



Regional Development *Australia*

TOWNSVILLE AND NORTH WEST QLD

Draft Regional Roadmap 2013-16

Townsville and North West Queensland

Bouliā, Burdekin, Burke, Carpentaria, Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Doomadgee, Flinders, Hinchinbrook, Mornington Island, McKinlay, Mount Isa, Palm Island, Richmond, Townsville



Developing the long term sustainability of our region



An Australian Government Initiative



Queensland Government

1 MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA TOWNSVILLE AND NORTH WEST QUEENSLAND COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Since its inception in 2009, the Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland Committee (RDA) has worked to coordinate across, and advocate for, our vast and productive region. This has been no mean feat given our geographical landscape from the Gulf and North West, south to Boulia and across the Mitchell Grass plains to the hinterland and coastal region of North Queensland. The development of the Regional Roadmap 2013 - 2016 has relied on input from people across the region and this has been much appreciated and highly valued.

This Regional Roadmap serves as a document that outlines key messages that are, as much as possible, consistent across the whole region and is designed to help promote the region's priorities and desired outcomes. Our approach throughout the development of this Regional Roadmap adheres to the principles outlined in the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Framework for Regional Economic Development. In particular, we will make decisions based on evidence and ensure strong partnerships and collaboration on regional economic development activities.

Our region, incorporating the 15 Local Government areas of Boulia, Burdekin, Burke, Carpentaria, Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Doomadgee, Flinders, Hinchinbrook, McKinlay, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Palm Island, Richmond and Townsville is already recognised nationally and internationally for its strengths in its people, industry, resources, and the future opportunities these offer. Like any other region we also have our challenges, and progression of this Regional Roadmap 2013 – 2016 will help us to work together as a region for mitigating these.

Thank you to all regional stakeholders who have contributed and to the RDA Committee members and staff for their role in bringing this Regional Roadmap 2013 – 2016 together and providing a sound documented basis to go forward. I look forward to working with all stakeholders to develop our region for the benefit of residents, future residents and for a greater Australia.

Paul Woodhouse

Chairman

Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland Committee

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2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 REGIONAL OVERVIEW

The Townsville and North West Queensland region covers a large geographic area traversing 449,190.9km², with four distinct areas, these being the Gulf, North West Minerals Province, Northern Outback and the coastal North Queensland area. Each area, individual in its characteristics, is in many ways reliant on its neighbouring areas. Despite their differences these areas share a number of agreed priorities for development of the region. The area equates to 25.9% of Queensland's land mass and 5.8% of Australia's.

Geographically this region covers the 15 Local Government areas of Boulia, Burdekin, Burke, Carpentaria, Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Doomadgee, Flinders, Hinchinbrook, McKinlay, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Palm Island, Richmond and Townsville.

The population of the region is 265,500 persons which equates to 5.8% of Queensland's population and 1.145% of Australia's. The region's projected population is 386,652 persons by June 2031. 70% of the region's population lives in Townsville, the largest city in northern Australia. Mount Isa is the second largest city with a population of 22,800 while 22% of the region's residents live in shires of populations from 494 to 17,900 persons, indicating the large variation in population density across the region.

Within the region, 21.1% of the persons in the region are aged 0 – 14 years, the majority, that is, 68.3% are aged 16 – 64 years and 10.5% are aged 65 years and over. The population ratio of people in the 45 – 64 age statistical bracket is 2.2 times the number currently in the 65 plus statistical bracket. The future provision of aged and health services to cater for the future needs of the 45 – 64 age statistical bracket is of concern to the region.

Formal education levels in the region as a whole remain below the Queensland and National average benchmarks. 50.9% of residents aged over 15 years completed high school to Year 11 or 12. This compares to a state average of 55.3%. Of residents aged over 15 years, 13,927 have not completed education beyond Year 8. There is a need to improve education attainment levels in the region to better prepare the future workforce and to ensure greater prosperity through employment.

As a measure of socio-economic status, the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage suggests that the region has a higher percentage of population that are more disadvantaged as compared to being in the higher status quintiles. Noteworthy is that the Indigenous Local Government areas of Palm Island, Doomadgee and Mornington Island experience almost 100% of their populations as being in the most disadvantaged quintile. The larger cities of Townsville and Mount Isa have the least disadvantaged socio-economic status.

Within the region, the largest contributors to gross regional product are mining, manufacturing, public administration and safety sectors, followed by construction and retail trade.

As compared to Queensland there is a larger percentage of employed in the agricultural, mining, electricity, public administration and education and training industries. Within the Townsville area, Palm Island experiences the highest unemployment level at 9.3% (December 2012). Whilst in the Mount Isa area, unemployment as of June 2011 was 5.4%, with particularly high unemployment in the areas of Burke (17.6 per cent), Doomadgee (17.1 per cent), Mornington (12.1 per cent) and Carpentaria (11.3 per cent).

This region is recognised as being globally significant in several sectors and has much potential to be developed to sustain itself into the future. The region has:

- **a strong and diverse regional economy, contributing a total of \$18,434 million to Queensland's Gross Regional Product (2010-2011)**, although sub-regions are often reliant on one core industry such as mining or agriculture;
- **an internationally significant mining industry**, with an annual output worth approximately \$14.7 billion from the North West Minerals Province which contains an estimated 75% of Queensland's total metal resources, however there are problems with inefficiency and safety on regional roads and rail that need to be addressed through planning and investment including greater focus on transferring freight to the rail network;
- **excellent potential for future mines** to open but this requires research and planning;
- **three major export-focussed minerals processing facilities** in Townsville and Mount Isa, but they are exposed to the high cost of energy which is impacting the viability of expanding operations and long-term sustainability;
- **substantial agricultural and grazing industries**, with a focus on sugar (34% of Queensland's total production) and beef production (25% of Queensland's cattle), with new growth opportunities around irrigated agriculture in the Flinders River Precinct emerging;
- **A leading world class university** (top 4% in the world) presence in the region, through James Cook University, with recognised research in areas such as marine sciences, biodiversity, tropical ecology and environments, global warming, tourism, and tropical medicine and public health care in under-served populations;
- A wide range of **applied knowledge and expertise** on how to innovate in industries operating in the tropics, but this is yet to be fully developed into a successful framework for exporting to the \$40 trillion economy in the tropics of the world;
- **excellent port infrastructure with three ports** in Townsville (handled 12.8% value of all of Queensland's exports in 2011 – 2012), Lucinda and Karumba but further investment is required into the rail access to the port to enhance productivity;
- on average a young population, but faces some serious challenges in "closing the gap" on **education levels across the region that are currently lower than the State and National averages**. Without urgently addressing education attainment levels, the region will not have workers for the future who are armed with the right skills and have the ability to earn and prosper; and
- **strong local communities**, ranging from Boulia to Mornington Island to Palm Island and Townsville, however, they all need support to develop infrastructure that helps attract workers in local jobs and retain families in their communities. They need to be able to source funding for infrastructure and programs in the arts, sport, recreation and social inclusion that encourage active, healthy and connected lifestyles.

2.2 DRIVERS OF CHANGE

There are a number of drivers of change directing the region's development. These drivers include policy from the three levels of Government. In particular, at an Australian Government level, current policy drivers of Developing Northern Australia, Defence White Papers, Asian Century White Paper, National Food Plan, National Ports Strategy, and the National Freight Strategy have significant relevance to our region. At a State Government level, the Queensland Plan, Queensland Ports Strategy, the 30 year Electricity Strategy and the 30 year Water Sector Strategy are instrumental in providing policy direction for the key issues facing the region. Community Plans and Economic Development Plans (where available) of the regions 15 Local Governments are vitally important in shaping local decision making.

Further external drivers impacting on the region's development include:

- The relatively high AUD exchange rate and its impact on the mining, agricultural and education export sectors.
- Global economic uncertainty affecting business confidence.
- Political instability in the Middle East, impacting oil prices.
- Climate change impact on the environment, community and industry.
- Australian Federal Government election period (2013) will delay some decision-making on key projects.

2.3 THE REGION'S FUTURE DEVELOPMENT – DIRECTIONS

To achieve the vision (as outlined in Section 3), the Regional Roadmap 2013 – 2016 identifies a number of directions for the region's development. These directions are:

- **Infrastructure for current and future projected needs.**
Across the region there are a number of significant port, air, rail, communications and water infrastructure assets. It is important that not only that these assets are maintained, but also that they are future proofed to allow for the region's development potential and connectivity for residents.
- **Strengthening and development of industry sectors.**
The region has a diversified industry base, with strengths in mining, agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. It is important that measures are taken that allow this continued diversity, uptake of innovative opportunities and further investment into the region is made.
- **Provision of infrastructure and services for enhancing liveability.**
Attraction and retention of people within the region is a high priority. Factors such as access to communications, health, public transport, education and social services can influence the liveability and desire of people to stay or be attracted to live within the region. Coordinated human services delivery is needed to ensure equal opportunities and access for all residents.
- **Promotion of the region and its opportunities.**
Attracting investment to take up opportunities offered is paramount to the future viability of the region. Opportunities exist to expand, diversify and value-add to the region's resources, by identifying competitive advantages and encouraging new economic opportunities.

- **Strengthening of partnerships and networks for progression of the region.**
By strengthening partnerships and networks within the region, outcomes of efficiency will be achieved, particularly in the areas of service delivery. Coordinated human services delivery is needed to ensure equal opportunities and access for all residents.
- **Natural resource management stewardship.**
The region's gross regional output is strongly reliant on our natural resource base. It is therefore essential that this natural resource base is valued and cared for to protect our existing industry and lifestyle now and into the future.

2.4 TRANSFORMATIONAL ENGINE STARTER PRIORITIES

While there are many priorities, issues and projects of significance and urgency, RDA's specific focus over the next three years will be on the following priorities which we consider to be "transformational engine starters" that will make a significant positive impact on economic development, community well-being and the future sustainability of our region. RDA will be a facilitator and/or supporter of these initiatives.

Table 1: Transformational Engine Starter Priorities

#	Transformational Engine Starter Priorities	Key Investors (I) and Enablers (E)
1.	Investment into energy infrastructure , and in particular, electricity generation and transmission including renewable generation – this will enable (1) cost competitive delivery of electricity to attract and retain industry and (2) reliable and affordable electricity supplies to residents and business, and (3) lower emissions.	Australian Government (E) Queensland Government (E) Private Sector (I)
2.	Investment into urgent regional road priorities – this will improve (1) safety and efficiency on transport routes for residents and tourists and (2) productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets.	Australian Government (I) Queensland Government (I) Local Government (E)
3.	Investment into rail, intermodal, port and airport infrastructure to support productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets.	Australian Government (I) Queensland Government (I&E) Private Sector (I)
4.	Communications infrastructure improvements across the region including mobile and high speed broadband access – this will provide (1) residents, in particular those in rural and remote areas, with access to health, education and other online services and (2) industry with access to productivity improvements and markets.	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (E) Local Government (E) Private Sector (I)
5.	Planning and solutions for water quality improvements, sustainable access to water, and its storage to expand agriculture, grazing and other industries.	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (I&E) Local Government (I&E) Private Sector (I)
6.	Identification of new mining and minerals processing opportunities in the region to ensure the future prosperity of the region.	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (I&E) Private Sector (I)

#	Transformational Engine Starter Priorities	Key Investors (I) and Enablers (E)
7.	Development of the branding, positioning and exporting of <u>Tropical Knowledge and Expertise</u>	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (I&E) Institutions (I&E) Private Sector (I)
8.	Improved <u>education</u> attainment levels to provide more opportunities for individuals to participate and prosper in the workforce and to support improvements in productivity and innovation in industry.	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (I&E) Education Sector (I&E) Private Sector (I) Communities (E)
9.	<u>Land tenure security</u> for leasehold land, lessening the disincentive for investment in the region.	Australian Government (E) Queensland Government (E)
10.	Funding opportunities for local governments to develop <u>community infrastructure</u> for access, health, culture, the arts, sport and recreation.	Australian Government (I) Queensland Government (I) Local Government (I&E) Private Sector (I) Communities (E)

3 VISION FOR THE REGION

The RDA Townsville and North West Queensland Committee’s vision is ***to achieve a prosperous, sustainable, cohesive and liveable region.***

The vision will be achieved by working in the following directions:

Focussing on infrastructure for current and future projected needs, people attraction, skills development and resilience building will be key components to ensuring successful outcomes across existing and new industries. It is important that not only are infrastructure assets are maintained, but also that they are future proofed to allow for the region’s development potential and connectivity for residents.

Focussing on strengthening and development of industry sectors for the development of a strong economy. This will be achieved through recognition and development of the region’s competitive advantages in existing industries and the attraction of investment and businesses in both existing and new sectors. Innovation will also be a key element that will contribute to the strengthening and development of industry sectors.

A prosperous and sustainable economy

Focussing on infrastructure and services for enhancing liveability for people across the region and to improve the quality of life for all. It involves ensuring basic standard of living expectations and infrastructure and facilities to enhance the attractiveness of communities to current and new residents in particular access to health, social and cultural services. It is about making liveable towns where people are proud and happy to live. It is understood that “lifestyle”, “quality of life” and “liveable” towns will have many interpretations, but the region considers it important to raise the level of the base quality of life and development of facilities in each community to ensure communities thrive into the future with opportunities presented.

Focussing on promotion of the region and its opportunities and developing a strong identity for the region in the minds of all levels of government and the private investment sector. Supporting the development of strong leadership and productive networks and partnerships that will help strengthen the region. Also aims to improve the recognition and equity of the region with the more populous areas of Australia.

Cohesive and liveable communities

Focussing on strengthening of partnerships and networks for progression of the region. It aims to address issues of social cohesion, interaction and engagement and to ensure equal access for all to the community in which they reside. It also aims to promote the acceptance and understanding of other community members’ backgrounds and cultures.

Focussing on natural resource management stewardship through acknowledgement of the region’s environment and natural resources, and their significance in underpinning the region’s economic and social structure, and the importance of managing our natural resources for current and future generations.

A prosperous and sustainable environment

4 ROLE OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA

4.1 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA

Regional Development Australia is an Australian Government initiative that brings together all levels of government to enhance the development of Australia's regions. A national network of 55 RDA committees has been established to achieve this objective.

The Regional Development Australia Charter highlights that a key focus will be on the economic, social and environmental issues affecting communities. Regional Development Australia will be an important contributor to and driver of:

- Regional business growth plans and strategies, which will help support economic development, the creation of new jobs, skills development and business investment;
- Environmental solutions, which will support ongoing sustainability and the management of climate change (including the impact of drought, flood or bushfires); and
- Social inclusion strategies, which will bring together and support all members of the community.

The mission for members of Regional Development Australia is to build relationships:

- Within communities, including with business, industry and the non-government sector;
- Across communities, including with groups such as young people, women, Indigenous Australians and people from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds; and
- Between regions, across boundaries, and in cities and towns.

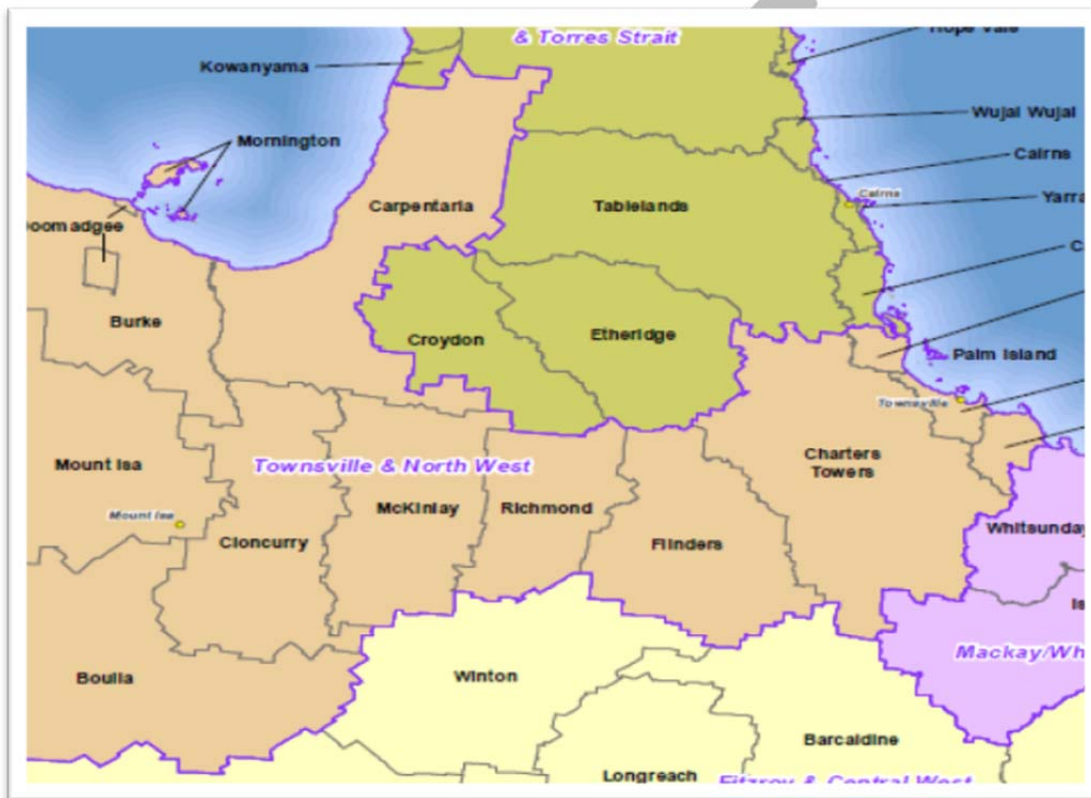
RDA is working to create successful and sustainable communities. In partnership with the government, private sector and the community, committees are:

- Supporting informed regional planning;
- Consulting and engaging with stakeholders to identify and resolve critical issues;
- Liaising with governments and local communities about the best, most appropriate programs and services to support regional development; and
- Contributing to business growth and investment plans, environmental solutions and social inclusion strategies.

4.2 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA TOWNSVILLE AND NORTH WEST QUEENSLAND INC.

Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland Inc. (RDA) engages across the 15 local government areas of Boulia, Burdekin, Burke, Carpentaria, Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Doomadgee, Flinders, Hinchinbrook, McKinlay, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Palm Island, Richmond and Townsville.

Figure 1: Map of Townsville and North West Queensland Region



RDA operates as a not-for-profit, incorporated association and is funded through a service contract with the Australian Government (the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport). In-kind resource support is provided by the Queensland State Government (the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning).

The Committee consists of 12 ministerially appointed members who are volunteers with a diverse range of skills, experiences and knowledge from the community, industry, business, economic development, natural resource management, training and government.

The Committee meets on average every eight weeks, and throughout the year Committee members represent the Committee and region in a variety of forums.

RDA's mission is to enhance the sustainable economic prosperity and quality of life in our region.

4.2.1 The way we do business is:

- We seek our community's views and advice on regional issues;
- We seek input from our Committee representatives who bring a wide range of regional and industry experience;
- We seek input from a wide range of regional stakeholders in all levels of government, regional economic development organisations, natural resource management groups, chambers of commerce, industry and social services organisations;
- We use this information to identify common issues across the region;
- We gather evidence to support the issues;
- We document the issues and solutions that require support; and
- We facilitate or support actions to advocate to relevant government and non-government decision-makers to achieve outcomes.

4.2.2 Regional Collaboration

RDA engages and partners with all levels of government, regional economic development organisations, natural resource management groups, chambers of commerce, industry and social services organisations to work on issues and achieve outcomes. This is done both informally and through structured forums and committees. The Chairman and Chief Executive Officer represent RDA on several regional committees to facilitate sharing of information and work to achieve shared goals.

4.2.3 Cross-Regional Collaboration – Northern Queensland Strategy

Since early 2012, the four Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committees in Northern Queensland (RDA Far North Queensland and Torres Strait, RDA Townsville and North West Queensland, RDA Mackay Isaac Whitsunday and RDA Fitzroy and Central West) have been working collaboratively on a place-based approach to regional development under the banner of the Northern Queensland Strategy. Recognising there are common issues and opportunities that can be addressed in a collegiate rather than competitive way, the four RDAs have taken a visionary approach to the development of Northern Queensland, building upon recognised Australian and Queensland Government priorities.

We have a strong and united voice and willingness to work closely with all levels of government and the private sector to resolve critical road blocks to maximise opportunities for development across Northern Queensland.

4.2.4 Governance Context

The region has strong representation from all levels of Government and RDA work collaboratively with all. At an Australian Government level, current policy drivers of Developing Northern Australia, Defence White Papers, Asian Century White Paper, National Food Plan, National Ports Strategy, and the National Freight Strategy have significant relevance to our region. At a State Government level, the Queensland Plan, Queensland Ports Strategy, the 30 year Electricity Strategy and the 30 year Water Sector Strategy are instrumental in providing policy direction for the key issues facing the region. Community Plans and Economic Development Plans (where available) of the regions 15 Local Governments are vitally important in shaping local decision making.

5 ANALYSIS OF THE REGION

A review of existing plans (in particular, Local Government Community Plans/Corporate Plans and those of the Economic Development Groups) across the region (Refer to Annexure 3), in conjunction with consultation outcomes from the on-line survey, workshops, round-tables and one-on-one discussions (Annexure 2) has identified a number of consistent messages regarding the region's future development.

Taking into consideration the key determinants of long-term regional economic growth as set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Regional Economic Development Framework, an analysis of these identified messages has been undertaken and cross referenced with statistical information sourced from the regional profile outlined in Annexure 1.

5.1 **KEY DETERMINANT ONE: HUMAN CAPITAL (EDUCATION AND SKILLS)**

Human capital is defined as the stock of knowledge, expertise and abilities of a population (Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 2013). Human Capital is crucial to a region's economic activity for a number of reasons, including:

- Businesses need access to a skilled workforce. A lack of skilled workers can constrain the investment in and or growth of business.
- High levels of knowledge, expertise and skill enhances a region's innovative and productive capacity, and well positions it to identify and take advantage of new opportunities and address challenges.
- Access to further education can assist in retaining people in a region and can assist in stopping the exodus of young people to cities and larger regional centres¹ to study.

(Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 2013)

5.1.1 **Regional Strengths – Human Capital (Education and Skills)**

Identified strengths that the region has for human capital and future growth are:

- There are a **range of education and research facilities**: Nationally recognised James Cook University with has two campuses in Townsville and Mount Isa. Other education and research facilities include the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, CSIRO Davies Laboratory, Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations, State Government Primary Industry Research Stations, schools (including boarding schools) and TAFE and technical colleges, all of which provide core strengths for skills development within region.
- **Tropical expertise**. There is a concentrated centre of tropical science expertise based in the Northern region, including James Cook University, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Townsville Hospital, CSIRO, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Queensland Government's departments with responsibility for Primary Industries and Environmental and Resource Management and a wide range of private sector companies. There is also a wide range of tropical expertise in industry and businesses that operate within the region.

¹ Throughout the document the term "centre" is used to describe a defined city or town, and is used throughout this document in order to be consistent with Government planning terminology.

- **Diversity of skills and experience** in the region, due to a diverse industrial business and service base.

5.1.2 Regional Challenges and Needs - Human Capital (Education and Skills)

Of concern is the following identified challenges and needs to the region's human capital and future growth:

- **Average formal education levels** across the region remain below the State and National average benchmarks. In particular the level of education attainment is low amongst Indigenous people. Overall the lower level of education attainment within the region is for a number of reasons, including:
 - Remoteness from education services.
 - Inadequate coordination of services ensuring students successfully transition from school to further study, training or employment.
 - Restricted ability of disadvantaged people to access and participate in education.

Responses to this issue suggest that there is a need for a more integrated and flexible approach to education provision in rural and remote areas.

- Statistics of **employment** by occupation suggest that as a whole the region is **under skilled** in the areas of managers, clerical, administration and sales workers compared to the Queensland average. Skill shortages in the region can be attributed to a number of reasons including:
 - Often industries most affected by cyclic economic and climatic events such as mining can experience staffing shortfalls, which can place pressure on the availability of skilled workers to service other industries, particularly agriculture.
 - A diverse regional economy can raise challenges for disadvantaged people, including those with a disability, youth, sole parents, the long-term unemployed and Indigenous Australians, to actively participate in the workforce.
 - There is also an issue with access to appropriate skilling options within smaller centres.
- Lack of **childcare facilities** in the region, due to:
 - Issues with attraction and retention of child care professionals.
 - Costs of service provision and viability within rural centres.

Consultation also raised the issue of lack of flexibility in the child care centres to cater for the shift workers in the centres with a high mining presence.

5.1.3 Regional Opportunities - Human Capital (Education and Skills)

The region's is poised to take advantage of the following opportunities to contribute to future growth:

- **Tropical knowledge and expertise business growth.** The region can benefit from the commercialisation of science, industry and business knowledge generated in the tropics that is of benefit to tropical economies and communities of the world.
- **Improve education attainment levels** to provide more opportunities for individuals to participate and prosper in the workforce and to support improvements in productivity and innovation in industry.

- **Communications infrastructure improvements** across the region including mobile and high speed broadband access, to provide:
 - Residents, in particular those in rural and remote areas, with access to health, education and other online services.
 - Industry with access to productivity improvements and markets.

5.2 **KEY DETERMINANT TWO: SUSTAINABILITY (ECONOMICALLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY AND SOCIALLY) COMMUNITIES AND POPULATION GROWTH**

Sustainable communities refers to the ability of a region to endure in the long term. There are economic, environmental and social dimensions to this concept. The changes in the size of a population over time, caused by migration and natural change through births and deaths is the measure of population change (Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 2013). Where the change is occurring, and in which age groups are determinants the long term viability of a community in terms of economic, environmental and social sustainability. Sustainability and population growth is crucial to a region's economic activity for a number of reasons, including:

- While population growth can lead to regional economic growth, it can also put pressure on local infrastructure and services, and natural resources such as land and water.
- Population growth can create a greater amenity, community vibrancy and cultural diversity in a region, leading to an increased attractiveness to the region of migrants.
- Regional economic growth can attract migration and business investment into a region.
- Population decline can make efficient service provision difficult.

(Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 2013)

5.2.1 **Regional Strengths – Sustainability Communities (Economic, Environmental and Social) and Population Growth**

Identified strengths that the region has in the area of sustainable communities and population growth are:

- **Strong local communities**, stretching from Boulia, Mount Isa and Cloncurry in the west, to Mornington Island, Normanton and Karumba in the northern Gulf area, through the mid-west areas of Julia Creek, Richmond and Hughenden, and including Charters Towers the gateway to the west and the coastal towns of Ayr, Townsville, Palm Island and Ingham.
- As a whole, the region continues to **experience long term population growth**. Within the region, four local government areas are experiencing a decline in population; Burdekin, Flinders, Hinchinbrook and Richmond.
- The region as a whole enjoys a **smaller unemployment rate** as compared to Queensland. Within the region, six local government areas Boulia, Burke, Carpentaria, Doomadgee, Mornington and Palm Island have significantly higher unemployment rates.

- Compared with the whole of Queensland, the region has a larger percentage of people employed in the agricultural, mining, electricity, public administration and education and training industries.

5.2.2 Regional Challenges and Needs - Sustainability Communities (Economic, Environmental and Social) and Population Growth

Of concern is the following identified challenges and needs to the region's future growth:

- **Population statistics.** There is insufficient data available for some areas, in particularly health and social service coordination and also for service population (FIFO/DIDO) as compared to resident population. If a service population is not accounted for, there can be associated issues with inability to adequately provide services. The Roadmap 2013 – 2016 consultation process confirmed that the majority of mines in the region utilise a fly-in-fly-out or drive-in-drive-out workforce. While the statistical information presented in Annexure 1: Regional Profile does not reflect the nature of the mining workforce, consultation identified several issues, especially where essential services provision and planning in a centre are based on resident population as compared to non-resident population. No profile has been undertaken within the region to determine the service population and how information gleaned from such a profile would amend current policy responses to the provision of services and infrastructure.
- **The region has a significant percentage of people aged 45 – 64**, this age bracket represents 2.2 times more people than the current population aged over 65. This population characteristic is likely to place pressure on existing health and aged care facilities. Consistently across the region consultation raised issues with aging health infrastructure, service provision and the ability for people with high care needs to 'age in place'. These were issues raised in a current context through the consultation process.
- **Rural centres decline leading to limited access to services and an emphasis on outreach services.** Many of the region's rural centre have experienced population decline (and in some cases unaccounted population growth). Most often a population decline means that many rural centres are unable to support a range of services enjoyed by urban centres in the region. Economies of scale in service provision require sufficient population.
- **Lack of coordination of social services in centres and across the region.** In particular, some health and social services are seen as being uncoordinated to the point of losing effectiveness. Common concerns were voiced about the level of coordination between dental and medical services. Also concerns were raised that the number of services available in some parts of the region were extensive to the point of offering duplication of services to the same people whilst in contrast in other parts of the region these services were non-existent. There is no statistical data available to numerically support this issue.
- **Health infrastructure.** Some existing health infrastructure is too old to sustain current pressures.

- **Availability and cost of public transport.** In particular cost of flights is prohibitive for many to visit relatives requiring services outside of their centre. There is also limited public transport options available throughout the region, including in the two major centres of Mount Isa and Townsville. Many centres don't have a public transport network within centre or between centres, or where available is limited in capacity.
- **Housing affordability** due to high demand is decreasing and there is a shortage of affordable rental properties throughout the region. In addition some centres have a lack of appropriate housing stock to provide for new staff.

5.2.3 Regional Opportunities - Sustainability Communities (Economic, Environmental and Social) and Population Growth

The region's is poised to take advantage of the following opportunities to contribute to future growth:

- **Communications infrastructure improvements** across the region including mobile and high speed broadband access, to provide:
 - Residents, in particular those in rural and remote areas, with access to health, education and other online services.
 - Industry with access to productivity improvements and markets.
- **Investigations into new opportunities and expansion of existing industries in the region.** For example there are investigations into the development of a new meat processing facility within the region and there are the trails being undertaken as part of the Flinders River Agricultural Precinct and dry-cropping developments.
- **Room for Population Growth.** The region is not densely populated and has state and/or local planning in place to accommodate growth.
- Provision of funding **opportunities to assist local government's develop local infrastructure**, in turn helping to attract workers in local jobs and retain families in their communities. Local Government's need to be able to source funding for infrastructure and programs in the arts, sport, recreation and social inclusion that encourage active, healthy and connected lifestyles.

5.3 KEY DETERMINANT THREE: ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MARKETS

Access to a market is the ability to trade goods and services in a given market and is facilitated by physical and non-physical connections (Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 2013). Access to markets is crucial to a region's economic activity for a number of reasons, including:

- Regions that are well connected to large and diverse markets can access a wider range of potential customers and hence growth in trade occurs; and
- A greater access to markets creates opportunities to purchase from a wider number of suppliers, possibly leading to lowering of accrument price and for consumers a larger access to goods and services.

(Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 2013)

5.3.1 Regional Strengths – Access to International, National and Regional Markets

Identified strengths that the region has with regards to access to international, national and regional markets are:

- **Major regional service hubs in Townsville and Mount Isa.** The region is served by two major centres that support a range of business and community services. The region is less reliant on servicing from Brisbane as compared to some other regions.
- The region has a number of **strengths in its infrastructure and is serviced by:**
 - Two major rail networks;
 - Ten major road networks;
 - Two major ports;
 - Two major airports; and
 - Two main public hospitals.
- **Significant regional transport hub** in Townsville with air and port connectivity to markets. Both the port and airport are looking at opportunities to expand their capacity to handle increasing demand. There is also port infrastructure at Karumba and Lucinda. These ports currently support exporting activity and future growth opportunities.
- Parts of the region have had an **early roll-out of the National Broadband Network (NBN)**. Government surveys suggest that uptake of NBN has been limited, possibly because of misunderstanding of the benefits it poses. Expected benefits to the region of having high speed broadband are:
 - Improved connections between centres within and outside of the region, including greater uptake of high-quality video conferencing and associated reduction in travel time and costs;
 - Use of cloud computing for more efficient sharing and collaborating on information resources;
 - Better access to specialised medical services in the health and aged care sectors;
 - Education improvements through service provision on-line;
 - Better data and research analytics, through the accessing of sensor networks in the industries of agriculture, mining and environmental management;
 - Remote working opportunities with the potential to reduce travelling expenses and improve productivity;
 - Safer working environments, particularly in mining where remote operating technologies can remove people from hazardous areas; and
 - Streamline the provision of Government services and benefit consumers and business.

5.3.2 Regional Challenges and Needs - Access to International, National and Regional Markets

Of concern is the following identified challenges and needs, with regards to access to international, national and regional markets are:

- **Distances between towns in the region and remoteness from service hubs.** The region is vast, distances between centres are great and communities are often small and isolated. This has implications for infrastructure associated with connectivity and interaction and also ability of people to access health and education services. Travel times and costs are high. The region has a population residing in an area classified as Outer Regional Australia to Very Remote Australia. The majority of the population (83.4%) reside in the Outer Regional Australia zone.
- Across the region there continues to be **poor communications coverage**, particularly outside of the urban area of Townsville. Consultations identified that poor communications coverage impact significantly on safety, ability to access markets and for the uptake of on-line applications.
- There is **inequitable access to high speed broadband infrastructure** based on geography and socio-economic factors. Also there has been a slow uptake and adaption to new high speed broadband related opportunities where access is available.
- **Natural disasters such as floods, drought and cyclones.** These can negatively impact on infrastructure, particularly roads and electricity and effectively limit access to the region for periods of time. It is also costly to repair damage to infrastructure. There are also perceptions created from natural disasters that the region is 'closed' for tourism and business purposes.
- It is recognised through a number of studies that there are a number of **constraints on current infrastructure**. These are:
 - Aging infrastructure, requiring maintenance;
 - Infrastructure being unable to cater for increased freight and requirements; and
 - The ability of this infrastructure to operate following a natural disaster event.
- **Transport Infrastructure.** The region is in need of significant upgrading and investment in transport infrastructure to accommodate industry growth and communications needs.
- **Rail capacity and cost of freight.** Rail capacity is specifically highlighted as it is considered that there is currently not enough capacity to service the current and medium term demand for freight transport, particularly bulk freight from the North West Minerals Province, also impacts on other supply chains along the line and diverts more traffic to the road network creating wear and tear issues due to high tonnage use. Consultation feedback placed a high priority on the effectiveness and efficiency of the rail corridor between Mount Isa and Townsville.
- **Road Infrastructure.** The ability for road infrastructure to keep up with current freight and carriage demands, in particular the Bruce, Flinders and Barkley Highway is limited in its current state. Investment into upgrading and future-proofing road infrastructure was also a significant issue raised during consultations, in particular for the Bruce, Flinders, Barkley, Matilda, and Gulf Savannah highways.

- **Electricity supply is mainly reliant on generation outside the region.** Also electrical generation is not integrated across the region, rather there are a number of distribution systems. The coastal part of the region imports most of its electricity via long distance transmission lines from the south. There is a cost penalty associated with importing electricity which is a negative factor for the establishment of electricity intensive industries. In remote areas of the region, electricity is often generated by diesel fuel and supplied locally, often at a high cost and in many cases without the level of reliability of electricity efficiency and low carbon impact that is desired.

These issues lead to:

- Higher electricity costs for industry due to higher transmission costs and electricity losses;
- Increased government subsidies for residential and small business consumers of electricity;
- Limited competition for generation;
- Inability to meet emerging load requirements and demand; and
- Unreliable electricity supply in more remote areas due to insufficient infrastructure.

5.3.3 Regional Opportunities - Access to International, National and Regional Markets

The region is poised to take advantage of the following opportunities with regards to access to international, national and regional markets are:

- **Investment into energy infrastructure** enabling:
 - Cost competitive delivery of electricity to attract and retain industry.
 - Reliable and affordable electricity supplies to residents and business.
 - Lower emissions.
- Development of **renewable electricity generation and new transmission** to provide access to markets. The region has significant resources available for innovation and utilisation as alternative electricity sources.
- Investment into urgent regional road priorities to improve:
 - Safety and efficiency on transport routes.
 - Productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets.
- **Investment into rail, intermodal, port and airport infrastructure** to support productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets.
- **Communications infrastructure improvements** across the region including mobile and high speed broadband access, to provide:
 - Residents, in particular those in rural and remote areas, with access to health, education and other online services.
 - Industry with access to productivity improvements and markets.
- **Growth in the Asian market.** The region's proximity to Asia enhances export engagement.

5.4 KEY DETERMINANT FOUR: COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE AND BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

A region has a comparative advantage when the products, goods and services it produces are made at a lower opportunity cost than that of other regions. This can be the region's area of relative strength or specialisation. There is also a competitive advantage when a product or service cannot be easily duplicated by competitors. Business competitiveness is the ability of a business to sell and supply goods and services compared to a competitor (Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 2013). Comparative advantage and business competitiveness is crucial to a region's economic activity for a number of reasons, including:

- The underlying attributes of a region, for example its natural resources, climate, industry clusters, access to infrastructure and skill profile can influence the type of economic activity that is likely to be successful in the region;
- Allows a region to identify opportunities to diversify, and strengthen current areas of specialisation and utilise new ways to use existing assets, resources and knowledge; and
- Businesses can have efficiency advantages, allowing them to develop a unique or innovative product that cannot be easily replicated.

(Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 2013)

5.4.1 Regional Strengths – Comparative Advantage and Business Competitiveness

Identified strengths that the region has with regards to comparative advantage and business competitiveness are:

- **Economic Diversity.** As a whole the region has a relatively broad range of economic drivers including mining, agriculture, heavy industry, tourism, defence, education and transport. The region makes a strong contribution to the State's Gross Regional Product. The largest industry contributors to the Gross Regional Product for the north west area of the region is mining, followed by agriculture, forestry and fishing. The regions' largest industry contributors to the Gross Regional Product in the northern part of the region are manufacturing, public administration and safety, construction and health care and social assistance.
- The region enjoys a **higher specialisation ratio** in the business areas of agriculture, mining, construction, accommodation and food services, transport and postal warehousing, administration and support services, education and training, health care and social assistance and other services.
- The **high export dependence** of the mining sector is the standout of the exporting industries. Food products are the next largest exporting industry. These results align with the strong presence of mining and food production industries (such as sugar) in the region. Live beef cattle are also a significant export for the region.
- **Three major export-focussed minerals processing facilities** in Townsville and Mount Isa.

- **Favourable climate.** The region's climate with its high levels of sunshine, relatively consistent rainfall and temperatures is considered a regional asset for lifestyle, agriculture and other industries, including renewable electricity generation such as solar and wind powered.
- **Natural resource endowment.** The region has a significant natural resource base, upon which many industries are reliant for productivity.
- **Valuable Commodities Availability.** The region has a world-class ore resource area (North West Minerals Province) containing an estimated 75% of Queensland's total metal resources with many operational mines and further viable deposits identified and exploration continuing. There are also further mining resources in the Gulf and eastern area of the region with gold and other mineral deposits are scattered throughout the region. Undeveloped coal, gas, iron ore and uranium deposits also exist.
- **An environment conducive to grazing, fishing, and agricultural strengths.** As an industry, grazing is perfectly adapted to the vastness of the region and the region's productive pastures. The region has large coastline access in the east and Gulf of Carpentaria, supporting significant fishing industries. The eastern coastal area has a strong track record in sugar production.
- **Renewable Electricity Options.** The region offers vast renewable electricity generation opportunities such as solar, hydro, bagasse and wind powered generation in the short to medium term and geothermal powered generation in the long term.
- **Land Availability.** The region is not densely populated with land available for most industry and urban requirements. With majority of centres having designated industrial land and supporting infrastructure.
- **Reef, rainforest, outback natural attractions.** The region has a large range of high biodiversity habits including the Great Barrier Reef, coastal habitats, tropical rainforests, savannah, grasslands, wetlands and mountain ranges.
- **Water availability.** The majority of current water supply is drawn from over 31 recognised water storages and watercourses, local aquifers and the world's largest artesian aquifer the Great Artesian Basin. A common theme in the consultation in the mid-west, Gulf and north-west areas of the region was the need for reliable and adequate water supply for domestic purposes and future development in the region. The Flinders River Agricultural Precinct and the potential for an abattoir to be located in the west require reliable and adequate water availability.
- The region's wide range of natural assets is of high value to the **tourism industry**. An increase in tourism has been experienced in both the western Queensland and coastal areas, however there has been a recorded decline in international tourist numbers on the coastal area. This decline is attributed to economic decline in the United Kingdom, Germany and New Zealand. Consultations, particularly in the Gulf area, highlighted that tourism numbers have notably decreased in recent times with the tourists' perception of the region being closed following natural disasters being cited as the reason for the decline.
- The region has a **strong defence force presence**. The Defence White Papers points toward this presence increasing.

5.4.2 Regional Challenges and Needs – Comparative Advantage and Business Competitiveness

Of concern is the following identified challenges and needs, with regards to comparative advantage and business competitiveness are:

- The region has a **minimal food processing industry** (other than sugar refining and basic meat processing). The region also imports a large amount of food, predominately due to the region having a relatively narrow food-growing industry.
- **Transport costs increasing with pricing impact flowing onto businesses.** The size of the region, the geographic distribution of settlements and activities and the distance from suppliers of imports means that transport costs impact on production viability and the cost of living.
- **Lack of natural resource valuing.** There are gaps in the understanding of the value of the region's natural resource management base and its drivers for industry production.
- **Disease or inappropriate management of the natural resource base** could impede capacity to meet future food production demands.
- **Climate change** is likely to have potential impacts and costs to industries, infrastructure, environment and people. These changes are likely to be:
 - Inundation affecting residential housing, roads, railways and commercial buildings;
 - Variability of rainfall, affecting water supplies and number of flooding events;
 - Increase in intensity of tropical cyclones;
 - Sea surface temperature changes impacting on the Great Barrier Reef and fisheries resources;
 - The agricultural industry sectors of sugar and beef production to experience decline in production;
 - Public health risks associated with the spread of mosquitoes;
 - Potential changes in the distribution and abundance of animal pests and weeds; and
 - Possible opportunities for innovative responses to capitalise on any changes experienced.
- There is **some uptake of renewable electricity sources, though there are constraints** to further development, including:
 - Regulatory issues regarding transmission and connection to the grid;
 - Lack of clarity on land planning, native title, land tenure and environmental noise and visual impacts; and
 - Viability in servicing a decentralised population cost effectively or reliably.
- **Closure or scaling back of mine projects** and associated operations as responses to economic cyclic events or lack of investment into the region can impact negatively on the region's gross regional output and diversity of industry.
- The majority of **land is tenured leasehold**, which can create challenges and barriers for investment and future development potential.

5.4.3 Regional Opportunities – Comparative Advantage and Business Competitiveness

The region is poised to take advantage of the following opportunities with regards to comparative advantage and business competitiveness are:

- **Planning and solutions for water** quality improvements, sustainable access to water, and its storage to expand agriculture, grazing and other industries.
- **Identification of new mining and minerals processing opportunities** in the region to ensure the future prosperity of the region.
- **Improve land tenure security**, in particular for leasehold land, and thereby lessening the disincentive for investment in the region.
- **Growth in the Asian market.** The Asian Century White Paper points towards an emphasis on industry exporting to Asian markets, particularly in the mining and food production areas.
- **Development of renewable electricity generation and new transmission** to provide access to markets. The region has significant resources available for innovation and utilisation as alternative electricity sources.
- Application of the wide range of **applied knowledge and expertise** on how to innovate in industries operating in the tropics.

5.5 **KEY DETERMINANT FIVE: EFFECTIVE CROSS-SECTORAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS (INCLUDING THROUGH PLACE-BASED APPROACHES) AND INTEGRATED REGIONAL PLANNING**

Effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships are areas of formal and informal cooperation between stakeholders, which can help deliver on shared priorities. Integrated regional planning aligns the objectives of governments, businesses and the community in an effort to coordinate development efforts at different levels (Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 2013). Effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships combined with integrated regional planning are important to a region's economic activity for a number of reasons, including:

- No individual, organisation or government can fully respond to the needs and circumstances in a particular region. Hence partnerships are crucial for coordinating activities and investments of different stakeholders;
- Efficiencies and consistencies can be achieved by working in collaboration and cooperation, particularly when working towards common regional economic development outcomes and
- Regional development strategies are more effective when they coordinate a suite of actions to influence multiple determinants.

5.5.1 Regional Strengths – Effective Cross-Sectoral and Intergovernmental partnerships (including through place-based approaches) and Integrated Regional Planning

Identified strengths that the region has with regards to effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships and integrated regional planning are:

- The region has **strong representation** in a range of areas. This representation includes:
 - Two operating Regional Organisations of Councils;
 - Two Queensland Government senior manager forums;
 - Two Hospital Boards;
 - Four Regional Economic Development Groups;
 - Five Natural Resource Management Groups; and
 - A number of peak industry organisations.
- The region participates in the **Northern Queensland Strategy**, allowing for a consolidated and visionary approach to the development of strategic initiatives that strengthen the future of the Northern Queensland economy. This is a ‘place based approach’ between Townsville and North West region and its neighbouring regions.
- **Integrated Regional Planning.** The region has a statutory regional land use plan, *North-West Queensland Regional Plan 2010* influencing social, economic and environmental outcomes in the region through an integrated planning framework. There is no statutory regional land use plan covering Townsville and surrounding local governments. There is however a non-statutory North Queensland Economic and Infrastructure Framework being prepared. Whilst there is a regional plan for the Gulf region (*Gulf Regional Development Plan 2000*), it is not a statutory regional land use plan.
- **Increasing level of political representation and awareness** of Northern Australia’s significant opportunities at a state and federal government level.
- **Large public service presence** in the major regional service hubs of Townsville and Mount Isa.

5.5.2 Regional Challenges and Needs - Effective Cross-Sectoral and Intergovernmental partnerships (including through place-based approaches) and Integrated Regional Planning

Of concern is the following identified challenges and needs that the region has with regards to effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships and integrated regional planning are:

- **Lack of awareness of the region.** The region is not well understood by public and private sector decision makers which impedes investment decision-making. The region is dependent on external decision makers who may not well understand local factors. Despite many opportunities for growth, without higher awareness of the region investment will not be forthcoming.
- **Over-regulation.** The degree, complexity and pervasiveness of government regulation, compliance and policing is seen as a deterrent to investment and business activity.
- **No statutory Regional Plan for North Queensland exists.** There is no coordinated planning direction provided by the State Government regarding land use and infrastructure provision in North Queensland. There is also no connectivity with existing Regional Plans in the region.

- Government budgetary situations may lead to **cost and responsibility shifting** to Local Government.

5.5.3 Regional Opportunities - Effective Cross-Sectoral and Intergovernmental partnerships (including through place-based approaches) and Integrated Regional Planning

The region is poised to take advantage of the following opportunities with regards to effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships and integrated regional planning:

- **Collaboration between regions.** The development of the Northern Queensland Strategy is a 'place based' approach to strengthening economic linkages between the Townsville and North West region and its neighbouring regions.
- **Opportunity to influence government policy.** There is an increased focus on the development of Northern Australia at a national scale and a Queensland Government focus on Townsville as the second capital. Such policies would create economic growth through investment.
- **Opportunities available.** The region offers a broad range of private and public investment opportunities.

6 REGIONAL PRIORITIES

There are many competing priorities across the region. These priorities have been identified because they:

- Build upon the identified strengths of the region in a defined key economic growth determinant area, and
- It is an identified need and/or challenge, and
- Will seize on opportunities available to the region.

The identified priorities per key determinant of long-term economic growth are:

Table 2: Regional Priorities

Priorities	Linkages to existing planning and strategy documents and RDA vision
KEY DETERMINANT ONE: Human Capital (Education and Skills)	
<p>Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communications infrastructure improvements across the region including mobile and high speed broadband access, to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents, in particular those in rural and remote areas, with access to health, education and other online services. • Industry with access to productivity improvements and markets. 2. Development of the branding, positioning and exporting of Tropical Knowledge and Expertise. 3. Improved education attainment levels to provide more opportunities in the region to ensure the future prosperity of the region. 	<p>Consulting the region’s planning and strategy documents in particular the Local Government Community Plans (or Corporate Plan in the absence of a Community Plan), the common desired outcomes in relation to human capital are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to education facilities within the region, to improve education levels. • Attraction and retention of a skilled workforce to address skill shortages in the region. <p>The identified priorities reflect these common desired outcomes of the region’s 15 Local Governments.</p> <p>Further these priorities contribute to the RDA vision through the following directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of infrastructure and services for enhancing liveability. • Promotion of the region and its opportunities. <p>Both of these directions will help the RDA to achieve cohesive and liveable communities.</p>
KEY DETERMINANT TWO: Sustainability (Economically, Environmentally and Socially) Communities and Population Growth	
<p>Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding opportunities for Local Governments to development community infrastructure for access, health, culture, the arts, sport and recreation. 2. Maintenance and improvement of health and social services infrastructure to meet current and projected needs. 3. Coordinated emergency, social and health care, including provision of aged care facilities and health care services. 4. Availability of affordable housing. 5. Interconnection abilities through transport options for people and freight. 	<p>Consulting the region’s planning and strategy documents in particular the Local Government Community Plans (or Corporate Plan in the absence of a Community Plan), the common desired outcomes in relation to sustainability, communities and population growth are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of services, particularly health and support services. • Maintenance and creation of local employment opportunities. • Planning for future supply of housing. • Affordable housing and living. • Sustainable population growth and people living long term in the region. • Provision of infrastructure to support sustainable population growth. • Enhancing and promoting a great lifestyle. • Having vibrant arts and cultural development. • A community where people feel safe. • Interconnectedness abilities through transport options for people and freight. <p>The identified priorities reflect these common desired outcomes of the region’s 15 Local Governments.</p> <p>Further these priorities contribute to the RDA vision through the following directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of infrastructure and services for enhancing liveability. • Promotion of the region and its opportunities. <p>Both of these directions will help the RDA to achieve cohesive and liveable communities.</p>

Priorities	Linkages to existing planning and strategy documents and RDA vision
KEY DETERMINANT THREE: Access to International, National and Regional Markets	
<p>Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Investment into energy infrastructure, and in particular, electricity generation and transmission including renewable generation – this will enable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost competitive delivery of electricity to attract and retain industry. Reliable and affordable electricity supplies to residents and business. Lower emissions. Investment into urgent regional road priorities – this will improve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety and efficiency on transport routes for residents and tourists. Productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets. Investment into rail, intermodal, port and airport infrastructure to support productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets. 	<p>Consulting the region’s planning and strategy documents in particular the Local Government Community Plans (or Corporate Plan in the absence of a Community Plan), the common desired outcomes in relation to access to international, national and regional markets are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance and improvement to existing infrastructure. Future proofing infrastructure as an enabler for future economic development. <p>Further these priorities contribute to the RDA vision through the following directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focussing on infrastructure for current and future projected needs. Focussing on infrastructure and services for enhancing liveability. <p>These directions will help the RDA to achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy, and cohesive and liveable communities.</p>
KEY DETERMINANT FOUR: Comparative Advantage and Business Competitiveness	
<p>Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and solutions for water quality improvements, sustainable access to water and its storage to expand agriculture, grazing and other industries. Identification of new mining and minerals processing opportunities in the region to ensure the future prosperity of the region. Land tenure security for leasehold land, lessening the disincentive for investment in the region. Promotion of the region for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition and development of the region’s competitive advantages in existing industries and the attraction of investment and business in both existing and new sectors. Attracting skilled workers. Valuing of the resource base and its contributing value to the region’s output and industry. 	<p>Consulting the region’s planning and strategy documents in particular the Local Government Community Plans (or Corporate Plan in the absence of a Community Plan), the common desired outcomes in relation to comparative advantage and business competitiveness are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That existing and emerging industries are sustainable. Tourism expansion through new or improved products, new markets, new or expanded events development, access to national parks, and investment attraction into accommodation. That industry embraces innovation. That there is land available to foster opportunities for industries sustainable development and innovation. Water quality and quantity to support existing and future needs; Sound economic base for future prosperity. Diversity for growth and resilience. Culture of investment attraction. Sustainable and best practice actions to support the existing natural resource base. An environmental ethos in the community. Climate change adaption. <p>Further these priorities contribute to the RDA vision through the following directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focussing on infrastructure for current and future projected needs. Focussing on strengthening and development of industry sectors. Promotion of the region and its opportunities. Focusing on natural resource management stewardship. <p>These directions will help the RDA to achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy and environment and cohesive and liveable communities.</p>

Priorities	Linkages to existing planning and strategy documents and RDA vision
KEY DETERMINANT FIVE: Effective Cross-Sectoral and Intergovernmental Partnerships (Including through place-based approaches) and Integrated Regional Planning	
<p>Priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinated and planned delivery of infrastructure needs for the region. 2. Support collaborative arrangements that will strengthen opportunities for the region. 	<p>Consulting the region’s planning and strategy documents in particular the Local Government Community Plans (or Corporate Plan in the absence of a Community Plan), the common desired outcomes in relation to effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships and integrated regional planning are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated and planned delivery of infrastructure. • Robustness and clarity in decision making through representation and partnerships. • Informed residents. • Coordination of service delivery for effectiveness and efficiency. • A government presence in region. • Strong leadership. <p>Further these priorities contribute to the RDA vision through the following direction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focussing on strengthening of partnerships and networks for progression of the region. <p>This direction will help the RDA to achieve cohesive and liveable.</p>

RDA’s principle focus over the next three years will be on ten priorities which are considered as “transformational engine starters”. These ten transformational engine starters warrant their priority due to:

- Are an ‘engine starter’ and have positive ‘flow-on’ impacts for the region.
- There are consistent messages from the regions stakeholder’s that these are a priority.
- Contribution to RDA’s vision for the region.

In summary these ten identified transformational engine starter priorities are:

Table 3: Transformational Engine Starter Priorities

#	Transformational Engine Starter Priorities	Key Investors (I) and Enablers (E)
1.	Investment into energy infrastructure , and in particular, electricity generation and transmission including renewable generation – this will enable (1) cost competitive delivery of electricity to attract and retain industry and (2) reliable and affordable electricity supplies to residents and business and (3) lower emissions.	Australian Government (E) Queensland Government (E) Private Sector (I)
2.	Investment into urgent regional road priorities – this will improve (1) safety and efficiency on transport routes for residents and tourists and (2) productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets.	Australian Government (I) Queensland Government (I) Local Government (E)
3.	Investment into rail, intermodal, port and airport infrastructure to support productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets.	Australian Government (I) Queensland Government (I&E) Private Sector (I)
4.	Communications infrastructure improvements across the region including mobile and high speed broadband access – this will provide (1) residents, in particular those in rural and remote areas, with access to health, education and other online services and (2) industry with access to productivity improvements and markets.	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (E) Local Government (E) Private Sector (I)
5.	Planning and solutions for water quality improvements, sustainable access to water, and its storage to expand agriculture, grazing and other industries.	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (I&E) Local Government (I&E) Private Sector (I)
6.	Identification of new mining and minerals processing opportunities in the region to ensure the future prosperity of the region.	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (I&E) Private Sector (I)
7.	Development of the branding, positioning and exporting of Tropical Knowledge and Expertise	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (I&E) Institutions (I&E) Private Sector (I)
8.	Improved education attainment levels to provide more opportunities for individuals to participate and prosper in the workforce and to support improvements in productivity and innovation in industry.	Australian Government (I&E) Queensland Government (I&E) Education Sector (I&E) Private Sector (I) Communities (E)
9.	Land tenure security for leasehold land, lessening the disincentive for investment in the region.	Australian Government (E) Queensland Government (E)
10.	Funding opportunities for local governments to develop community infrastructure for access, health, culture, the arts, sport and recreation.	Australian Government (I) Queensland Government (I) Local Government (I&E) Private Sector (I) Communities (E)

7 PROGRESSING REGIONAL PRIORITIES - RDA ACTIVITIES, INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS

By understanding the priorities (section 6) RDA is able to identify projects and actions to advance these during the period 2013 - 2016. RDA's role is determined by a number of factors, these include:

- Relevance of the issue on a regional scale;
- Other stakeholders' involvement; and
- Resourcing levels of RDA.

There is a greater emphasis on actions that support the 10 identified transformational engine starter priorities. This is also reflected in the RDA Business Plan.

Table 4: RDA Projects 2013 - 2016 as per identified regional priorities:

#	Priority	RDA will
1	Investment into energy infrastructure, and in particular, electricity generation and transmission including renewable generation – this will enable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost competitive delivery of electricity to attract and retain industry. • Reliable and affordable electricity supplies to residents and business. • Lower emissions. 	<p>Electricity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in a regional leadership group to identify opportunities to reduce the cost of electricity and provide more reliability in remote areas. • Support efforts to attract investment into electricity infrastructure solutions. <p>Renewable Energy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and support investment attraction into renewable generation in the region. • Support advocacy for investment into transmission infrastructure to support the investment into electricity generation to get the electricity to markets.
2	Investment into urgent regional road priorities – this will improve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and efficiency on transport routes for residents and tourists. • Productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets. 	<p>Roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for funding for improvements to major regional roads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bruce Highway - Based on Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads analysis and recommendations and in partnership with the Northern Queensland Strategy partners, advocate for improvements to safety hazards and flood prone sectors of the Bruce Highway, including the Haughton River Floodplain and Pink Lily Lagoon Upgrades (Townsville- Burdekin), the Townsville North Access Intersections Upgrade, Cattle and Frances Creeks Upgrades (Ingham) and Yellow Gin Creek Upgrade (Home Hill) ○ Hann Highway - In partnership with the Northern Queensland Strategy partners, advocate for sealing of the Hann Highway from The Lynd to Hughenden ○ Flinders and Barkly Highways – Based on Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads analysis and recommendations, advocate for improvements to safety hazards and flood prone sectors of the Flinders and Barkly Highways. • Work with the Regional Roads Groups to identify and prioritise other regional road priorities and advocate for greater investment into the region's roads – such as the Burke Development Road from Cloncurry to Normanton , the Savannah Way from Normanton to Burketown, and major north-south arterial roads • Advocate and support investment attraction into intermodal transport solutions, for example, in Cloncurry.

#	Priority	RDA will
3	Investment into rail, intermodal, port and airport infrastructure to support productivity on supply chains for industry to access markets.	<p>Rail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support initiatives to attract investment into rail transport productivity improvements and development of capacity to meet future demand on the North West Rail Corridor connecting Mount Isa and Townsville. • Support advocacy for investment into the Townsville Eastern Rail Corridor (TEARC) to improve productivity for rail freight into the Port of Townsville. <p>Airports and Air Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate to the Australian and Queensland Governments to provide more funding opportunities for local governments, and in particular those in rural and remote areas, to address maintenance and improvements in airport infrastructure including but not limited to runways, hand stands, terminals and parking. • Support advocacy efforts to attract investment into airports, and in particular those that are under great pressure from the mining industry, such as Cloncurry Airport. • Support advocacy efforts for an increase in air services. • Support advocacy efforts for affordable air access for remote or isolated communities, such as Mornington Island, Doomadgee, Normanton, Burketown, Boulia and Palm Island. <p>Ports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support advocacy efforts for investment into expanded port operations at the Port of Townsville in accordance with feasibility studies based on supply and market demand. Support the development of a Master Plan for Karumba Port and identified investment opportunities associated with feasibility studies based on supply and market demand.
4	Communications infrastructure improvements across the region including mobile and high speed broadband access, to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents, in particular those in rural and remote areas, with access to health, education and other online services. • Industry with access to productivity improvements and markets. 	<p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and advocate for communications solutions to address slow broadband speeds and mobile coverage black spots. E.g mobile and broadband infrastructure into towns like Greenvale, in Charters Towers Region • Provide an opportunity for the region’s Council representatives to hear first-hand from communications organisations and experts about (a) current regional communications infrastructure, (b) the NBN roll-out and (c) other potential communications infrastructure and service options. • Provide information regarding communications infrastructure to Councils as appropriate including information on potential funding sources for projects.
5	Planning and solutions for water quality improvements, sustainable access to water and its storage to expand agriculture, grazing and other industries.	<p>Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Queensland Government’s 30-Year Water Strategy process. • Advocate for our region’s needs into the Queensland Government’s 30-Year Water Strategy. • Advocate to the Australian and Queensland Governments to provide more funding opportunities for local governments, and in particular those in rural and remote areas, to address water quality, storage and supply requirements. • Support efforts to attract investment into water infrastructure.
6	Identification of new mining and minerals processing opportunities in the region to ensure the future prosperity of the region.	<p>Mining</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially contribute to the MITEZ North West Queensland Strategic Development Study and support it through working group participation to identify new mining and minerals processing opportunities.

#	Priority	RDA will
7	Development of the branding, positioning and exporting of Tropical Knowledge and Expertise.	<p>Tropical Expertise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with stakeholders on positioning and developing business opportunities associated with tropical expertise given the region is fully located north of the Tropic of Capricorn. • Advocate for investment attraction into the Tropical Knowledge and Innovation Centre – a partnership between James Cook University and the private sector through Anittel- as identified in the Northern Queensland Strategy. • Promote opportunities for exporting, in particular to Asia.
8	Improved education attainment levels to provide more opportunities in the region to ensure the future prosperity of the region.	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate the importance of and awareness of the issue of lower education attainment levels in the region to the Queensland and Australian Governments. • Facilitate discussion on strategies to address lower education attainment levels in the region. • Promote the need for equality of access to high speed broadband to enable engagement by all in online education opportunities. • Support initiatives that develop skills and encourage lifetime learning.
9	Land tenure security for leasehold land, lessening the disincentive for investment in the region.	<p>Land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate to the Queensland Government for additional planning instruments, as required, to assist in coordination of future infrastructure and land use. • Support the Queensland Government reform agenda into the future and continued relevance of government land tenure across Queensland.
10	Funding opportunities for Local Governments to development community infrastructure for access, health, culture, the arts, sport and recreation.	<p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the Regional Development Australia Fund to stakeholders across the region. • Advocate to the Australian and Queensland Governments for funding to Local Government to address enhanced liveability for attraction and retention of people. • Promote the availability of relevant grants to stakeholders • Support investment attraction into facilities and programs that support sports, recreation, arts and cultural activities. For example, provide advocacy support for investment attraction into major regional facilities such as the Stadium Northern Australia and Tony Ireland Stadium and advocate for funding rounds in RDAF to provide opportunities for all Local Government authorities to secure funding for local projects that contribute to enhancing the local lifestyle.
11	Maintenance and improvement of health and social services infrastructure to meet current and projected needs.	<p>Health and Social Services Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate and support investment attraction into facilities that will meet regional needs, such as The Salvation Army Multi-Purpose Centre in Townsville and The Village project developed by Flexi Queensland in Ayr. • Advocate for appropriate high care and services facilities throughout the region.
12	Coordinated emergency, social and health care, including provision of aged care facilities and health care services.	<p>Health and Aged Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for a desktop analysis of existing service providers in the health and social services industry to identify duplication of services, gaps and efficiency gains. • Promote the need for equality of access to high speed broadband to enable access by all, and especially those in remote areas, to tele-health and online education services.
13	Availability of affordable housing.	<p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate the importance of and awareness of the issue of affordable housing in the region to the Queensland and Australian Governments. • Advocate for policy and funding programs to attract appropriate investment to meet social and community needs.

#	Priority	RDA will
14	Interconnection abilities through transport options for people and freight.	<p>Public Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key stakeholders and facilitate discussion on strategies to address the viability of public transport in regional centres. Reframe the discussion from public transport being considered a standalone business, albeit usually subsidised, to one that is an enabler for education, health services, youth engagement, social inclusion and justice. Based on above discussions, advocate for a desk-top survey of existing literature on public transport studies in regional Australia that would have relevance. Based on above survey, decide whether to seek funding for a study to be undertaken on linkages between public transport and economic and social outcomes in education, health services, youth engagement, social inclusion and justice.
15	<p>Promotion of the region for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition and development of the region's competitive advantages in existing industries and the attraction of investment and business in both existing and new sectors. Attracting skilled workers. 	<p>Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in the Northern Queensland Irrigated Agricultural Strategy Governance Committee that focuses on the Flinders River (and Gilbert River) for expanding irrigated agriculture in the region Support initiatives that create value adding for agriculture and pastoral industries. Advocate for investment into projects that promote innovation and greater productivity such as the Pacific Reef Bioremediation Aquaculture Project in Ayr which is a partnership between MBD Energy and James Cook University and is included in the Northern Queensland Strategy. Support the strengthening and development of existing primary and downstream processing industries, especially those with competitive advantage. Promote opportunities for exporting, in particular to Asia. <p>Industries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the strengthening and development of existing industries, especially those with competitive advantage. For example support investment attraction into new tourism infrastructure such as the Be Engulfed Monsoon Experience / Monsoon Centre in Normanton, Carpentaria Shire. Support the attraction of new industries, especially those that can leverage access to high speed broadband as it is rolled out in the region. Promote opportunities for exporting, in particular to Asia. <p>Promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to use the RDA website to share information about the region and links to regional organisations and relevant reports and documents such as the Regional Roadmap. Support Regional Economic Development and Tourism Organisations' efforts to promote the region and its opportunities. Develop further opportunities to promote the region.
16	Valuing of the resource base and its contributing value to the region's output and industry.	<p>Natural Resource Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate, as appropriate, in the planning processes of the Natural Resource Management Groups. <p>Environmental Stewardship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Local Government, Queensland and Australian Government policies, programs and opportunities that adhere to the principles of natural resource management stewardship. Support advocacy for attracting investment into facilities and programs that support natural resource management. Support the case for appropriate natural resource management stewardship in new industrial development proposals.
17	Coordinated and planned delivery of infrastructure needs for the region.	<p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate to the Australian and Queensland Governments for a Northern Queensland 30-Year Infrastructure Plan, in partnership with Northern Queensland Strategy partners. Advocate to the Queensland Government for additional planning instruments, as required, to assist in coordination of future infrastructure and land use.

#	Priority	RDA will
18	Support collaborative arrangements that will strengthen opportunities for the region.	<p>Statistical Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with the Treasury office of the Queensland Government to present population statistics at workshops in the Western part of the region and to provide advice to users on their application. • Advocate for a service population profile to be undertaken throughout the region. This will then take into account the visiting Fly-In, Fly-Out or Drive-In, Drive-Out workforce impact on service suppliers. • Promote the availability of new statistics and workshops to stakeholders. <p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the promotion of leadership, development and award and recognition programs. • Promote individuals and organisations making a difference to the sustainable future of the region. • Promote RDA's work and outcomes as a result of collaborative efforts. <p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue participation in the Northern Queensland Strategy and advocate for funding of projects of benefit across the north. • Join other cross-regional initiatives that will benefit the region. • Network, regularly meet and support regional organisations and Government agencies to achieve targeted regional development outcomes. • Participate in joint initiatives to advance issues and opportunities. • Participate in regional groups as a member or ex-officio. <p>Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly consult with regional stakeholders to seek input to update the Regional Roadmap • Consult regional stakeholders for submissions to Government enquiries • Monitor regional media for developments on regional issues. <p>Development of an RDA engagement strategy, which outlines current linkages and opportunities in the region.</p> <p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for a larger Australian Government presence throughout the region. • Advocate for opportunities for the Queensland Government to decentralise government agencies. • Advocate for opportunities for the Australian Government to focus on opportunities in Northern Queensland through the Northern Queensland Strategy. • Advocate and support the development of opportunities in Northern Australia.



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