects delivered. It is recommended that the methodology developed for the IQ-RAP be extended across the Queensland border and become the basis for an assessment and prioritisation of the entire inland Australia road network.

Regional Roads and Transport Groups	Strategic estimate <sup>1</sup>	Future investment \$m			
		\$m	1-5yr	6-10yr	11-15yr
South West	694	86	343	265	
Outback	903	106	337	410	50
North West	1,222	176	305	307	434
Bowen Basin, Rockhampton, Gladstone	964	220	424	320	
Whitsunday	417	92	126	81	118
North Queensland <sup>2</sup>	491	170	132	189	
Far North Queensland <sup>3</sup>	321	72	146	103	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,012</b>	<b>922</b>	<b>1,813</b>	<b>1,675</b>	<b>602</b>

<sup>1</sup> Strategic Estimate in \$2015, subject to planning and design considerations.

<sup>2</sup> North Queensland = funding partners Townsville and Charters Towers

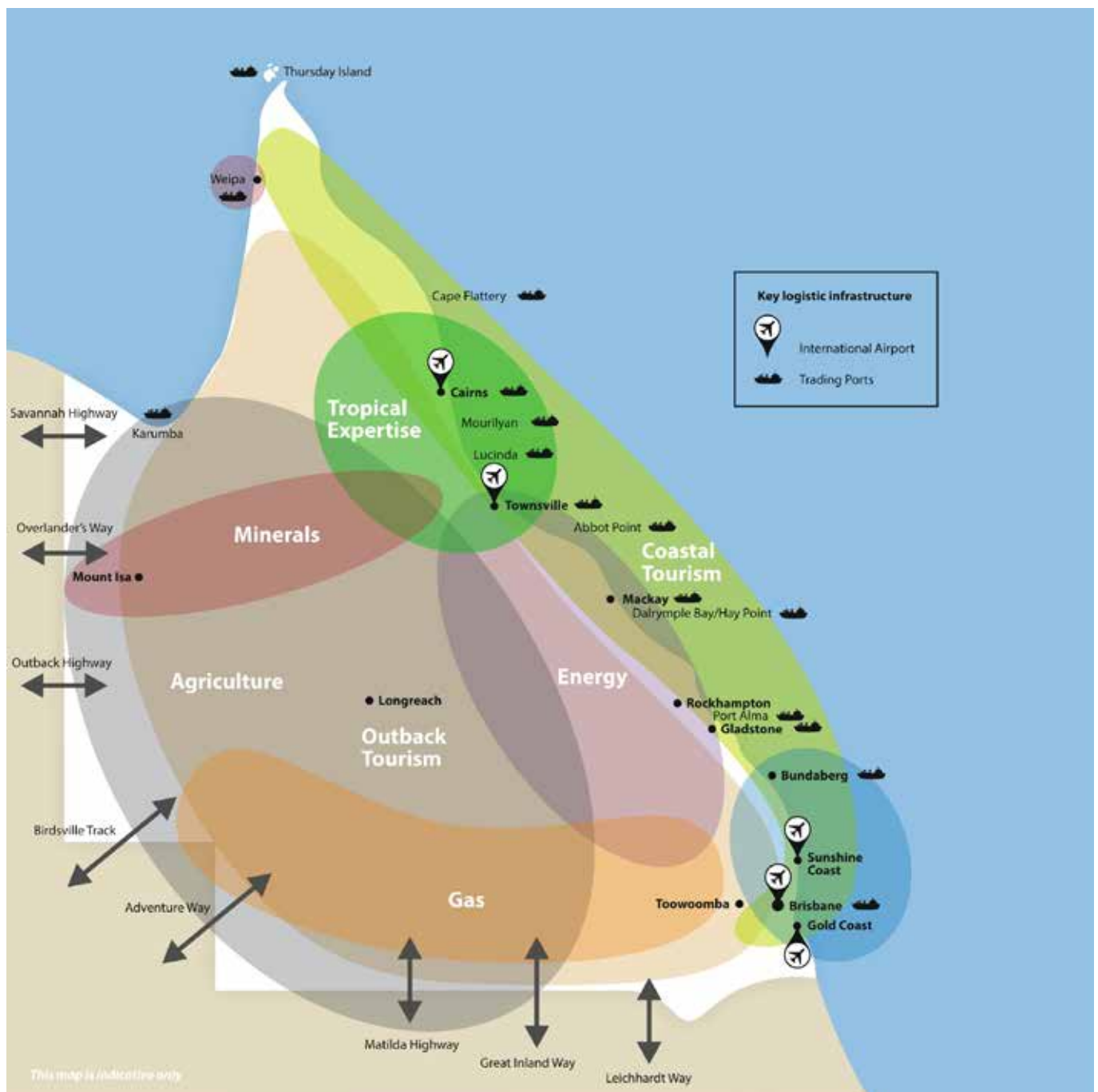
<sup>3</sup> Far North Queensland = Mareeba and Tablelands

# Inland Queensland Roads

*Connect products, services and people*

IQ-RAP objectives are to:

- Improve safety outcomes
- Improve productivity for agricultural, mining and logistics businesses and their supply chains
- Open up new drive routes to expand tourism
- Build resilience and more reliable connectivity for the delivery of goods and services to communities
- Create sustainable jobs in road planning, designing, construction and maintenance
- Open up new opportunities to attract private sector investment
- Enhance competitiveness of exporters to grow their businesses and employ more people
- Improve animal welfare and product quality outcomes through better road quality and connectivity between the farm gate and markets





# Inland Queensland Roads Action Plan

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in Australia's Transport Network

## IQ-RAP Partners



Blackall-Tambo  
Regional Council  
*Explores the past, Invents the future*



CARPENTARIA SHIRE  
*Outback by the Sea\**



Whitsunday  
Regional Council



FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND  
AND TORRES STRAIT INC



TOWNSVILLE AND NORTH WEST QLD



MACKAY-ISAAC-  
WHITSUNDAY QLD



DARLING DOWNS  
AND SOUTH WEST INC



FITZROY AND CENTRAL WEST INC



Regional  
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