



Cassowary Coast
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Advocacy Plan 2025-2026





Acknowledgement of Country

Cassowary Coast Regional Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and sea on which we operate, the Mamu, Djiru, Girramay, Gulgnay, Warrgamay, Jirrbal and Bandjin Peoples. We wish to acknowledge our respect for their current and emerging leaders and those in the dreaming. We thank all First Nations people for the contributions they make in building this community.





Advocacy Plan 2025-2026

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

Cassowary Coast: The most liveable tropical Community	4
Advocacy objectives	5
Port of Mourilyan expansion	6
Skills and training – Grow Our Own (<i>Skilling Queenslanders for Work First Start</i>)	7
Implementation of the Reef 2050 <i>Long Term Sustainability Plan</i>	8
River Improvement Trust support in Cassowary Coast	9
Funding for a disaster and evacuation centre in Cardwell	10
Investment in water and sewerage infrastructure networks	11
Funding to support recycling programs and waste harmonisation	12
Cyclone reinsurance pool	13
Light rail from Cairns to Cardwell – feasibility funding	14
Additional high priorities	15
Appendix 1: About Advocacy	16

Cassowary Coast:

The most liveable tropical community

Cassowary Coast Regional Council (CCRC) is committed to enhancing the quality of life for our communities, supporting sustainable economic growth, and protecting our unique natural environment. This Advocacy Plan outlines the Council's priorities and strategic approach for 2025–26 to influence state and federal government policy, secure funding, and strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders.

The plan ensures CCRC's advocacy is coordinated, evidence-based, and aligned with community expectations and Council's strategic objectives. Through targeted advocacy, the Council aims to deliver tangible outcomes that improve infrastructure, environmental protection, economic development, disaster resilience, and social services.

The Cassowary Coast region faces a unique combination of opportunities and challenges:

- **Economic growth and tourism:** Expansion of tourism and support for local businesses are essential for regional prosperity.
- **Climate resilience and disaster recovery:** The region is prone to cyclones, flooding, and extreme weather events, highlighting the need for proactive infrastructure and planning.
- **Infrastructure needs:** Roads, transport, water, digital connectivity, and community facilities require targeted investment.
- **Social services:** Housing, health, youth engagement, and aged care services need ongoing support to meet growing community demands.
- **Environmental protection:** Unique ecosystems, including the Great Barrier Reef and coastal wetlands, require strong environmental stewardship aligned with the *Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan*.



Advocacy objectives

CCRC will be advocating for the following outcomes in 2025–26:

1

Secure funding for critical infrastructure to support safe, resilient, and connected communities.

2

Strengthen disaster preparedness and recovery capacity, ensuring timely and effective support for communities impacted by extreme weather.

3

Enhance community services, particularly housing, health, and youth programs, to improve social outcomes.

4

Promote sustainable economic development and support tourism, agriculture, and local business initiatives.

5

Protect natural assets, ensuring long-term environmental sustainability and alignment with the *Reef 2050 Plan*.

Port of Mourilyan expansion

The Port of Mourilyan is a critical economic gateway for the Cassowary Coast region, supporting the sugar, agriculture, and timber industries. Expansion of the port infrastructure will enhance freight efficiency, attract new investment, and improve regional competitiveness.

Councils advocates for state and federal funding to support the deepening of the port channel, the upgrade of berthing facilities, and improved road and rail connections to ensure safe, efficient transport of goods.

Investment in the port aligns with broader regional economic development strategies, supporting local jobs, boosting export capacity, and providing long-term economic sustainability for the Cassowary Coast.

The Cassowary Coast is seeking:

- Funding aligned with \$8 million over five years for port channel deepening, berth upgrades, and improved road and rail connections to enhance freight efficiency.
- Funding of \$15 million over five years to deliver critical infrastructure upgrades at the Port of Mourilyan, including wharf extensions, storage and handling improvements, and landside access works, to enhance export capacity, support regional industry growth, and supporting the *Ports North Two-Port Master Plan* for long-term economic sustainability.
- Recognition of the Port's strategic economic role and alignment with regional development plans.
- Support for community and industry consultation to ensure expansion meets local economic and environmental priorities.



Skills and training – Grow Our Own (*Skilling Queenslanders for Work First Start*)

A skilled local workforce is essential for regional development. Council seeks increased funding and support for programs that grow local skills, particularly initiatives like Skilling Queenslanders for Work First Start. These programs provide training, work experience, and pathways into employment for residents, including youth, Indigenous community members, and other disadvantaged groups.

Targeted investment will enhance workforce participation, reduce skills gaps, and ensure that local industries – including agriculture, tourism, construction, and health services – have access to a reliable and capable workforce.

The Cassowary Coast is seeking:

- Increased and ongoing commitment to funding over the next four years to expand local skills programs, apprenticeships, and First Start initiatives.
- Recognition of local industries' needs to ensure training programs align with employment opportunities.
- Support for partnerships with local schools, training providers, and employers to maximise workforce participation.



Implementation of the *Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan (Reef 2050 Plan)*

The *Reef 2050 Plan* provides a roadmap for protecting and enhancing the Great Barrier Reef's ecological and economic values.

Council advocates for continued investment in water quality initiatives, coastal habitat restoration, and monitoring programs within the region. Key focus areas include reducing agricultural run-off, enhancing mangrove and wetland ecosystems, and supporting community-led stewardship projects.

Implementation funding will enable the Cassowary Coast to meet *Reef 2050 Plan* targets, safeguard biodiversity, and strengthen climate resilience, while also supporting tourism and sustainable industry growth in alignment with state and federal environmental priorities.

The Cassowary Coast is seeking:

- Continued investment in the range of \$6 million over five years for water quality initiatives, mangrove and wetland restoration, and monitoring programs.
- Alignment of funding with *Reef 2050 Plan* targets and local community-led projects.
- Simplified grant and reporting processes to enable timely implementation of *Reef 2050 Plan* actions.



River Improvement Trust support in Cassowary Coast

River systems in the Cassowary Coast region are vital for agriculture, biodiversity, and community resilience.

Council seeks ongoing support and funding for river improvement trust programs to improve water quality, manage sediment run-off, and protect riparian ecosystems.

Strengthened River Trust partnerships will enable local projects, including riverbank restoration, community engagement initiatives, and sustainable land management practices.

Support for these programs ensures compliance with environmental standards, protects the Great Barrier Reef catchment, and secures the health of freshwater systems that underpin regional livelihoods and tourism.

The Cassowary Coast is seeking:

- A shift from reactive repairs to proactive, preventative waterway maintenance supported by fair and efficient funding allocation from the relevant River Trust.
- Recognition and support for growers, peak bodies, and the River Trust as essential partners in delivering sustainable, long-term waterway solutions.
- Streamlined funding processes to maximise impact and enable more efficient preventative works.



Funding for a disaster and evacuation centre in Cardwell

Given the region's vulnerability to cyclones, flooding, and extreme weather events, CCRC advocates for dedicated funding for a disaster and evacuation centre in Cardwell. The centre would provide safe shelter, emergency coordination, and community support during disasters, reducing risk to life and property.

Investment would also strengthen local emergency response capacity, provide training facilities for volunteers and staff, and ensure resilience planning is embedded in regional development.

A state-of-the-art centre would enhance community confidence and preparedness across the Cassowary Coast.

The Cassowary Coast is seeking:

- \$50 million funding within four years for a purpose-built disaster and evacuation centre to enhance safety and emergency response in the southern region of the Shire.
- Recognition of the centre's role in community preparedness, training, and volunteer coordination.
- Support for operational resourcing to ensure long-term sustainability and functionality.



Investment in water and sewerage infrastructure networks

Water and sewerage infrastructure is vital for community health, environmental protection, and economic growth.

Council seeks investment in the northern parts of the region to upgrade ageing networks, expand capacity, and support growth in residential, agricultural, and tourism sectors. Funding would improve water security, reduce environmental impacts, and ensure compliance with health and environmental standards.

Investment in modern, resilient infrastructure supports population growth, industrial expansion, and climate-adaptive planning.

The Cassowary Coast is seeking:

- \$14 million over five years to upgrade and expand water and sewerage networks across northern Cassowary Coast, prioritising preventative maintenance and climate-resilient infrastructure, and supporting cost-sharing arrangements to ensure network sustainability and enable the Council to proactively meet growing demand and future-proof essential services.
- Prioritisation of preventative maintenance and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Support for cost-sharing arrangements and efficient funding allocation to ensure network sustainability.



Funding to support recycling programs and waste harmonisation

Council is committed to improving waste management, recycling rates, and environmental outcomes.

CCRC seeks funding to expand existing recycling programs and harmonise waste management practices across the region. Harmonisation ensures efficiency, reduces contamination, and increases resource recovery. Enhanced recycling and waste programs support sustainability goals, protect natural environments, and strengthen the circular economy in the Cassowary Coast.

Investment would enable better community education, upgraded collection infrastructure, and improved processing facilities.

The Cassowary Coast is seeking:

- \$4.5 million over four years to expand recycling programs and harmonise waste management across the Cassowary Coast, including upgraded collection infrastructure, improved processing facilities, and community education initiatives, to support sustainable waste outcomes and strengthen local government and community capacity.
- Recognition of local government and community roles in delivering sustainable waste outcomes.
- Resourced support for community education, upgraded collection infrastructure, and improved processing facilities.



Cyclone reinsurance pool

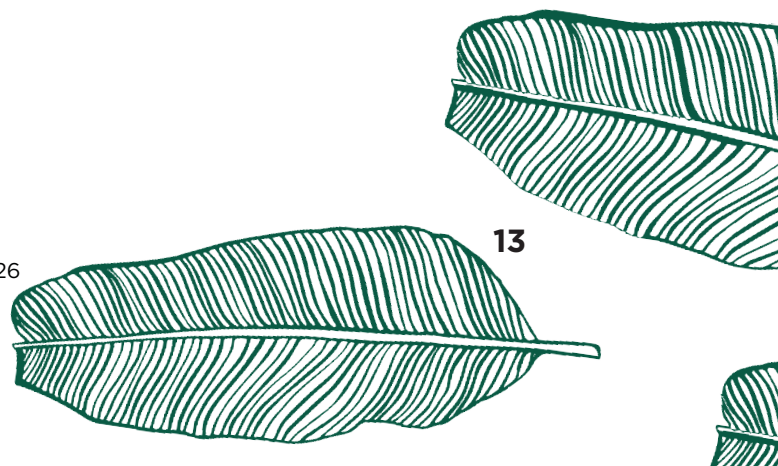
To mitigate financial risks from severe weather events, Council supports the establishment and funding of a cyclone reinsurance pool. This mechanism spreads risk across participating councils and levels of government, providing certainty and reducing the financial burden of disaster recovery.

Access to a reinsurance pool ensures that Council can respond quickly to post-disaster needs, maintain essential services, and safeguard infrastructure, while improving long-term financial sustainability and resilience planning for the region.

Investment would enable better community education, upgraded collection infrastructure, and improved processing facilities.

The Cassowary Coast is seeking:

- Inclusion in and co-funding support for participation in the Australian Government's Cyclone Reinsurance Pool, with the Queensland Government contributing to initial premium offsets or administrative costs for councils in high-risk regions.
- State and federal recognition of the unique financial pressures faced by small coastal councils, ensuring equitable access to risk-sharing mechanisms that strengthen disaster recovery capacity.
- Establishment of a streamlined process through the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) and Australian Reinsurance Pool Corporation (ARPC) to enable councils to access pooled insurance data, claims support, and post-disaster recovery funding quickly following severe weather events.



Light rail from Cairns to Cardwell – feasibility funding

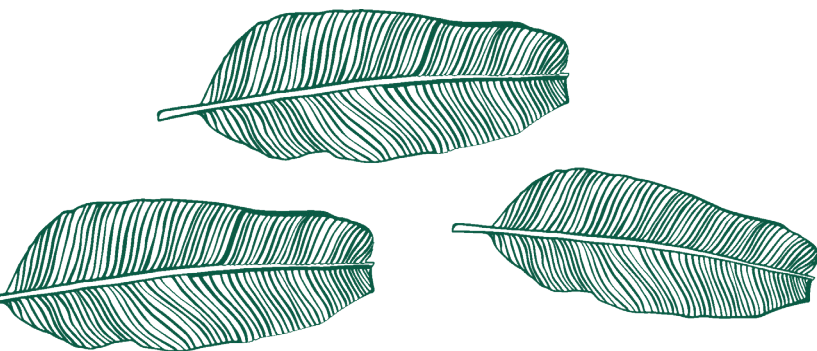
Transport connectivity between Cairns and Cardwell is critical for regional growth, tourism, and access to services.

Council advocates for funding to support feasibility studies for a light rail connection. Such a project would reduce travel times, improve access to employment and education, enhance tourism opportunities, and provide sustainable transport options.

Feasibility funding would examine engineering, environmental, economic, and social factors, enabling evidence-based decision-making for future transport investment in the region.

The Cassowary Coast is seeking:

- \$2.5 million over two years to undertake a feasibility study for a light rail connection between Cairns and Cardwell, assessing engineering, environmental, social, and economic factors to inform future investment in sustainable regional transport, improve connectivity for employment and tourism, and support long-term growth across Far North Queensland.
- Recognition of the potential benefits for regional employment, tourism, and sustainable transport.
- Support for collaborative planning with state agencies and stakeholders to ensure evidence-based outcomes.



Additional high priorities

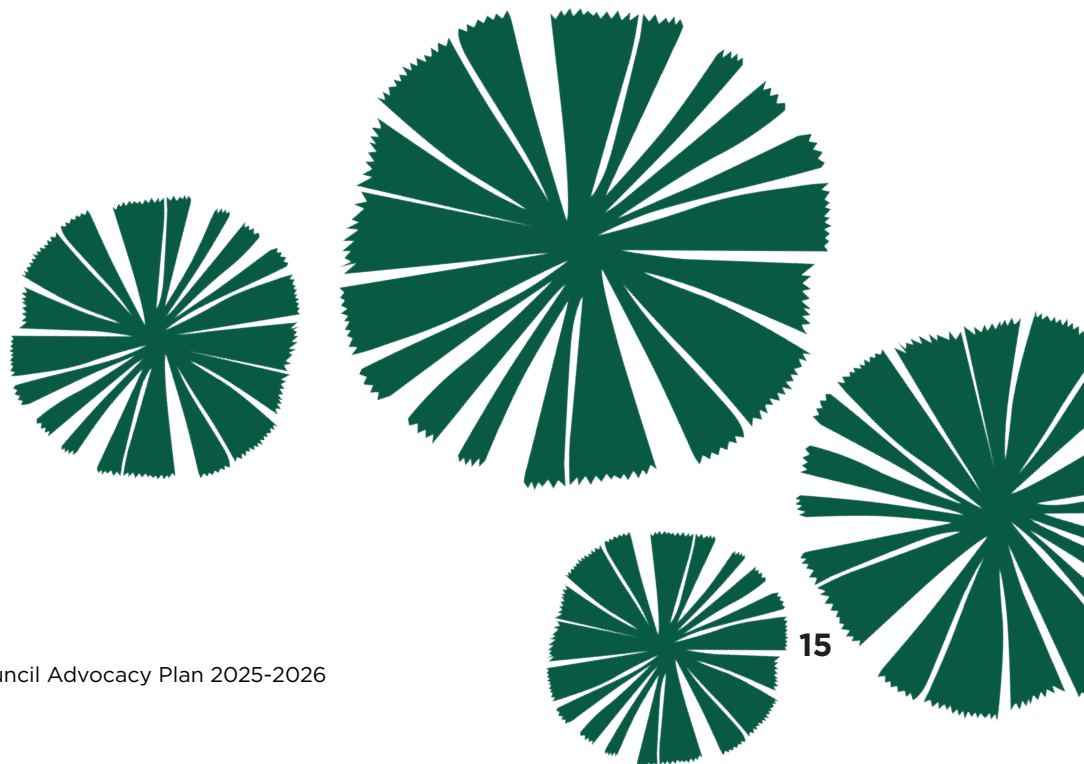
Continued financial support for feral pig control programs in the region.

Increased on the ground community and safety support for the PALM (Pacific Australia Labour Mobility) Scheme, reflective of triple the FTE which is currently funded.

Funding to enhance digital connectivity and regional telecommunications, especially supporting the aging population.

State-level support of \$250,000 is sought to enable Far North Queensland councils to research and address current and future early childhood and youth needs through tailored, community-led solutions.

Place-based housing solutions prioritise multi-generational, kinship and large-family homes to meet the Cassowary Coast's diverse community needs.



Appendix 1: About Advocacy

Cassowary Coast Regional Council – Advocacy Summary

Cassowary Coast Regional Council's advocacy bridges the gap between community needs and higher levels of government. Through strong governance, planning, and community engagement, Council ensures that regional priorities are recognised and supported at state and federal levels, strengthening community wellbeing and sustainability.

1. Roles of Government

Council's advocacy aligns with the distinct roles of each tier of government:

Federal Government – Responsible for national infrastructure, health and social services (e.g. Medicare), defence and security, and economic management. Federal policies and funding indirectly shape local economies and services.

State Government – Oversees education, healthcare, transport, housing, policing, and justice. Councils collaborate with state agencies to advocate for improved facilities, infrastructure, and community safety.

Local Government – Manages essential services (waste, water, local roads), community spaces (libraries, parks), and local laws. Most importantly, councils act as the community's voice—advocating for local priorities to state and federal partners.

2. Governance and Planning Framework

Council's advocacy is guided by integrated strategic and financial frameworks:

- **5-Year Integrated Corporate and Strategic Plan** – Defines long-term community goals.
- **Annual Operational Plan** – Outlines yearly actions and projects.
- **Long-Term Financial and Asset Management Plans** – Ensure sustainable management of infrastructure and services.
- **Risk Management Framework** – Identifies and manages risks to council operations.
- **Operational and Capital Budgets** – Allocate funding for day-to-day services and long-term projects.

3. Legislation and Compliance

Council operates within a comprehensive legal environment that underpins its advocacy and governance responsibilities. Key frameworks include the **Local Government Act and Regulation**, the **Sustainability Framework**, and numerous legislative obligations such as the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*, *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, *Human Rights Act 2009*, and *Native Title Act 1993*.

4. Community Engagement

Effective advocacy depends on listening to the community.

- **Community Scorecards and Surveys** provide feedback on local issues and council performance.
- **Public Consultation Platforms (e.g., YourSay)** invite residents to participate in decision-making.
- **Councillors and Customer Service** act as the direct link between residents and council operations, helping shape advocacy priorities.

5. Advocacy in Practice

Council's advocacy seeks to influence policy, funding, and partnerships that benefit the region.

- **Influencing Policy and Funding:** Presenting evidence-based cases to state and federal governments for investment and legislative change.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborating with LGAQ, FNQROC, RDA Tropical North, Advance Cairns, TTNQ, and Reef Guardian Councils to amplify regional voices.
- **Local Impact:** Ensuring higher-level legislation and strategies reflect local conditions rather than imposing one-size-fits-all solutions.

Examples:

- Securing grants for infrastructure projects such as sewerage upgrades and lighting replacements (e.g., Eaton Estate Housing Development).
- Advocating for regulatory flexibility where local needs differ from state standards.
- Using community engagement data, including Council's biannual Community Scorecard, to support funding bids and policy change.

Figure 1: Local Government Advocacy in Action







-  1300 763 903
-  enquiries@cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au
-  cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au
-  70 Rankin Street, Innisfail
38-40 Bryant Street, Tully
4 Balliol Street, Cardwell