

FOREWORD



The Townsville–Thuringowa region contains the State's largest concentration of population outside the southeast corner. It is the major service centre for a vast catchment — characterized by a strong and diverse economy, and a wealth of natural assets and cultural attractions. The region is poised to continue as one of the State's major economic development centres into the next millennium.

A major challenge facing the region is the need to manage economic development and population growth so that the region's environmental assets and relaxed lifestyle are maintained and enhanced.

Meeting this challenge successfully will require a concerted effort by all spheres of government and the community. The Townsville–Thuringowa Strategy Plan (TTSP) presents the outcomes of a cooperative planning exercise between the Townsville and Thuringowa Councils and the State Government in consultation with the regional community.

The TTSP provides a comprehensive framework of recommendations incorporating policies, actions and implementation arrangements to guide the future growth and development of the region. While not a binding statutory document, the TTSP has been formally endorsed by the State Government and the Townsville and Thuringowa Councils as the principal strategy to guide the region into the 21st Century. Government agencies and others should be guided by the TTSP in their planning, budgetary and program activities, including the delivery of infrastructure and services.

We are committed to ensuring that this spirit of cooperation continues into the vital implementation phase of the TTSP.

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1. INTRODUCTION



Background, Structure and Purpose

The Townsville–Thuringowa Strategy Plan (TTSP) is the product of a regional planning exercise undertaken cooperatively between State and Local Government with the involvement of key community interest groups. It forms part of the State Government’s wider regional planning program for significant growth areas in Queensland.

The TTSP is not a statutory planning document. However it has been endorsed by both State and Local governments as a guiding framework and resource document for the cooperative management of population growth and economic, environmental and social issues in the Townsville–Thuringowa region.

The TTSP region comprises the two local government areas of Townsville City and Thuringowa City — the “twin cities” of North Queensland. The project commenced in January 1996 in response to a recommendation by the Local Government Commissioner for Queensland that the Joint Arrangements Committee, which comprises elected representatives from the two Councils, should develop a strategy to coordinate planning and development across both local government areas.

As a separate initiative at around the same time, the Queensland Department of Local Government and Planning established a Sub-Regional Planning Group of senior officers from State agencies and Local Government and representatives from key community organisations in Townsville–Thuringowa. The role of the Sub-Regional Planning Group was to consider and coordinate economic, social, environmental and development issues, particularly those requiring the involvement of both spheres of government.

The TTSP project was devised as an integrated approach to addressing both sets of regional planning responsibilities.

The Sub-Regional Planning Group has been responsible for the management and coordination of the project and the provision of technical advice to the Joint Arrangements Committee. The Joint Arrangements Committee has been responsible for overall strategic direction and policy issues, as well as the consideration and approval of key project outputs.

The State Government also conducted a separate study — the Townsville Industrial Land Project (TILP) — into the requirements to support major industrial development in the region. The key findings of the TILP have been incorporated in the TTSP to provide an integrated framework for the management of economic, social and environmental issues in the Townsville–Thuringowa region.

In addition to the TILP, a number of other significant planning activities were progressed in parallel to the TTSP. These included:

- Townsville Central Area Development Strategy focusing on the CBD and environs;
- Townsville Port Access Study; and
- a study into the possible relocation of the Townsville General Hospital.

The Joint Arrangements Committee and Sub-Regional Planning Group were instrumental in coordinating the activities and outputs of these studies with those of the TTSP.

The principal components of the TTSP are:

- a Regional Overview describing the characteristics and key issues and values in the region;
- a Vision for the region;
- a set of Regional Planning Policies comprising goals, principles, priority actions and responsible agencies to guide planning and decision making on key regional issues;
- a Regional Structure Plan that identifies the preferred nature and distribution of major land uses and activities in the region. The Regional Structure Plan also includes a preferred broad sequence of development for the region to guide the planning and investment activities of government agencies and the private sector;
- proposed arrangements for the implementation, monitoring and review of the TTSP.

The TTSP has been prepared through a comprehensive process of investigation, analysis and evaluation largely undertaken by Working Groups comprising representatives of key government agencies and community organisations. The memberships of these Working Groups, together with that of the Joint Arrangements Committee, the Sub-Regional Planning Group and the Project Team are listed in Appendix 1.



The TTSP is also based on extensive consultation and feedback from the regional community. The consultation process included the preparation of a consultation draft of the TTSP. The consultation draft was exposed to community review for two months in late 1998. Information on the consultation draft was widely disseminated throughout the community, and included the distribution of an information brochure to every household in the region.

Appendix 2 lists the technical papers and supporting reports that were prepared as part of the TTSP process. These documents can be obtained from the Townsville City Council, Thuringowa City Council or the Department of Communication and Information, Local Government, Planning and Sport in Townsville.

Appendix 3 provides a glossary of the terms and abbreviations used in the TTSP.

Disclaimer

The TTSP has been prepared in good faith based on the best available information. No responsibility is taken for errors or omissions in the TTSP or for the results of any action which may occur due to its use.

All plans and maps are intended to represent general concepts for the purpose of broad scale regional planning. Plans and maps are not intended to identify or tie attributes or rights to specific land parcels. Boundaries and locations are indicative only and may be subject to further refinement.

Further Information

Further information on the TTSP and associated implementation activities can be obtained from:

The Regional Implementation Officer
 Department of Communication and Information,
 Local Government, Planning and Sport
 PO Box 5666 MC
 Townsville Q 4810

Telephone: (07) 4760 7527
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2. REGIONAL OVERVIEW AND KEY ISSUES

The Region

The Townsville–Thuringowa region comprises the local government areas of Townsville City and Thuringowa City with a total land area of some 3,715 square kilometres. The region is bounded by the Coral Sea to the east, and by the Shires of Burdekin, Dalrymple and Hinchinbrook to the south, west and north respectively. The extent of the Townsville–Thuringowa region is shown in Map 1.

The Townsville–Thuringowa urban area is the largest in the State outside South East Queensland. It is the primary service centre for a vast catchment that extends along the coast between the Whitsunday island group in the south to Cardwell in the north, and as far west as the Northern Territory border. The region also provides higher order services, including health and education, to Papua New Guinea and some of the Pacific islands.

Historically, Townsville City was a relatively small, predominantly urban area surrounded by Thuringowa City which was much larger in area and contained most of the significant urban expansion areas. As a result of a report by The Office of Local Government Commissioner in 1994, a number of amendments were made to the local government boundaries of Townsville and Thuringowa. The current boundary between the two cities follows the Bohle River in the north, and the Ross River in the south.

The two cities now each occupy roughly half of the regional area. Land to the south and east of the existing urban area is part of Townsville City. Land to the west, and north along the coast is in Thuringowa City.

Key Issue

An agreed regional planning framework is required to guide decision making in relation to issues of regional interest.



History

The Townsville–Thuringowa region has been occupied by Aboriginal people for at least 40,000 years. The original groups were divided into small, named local groups, tied through religious beliefs and rituals to specific areas of land identified by a prominent landform, such as Cape Cleveland, Mt Elliot or Magnetic Island. Each small group systematically harvested its economic resources as a band, in family units or in cooperation with other neighbouring groups depending on the season and the availability of particular food sources. Large gatherings were occasions for religious rituals.

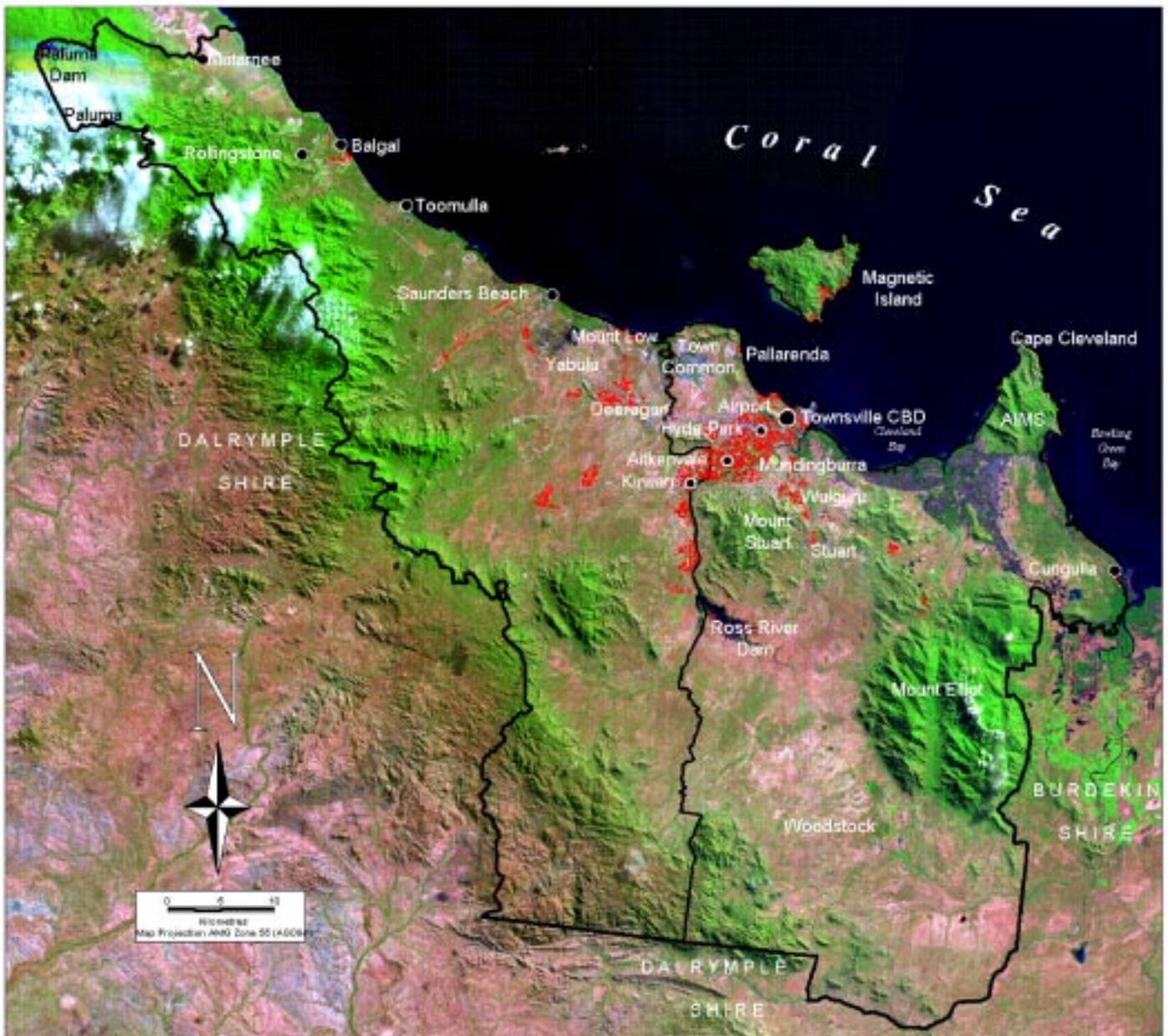
For Aboriginal people the physical form, language, law and spirit of their country is explained through the activities of ancestral beings: *A carpet snake moved down from the north and created what are now the Palm Islands. As the carpet snake travelled down he created first Pelorus Island then Orpheus, Fantome, Curacao and Great Palm Island. From Great Palm Island an Old Man followed the carpet snake's tracks through Barber, Esk, Brisk, Falcon, Havana, Saddleback and Herald Islands, each of them places the carpet snake had made as he rested. The Old Man finally caught up with the carpet snake on Magnetic Island. Following an encounter the carpet snake continued up the Ross River.*

The Townsville–Thuringowa region provided a rich variety of seafood, animal, birdlife, vegetable and material resources for the hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Women provided most of the food as gatherers while men engaged in hunting, fishing and warfare. The Aboriginal groups had to devote only about 20% of their day to economic activities, the rest could be devoted to religious ritual with associated art, music and dancing, or to tool and weapon making, craftwork and resting.

The first extensive European exploration of the Townsville area was undertaken in 1860 by George Dalrymple. From this exploration, Port Denison (Bowen) and the surrounding region were settled, and the way of life of the Aboriginal people was changed dramatically. Exploration of the Townsville region in 1864 located a site for a port and boiling

down works that was more accessible to pastoral leases north of the Burdekin River. In 1865, the port of Townsville was founded. The municipality of Townsville was proclaimed the following year in 1866, named after its patron, Robert Towns.

With the spread of pastoralism into the Townsville region, conflict between pastoralists and Aborigines occurred. The Aboriginal groups resisted white settlement until their resistance was broken by the superior weapons of the colonists. A Native Police force was used to “disperse” and “keep out” the Aborigines. By the late 1860s Aborigines were being “let in” on some stations. From the early 1870s Aborigines provided a large pool of cheap labour and were actively encouraged to work on stations in the area. Other Aboriginal survivors of frontier violence and introduced diseases were relocated to



Map 1: Regional Satellite Image

government reserves like Palm Island, and all Aboriginal people were controlled by “protection” legislation until relatively recent times.

The discovery of gold at Charters Towers and Ravenswood in the late 1860s and early 1870s consolidated the struggling development of Townsville as it evolved into the port servicing these centres throughout the gold rush. The resulting dramatic increase in population prompted the taking up of many selections in the Townsville–Thuringowa region and the development of community infrastructure. A Divisional Board was established in the Thuringowa area in 1880, and was proclaimed Thuringowa Shire Council in 1902. The population in 1901 was 12,717 with 2,233 dwellings. Townsville achieved city status in 1902. By 1920 Townsville had 25,000 residents and 4,127 dwellings, predominantly simple workers cottages.

A key to the region’s prosperity has been its continued role as a transport hub, with significant milestones being the early success of the Townsville based Burns Philp shipping company and the construction of a railway to Charters Towers in the 1880s; the completion of the North Coast railway line and the construction of the railway workshops in the 1920s; the selection of Townsville over Normanton as the preferred port servicing successive mineral booms in Cloncurry and Mount Isa in the 1900s and 1930s; and the replacement of manual sugar handling at Home Hill with a bulk sugar export terminal in Townsville in the early 1950s.

The Townsville–Thuringowa region played an important part in World War II as a base for the war in the Pacific, particularly during the Battle of the Coral Sea. Over 100,000 allied servicemen and women were based in Townsville, which became one of the largest military bases in the Pacific region.



Since World War II, Australian air force and army bases have maintained a constant presence in the city, with the army presence significantly increased through the deployment of 3rd Brigade to Lavarack Barracks in 1972. Lavarack Barracks is now the largest army base in Australia.

Following World War II, Townsville’s population growth has been stimulated by the establishment of heavy industries (with their related construction phase population “booms”) and major government institutions. The most notable heavy industries established in Townsville have been the cement and copper works in the 1950s, and the Yabulu nickel refinery and related Greenvale railway line in the 1970s. Other major influences were the development of the army barracks in the 1960s, the Australian Institute of Marine Science and James Cook University in the 1970s, and several major Commonwealth and State government regional offices in the 1980s and 1990s.

Recent Growth Trends and Prospects

Over the five years to 1996 the region’s population increased by an average of 2,150 persons annually to reach a total estimated resident population of 132,300 in June 1996 at an average annual growth rate of around 1.7%. This is consistent with longer term growth trends which have averaged about 1.8% per annum since 1986. Historically, population growth in the region has tended to be influenced by significant regional and local events rather than steady incremental increases.

Present indications are that the region is entering another economically driven growth phase based on downstream processing and the provision of services to major mineral developments in its service catchment area including the North West Minerals Province around Mount Isa.

The most recent population projections prepared by the Queensland Department of Local Government and Planning indicate that the region’s population is likely to increase by between 38,000 and 46,000 by 2011. This means that by 2011 the region’s population is likely to be between 175,000 and 183,000.

Key Issue

The region’s population is expected to increase by around 50,000 over the next 20 years. The associated demands for housing, employment, infrastructure and services need to be managed to ensure that the region’s environmental, economic and social values are maintained.

Physical Features

Land Form

The region consists predominantly of a low lying coastal plain bound by the Coral Sea and the Paluma and Hervey mountain ranges.

The coastal plain is drained by a number of rivers and creeks that rise in the mountain ranges. Among these the most prominent are the Bohle, Ross, Black and Alice Rivers. The coastal plain is extremely flat in some areas and this poses drainage constraints to urban development. This flat coastal topography is broken by a series of dramatic peaks and rocky outcrops including Mt. Stuart, Mt Louisa, Mt Bohle, Castle Hill, Many Peaks and the Pinnacles.

The region also includes Magnetic Island with its mountainous interior and numerous small bays and inlets, together with a number of small islands and rock shoals including Rattlesnake Island and Herald Island.

Climate

The region's tropical climate is characterised by relatively high temperatures throughout the year and pronounced wet and dry seasons. The high summer



temperatures generally peak in January and are usually accompanied by high humidity levels. Temperatures during the remainder of the year are warm, and attract visitors from cooler southern climates.

Rainfall occurs predominantly between November and April mainly in the form of short duration, high intensity tropical storms which can cause flooding.

Predominant wind directions are from the south east in the mornings to the north east in the afternoons. The region is occasionally affected by cyclones with attendant risks of flooding, storm surges and wind damage, all of which need to be considered in planning for the region.

Community Profile

The following summary of regional demographic characteristics is intended to provide a broad understanding of the regional community:

Age Structure

The population is characterised by a high proportion of children and young adults due to the presence of the Defence Force, regional public administration, tertiary education institutions and the younger family structures of these workforces. This has implications for the planning and delivery of a range of child care and family support programs as well as the provision of public facilities in health and education.

The number of elderly people in the region is proportionally lower than other major centres of population in Queensland. However the number of people over the age of 65 is increasing, comprising some 10,700 persons in 1996.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

While Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are recorded as comprising around 5% of the total population their actual number is considered to be significantly higher, due to under counting in the Census. The Aboriginal community at Palm Island (approximately 3,000) although outside the region



looks to Townsville for a number of services including health, education and for family visits. The youthfulness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is a significant factor, especially for education, health and employment opportunities.

Key Issue

Improved consultation mechanisms with the indigenous community are essential if planning and services delivery are to improve and are to be appropriate to their beliefs and values.

Employment

Defence Force and other public sector employment has a significant impact on the economic and employment structure of the region. The Defence Force has a \$510 million per annum input to the Townsville economy, creating some 8,500 jobs, and is an integral and important component of the region's population.



Although the regional economy is relatively robust, unemployment levels have fluctuated between 8 and 10 per cent in recent years in line with State averages. Youth unemployment is of great concern and in some suburbs is as high as 30%. Effective training for employment opportunities is important to enable optimum benefits to be gained from current economic development opportunities.

Natural Environment

Three strongly differentiated State Biogeographic Regions meet in Townsville–Thuringowa: the Brigalow Belt North in the south; the Einasleigh Uplands in the west; and the Wet Tropics in the north. As a result the region is characterised by a diversity of landforms and natural environments.

More than a third of the region is composed of mountainous and hilly areas. The Hervey and Paluma Ranges provide a dramatic western and north-western backdrop. Other separate hills and mountains rise spectacularly out of the coastal plain to provide significant landmarks. The best known of these is Castle Hill which rises abruptly out of the urban area and faces the rugged profile of Magnetic Island across Cleveland Bay.

The other distinctive landsystem is the coastal province which runs the entire length of the region, and comprises beaches, beach ridges, mangrove estuaries, salt pans and coastal swamps. In the north of the region the coastal province is narrow comprising only beach frontage and small estuaries. South of the Bohle River, the coastal province becomes very wide and includes large estuarine, salt pan and brackish wetland systems.

Household Occupancy

Household occupancy rates in the region are declining in keeping with the national trend towards smaller household sizes as a result of the ageing of the population, family breakdowns and an increase in single person households.

Between 1986 and 1996 the average household occupancy rate fell from 3.1 to 2.7 persons per household (a decrease of 13%). These changes are consistent with State averages. The household occupancy rates differ between Townsville City (2.5) and Thuringowa City (3.0) reflecting differences in the family cycles and mix of dwelling types between the two areas. The result of the declining household occupancy rates is that new households are being formed at a higher rate than population growth. The total number of households in the region is likely to increase by between 15,000 and 18,000 by 2011.

Key Issue

There is a need for more dwellings and a greater variety of dwelling styles to accommodate changing population and household structures.

Between the mountain ranges and the coastal province lie the coastal plains which are drained by a number of rivers and creeks, and include the Black, Bohle and Ross River coastal plains and the more inland Anthill Plains.

Key Issue

The region's dominant features including its mountainous and hilly areas, coastline, rivers and creeks combine to present a strong physical image. These landscape and seascape values should be protected for the long term benefit and enjoyment of the region and its visitors.

The main vegetation type in the region is eucalypt dominated savannah woodland and grasslands. However, the region also includes significant examples of more diverse and denser vegetation communities such as beach ridge vine thickets, riparian forests along creeks and rivers, hoop pine and other semi-deciduous vine thickets on hilly fire refuge areas, and rainforests and wet sclerophyll forests on the wetter uplands of the Paluma Range,

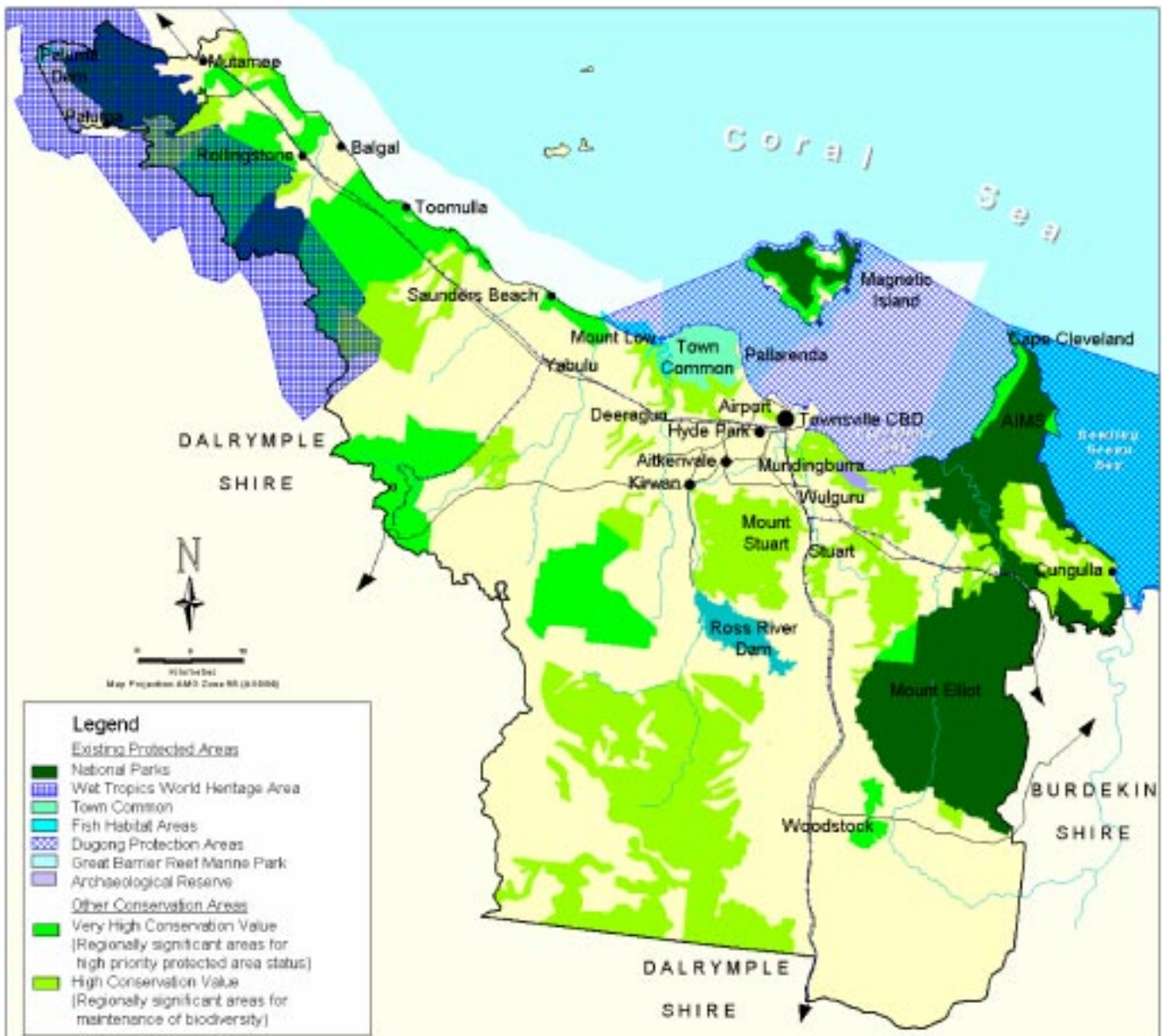
and at Mount Elliot in the south. The Paluma Range uplands are included in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Another major group of vegetation communities is associated with wetland areas. These include mangrove forests in estuarine areas, samphire communities associated with salt pans, and aquatic plants including water lilies, sedges, grasses, and paperbark forests associated with freshwater wetlands.

This variety of natural habitats accommodates a wide range of flora and fauna including 53 mammal species, and a large number of reptiles and amphibians including 33 species of land snakes, estuarine crocodiles and a diverse range of lizard and frog species.



Above all the region is renowned for its birdlife. At least 365 bird species have been seen within 50 kilometres of Townsville Post Office. This incredible variety of bird species is due mainly to the prolific nature of the region's wetlands. The wetlands provide habitat for migratory species that vary from season to season and from year to year. In particular the Bowling Green Bay wetlands seasonally support more than 20,000 waterfowl, and almost half of the bird species known to visit the area breed in these wetlands.



Map 2: Nature Conservation Areas

A number of endangered, vulnerable and rare wildlife species including mahogany gliders, dugong and cassowaries occur within the region. The region is also home to a range of vulnerable flora species such as the ant plant, and vulnerable vegetation communities such as broad leaf tea tree woodlands. For some significant species such as the *Livistonia drudei* palm and the cotton pygmy goose, the Townsville–Thuringowa region is their last major stronghold.

Some of the region's more significant nature conservation areas are protected within national parks and other reserves. These include Magnetic Island, Paluma Range, and Bowling Green Bay National Parks; and the Cape Pallarenda and Townsville Town Common Conservation Parks. The lowland section of Bowling Green Bay National Park is also listed under the RAMSAR Convention as a wetland of international importance.

However a number of important habitat types are poorly represented within existing protected areas,



and significant habitat areas with high nature conservation values occur outside of existing reserves. Map 2 shows the existing protected areas within the region together with areas that have been identified as including elements of Very High nature conservation value (ie has a high priority for protected area status), or High nature conservation value (ie should be retained in its natural state for outdoor recreation, scenic amenity and nature conservation purposes but may not warrant protected area status).

It should be noted that these latter designations are relatively broad and, while useful for regional planning purposes, may need to be adjusted as more detailed information on nature conservation values is acquired.

Key Issue

There are significant areas with important nature conservation values that are outside existing conservation reserves. Planning for the region needs to ensure that these important nature conservation values are adequately protected.

The marine environment is also of great significance, as the region is partly within and adjoins the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Queensland State Marine Park. The area has a range of marine conservation values including seagrass and mangrove communities, fringing reefs, turtle nesting areas, dugong habitat, fish nurseries and seabird, wader and raptor habitats.

The intertidal and subtidal seagrass beds and mangrove lined estuaries of Cleveland and Bowling Green Bays form extensive baitfish grounds, and provide a feeding and breeding habitat for commercially and recreationally important fish species and other marine life. Bowling Green Bay and the Bohle estuary are declared Fish Habitat Areas. There are also declared Dugong Protection Areas in Cleveland Bay including around Magnetic Island, and in Bowling Green Bay.

Natural Resources

The Townsville–Thuringowa region is not endowed with an abundance of natural resources. The region's main natural resources are its fisheries and extractive materials which make a substantial contribution to the regional economy. Other natural resources such as good agricultural land, forests and timber, and water are less significant, and the region tends to rely on adjacent areas such as, for example, the Burdekin which provides horticultural produce and supplements the region's bulk water supplies.

Map 3 shows the region's main natural resource areas. Protecting these natural resource values should be a high priority for planning and decision-making in the region. The rivers, wetlands, estuaries, coastal bays, islands and reefs of the region support major recreational and commercial fisheries. These are of economic importance to the region creating jobs and export earnings, and are also a major recreation resource for residents and visitors.

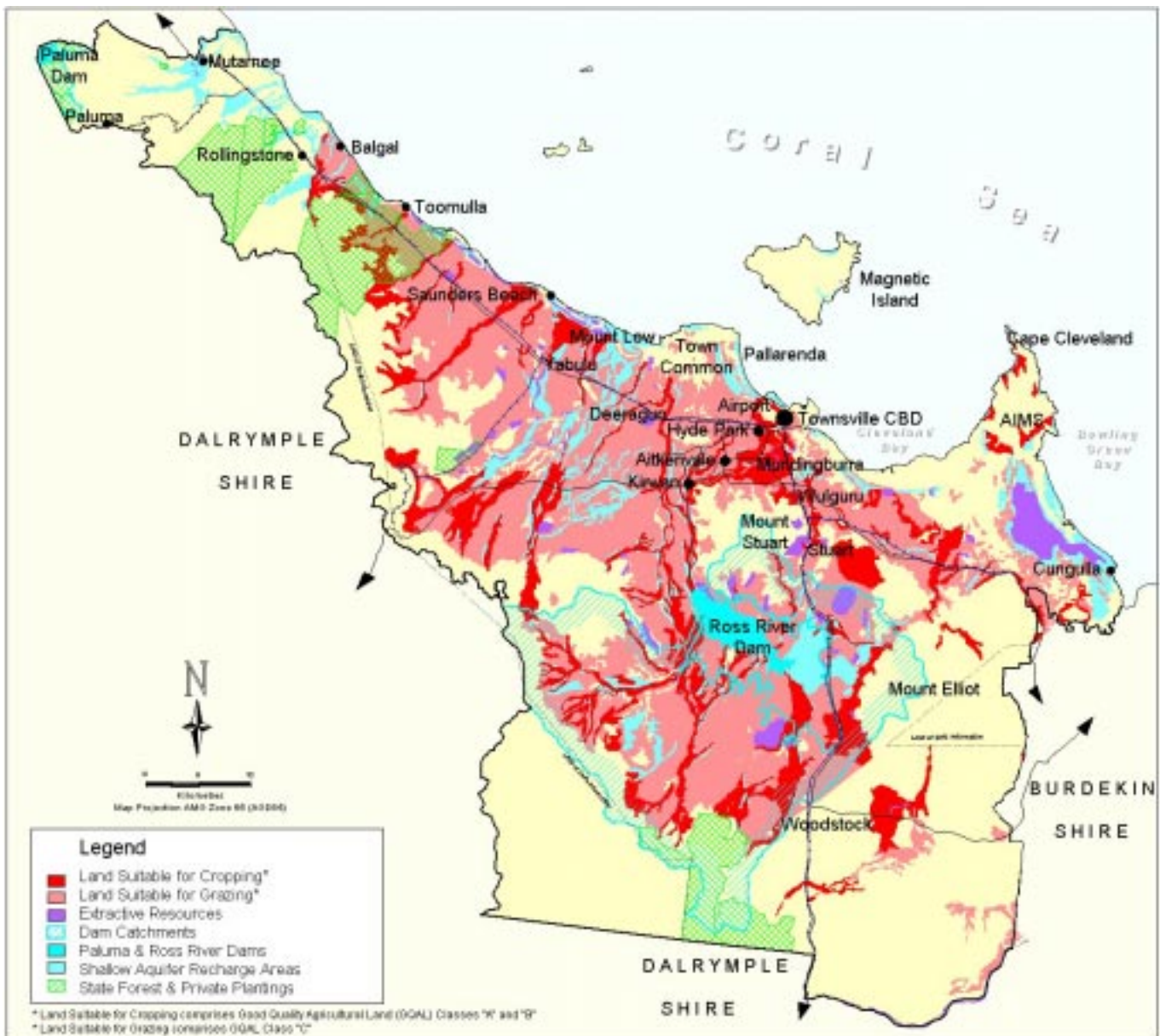
These fishery resources are nationally and internationally recognised for the quality of the recreational fishing they provide, and are a substantial attraction to tourists.

Some of the region's important fishery resources are protected by the Bowling Green Bay Fish Habitat Area, however there are other important fishery resources that should also be protected.

While the region does not contain any known workable reserves of minerals, coal or petroleum, it is provided with a range of significant quarry materials which support the regional building industry. As well as silica, sand, quartz and gravel, the region contains an abundance of hard rock, clay and limestone deposits. Granite quarrying has recently commenced at Hervey Range and supplies both local and export markets.

Good quality agricultural land is relatively limited in extent occurring mainly on alluvial flats associated with rivers and creeks. Lack of adequate and reliable rainfall further limits intensive agricultural pursuits to some dry land cane farming in the northern part of the region, and fruit tree cropping in the Rollingstone, Majors Creek and Alligator Creek areas. The predominant agricultural pursuit is grazing of beef cattle on the lesser quality lands that predominate in the region. The climate is suitable for some aquaculture activities which are perceived as a sunrise industry, although water supply issues and concerns about long term sustainability have not been resolved.

The region's relatively low and highly seasonal rainfall limits the availability of surface water supplies. The main water storages are the Paluma Dam on Swamp Creek in the north of the region, and the Ross River



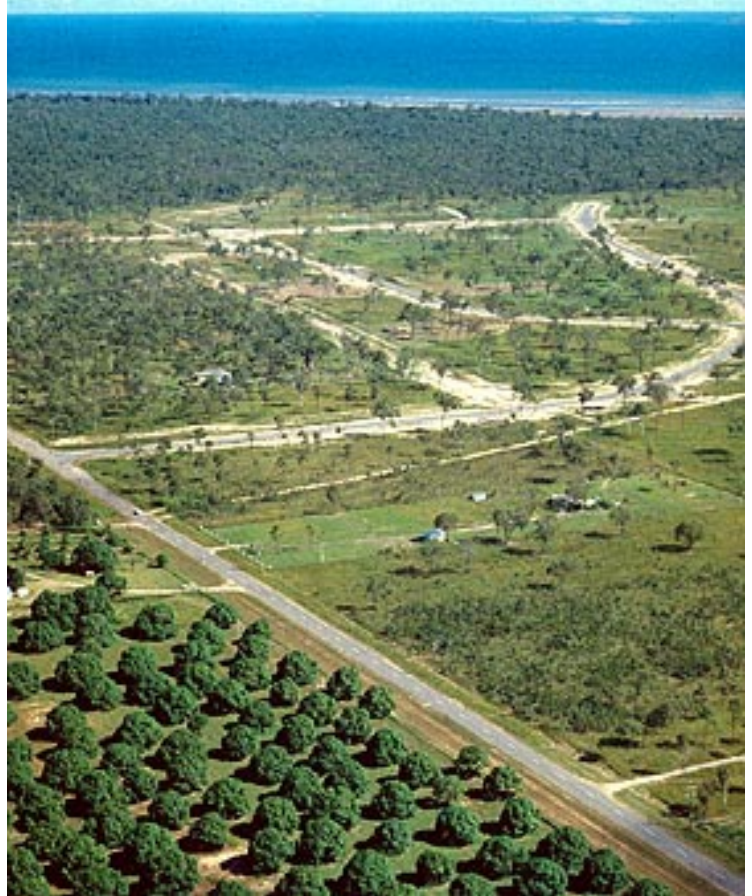
Map 3: Natural Resource Areas

Dam. These water supply sources are supplemented by bulk water from the Burdekin Falls Dam–Clare Weir system outside the region.

The region also has significant groundwater resources which vary in reliability and quality. Groundwater is the main source of water for irrigation and stock watering purposes, and for domestic use where a reticulated supply is not available. There are a number of groundwater sources in the region including the Bluewater sub-artesian area, within which the Black River Bore Licensing Area is subject to stringent water use controls to ensure a regular supply of groundwater to the Queensland Nickel refinery. Major areas of high groundwater use are around the Alice and Black Rivers, around Woodstock and Alligator Creek, and areas between the Bohle and Ross Rivers. Protection of the quantity and quality of the groundwater reserves in the region is important from an economic as well as environmental perspective.

Key Issue

The region's important natural resources need to be protected. Among the most significant of these are the catchment areas of the Ross River and Paluma Dams, the region's extensive groundwater reserves, extractive resources, agricultural, horticultural, forest production and fishery resources.



The dry savannah landscapes that characterise the Townsville–Thuringowa region do not provide significant commercial timber resources. These resources are generally restricted to the higher rainfall State forest areas of the Paluma Ranges, although there is also a substantial State timber plantation in the southern part of the region adjacent to the Dalrymple Shire boundary.

The Regional Economy

The Townsville–Thuringowa region's economy is diverse and robust. Over the past ten years, the Northern Statistical Division has experienced an increase in the value of Gross Regional Product (a measure of regional economic activity which includes expenditure on goods and services produced and sold to consumers in the region, plus the value of exports produced and sold by the region, less imports purchased by the region) every year except 1990–91 when a slight decrease of 0.3% was recorded at the height of the national economic recession.

North Queensland makes a significant contribution to the Queensland economy. Over recent years the rate of economic growth in North Queensland has substantially exceeded Queensland's. North Queensland is also one of the most productive areas of the State, recording a per capita Gross Regional Product (GRP) of \$19,076 in 1990–91, which was more than 10% above the equivalent figure for the State.

The key to the region's economic stability is its diversity, with a wide range of industry sectors contributing substantially to GRP. This stability meant

that Townsville–Thuringowa was able to weather the 1991–92 economic recession better than many other regions of Australia. The main industry sectors in the Northern Statistical Division in terms of contribution to GRP in 1994–95 were:

- Public Administration and Defence (15.7%)
- Finance, Property and Business (14.1%)
- Mining (13.7%)
- Wholesale and Retail Trade (12.1%)
- Agriculture (11.3%)
- Manufacturing (11.0%).

The Public Administration and Defence sector of the economy has been predominant in North Queensland for many years, reflecting Townsville–Thuringowa's role as the main centre for government administration outside Brisbane, and the economic significance of the large defence presence in the region. However as other industry sectors become stronger the relative contribution of the Public Administration and Defence sector has declined. Over recent years the fastest growing sectors of the North Queensland economy have been Mining which grew

by 42% between 1993–94 and 1994–95, Agriculture (19.8%) and Recreation, Personal and Other Services (18.1%).

Key Issue

The region has a strong and diverse economy and is a major service centre for North Queensland, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands. This role needs to be maintained and strengthened.

The mining sector has always played a significant role in Townsville–Thuringowa’s economic development, through its role as the transport gateway and main service centre for the mining activities in its extensive hinterland which includes the North West Minerals Province around Mount Isa. These locational advantages have resulted in the establishment of major downstream processing industries in Townsville–Thuringowa including a copper refinery and nickel smelter.



Planned expansion of mining activities in North Queensland is likely to lead to the establishment of other major downstream processing activities in the region. One such industry, the Sun Metals zinc refinery with an estimated first stage cost of \$500 million, is already under construction. A number of other likely major industrial projects have been identified including specialist chemical plants to supply the regional mining industry, food processing, copper wire and other downstream copper manufacturers, alloys and metal coatings.

Key considerations to maintaining the attractiveness of Townsville–Thuringowa to activities of this nature include:

- maintaining the efficiency of the Port of Townsville and ensuring that it is provided with good road and rail access;
- reducing electricity costs in the region through the construction of a major base load power station; and
- ensuring the provision of suitably located and serviced land for major industries.

All of these issues are being actively pursued. The major industrial land requirements have been addressed through the State Government’s Townsville Industrial Land Project (TILP) study, the initial findings of which, relating to the location and extent of proposed major industrial sites, have been integrated into the TTSP.

Townsville–Thuringowa is also a major transport and service centre for agricultural activities throughout North Queensland. Major agricultural exports passing through the port include bulk sugar, meat and meat products, and live cattle. Opportunities for exporting fresh horticultural produce to Asia have also been identified, but are currently limited by the lack of direct international flights to Townsville airport.

There is a substantial commercial fishing industry based in Townsville, and aquaculture is perceived by many as a sunrise industry for the region. Downstream agriculture processing activities in the region are limited at present, with the main one being the export beef processing plant at Stuart. However downstream processing of seafoods has been identified as a sector with growth potential.

The manufacturing sector is strongly oriented towards the local market. Most manufacturing enterprises are small, and a high proportion are involved in metal fabrication and machinery. The chemical industries sector is similarly small and locally oriented. Scope for significant expansion of the manufacturing sector appears limited due to the dependency of most such industries on proximity to the larger southern markets. There may be some niche opportunities associated with larger downstream processing activities, and Townsville–Thuringowa is well placed to act as the major distribution and service centre for North Queensland and Papua New Guinea.

The region also has a cluster of research and technology organisations such as James Cook University, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, CSIRO, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and the Department of Primary Industries. All of these interact with private enterprise to varying degrees. Separate entities, such as Cooperative Research Centres, aim to strengthen research and development linkages between private enterprises and public agencies.

The health sector provides a further opportunity for economic growth as Townsville–Thuringowa currently offers the most complete and sophisticated medical and health facilities in northern Australia. In addition, the region is the base for the Anton Brienl Centre for Tropical Medicine and provides medical training through James Cook University and the region’s three major hospitals. Similar opportunities exist for Townsville–Thuringowa to be a major service provider in the education sector not only in North

Queensland, but also to Papua New Guinea and beyond into Asia and the Pacific islands.

The tourism industry is an underdeveloped sector of the region's economy. The recreation sector in North Queensland represents only 5.6% of GRP, compared with an equivalent of 7.1% for Queensland. The region's climate, historic character and proximity to a wide range of tourist attractions including the Great Barrier Reef, Magnetic Island and Charters Towers/ Ravenswood underline its potential. Poor air services and lack of marketing, particularly to international markets, have hampered the industry's development. There have however been some successes particularly in the area of events, cultural and sports tourism. This is one of the sectors which is considered to have substantial growth potential, along with eco-tourism and business/convention tourism.

Research and development allied to the mining, downstream processing of minerals and agriculture,

marine sciences and tropical medicine are seen as the key knowledge-based industries of the future for Townsville–Thuringowa.

Key Issue

Major growth sectors of the economy that should be facilitated through a regional growth management strategy include:

- transport and downstream processing of mineral and agricultural products
- provision of higher order services including health and education
- research and development allied to mining and agriculture, marine sciences and tropical medicine
- tourism, particularly ecotourism and events, cultural and sports tourism.

Urban Development

Urban development in the region consists of the main Townsville–Thuringowa urban area which in its broadest sense can be considered to include a number of peripheral urban and rural residential settlements such as Mount Low, Rupertswood, Oak Valley and Alligator Creek, together with a number of small beachfront communities such as Cungulla, Saunders Beach and Toolakea, and a large rural residential development at Bluewater.

Pattern of Settlement

The pattern of settlement for the main urban area has been shaped by a range of factors including:

- topographical and environmental constraints such as Castle Hill, Mt. Stuart, the Town Common and low lying coastal areas;
- the availability of infrastructure such as water supply from the Paluma and Ross River Dams, and the Ross River itself;
- accessibility via the major transport routes linking the CBD to the south (Flinders and Bruce Highways, and the Great Northern Railway), to the west and north (Bruce Highway and North Coast Railway), and to a lesser extent the south-west (Ross River Road and Hervey Range Road);
- the locations of major industries and large institutional uses such as Lavarack Barracks and the defence training area, the air and sea ports, Stuart Prison, Yabulu nickel refinery and the like.

In recent years the majority of urban development has occurred in Thuringowa City which has changed from being a predominantly rural-based local government. Townsville City has traditionally had a more established and consolidated urban form, and

contains most of the key regional infrastructure such as the air and sea ports, major commercial centres, hospitals and regional centres of administration. More recently, with increasing population, Thuringowa City is also gaining substantial support infrastructure including retail and commercial centres.

Most of the recent urban growth has occurred in the Douglas/Annandale and Mt Louisa areas in Townsville, and the Ross River corridor and the Burdell–Mount Low–Bohle areas of Thuringowa. The trends have been for an incremental expansion on the urban fringe on a large number of development fronts, some of which such as Rupertswood,



Rangewood and Serene Valley–Alligator Creek, are relatively remote from the main urban areas and associated facilities and services.

Key Issue

Urban development should be consolidated on a limited number of growth fronts to ensure that communities are provided with timely and cost effective infrastructure and services.



Retail and Commercial Development

In keeping with trends observed in many other major metropolitan and regional centres, the traditional hub of the region, the Townsville CBD, has been declining in importance as other urban activity centres emerge. The decline has been most marked in retail activity. As a result of urban expansion occurring predominantly in a westerly direction, the traditional CBD is becoming less accessible to an increasing proportion of the region's population. This is reflected in the emergence of major retail and service centres at Aitkenvale, Thuringowa Central and Hyde Park which have now largely supplanted the CBD's traditional retailing functions.

The CBD retains its dominance as the focus for the region's commercial and administration activities. This is reflected in the fact that the CBD and environs account for some 26% of the region's total employment, compared with a combined total of about 24% for Aitkenvale, Thuringowa Central and Hyde Park. However there appears to be an emerging trend for office development to locate outside the CBD.

The region's retail and commercial activities are also characterised by a proliferation of strip or ribbon development along many major roads including Charters Towers Road, Ross River Road, Bowen and Ingham Roads, and parts of Dalrymple Road. This



type of development presents a number of problems including reduced traffic flows, poor accessibility, adverse impacts on development in designated centres, pedestrian safety and amenity, and visual blight.

Key Issue

The future role and function of the Townsville CBD and the region's other major centres should be clarified through an agreed policy and hierarchy of major centres. Managing strip commercial development is also a major issue for the region.

Housing

The region provides a wide spectrum of residential options ranging from budget house and land packages available in the outer residential suburbs to luxury apartments with panoramic ocean views. Lifestyle options also vary from small lot inner-city living to rural residential areas.

However, while there is a wide choice of residential options within the region, the variety of housing types within particular residential areas or price ranges is often quite poor, consisting predominantly of detached houses on standard 600–1,000m² allotments. With an aging population and changing household structures, there is now a need to provide a greater variety of housing choices. Some recent initiatives such as the small lot housing at Willows Gardens suggest that greater housing choice is becoming available in response to changing consumer demands.

The region is also characterised by an oversupply of rural residential land which is dispersed throughout the region in locations such as Alice River, Bluewater, Cungulla, Oak Valley, Black River and Alligator Creek. While rural residential development can provide an attractive lifestyle and is appropriate in some

locations, it also presents a number of planning and environmental concerns. These include the difficulty of matching the unrealistic expectations of rural residential communities of the range of services that should be provided, with the inherent inefficiencies in the provision of physical and social infrastructure due to low population densities and thresholds and excessive distances from existing services.

The cost of housing in Townsville compares favourably with other major centres. In 1994, the median house and land package cost in Townsville–Thuringowa was equivalent to the State’s median cost, and lower than the equivalent costs in Brisbane and Cairns by 17% and 23% respectively. Public housing comprises around 2,200 dwellings or 4.3% of the total housing stock in the region, which is consistent with public housing levels in other areas of Queensland.

Housing styles in the region generally follow national design trends established in the larger southern markets, and do not acknowledge the design requirements of housing for the tropics. Design features such as effective cross ventilation, louvred windows, wide roof overhangs shading walls and windows, high set housing providing a cool shaded area for relaxation and drying are generally ignored with detrimental results on energy efficiency and comfort.

The loss of the region’s traditional architectural character has been identified as a significant concern by the community, and diminishes the distinctive



tropical image of Townsville–Thuringowa which is an important element of community identity and potentially a strong theme for marketing the region.

Key Issue

Action is required to maintain the region’s traditional architectural character and distinctive tropical image, and to ensure that sites of cultural heritage significance are identified and protected.

Infrastructure and Services

Human Services

Human services and their associated infrastructure are generally considered to relate to programs and activities in the broad areas of health, education, public housing, family and community support and information services, cultural development, recreation and public safety.

During this period of rapid change in public policies and funding arrangements for the provision of human services, it is particularly important to achieve a high level of coordination between the wide range of community organisations and agencies at all levels of government that provide these services. This is necessary to ensure that community needs are identified and met in an integrated and efficient fashion.

This is particularly so in a community such as Townsville–Thuringowa where the bulk of new development is occurring on the urban fringes which are relatively remote from established human services infrastructure. The needs of these emerging

communities and the costs associated with the expanded provision of human services are major issues for the community.

Key elements of the region’s human services which have been identified as requiring detailed consideration and upgrading include: employment and training options particularly for youth; family support services to meet the needs of a highly mobile population (eg defence personnel) often isolated from natural support systems; decentralised community health services, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services, and adult mental health; community based facilities for people with disabilities and the frail elderly; and enhanced personal and community safety.

However, the region is provided with a generally high level of human services in keeping with its role as the service centre for the North Queensland region and beyond. With most of the region’s population living in the main urban centre, access to these services is relatively high compared to other regions with a more dispersed population distribution pattern, although it does of course vary with location.



Existing major human services infrastructure and services available to the regional community include:

- over 200 cultural organisations providing services, cultural products and employment in the arts and cultural development fields such as dance, music, theatre, visual arts and crafts; and including indigenous and multicultural groups
- a broad range of tertiary education opportunities through James Cook University and the Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE
- higher order health services provided through two major public hospitals and two major private hospitals including the Townsville General Hospital which is the State's only tertiary hospital outside Brisbane.

Key Issue

Cultural and community services are significant contributors to overall quality of life. These services should be planned and provided in consultation with communities to reflect cultural diversity and needs, and ensure equity of access.

Physical Infrastructure

Physical Infrastructure includes the basic community services of water supply, sewerage, storm drainage and waste disposal, as well as power supplies and telecommunications.



The Townsville–Thuringowa Water Supply Board (TTWSB) is responsible for bulk water supply to the region, with the two Councils generally responsible for distribution to consumers. Since 1994 the supply of water from the two main water storages in the region, the Ross River and Paluma Dams, has been supplemented as required with water from the Burdekin Dam. This guaranteed new source of bulk water supply is sufficient for the region's projected future growth, and removes a previous impediment to the establishment of major industries in the region.

The ready availability of water and the desire to "green" a naturally dry environment combine to create a high demand for water. The application of "user pays" and other demand management principles, together with programs to recycle water will be important to maintain water use within ecologically sustainable limits.

Key Issue

Demand management and recycling programs are required to maintain water use within environmentally acceptable limits.

Both Councils operate a number of wastewater treatment schemes which provide reticulated sewerage infrastructure to all of the main urban areas and to coastal settlements at Mount Low, Toomulla and on Magnetic Island. The remaining coastal villages and rural residential areas use septic systems.

Treated wastewater is discharged to the sea and to a number of natural waterways including the Bohle River, Sandfly Creek and Saunders Creek. The highly variable seasonal flows in these waterways pose a problem for dispersal of effluent. Land disposal options are being introduced as an alternative to disposal of effluent to waterways.

Key Issue

A coordinated approach to wastewater management incorporating a catchment based approach, together with higher treatment levels and increased use of alternatives to disposal to waterbodies is a high priority for the region.

The short high intensity storms that punctuate the region's normally dry tropical climate make the provision of underground drainage expensive and difficult to justify. The flat topography of the coastal plains also contributes to the need for substantial surface stormwater drainage systems. In urban areas underground piped systems normally cater for primary drainage (2 year Average Return Interval for residential areas), while roads convey surcharge flows for higher intensity storms. Sediment loads and pollutants in the runoff waters reduce water quality in the receiving waterways. Both Councils are currently preparing Stormwater Management Plans over parts of their areas to address these issues. These plans need to be prepared on a cooperative basis as part of overall catchment management strategies.

Management and disposal of solid waste is undertaken separately by both Councils utilising kerbside wheelie bin collection services and disposal by landfill at three major sites, Stuart, Alice River and Deeragun, and a number of smaller sites at Magnetic Island, Cungulla, Majors Creek, Toomulla and Bluewater. Recycling processes are in place at the three major sites. Both Councils have adopted the National Recycling Strategy of trying to achieve a 50% reduction of solid waste to landfill by the year 2000, and have implemented public education programs. The need to upgrade waste management practices to reduce environmental impacts in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act suggests that a regional waste management strategy emphasising waste reduction, recycling and more effective waste treatment and disposal is required to coordinate the activities of the two Councils.

Key Issue

A regional solid waste management strategy emphasising waste reduction, recycling and more effective waste treatment and disposal is required.

Hazardous waste disposal is also a major concern in the wider North Queensland region. The demand for and viability of establishing a purpose built facility in North Queensland needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

The region's power supply system is integrated with the State electricity grid. The North Queensland Electricity Corporation monitors the region's energy demands and upgrades the electricity network as required to ensure an adequate supply. The North Queensland region's demand for electricity supply is about 20% of the total State demand, however the North Queensland region generates only about 3.4% of the State's total electricity supply.

Two gas turbine powered generating stations, at Stuart and Yabulu, provide some 400 MW of power at times of peak load. Both facilities are capable of conversion to natural gas which will enable them to contribute to base load capacity. A base load power station is also currently under investigation for the Sun Metals zinc refinery site at Stuart. This will facilitate the expansion of major industry in the region by reducing energy costs which are relatively high at present. The North Queensland Electricity Board develops the electricity reticulation network and supplies power to consumers as needed.

In addition it appears likely that the region will be provided with a ready supply of natural gas via a proposed pipeline from New Guinea.

Key Issue

The region needs to achieve base load electricity generating capacity to facilitate economic development. Overall energy demand should be constrained to acceptable levels by demand management programs and the use of alternative, low impact energy sources.

Transport

Efficient and effective transport is essential to economic growth and development, and contributes to the well-being of the community by facilitating social interaction, and access to cultural, sporting and other recreational activities.

One of the region's significant competitive advantages is the strength of its transport infrastructure and services. Townsville-Thuringowa is at the confluence of major road and rail networks serving the North Queensland region and beyond, and also provides high quality sea port and air services.

The region is serviced by two major rail networks, the North Coast line between Brisbane and Cairns, and the Mount Isa line to the west. The region



accommodates substantial rail infrastructure associated with the port, freight and passenger terminals, and workshops and maintenance facilities. Queensland Rail is progressively relocating major maintenance and operational activities to a new facility at Stuart to consolidate and simplify rail operations. Both major rail routes have also been upgraded recently to allow heavier and more efficient trains to operate and to reduce travelling times for freight and passenger trains.

Townsville–Thuringowa is also well served by the National and State controlled road network including the Bruce Highway which links the region to the southern and northern areas of the State, and also provides access between the coastal settlements in the region, and the Flinders Highway which links Townsville to the western areas of the State including Mount Isa. A corridor is being preserved to allow for the future construction of a ring road between Douglas and Deeragun to allow through traffic movements on these highways to bypass the main urban areas.

The urban road network in the region is well developed and is subject to continuous upgrading to meet increases in demand for road based transport. Major urban road infrastructure projects planned for the region include duplications of Dalrymple Road and Thuringowa Drive, and the extension of Dalrymple Road to the west to link with the proposed ring road.



The Townsville Port is the largest deep water facility in North Queensland. It provides major handling facilities for bulk and containerised cargo, and direct road and rail access to the wharfside. Export and import throughput has been growing strongly and the capacity of the port is being expanded by the Townsville Port Authority. Over recent times BHP Minerals and Queensland Nickel have substantially

upgraded their materials handling and storage infrastructure at the port. There is a pressing need to secure the long term road and rail access to the port. Alternative long term access routes, including upgrading of existing road and rail access, are currently under investigation.

The existing Townsville airport at Garbutt is a joint civil and military facility. The runway meets current growth needs, and is sufficient to accommodate fully loaded wide bodied jets going to any of the major Asian destinations. The strength of the runway currently restricts frequency of use although a proposed resheet of the main runway by the year 2000 will alleviate these restrictions. The civil terminal and associated facilities are currently operating well below capacity. Increasing the number of direct international flights to Townsville would boost the local tourism industry, and enable transport of fresh produce to Asian markets. The existing airport is likely to serve the region adequately for the foreseeable future.

Passenger transport in the region is dominated by the private motor vehicle. The area has traditionally exhibited a very low level of public transport usage due to a range of factors including low levels of traffic congestion, easy parking and the low service level of the bus services. A new public transport operator introduced substantially upgraded bus services to the main urban areas in mid-1996 under a performance contract let by Queensland Transport. There are no commuter rail services operating in the region.

Key Issue

The region would benefit from a more integrated approach to transport and land use planning in which economic, environmental and social objectives are achieved through demand management, and the various transport modes are considered and planned as components of a single integrated transport system.

Magnetic Island is linked to the mainland by a passenger ferry service between Townsville and Picnic Bay which operates seven days a week and carries approximately 300,000 passengers per annum. This service is supplemented by a seven days per week barge service carrying vehicles and passengers between Arcadia and Townsville. Both services cater to commuters and tourists.

Walking and cycling are substantially more popular in the urban areas of the region than in most other parts of the State. This is largely due to advantages of topography and climate, but would also be attributable to the extensive network of bikeways in the urban areas.

3. PLANNING APPROACH



Ecologically Sustainable Development

The principles and objectives of the *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* which are briefly outlined below, have guided the preparation of the Townsville–Thuringowa Strategy Plan.

On 7 December, 1992 the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* as the broad strategic and policy framework under which governments would cooperatively make decisions and take actions to pursue ESD in Australia.

Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) is defined as *using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased.*

The Goal of ESD is *development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.*

The Core Objectives are

- to enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations;
- to provide for equity within and between generations;
- to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

The Guiding Principles are

- decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations;
- where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation;
- the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognised and considered;
- the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised;
- the need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised;
- cost effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms;
- decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues which affect them.

The *National Strategy for ESD* makes it clear that these guiding principles and core objectives need to be considered as a package. No objective or principle should predominate over the others. A balanced approach is required that takes into account all these objectives and principles to pursue the goal of ESD. This approach underpins the TTSP, and is also intended to guide future implementation activities.

Native Title

On 3 June 1992, the High Court of Australia delivered its judgement in the case of *Mabo v. the State of Queensland* declaring that the common law of Australia recognized native title. The decision overturned the concept of *terra nullius*, (a land belonging to no one) on which Australia's land tenure system had been based, and recognized that, unless extinguished, indigenous property rights pre-existed and survived colonisation.

The High Court recognized that indigenous people's rights to native title had survived and that in accordance with the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, their native title must be treated equally before the law with other titles that flow from the Crown.

The Commonwealth saw the judgement as providing an important opportunity to rebuild the relationship between our nation and its indigenous people. At the end of 1993 the Commonwealth enacted the

Native Title Act 1993. The main purpose of the Native Title Act was:

- to validate any potentially invalid grants in land and other dealings after the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*;
- to set out the rights of native title holders in future land dealings; and
- to provide a mechanism for native title holders to have their claims facilitated and recognized, that is the native title claim process. Under the Act it is not compulsory for native title holders to register their interests.

The *Native Title Act 1993* does not give rise to or create native title rights. It provides for the recognition and protection of native title — an existing common law right — by providing processes to facilitate its recognition and ensure it receives the same amount of legal protection as other land titles. As each State and Territory is responsible for land management, they needed to pass legislation complementary with the Commonwealth Native Title Act to validate potentially invalid past dealings. The *Native Title (Queensland) Act 1993* provides for the validation of land dealings for the period 31 October 1975 to 1 January 1994. From this date acts that affect native title needed to comply with the future act regime contained in the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993*.

Native title rights and interests are unique and bear little resemblance to tenure property rights as represented by Anglo-Australian property law. Native title rights and interests may include, but are not limited to:

- the right to exercise traditional responsibilities and protect cultural heritage by visiting the land, maintaining or protecting a site, performing a ritual activity, burials, law making, seeking and imparting traditional knowledge, cleaning and burning areas, keeping some people away from certain sites, exercising certain behavioural routines when visiting sites, and the collection of materials such as timber, bark, stone, ochre, clay, resin and grass for making weapons, tools and ceremonial articles;
- the right for certain land use by the holders of native title, including the right to hunt, gather, fish, traverse and camp;
- the fundamental link to the identity, self determination, well being, and community development of indigenous people;
- the protection of environmental quality through the principle of sustainable development and the utilisation of indigenous knowledge and experience to achieve effective and sustainable land use management;
- the recognition and protection of the indigenous subsistence economy and effective systems for

wildlife management and land and sea management;

- the participation in decision making concerning the planning, use, management and conservation of land, water and resources;
- the integration of social, cultural, economic and environmental policies through joint land use management regimes;
- the inclusion of specific economic measures including indigenous employment and training;
- the ownership and sharing of natural resources including mining, forestry, marine and quarry products;
- the compensation of lawful effects upon native title;
- the protection of intellectual and cultural property rights.

Native title was previously considered to have been extinguished where certain interests in land had been granted. These included various types of leases including pastoral leases. However, on 23 December 1996, the High Court handed down its judgement in the Wik case — a test case on whether pastoral leases extinguished native title. It held that the Queensland pastoral leases did not necessarily extinguish native title, and that native title rights could/may survive to the extent that they are not inconsistent with the rights granted to pastoralists under their leases. The Wik decision means that native title can coexist with certain types of leasehold tenure.

The original Commonwealth legislation and the subsequent Wik judgement tried to resolve native title issues, but confusion, complexity and lack of certainty remained. The 1998 Commonwealth amendments to the Commonwealth Native Title Act (derived from the “10 Point Plan”) were designed to resolve this lack of certainty along with a number of other concerns and misinformation existing in the community. Although the amendments did not meet with universal approval, they provide the framework under which everyone must now work.

The Commonwealth amendments also allowed the States and Territories to establish their own process for resolving native title issues for some future activities, particularly mining. The Queensland Government passed native title legislation in two stages. The first stage confirmed the extinguishment of native title on all tenures granting “exclusive possession”. It also guaranteed the validity of those “intermediate period” acts taken by the State between the date of commencement of the original Native Title Act (1/1/94) and when the Wik judgement was handed down (23/12/96).

The second stage of the Queensland legislation provides a series of statutory schemes for native title



processes in relation to future mining developments. These Queensland schemes provide alternatives to the onerous Commonwealth Right to Negotiate Process and involve timeframes and processes that are far more appropriate and workable.

The amended Commonwealth legislation also clarified and strengthened a mechanism for negotiated settlements through Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) to be registered with the National Native Title Tribunal thus providing flexibility and certainty as well as mechanisms for enforcement. ILUAs are also strongly supported by current State Government policy which seeks to negotiate not litigate. This is being achieved through comprehensive agreements, negotiated with good will and in good faith by all interested parties.

Whether they are negotiated before or after a determination of native title, the main benefits of ILUAs are the flexibility of their content, the legal certainty that follows after registration and the avoidance of time consuming and expensive litigation.

Whilst it is possible to determine areas over which native title may exist, there are currently no registered determinations of native title in the area covered by the Townsville–Thuringowa Strategy Plan. However, the Wulgurukaba people have lodged two native title claims over National Park and USL ‘Buffer Zone’ on Magnetic Island.

The determination of native title rights will be resolved by processes that are clearly outside the scope of the TTSP. However, planning and decision making processes in the region need to be aware of the potential for native title rights and interests and to incorporate appropriate mechanisms to deal with native title issues.

Due to the uncertainties in relation to the existence of native title in the Townsville–Thuringowa study area, and because this regional planning process neither confers nor denies rights to use land, the

issue of land tenure, and native title in particular, has not been specifically addressed in the Townsville–Thuringowa Strategy Plan.

It is important to note that nothing in this plan should be construed as in any way affecting any native title rights and interests that may exist in the Townsville–Thuringowa region. The TTSP supports the use of negotiated settlements, through ILUAs and other special purpose agreements, to resolve issues relating to native title rights and interests.

There is a need to protect native title rights and interests in the region. The State Government should consider facilitating a Regional Protocol which could, among other things, reconcile indigenous and non-indigenous land use planning, development and management issues at the regional level by negotiating agreed ways to deal with the interests of traditional owners.

4. VISION FOR THE REGION



Preamble

The Vision describes the community's ideal future outcomes for the Townsville–Thuringowa region.

It consists of a brief overview together with a more detailed description of the key elements. All elements of the Vision are of equal importance.

Overview

Townsville–Thuringowa has emerged as the principal urban centre of North Queensland through its major administrative, defence, educational, cultural, industrial, health care and service functions.

It has a diverse, stable economy underpinned by strong links to countries of Asia and the Pacific Rim, and to a vast and productive hinterland.

The community has managed to balance the impacts of growth and development with the need to conserve environmental, cultural and community values which combine to ensure that residents and visitors alike enjoy a relaxed, tropical lifestyle.

Australia's largest tropical urban area has become a showcase for technologies associated with climatically responsive planning and design including water reuse and conservation, and energy efficiency.

Commitments to the principles of social justice and equity have resulted in a community which has a strong sense of identity and belonging where all its members are able to participate fully in community life.

Economy

The area's economy is both diverse and robust.

Major downstream processing industries based on the mineral and primary production resources of the North Queensland region are a significant component of the economy. These, together with manufacturing and service industries, make up a strong industrial base. Knowledge based industries allied to the mining, processing and environmental sectors together with a vibrant tourism industry are also major contributors to the economy.

The agriculture and aquaculture industries also comprise significant elements of the local economy which is further enhanced by major government employment in the areas of administration, services, education, and defence.



Townsville–Thuringowa is the primary export/import gateway for northern and western Queensland to domestic and international markets through its road, rail, air and sea links.

This economic diversity has created a wide range of opportunities to satisfy the employment requirements of the community.

Natural Environment

The World Heritage areas of the Great Barrier Reef and the Paluma Range are complemented by other key conservation areas including The Pinnacles, Mts. Stuart and Elliott, Cape Cleveland and Magnetic Island to form a dramatic scenic rim.



Other visually prominent features, wetlands and the extensive river systems have also been conserved as part of an accessible network of natural areas. These natural areas are highly valued by the community as defining the physical character of the cities, and for their environmental, recreational and tourism benefits.

The community's insistence upon world's best practice has ensured that high standards of air and water quality have been achieved and are maintained.

Recreation and Tourism

A wide range of accessible, nature-based recreation opportunities contributes to the relaxed tropical lifestyle enjoyed by residents, and also provides the basis for a thriving eco-tourism industry.

The area has consolidated its role as the sporting and events capital of North Queensland, and is home to several nationally-competitive sporting teams. Visitation associated with major sporting, cultural and recreational events is an important element of the local tourism industry.

Tourism developments provide a diverse range of unique visitor experiences based on the region's attractions and interests.



Education

The education sector has developed world class expertise in several fields including applied research associated with mining and minerals processing, climatically responsive design, tropical medicine,



tropical agriculture, marine sciences, water conservation and energy efficiency.

Townsville–Thuringowa is also noted for the provision of high quality education facilities and services to domestic and international students. James Cook University and the other centres of education are an integral part of the region through their mutually beneficial links with a wide range of community interest groups.

Community

The area provides a rich choice of lifestyles and personal development opportunities. All sectors of the community including children, youth and the aged have good access to a range of quality human services and community facilities.

The community has achieved a substantial reduction in violence and other criminal activity. Citizens feel at ease and enjoy a safe, secure lifestyle.

Townsville–Thuringowa has a harmonious mix of people with different cultural backgrounds. The cultural diversity of the population is valued and celebrated by the community. Indigenous peoples have retained their cultural identity and are respected as an integral part of this diverse community.

The community has built on strong traditions to become Australia's foremost regional centre for the visual and performing arts. Cultural events cater to a wide catchment and are a source of pride for the local community.

Urban Development

The area provides a diversity of residential environments ranging from vibrant inner-city localities to semi-rural living. Significant urban elements such as the historic early suburbs, Magnetic Island and the coastal communities have retained their character and charm, and sites of cultural heritage significance are valued and protected.

Urban growth has been effectively managed by determining settlement patterns, which ensure the conservation of valuable environmental and natural resources, and promote the cost-effective provision of infrastructure and services.

Development is climatically responsive, characterized by the practical application of the principles of ecologically sustainable development including water conservation and energy efficiency. A distinctive local architecture has emerged, adding to the area's tropical image and attractiveness.

Major Centres

Significant retailing, commercial, social and cultural services are co-located in a hierarchy of major centres, which promote accessibility and provide local employment opportunities. All of the major centres have good transport links and are supported by higher-density residential development in surrounding areas. These major centres are vibrant "people" places that provide focal points for local communities.



The City Heart remains the primary focus of the community and the centre where all higher-order administration, commercial and cultural activities are concentrated. The City Heart is a flourishing mixed-use centre in which residential and commercial development is integrated with a wide range of recreational and cultural activities including boutique and specialty retailing to present a dynamic attractive environment.

Transport

All modes are effectively integrated into a transport system that meets the economic, environmental and social objectives of the community. A well-defined road hierarchy has been established to ensure efficient access for through and freight traffic, and to maintain the safety and amenity of residential areas.

Freight transport links have been enhanced to meet the demands of the local economy, and in recognition of the area's role as a major economic gateway.

An efficient public transport system and an extensive network of safe pedestrian and cyclist routes linking residential areas, major centres and other high activity areas have developed and are strongly supported by the community.

Infrastructure

Major infrastructure requirements have been provided in a pro-active, environmentally responsible and cost-effective manner to foster economic development in a highly livable city. The benefits of these assets to the community have been maximized through planned refurbishment and maintenance programs.

Careful management of energy and water resources combined with efficient waste minimization and management techniques have enabled Townsville–Thuringowa to develop as a world leader in the practical application of ecologically sustainable development practices in a dry tropical environment.

5. REGIONAL STRUCTURE PLAN

The Regional Structure Plan (RSP) describes the preferred broad physical form of the region for a notional long-term population of around 320,000 (compared with the existing regional population of approximately 140,000).

The RSP is intended to provide a strategic context for the planning, development assessment and investment activities of the three spheres of government and private enterprise.

It was developed by evaluating a range of regional growth options against objectives and evaluation criteria addressing environmental sustainability, natural resources management, transport, economic development, urban development, human services and physical infrastructure issues. It is the optimum long-term settlement pattern for the region taking all of these issues into account.

The RSP includes a broad development sequence. This broad sequence identifies areas preferred for urban and rural residential development within the next 15–20 years. These phase one development areas are generally consolidations of or extensions to existing urban and rural residential areas, and can be provided with supporting infrastructure and services relatively efficiently. More detail regarding the preferred development sequence for these phase one areas will be provided through benchmark development sequencing plans which will form part of the local government planning schemes under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* (IPA).

The RSP also identifies other urban and rural residential development areas which are the preferred areas to cater for additional longer term population growth in the region (ie beyond that which can be accommodated in the phase one development areas). Development of these phase two areas for the purposes designated in the RSP should only occur when the regional population approaches the capacity of the phase one development areas.

In the interim, Local Government planning schemes should ensure that the long term development potential of the phase two development areas is protected by preventing subdivision patterns or the establishment of land uses which would be likely to constrain the long term future use of the land for the purposes designated in the RSP.

The key features of the RSP are:

- Recognition that the existing Townsville–Thuringowa urban area will be the primary focus of future growth. This is because it has the highest level of infrastructure and services, and the greatest potential to generate economic development and jobs.
- Encouragement of infill and fringe urban development within and adjacent to existing urban areas to promote efficient use of, and to consolidate demand for urban infrastructure and services.
- Further promotion of urban consolidation by encouraging increased urban densities within and around existing and proposed major centres, including the CBD, to improve accessibility to jobs and services and enhance the vitality of central places.
- Promotion of development at Burdell–Mt Low–Deeragun, over the longer term, into an integrated urban community of approximately 70,000 focused on a major centre providing a full range of sub-regional services and amenities.
- Establishment, in the longer term, of a new integrated urban community of approximately 55,000 at Rocky Springs also to be focused on a major centre with a full range of sub-regional services and amenities.
- Limiting the extent of urban development on the Bohle Plain to a population capacity of approximately 13,000 supported by district level services and amenities.
- Supporting the role of the Townsville CBD as the main centre for the region, and promoting new sub-regional centres at Burdell–Mt Low and Rocky Springs, to complement the existing sub-regional centres at Aitkenvale, Thuringowa Central and Hyde Park.
- Consolidating major business and industry areas at Stuart, along the Bruce Highway between Garbutt and Bohle, and at the Townsville Port area in addition to the nickel refinery at Yabulu and the proposed broad-hectare industrial area at Woodstock.
- Consolidating rural residential development within and adjacent to existing rural residential areas including those at the Upper Ross corridor, Bluewater and Alligator Creek.
- Limiting the extent of development in other small centres throughout the region to preserve their unique characters.

The RSP identifies two areas where even broad designations cannot be determined until the results of current planning studies are available. The Southbank Investigation Area contains a range of competing values, and is currently being investigated as part of the Townsville Port Access Study. The future use of this area will be determined through the Townsville City planning scheme review process when the results of the port access study are available.

There is also a 3,500 hectare area at Woodstock shown as a Major Industry Investigation Area. This area was identified through the Townsville Industrial Land Project (TILP) as being potentially suitable to accommodate major industries. Further more detailed investigation is required to confirm this potential, and to assess the demand for major industries to establish in this location.

The RSP provides a broad structure only. The Townsville and Thuringowa Councils will need to undertake more detailed planning to guide the development of urban growth areas in their respective local government areas. This will be particularly necessary for the major urban growth areas at Burdell–Mt Low–Deeragun, Rocky Springs and on the Bohle Plain. Some key planning issues that will need to be addressed in relation to each of these major growth areas are:

Burdell/Mt Low/Deeragun

- facilitate the continued development of smaller-scale communities at Deeragun, Bushland Beach and Burdell within the longer term context of a major urban community of approximately 70,000 focused on a sub-regional centre.
- achieve urban residential densities throughout the designated growth areas with higher densities around a centrally located sub-regional centre.
- provide substantial environmental buffers along the Bohle River and its tributaries including Saunders Creek and Stoney Creek.
- maintain and enhance the beachside character and recreational opportunities in areas adjacent to Halifax Bay.
- minimise the detrimental impacts associated with development on the duplex soils prevalent in the area on water quality in the Bohle River and Halifax Bay including the Bohle River Fish Habitat Area.

Rocky Springs

- the future planning and development of the Rocky Springs area will be the subject of a detailed master planning exercise. The purpose of the master plan is to facilitate the development of an integrated urban community accommodating a full range of urban uses.

- ensure that the productive capacity of the good quality agricultural land in the area is preserved until it is required for urban development.
- preserve the amenity and environmental values of Mt Jack and the Sisters Mountains including visually prominent foothills.
- preserve significant environmental/wildlife corridors between the Sisters Mountains and the Muntalunga Range, and between Mt Stuart and the Sisters/Mt Elliot.
- achieve urban residential densities throughout the designated growth area with higher densities around a centrally located sub-regional centre.
- provide substantial environmental buffers along Stuart Creek, and ensure that there are no detrimental impacts on water quality in the Ross River Dam.

Bohle Plain

- provide substantial environmental/wildlife corridors along the Bohle River and its tributaries.
- minimise the detrimental impacts associated with development on the duplex soils prevalent in the area on water quality in the Bohle River and Halifax Bay including the Bohle River Fish Habitat Area.