



JANUARY UPDATE

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Getting Back on Track



Ross Contarino

As we head into a new decade, all the signs point to the unfolding year being a marked improvement on 2009. While our unemployment levels are still concerning,

we look forward to a flurry of construction activity throughout the coming year. Some of this new activity will emerge from stimulus projects like the Building Education Revolution, and new social housing and other initiatives such as the Cairns Base Hospital Redevelopment, water and sewerage facility improvements and road infrastructure developments.

The tourism industry should also get a boost from the plethora of airline announcements over the past few weeks, with many new services commencing in the coming months. These new flights will be complimented by additional promotional activity being undertaken by Tourism Tropical North Queensland, Tourism Queensland and Tourism Australia. The Cairns Airport, TTNQ, TQ and the Queensland Government assisted by the policy changes announced

by the Australian Government, are also working hard to attract new airline carriers to our region.

The other pleasing outcomes were the announcements of enormous new mining and resource projects for our near neighbours in Papua New Guinea. This comes on the back of renewed and new interest in Cairns from existing mining operations from the region. Significant opportunities will emerge for Tropical North Queensland from these developments including procurement of goods and services, fly-in-fly-out labour deployment and R&R opportunities for expats and other incoming staff.

Advance Cairns will also be working right across our region to value add to the great produce grown in our tropics and, by sampling this great produce, add to the reasons for visitors to come to this

destination. The opportunity to undertake this work was made possible through the Federal Government's TQUAL funding program.

The combination of all of this effort should see our region emerge out of the current low ebb and start to move back to a position of real growth. Advance Cairns will be working diligently to ensure that all of the various projects and promises are delivered in full.



Driving the New Deal into 2010

Advance Cairns and its New Deal consortium members are continuing to work through the many initiatives highlighted in their negotiations with both State and Federal Governments, in the later part of 2009. Here's a snapshot of how the New Deal will be enacted in 2010:

- Both levels of Government have appointed 'Go-to' officers tasked with assisting the recovery of the Cairns region, and Advance Cairns is working very closely with both of these individuals. The Federal go-to person is Peter Doutre, Local Jobs Coordinator. Peter will base himself in the Advance Cairns office and will play an integral role in the Local Employment Advisory Group, established to advise the Federal Government.

The members of the Advance Cairns Board will also be utilised as a reference group for the State Government's Cairns Economic Future Strategy.

- Another plank of the New Deal Plan was a concerted push for improved trade with Papua New Guinea, riding on the back of the resources boom currently being experienced in the region. To that end, Advance Cairns has hired local consulting firm Blocky Consulting to develop and implement a PNG Trade Strategy Plan. This project is aimed at assessing the opportunities emerging in PNG and matching them with local capabilities in our region. This work will complement the trade mission activities being organised by the Cairns Chamber of Commerce.

- With the assistance of Cairns Regional Council, Advance Cairns has accessed a significant portion of Advance Cairns' Chair, Russell Beer's time to act as the single point of coordination for New Deal activities. Russell is working diligently to ensure that the region's needs remain front-of-mind with all three tiers of Government.

- Plans are underway for Advance Cairns to make another visit to both Brisbane and Canberra to continue discussions regarding the New Deal initiatives.



Green light for food tourism project

The Federal Government has given top priority to a food tourism project to be undertaken by Advance Cairns.

Kevin Rudd granted \$446,000 in TQUAL funding to the project, fast-tracking the application ahead of the first round announcements, which were announced late last year.

The project will position North Queensland as an emerging tropical agri-food tourism destination by building an alternative tourism theme for the Cairns region, based on tropical agri-food experiences. Developed with a long-term strategic approach, the project has a clearly targeted action plan to assist existing businesses to adapt, and new enterprises to emerge.

Project officer Nola Craig said the project would provide the framework for complimentary products, with funding to be used for research, developing action plans to implement the food strategy, building capacity, and developing and delivering a regional food brand and marketing strategy.



Nola Craig



New Sustainability Coordinator

Advance Cairns continues to strongly support the regions' push for triple-bottom-line-sustainability with the recruitment of a Sustainability Officer. The project officer, funded through the generosity of the former Far North Queensland Area Consultative Committee, will work with various local agencies to help coordinate sustainability activities, particularly the Sustainable TNQ group and its committee.

Advance Cairns CEO Ross Contarino announced that Daintree resident Nicky Swan has been appointed to the role. "Sydney-born Nicky has many years of experience working in the sustainability field in Europe and is keen to share that experience and expertise with the local committee," Mr Contarino said. "Not only has she worked as an environmental consultant but she also ran a company promoting environmentally innovative products. Nicky divides her time between Cairns and the Daintree, with the time spent in our world heritage region heightening her interest in alternative energy sources."

Mr Contarino said that Advance Cairns and Sustainable TNQ are keen to tap into the wealth of knowledge Nicky brings to this position. The Sustainable TNQ group has now been in existence for 15 months and is investigating a range of activities that will lead the region towards economic, environmental and social sustainability.



Nicky Swan