

JULY 26

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RDA TNWQ Business Plan

rdanwq.org.au

Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present the Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland 2026–27 Annual Business Plan and Budget.

It's an exciting time in our region as our strengths and endowments align with themes of national and global significance, including building sovereign capability in critical minerals and manufacturing, renewable energy, defence, agriculture, and First Nations economic development. In early 2026, we released our 2026–2031 Strategic Regional Plan (SRP) to map how these opportunities can be captured across our region. The Plan lays out RDA TNWQ's priorities and details how we will collaborate with councils, industry, community organisations, government agencies, and regional development partners to enhance the region's prosperity and sustainability.

This year, we launched the State of the Region Roadshow across all our local government areas. This format allowed us to share our SRP priorities, discuss regional outlooks on the economy and workforce trends, and listen directly to councils, industry, government, and community feedback. The insights gained from these engagements have reinforced the importance of our SRP and enhanced our understanding of collaboration with stakeholders to promote sustainable, equitable economic growth. We plan to continue the Roadshow tradition in 2027.

Workforce development remains central to our work. In September 2025, RDA TNWQ won the contract to continue hosting the Regional Jobs Committee for North Queensland, Jobs Townsville North Queensland (JTNQ). We also continued to host the Jobs and Live web platforms for North and North West Queensland. These sites will be key assets in a broad campaign to promote TNWQ as a promising place to work and live.

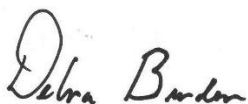
Our regional engagement has shown that workforce shortages, housing scarcity, and liveability are interconnected and cannot be addressed in isolation. A lack of housing options hinders workers from moving to rural and remote areas, creating shortages of skilled staff that affect service delivery and economic development, thereby reducing overall liveability. While we continue our workforce development efforts, we will also explore ways to enhance housing availability and affordability.

Extreme weather events over the 2025-26 summer highlighted the pressure placed on local councils to recover, repair and rebuild vital infrastructure with limited resources. We will work with councils and regional partners to identify opportunities to enhance disaster recovery and resilience and develop recommendations for funding settings that match the cost and conditions of northern Queensland.

As the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games approach, competition for infrastructure funding in Queensland will intensify. We will collaborate with regional stakeholders to ensure that Infrastructure Australia, the Queensland Government, and the Commonwealth Government recognise the importance and value of realising the region's key enabling infrastructure priorities.

In 2026, with four new committee members appointed, we now benefit from a diverse group that covers various backgrounds, regional expertise, industry knowledge, governance experience, and connections across local government, business, and community sectors. Their combined experience and networks will be invaluable in executing this business plan.

I wish to thank our committee, staff, councils, industry and regional economic development partners, community organisations, and government stakeholders for their ongoing dedication to the region. RDA TNWQ's strength lies in uniting people, clearly identifying issues, and transforming regional priorities into action.



Debra Burden

CHAIR, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA TOWNSVILLE & NORTH WEST QUEENSLAND

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

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

TREASURER



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

SECRETARY



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



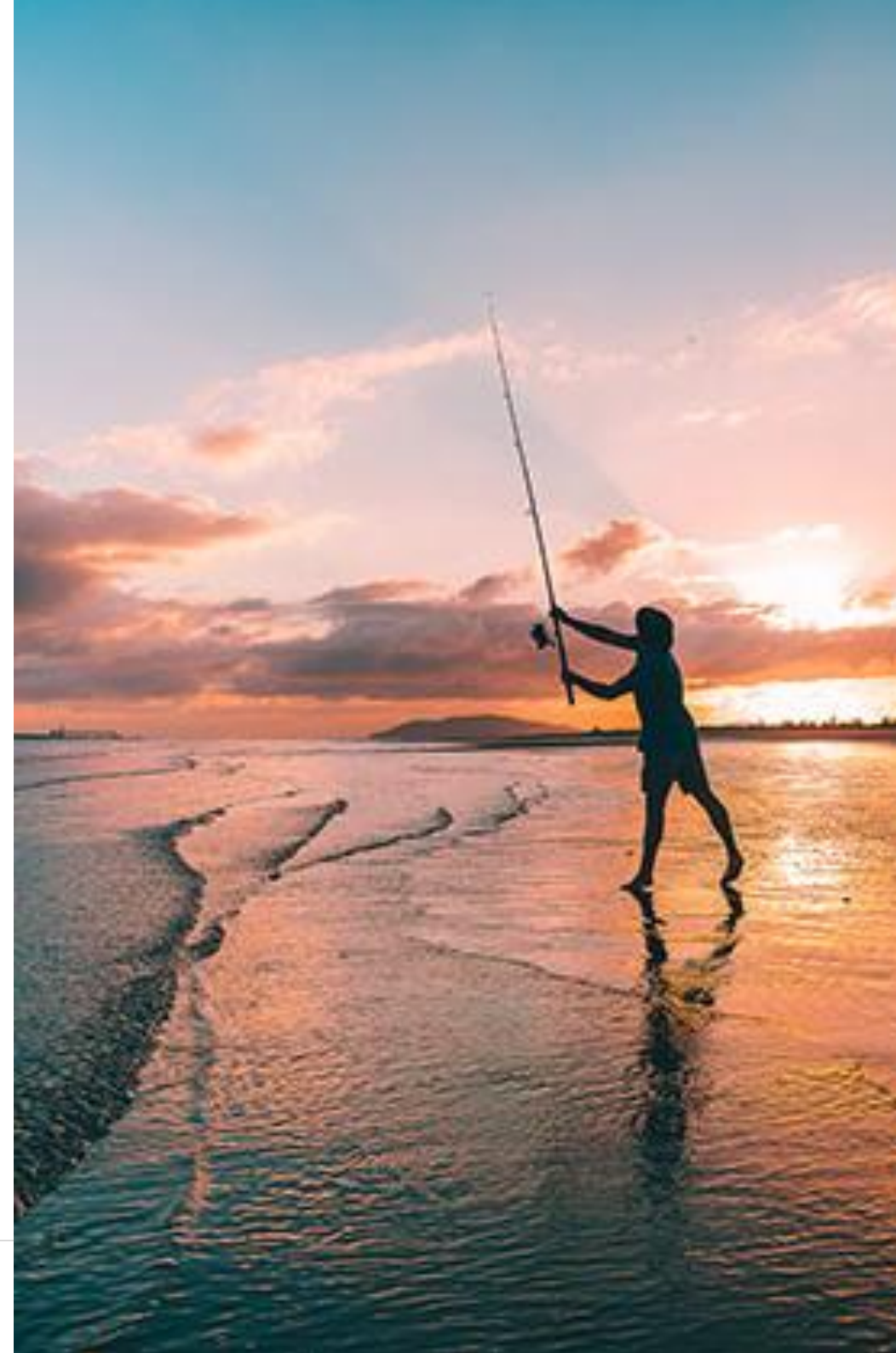
Rachel is the Regional General Manager for Northern Queensland at Telstra, with more than 30 years' experience in regional leadership and infrastructure delivery. A North Queensland local, she has worked closely with councils, industry, community organisations and government across the region. Rachel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

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. Burdekin and Hinchinbrook produce sugar cane and high-value horticulture, while Charters Towers is a major beef and gold production centre. Palm Island is a vibrant First Nations community adding to the region's cultural fabric.

ECONOMIC DRIVERS | OPPORTUNITIES

- Healthcare and education services
- Defence (Australia's largest garrison city)
- Manufacturing (value-adding regional resources)
- 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.

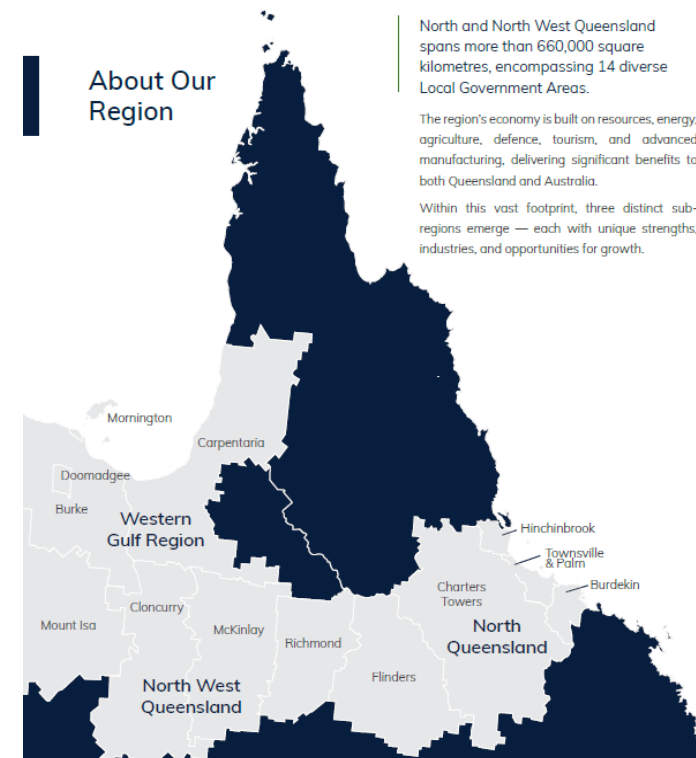
Western Gulf Region

CARPENTARIA | BURKE | DOOMADGEE | MORNINGTON ISLAND

The 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 | OPPORTUNITIES

- Phosphate and critical minerals mining
- Agriculture: cotton and grains, beef cattle production
- 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 (2036)



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

144,000
Jobs

66.9%
Participation

3.8%
Unemployment

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

Housing & Lifestyle

Opportunities for affordable living and sustainable growth



108,000
HOUSEHOLDS

MEDIAN HOUSE PRICES

📍 Townsville ~\$680K

📍 Mount Isa ~\$312K



Rental Vacancy:
1.2%



Economic Strength

Powered by resources, health, education & innovation

\$36.3 Bn

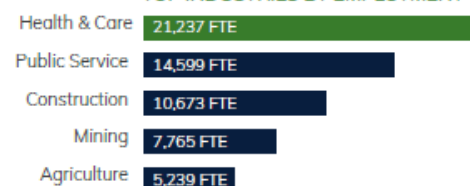
Gross Regional Product



MAJOR EXPORTS

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

TOP INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT



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

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

Strategic context – Opportunities, Strengths and Challenges

Opportunities - global and national trends creating opportunities Townsville and North West Queensland

1. Global and National Push for Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy
2. Surging Demand for Critical Minerals
3. Rising Investment in Defence and Regional Security
4. Global Supply Chain Reshaping and Resilience
5. Inflationary Pressures and Construction Cost Escalations
6. Workforce Transformation
7. Natural Resource Management - Protecting the Environment & Cultural Heritage
8. First Nations Economic Development
9. Tropical Health & Innovation

Strengths – building on the region’s competitive advantages

Natural Resources

- Critical minerals - A globally significant source of copper, zinc, rare earths, and other minerals essential for clean energy, advanced technologies, and defence industries. Our existing processing and refining capability supports a sovereign supply chain.
- Renewable 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 gateway - 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 is a gateway for exports from the Gulf region.
- Defence and security hub - The region has long been home to a significant defence presence, with Townsville home to Australia’s largest Army base and a major Air Force base. It is well positioned to benefit from increased Defence spending aligned with the 2024 National Defence Strategy and the 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 talent - Deep expertise across mining, agriculture, defence, logistics, health, and professional services, supported by long-established industry operations.
- Education and training - Regional education institutions, including James Cook University, Central Queensland University, TECNQ, Mater Education and TAFE Queensland, drive skills development to meet emerging workforce needs.
- Excellence in Tropical Research & Development - North Queensland has several worldclass 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 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

- Strong communities - Regional centres demonstrate strong leadership, collaboration, and adaptability, responding effectively to climate variability and natural disasters.
- Improvements in digital connectivity - although access to digital and telecommunications services in remote and rural areas remains less than in major centres, many areas have benefited from enhanced digital access due to upgrades in NBN and mobile coverage.
- 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 and knowledge - Rich and diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledge systems and heritage are deeply connected to land and sea. They create opportunities for cultural tourism, traditional ecological knowledge in land and water management, and partnerships that strengthen community, identity and economic participation.

Challenges – unlocking the region's potential

Infrastructure

- Ageing and 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 major transport infrastructure including the Bruce Highway, the Flinders Road and rail corridor, and key inland routes into the Gulf. In many areas, local government water and waste infrastructure needs upgrading.
- Energy supply - 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 large-scale 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 a key challenge for economic development and community wellbeing within the Gulf region.

Labour & Skills Shortages

- Workforce shortages - Regional areas face persistent shortages in healthcare, education, trades, mining, construction and agriculture.
- Training alignment - 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.

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. Affordability is a significant issue, with some businesses under-insuring or exiting the market.

Regional & Remote Service Gaps

- Housing - Demand for residential housing in the region's growth centres continues to outstrip supply. In rural and remote regions, high building costs choke 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 – The shortage of essential workers, caused by a shortage of housing can restrict access to healthcare, aged and disability care, education, and childcare services in many remote communities.
- Economic transition and industry risk - 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.

First Nations Economic Development

- Barriers to economic participation - The region's remote First Nations communities face challenges in accessing education, training, and employment opportunities.
- Access to basic services - First Nations communities in Mornington Island, Doomadgee and Palm Island can only access electricity through prepaid meters. These households are among the world's most energy insecure. Disconnection of power supply creates health issues and causes social and economic disruption across whole communities.
- School to work transitions - Some First Nations communities face restricted educational opportunities, with some areas only providing schooling up to Year 10 and limited access to vocational training. This gap between schooling and the skills needed for employment leads to high youth unemployment, which can harm social cohesion and restrict young people's ability to engage in the wider economy.
- 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.

Natural Resource Management

- Environmental management - Balancing economic growth, particularly mining and agriculture, with protecting the Great Barrier Reef, water catchments, and biodiversity remains a critical priority.
- Biosecurity - The Gulf area remains a significant entry point for invasive species, pests, and disease incursions. 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.

RDA TNWQ's 2026–2031 Strategic Regional Plan has eight strategic priorities

These priorities inform our annual business plans.

1. Protect and enhance enabling infrastructure

Unlocking opportunity, creating a productive economy and strengthening the region's resilience in times of crisis requires efficient connectivity across roads, rail, ports, telecommunications and digital networks.

2. Support Sustainable Economic Growth

The region is well-positioned to develop new industries aligned with national priorities in renewable energy, critical minerals, defence and advanced manufacturing. To capitalise on this growth, and maintain the competitiveness of existing industries, actions are needed to reduce operating costs, improve productivity and enhance global competitiveness. This includes implementing policies that overcome the challenges of operating in northern Australia. Maintaining critical sovereign capabilities in processing and refining is vital to ensure a strong industry backbone.

3. 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, employers, 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.

4. Enhance Liveability and Resilience

Improved access to affordable housing, health care, education, and community services is 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.

5. Facilitate Regional Collaboration

Positive regional outcomes depend on a strong, unified voice. RDA TNWQ is committed to working with regional bodies to build a shared vision and coordinate advocacy efforts.

6. Drive Innovation

Commercialisation, R&D, digital adoption, and sustainable practices are key to maintaining competitiveness in the global low-emissions economy. The region boasts strong capabilities in Research and Development and Tropical Innovation. Targeted actions and investment are needed to support and expand our innovation ecosystems and foster an environment that speeds up growth in emerging sectors.

7. 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.

8. 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.



Annual Work Plan

1. Regional Priorities

The 2026–27 work plan translates RDA TNWQ’s Strategic Regional Plan into a focused set of activities for the year. Regional priorities 1 to 4 reflect the main areas of activity drawn from the Strategic Regional Plan. Priority 5 supports all activities by strengthening regional engagement, coordination and intelligence.

1. Building a skilled workforce
2. Securing key enabling infrastructure
3. Improving access to housing, enhancing liveability and building resilience
4. Regional collaboration
5. Regional engagement and intelligence

2. Priority business activities

1. **Workforce:** Addressing skills shortages and increasing participation.
2. **Infrastructure:** Raising the profile of key enabling infrastructure projects.
3. **Liveability and resilience:** Developing a roadmap of actions to increase the availability of affordable housing in the region. Highlighting actions needed to improve regional recovery and resilience in the face of climate change and more frequent extreme weather events.
4. **Regional Collaboration:** Enhancing regional stakeholder collaboration and coordination to ensure the needs of the TNWQ region are clearly voiced to governments.
5. **Regional intelligence:** Gathering regional intelligence, information and insights to enhance planning and policy.

3. Funding agreement focus outcomes and performance indicators

Primary focus

Outcome 1: Regional economic development. The region is experiencing significant economic opportunity, particularly in critical minerals, renewable energy, defence and agriculture. Realising these opportunities requires enabling infrastructure, a skilled workforce and maintaining liveability across the region.

Key performance indicators: the number of initiatives led, contributed to, or supported across workforce, enabling infrastructure and industry growth.

Outcome 4: Evidence and local intelligence. Decision-makers require consistent, credible evidence to understand regional barriers such as infrastructure constraints, cost pressures and workforce shortages.

Key performance indicators: Number and quality of briefings provided to government and decision-makers, Participation in consultations, submissions and advisory processes, Demonstrated use of evidence to influence policy, funding or investment decisions

4. RDA TNWQ Value Add

- **Connecting regional and national priorities** - Positioning Townsville and North West Queensland in the context of national priorities such as critical minerals, renewable energy and sovereign capability.
- **Leading where action is required** – Initiating and leading projects that address identified needs.
- **Leading where coordination is required** - Bringing together industry, education, community and government to align priorities and reduce duplication.
- **Providing independent regional intelligence and insight** - Delivering clear, unbiased and practical insights into infrastructure, workforce, housing and cost pressures to inform policy and investment decisions.
- **Supporting investment readiness** - Helping to refine project concepts, make connections and improving access to funding.
- **Reflecting community diversity** - Representing the diversity of the TNWQ region; from isolated First Nations communities to rural outback towns to the largest city in northern Australia, Townsville.



7. Outcomes and Performance Indicators Tables

Summary of top 5 **strategic priorities** for the upcoming year:

1. Regional workforce development.
2. Highlighting key enabling/catalytic infrastructure needs nationally.
3. Housing availability and affordability.
4. Regional collaboration.
5. Regional engagement and intelligence.

Summary of the top 5 key **business activities** for the upcoming year:

1. *Workforce*: Activities to develop the workforce needed to deliver on economic opportunity and to maintain sustainable and liveable communities.
2. *Infrastructure*: Identifying and raising the profile of regional enabling infrastructure to unlock nationally significant economic growth opportunities and improve the quality of life in our regions.
3. *Liveability and resilience*: Developing a roadmap of actions to increase the availability of affordable housing in the region and working with regional stakeholders to identify and highlight recommendations to improve recovery and resilience in the face of climate change and more frequent extreme weather events.
4. *Regional Collaboration*: Activities to enhance regional stakeholder collaboration and coordination to ensure the needs of the TNWQ region are clearly voiced to governments.
5. *Regional intelligence*: Gather regional intelligence and information to understand firsthand challenges and opportunities across the region and inform planning and policy.

Outcome 1: Facilitate regional economic development outcomes, through investment in: • Skills and local leadership • Opportunities for First Nations people • Infrastructure • Connectivity • Decarbonisation Industry growth.				
Activity 1: Regional workforce development				
Activity 1.1: Host Jobs Townsville North Queensland The Regional Jobs Committee for North Queensland JTNQ is our primary delivery vehicle for regional workforce development.	Skills and local leadership	Lead	Jul 2026 to Jun 2027	• Understand regional workforce gaps and opportunities to improve alignment between education and training and employer needs. • Strengthened partnerships between education and training, industry and regional development organisations in the NQ region. • Increased awareness of future career opportunities and pathways by job seekers, diverse communities and youth. • Enhanced capability of employers to attract and retain staff
Activity 1.2: Create pathways for underrepresented groups into training and employment Manage projects that focus on increasing workforce	Skills and local leadership; opportunities for First Nations people	Lead	Jul 2026 to Jun 2027	• Training and employment opportunities in Health and Education for people with First Nations and multicultural backgrounds. • Practical career advice and pathways to remove barriers to entering the workforce for kids from multicultural backgrounds.

participation by underrepresented groups.				
Activity 1.3: TNWQ Regional skills attraction An initiative to highlight career and lifestyle opportunities and attract skilled workers to the region.	Skills and local leadership	Lead	Sept 2026 to June 2027	Attract skilled workers to areas where there are critical skills shortages.
Activity 1.4: Establish regional partnerships to address workforce needs in the north west Look for opportunities and partners (including the Mount Isa Regional Jobs Committee) to deliver projects to address workforce challenges in North West Queensland.	Skills and local leadership	Lead	Jul 2026 to Jun 2027	- Workforce development projects that effectively target workforce issues in the North West - Stronger regional workforce partnerships
Activity 2: Enabling infrastructure			July 2026 to June 2027	
Activity 2.1: Champion nationally significant enabling infrastructure projects. Engage with regional stakeholders to develop an agreed regional infrastructure priority list (top 3-4 projects)	Local leadership	Lead	Q2 2026-27	- A coordinated and cohesive approach will raise the profile of nationally significant enabling infrastructure in the TNWQ region. - Including these infrastructure priorities on the Infrastructure Australia list will strengthen advocacy by regional stakeholders to deliver these projects.

Deliver targeted briefings to Infrastructure Australia and key government decision-makers				
Activity 2.2: Highlight regional transport limitations through briefings on: Critical road network needs in the Gulf Burdekin Bridge Flinders transport corridor	Infrastructure	Contribute to	July 2026 - June 2027	Raise national awareness of transport connectivity needs in the region
Activity 2.3: Highlight regional energy infrastructure needs through briefings on: Importance of Copperstring to economic development in the North West Energy needs in the Gulf region	Infrastructure and decarbonisation	Contribute to	July 2026 - June 2027	Greater national and state awareness of the need for investment in reliable and affordable energy solutions to enable regional development in TNWQ
Activity 2.4: Brief the Department on the Port of Karumba business case. Pending the outcomes of the business case – brief the Commonwealth Government	Infrastructure	Otherwise assisted	July 2026 to June 2027	Raise the Commonwealth's awareness of the Port of Karumba business case outcomes.

on next steps and recommendations.				
Activity 2.5: Digital connectivity gaps and challenges across the TNWQ region Collate information on digital and telecommunications access issues across TNWQ Highlight needs to providers	Connectivity	Contribute to	July 2026 - June 2027	Improvements in digital and telecommunications across the region
Activity 3: Housing, liveability and resilience			August – December 2026	
Activity 3.1: Regional housing roadmap. Seek partners to co-fund development of a roadmap of evidence-based recommendations to the government on policy, funding, and investment options to enhance housing availability and affordability in areas of northern Queensland experiencing housing market failure.	Infrastructure	Lead	August 2026 to December 2026	A roadmap of practical actions to help improve housing supply and affordability across the TNWQ region where there is market failure
Activity 3.2: Support local government disaster		Contribute to	August 2026 to December 2026	Increase the Commonwealth government's awareness of the specific challenges faced by LGAs in northern Queensland, such as increased exposure to extreme

response capability by articulating gaps and needs Identify the top issues affecting regional resilience and recovery. Provide briefings to the government on recommendations to ensure the region recovers and builds back better.				weather, higher costs to repair and enhance the resilience of key infrastructure, and small rate bases. Policy decisions that lift the ability of TNWQ LGAs to recover from extreme weather events and build more resilient infrastructure.
Activity 3.3: Review insurance costs across northern Queensland Present findings in a brief to government and use findings to raise general awareness on the impacts on northern Queensland		Lead	July 2026 to June 2027	Raise awareness of how insurance costs disadvantage businesses and communities across the north and provide options to minimise impacts.

Outcome 2: Support regional stakeholders, including local government and the not-for-profit-sector, to seek grant opportunities that advance strategic regional priorities.	
Activity 4: Grants and submissions support aligned to strategic priorities	
Activity 4.1: Support councils to prepare submissions and applications that progress housing, workforce and education access and critical infrastructure delivery.	- Increased regional capability to submit strong, aligned funding proposals - More consistent alignment between grant asks and SRP priorities - Higher quality applications from councils and partners

Activity 4.2: Support infrastructure business cases and submissions where they align with RDA TNWQ's Strategic Regional Plan.	• Stronger business case narratives and stakeholder backing • Better alignment across councils and regional bodies on priority asks
Activity 4.3: Where requested, support First Nations organisations and enterprises with partner connections, investment readiness and applications, including letters of support.	• Increased participation of First Nations organisations in major projects • More consistent inclusion in procurement and supply chain opportunities • New First Nations-led enterprises
Outcome 3: Contribute to, and where appropriate, drive local economic development planning and strategy development.	
Activity 5: Regional planning and coordination to drive aligned action	
Activity 5.1: Facilitate regional strategic alignment across councils and economic development bodies by contributing to regional planning activities	• Enhance input into regional planning processes on priorities and delivery barriers
Activity 5.2: Host quarterly business roundtables for regional leaders to share information and coordinate advocacy	• Improved cross-agency collaboration and information flow • Practical coordination that reduces duplication and strengthens outcomes
Activity 5.3: Participate in relevant regional working groups including the Gulf Water Plan.	• Better regional representation in planning processes • Clear understanding of the economic opportunities available from increased water supply in the Gulf catchment
Activity 5.4: Support LGA initiatives to foster sustainable regional development.	• Provide support for Doomadgee's Regional Precincts and Partnerships project "Heart of Doomadgee"
Activity 5.5: Contribute to Gulf Savannah Development's economic development plan. Help identify workforce challenges and solutions as part of GSD's economic development plan.	• Workforce development priorities that align with the GSD's economic development plan.

Outcome 4: Contribute relevant data and local intelligence to support the evidence base to inform regional development strategies, program design and policy responses.	
Activity 6: Communications and stakeholder engagement	
Activity 6.1: Deliver the 2027 TNWQ State of the Region Roadshow	• Stronger engagement with key stakeholders • Input from regional stakeholders to ensure TNWQ's Strategic Regional Plan priorities address key regional opportunities and challenges.
Activity 6.2: Promote key government programs and messages through RDA channels	• Increased reach through established RDA communication channels
Activity 7: Evidence and briefings program to government and decision makers	
Activity 7.1: Provide briefings to the government on major regional events – such as catastrophic weather events (e.g. 2025-26 floods)	• Government has first-hand information on the on-ground impacts of major events
Activity 7.2: Contribute submissions to Commonwealth enquiries	• Ensuring that TNWQ regional issues are considered in government decision-making