



TOWNSVILLE AND NORTH WEST QUEENSLAND

Strategic Regional Plan

2026-2031



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia

Acknowledgment of Country

Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland acknowledges First Nations peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Australia.

We respect and celebrate the inherent strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their commitment to the land, waters and their communities. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Foreword

A Strategy for Regional Growth

The Townsville and North West Queensland region is entering a period of significant opportunity. Global demand for critical minerals is increasing, renewable energy resources are highly sought after nationally and internationally, and the region's industrial base is foundational to Australia's sovereign capability. This is complemented by a tourism sector that offers distinctive experiences to visitors from across Australia and around the world.

Infrastructure investment and emerging industries in the region will shape Australia's economic and energy future by creating jobs, fostering innovation and strengthening national resilience.

Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland's (RDA TNWQ) 2026-2031 Strategic Regional Plan identifies economic opportunities and a strategy to realise them.

Unlocking the region's potential relies on building strong core capabilities, including key enabling infrastructure, access to quality housing, provision of essential services to our communities, and education and training opportunities that build a skilled, future-ready workforce.

This Strategic Regional Plan has been developed following widespread consultation with stakeholders and builds on the priorities and actions outlined in strategic plans developed by various stakeholder organisations.

With a clear focus on long-term outcomes and a commitment to inclusive regional development, this plan provides a framework for aligning priorities, tackling challenges, seize opportunities, and share the benefits of growth across all communities.

RDA TNWQ's Strategic Regional Plan 2026-2031 is our call to action, guiding investment and collaboration and building a region that is stronger, more resilient, and ready to capitalise on current and future opportunities.

Debra Burden

CHAIR, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA
TOWNSVILLE & NORTH WEST QUEENSLAND



Executive Summary

North and North West Queensland is a vast and diverse region, home to over 275,000 people and a \$36 billion economy.

The region's resources position it to lead Australia in supplying clean energy, critical minerals mining and processing, advanced manufacturing, defence industry services, food, fibre, and biofuels, as well as tropical industries innovation.

RDA TNWQ's Strategic Regional Plan 2026-2031 outlines key actions to leverage these resources, with regional stakeholders already leading many initiatives. The Plan details how RDA TNWQ will work with stakeholders to realise the region's potential to achieve long-term, sustainable, and equitable prosperity.

Our Opportunity

Major global trends, including the transition to net zero, which is driving increased demand for clean energy and critical minerals, the push to strengthen national sovereignty over local supply chains, AI, and a shifting strategic defence landscape, align with our region's strengths, including:

- » Abundant critical minerals, solar and wind resources
- » A strong and diverse agricultural base
- » Efficient access to global markets through the Ports of Townsville and Karumba
- » Supply chain expertise across mining and minerals processing, manufacturing, agriculture, defence, and logistics

- » Iconic natural assets
- » A rich First Nations culture
- » A strong pipeline of public and private investment
- » North Queensland's strategic importance in the defence of our nation
- » World-class research and innovation in tropical health and sciences.

Our Strategy

We have identified eight strategic priorities:

Protect and enhance enabling infrastructure

A strong and resilient supply chain is the backbone of the regional economy. Enhancing connectivity across roads, rail, ports, and digital networks must keep pace with industry and population growth and strengthen the region's resilience in times of crisis. Critical sovereign capability in processing and refining must be retained.

Support Sustainable Economic Growth

The region is well-placed to develop new industries aligned with national priorities in renewable energy, critical minerals, defence and advanced manufacturing. To capitalise on this growth, it is crucial to reduce operating costs, make strategic investments in infrastructure and skills, adopt supportive policies, and create industry-ready precincts. Additionally, promoting investment opportunities in the region is essential.

Build a Skilled, Future-Ready Workforce

Addressing critical skills shortages while preparing for long-term transformation remains one of the region's most urgent priorities. Collaboration between industry, individual businesses, education and training providers, and communities will ensure a pipeline of skilled workers aligned with future economic needs. A key priority in establishing an inclusive workforce is to close the gap in education and training outcomes in our remote and rural areas. These priorities are supported by six economic development focus areas.

Enhance Liveability and Resilience

Sustainable economic growth should result in vibrant, affordable, equitable and resilient communities. Improved employment opportunities, access to affordable housing, and health, education, and community services are crucial to attracting and retaining workers while enhancing the quality of life across the region. Enhancing the region's resilience and the ability to respond to extreme weather events is critical to the long-term sustainability of regional communities and industry.

Facilitate Regional Collaboration

Achieving regional outcomes depends on a strong, unified voice. That requires regional bodies to work together to build a shared vision and to coordinate advocacy efforts.

Drive Innovation

The region hosts significant capability in Research and Development and Tropical Innovation. Commercialisation and uptake of R&D, digital adoption, and sustainable practices

are central to ensuring competitiveness in the global low-emissions economy. The region must nurture and promote our innovation ecosystems and create the conditions to accelerate growth in emerging sectors.

Support First Nations Economic Development

First Nations peoples are critical to the region's prosperity, as custodians of land and culture and as economic leaders. Supporting First Nations led enterprises, employment pathways, and cultural industries will ensure inclusive growth.

Natural Resource Management

Protecting the environment and cultural heritage while supporting growth is central to regional sustainability. Effective natural resource management strengthens community resilience, safeguards biodiversity, and builds investor confidence in sustainable development.



Implementation

RDA TNWQ will advance these strategic priorities by working with our stakeholders to implement the steps outlined in this document.

Because we operate in a changing global and national context, the Action Plan will be reviewed annually by the RDA TNWQ board and stakeholders to ensure it remains aligned with the region's evolving needs.

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01

INTRODUCTION

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Welcome

The Townsville and North West Queensland region is entering a period of unprecedented economic opportunity.

A project pipeline exceeding \$40 billion, if realised, will create new industries in renewable energy, critical minerals mining and processing, defence, manufacturing, and tourism. These projects will also strengthen the region by building essential enabling infrastructure, expanding health services, and improving the sustainability of local communities.

While the potential is immense, core capabilities must be put in place. Ageing infrastructure, workforce and housing shortages threaten project delivery. Many rural and remote communities face challenges in housing, access to education and training, and other essential community services. Without deliberate action, we risk a two-speed economy, one in which some parts of the region prosper while others are left behind.

The Strategic Regional Plan 2026–2031 highlights the main priorities for RDA TNWQ and our partners to seize these opportunities and address the challenges to developing a sustainable and fair region.

The heart of this plan focuses on building core strength to ensure our communities prosper and our businesses and industry can take advantage of new economic opportunities. Strengthening this core is essential for the region to deliver and benefit from major projects and new industries.

By investing in this strong foundation, we not only enable equitable participation in today's opportunities but also make our region more attractive for future investment.

Developed through extensive collaboration with government, industry, and community stakeholders, this plan reflects the priorities and aspirations of our region. RDA TNWQ has engaged with leaders across key sectors — including local and state government, key regional industry sectors, infrastructure providers, education and training providers, workforce specialists, telecommunications providers, natural resource management groups, and First Nations representatives to ensure the strategy addresses

both opportunity and capability. We have also considered a range of strategic plans, government policies, and priorities.

As a trusted voice, connector, and facilitator, RDA TNWQ plays a pivotal role in aligning the efforts of

all levels of government, business, and community. This plan builds on those partnerships and sets a clear course for collective action — enabling North and North West Queensland to grow, adapt, and lead in a rapidly changing global economy.

Our Vision & Mission

Our VISION
Our vision is for a prosperous, sustainable, cohesive and liveable region.

Our MISSION
To enhance the sustainable economic prosperity and quality of life in our region.





About Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland

RDA TNWQ promotes sustainable regional growth by fostering strategic partnerships between government, industry, and communities. As part of the national RDA network, RDA TNWQ covers 14 Local Government Areas across North and North West Queensland.

An experienced committee with strong regional knowledge and stakeholder connections guides RDA TNWQ.

Our Committee



Debra Burden
CHAIRPERSON

Debra commenced as CEO of Selectability in February 2017 and has previously held CEO and executive management positions with Queensland Country Credit Union and Health Fund, 1300Smiles and Canegrowers Burdekin.

Her business management expertise has been recognised with the Qld Business Review Women in Business Award and the Queensland Telstra Business Women's Award.



Maria James
ACTING DEPUTY CHAIR

Maria is the CEO of MITEZ, a regional development organisation encompassing seven local government areas along the North West corridor, as well as members from mining, transport, logistics, and energy sectors.

A born and bred North Queenslander, with 14 years of prior experience at Port of Townsville, she is passionate about the Northern Australia region and being part of its development.



Heidi Turner
SECRETARY

Heidi is a Townsville-based strategic communications and engagement specialist, Non-Executive Director and founder of Crystal Clear Public Relations. With more than 30 years' experience across Australia and Europe, she has worked with government, industry and community organisations to support regional growth and engagement. Heidi brings expertise in strategic communications, marketing, stakeholder engagement and advocacy.



Anthony Curro
TREASURER

Anthony is Chief Executive Strategy and Engagement at the CRC for Developing Northern Australia. Based in Townsville, Anthony leads strategic initiatives and research that support agricultural development and climate resilience across the North. With a background in pharmacy and a family history in agriculture, he brings practical insight and deep regional knowledge. He also serves as a Director on the North Queensland Dry Tropics Board.



Kallum Cotterell

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Kallum is a proud First Nations man with strong connections to North West Queensland and the lower Gulf of Carpentaria. He brings experience across the health, education, construction, mining, energy and infrastructure sectors. He is passionate about supporting sustainable economic growth, cultural inclusion and opportunities for regional communities.



Cr Peta MacRae

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Peta MacRae is the Mayor of Mount Isa and a long-time advocate for the North West. With a background in education, business, and community leadership, she is passionate about regional development, liveability, and local opportunity.

Peta has served on the Council for eight years and chairs the Country Universities Centre Mount Isa. She holds an MBA and is a graduate of the AICD, committed to building a stronger, more vibrant Mount Isa for future generations.



Cr Pierina Dalle Cort

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Pierina Dalle Cort is the Mayor of Burdekin Shire and a long-time business owner with deep ties to the local community. A former Councillor for 12 years, Pierina is a strong advocate for economic development, housing, and youth engagement.

She is a Justice of the Peace, an AICD graduate, and has held leadership roles with the Burdekin Chamber of Commerce and Local Government Women's Association.



Rachel Cliffe

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Rachel is the Regional General Manager for Northern Queensland at Telstra, with more than 30 years' experience in regional leadership and infrastructure delivery. A North Queensland local, she has worked closely with councils, industry, community organisations and government across the region. Rachel previously chaired Jobs Townsville North Queensland.



Neil O'Brien

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Neil has led Gulf Savannah Development Inc. since 2023, supporting economic development across the Gulf Savannah region through advocacy and regional projects. Prior to joining GSD, Neil spent more than 37 years in the Queensland public sector, including senior leadership roles spanning tourism, infrastructure, agriculture, biosecurity and corporate services.



Our Partners





02

OUR REGION

- » About our Region
- » Our Region at a Glance
- » Opportunity & Infrastructure Maps



About Our Region

North and North West Queensland spans more than 660,000 square kilometres, encompassing 14 diverse Local Government Areas.

The region's economy is built on resources, energy, agriculture, defence, tourism, and advanced manufacturing, delivering significant benefits to both Queensland and Australia.

Within this vast footprint, three distinct sub-regions emerge — each with unique strengths, industries, and opportunities for growth.



North Queensland

TOWNSVILLE | BURDEKIN | HINCHINBROOK | CHARTERS TOWERS | PALM ISLAND

North Queensland is anchored by Townsville, the largest city in Northern Australia and a critical gateway to the Asia-Pacific. Surrounding agricultural hubs in Burdekin and Hinchinbrook produce sugar cane and high-value horticulture, while Charters Towers is a major beef and gold production centre. Palm Island represents a vibrant First Nations community that contributes to the region's cultural and social fabric.

ECONOMIC DRIVERS | OPPORTUNITIES

- Healthcare and education services
- Defence (Australia's largest garrison city)
- Manufacturing (value-adding regional resources)
- Mining
- Professional and business services
- Value added Agriculture.

North West Queensland

FLINDERS | RICHMOND | MCKINLAY | CLONCURRY | MOUNT ISA

North West Queensland is the engine room for beef production, critical minerals mining, and renewable energy investment. This region is increasingly recognised for its role in the energy transition, with new investment in large-scale renewables supporting local jobs and infrastructure.

ECONOMIC DRIVERS | OPPORTUNITIES

- Beef cattle grazing
- Grain and cotton cropping
- Critical minerals exploration and mining
- Outback tourism
- Renewable energy generation.

Western Gulf Region

CARPENTARIA | BURKE | DOOMADGEE | MORNINGTON ISLAND

The North West and Gulf region is significant for its seafood industries, base metals mining, cattle production, and its rich First Nations heritage. While the wind-down of MMG's Century Zinc Mine signals a major transition, the broader region remains highly prospective for critical minerals, phosphate, cropping, and tourism.

ECONOMIC DRIVERS

- Phosphate and critical minerals mining
- Cropping (cotton and grains)
- Livestock and beef cattle production
- Gulf fisheries and aquaculture
- Eco-tourism and First Nations cultural tourism.

Our Region at a Glance

North and North West Queensland is home to over 275,000 people and a \$36 billion economy — powered by innovation, natural resources, and community resilience.

A Connected Region.
A Growing Economy.
A Strong Future.



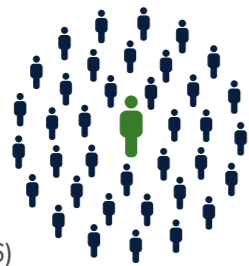
Population & Communities

Growing, diverse, and vibrant regional centres

Total Population

278,000

Forecast ~300,000 ('36)



35.6 years

Median Age



2.6 persons

Average Household

12.5%

First Nations Population

LARGEST CENTRES†

Townsville (183K)
Mount Isa (18.5K)
Cloncurry (3.2K)

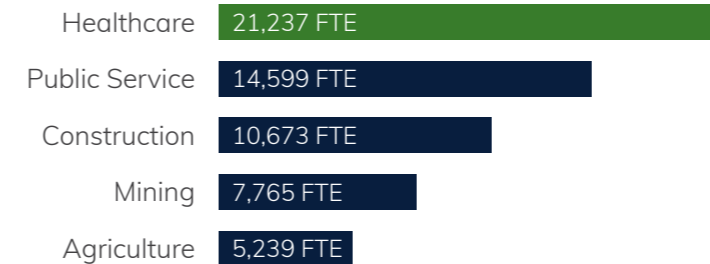


A Skilled & Resilient Workforce

A region of talent, opportunity and growth



TOP INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT



Education & Skills

Training a future-ready workforce for emerging industries

56% of workforce with Cert III or higher

ACCLAIMED HIGHER EDUCATION

- James Cook University (JCU)
- CQUniversity
- TAFE Queensland

Workforce development initiatives will be critical to addressing skills shortages in high-demand occupations like construction, engineering, and project management.

Housing & Lifestyle

Opportunities for affordable living and sustainable growth

108,000
HOUSEHOLDS

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICES

Townsville ~\$390K

Mount Isa ~\$300K

Rental Vacancy:
1.2%



Economic Strength

Powered by resources, health, education & innovation

\$36.3 Bn

Gross Regional Product



MAJOR EXPORTS

- Minerals (copper, zinc)
- Livestock (beef cattle)
- International Education

Major Project Pipeline

Strong, future-focused major project pipeline

CRITICAL INDUSTRIES

- Renewable Energy
- Mining
- Infrastructure
- Advanced Manufacturing



<\$40 Bn

~90 projects valued at \$40 billion underway or planned (March '25)

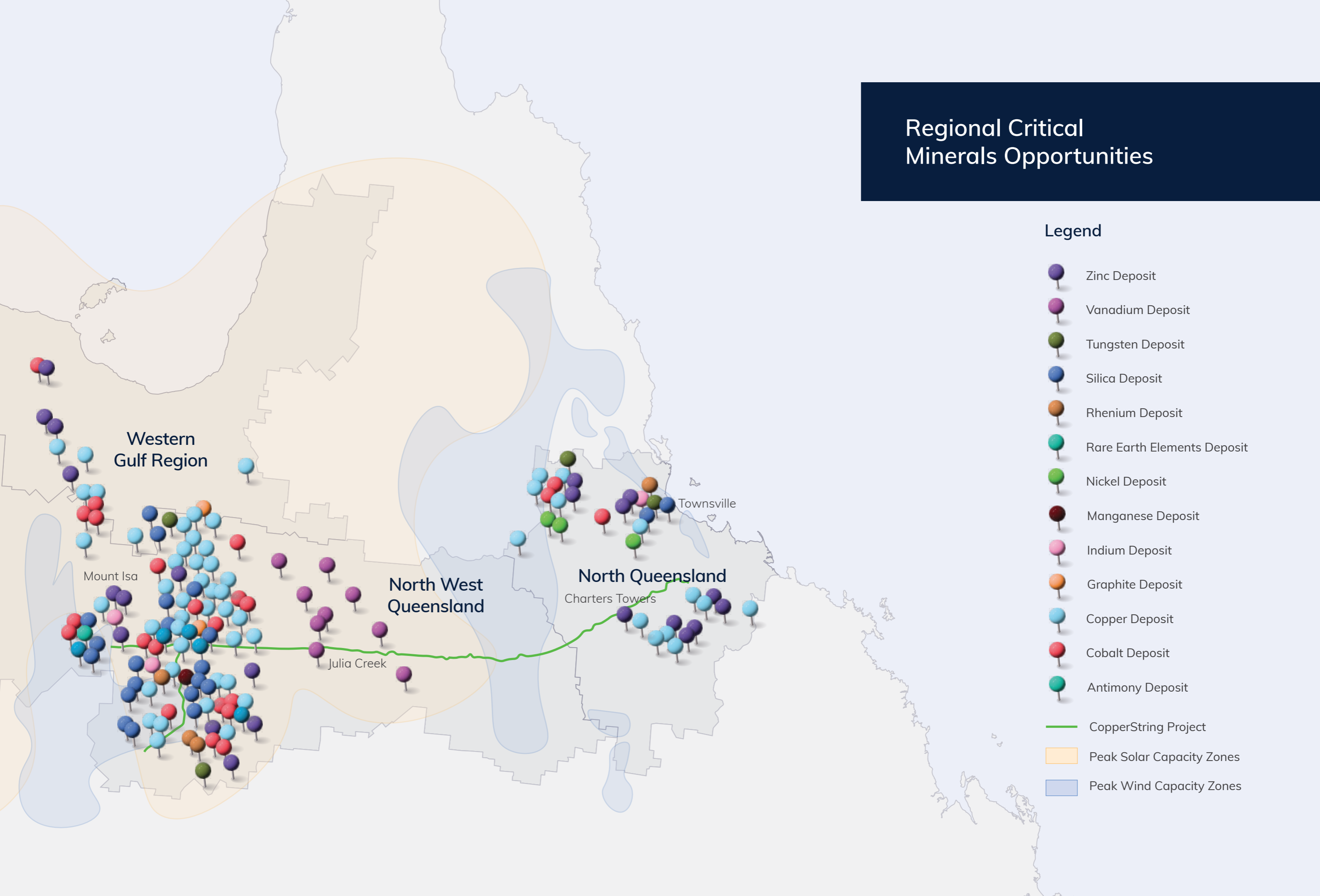
41,000

Projected to support 41,000 full time (equivalent) jobs and increase wages by 6% pa

\$5.6 Bn

Estimated Gross Regional Product increase of \$5.6 billion

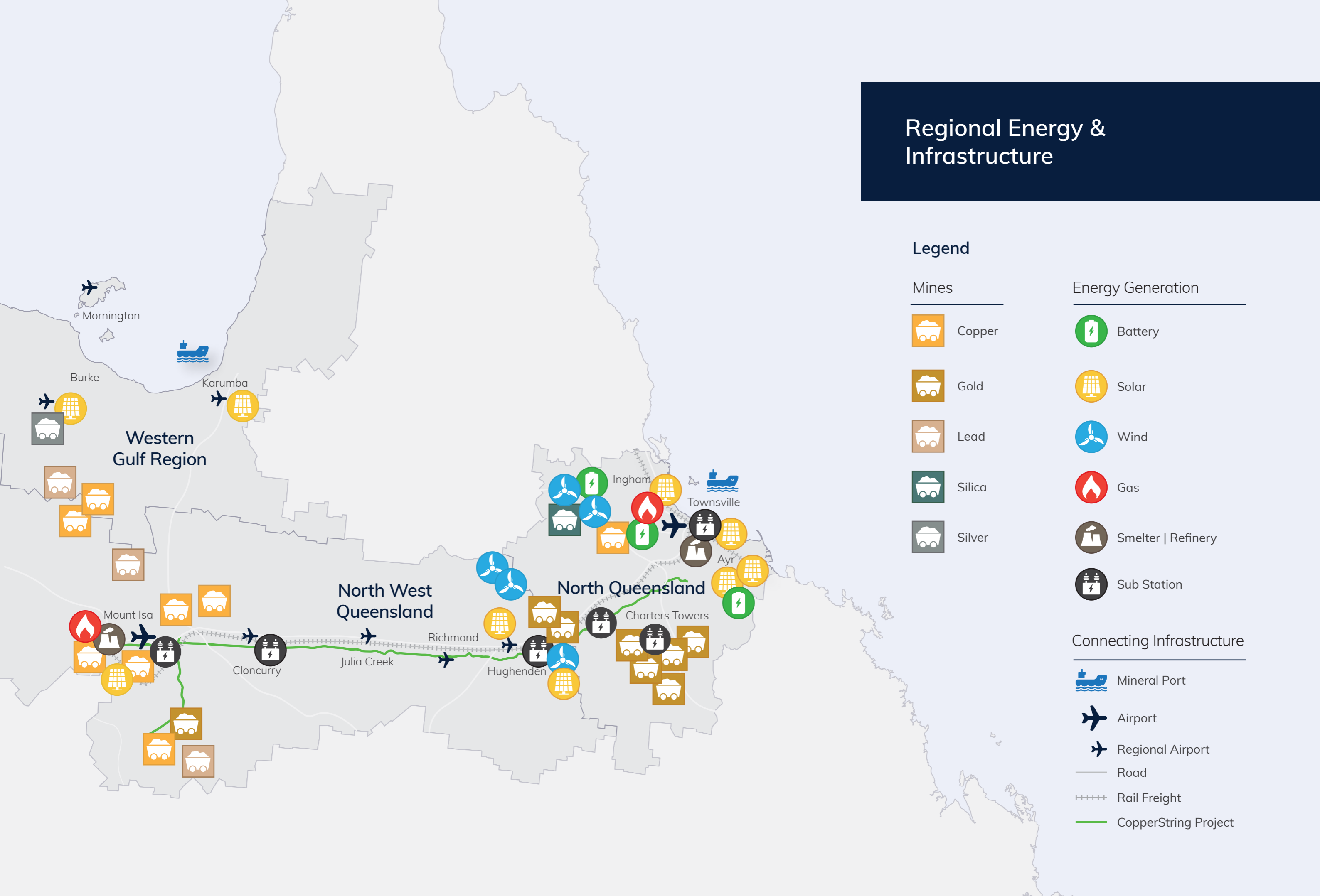
Regional Critical Minerals Opportunities



Legend






- Zinc Deposit
- Vanadium Deposit
- Tungsten Deposit
- Silica Deposit
- Rhenium Deposit
- Rare Earth Elements Deposit
- Nickel Deposit
- Manganese Deposit
- Indium Deposit
- Graphite Deposit
- Copper Deposit
- Cobalt Deposit
- Antimony Deposit
- CopperString Project
- Peak Solar Capacity Zones
- Peak Wind Capacity Zones

Regional Energy & Infrastructure









Legend







Mines

-  Copper
-  Gold
-  Lead
-  Silica
-  Silver

Energy Generation

-  Battery
-  Solar
-  Wind
-  Gas
-  Smelter | Refinery
-  Sub Station

Connecting Infrastructure

-  Mineral Port
-  Airport
-  Regional Airport
-  Road
-  Rail Freight
-  CopperString Project



03

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- » Regional Strengths
- » Regional Challenges
- » Global and National Trends -
Local Opportunities



Regional Strengths



Natural Resources



Strategic Location



Industry Expertise



Economic Diversity



Community Resilience & Liveability



First Nations Cultural Heritage

By building on its distinct advantages, the region can secure strategic investment, drive diversification, and support sustainable, inclusive growth.



Natural Resources

- **Critical Minerals Powerhouse**
A globally significant source of copper, zinc, rare earths, and other minerals essential for clean energy, advanced technologies, and defence industries. Existing processing and refining capability supports a sovereign supply chain.
- **Renewables Energy Advantage**
World-class solar and wind resources, with over 7 GW of renewable energy projects either proposed, approved, or under development, establishing the region as a key contributor to national renewable energy targets.
- **Iconic Natural Assets**
Unique tourism attractions include the Great Barrier Reef, Gulf Savannah, and Outback experiences, attracting both domestic and international visitors.
- **Productive Agricultural Landscapes**
Extensive irrigation areas, quality grazing land, rich soils that support irrigated and dryland cropping, biofuel feedstock production, combined with vital infrastructure to export the region's agricultural output worldwide.



Strategic Location

- **Northern Australia's Gateways**
Townsville is the largest city in Northern Australia, anchoring regional trade and logistics. It links mining, agriculture, and manufacturing industries to global markets through the Port of Townsville, international air links, and road and rail corridors. The Port of Karumba provides access to Asian shipping routes.
- **Defence & Security Hub**
The region has long been home to a significant defence presence. Townsville is home to Australia's largest Army base and a major Air Force base, making it a key part of national security and defence efforts in the north. It is well-positioned to benefit from increased Defence spending aligned with the 2024 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program. Northern Australia's vital role in national defence capability offers opportunities for towns across the region to expand on their long history of hosting training and other defence activities.
- **Proximity to Asia Pacific**
Strategic location less than four hours from Asia's growth markets, enabling competitive advantage in exports of minerals, energy, food, and services.
- **Integrated Transport Network**
Critical transport infrastructure links the Port of Townsville to the Mount Isa Rail Line and the Bruce and Flinders Highways, positioning the region as a key node in Australia's supply chain resilience and sovereign capability.



Industry Expertise

- **Specialised Regional Talent**
Deep expertise across mining, agriculture, defence, logistics, health, and professional services, supported by long-established industry operations.
- **Education & Training**
Regional education institutions, including James Cook University, Central Queensland University, TECNQ and TAFE Queensland, drive skills development to meet emerging workforce needs.
- **Excellence in Tropical Research & Development**
North Queensland has several world-class research and development facilities. James Cook University is a global leader in tropical health, marine science, and agriculture. CSIRO offers expertise in tropical agriculture. The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) has world-class research facilities focused on the sustainable use and protection of tropical marine ecosystems.



Economic Diversity

- **Resilient Multi-Sector Economy**
Mining, agriculture, defence, healthcare, education and manufacturing all contribute strongly, reducing exposure to commodity price cycles and global shocks.
- **Emerging Growth Sectors**
Clean energy, critical minerals mining and processing, advanced manufacturing, digital industries, and new cropping ventures are broadening and strengthening the region's economic base.
- **Sovereign Capability**
Local industries and industrial capabilities that underpin critical national supply chains in minerals processing, manufacturing, defence, and food security support a Future Made in Australia.



Community Resilience & Liveability

- **Connected, Adaptable Communities**
Regional centres demonstrate strong leadership, collaboration, and adaptability, responding effectively to climate variability and natural disasters. Improvements in digital connectivity over the past few years have enhanced access to digital services, including healthcare, education, and markets.
- **Lifestyle**
North and North West Queensland communities offer unique lifestyle opportunities, vibrant communities, cultural diversity, lower cost of living and distinctive natural assets.



First Nations Cultural Heritage

- **Culture & Knowledge**
Rich and diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledge systems, and heritage that are deeply connected to the land and sea.


These provide opportunities for cultural tourism, traditional ecological knowledge in land and water management, and partnerships that strengthen community, identity, and economic participation.



Regional Challenges

 Infrastructure Challenges


 Supply Chain Costs


 Labour & Skills Shortages

 Environmental Vulnerability

 Economic Transition & Industry Risk

 Regional & Remote Service Gaps

 First Nations Economic Development

 Natural Resource Management

While the region's strengths provide a solid foundation, targeted efforts are necessary to help it realise its full potential.



Infrastructure Challenges

- **Ageing & Inefficient Infrastructure**
Parts of the region's transport and water infrastructure need upgrades to maintain liveability and boost regional competitiveness. Important areas for improvement include the Bruce and Flinders Highways, the Mount Isa Rail Line, and key inland routes into the Gulf. In many regions, local government water and waste infrastructure needs upgrading.
- **Enabling Infrastructure**
The North West Power System, which supplies energy to communities and energy-intensive industries around Mount Isa and Cloncurry, is not connected to the National Electricity Market (NEM). This limits investment in new renewable energy projects and the expansion of energy-intensive industries that add value to the region's mining and agricultural outputs. Reliable and adequate electricity supply is also key challenge for many towns within the Gulf region. The region's rich soils can produce high-value crops such as cotton and grains; however, productivity is limited without investment in irrigation infrastructure.



Supply Chain Costs

- **High Transport Costs**
Long distances to markets and high freight costs reduce business efficiency and international competitiveness.
- **Year round access**
Key access routes into Gulf communities can be cut off for weeks during the wet season.
- **Energy Costs**
The high cost of energy, particularly gas, threatens the viability of the region's energy-intensive industries.
- **Access to Capital**
Securing a loan is more challenging for rural and remote businesses compared to those in metropolitan areas. Businesses in remote areas often have fewer lenders, and those lenders usually require higher deposits to secure loans.
- **Insurance Costs**
Businesses across the north face substantially higher insurance premiums than those in metropolitan areas like Brisbane, primarily due to cyclone and flood risk. Affordability is a significant issue, with some businesses under-insuring or exiting the market.



Labour & Skills Shortages

- **Talent Attraction & Retention**
Regional areas face persistent shortages in healthcare, education, technical trades, agriculture, and emerging industries such as renewables.
- **Training Alignment Challenges**
Education and training pathways are not always fully aligned with the fast-evolving needs of industry and the economy, limiting the pipeline of job-ready workers.
- **Educational Opportunities**
The population in the rural and remote areas of the RDA TNWQ region have lower levels of post-school educational attainment, reflecting the lack of access to quality education and training opportunities in those regions.
- **Workforce Diversity**
The RDA TNWQ region has a high percentage of the population with diverse backgrounds that are underrepresented in the workforce; including First Nations people, migrants and refugees and people with a disability. More can be done to increase the participation of these groups in the workforce.



Regional & Remote Service Gaps

- **Housing & Affordability and Availability**
Demand for residential housing in growth centres continues to outstrip supply. In the rural and remote regions, the high costs of new builds restricts investment in private housing with most new housing developed for government workers. The lack of regional housing also fosters a fly-in, fly-out culture, limiting the community benefits from significant investment and industry occurring in their region.
- **Access to Essential Services**
In many remote communities, access to healthcare, aged and disability care, education, and childcare is often limited, resulting in lower living standards and hampering population growth. This is primarily due to a shortage of essential workers, caused partly by a shortage of housing.



Natural Resource Management

- **Environmental Management Pressures**
Balancing economic growth, particularly mining and agriculture, with protecting the Great Barrier Reef, water catchments, and biodiversity remains a critical priority.
- **Biosecurity Risks**
The Gulf area remains a significant entry point for invasive species, pest and disease incursion. Townsville's Port is also a potential entry point for foreign pests and diseases.
- **Policy Conflict**
Efficient land-use planning and approvals processes are needed to balance the competing interests of agriculture, mining, renewable energy development, biodiversity conservation, vegetation preservation, and water management.



First Nations Economic Development

- **Barriers to Economic Participation**
The region's remote First Nations communities face challenges in accessing education, training, and employment opportunities. Additionally, many remote First Nations peoples encounter difficulties in meeting basic requirements for economic participation, such as obtaining a birth certificate—necessary for qualifying for a driver's licence—having their educational qualifications recognised, and obtaining a Blue Card.
- **Lack of Access to Basic Services**
First Nations communities in Mornington Island, Doomadgee and Palm Island can only access electricity using prepaid meters. These households are among the world's most energy-insecure. Disconnection from energy supply cuts off access to all the basic functions of a healthy home, creating health issues and causing social and economic disruption across whole communities.¹
- **Land Tenure**
Restrictions associated with land tenure limit opportunities for communities to develop, or use land for commercial purposes or to build and own their own homes.



Environmental Vulnerability

- **Exposure to Extreme Weather Events**
Cyclones, droughts, floods, and bushfires create significant risks for communities, supply chains, and infrastructure, driving up insurance and recovery costs.
- **Inadequate Climate Monitoring Infrastructure**
Limited coverage of weather monitoring infrastructure and systems reduce availability of timely and reliable data, undermining the ability of communities, industry and governments to prepare for and respond to extreme weather events.



Economic Transition & Industry Risk

- **Reliance on Traditional Sectors**
Communities heavily dependent on mining, processing, and agriculture are vulnerable to global commodity price shocks, land-use pressures, and climate variability.
- **Transition to Net Zero**
Achieving low-emissions growth requires significant investment in new infrastructure, industry, technology, and workforce skills. Existing businesses need to adapt to net zero policies and remain competitive.

¹ Original Power, for the Energy Consumers Association of Australia, November 2025. The Right to Power - Keeping First Nations communities on prepayment connected.



Global and National Trends - Local Opportunities

North and North West Queensland stand at the forefront of global economic, technological, and environmental transformation.

Major global shifts in decarbonisation, defence, digitalisation and supply chain resilience are creating new opportunities for the region while redefining the skills, industries and infrastructure required for success.

Understanding these trends and preparing strategic responses is critical to securing long-term growth, resilience and prosperity.





| 01

Global and National Push for Decarbonisation & Renewable Energy

Global investment in clean energy exceeded USD 2.1 trillion in 2024, including renewable energy, power grids, and electric transport, almost twice the share of fossil fuel investments in the global energy sector. More than 140 countries have now set net-zero targets, accelerating demand for renewable technologies, hydrogen, biofuels and critical minerals.

The Australian Government has set a target of 82% renewable electricity by 2030, which will require substantial investment in large-scale renewables and energy storage over the coming four years. Additionally, national emissions reduction targets involve decarbonising transport, increasing reliance on liquid biofuels and exploring opportunities for carbon farming.

- **SHORT-TERM**
New industries being pioneered in the region, including Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF), come to commercial fruition and are at the scaling-up stage. Large-scale renewable energy projects along the East Coast, such as the 400MW Gawara Baya wind farm, are under development with many more planned within the region.
- **MEDIUM-TERM**
The eastern link of the CopperString enables large-scale renewable energy development around Hughenden. Isolated communities have access to affordable, reliable clean energy.
- **LONG-TERM**
CopperString connects Mount Isa to Townsville, opening up vast swathes of solar and wind resources for development along the corridor.

| 02

Surging Demand for Critical Minerals

Global demand for copper, lithium, and rare earth elements is projected to increase by up to 500% by 2050 (World Bank, 2024). Secure, ethical supply chains have become a strategic priority for major economies. In October 2025, Australia and the United States signed an agreement to implement policy tools and undertake coordinated investment to accelerate the supply of raw and processed critical minerals and rare earths that are vital to the commercial and defence industries of both countries.

- **SHORT-TERM**
Mining output from the North West Minerals Province and the Western Gulf, valued at \$500 billion, remains strong despite some mine closures. Recent announcements regarding capital pipelines for critical minerals and rare earth projects are stimulating exploration and providing greater impetus for new project development.
- **MEDIUM-TERM**
Local processing initiatives such as the Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct and the Queensland Resources Common User Facility (QRCUF) in Townsville become operational and start creating value opportunities.
- **LONG-TERM**
New, sustainable critical minerals mining and processing projects are well established in the North West, with Townsville and Mount Isa emerging as centres for processing, refining, and exporting critical minerals to global markets.



| 03

Rising Investment in Defence and Regional Security

Australia's 2024 Defence Strategic Review positions Townsville and North West Queensland as a vital hub in its northern defence posture. Townsville hosts the largest army base and most Army rotary aircraft, vital for regional RAAF operations. Army's watercraft are at Ross Island Barracks, and the Port of Townsville provides dedicated servicing for naval vessels.

● SHORT-TERM

Over \$35 million in upgrades at Lavarack Barracks, the relocation of more than 500 new ADF personnel to the region and the \$700 million upgrade of the Townsville RAAF base to support the deployment of AH-64E Apache helicopters offers multiple supply chain opportunities. A dedicated Aviation Training Academy in Townsville provides local training opportunities for maintenance personnel for both Apache and Chinook helicopters. The NQ Spark facility is completed to provide simulation services to Defence and other industries.

● MEDIUM-TERM

Regions outside of Townsville provide services to Defence, including military equipment testing, support for training exercises, deployment operations and storage needs. Regional businesses acquire enhanced capability to support the location of maintenance operations for Defence's new heavy vehicle fleet, uplifting the region's capabilities to work with sophisticated technology. The development of the Australian Singapore Military Training Initiative (ASMTI) training area at Greenvale creates significant economic opportunities..

● LONG-TERM

The region develops capabilities to deliver a broader range of defence technologies and services, including unmanned systems, cybersecurity, and simulation training, ensuring defence readiness in the north while supporting the national Future Made in Australia agenda.

| 04

Global Supply Chain Reshaping and Resilience

Post-pandemic disruptions and geopolitical tensions are accelerating investment in resilient, onshore supply chains, logistics hubs and domestic production.

● SHORT-TERM

The region retains its critical copper processing capability in Mount Isa and Townsville, strengthening Australia's sovereign copper supply chain.

● MEDIUM-TERM

Growth in manufacturing capability in food processing, battery manufacturing and critical minerals refining further builds domestic supply chain strength and contributes to a Future Made in Australia.

● LONG-TERM

North and North West Queensland is a key national logistics hub, connecting inland resources and value-added products to domestic and global markets.

| 05

Inflationary Pressures and Construction Cost Escalations

Persistent global inflation and workforce shortages are driving construction costs across the infrastructure and housing sectors.

● SHORT-TERM

Cost pressures stimulate innovation and boost adoption of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), improving productivity and mitigating skills shortages.

● MEDIUM-TERM

The region builds capability in delivering lower-cost housing solutions.

● LONG-TERM

Innovation in manufacturing methods, materials and supply chains helps maintain competitiveness and liveability.



| 06

Workforce Transformation

The World Economic Forum (2024) projects that 40% of current job skills will change within five years, underscoring the urgency for adaptation. The future workforce must be equipped to drive the energy transition, support advanced manufacturing, contribute to a Future Made in Australia and provide essential community services. This means leveraging emerging technologies such as AI while mastering critical human capabilities such as critical thinking, effective communication, and adaptability.

Education and training will be central to building this workforce. Advances in technology are enabling personalised learning experiences, improving accessibility, and opening resources that were previously out of reach. Programs such as the Australian Government's Country Universities Centre are delivering vital education infrastructure to regional communities, ensuring that local talent can access the skills needed for tomorrow's economy.

● SHORT-TERM

A considered and collaborative approach to regional workforce planning provides a clear roadmap to address immediate skills shortages and develop a future-ready workforce. The region is positioned as a destination offering strong employment prospects and career pathways, complemented by an attractive lifestyle that appeals to workers and their families.

● MEDIUM-TERM

Addressing housing shortages in remote parts of the region unlocks capacity to attract and retain skilled workers. Leveraging AI and digital technologies overcome structural barriers to quality education and training, ensuring equitable access across regional and remote communities. A sharper focus on emerging workforce needs enhances the region's ability to capitalise on opportunities in the energy transition, digital technologies, and advanced manufacturing.

● LONG-TERM

Continued collaboration between education providers, industry, and government, and investing strategically in training, skilled migration, and innovation hubs, has enabled the region to become a leader in future-oriented industries.

| 07

Natural Resource Management - Protecting Environment & Cultural Heritage

Climate change, competing land uses and global expectations for sustainability are elevating the importance of resource stewardship.

Governments, investors and communities are demanding stronger environmental protection and cultural heritage management. At the same time, slow referral and approval systems for promising projects can stifle regional development opportunities. There is a need to strike a balance between protecting the environment and streamlining approvals.

● SHORT-TERM

Effective and genuine community engagement will strengthen the social licence and enhance approvals processes for large-scale projects critical to the region's and the nation's future development.

● MEDIUM-TERM

Expansion of carbon farming, biodiversity offsets and water stewardship programs, create new income streams for landholders and Traditional Owners.

● LONG-TERM

Recognition of North and North West Queensland as a leader in balancing growth with world-class environmental and cultural heritage management.



| 08

First Nations Economic Development

First Nations peoples are custodians of much of the region's land and cultural heritage. Nationally, governments and industry recognise the importance of ensuring Traditional Owners are genuine partners in development.

The Commonwealth and Queensland state governments have developed several initiatives to support economic empowerment for First Nations communities.

● SHORT-TERM

First Nations communities benefit from and grow economic capability on the back of rising demand for First Nations procurement and employment in major projects across resources, renewables and infrastructure. Traditional owners harness the region's natural and cultural assets to develop a thriving Nature-Based First Nations Tourism industry.

● MEDIUM-TERM

There is growth in the number and size of First Nations owned businesses and joint ventures in tourism, land management, construction and professional services. There is significant progress in closing the gap in First Nations education and employment outcomes.

● LONG-TERM

A stronger, more inclusive regional economy where First Nations peoples are leaders in business, innovation, and environmental and cultural stewardship.

| 09

Tropical Health & Innovation

Tropical regions face unique challenges and opportunities in natural resource management, health, and agriculture. Global trends, including climate change, population growth, and food insecurity, are increasing the demand for solutions tailored to tropical environments. Our region has unique capabilities to provide these solutions.

TNWQ hosts world-class research and development capability, such as James Cook University, a global leader in tropical health, marine science, and agriculture; and the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), which has large-scale, long-term, and world-class research facilities focused on the sustainable use and protection of tropical marine ecosystems.

● SHORT-TERM

The region's R&D organisations are supported to continue delivering integrated solutions for tropical health, marine systems, natural resource management, agriculture, and bio-tech.

● MEDIUM-TERM

The region capitalises on the critical mass of tropical knowledge and innovation to establish collaborative partnerships to accelerate the commercialisation and translation of research and innovations for industries in the tropical, health and defence sectors. Northern Australia is known as an international hub for tropical research, driving export-ready solutions in marine science, health, and agriculture. It is a preferred destination for tropical R&D investment, attracting partnerships with Asia-Pacific nations for food security and health solutions.

● LONG-TERM

Growth in tropical knowledge industries contributes significantly to Australia's economy and generates thriving regional businesses built on the commercialisation of tropical research and innovation.



04

ACTION PLAN

- » Regional Priorities & Actions 2026-2031
- » Regional Action Plan



Regional Priorities & Actions 2026-2031

This Strategic Regional Plan outlines **eight priorities** for fostering sustainable and inclusive growth.

Each priority is supported by actions aimed at maximising economic development opportunities, strengthening existing industries, and fostering a cohesive and inclusive community.

Implementing these priorities will position the region as a national leader in renewable energy, critical minerals, defence, advanced manufacturing, and tropical innovation — all while ensuring liveability, sustainability, and the preservation of the region's cultural and environmental heritage.

01

Protect & Enhance Enabling Infrastructure

A strong and resilient supply chain is the backbone of the regional economy. The major Bruce and Flinders highways are key points connecting North and North West Queensland to the South East. Key roads into the gulf regions can be cut off, sometimes for months, during the wet season. Enhancing and future-proofing road, rail, ports, and digital networks is necessary to keep pace with industry and population growth. Critical sovereign capability must be retained in key industries.

KEY REGIONAL ACTIONS

- › Upgrade the Bruce and Flinders Highways to future-proof connectivity for heavy transport (e.g. agriculture, manufacturing, critical supplies) and defence.
- › Floodproof the Mount Isa Rail Line and implement upgrades to increase its productivity.
- › Continue with the expansion of the Port of Townsville to accommodate new industry development.
- › Upgrade the Port of Karumba to open opportunities for economic development and provide better transport connectivity for Gulf and North West communities and industry.
- › Continue to expand digital connectivity across regional and remote communities, addressing mobile blackspots.
- › Retain existing capability in minerals processing and attract investment in new infrastructure to process critical minerals.
- › Floodproof critical road infrastructure to improve access to Gulf communities during the wet season.

02

Support Sustainable Economic Growth

The region is well-positioned to develop new industries that support national priorities in renewable energy, critical minerals, defence, and advanced manufacturing. To capture this growth, it will be essential to address operating costs, invest strategically in new infrastructure and capability development, implement supportive policies, and establish industry-ready precincts.



KEY REGIONAL ACTIONS

- › Ensure delivery of the transformational CopperString project, including the western section to connect the North West power system to the National Electricity Market.
- › Provide investors and communities with long-term certainty over the sustainable provision of affordable energy in the North West Energy System by developing an energy plan for the North.
- › Focus on reducing key costs, including energy and insurance, and address the limited access to capital in remote regions.
- › Establish environmentally sustainable irrigation infrastructure in the North West and Gulf to support the development of new agricultural production.
- › Promote investment in net-zero technologies such as renewable generation (solar, wind, batteries), hydrogen and biofuels.
- › Promote investment in strategic precincts such as the Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct, Townsville State Development Area, NQ SPARK and the Australia Critical Minerals Industrial Precinct
- › Broaden procurement opportunities for regional SMEs and First Nations businesses in large projects.
- › Promote uptake of sustainable practices in agriculture, mining, construction, and manufacturing.
- › Promote opportunities for value adding and creating new industries in the agriculture sector, including biofuels, sustainable packaging, and food processing.
- › Explore opportunities to expand industry development into remote and rural areas where there is plentiful industrial land.
- › Invest in increasing electricity supply and capacity in remote and isolated networks across the region to enable industry development.
- › Invest in new industry capability in critical minerals mining and refining, and defence maintenance and manufacturing.
- › Enhance the quality of community engagement by large project proponents to ensure new development brings positive and sustainable community benefits and avoids negative social and community impacts.



🔧 | 03

Build a Skilled, Future-Ready Workforce

Addressing critical skills shortages while preparing for long-term transformation remains one of the region's most urgent priorities. Collaboration between industry, education and training providers, and communities will ensure a pipeline of skilled workers aligned with future economic needs. A key priority in establishing an inclusive workforce is to close the gap in education outcomes for remote and rural areas.

KEY REGIONAL ACTIONS

- › Develop a Regional Workforce Development Plan and Roadmap for TNWQ in partnership with industry, government, education and training provider and regional development organisations.
- › Support targeted initiatives for workforce attraction and skilled migration.
- › Create pathways for First Nations people and other underrepresented groups to participate in the workforce.
- › Expand education and training pathways for specialist roles in areas like advanced manufacturing and new defence industries.
- › Support the establishment of education and training infrastructure in rural and remote areas by widening the Country University Centre program.
- › Expand partnerships between industry, business and education and training providers (including with TAFE Queensland, James Cook University, Central Queensland University, high schools and regional training providers) to raise awareness of industry skills needs and align skills pipelines to industry demand.

🏠 | 04

Enhance Liveability & Resilience

Sustaining growth requires vibrant, affordable, and resilient communities. Improved housing, health, education, and services are crucial to attracting and retaining workers while enhancing the quality of life.

KEY REGIONAL ACTIONS

- › Develop innovative housing solutions and business models in partnership with local governments and communities to increase the availability and affordability of housing across regional and remote communities.
- › Strengthen the availability and quality of health care, primary and secondary education, childcare, aged and disability care and other essential services to support residents and attract new families.
- › Work with major project proponents, industry employers and local government to reduce reliance on fly-in, fly-out workforce models.
- › Improve access to timely weather information, including developing a robust and real-time flood warning system.
- › Embed climate resilience and disaster preparedness into infrastructure and community planning.
- › Improve transport and communications connectivity to reduce isolation and enhance opportunity.
- › Support local government initiatives that enhance liveability.
- › Work with local government to explore opportunities for affordable housing in rural and remote parts of the TNWQ region.



| 05

Facilitate Regional Collaboration

Regional growth depends on partnerships. A shared vision, effective collaboration and coordinated advocacy are needed to ensure the region speaks with a strong, united voice.

KEY REGIONAL ACTIONS

- › Build strategic alliances between councils, economic development bodies, Traditional Owners, government departments and industry groups.
- › Align regional priorities with state and national policy agendas, ensuring strong representation in decision-making.
- › Leverage regional leadership to advocate for investment and reforms that benefit North and North West Queensland.
- › Support collaborative governance models that deliver long-term impact across multiple LGAs.
- › Collaborate with other key stakeholders in northern Australia to raise national awareness about the issues facing the north.

| 06

Drive Innovation & Sustainability

Innovation, digital adoption, and sustainable practices are central to ensuring competitiveness in the global low-emissions economy. The region must grow innovation ecosystems that future-proof industries and accelerate growth in emerging sectors.

KEY REGIONAL ACTIONS

- › Support the establishment of innovative precincts such as NQ SPARK which connect industry, research, and government.
- › Promote digital adoption and Industry 4.0 practices across traditional and emerging industries.
- › Support the growth of clean technology and circular economy initiatives to diversify the regional economy.
- › Promote the region as a centre of tropical R&D expertise to address issues in tropical health, natural resource management, marine science, and sustainable agricultural production across the Asia-Pacific region.



07

Support First Nations Economic Development

First Nations peoples are critical to the region's prosperity, as custodians of land and culture and as economic leaders. Supporting First Nations-led enterprises, employment pathways, and cultural industries will ensure inclusive growth.

KEY REGIONAL ACTIONS

- › Engage with the region's First Nations councils to support initiatives that reflect local needs, strengths, and aspirations.
- › Support the establishment and growth of First Nations businesses, particularly in renewable energy, tourism, cultural heritage, and land management.
- › Expand First Nations employment and training pathways across priority industries.
- › Build partnerships between Traditional Owners, industry, and government to co-design development opportunities.
- › Promote cultural tourism and heritage enterprises as part of the region's liveability and economic offering.
- › Support Traditional Owner-led land and sea management initiatives.

08

Sustainability & Natural Resource Management

Protecting the environment and cultural heritage while supporting growth is central to regional sustainability. Effective natural resource management strengthens community resilience, safeguards biodiversity and builds investor confidence in sustainable development.

KEY REGIONAL ACTIONS

- › Ensure that there is a balance between new industry development and protection of the region's environmental and cultural heritage.
- › Expand opportunities in carbon farming, biodiversity offsets, and water stewardship to create new revenue streams.
- › Assist NRM groups, industry groups and regional council efforts to promote land and water resource management, including projects to reduce soil erosion, runoff and invasive species.



Regional Action Plan 2026-2031

01	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	RDA TNWQ ROLE	TIMEFRAME	INTENDED OUTCOME
Protect & Enhance Regional Supply Chain Capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Raise awareness of the need for investment in upgrading the Bruce and Flinders Highways to maintain critical regional connectivity. Highlight the need to flood proof key road infrastructure blocking access to Gulf communities. 	Queensland Dept State Development (DSD), NWQROC, NQROC, Transport and Main Roads (TMR), MITEZ, Dept Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA), Gulf Savannah Development (GSD)	Providing briefings to the government outlining the risks of losing critical road connectivity.	Short	Improved transport connectivity and logistics capacity, reducing barriers to delivering major projects.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support CopperString implementation (eastern and western links). 	Powerlink, QIC, Department of State Development (DSD) Northern Projects Coordination Group, Local Councils, DCCEEW, Queensland Treasury, MITEZ, TEL	Providing briefings to the government outlining regional energy infrastructure needs.	Medium	the north west renewable energy corridors is operational, new mining projects are connected, and enhanced economic development opportunities for local communities are available.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Seek upgrades to the Mount Isa Rail Line to ensure affordable, reliable freight. 	QR, MITEZ, industry, DISR, TMR	Providing briefings to the government outlining regional transport and freight infrastructure needs.	Short - Medium	Improved freight efficiency and cost competitiveness. Improved flood resilience.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Retain existing capability in minerals processing and attract investment in new infrastructure to process critical minerals. 	MITEZ, Mount Isa City Council, TEL, NWQROC, Department Industry Science and Research (DISR), DSD	Support the development of a sustainable transition plan for the copper smelter and refinery.	Short–Medium	A sustainable solution to preserving copper processing capability in the TNWQ region.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Upgrade the Port of Karumba to improve transport connectivity for Gulf and North West communities and industry. 	NWQROC, Gulf Savannah Development (GSD), industry	Support the Port of Karumba business case.	Ongoing	Maintain and enhance the capability of the Port to support economic development in the Gulf.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve telecommunications investment and digital connectivity. 	State Development, NBN, DITRDCA (Mobile Black Spot Program),	Advocate and engage providers.	Short–Medium	Enhanced digital and mobile access, supporting liveability and business innovation.



02

Support Sustainable Economic Growth

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	RDA TNWQ ROLE	TIMEFRAME	INTENDED OUTCOME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote strategic precincts such as the Lansdown Eco-Industrial Precinct, Townsville State Development Area, NQ SPARK, Australian Critical Mineral Industrial Precinct (Mount Isa). 	DSD, JCU, Townsville University Hospital, MITEZ, TEL, Local Councils, DISR	Raise awareness of the opportunity and promote regional benefits.	Short-Medium	Precinct activation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support local governments in developing their critical infrastructure to support economic growth and diversification. 	Local Councils, NQROC, NWQROC, state and federal government	Raise awareness of key local government infrastructure needs among Commonwealth and State decision makers.	Ongoing	Regional areas get key infrastructure necessary to capitalise on growth opportunities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish environmentally sustainable water infrastructure in the North West and Gulf to support the development of new industries, including in agriculture and mining, and ensure water security for regional communities. 	NWQROC, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWV), Local councils, NRM groups, GSD	Participate in the Gulf Water Plan working group and the Burdekin Water Plan Stakeholder Advisory Group.	Ongoing	New industry enabled by sustainable water supply.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen social licence and community engagement around renewable energy. 	Renewable energy industry, local councils, Traditional Owners, DSD, Queensland Renewable Energy Council (QREC), MITEZ	Provide support and connections to achieve genuine community engagement.	Ongoing	Genuine community acceptance of new energy infrastructure, including transmission and renewable energy generation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the growth of the emerging biofuels industry in North Queensland. 	Industry, DSD, Queensland Department of Primary Industries (DPI), Department of Climate Change Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), MITEZ, TEL	Promote and support existing projects, and contribute to government working groups to grow the industry.	Medium	New bioenergy opportunities identified and developed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access to incentives, investment-readiness pathways, procurement opportunities, and targeted assistance to enhance local business management capability. 	Industry, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), business.gov.au, Chambers of Commerce, Department of Customer Services, Open Data, Small and Family Business (DCSODSFB), Ausindustry	Support and promote existing programs. Identify needs and gaps.	Short-Medium	Strong, sustainable regional businesses capturing value from new industry development.



02

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Support Sustainable Economic Growth

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	RDA TNWQ ROLE	TIMEFRAME	INTENDED OUTCOME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the high costs of doing business in the north, including insurance costs and access to capital. 	Chambers of Commerce, Northern RDA Alliance, MITEZ, TEL, GSD, NQ ROC and NWQ ROC	Develop briefings to raise awareness among decision makers.	Short	Government policies and programs that address the economic and structural hurdles faced by regional communities and businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support sustainable infrastructure solutions that diversify the North West economy and reduce reliance on single industries. 	MITEZ, Local Councils, TEL, Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR), Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development (DNRMMRRD)	Providing briefings to the government outlining the need for core industrial capability.	Medium-long	Greater economic resilience in the North West through infrastructure that supports diversification.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the need for an integrated industry and energy plan to underpin investment and economic development in the North West. 	Industry, MITEZ, TEL, NWQROC	Develop briefings to raise awareness among decision makers.	Medium	A sustainable future for industry in the North West, underpinning sovereign capability and creating opportunities in critical and other minerals and renewable energy developments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the need for enhanced energy capacity and reliability for isolated communities 	Industry, GSD, NWQROC	Develop briefings to raise awareness among decision makers.	Medium	Unleash economic opportunity in remote and isolated regions. Enhanced community liveability and resilience.



🔧 | 03

Build a Skilled, Future-Ready Workforce

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	RDA TNWQ ROLE	TIMEFRAME	INTENDED OUTCOME
Expand Regional University Study Hubs in rural and remote areas.	NWQ and NQ ROCs, Local Government, JCU, CQU, TAFE Qld	Support applications by local councils.	Medium	Improved access to tertiary and VET education in regional communities.
Develop a regional workforce development plan and Roadmap.	JTNQ, Mount Isa Regional Jobs Committee (MIRJC), DTET, industry, Jobs Queensland, Jobs and Skills Australia, education and training sector, regional development groups, DEWR, Local Jobs	Lead, secure resources and coordinate stakeholder contributions. Host JTNQ to coordinate industry, education, and training stakeholders to align industry skills needs with training opportunities.	Short-Medium	An ecosystem that supports the development of a regional workforce that meets current and future skills needs.
Create pathways for underrepresented groups to access education and training and participate in the workforce.	JTNQ, MIRJC, DTET, DEWR, Local Jobs, RTOs, community groups	Work with organisations supporting disadvantaged groups to facilitate training-industry linkages.	Ongoing	Disadvantaged job seekers fill regional skills gaps.
Expand education and training pathways for specialist roles in areas like advanced manufacturing and new defence industries.	MSQ, DTET, ADF, Industry/business, JTNQ, Regional Schools Industry Partnership (RSIP) program	Lead projects in collaboration with.	Ongoing	The region can provide a skilled workforce to meet the new industry's needs.
Promote the TNWQ region's strengths and liveability, position the area as one of opportunity meets lifestyle.	Local councils, MITEZ, TEL	Lead a Regional Skills Attraction Initiative.	Ongoing	TNWQ is perceived nationally and internationally as an attractive place to live, with opportunities for great jobs.



🏠 | 04

Enhance Liveability & Resilience

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	RDA TNWQ ROLE	TIMEFRAME	INTENDED OUTCOME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and promote regional housing initiatives that explore innovative ways to deliver affordable housing and reduce construction costs. 	NWQROC, local councils, Housing Australia, Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works (HPW), industry, modular housing providers	Facilitate policy recommendations and proposals.	Short-Medium	Increased affordable and accessible housing stock.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the impact of excessive insurance costs on regional and remote households and small businesses. 	Local councils, chambers of commerce, Northern RDAs	Develop briefing papers to raise government awareness.	Medium	Reduced insurance burden for residents and businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the impacts of limited access to capital by residents and small businesses in remote areas on the development of new housing and business growth. 	Local councils, Northern RDAs, Regional Development Groups, Chambers of Commerce.	Develop briefing papers, raise government awareness.	Short	Ability for residents and businesses to access capital to buy housing and build businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance Digital Literacy to ensure people in remote communities can take advantage of improved digital connectivity. 	State Library, NBN Co, JCU, local councils	Promote digital literacy programs	Short-Medium	Communities are empowered through access to enhanced digital connectivity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support local governments to build capability and capacity for natural disaster response. 	NQ ROC, NWQ ROC, local councils, DITRDCA, DLGWV, Queensland Reconstruction Authority, NEEMA	Work with stakeholders to clearly articulate gaps and needs to raise the awareness among key decision makers and stakeholders.	Ongoing	Councils are empowered to work with relevant stakeholders to implement a fast and efficient response to natural disasters.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance access to healthcare, disability services, and aged care in remote and rural areas (including the expansion of telehealth). 	Queensland Health, PHNs, NQROC, HHS, aged and disability care service providers	Develop briefing papers to raise government awareness of needs and challenges.	Short-Medium	Improved regional healthcare delivery and liveability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the region's weather data monitoring and reporting systems. Including upgrading rain radar coverage and infrastructure to enable appropriate and real-time flood warnings. 	BoM, local councils, Queensland government, landholders	Facilitate stakeholder engagement.	Short	Communities in rural and remote areas have adequate warnings to prepare for extreme weather events.



05

	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	RDA TNWQ ROLE	TIMEFRAME	INTENDED OUTCOME
Facilitate Regional Collaboration	– Facilitate regional strategic alignment across councils and economic development bodies.	MITEZ, TEL, NWQROC, NQROC, GSD	Facilitate coordination and collaboration.	Ongoing	Stronger regional advocacy and project coordination.
	– Create opportunities for cross-agency collaboration and information sharing.	Regional government agencies and regional development groups	Host Quarterly Business Roundtables for regional leaders to share information.	Ongoing	Streamlined collaboration and coordinated advocacy efforts.
	– Work with aligned regional bodies to provide information to state and federal governments on regional issues, challenges, opportunities and needs.	TEL, MITEZ, NWQROC, NQROC, GSD, local councils	Coordinate briefings and meetings with government decision makers. Develop briefing papers and materials where required.	Ongoing	Strong, consistent messaging to Government.
	– Compile an Annual State of the Region report - on regional economic growth and major project development to inform Federal and State Governments, regional councils, and key industry stakeholders.	RDA TNWQ, local councils, industry partners, and regional development groups	Lead.	Annual	Robust evidence to strengthen advocacy, guide investment decisions, and support coordinated regional planning.

06

Drive Innovation & Sustainability	– Champion innovation precincts NQ SPARK, Australian Critical Minerals Industrial Precinct (Mt Isa) connecting industry, research, and government.	NQ SPARK, Townsville City Council, Mt Isa City Council, JCU, CQU, DSD, industry associations, Townsville Hospital and Health Service	Promote the benefits of investment to support precinct coordination.	Short–Medium	Stronger regional innovation ecosystems.
	– Work with regional R&D bodies to connect R&D innovation with local businesses.	CRC Developing Northern Australia, JCU/CQU, Industry groups, local business, Chambers of Commerce	Promote R&D expertise to the business community, facilitate workshops and knowledge sharing.	Medium	Regional businesses adopt innovations developed by regional R&D bodies.
	– Promote the region as a centre of tropical R&D expertise to address issues in tropical health, natural resource management, marine science, and sustainable agricultural production across the Asia-Pacific region.	JCU, AIMs, CRCDNA, CSIRO, TCC, Mount Isa CC, TCC	Promote through RDA channels, provide connections and identify commercialisation opportunities as they arise.	Medium	Increased opportunities to capitalise on the region's R&D expertise.
	– Support the continuation of the CRC for Developing Northern Australia.	RDA Northern Alliance, RDATNWQ	Provide support as needed.	Short	Northern Australian-focused R&D continues to underpin northern voices.



07

Support First Nations Economic Development

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	RDA TNWQ ROLE	TIMEFRAME	INTENDED OUTCOME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Build Skills and Employment Pathways for First Nations Communities. 	TAFE Queensland, JCU, CQU, First Nations employment agencies, local councils, State/Federal agencies	Work with First Nations organisations to facilitate training-industry linkages.	Short-Medium	Improved First Nations employment outcomes and representation in priority industries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthen procurement, training, and business opportunities. 	North Queensland First Nations Business Networks, Traditional Owner Corporations, local councils, State and Federal agencies, and major project proponents, Indigenous Business Australia (IBA)	Support companies and First Nations enterprises to meet inclusive procurement targets.	Ongoing	Greater participation of First Nations enterprises in regional supply chains, increased employment, and stronger First Nations owned businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support First Nations led economic development initiatives. 	Traditional Owner Corporations, Tourism Queensland, Councils, NRM groups, DSD, National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), Queensland Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multiculturalism (DWATSIPM)	Promote opportunities for First Nations peoples, support applications, connect partners, and support investment readiness.	Ongoing	Growth of sustainable First Nations-led tourism and cultural industries, stronger land stewardship partnerships, and diversified regional economic activity.



 | 08

	ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	RDA TNWQ ROLE	TIMEFRAME	INTENDED OUTCOME
Sustainability & Natural Resource Management	Strengthen integrated land, water, and biodiversity management.	NRM groups (Southern Gulf NRM, NQ Dry Tropics), AgForce, Local Councils, State Environment Departments	Contribute to working groups, promote best practices.	Short–Long	Balanced growth and natural resource protection, ensuring long-term sustainability and liveability.
	Support sustainable practices in agriculture, mining, and tourism.	AgForce, mining and resource companies, Tourism & Events Queensland, and Environmental NGOs	Promote best practice, connect industry with regional NRM groups and other providers of expertise in sustainable land use.	Medium–Long	Increased adoption of sustainable practices across industries, strengthening social licence and reducing environmental impact.
	Build workforce pathways in land and natural resource management.	TAFE Queensland, universities (JCU, CQU), NRM groups, Traditional Owner Corporations, and the State Government	Facilitate partnerships, advocate for training investment to grow regional capability, and address barriers to skills attraction.	Short–Medium	Expanded employment and training opportunities in conservation, land management, and climate resilience, particularly for First Nations and regional communities.
	Support the growth of clean technology and circular economy initiatives to diversify the regional economy.	CleanTech developers, local councils, universities, industry groups, and environmental NGOs	Promote initiatives and support pilot projects.	Ongoing	Diversified regional economy with new industries in clean technology, recycling, and circular economy practices.
	Support regional biodiversity initiatives.	NRM groups, NWQ ROC, NQ ROC	Promote programs and key messages through RDATNWQ channels.	Ongoing	Northern Queensland remains a solid barrier against invasive pests and diseases.



05

APPENDIX

- » **A:** Partner Organisations & Acronyms
- » **B:** RDA TNWQ Studies



APPENDIX A: Partner Organisations & Acronyms

GOVERNMENT – STATE & FEDERAL

- » Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDIP)
- » Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR)
- » Department of Trade, Employment and Training (DTET)
- » Queensland Health (QH)
- » Primary Health Networks (PHNs)
- » Hospital and Health Services (HHSs)
- » Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ)
- » Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) – Federal
- » National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)

INDUSTRY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BODIES

- » Townsville Enterprise Limited (TEL)
- » Mount Isa to Townsville Economic Zone (MITEZ)
- » North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NWQROC)
- » North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NQROC)
- » North Regional Community Forum (NRCF)
- » Chambers of Commerce & Industry (CCI)
- » AgForce Queensland (AgForce)
- » Queensland Resources Council (QRC)

EDUCATION & TRAINING

- » James Cook University (JCU)
- » Central Queensland University (CQU)
- » TAFE Queensland (TAFE Qld)
- » Regional University Study Hubs (Study Hubs)

INNOVATION, DEFENCE & RESEARCH

- » North Queensland Simulation Park (NQ SPARK)
- » Tropical Intelligence and Health Precinct (TropiQ)
- » Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine (AITHM)
- » Queensland Defence Industry Hub – Townsville (QDIH)

FIRST NATIONS ORGANISATIONS

- » Traditional Owner Corporations (various across region)
- » Independent Indigenous Tourism Operators of Queensland (IITOQ)

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & ENVIRONMENT

- » North Queensland Dry Tropics (NQ Dry Tropics)
- » Southern Gulf NRM (SG NRM)
- » Cape York NRM (CY NRM) (if broader engagement needed)
- » Environmental NGOs (e.g. World Wide Fund for Nature – WWF, The Nature Conservancy – TNC)

INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES

- » Powerlink Queensland (Powerlink)
- » NBN Co (NBN)
- » Port of Townsville Ltd (POTL)
- » Queensland Rail (QR)



APPENDIX B: RDA TNWQ Studies

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF NORTH WEST QUEENSLAND'S MAJOR PROJECTS

- » This report provides a strategic snapshot of an unprecedented era of regional growth.
- » Commissioned by Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland and Jobs Townsville North Queensland, the report outlines the scale and significance of the developments set to transform the region's economic future. From emerging industries to essential infrastructure, it highlights the opportunities that will reshape how we live, work, and invest in North and North West Queensland.



NORTH QUEENSLAND WORKFORCE ENVIRONMENTAL WORKFORCE SCAN

- » This Environmental Scan examines labour market readiness and highlights the urgent need for a coordinated Workforce Development Roadmap to meet future demand.
- » Commissioned by Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland and Jobs Townsville North Queensland, the study forecasts over 41,000 new jobs boosting the regional workforce by 25%. But many roles require skills already in short supply.





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