

## 7.9. DRAFT FNQ REGIONAL PLAN SUBMISSION

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**DEPARTMENT** Environment and Planning

### RECOMMENDATION

**That Council resolves to delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to make a submission to the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning as part of the statutory consultation period ending on 5 January 2026, for the Draft Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2025 as per Section 10 of the *Planning Act 2016*.**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The draft Far North Queensland Regional Plan 2025 (draft FNQRP) is open for public consultation between 12 November 2025 and 5 January 2026. Council is invited to make a submission for the draft FNQRP to reflect its needs in order to position itself to effectively plan for growth into the next decade. The draft FNQRP is designed to support the regions strengths in tourism, agriculture and emerging industry. The draft plan provides the framework for the management of housing supply and population growth, critical infrastructure delivery and protection of the region's natural assets such as the two world Heritage Areas. The intent of the submission is to have Douglas Shires interests accurately and effectively represented in the draft FNQRP which facilitates securing future infrastructure grants and informs the growth pattern to be reflected in future local planning scheme amendments.

### BACKGROUND

Council has worked with the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning to develop the draft FNQRP for the past two years. Largely Councils interests have been reflected in the draft and have been accommodated. However, there is further refinement required. As market trends and demands continue to change, Councils interests continue to need further refinement and representation in the draft plan. A number of changes need to be reflected in the plan to provide clarity on policy position and to place importance on critical infrastructure that connects the shire to the region and supports the shires growth.

The Department has shortened the public consultation period to one month instead of two months and have set the closing date for submissions to be 5 January 2026.

### COMMENTS

This report summarises the deficiencies identified by Councils Planning Department in the draft FNQRP and nominates both subtle and significant changes reflective of the needs of Douglas Shire. The community is encouraged to make a submission to the department before 5 January 2026 if there are any views they wish to share in order to influence the plan that manages the growth of the region for the next decade.

#### **Draft FNQRP mapping changes proposed:**

Mapping in the draft plan needs further refinement, in particular, the draft Strategic Rehabilitation Area (SRA) mapping which is only intended to nominate areas for progressive

rehabilitation of degraded areas such as riparian corridors on farms. The mapping is inconsistent across the shire and is indicative in some locations and detailed in others. Areas which do not require additional planting are also nominated.

Dickson inlet is nominated as a regional biodiversity corridor. If future development of the Marina, Waterfront precinct (formerly Waterfront South Precinct) and Marine Industry Precinct is ever to occur, this is counterproductive.

### **Draft FNQRP sections proposed for change:**

#### **Marine Industry Precinct and Waterfront Precinct Opportunity**

Opportunity exists for a new Marine Industry Precinct to see localised benefits from the expansion of the Cairns Marine Industry precinct which may accommodate under supply of services in Cairns and opens up market share for Douglas Shire. Although the business case has not been undertaken, this represents an important opportunity for industry diversification worth a second look.

A Waterfront precinct completely separated from the industry precinct on Dickson Inlet represents opportunity to revisit the Waterfront South Planning Area in order to expand the commercial offering for tourist use on the inlet. The Marina is a key local and regional economic asset as the gateway to the reef so any opportunities to co-locate and further develop the precinct are important to include for consideration.

#### **Regional Centres, Precincts and Sectors**

Opportunity exists to nominate a convention centre land use in Port Douglas to strengthen the tourist economy and address extreme seasonality of the existing industry. This kind of infrastructure would be regionally significant and is appropriate for inclusion in the plan.

#### **Infrastructure Planning and Delivery**

The stretch of the Captain Cook Highway connecting the shire to Cairns between Ellis Beach and Oak beach is a critical transport route. Its presence and importance is lacking in the draft FNQRP and needs to be elevated for betterment and disaster resilience funding opportunities.

The Principal Cycle Network requires refined alignment in the draft plan placing importance on the connection between Mossman and Port Douglas as both a journey to work path and a scenic route.

The Daintree ferry's profile is lacking in the plan and its importance for connectivity between Douglas, Wujul and Cook Shires is not recognised and reflected appropriately.

#### **Good Quality Agricultural Land, Carbon offsets and Permanent Plantations**

The draft FNQRP nominates that for Douglas Shire, rehabilitation is to occur in degraded riparian areas and areas not suitable for farming. However, there are conflicting policy positions reflected in the plan which need to be refined. The State has not provided a clear policy position on permanent plantation for the region.

#### **Regional Economic Assets**

The Daintree Rainforest and Mossman Gorge are not nominated as regional economic assets in the draft FNQRP. The Mossman Mill has been included as a Regional Economic Asset. It is not proposed to remove the Mill from the list as the site remains an opportunity for heavy

industry to re-establish and must be reflected in the draft FNQRP as a particularly important industry site for new industry uses, albeit that it may never crush cane again.

## PROPOSAL

It is proposed that Council note the proposed changes to the draft FNQRP detailed in attachment 1 and delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to make a submission to the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning.

## COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

<b>Advocate</b>	Council makes representation on behalf of the community on important issues, funding opportunities, projects and programs. Council will use its influence to seek the best outcomes for the community.
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## CONSULTATION

<b>Internal:</b>	Community and Economic Development Department, Water and Wastewater Department.
<b>External:</b>	Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment 1- FNQ Draft Regional Plan 2025 submission details [7.9.1 - 2 pages]

FNQ Draft Regional Plan 2025- Douglas Shire Council Submission		
1	Draft Regional Plan Reference	DSC proposed changes
2	Includes Dickson Inlet (Port Douglas) as a draft regional biodiversity corridor- Online mapping	Remove Dickson Inlet draft regional biodiversity corridor mapping. The waterfront land south of the Marina is intended to be developed and activated for marine industry in one location and expanded tourist uses in another in this area.
3	Various areas of SRA Mapping have detailed boundaries around primary production areas, then other areas particularly in the Daintree have indicative mapping	SRA mapping is intended for rehabilitation of degraded areas such as cleared creeks. There is no benefit in including SRA mapping over completely vegetated creeks in the Daintree such as the tributaries at the base of Alexandra Range which are not affected by agricultural clearing. This is inconsistent with the SRA mapping of the reproductive land around Mossman and Lower Daintree for example where the mapping follows cadastres but also follows riparian areas. The mapping layer needs to be refined to cover just riparian corridor areas to not only refine the spatial arrangement but also clarify that the intent is for biodiversity improvement of degraded areas.
4	Page 13- Map 2	Starting at Map 2 Port Douglas should be nominated with Marine and Aviation sectors also. There is a desire to develop the marine industry for vessel maintenance locally. Douglas is set to see benefits from the Cairns marine industry expansion and under supply of services which may be accommodated in Port Douglas.
5	Page 23-	Amend seventh paragraph on page 23 to "Port Douglas is a renowned and iconic international tourism destination with a strong service sector and distinct sense of place retaining its coastal village atmosphere over time. Opportunity exists to diversify marine industry by establishing a Marine Industry Precinct on Dickson Inlet and expand an activated waterfront precinct closer to the Marina. The Douglas Shire includes numerous residential.....(retain existing text hereon).
6	Page 23-	Amend second paragraph under Infrastructure heading. Amend paragraph to "Key infrastructure projects include the Port Douglas Water reservoir duplication, Mossman and Port Douglas wastewater treatment plant and network upgrade, Port Douglas Marine Industry Precinct, Port Douglas Waterfront Precinct, Rex Range Road improvement, Captain Cook Highway improvement between Cairns and Port Douglas, extension of trunk water main to enable expansion of Wonga Beach and the Development of hiking and biking trails- Wangetti trail to Port Douglas connection. An opportunity to address seasonality exists for a Convention Centre in Port Douglas which allows diversification from the tourism market.
7	Page 23-	Typo- Paragraph 7 'identify' needs to be 'identity'
8	Page 80-	Add new strategy 1.12 as strategy for economic growth and diversification. 1.12 "Douglas Shire Council Only-

		facilitate the development of the Port Douglas Marine Industry Precinct and Port Douglas Waterfront Precinct- a. facilitate a maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) precinct for vessels that the Cairns facility cannot accommodate; b. facilitate a separate activated waterfront precinct for tourism development capitalising on the waterfront attributes and co-location with the existing Marina.
	Page 81	Add new strategy 2.10 Regional Centres, Precincts and Sectors. 2.10 "Douglas Shire Council Only- Promote the development of the Port Douglas town centre precinct by supporting the development of a Convention Centre.
9	Page 83	4.1 ( c) is an oxymoron-carbon offsets directly impact regional agricultural production if they are on GQAL. Remove reference to 'carbon offsets' . The State should seek to clarify its position on permanent plantations on GQAL rather than leave it to councils to determine. A clear policy position on the issue should be created to apply to the handling of such uses across the regional as all of the Councils have the same natural resource to manage- GQAL, the primary differences only being whether is used and suitable for grazing or cropping as a resource.
10	Page 89	Add Port Douglas Sports Complex as new item 4.5
11	Page 95	Regional Economic Assets are lacking for Douglas Shire. Amend list to read: Port Douglas Marina, Mossman Sugar Mill, Mossman Gorge, Daintree Rainforest
12	Page 142	FNQ Principal Cycle Network- Rephrase sixth dot point to: Linking Mossman and Port Douglas as an important journey to work path. In addition this connection can be used as an iconic recreation route.
13	Pages 140-146	No mention of the need for infrastructure upgrade of Captain Cook Highway between Cairns and Port Douglas (Ellis Beach to Oak Beach). This stretch of road is critical infrastructure and is significantly at risk of land slip hazard. Resilience based enhancements should be included as Future Planning Considerations (Pg 146) and should an Infrastructure Enhancing Strategy' should be developed for this section of Road. Further, no mention of the Daintree ferry and its importance to the region connecting Douglas Shire to Wujul Wujul and Cook Shire. For many people in the region this is critical infrastructure.