

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH SECTOR

COUNCIL: CAIRNS STATE ELECTORATE: CAIRNS FEDERAL ELECTORATE: LEICHHARDT

↓ THE ISSUE

Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) has a dynamic and vibrant education sector that includes two universities, six TAFE campuses, 35 secondary schools, and a number of private language and business schools. Nearly 13,000 people are employed in education and training in TNQ, accounting for 5.2% of the State education workforce and contributing \$1.1B to the economy. However, the region is shifting towards a knowledge-based economy which has implications for educators and regional training facilities. To accommodate the shift, the sector has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure in recent years, and a number of additional projects are flagged for investment.

With a strong student base now established, CQUniversity and James Cook University (JCU) are experiencing rapid growth in the Cairns region. Through collaborative partnerships, to address current gaps in education pathways the two universities are working to build capacity across a range of industries and community initiatives.

In 2017 CQUniversity released a community impact plan consisting of six primary projects. Most of the projects in the 2017 plan were

completed to varying degrees by the end of 2018, requiring the development of an updated CQUniversity 2019 Cairns Community Impact Plan which includes:

- Queensland's first comprehensive University High School (\$35 million)
- Stage 2 and 3 CQUniversity Asia Pacific Aviation Hub (\$45 million)
- Permanent new CQUniversity Cairns CBD campus (\$50 million)

Based within JCU's Division of Tropical Health and Medicine, JCU proposes to establish a Tropical Global Health Centre to produce research-enabled clinicians with extensive clinical training in population health and global public policy.

The Centre will leverage investment in the Cairns University Hospital to provide students with globally relevant training and deliver a medical workforce specifically prepared to handle regional health challenges. Although initially focused on the medical workforce, the program will subsequently expand to include nursing, dentistry, allied health, pharmacy and veterinary health professionals.

BRIEFING NOTE SUMMARY

- Tropical North Queensland has a dynamic and vibrant education sector that includes two universities, six TAFE campuses, 35 secondary schools, and a number of private language and business schools.
- Youth unemployment currently sits at 9.3% and the region faces a skills shortage in areas related to health, allied health, aviation and a number of other STEAM professions.
- To address regional skill gaps four key projects have been identified: \$35 million for Queensland's first Comprehensive University High School, \$45 million for stages 2 and 3 of CQUniversity's Asia Pacific Aviation Hub, \$50 million for a permanent new CQUniversity campus in the Cairns CBD, and \$26.7 million recurrent for Commonwealth Supported Places.

↓ BACKGROUND

The TNQ region has an estimated resident population of 278,080 and population growth of 1.1% per annum. The attainment of a university degree in Cairns is 54% lower than the national average at 14.3%, while 8.5% of residents have an Advanced Diploma or Diploma and 22.9% have a Vocational certificate, on par with the rest of the State.

Annual trend employment sits at 4.1% however over the past 12 months, most of this employment has occurred within the 25-44 year age group, leaving youth unemployment (15-24 years) at a much higher estimated

9.3%. While Cairns has two universities, access to appropriate courses and pathways into University are critical in bridging the high youth unemployment rate and encouraging young people to enter the workforce.

Nationally over the next 5 years, an additional 85,000 health workers and 28,000 educators will be needed to fill jobs in regional areas. To fill this need, the importance of regional universities cannot be overstated with more than 55% of employed regional university graduates remaining in regional areas on completion of their studies.



NEXT STEPS

In addressing youth unemployment and preparing the region’s workforce for the future, the following four projects have been identified as essential enablers.

1. To establish Queensland’s first Comprehensive University High School, Cairns State High School and CQUniversity seek \$35 million in funding. The funding will deliver new teaching facilities and university education offerings at Cairns State High School, delivering education pathways and employment pipelines at fundamental levels. As a Queensland first, the school will focus on the Sciences, Aerospace, Engineering, and Performing Arts disciplines, supporting the government’s STEAM agenda and encouraging more young people into areas of critical workforce need.
2. CQUniversity seeks \$50 million to establish a permanent, purpose-built CBD campus capable of accommodating 2,500+ students. The new, permanent campus will deliver an expanded range of training, education and research offerings that will diversify and grow the local economy and skilled workforce, while stimulating greater international student numbers in the CBD. This will cement CQUniversity’s presence in Cairns with a permanent CBD campus capable of absorbing forecast student growth, while galvanising Cairns’ identity as an agile, innovative two-university city.



3. CQUniversity seeks \$45 million for the second (\$10 million) and third (\$35 million) stages of its ambitious Asia-Pacific Aviation Hub. This funding will secure a second hanger at the Cairns International Airport, new laboratory facilities including specialist space for Aviation Accidents Forensics, new flight simulators including a high-fidelity, world class flight simulator capable of attracting global commercial flight training business, and the roll-out of new aviation courses; Bachelor of Accident Forensics, Bachelor of Airline and Airport Management, Bachelor of Airworthiness, and Aviation Masters and Research Programs.

4. To support the training and recruitment of Cairns-based clinicians, JCU requires an additional 50 Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP) and 30 international places recurrent for the JCU Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) program. This will allow JCU to offer Years 1-6 of the MBBS in Cairns and Mackay. The additional places will be distributed across the regional centres of Cairns (30), Mackay (10) and Townsville (40).

OUR RECOMMENDATION

- That the State Government invest \$35 million in 2020-2021 to action the Comprehensive University High School, with a further \$10 million in 2021-2022 for Stage 2 of the CQUniversity Asia-Pacific Aviation Hub and \$50 million in 2022-2023 for the CQUniversity CBD Campus, to collectively address skill gaps and unemployment in Tropical North Queensland.
- That the Federal Government invest \$35 million in 2022-2023 to progress Stage 3 of the CQUniversity Asia-Pacific Aviation Hub, positioning Cairns as a world-class leader in aviation training.
- That to support the training of a regional medical workforce, the Federal Government allocate an additional 50 Commonwealth Supported Places and 30 International places recurrent, together with an allocation of Destination Australia scholarships to JCU’s School of Medicine and Dentistry

ESTIMATED PROJECT COST \$130M	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	
	University High School	Asia-Pacific Aviation Hub	CQUniversity CBD Campus	Asia-Pacific Aviation Hub
Recommended State Investment	\$35m	\$10m	\$50m	
Recommended Federal Investment	-	-	-	\$35m