



Developing the long term sustainability of our region

News from Townsville & North West Queensland



Welcome to Issue 1 of NORTHERN AUSTRALIA CONNECTIONS

Over the past three years Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland (RDA) has published a monthly newsletter [Community Connections](#) for stakeholder organisations and community members in the Townsville and North West Queensland region. Today we invite you to receive our new **Northern Australia Connections** for stakeholder organisations and friends who are living outside our dynamic and beautiful region spanning the Gulf, Outback and Great Barrier Reef.

Quick Facts on the Townsville and North West Queensland region

Area 449,190km² equating to 25.9% of Queensland; 15 local government areas; population of 265,500 equating to 5.8% of the State; Townsville is the largest city in Northern Australia with a population of 185,000; Major industries include mining and minerals processing, agriculture including the beef industry, defence and government administration, services including scientific research, education, training, transport and tourism; Gross Regional Product of \$18.4 billion

The Year in Reflection

On Page 2, we reflect on the past year and our key areas of focus and activities as linked to our Top 10—"Transformational Engine Starter Priorities". These are in our [Draft Regional Roadmap for 2013-16](#) supported by data in the [Appendix](#).

RDA Regional Queensland Roads Forum

Five RDAs with inland Queensland road networks recently convened a Regional Roads Forum in Longreach. Copies of presentations are now available on our website: <http://www.rdanwq.org.au/projects> For more information, see our story on Page 4.

Northern Australia Development

RDA has commenced discussions with key stakeholders and looks forward to contributing to the White Paper for Northern Australia Development.

On behalf of our Chairman Paul Woodhouse, Committee members and staff member Shannyn, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of RDA throughout the year and wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for a healthy, happy and prosperous new year! We look forward to working with you in 2014.

Glenys Schuntner
Chief Executive Officer 

RDA Committee

<p>Mr Paul Woodhouse Chairman</p>  <p>Paul joined RDA in 2012. Retiring from local government after serving 12 years as Mayor and Councillor of McKinlay Shire Council to follow other interests, Paul is a primary producer in north west Queensland.</p>	<p>Ms Lyn McLaughlin Deputy Chair</p>  <p>Lyn joined RDA in 2009. She is a former Mayor and Councillor of Burdekin Shire Council and represents the region on several committees. Lyn is a primary school teacher.</p>	<p>Mr Jeff Jimmieson Treasurer</p>  <p>Jeff Jimmieson is the Manager of Performing Arts, Events and Protocol for Townsville City. He has had an extensive career in event management, public relations and the performing arts, both in local government and private enterprise. His community service includes board memberships of PCYC and Rotary..</p>	<p>Mr David Kippin Secretary</p>  <p>David is CEO at Townsville Enterprise Limited, North Queensland's peak economic development and destination marketing organisation. David has previously held senior positions in Financial and Professional Services and Corporate Advisory.</p>	<p>Cr Rick Britton</p>  <p>Rick was elected to Boullia Shire Council in 2007 and has served as Mayor since 2008. Rick and his wife Ann own and operate the cattle station Goodwood Pastoral Company.</p>	<p>Dr Scott Crawford</p>  <p>Based in Townsville, Scott is CEO of NQ Dry Tropics, the natural resource management body for the Burdekin region. Originally from Brisbane, Scott has lived in Townsville for 13 years.</p>
<p>Mr Trevor Goldstone</p>  <p>Trevor is the Director, Business Development and Operations at the Faculty of Law, Business and Creative Arts at James Cook University. Trevor moved from Adelaide to Townsville in 2009.</p>	<p>Cr Greg Jones</p>  <p>Greg is the Mayor of Flinders Shire where he has served as a Councillor since 1994. Greg and wife Carole operate an Electrical, Refrigeration & Air Conditioning business in Hughenden.</p>	<p>Prof. Sabina Knight</p>  <p>Sabina is the Director of the Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health and is an internationally recognised rural health leader with an extensive career in remote and rural primary health care, public health and education, and community development.</p>	<p>Mr Jeremy Moffat</p>  <p>Jeremy is the Director of NQ Telecom and a passionate advocate for regional Queensland. Jeremy moved his family from Sydney in 2003 to start up North Queensland Telecom.</p>	<p>Mr Mike Westerman</p>  <p>Mike is the General Manager, Xstrata Mount Isa Copper Operations and has more than 20 years' experience as a mining engineer in underground and open pit environments.</p>	<p>Position Vacant</p> <p>People interested in nominating for the Committee can find more information at http://rda.gov.au/node/15</p> <p>Also please do not hesitate to call Glenys Schuntner, CEO on 07 4760 1612 for a discussion about the role.</p>

2013—RDA's year in reflection

RDA has been facilitating and advocating, and leading or supporting a wide range of initiatives that will underpin the future sustainability of our region. With input from our extensive regional engagement and consultation across 15 Council areas, we updated the Draft Regional Roadmap for 2013-16. The Top 10 "Transformational Engine Starter Priorities" focus on issues that broadly affect our large region. The following is a summary of the Top 10 and major activities to support the region.

1. **Energy**— Chairman Paul Woodhouse is a Member of the North and North West Queensland Sustainable Resource Feasibility Study Committee (the "Pentland" – energy and agriculture study); Advocacy support to help secure the funding for the above \$ 2 million study; submissions to the Queensland 30 year electricity planning process and Australian Renewable Energy Program
2. **Roads**—Led the Regional Roads Forum in December to address inland regional roads prioritising and funding; Providing research, engagement and secretariat services for the Interim Working Group to take road issues forward; advocated for Bruce Highway funding leading up to the Federal Election including travel to Canberra to meet with Government and Opposition Senators and Members
3. **Rail/ intermodal, port, airport infrastructure**—Submission to the Queensland Ports Strategy; support to Cloncurry Shire Council to attract funding under Royalties for Regions for the airport upgrade; support to Cloncurry Shire Council for their advocacy to attract Virgin Australia to fly Brisbane—Cloncurry
4. **Communications**—Initiated a workshop for regional Mayors and CEOs on communications, and especially high speed broadband infrastructure and services in the region with guest speakers from a range of communications organisations; Submission to the Queensland Digital Economy Strategy; CEO Glenys Schuntner is on the Broadband for the Tropics Committee
5. **Water**—Chairman Paul Woodhouse is a Member of the Northern Queensland Irrigated Agricultural Strategy (Flinders and Gilbert Rivers study) Committee
6. **New mining and minerals processing opportunities**—RDA is a financial contributor and CEO Glenys Schuntner is a Member of the North West Queensland Strategic Development Study (Carpentaria Minerals Province Study) Committee
7. **Tropical Knowledge and Expertise**— Inclusion of a range of significant regional projects including the Tropical Knowledge and Innovation Centre, Pacific Reef waste water bioremediation and aquaculture feed project and Be-Engulfed Monsoon Centre projects in the Northern Queensland Strategy; Advocacy to the Federal Government for these and other projects including travel to Canberra
8. **Improve education attainment levels** – participation in a range of workshops focussed on labour force and skills issues; initial discussions with some stakeholders for dialogues to continue in 2013
9. **Land tenure security** – prioritisation of this issue in the Northern Queensland Strategy and advocacy to the Federal Government
10. **Community Infrastructure** - the opening of RDAF Round 1 Walkway project on Magnetic Island in March; construction began on RDAF Round 2 Act for Kids Child and Family Centre of Excellence project in March; Approval and works commenced on RDAF Round3 projects – (1) the new floating pontoon for Palm Island and (2) new office accommodation for the Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre; Approval of funding for RDAF Round 4 project at Tec-NQ for new accommodation facilities for regional students; letters of support to a range of community projects across the region; regular advice on funding opportunities through the distribution of *Community Connections*

The above gives a sample of our work this year, and while not complete, gives you an indication of our focus areas. We note that participation in several of the committees is at a financial cost to RDA to travel to meetings and is a major time commitment for our volunteer Committee members.

We look forward to continuing to focus on the Top 10 in the year ahead and collaborating with regional stakeholders to achieve results and outcomes that make a positive difference to our region's future.

Community Connections and Newsflashes

Throughout the course of the year, RDA sent out 15 *Community Connections* newsletters and 4 *Newsflashes* promoting:

- 108 grants and programs;
- 99 events across the region; and
- 115 other pieces of information.

Our *Community Connections* newsletters are distributed every month. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, please email info@rdanwq.org.au.

Draft Regional Roadmap 2013-2016

Regional Roadmap Update

RDA undertakes regular and extensive community consultations to develop and update a [Regional Roadmap](#).

It is RDA's Strategic Plan for the next three year period to 2016. It is also accompanied by an Appendix with significant data to as supporting evidence to the content in the Roadmap and both documents are available on our website.

RDA's vision is to achieve a prosperous, sustainable, cohesive and liveable region.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Regional Economic Development Framework, using the following determinants, has been used to analyse the region, its strengths, challenges and opportunities.

- Human capital – education and skills
- Sustainability – economically, environmentally and socially for communities and population growth
- Access to international, national and regional markets
- Comparative advantage and business competitiveness
- Effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships

Based on community consultation and the above analysis, RDA highlights the following as regional priorities.

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

From the Regional Roadmap RDA develops an Annual Business Plan.

Regional Roads Forum

Regional Roads Forum—held in Longreach 4 December 2013

50 representatives from groups with an interest in regional roads development gathered to discuss their priorities and coordinate their advocacy efforts at a Regional Roads Forum held in Longreach on 4 December 2013.

The Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committees of Townsville and North West Queensland, Far North Queensland and Torres Strait, Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Central West and Darling Downs and South West coordinated the Regional Roads Forum.

Champion of the Regional Roads Forum, Cr Rick Britton, Mayor of Boulia Shire Council and RDA Townsville and North West Queensland Committee member said, "This was an opportunity to get both the east-west and north-south roads across the Great Dividing Range on the agenda. More often than not western roads provide alternative freight and connectivity routes away from the coastal Bruce Highway – it is time to respect the value that these western roads add to our economy, industries and communities".

Local and State Government representatives and industry groups from sectors such as agriculture, tourism and economic development attended the forum. Participants focussed on criteria for prioritising regional roads, current road development priorities, evidence gaps that are an impediment to securing funding, and identifying areas for strategic collaboration and joint advocacy for regional Queensland roads.

Criteria for prioritising regional roads were broadly adapted into five headings. At this stage no weightings have been considered.

Economic

This criteria is about measuring the current economic value of the road for industry productivity purposes, including its contributions to supply chains and market access. Industry and business users across sectors such as, but not limited to, mining, agribusiness, tourism and services delivery will be considered. This criteria also relates to the value of roads as alternate routes, such as the Hann Highway being an alternate route to the Bruce Highway, especially in times of flood impacts.

Safety

This criteria is about addressing safety for all road users and compliance with minimum standards.

Strategic Intent

This criteria is about future catalytic economic and community development opportunities – such as investment attraction into new industries to support economic diversification and creation of jobs.

Access and Capacity

This criteria is concerned with access availability for all road users including measuring the risk immunity and ability of the road to withstand impacts such as weather events, days closed and tonnage limits. This includes measuring capacity for dealing with congestion and volume of traffic.

Social

This criteria relates to equity of access for communities to essential services. It supports the development of greater connectivity for communities that rely on the road infrastructure for accessing work, health, education and recreation activities.

An Interim Working Group of industry, local government and Regional Development Australia representatives has been formed, tasked with the development of a terms of reference for a future working group that will develop an advocacy plan and investment prospectus for regional roads. The Interim Working Group will also undertake a gap analysis of information sources needed to inform future advocacy efforts for regional roads. Cr Rick Britton is the nominated chair of the Interim Working Group.

Members of the Interim Working Group are:

Cr Rick Britton, Mayor, Boulia Shire Council and Committee member Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland

Cr Peter Maguire, Mayor, Central Highlands Regional Council

Cr Butch Lenton, Mayor, Winton Shire Council

Dave Burges, CEO, Quilpie Shire Council

Ian Groves - Industry (Director, AgForce)

Darlene Irvine, Executive Officer, FNQ Regional Organisation of Councils

Presentations from the Regional Roads Forum can be found at: <http://www.rdanwq.org.au/projects>

The Interim Working Group aims to complete its work by 31st March, 2014. For more information, please don't hesitate to contact RDA Townsville and North West Queensland CEO Glenys Schuntner on 07 4760 1612 or ceo@rdanwq.org.au

RDA Input to strategies and submissions

Northern Queensland Strategy

Since early 2012, the four Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committees in Northern Queensland - Far North Queensland and Torres Strait, Townsville and North West Queensland, Mackay Isaac Whitsunday and Fitzroy and Central West - have worked collaboratively on a visionary approach to the development of strategic initiatives that will strengthen the future of our large combined region.

This work has involved information sharing, analysis of shared issues and opportunities, strategic planning and advocacy.

This has led to the development of cross-regional priorities under the themes of Infrastructure, Agriculture, Tropical Knowledge, Mining/ Tourism, Energy, Water and Climate adaptation. Outcomes are focussed on investment attraction, alternative governance approaches and policy development.

There have been regular meetings with both the Australian government and opposition prior to the Federal Election and also the State Government to position this work for further support. We are now engaged with the State Government in meetings to coincide with budgetary cycles.

The four RDAs recently met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development the Hon Warren Truss MP to promote this work to feed into the Development of Northern Australia white paper process.

North Queensland Irrigated Agricultural Strategy

Committee Chairman Paul Woodhouse represents RDA Townsville and North West Queensland on the North Queensland Irrigated Agricultural Strategy Governance Committee. The Governance Committee, along with a Steering Committee provide high level governance and leadership to the Strategy, and monitor project outcomes, associated risks and stakeholder engagement.

The North Queensland Irrigated Agriculture Strategy is a collaborative initiative of the Australian Government's Office of Northern Australia within the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development; and the Queensland Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The \$10 million Strategy will build capacity for future commercial agricultural development in the north. It includes a strong focus on practical on-the-ground research and will draw together world class scientific expertise with local and commercial experience.

The Strategy will deliver a comprehensive assessment of sustainable water resource development and the potential for new irrigated agriculture in the Flinders and Gilbert catchments of north Queensland. It will also include an independent assessment of the viability of establishing new meat processing facilities in north-west Queensland.

The Strategy will deliver a number of allied regional benefits that address the needs of local, commercial and government stakeholders, including the sustainable and equitable management of public resources, due consideration of environmental and cultural issues, and the requirements of private investors.

The Strategy will apply the world's first modelling and data analysis techniques using high resolution topographic mapping and automated terrain analysis. It will:

- identify and evaluate water capture and storage options, and test the commercial viability of irrigated agriculture opportunities, and
- thoroughly assess potential environmental, economic and cultural impacts and risks.

The Strategy will also support commercial agricultural development and build capacity by:

- working with local producers to develop enterprise practices and systems that build capacity and management practices to maximise long-term viability and sustainable benefits
- establishing commercial benchmarks and best practice farming systems suited to the soils, climate and geology of northern Queensland, and
- publishing key data online, such as data downloads and interactive web mapping systems.

To keep up to date with the Northern Queensland Irrigated Agricultural Strategy, visit <http://www.regional.gov.au/regional/ona/nqias.aspx>.

RDA Input to strategies and submissions

North and North West Queensland Sustainable Resource Feasibility Study

North and northwest Queensland has an abundance of natural resources, arable lands, a growing population base and close proximity to Asia, positioning it well to contribute to Australia's economic prosperity in the future. However, concerns have been raised by RDA and many others that future growth in the region is impeded by lack of access to a reliable and affordable supply of base load energy and limited availability of irrigable land.

Access to a reliable and affordable supply of energy is widely considered to be a critical element to the ongoing development and expansion of Australia's vibrant economy. Similarly, agriculture has played a significant role in the development of Australia and northwest Queensland, and further opportunities may exist to expand and diversify the industry.

Committee Chairman Paul Woodhouse represents RDA Townsville and North West Queensland on the Northwest Queensland Sustainable Resource Feasibility Studies Steering Committee. The studies aim to inform the continued expansion and development of the region's natural resource, agricultural and renewable energy industries.

The purpose of the *North West Queensland Power Feasibility Study* is to investigate the feasibility of establishing:

- a base-load power station within the northwest Queensland region, in and around the Pentland area; and
- a high-voltage transmission line within the northwest Queensland region to connect any new base-load power station to the NEM, which may also enable the development of renewable energy projects across northwest Queensland.

The purpose of the *Pentland Agricultural Feasibility Study* is to investigate the feasibility of establishing an irrigated agriculture precinct in the Pentland/Hughenden region in northwest Queensland, to sustain new sugar production and/or other associated products (as well as other possible agricultural crops) and processing facilities for potential ongoing regional benefit (including the feasibility of water capture from the Burdekin River and transport to the Pentland region). The study will address the following three main aims:

- quantify the potential for sugar production in the Pentland/Hughenden region having regard for sustainable farming practices and maximising water efficiency, identify sugar production and processing operations that optimise that potential;
- consider potential economic, environmental and social impacts of such an agricultural development; and
- identify regulatory and social licence requirements that maximise long-term benefits to the local community, as well as regional, state and national stakeholders.

The final reports are due in early 2014.

30 Year Electricity Strategy Discussion Paper

RDA has made submissions to the Queensland Government's 30-year electricity strategy Directions Paper and more recently to the [30-year Electricity Strategy Discussion Paper](#), which closed on 6 December 2013.

RDA advocated for electricity issues of relevance to our region such as the lack of base-load generation, high cost of transmission and energy losses and the negative impacts these have on industrial development and communities.

RDA's response can be viewed on our website at <http://www.rdanwq.org.au/resources-and-links/plans-documents>.

The Queensland Plan

RDA has participated in two forums in Brisbane to provide input to *The Queensland Plan* from a Townsville and North West Queensland perspective. At the most recent forum, more than 600 Queenslanders, including RDA Treasurer, Mr Jeff Jimmieson came together to review the focus areas emerging from [The Queensland Plan feedback](#) and to identify the steps to deliver the Queensland Government's 30-year vision. A broad cross-section of Queenslanders attended, including community representatives, youth representatives, peak bodies, business and industry, community organisations, mayors and state members of parliament.

A set of 39 outcomes were identified as priority areas for *The Queensland Plan*. At the summit, delegates voted on their top 10 priorities to further explore during summit activities. It is important to note that all outcomes will be addressed in the final version of *The Queensland Plan*. These can be viewed at <http://queenslandplan.qld.gov.au/journey/brisbane-summit/>.

The Draft Queensland Plan can now be viewed online and the Queensland Government is seeking feedback.

RDA Input to strategies and submissions

North West Queensland Strategic Development Study

RDA has been a financial contributor to this study and Chief Executive Officer Glenys Schuntner is an Observer on the North West Queensland Strategic Development Study Working Group.

The objective of the study is to provide an outline of the development opportunities in the region, the market potential for such opportunities and the issues to be addressed in progressing these. Thus the study should outline, in broad terms, an economic development strategy for the North West Queensland region and set out the critical factors in implementing this strategy with a focus on infrastructure. An aim of the study is to drive economic development in the region for the next 30 years.

It is to be noted that this is a scoping study and not a feasibility study of potential projects.

The project will emphasise the vision for economic development in the North West. Drawing on the expertise of key corporate stakeholders we will seek to identify:

- new business opportunities;
- game changing projects for industry and urban areas; and
- synergies across business operations.

A key objective of the project is to define a preferred future for the region that is not constrained by the limitations of current thinking or existing industry but considers new and different options and assesses their viability.

Industries of focus include but are not limited to: coal, rare earth, uranium, minerals and other mining, agriculture, energy, infrastructure, manufacturing and transport opportunities.

The study will identify the indirect flow-on that can be leveraged from new or expanded capital investment in infrastructure and new industry. Area of focus for this study incorporates the Local Government Areas of: Mount Isa, Cloncurry, McKinlay, Richmond, Flinders, Burke, Carpentaria, Doomadgee, Etheridge, Croydon and Mornington in accordance with the project brief.

Proposals under the study must be: grounded in evidenced based-data and commercial reality, industry relevant, financially viable, capable of regulatory compliance and acceptable to the community.

The final report is due in early 2014.

Queensland Digital Economy Strategy

RDA recently submitted a response to the [Draft Queensland Digital Economy Strategy](#). Comments were made in relation to the four key themes of the Strategy— Queensland Government services; People and communities; Business and industry; and Digital industry. RDA advocated for the needs of north and north-west Queensland in terms of access to competitive speeds, capacity and pricing for high speed broadband and mobile technologies.

RDA's response can be viewed on our website at <http://www.rdanwq.org.au/resources-and-links/plans-documents>.

NQ2031 Plan

RDA Chief Executive Officer Glenys Schuntner has been a regular participant in workshops to develop the North Queensland region's NQ 2031 Economic and Infrastructure Framework under the auspices of the Regional Economic Development Sub-Committee of the North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils. RED-ROC for short!

There has been consensus for some time that a comprehensive North Queensland regional economic development plan was required. Referring to city and shire economic development plans, RDA's Regional Roadmap and other relevant plans in the region, the NQ 2031 Plan will provide an overview of the region and regional priorities for economic development that all Councils in the region support.

The NQ2031 Plan will be completed early in 2014.

Regional Development Australia Fund Update

Round 1—Townsville City Council's Gabul Way, Magnetic Island

In Round 1 of the Regional Development Australia Fund in 2011, Townsville City Council was successful in securing \$4.79 million for the Gabul Way, which was officially opened on 3 March 2013.

The total cost of the project was \$5.3 million, with Townsville City Council funding the remainder of the cost.

The entire project was constructed using Townsville and Magnetic Island companies, including the principal contractor Hutchinson Builders, who did a fantastic job of employing local Magnetic Island businesses wherever possible.

Gabul Way was recently awarded the Master Builders prestigious title of "Best Sporting and Community Facility up to \$5 million".

The opening of Gabul Way marked the end of a 15 year campaign from the Magnetic Island Community to improve the safety of pedestrians as they move between Nelly Bay and Geoffrey Bay.

The 710 metre walkway is adjacent to Arcadia Road and is made up of 2 sections:

- Geoffrey Bay towards Nelly Bay - this section is 350m long by 2.5m wide and leads to the first of two viewing platforms. This section is disable access compliant.
- Nelly Bay towards Geoffrey Bay – this section is 360m long by 2m wide and mostly elevated, with several break out areas to enjoy the vistas from.

Visit the Townsville City Council website at <http://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/council/projects/pages/magneticislandwalkways.aspx> to view a video of the walkway and comments from users.



Magnetic Island—Photo provided by Tourism Queensland

Regional Development Australia Fund Update

Round 2—ACT for Kids' Child and Family Centre of Excellence

In 2012, Act for Kids was awarded \$3.4 million from the Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF) Round 2 and \$600,000 from the Queensland Government's Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to support the \$4.6 million development of the Act for Kids Child and Family Centre of Excellence. James Cook University provided an in-kind donation through the provision of land.

Hutchinson Builders have been appointed as the contractor for the facility, helping to develop the building skills of local construction workers. The centre is now well under construction at the James Cook University Campus in Townsville. The building's foundation and many of the underground utilities are in place, and the structure is coming out of the ground. It is scheduled for completion in late 2013.

The centre is on track to be the first of its kind in the region, pushing the boundaries of sustainable design and leading future service development. The centre will improve best-practice across the sector and will integrate therapeutic support for children and families, Act for Kids' unique Early Education Program, extensive research and tertiary course development.

Act for Kids CEO, Dr Neil Carrington, said: "It's exciting to see our vision for the region's most advanced therapeutic centre become a reality.

"Not only will the centre be a family friendly facility for community use, it will also enable us to increase the capacity and capability of the human services sector in the region, create safer home environments for children, increase community awareness of children's needs and provide better access for Indigenous children and families to culturally appropriate support."

The Act for Kids Child and Family Centre of Excellence will include:

- purpose-built therapy spaces and a specialist preschool with indoor and outdoor play areas for abused and neglected children;
- improved office facilities to accommodate delivery of outreach parenting support and programs;
- a child friendly outdoor play and meeting space for families and for Act for Kids and other community organisations to conduct parenting programs;
- a training centre for professional development workshops, undergraduate subjects and postgraduate courses developed in partnership with James Cook University; and
- a child safety and development research centre to promote evidence based practice, evaluate services and inform program and policy development.

For further information, visit <https://actforkids.com.au/centre-of-excellence.html>.



Regional Development Australia Fund Update

Round 3—Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council's Palm Island Floating Pontoon

In May 2013 under Round 3 of the Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF), Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council was awarded \$500,000 for the construction of a floating pontoon on Palm Island, to enable all tidal access for ferry services. The total value of the project is \$1.5 million, with contributions provided by Sealink Queensland and the Queensland Government.

This project will ensure more frequent and affordable connectivity between Palm Island and Townsville and the northern Queensland region and will open up economic and social opportunities that did not exist with limited tidal access.

The Pacific Marine Group has been awarded the contract for the project. The first stage of the project is now underway with detailed planning, approvals and assessments. Project site works are planned to commence from March 2014 and be completed by early June 2014.



Photos of the current jetty courtesy of Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council

Round 3—Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre's Acquisition and Fit-out of Flood Proof Premises

In May 2013 under Round 3 of the Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF), the Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre was awarded \$500,000 for the acquisition and fit-out of expanded flood proof premises. The premises will be occupied by the Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre and Ingham Disability Services. The total value of the project is \$800,000, with the Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre funding the remainder of the cost.

The new building will be owned by the Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre and is therefore a community asset. Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and repair of the building. They have created a self funding model, which offers attractive short and long term office rental packages to like minded service delivery partners. Co-location also creates efficiencies in organisational costs such as administration support, IT hardware and support, reception and accounting personnel, enabling more dollars to be spent on direct benefits to clients.

Operating from the new building will allow Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre's community services delivery to double and enable Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre to form a hub of social service provision in Ingham, including providing office space to visiting counselling, health and social services. The social services hub will include the existing building on Townsville Road which will be used to provide a community meeting space, community development opportunities as well as lower cost office space. HCSC's increased office space will allow it to expand its services in community support into areas of emerging need within the Hinchinbrook community, particularly men's support and youth needs.

Handover of the new premises occurred in August. Fit-out of the premises has begun, with prioritisation of disability access and health and safety needs.



Photos of the current fit-out being completed

Regional Development Australia Fund Update

Round 4—TEC-NQ's Regional (VET) Training Accommodation Facility

In June 2013 under Round 4 of the Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF), TEC-NQ was awarded \$2 million for the construction of a purpose built facility that will accommodate regional students attending TEC-NQ. The total value of the project is \$4.019 million.

This grant was recently reconfirmed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, The Hon Warren Truss MP and will be funded through the new Community Development Grants Programme, as part of the regional community funding package.

The facility will be built by apprentices employed by TEC-NQ who will receive on the job training.

Currently, students who live outside Townsville face challenges when wanting to combine school and trade training in Townsville due to a lack of accommodation. This project will allow regional students to live and study a trade within the region.

The infrastructure will consist of eight dormitory style rooms that can accommodate four students per dormitory.



Current TEC-NQ premises where training and education programs are provided. Photo courtesy of Tec NQ website

RDA



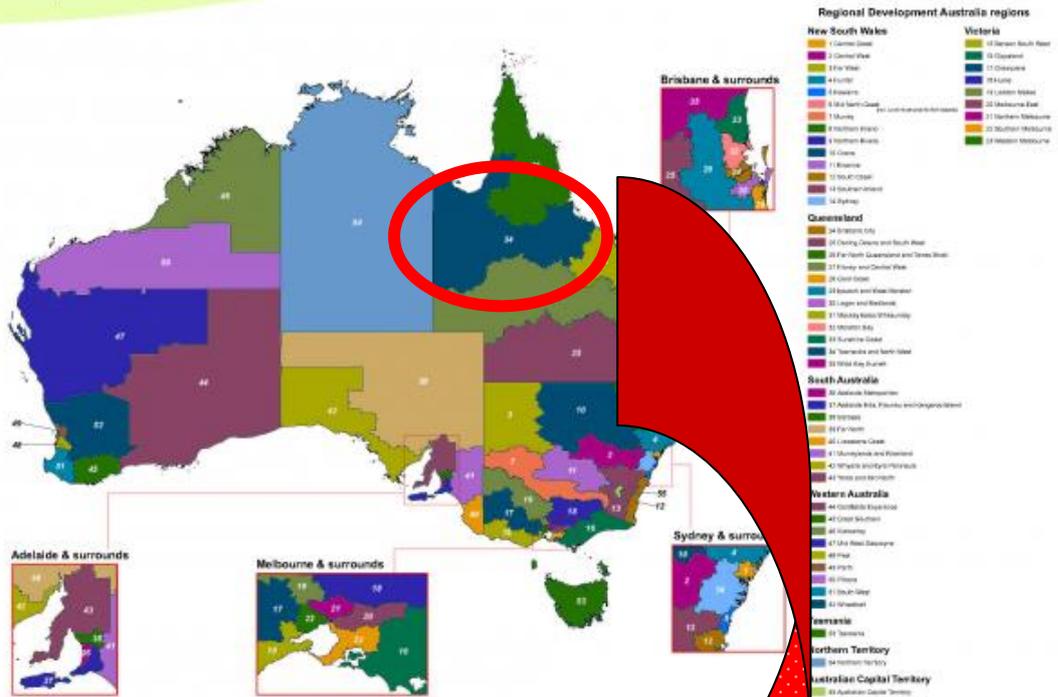
Local people developing local solutions to local issues

Who are we?
Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a partnership between the Australian, State, Territory and Local Governments to strengthen regional communities.
RDA consists of a national network of 85 committees, which are made up of local leaders who work with all levels of government, business and community groups to support the development of their regions.

What do we do?
RDA members are local people developing local solutions to local issues. They build partnerships to develop strategies and deliver sustainable infrastructure and services to their regions. They also work with each other to identify issues that cross regions.

Contact
For more information on working with or joining your local RDA visit www.rda.gov.au or email rda@regional.gov.au
All postal correspondence:
GPO Box 803, Canberra ACT 2601

www.rda.gov.au



The Committee and Staff of RDA Townsville and North West Queensland wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

The RDA office will be closed from 1:00pm Tuesday 24 December to Wednesday 1 January (inclusive). For any urgent matters, please contact the CEO, Glenys Schuntner on 0417 198 284

Contact

Phone 07 4760 1612
Email info@rdanwq.org.au
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An Australian Government Initiative



Queensland Government