

# REGIONAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY 2024

North West Queensland  
(including the corridor to Townsville)



Queensland  
Government



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

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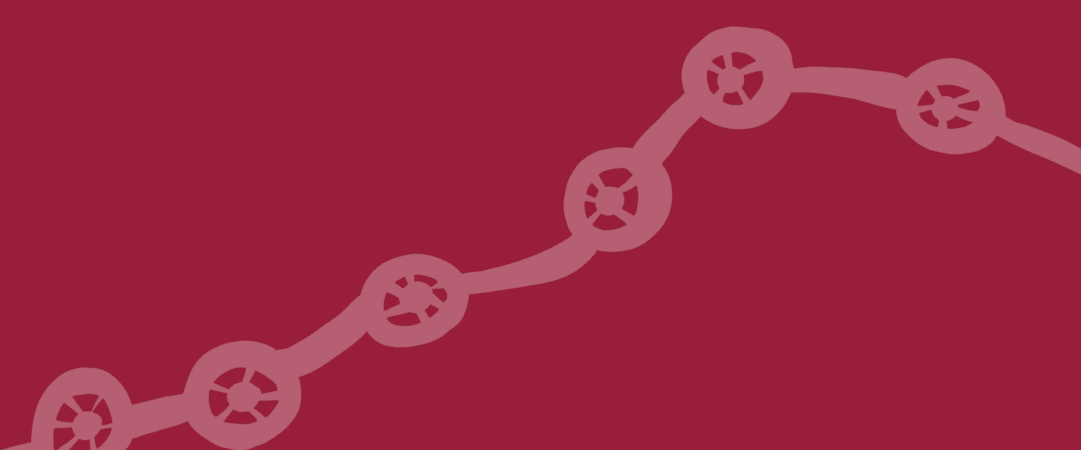
The Department of State Development and Infrastructure (DSDI) acknowledges the Country and people of Queensland's First Nations. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the continuous living culture of First Nations Queenslanders – their diverse languages, customs and traditions, knowledges and systems. We acknowledge the deep relationship, connection and responsibility to land, sea, sky and Country as an integral element of First Nations identity and culture.

This Country is sacred. Everything on the land has meaning and all people are one with it. We acknowledge First Nations peoples' sacred connection as central to culture and being.

We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of First Nations peoples and commit to shaping our state's future together. DSDI recognises the contribution of First Nations peoples and communities to the State of Queensland and how this continues to enrich our society more broadly.

The transformation priorities for the region have been developed in close consultation with the community and are intended for the benefit of all people in the region.









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# CONTENTS

Foreword	5
The importance of transformation in regional Queensland	8
About the North West Queensland region	18
Transforming the North West Queensland region	31

# FOREWORD

The global economy is undergoing a historic shift from carbon-intensive industries to a cleaner, decarbonised economy. As the impacts of climate change become increasingly evident, governments and investors around the world are transforming their economies at an unprecedented scale. This is changing how economies source their energy, where investors allocate capital, and the products customers buy.

The Queensland Government is committed to working with industry, local governments and the regions to harness opportunities that this transformation presents.

**The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan** (released in 2022) outlines the Queensland Government's plans to transform Queensland's energy system to deliver clean, reliable and affordable power and achieve 80 per cent renewable energy by 2035. The Plan also targets the Queensland Government's plans to reduce emissions to 75 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025.

**The Queensland New-Industry Development Strategy** (released in 2023) identifies the key industries where Queensland is likely to have a competitive advantage in a decarbonised global economy.

**The Regional Transformation Strategies** build on these state-wide initiatives to identify specific opportunities for four regions – North West Queensland (including the corridor to Townsville), Greater Whitsunday, Central Queensland, and Darling Downs, South West and the South Burnett.

These regions are home to traditional, primary industries that today are a significant source of economic activity and jobs. However, they also have unique opportunities to support new industries like critical minerals, renewable energy, and low-carbon fuels such as hydrogen and biofuels, which will thrive in a decarbonised global economy.

The North West Queensland (including the corridor to Townsville) Regional Transformation Strategy (RTS) aims to build on the unique strengths and advantages of the region to support its long-term transformation. Harnessing the region's world-class natural assets and agriculture industry, and emerging renewable energy industry, the strategy identifies key opportunities for jobs and investment growth in a low-emissions

economy. These include diversified, value-added agriculture, including First Nations-led opportunities, growth in solar and wind energy, additional minerals (including critical minerals) exploration, supply chain decarbonisation and tourism opportunities. Some of these specifically harness opportunities associated with decarbonisation; others provide diversification opportunities as the region transitions over time from carbon-intensive industries.

The RTS sets-out specific priorities in relation to these industries to support their further development. It aims to ensure the North West Queensland region has a strong future in a low-carbon economy, with a resilient economy, sustainable industries and thriving communities.

These priorities build on the significant investment already underway in the region, including \$5 billion to deliver CopperString 2032 project and over \$129 million in 2024-25 under the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program.

The RTS details the range of support currently available to the regions to support the transition. This includes \$200 million under the Regional Economic Futures Fund to support specific regional transition and the \$415.5 million Industry Partnership Program.

The objectives and priorities that underpin this RTS have been developed in partnership with local government, industry and the wider community.

As implementation occurs the Queensland Government will continue to consult and partner with communities in the region.

The region has a strong, vibrant future – and the Queensland Government is committed to supporting its transformation towards a world-class, low-carbon economy.

## QUEENSLAND REGIONAL TRANSFORMATION OBJECTIVES

Resilient regions with diversified, value-adding industries and a highly skilled workforce

Sustainable regions with innovative industries that lead the way in a net zero economy

Thriving, liveable and inclusive regions that attract and retain people, businesses and investment

### North West Queensland Priorities



#### Clean and sustainable energy

Sufficient transport network capacity throughout the North West Queensland region, including road, rail, air and ports, to facilitate the movement of renewable energy infrastructure

Identify appropriate sites and projects through North West Queensland local governments' collaboration to promote the region as an emerging renewable energy hub and attract investment in renewable energy generation

Growth in firm solar and wind energy supply in the region to support investment in clean-powered regional manufacturing and minerals processing

North West Queensland regional businesses and the local workforce have an active role in the renewable energy supply chain, including servicing, maintenance and recycling of assets

Develop energy storage manufacturing in Queensland using minerals from the North West Queensland region



#### Agriculture diversification

A unified approach to the collection, allocation and storage of water across the North West Queensland region to provide greater investment certainty for producers

Firm renewable power supply to support more sustainable intensive agriculture, such as cotton gins

Enhanced research and planning around opportunities for new high-value crops within the region

Leverage North West Queensland's locational advantage between the east coast and northern ports to capture more value from the agricultural supply chain



#### Minerals production and processing

Adequate and reliable common user infrastructure, particularly energy and water, at processing precincts to facilitate investment attraction

Resilient and price competitive transport supply chain to encourage on-site processing and manufacturing of minerals

Long-term, reliable supply of acid and other key inputs required in the processing of minerals

Industry-leading education, training, collaboration and up-skilling in critical minerals mining and processing in the region to attract and retain skilled labour in North West Queensland

Resource recovery and recycling of waste materials from minerals processing to optimise the sustainability of mining in the region

Partnerships with industry and higher education providers to encourage research and development (R&D) into minerals produced in North West Queensland

Promote additional exploration activities through supportive state government incentives and mechanisms

Investigation of future opportunities to continue the use of existing industrial assets where these can be used to support new industries and/or for common use



## North West Queensland Priorities (continued)



### Sustainable supply chains

Increased rail freight mode share between Mount Isa and Townsville through resilient, accessible and price-competitive rail infrastructure

Increased uptake of electric and/or hydrogen powered road and rail freight to decarbonise the transport industry

A lower carbon regional freight network for the North West Queensland region through innovation and skills training

Support research and investment into biofuels production in the North West Queensland region, particularly through the use of agricultural by-products



### Tourism opportunities

Increase First Nations tourism experiences across the North West Queensland region to ensure the industry is positioned as a differentiated and growing economic contributor

Growth in education-based tourism around attractions that are anchored in the culture and identity of communities within the North West Queensland region

Increased marketing of the North West Queensland region to tourists in order to increase visitor numbers, provide a direct boost to local economies and encourage investment in the industry

Enhanced capability across the North West Queensland region for agri-tourism, paleo-tourism and outback tourism experiences



*View of Mount Isa*

# THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSFORMATION IN REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

## Why transformation matters

As Australia and nations around the world prioritise the decarbonisation of their economies, regional Queensland has an important role to play in the future industries that will underpin a low-emissions global economy. Adapting to that global shift and harnessing regional Queensland's distinctive strengths is key to ensuring that our state is globally competitive and home to vibrant regional communities that continue to prosper.

The North West Queensland region has vast reserves of the critical minerals needed to support low-carbon industries, abundant natural assets and land resources suitable for sustainable agriculture and renewable energy generation and expertise in world-leading industries, such as mining.

Transformation relies on continued investment in economic and social enablers, such as diverse housing, water, energy, health, education and transport infrastructure, a skilled workforce and digital connectivity.

Transforming the North West Queensland region around the key industries of mining, agriculture, renewable energy and tourism will require working across government and with local governments

and the community to have the right land use and infrastructure in place. Of particular importance to the region is the protection of land for its best use. In some circumstances, multiple land uses can be navigated to achieve sustainable coexistence. Other times, competing land use must be assessed to ensure any identified adverse impacts are appropriately avoided, minimised or mitigated, to support and strengthen the region's ongoing competitive advantage.

Over time the region's economy will change. Regions with diverse economies with numerous strong industries are expected to better manage the impacts of potential changes. The recent announcement that Glencore is downsizing and new mega projects like CopperString 2032 will impact the regional economy in different ways.

That is why the RTS is designed to align with other Queensland Government policies as well as federal and local government policies as outlined in Figure 1 (page 9).

Queensland's agricultural, forestry and fishing, mining and manufacturing industries contributed



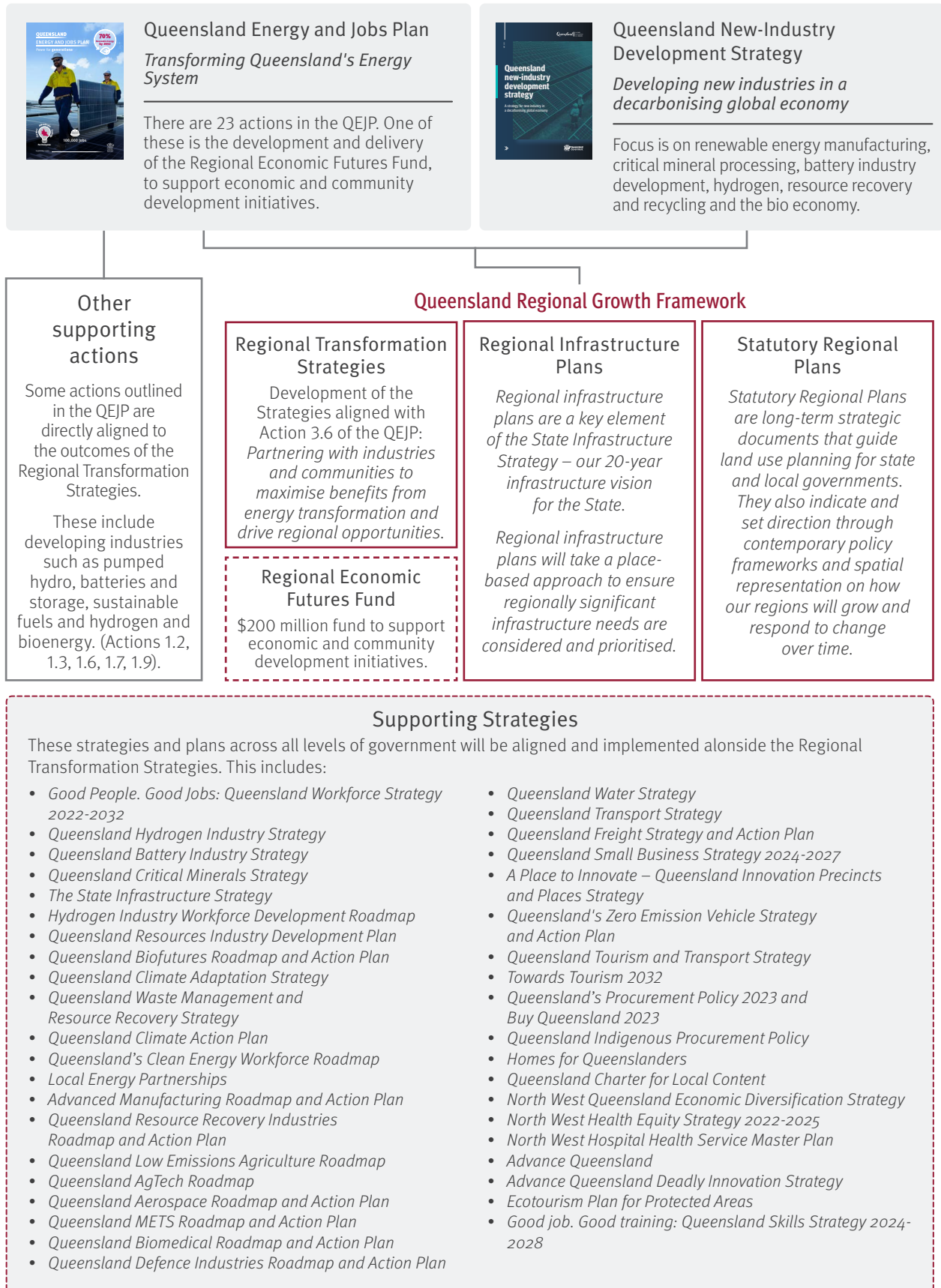
### Notes

<sup>1</sup> As of 2022, Data sourced from REMPLAN, 2018-2022, Release 1.



Figure 1: Queensland regional transformation policy context.

## AUSTRALIA AND QUEENSLAND'S TARGETS: NET ZERO EMISSIONS BY 2050



# Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan and the Queensland New-Industry Development Strategy

The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan (QEJP) outlines how Queensland's energy system will transform to deliver clean, reliable and affordable energy for Queenslanders. It outlines key renewable energy targets and actions for Queensland, including:

- a new renewable energy target of 70 per cent by 2032 and 80 per cent by 2035.
- a commitment to convert all of Queensland's publicly owned coal-fired power stations into clean energy hubs by 2035, backed by a Job Security Guarantee for workers.
- substantial investment across the state, with 95 per cent of clean energy infrastructure investment anticipated to be in regional Queensland.

The QEJP will harness Queensland's existing natural resources and skilled workforce to transform the state's electricity system and deliver clean, reliable and affordable power to Queensland's energy system. This will include around 25 gigawatts (GW) of large-scale wind and solar, foundation pumped hydro assets plus additional storage and firming technologies and new transmission.

## Queensland's natural advantages in renewables

Queensland has natural advantages in its high-quality renewable resources, including:

- **Solar** – Queensland has abundant solar resources and is well positioned for large scale solar generation, particularly in areas located near existing network infrastructure and major population centres.
- **Wind** – Queensland has high quality and nationally competitive wind resources, underpinned by recent improvements in wind turbine technology.
- **Biomass** – Queensland's strong agricultural industry generates substantial amounts of biomass. Using biomass to generate bioenergy (green electricity) and sustainable liquid fuels could contribute significantly to Queensland's renewable energy capacity.
- **Hydro-electricity** – There is significant potential to expand and build upon Queensland's opportunities.



*Solar farm, regional Queensland*

### Other focus areas of the QEJP that will assist with regional transformation

These RTS are one action of the QEJP (Action 3.6 – partner with industries and communities to maximise benefits from the energy transformation and drive regional opportunities). Other actions under the QEJP that will help facilitate regional transformation include:

- Developing industries and technology such as pumped hydro (Action 1.2), batteries and storage (Action 1.3), future renewable hydrogen (Action 1.6), sustainable liquid fuels (Action 1.7) and bioenergy futures (Action 1.9)
- Continuing to support the Uniform Tariff Policy, ensuring regional Queenslanders can access affordable energy (Action 2.7)
- Implementing a \$150 million Job Security Guarantee to support affected energy workers in Queensland’s publicly owned coal-fired power stations and associated coal mines (i.e., Kogan Creek and Meandu mines) (Action 3.2)
- Delivery of Queensland’s Clean Energy Workforce Roadmap, which was released on 25 October 2023, and \$192 million for Powerlink to develop Transition and Training Hubs in Townsville and Gladstone (Action 3.3)
- Committing \$11.6 million to build capacity in the manufacturing industry and encourage local content in Queensland to grow the renewable energy supply chain in Queensland (Action 3.4)
- \$10 million to deliver a Queensland Microgrid Pilot Fund to support network resilience for First Nations communities and ensure an inclusive SuperGrid (Action 3.5).

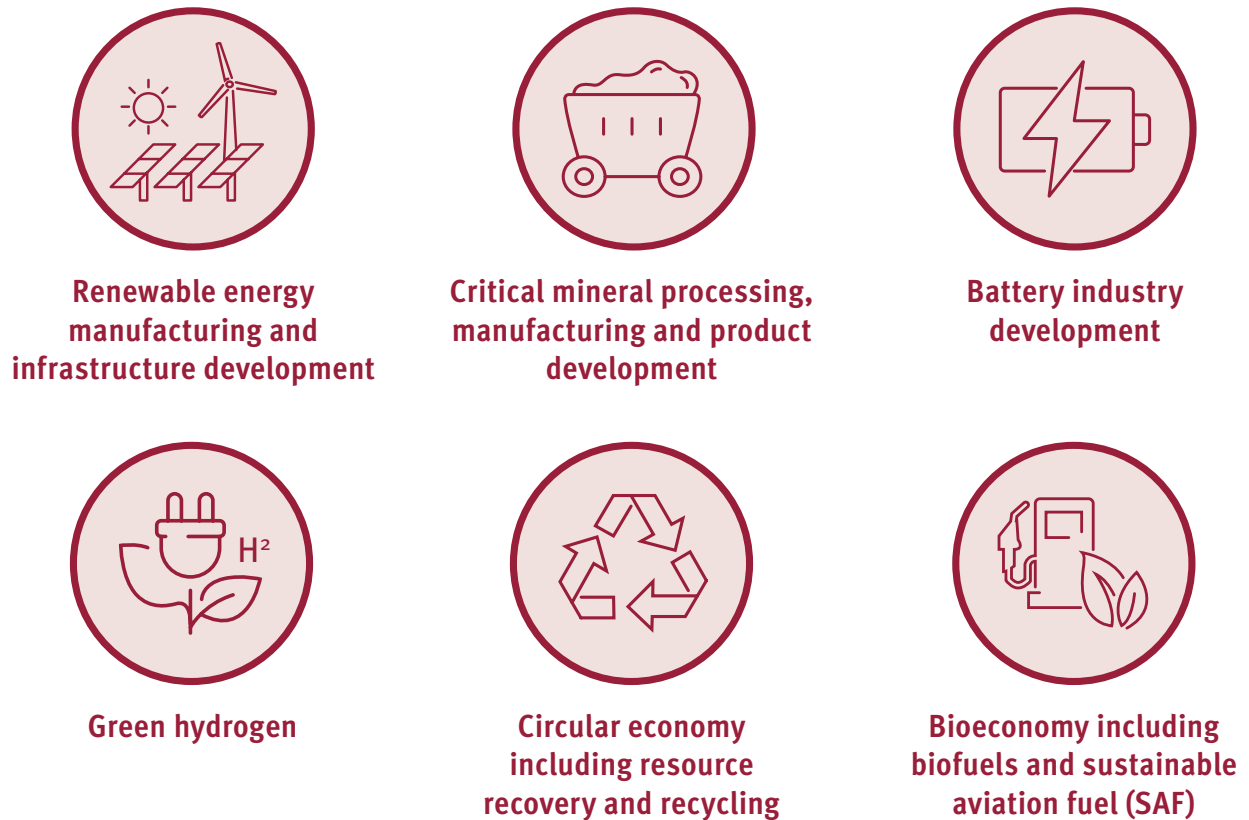
The Queensland New-Industry Development Strategy (QNIDS) sets out the Queensland Government’s approach to proactively develop the industries that are critical to the global shift to a net zero economy. QNIDS outlines the impact of decarbonisation in reshaping commodity demand, and opportunities for Queensland to capitalise on manufacturing opportunities to build the infrastructure and products required to transition towards renewable energy sources. The six key industries identified by QNIDS are outlined in Figure 2 (page 12).



Flow battery, National Battery Testing Facility



Figure 2: QNIDS industry priorities



## The Regional Economic Futures Fund (REFF)

The REFF is a \$200 million program to support communities, which will be directly impacted by the transition to a low-emission economy, to seize industry development opportunities presented by global decarbonisation.

The objectives of the REFF are to support long-term community prosperity by facilitating sustainable employment and increasing investment in economic development and diversification projects. The REFF supports activities which:

- create new jobs and a stronger workforce,
- strengthen regional supply chains,
- support decarbonisation and the QEJP,
- build or identify a region's strengths, and/or
- support renewable energy precinct development.

The REFF is a component of the QEJP and QNIDS. The RTS provides a coordinated approach to delivering state government programs, including REFF.

### How does the RTS align to these priorities?

The RTS identifies key economic strengths and future industry priorities for those Queensland regions likely to be most impacted by the shift to a decarbonised global economy, based on the unique geography, resources and workforce skills of these regions. This will enable these regions to have a targeted and place-based approach in line with the statewide strategic priorities outlined in the QNIDS, and the renewable energy targets outlined in the QEJP. The industry priorities in the RTS have been developed to align with both existing strengths and several of the industries identified in both QNIDS and QEJP.



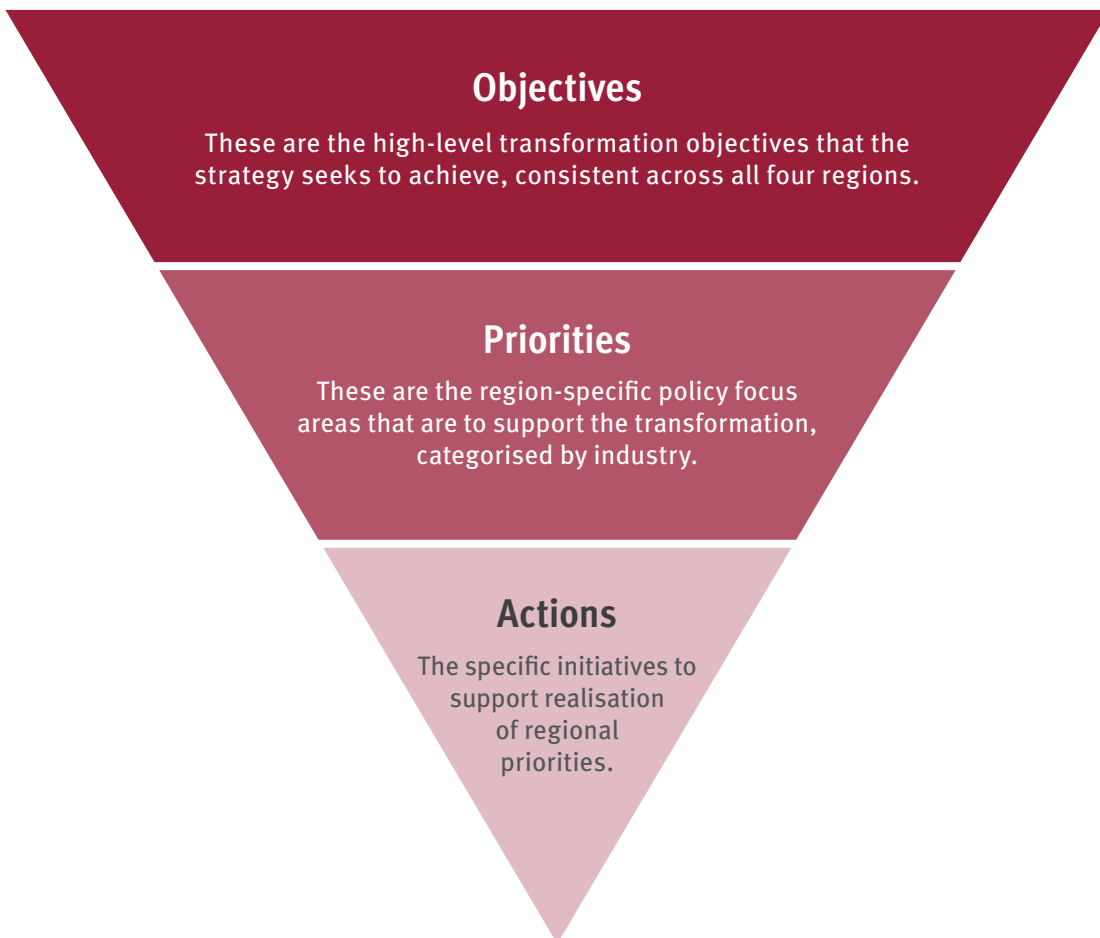
# Framework for the Regional Transformation Strategies

The development of the RTS is based on a practical, outcome-based framework and provides a clear link between the strategic opportunities of each region and future actions and outcomes. It has been underpinned by extensive community and industry consultation. Their input is fundamental to these strategies, which have been developed with a 10–20 year horizon, acknowledging that advancing global decarbonisation and energy transition in the regions during this period will be critical to meeting the Queensland Government’s renewable energy target of 70 per cent by 2032, and 80 per cent by 2035.

## The approach to the Regional Transformation Strategies

The strategy framework outlines how the overarching transformation objectives for regional Queensland are supported by region-specific priorities and targeted actions. The overarching objectives provide a long-term vision for all of Queensland’s regions that are the focus of transformation. They recognise the important relationship between sustainable, resilient and prosperous economies and thriving, liveable and inclusive communities.

Figure 3: Regional Transformation Strategy Framework



## The objectives for regional transformation

Through close consultation with communities, a vision for regional Queensland has been developed that is encapsulated in three objectives.

Figure 4: Queensland Regional Transformational Objectives

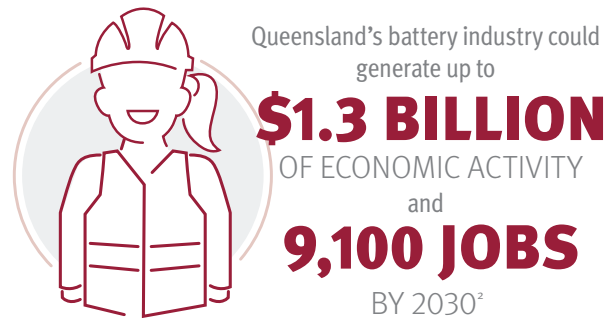


### OBJECTIVE 1: Resilient regions with diversified, value-adding industries and a highly skilled workforce

The future of regional Queensland is one of resilient communities, underpinned by a diverse economy, value-adding industries and a highly-skilled workforce. In this context resilience means being ready to harness the opportunities of a decarbonised global economy. It is this proactive approach that will underpin the long-term future of our regions – a future with competitive industries and well-paid, highly-skilled jobs and a lifestyle to match.

Traditional industries, such as mining and agriculture, have and continue to underpin the economic prosperity of regional Queensland. They provide well-paid jobs for communities and produce high-quality exports for domestic and global markets. These industries are making significant investments to reduce their carbon footprint, and they will continue to play an important role in the Queensland economy.

While demand in these industries will continue for some time to come, and low-emissions producers will have a critical role in a transformed economy, the long-term economic resilience of our regions will depend upon having a range of industries. This will better insulate our economy against changes in global commodity prices, reducing the risk of ‘boom and bust’ economic cycles.



Value-adding industries will have a key role in our resilient regional economies, by helping to capitalise on our strong resource base while also providing well-paid jobs for communities. A shift to boosting sovereign processing and manufacturing capability in a more uncertain world is adding to the case for ‘moving up the value chain’ in areas where our regions will be competitive. A mix of primary and other industries will provide regional communities with highly skilled jobs, helping to attract and retain both people and investment.

#### What does this mean for the North West Queensland region?

- An economy that continues to be underpinned by a world-leading resources industry, expanding into the critical minerals required for transition, but also harnessing this advantage to generate new, value-added products in sustainable ways.
- Strengthening existing industries, such as agriculture, through value-adding, diversification and climate resilience, enabled by AgTech development and adoptions and locally relevant research, development and extension (RD&E).
- Capitalising on the transition to renewable energy by building generation capability in wind and solar and battery power.

#### Notes

<sup>2</sup> Accenture (2023, January 17). Battery industry opportunities for Queensland.

## OBJECTIVE 2: Sustainable regions with innovative industries that lead the way in a net zero economy

The future vision for regional Queensland is one underpinned by sustainable and innovative industries that will lead the way in a net zero economy. By leveraging existing economic strengths and natural endowments, each region can be well positioned to meet growing demand for sustainable products. This will involve both the decarbonisation of existing industries and the emergence of new, clean energy industries.

The QNIDS outlines the government's approach to proactively developing the industries that will be in demand in a decarbonising world. At the same time, we are transforming our energy system.

With a highly skilled workforce, critical mineral deposits and abundant natural resources, Queensland's regions will be at the forefront of these strategic initiatives. This means the regions being underpinned by clean industries will be competitive in a world where supply chains and trade agreements place a growing emphasis on low emissions. Existing industries, such as manufacturing, resources, agriculture, transport and tourism, will play a key role in this. Businesses in these industries are already leading the way in reducing emissions. Innovative future industries will have an increasingly key role in our regions. A more circular approach to consumption and production will be prioritised, where we are recycling, re-manufacturing, re-designing and re-using products and materials at their highest value for as long as possible. Greater adoption of innovative methods, like modern methods of

construction, can enhance productivity and further support sustainability and emissions reduction.

Preserving and ensuring the ongoing sustainability of our natural environments will be critical, particularly with the challenges brought by climate change. An important part of this will be recognising and elevating First Nations peoples' deep knowledge systems in land and sea management practices. Management of climate risk, including by adapting to expected climate change impacts and mitigating further change, is vital to ensure the sustainability of the region, economically, socially and in terms of assets and infrastructure.

### What does this mean for the North West Queensland region?

- Harnessing the region's abundant wind and solar resources to strengthen its renewable energy industries and power regional manufacturing and minerals processing.
- Transition to low emissions agriculture that harnesses AgTech innovations to both enhance productivity and profitability, and capture ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) credentials of our sustainable products and services, particularly beef, cotton and other crops, through adoption of innovative practices to transition to globally competitive circular industries and supply chains.
- Utilise current assets, and future abandoned assets, to generate and provide energy storage solutions, i.e. End of life mine shafts used to store potential energy and/or using mine pumping systems as hydro energy storage.

*Rehabilitated mining land, Mount Isa*



### OBJECTIVE 3: Thriving, liveable and inclusive regions that attract and retain people, businesses and investment

At the heart of the transformation of our regions and their future prosperity will be the communities within them. Retaining people and attracting new residents will be key to strengthening our communities and providing a sustainable future. There is immense opportunity for investment and jobs in Queensland's regions as the world continues to decarbonise. However, this will only be possible if our communities are thriving, liveable and inclusive.

Fit-for-purpose and quality enabling infrastructure, such as diverse housing, water, energy, transport and digital connectivity, that is planned and built with consideration of the changing climate, is fundamental to support thriving, liveable and inclusive communities. This will support the wellbeing of residents and ensure regional communities provide the services that will attract and retain a competitive workforce. This will also ensure families have access to the services needed to provide future opportunities.



Highlighting the economic opportunities for communities in regional Queensland.

To make Queensland a location of choice for businesses, opportunities offered by transformation will need to be provided for all people in the regions.

Making up over 97 per cent of all business enterprises in Queensland, small businesses are the foundation of our communities<sup>4</sup>. They employ around 42 per cent of the private sector workforce and play an important role in the supply chain of new industries, as well as continuing to support the growth of traditional industries<sup>5</sup>.

First Nations peoples have unparalleled cultural resources and traditional knowledge of the lands and waters in the regions and are central to the nation's identity and history.

#### What does this mean for the North West Queensland region?

- Ensuring local opportunities for businesses and communities in renewable energy generation and storage infrastructure, particularly wind and solar.
- Upskilling the workforce through training programs for local and long-term jobs in renewable energy projects, critical minerals, low emissions agriculture and tourism.
- Prioritising enabling infrastructure that will support the community and economy.
- Attracting and retaining new workers and business investment to the region.

#### Notes

<sup>3</sup> Jobs Queensland. Data portal for the projection period 2021-22 to 2025-26. Net new jobs. Excludes Brisbane, Cairns, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Logan – Beaudesert, Moreton Bay – North, Moreton Bay – South and Sunshine Coast. Accessed on 18 September 2023.

<sup>4,5</sup> Queensland Small Business Outlook – Beyond the pandemic, 2023, Queensland Small Business Commissioner, accessible at : < [https://qsbcc.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/QSBC\\_Beyond-the-pandemic\\_Accessible-web.pdf](https://qsbcc.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/QSBC_Beyond-the-pandemic_Accessible-web.pdf) >



## How the RTS has been developed

The RTS has been informed by the outcomes and findings of extensive consultation processes with key regional stakeholders, including industry bodies, businesses, community members and organisations, local governments and other Queensland Government departments and agencies.

Consultation identified a diverse range of opportunities for each region and broadly supported the strategic direction of the underpinning

Queensland policy frameworks to help Queensland transition to a decarbonised future. Stakeholders also acknowledged that it will be important that regional transformation will need to be undertaken in a manner that is inclusive, sustainable and supports the liveability of our regions, with continued stakeholder input. Key stakeholders will continue to be periodically engaged through the regional **Local Economic Opportunity (LEO) Network**.



A Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) for each region provided advice and feedback on a range of issues specific to each region. These consultations informed the development of the RTS by identifying key strengths and opportunities for the region, transformation objectives, key priorities and potential actions that would support the transformation of the region. These forums will continue to have a role supporting the implementation of the RTS for the region.

Targeted consultations have been undertaken with a range of stakeholders across each region to explore their insights on the economic strengths of the region, opportunities for economic transformation and actions that may support the transformation objectives and priorities.

A targeted survey was conducted to obtain stakeholder insights on key economic opportunities and challenges relating to economic development and transformation in each region.

Public consultation has been undertaken to obtain feedback from people who live, work, or own a business in one of the four targeted regions. This was done through a range of media channels and an online survey.

# ABOUT THE NORTH WEST QUEENSLAND REGION

The North West Queensland region covers an area of over 370,000 square kilometres, or approximately 22 per cent of Queensland<sup>6</sup>. The region borders North Queensland to the east, Central Queensland to the south, the Northern Territory to the west and the Gulf of Carpentaria to the north. It includes the local government areas (LGAs) of Burke Shire, Carpentaria Shire, Cloncurry Shire, Croydon Shire, Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire, Etheridge Shire, Flinders Shire, McKinlay Shire, the City of Mount Isa and Richmond Shire<sup>7</sup>.

The region is home to First Nations peoples and cultures who are recognised as the Traditional Custodians of the landscape, having lived in and sustainably managed the region for many thousands of years and who retain strong connections to the<sup>8</sup> lands, skies and waterways of the region, including the

- Gangalidda Garawa, Waanyi and Kalkadoon peoples in Burke Shire
- Gkuthaarn, Kukatj Kurtijar, Gangalidda Garawa, Tagalaka and Kowanyama peoples in Carpentaria Shire
- Mitakoodi, Kalkadoon, Yulluna, Waluwarra and Pitta Pitta peoples in Cloncurry Shire
- Tagalaka and Gkuthaarn and Kukatj peoples in Croydon Shire
- Gangalidda, Garawa and Waanyi peoples in Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire
- Ewamian and Tagalaka peoples in Etheridge Shire

- Yirandhali and Gudjala peoples in Flinders Shire
- Wunumara, Yulluna and Kalkadoon peoples in McKinlay Shire
- Kalkadoon, Indjalandji-Dhidhanu, Waanyi, Bularnu Waluwarra, Wangkayujuru peoples in Mount Isa City
- Wunumara, Mbara and Yirandhali people in Richmond Shire

*Figure 5 (page 19) provides a geographic overview of the North West Queensland region, including the corridor to Townsville. The following sections provide a demographic and economic overview of the region, as well as an overview of the key strengths within each LGA. A statistical overview of the region is shown in Figure 6 (page 20).*

## Notes

<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of the REFF, the Region also includes the transport and energy corridor to Townsville.

<sup>7</sup> North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, Explore more about our member councils <https://www.nwqroc.com.au/nwqroc-region#:~:text=The%20traditional%20owners%20of%20the,copper%20deposits%20in%20the%20region>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.qroc.com.au/nwqroc-region#:~:text=The%20traditional%20owners%20of%20the,copper%20deposits%20in%20the%20region>) & National Native Title Register <http://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleRegisters/Pages/Search-National-Native-Title-Register.aspx> Search National Native Title Register (nntt.gov.au)

## Glencore Mount Isa mine closures and how we are supporting the North West Queensland region

On 18 October 2023, Glencore announced its decision to close its underground copper operations and copper concentrator in Mount Isa in 2025, along with the nearby Lady Loretta Zinc mine. Glencore's other metals assets in the region, including the copper smelter, George Fisher Mine, zinc-lead concentrator, and lead smelter in Mount Isa, as well as the copper refinery in Townsville, will continue operating. The decision follows recent studies by Glencore that found that the assets have reached end of mine life. This decision presents another major challenge for the region. The Queensland Government has announced a support package of up to \$50 million for mine workers and the Mount Isa community. This package consists of \$20 million for structural adjustment and \$30 million to accelerate resource projects in region. As at June 2024, projects are in assessment phase. Successful projects are expected to be announced in August 2024. This support package is in addition to the work already undertaken through the North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy Implementation Plan 2019 – 2021, supported by \$33.3 million in funding, and the current North West Queensland Implementation Plan to 2025, supported by \$20 million in funding. The RTS complements this support by identifying further opportunities for jobs and investment growth through the REFF program.

Figure 5 Map of North West Queensland (including the corridor to Townsville)

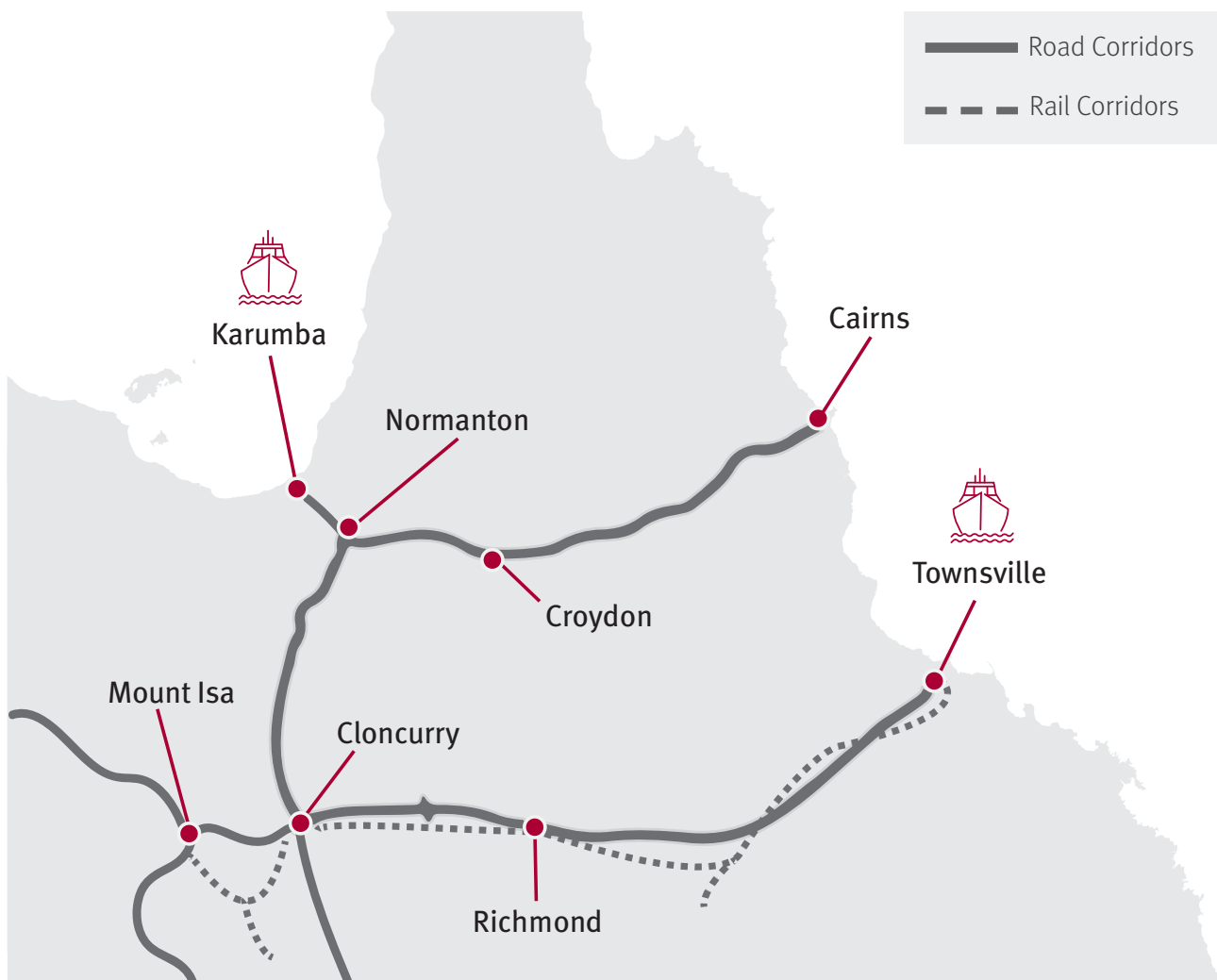
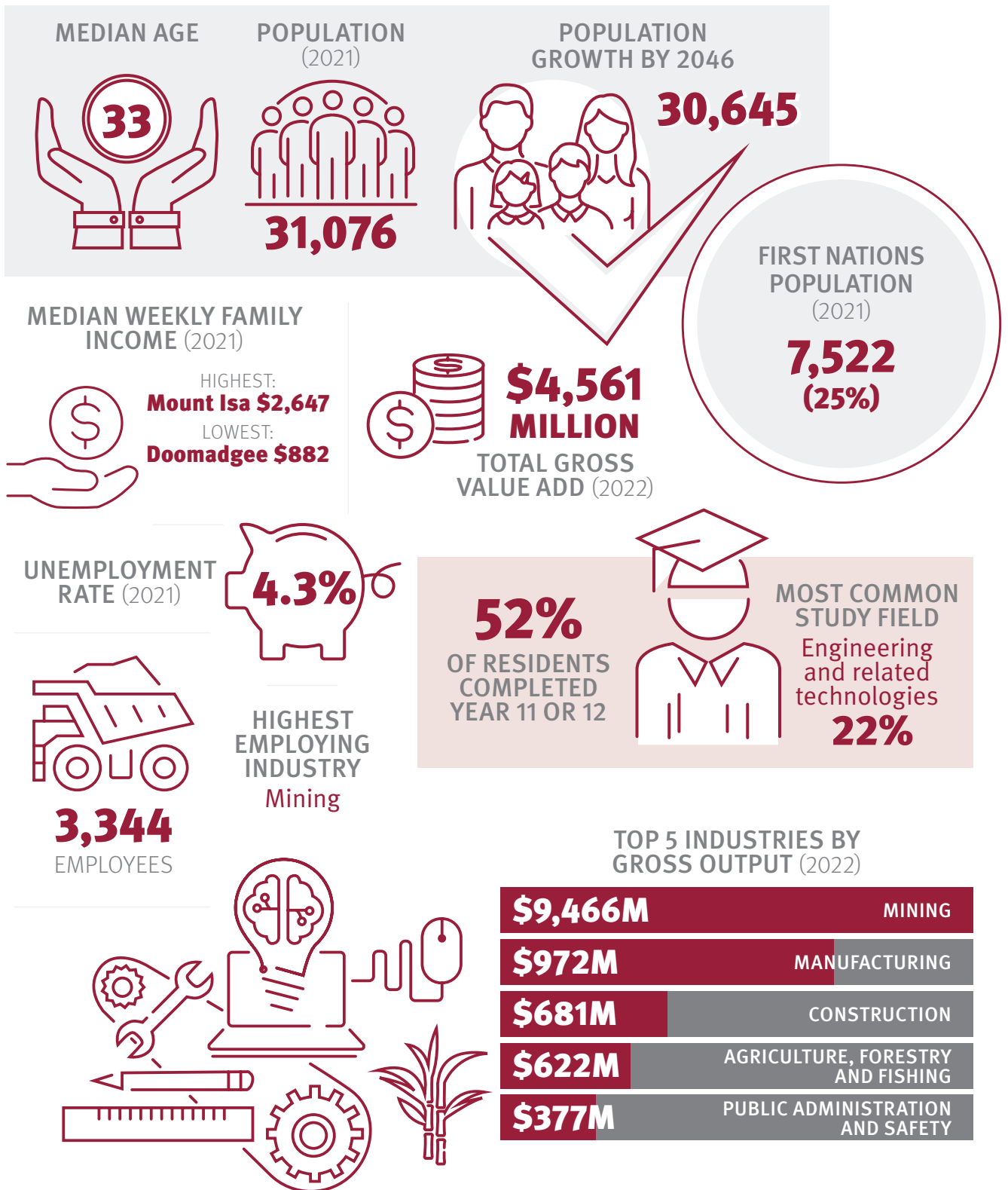


Figure 6 Statistical overview of the region<sup>8</sup>



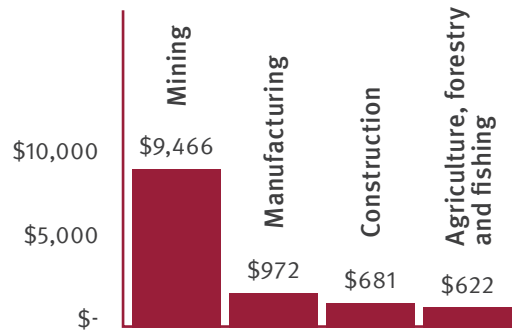
**Notes**  
<sup>8</sup> Data sourced from REMPLAN, 2018-2022 and Queensland Government Statistician's Office



# Economic overview

The North West Queensland region has several economic strengths that drive employment and output in the region. With abundant land and sea area, rich mineral resources and a well-skilled workforce, the region’s key industries include mining and mineral processing, manufacturing (predominantly mining by-products), construction, and agriculture and fishing.<sup>9</sup> In particular, this includes mining for minerals such as zinc, silver, copper, phosphate and lead, as well as beef cattle production. Collectively, these industries contribute almost 87 per cent of gross regional output.<sup>10</sup>

Gross Output (\$m, Top 4 industries)



## Mining

The region is one of the world’s richest mineral producing areas, containing substantial copper, lead, zinc and silver deposits, as well as phosphate and rare earth deposits. It makes the largest contribution by value-add to the regional economy, accounting for \$8.9 billion of exports, \$2.8 billion of gross value-add and \$9.5 billion of gross output.



## Construction

The construction industry predominately services the mining and transport industries. It has the second largest number of businesses (876) in the region, with an average annual growth rate of 14 per cent since 2019. It contributes \$143 million of exports, \$234 million of gross value-add and \$681 million of gross output.



## Manufacturing

The manufacturing industry predominantly refers to the minerals processing that occurs in the area. This supports the operations of both the mining and agriculture industries through the production of mineral concentrate and acid. It contributes \$596 million of exports, \$125 million of gross value-add and \$972 million of gross output.



## Agriculture, forestry, and fishing

Agriculture is the primary land use in the region. The industry is dominated by beef cattle production, cropping and horticulture. Suitable soils, and abundant land area make the North West Queensland region a productive place for agriculture. It contributes \$543 million of exports, \$232 million of gross value-add and \$622 million of gross output.

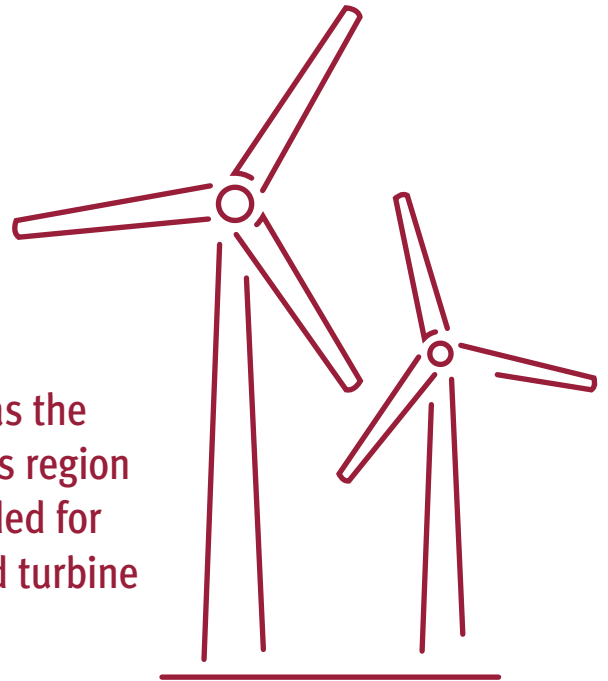


### Notes

<sup>9</sup> The economic profile of an industry within this report includes data on (1) output, (2) value added, (3) employment and (4) value of exports. (1) Output represents the total value of goods and services produced in an industry. (2) Value added represents the marginal economic value that is added by an industry (output) minus the cost of inputs. (3) Employment represents the total number of people employed by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors. (4) Value of exports represents the total value of goods and services exported outside of the defined region that have been generated by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors within the Region. Source: REMPLAN 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Data sourced from REMPLAN, 2018-2022, Release 1

There will be an increase in demand for the North West Queensland region's minerals as the world shifts towards renewable energy. This region is home to many of the input minerals needed for electric and hybrid vehicles, batteries, wind turbine generators and solar panels.



#### Emerging industries in the North West Queensland region

There are many economic opportunities for the North West Queensland region that build on current regional strengths and will support the growth of new, diverse industries as Queensland transitions to a decarbonised economy.

There are opportunities for further exploration and growth in supporting industries, such as critical minerals processing, particularly in mining-centric LGAs.

In agriculture, there are emerging opportunities for diversification of the industry's outputs by capitalising on the competitive advantages of the region and exploring dryland and irrigated cropping opportunities.

In renewable energy, LGAs across the region have identified the potential to invest in renewable energy resources, specifically in wind and solar energy generation. Developing the region as a major clean energy provider, through establishing a utility-scale renewable energy industry, will have many benefits for the region. Investment in onsite renewable energy generation will also help reduce operating costs and secure supply for energy intensive operations, helping to attract people and businesses.

# Mining

The North West Queensland region is advantageously located with access to vast natural resources. The region is one of the world's richest mineral producing areas, containing substantial copper, lead, zinc and silver deposits, as well as phosphate and other critical mineral deposits, such as vanadium, which is used in grid-scale battery manufacturing and steel strengthening. It is the largest industry by both output and employment, with important flow-on effects to the local communities.

The industry employed around 5,580 people in 2021, or 30 per cent of the total regional employment, making it the leading employment industry across the region. Mining and mineral processing also attracts a large fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in-drive-out (DIDO) workforce from Townsville, Cairns and South East

Queensland. While this industry has driven historical growth in the region, the remote location of North West Queensland and the dominance of the mining industry means the region is highly susceptible to fluctuating commodity prices and shifts in domestic and international demand. Traditional mining in the region is already changing, highlighting the importance of this RTS.

**OUTPUT: \$9,466 million**

**VALUE-ADD: \$2,794 million**

**EXPORTS: \$8,911 million**

REMPPLAN 2018-2022

## North West Mineral Province

The North West Mineral Province, an identified area in North West Queensland, is endowed with vast mineral resources, and is a key driver of Queensland's economic growth. The Queensland Government has identified several priorities to ensure the long-term future of the region and its communities. These priorities are presented in A Strategic Blueprint for Queensland's North West Minerals Province (the Blueprint). A key initiative under strategic priority 2 of the Blueprint was the development of the North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy (NWQEDS).

The three pillars of the NWQEDS are:

- Enhanced investment environment
- Strong supply chains
- Sustainable communities<sup>11</sup>

### Notes

<sup>11</sup> Queensland Government, 2022, Queensland's North West Minerals Province (<https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/regions/regional-priorities/a-strong-and-prosperous-north-west-queensland>)



*Wright's Welding, Mount Isa*

## Manufacturing

The manufacturing industry predominantly refers to the minerals processing that occurs in the North West Queensland region. This supports the operations of both the mining and agriculture industries through the production of mineral concentrate and acid, which is later used to produce fertiliser and refine critical minerals. Manufacturing is the second largest industry, with an output of \$972 million in 2022. The industry employs 679 people, equating to 3.6 per cent of the regional workforce.<sup>12</sup>

**OUTPUT: \$972 million**

**VALUE-ADD: \$125 million**

**EXPORTS: \$596 million**

REMPAN 2018-2022

### Notes

<sup>12</sup> Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2021, Custom Regional Profile generated 3 July 2023.



# Construction

The construction industry in the North West Queensland region predominantly services the mining, real estate, agriculture and transport industries. After agriculture, forestry and fishing, construction has the second largest number of businesses in the region, with an average annual growth rate of 14 per cent since 2019. The output in 2022 was \$681 million, the third highest in the region,<sup>13</sup> and it employed around 1,033 people in 2021.<sup>14</sup>

**OUTPUT: \$681 million**

**VALUE-ADD: \$234 million**

**EXPORTS: \$143 million**

REMPLAN 2018-2022

# Agriculture, forestry and fisheries

Alongside the mining industry, agriculture is a significant industry for the North West Queensland region. In 2022, there were approximately 876 agricultural businesses operating in the industry, employing around 1,600 people (2021). This equates to 8.6 per cent of the total regional workforce, making it the third largest employing industry.<sup>15</sup> It is also the largest employer in the Etheridge, Croydon and McKinlay LGAs.<sup>16</sup>

Agriculture is the primary industry for land use in the region and is dominated by beef cattle production, and broadacre cropping with selected areas for horticulture. Suitable soils and abundant land area make the North West Queensland region a productive place for agriculture. The industry accounts for 5 per cent of the region's total annual export value, facilitated by its proximity to Asian markets and connectivity to key export facilities in Queensland, including the Port of Townsville.

The region is subject to highly variable climatic conditions, from pervasive drought to major flooding, which impacts the region's agriculture sectors through loss of cattle and crops, as well as damage to infrastructure that is critical to the supply chain. Further, reduced migration over recent years due to COVID-19 has had a negative effect on the workforce by reducing the availability of labour.

**OUTPUT: \$622 million**

**VALUE-ADD: \$232 million**

**EXPORTS: \$543 million**

REMPLAN 2018-2022

## Notes

<sup>13</sup> REMPLAN 2019 – 2022 Release 1.

<sup>14</sup> Analysis of ABS LGA Level Data, 2011-2021, Regional Summaries.

<sup>15</sup> Analysis of ABS LGA Level Data, 2011-2021, Regional Summaries.

<sup>16</sup> Coriolis, 2018, Strategy and implementation plan for enhancing agricultural production and employment in North West Queensland ([https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0029/64559/the-north-west-agricultural-strategy-and-implementation-plan.pdf](https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0029/64559/the-north-west-agricultural-strategy-and-implementation-plan.pdf))

# Economic and social enablers

While the transformation priorities represent the key future opportunities for the North West Queensland region, achieving these priorities will only be possible if the economic and social enablers are in place. These enablers, which include diverse housing, water, energy, transport, social infrastructure and a well-skilled workforce, are essential now and will be essential to support the transformation of the region. Having effective enablers in place to integrate

with multiple policy domains is foundational to not just the economic prosperity of the region, but its liveability and its ability to attract and retain people.

There are both challenges and opportunities in relation to these enablers, and the Queensland Government is investing heavily at both a state and regional level to address these, as outlined below.

ENABLER	HOUSING
OVERVIEW	<p>North West Queensland, including the corridor to Townsville, has a rental vacancy rate of 2.14%.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>Improving liveability through quality housing supply will help attract and retain skilled workers and their families to the region. Housing (purchase and rental) and short-term accommodation needs a place-based response in each township for regional transformation to be successful.</p>
KEY INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION TO ADDRESS THIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The North West Queensland region falls under the Quickstarts Qld Outback region.</li> <li>• Under QuickStarts Qld and Social Housing Accelerator, the State has committed to 181 social home commencements in the Outback region by 30 June 2025.</li> <li>• From 1 July 2015 to 31 May 2024, 92 social homes have been delivered in the Outback, including through QuickStarts Qld and the Social Housing Accelerator.</li> <li>• Homes for Queenslanders will work across the broader housing spectrum – bringing together private and public housing delivery, planning reforms, local government partnerships, state development, and significant infrastructure and public works as part of an additional \$3.1 billion investment across Queensland to support social and affordable housing and housing and homelessness outcomes.</li> <li>• The Queensland Government is also supporting federal housing initiatives such as the Help to Buy scheme.</li> <li>• Government Employee Housing supports the attraction and retention of frontline staff such as police, health workers and teachers, through the provision of suitable, good quality and safe housing. The demand for new housing increases each year, driven by the expansion of agency services in regional and remote communities. The program will build up to 439 homes and maintain an existing portfolio of approximately 2,900 homes for essential frontline workers in regional and remote communities.</li> </ul>

Notes  
<sup>17</sup> SQM Research - Property - Vacancy

<b>ENABLER</b>	<b>TRANSPORT</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	Connectivity via road, rail, air and port is key to ensuring communities and local industries can efficiently access the inputs/goods they require, and that they have access to a variety of export markets.
<b>KEY INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION TO ADDRESS THIS</b>	Under the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program 2024-25 to 2027-28 several investments are being made: \$1.9 million for Burke Shire, \$38.6 million for Carpentaria Shire, \$35.7 million for Cloncurry Shire, \$591,000 for Doomadgee Shire, \$23.9 million for Flinders Shire, \$77.8 million for McKinlay Shire and \$15.2 million for Mount Isa City, including contributions from the Australian Government and the LGAs.

#### Queensland Freight Strategy and Queensland Freight Action Plan

The economic prosperity of regions is dependent on the strength of supply chains, which facilitate the movement of goods produced in regional areas to their final destination and vice versa. Freight networks are vital for regional economic growth, present an opportunity to decarbonise through investment in new, innovative technologies and skills development, which enable sustainable transport and promote sustainability across all aspects of the supply chain.

By investing in cleaner technologies, fostering innovation, and enhancing the skill set of the workforce, the region can move toward a more sustainable and economically prosperous future. These priorities are supported by the Queensland Freight Strategy and the rolling two-year Queensland Freight Action Plan which supports regions in:

- building effective partnerships between industry, customers and government
- unlocking economic opportunity
- smarter connectivity and access
- a more resilient freight system, and
- safer freight movements.

<b>ENABLER</b>	<b>WATER</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	Securing sustainable water supply will be key to sustain communities and industries in the face of increased climate variability. This is especially important in the North West Queensland region where water supply is critical to minerals processing.
<b>KEY INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION TO ADDRESS THIS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several feasibility studies are being undertaken, supported by the National Water Grid Fund and the Queensland Government, including the Hughenden irrigation project and Hughenden Water Bank. Earlier assessment of a potential new dam near Cloncurry concluded that there are a number of technical challenges and that, at the current time, the cost of construction and operation would exceed the value of the benefits that were expected.</li> <li>• The Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW) have commenced an early review of the Gulf Water Plan noting the increasing demand for water to support irrigated agriculture and major industry growth in critical minerals sector. The replacement plan is due for completion 2027.</li> <li>• Sunwater is currently undertaking the Julia Creek Richmond Critical Mineral Common User Water Infrastructure Study.</li> </ul>

#### Notes

<sup>18</sup> These figures will exclude some investment managed as a program that cross local government boundaries, such as routine maintenance.

<p><b>ENABLER</b></p> <p><b>OVERVIEW</b></p> <p><b>KEY INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION TO ADDRESS THIS</b></p>	<p><b>POWER</b></p> <p>Access to reliable, firm, cheap electricity supply will improve quality of life in towns and encourage additional processing, exploration and manufacturing within the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$5 billion has been committed to deliver the CopperString 2032 project in order to connect parts of the North West Queensland region to the National Electricity Market (NEM).</li> </ul>
<p><b>ENABLER</b></p> <p><b>OVERVIEW</b></p> <p><b>KEY INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION TO ADDRESS THIS</b></p>	<p><b>EDUCATION AND TRAINING</b></p> <p>Closer proximity to social amenities like education will improve the liveability of the region and therefore assist in attracting and retaining workers within the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2024, Country Universities Centre (CUC) will open a facility in Mount Isa, providing higher-education students in the region with access to learning facilities and academic support.</li> <li>In the 2022-23 budget, \$1.35 billion was committed to invest across Queensland (including the North West Queensland region) in skills, training, employment and small business.</li> <li>\$2.1 billion infrastructure investment allocated across Queensland schools in 2023-2034.</li> <li>\$290 million allocated annually across Queensland State Schools as part of Investing for Success.</li> <li>\$48.3 million for teacher housing in rural and remote areas of Queensland.</li> <li>A \$600,000 expansion to the Gateway to Industry Schools program to cover a dedicated renewable energy focus, and additional funding to support the development and implementation of online resources to support Queensland teachers to deliver clean energy content and student learning.</li> <li>Up to \$10 million investment across the state to uplift state owned training infrastructure to support the skills needs of the clean energy workforce.</li> <li>Funding is provided to organisations throughout the region for the provision of Early Years Services.</li> <li>Free kindergarten education for all eligible-aged children attending a government-approved kindergarten program.</li> <li>\$120 million over four years to implement the Queensland Early Childhood Workforce Strategy, which includes \$40 million to attract and retain Early Childhood Teachers in outer regional, remote and very remote communities.</li> <li>\$5.04 million investment across Queensland to strengthen partnerships between schools and industry through the Regional School Industry Partnership Program.</li> </ul>



<b>ENABLER</b>	<b>TELECOMMUNICATIONS</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	Access to digital connectivity is essential to growing business and delivering essential services (e.g., telehealth) in remote areas.
<b>KEY INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION TO ADDRESS THIS</b>	<p>The Queensland Government is delivering training and capacity-building programs to assist businesses to undertake digital transformation activities.</p> <p>In 2023 the Queensland Government committed to investing \$200 million over three years to grow the state’s digital economy and improve digital connectivity.</p> <p>The Wi-Sky Qld Far North Queensland Connectivity Project has been allocated a \$459,000 grant towards the deployment of a high-speed fixed wireless broadband network, backhaul, public Wi-Fi and free LoRaWAN network to 20,000 square kilometres of the North West Queensland region, which will improve connectivity in the area between Richmond and Croydon as well as surrounding areas. This grant is part of Round 2 of the Regional Connectivity Program which represents a total investment of \$137.2 million towards the improvement of telecommunications infrastructure in regional and remote Australia.</p>
<b>ENABLER</b>	<b>WORKFORCE</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	Developing industry and the economy will require an increase in available workforce to support the development and ongoing operation of new industry.
<b>KEY INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION TO ADDRESS THIS</b>	<p>The Queensland Workforce Strategy Action Plan (2022-2025) includes a focus on local solutions. It contains actions to implement locally focused and led workforce planning and coordinates efforts across industry, the community and government at all levels. In part of this region, the Mount Isa Regional Jobs Committee brings together local stakeholders and is a key mechanism in supporting the delivery of the strategy</p> <p>The Queensland Workforce Strategy builds on a suite of programs that have together powered the state’s significant economic growth. This includes projects under a \$200 million Future Skills Fund.</p> <p>The Queensland Government is funding Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West to develop a local jobs portal for workers to easily find jobs within the region.</p> <p>On 25 October 2023, the Queensland Government released Queensland’s Clean Energy Workforce Roadmap, which recognises and supports regional Queensland to prepare for growth associated with energy transformation. Key actions out of this \$30 million strategy that will be delivered in the North West Queensland region include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$500,000 to develop and implement a digital energy skills passport app, addressing workforce mobility barriers in Queensland’s renewable energy sector by establishing agreed skills, qualifications and competencies required for the trade workforce for applicable projects in Queensland.</li> <li>• Up to \$10 million investment across the state to uplift state owned training infrastructure to support the skills needs of the clean energy workforce.</li> </ul> <p>The Hydrogen Industry Workforce Roadmap 2022-2032, released in July 2022, sets a clear path for industry and government to work together to deliver a strong and adaptable workforce for a safe and thriving Queensland hydrogen industry. This includes an \$800,000 investment in the Gateway to Industry Schools project for the hydrogen industry (GISPH2).</p>

<b>ENABLER</b>	<b>HEALTH</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	Better health and specialised health services throughout the region will promote more liveable and growing communities.
<b>KEY INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION TO ADDRESS THIS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recent Queensland budget includes \$28.9 billion allocated to Queensland Health, with the majority to be spent on Hospital and Health Services across Queensland.</li> <li>• A major capital infrastructure program across the North West includes new health service builds in Hughenden, Richmond, Normanton, Camooweal and Doomadgee.</li> </ul>
<b>ENABLER</b>	<b>REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	<p>Planning and regulatory frameworks are constantly evolving in response to emerging markets and challenges – to achieve economic, social and environmental objectives. Project proponents must consider planning and environmental regulations under the relevant Australian, Queensland and local government legislation applying to the site including the <i>Planning Act 2016</i> and State Development Assessment Provisions.</p> <p>Having the right policy and regulatory frameworks in place is important to enable new and emerging industries as well as evolution in existing industries.</p>
<b>KEY INITIATIVES UNDERWAY IN THE REGION TO ADDRESS THIS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Queensland Government is already looking to ways to ensure policies and regulatory frameworks are enabling economic growth.</li> <li>• The Queensland Government has made a commitment to review the planning framework for renewables, specifically the State code 23: Wind farm development and the associated planning guidance. This includes working with government agencies, communities, local councils and stakeholders to provide more certainty and ensure individuals, communities and adverse impacts are considered in relation to appropriate site selection on rural land, local haulage routes, on-site construction camps and decommissioning of renewable energy projects.</li> <li>• The Coordinator-General, under the <i>State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971</i> (SDPWO Act) provides significant support to the coordination of major projects, evaluation and responsible management of regional impacts.</li> <li>• Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) is the Queensland Government's land use planning and property development agency.</li> <li>• On 18 April 2024 the Queensland Parliament passed the <i>Clean Economy Jobs Act 2024</i> and the <i>Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act 2024</i> to secure Queensland's spot at the centre of a global energy transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› The <i>Clean Economy Jobs Act 2024</i> sets out a pathway to decarbonisation that will support jobs in the state's key traditional industries, including agriculture, resources and manufacturing, and unlocking investment in new industries including renewables, manufacturing, critical minerals, hydrogen and sustainable aviation fuel.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# TRANSFORMING THE NORTH WEST QUEENSLAND REGION

The North West Queensland region has several key industries which are a significant source of economic activity and jobs. The region is also uniquely positioned to strengthen existing (and develop new) industries to harness the opportunities as the world transitions to net zero. The transformation of the North West Queensland region will be underpinned by industries that leverage the region's strengths

and have significant growth potential, whilst supporting long-term economic growth, diverse economies and sustainable jobs.

Figure 7 sets out the distinctive strengths by industry for the region, while specific transformation priorities, in these current and emerging industries, are outlined on the following pages.

Figure 7 North West Queensland region's key industry strengths

## MINING AND MINERAL PROCESSING



- One of the world's richest mineral producing areas
- Industry delivers substantial economic benefits to both the region and to the state
- Advantageous location with access to vast natural resources and proximity to key export markets

## AGRICULTURE



- Highly suitable soils and climate, as well as an abundant land area place for agriculture
- Agriculture is the major employer in most LGAs
- The region is advantageously located with good access to export markets, such as South East Asia

## ENERGY



- Areas across the region have a competitive advantage in solar and wind
- Several projects are already underway
- CopperString 2032 will enable some projects to sell excess energy back into the NEM

## How the transformation will provide opportunities for First Nations peoples in the North West Queensland region

The transformation priorities for the North West Queensland region have been developed in close consultation with the community and are intended for the benefit of all people in the North West Queensland region. In line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Queensland Government's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan and the *Yhurri Gurri Framework 2021-2024*, there are several actions designed to support First Nations communities, businesses and peoples across the North West Queensland region. These priorities have been developed through consultation with First Nations peoples in the region.

The National Native Title Tribunal recognises determination claims from communities that reside in the region. As the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways of the North West Queensland region, First Nations peoples have a deep knowledge of the natural capital that underpins the region and bring significant skills to participate in a vibrant economic future.

Recognising the determination of Native Title over one third of Queensland's land mass, it is important to consider and work with First Nations peoples on the development of clean energy projects on Native Title lands and to advance opportunities to improve outcomes and participation for them.

The Queensland Government is developing a First Nations Economic Strategy that will support agencies to engage with First Nations people, communities and businesses to address barriers and explore economic opportunities and pathways to jobs, skills and training, education, business development and entrepreneurship in current and emerging industries and sectors.

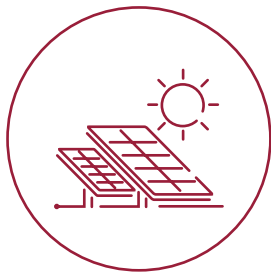
The Queensland Government has also implemented the Queensland Indigenous Procurement Policy, which seeks to increase procurement with First Nations businesses. By leveraging the procurement process, this will help grow and expand a diverse and sustainable First Nations business sector in Queensland and increase the capacity and capability of those businesses to supply not only to the Queensland Government but also the private sector. The Queensland Government will work with Federal agencies, such as the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation and National Indigenous Australians Agency, to activate opportunities in First Nations-led agriculture and tourism and participation in the new industries in a decarbonising economy.

Recognising the great diversity that exists amongst First Nations peoples across the region, there is great opportunity to walk together and explore the ways that their culture, Knowledge of Country and unique opportunities can elevate the sustainability, resilience and liveability of the region.



# Priority 1: Clean, sustainable energy

Increasing solar, wind and pumped hydro renewable energy generation in the North West Queensland region for use in the region and beyond .



Clean, sustainable energy

**Priority 1.1:** Sufficient transport network capacity throughout the North West Queensland Region, including road, rail, air and ports, to facilitate the movement of renewable energy infrastructure.

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**Priority 1.2:** Identify appropriate sites and projects through North West Queensland local governments' collaboration to promote the region as an emerging renewable energy hub and attract investment in renewable energy generation (solar and wind).

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**Priority 1.3:** Growth in firm solar and wind energy supply in the region to support investment in clean-powered regional manufacturing and minerals processing.

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**Priority 1.4:** North West Queensland regional businesses and the local workforce have an active role in the renewable energy supply chain, including servicing, maintenance and recycling of assets.

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**Priority 1.5:** Develop energy storage manufacturing in Queensland using critical minerals from the North West Queensland region.

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Energy supply in the North West Queensland region is currently separated from the NEM, with a significant portion of its energy demands being met through the North West Power System (NWPS) or, in more remote areas, diesel generators. This situation poses challenges for industries, such as manufacturing and minerals processing, which require both a substantial, low cost and firm power supply.

The CopperString 2032 project promises to connect the North West Queensland region with the NEM, providing an avenue for renewable energy sources to contribute to the grid. This integration not only enhances the financial feasibility of new renewable energy ventures within the region but also aids in firming current supply when coupled with energy storage solutions.

With both the Australian and Queensland Governments committing to Net Zero by 2050, the North West Queensland region now has a unique opportunity to leverage this development to its advantage, and to foster economic growth and sustainability in the process. While there are already projects underway in the North West Queensland region, such as at Mica Creek Solar Farm, Kennedy Energy Park and Kidston Pumped Storage Hydro Project, the region's renewable energy industry is still in its early stages.

The sub-priorities outlined in this section are directly aimed at ensuring this opportunity is realised in the North West Queensland region. This includes the improvement of transportation infrastructure to facilitate the movement of renewable energy assets,

attracting investments in renewable energy through strategic site identification and collaboration, fostering the growth of a stable energy supply for regional development, to support energy storage manufacturing, particularly battery production, within Queensland using minerals sourced from the North West Queensland region.

Pursuing these priorities will strengthen the North West Queensland region's resilience, enhance its economic prospects, and secure a sustainable energy future. They are also supported by the NWQEDS which speaks to the opportunities for:

- ensuring regulatory framework facilitates behind the meter renewable energy, especially for the largest energy users such as mining.

- investing in onsite renewable energy generation to reduce operating costs and secure supply for energy intensive operations.
- developing common user multimodal and transport logistics hubs to increase transport and supply chain efficiency, provide additional modal choice and reduce the cost of transport for individual users.
- increasing the competitiveness of local businesses to participate in regional supply chains.
- developing the region as a major clean energy provider through establishing a utility-scale renewable energy industry with high-value construction jobs.

### Queensland Government actions to support implementing this priority:

The REFF is a new fund that supports economic and community development initiatives. REFF funding that aligns to this priority is expected to be announced in 2024.

#### Other activities include:

- The 2024–25 Budget includes a landmark capital investment to support the QEJP (Department of Energy and Climate [DEC]).
  - » This includes around \$26 billion across the forward estimates to support the QEJP. The government's publicly owned energy businesses are leading Queensland's energy transformation, investing in new wind, solar, storage and transmission, as well as supporting infrastructure and including in partnership with the private sector (DEC and Queensland Treasury [QT]).
- The LEO Network engages through the region and hosts a dedicated webpage identifying current State and Federal funding programs and opportunities (DSDI).
- The Queensland Hydrogen Industry Strategy (DSDI and DEC).
- The Queensland Battery Industry Strategy (DSDI).
- Development of the Net Zero Emissions for Transport Roadmap (Transport Roadmap), a commitment under the Queensland Climate Action Plan. The Transport Roadmap will provide the foundational blueprint to reduce Queensland's transport sector emissions and contribute to achieving Queensland's emission reduction targets (Department of Transport and Main Roads [DTMR]).
- The Queensland Government has approved a \$1.3 billion Delivery Launch Package for the \$5 billion CopperString 2032 project to support early works activities and ensure construction commences from mid next year. The project is an approximately 1,000 kilometre power transmission line from Townsville to Mount Isa, connecting Queensland's North West region to the national electricity grid, and will deliver affordable and renewable energy to households, businesses and communities in the region. CopperString 2032 will support approximately 750 jobs over its construction to 2029, and thousands more across critical minerals mining, manufacturing and renewables development (DEC).
- The Queensland Government has funded support which aims to increase local industry participation in the procurement and contract opportunities for the CopperString 2032 project for local businesses (DSDI).
- SuperGrid Transmission and Training Hub in Townsville (DEC).



- The draft REZ Roadmap identifies three potential REZs for development in the North and Far North Queensland region – Far North Queensland REZ (500-700 MW of expected installed generation), Collinsville REZ (1,600-2,000 MW of expected installed generation) and Flinders REZ (2,000-2,400 MW of expected installed generation) (DEC).
- Queensland’s Clean Energy Workforce Roadmap (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training [DESBT]).
- A dedicated Renewables Project Officer for Manufacturing Skills Queensland (MSQ) to work with local manufacturing businesses to build workforce capacity and access clean energy supply chain opportunities (DESBT).
- Launched the \$9.25 million Local Energy Partnerships initiative to create a framework for community participation and benefit sharing from the renewable energy transformation, including the expansion of the former GasFields Commission to Coexistence Queensland which will enable the commission to engage communities and support coexistence with other industries, including between the renewable energy and agriculture sectors (DEC).
- The Queensland Government committed \$11.6 million to help build capacity in the manufacturing sector and encourage local content in Queensland to supply future renewable energy projects. The Queensland Government will announce mechanisms to encourage local content in mid-2024 (DEC).
- Local Thriving Communities is a significant long-term reform that will embed change, resulting in a visibly different way of working alongside communities across the state to improve outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders, including the primary industry sector (Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts [DTATSIPCA]).



*Kennedy Energy Park, Regional Queensland*



# Priority 2: Minerals production and processing

Increase the production and processing of minerals such as copper, lead, zinc, silver, cobalt and vanadium.



Minerals production and processing

**Priority 2.1:** Adequate and reliable common user infrastructure, particularly renewable energy and water, mining, production and processing precincts to facilitate investment attraction.

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**Priority 2.2:** Resilient and price competitive transport supply chain to encourage on-site processing and manufacturing of minerals.

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**Priority 2.3:** Long-term, reliable supply of acid and other key inputs required in the processing of minerals.

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**Priority 2.4:** Industry-leading education, training, collaboration and up-skilling in critical minerals mining and processing in the region to attract and retain skilled labour in North West Queensland.

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**Priority 2.5:** Resource recovery and recycling of waste materials from minerals processing to optimise the sustainability of mining in the region.

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**Priority 2.6:** Partnerships with industry and higher education providers to encourage research and development into minerals produced in North West Queensland.

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**Priority 2.7:** Promote additional exploration activities through supportive state government incentives and mechanisms.

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**Priority 2.8:** Investigation of future opportunities to continue the use of existing industrial assets where these can be used to support new industries and/or for common use.

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The North West Queensland region already plays a nationally significant role in the provision of the minerals needed for renewable energy technologies. The region has a substantial endowment of minerals, such as copper, lead, zinc, silver, cobalt and vanadium, which are essential in the manufacturing of electric vehicles, batteries and wind turbines.

As the world continues its transition towards renewable energy sources and decarbonisation, the demand for minerals found in this region is likely to rise, presenting an opportunity for further exploration and production activities. Importantly, this does not just include the minerals that are being mined currently, but also exploring the feasibility of other critical mineral deposits such as vanadium.

In addition to the direct economic benefits of minerals production and processing, it will also provide benefits to the local community through employment and training outcomes as these mines tend to be relatively labour intensive and require skilled employees. Building and retaining this skills base in the North West Queensland region will be critical to ensuring that, in the long-term, local economies will benefit from their operations. This also presents new opportunities such as resource recovery and asset recycling, as well as helping to develop industry capacity across the state in the extraction of critical minerals.

However, to realise this potential, there must be careful planning to ensure a stable supply of essential resources such as water, energy and key inputs like acid for processing. It also requires the right policy settings and incentives to support continued exploration activities throughout the region.

These priorities are supported by the *Strategic Blueprint for Queensland's North West Mineral Province* and the NWQEDS which both highlight the importance of:

- Facilitating continued resources industry development
- Promoting the investment potential of the Province
- Leverage common user infrastructure opportunities, and
- Support applied research and development in the Province.

### Queensland Government actions to support implementing this priority:

The REFF is a new fund that supports economic and community development initiatives. REFF funding that aligns to this priority is expected to be announced in 2024.

#### Other activities include:

- LEO Network engages through the region and hosts a dedicated webpage identifying current State and Federal funding programs and opportunities (DSDI).
- Establishing Critical Minerals Queensland - a dedicated office to facilitate growth in Queensland's critical minerals sector and support the delivery of the Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy (Department of Resources [DoR]).
- To support the growth of the state's critical minerals sector, the Queensland Government is investing \$75 million to build a Queensland resources common user facility (QRCUF) in Townsville (QT). In addition, \$2 million has been allocated to DoR to support preparations for operation of the QRCUF.
- The Office of the Coordinator-General is supporting timely decision making for critical minerals projects in the North West Queensland region with three projects declared as prescribed projects and one project declared as a coordinated project under the under the SDPWO Act (DSDI).
- The Queensland METS Roadmap and Action Plan (DSDI).
- The Queensland Battery Industry Strategy (DSDI).
- The Queensland Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy (DESI).
- The Queensland Resource Recovery Industries Roadmap and Action Plan (DSDI).
- DRDMW is working with critical mineral proponents to identify required water needs for this developing sector.
- Rural Water Futures program (DRDMW):
  - » \$7.1 million allocated over four years to enhance water modelling capacity to support water planning, water security and infrastructure assessments
  - » \$5.5 million to develop a Queensland bulk water infrastructure assessment plan, in the form of a Strategic Water Infrastructure Plan and Pipeline
  - » \$4.9 million for a Queensland rural water compliance system; Queensland Water Strategy; Big Rocks Weir (subject to the outcomes of pre-construction activities and assessments being led by Charters Towers Regional Council with Queensland and Australian Government funds) will supply a potential 10,000 megalitres of additional water to expand agriculture, industry and urban water security for the region.
- The Building our Regions Fund has committed \$1.1 million in funding to the Mount Isa Water Reservoir No. 3 Reconstruction (DRDMW).
- Critical minerals are an essential input to many renewable energy projects. There is a coordinated effort to support the value adding to the battery supply chain through refining and processing and facilitating supply chain development. Under the action 3.4 of the QEJP, the Queensland Government is investigating mechanisms to strengthen and lengthen Queensland's share of the renewable energy supply chain, from growing existing capabilities in critical minerals to advanced manufacturing (DEC).



# Priority 3: Agricultural diversification

Support the diversification of agriculture in the region, particularly in relation to cropping and value-add opportunities.



Agricultural diversification

**Priority 3.1:** A unified approach to sustainable collection, allocation and storage of water across the North West Queensland region to provide greater investment certainty for producers.

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**Priority 3.2:** Firm renewable power supply to support more sustainable intensive agriculture, such as cotton gins and Ag Tech adoption.

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**Priority 3.3:** Enhanced research and planning around opportunities for new high-value climate resilient crops and production systems within the region.

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**Priority 3.4:** Leverage North West Queensland's locational advantage between the east coast and northern ports to capture more value from the agricultural supply chain.

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Beyond Mount Isa and Cloncurry, agriculture is the major employer in the North West Queensland region, and the second-largest employer across the entire region. Historically, the region's agricultural activities have predominantly centred around cattle grazing. However, there is opportunity to diversify and expand the agricultural footprint for the benefit of the region. This includes the production of high-value crops within the region, as well as developing more intensive agricultural practices like cotton gins.

The *North West Agricultural Strategy and Implementation Plan*<sup>19</sup> illustrates the North West Queensland region's significant potential when compared to similar climates worldwide. It shows that by achieving productivity levels on par with global peers, the region could multiply the value of agricultural production by a factor of up to 10. It also identified the possibility of cultivating new crops such as sorghum, cotton, sesame, and mung bean in the region.

To realise this potential, it will be important that initiatives focused on water collection, reuse and allocation, harnessing renewable energy to support intensive agriculture and research and development are pursued. These initiatives will be crucial to leverage the region's advantageous natural assets and established agribusiness supply chains

The priorities below are supported by the NWQEDS which highlighted the following opportunities:

- suitable dryland cropping options
- realisation of opportunities for irrigated agriculture, and
- capitalising on Australia's safe, stable and modern investment climate to supply high-value, climatically suited crops to global market.

#### Notes

<sup>19</sup> Coriolis, Strategy and Implementation Plan, [https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0029/64559/the-north-west-agricultural-strategy-and-implementation-plan.pdf](https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/64559/the-north-west-agricultural-strategy-and-implementation-plan.pdf)

### Queensland Government actions to support implementing this priority:

The REFF is a new fund that supports economic and community development initiatives. REFF funding that aligns to this priority is expected to be announced in 2024.

#### Other activities include:

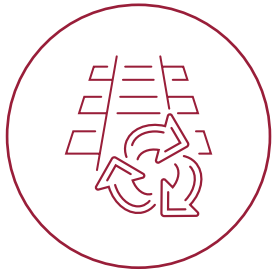
- LEO Network engages through the region and hosts a dedicated webpage identifying current State and Federal funding programs and opportunities (DSDI).
- Regional Water Assessment Program with Burdekin Regional Water Assessment recently underway (DRDMW and Australian Government).
- Round 6 of Building our Regions has awarded over \$23.2 million to the West Queensland region, leveraging over \$5.5 million in additional contributions and supporting an estimated 80 jobs during construction to improve water supply and sewerage systems (DRDMW).
- The NWQEDS supports many projects that have an agricultural industry focus (DSDI).
- Queensland's Land Restoration Fund supporting land-sector carbon projects and to increase participation in carbon farming by Queenslanders (Department of Environment, Science and Innovation [DESI]).
- Natural Resources Recovery Program supported the Gulf Savannah Natural Resource Management (DoR).
- Queensland Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap (Department of Agriculture and Fisheries [DAF]). Drought and Climate Adaptation Program – Delivering RD&E improving the drought resilience and preparedness of primary producers (DAF).
- Rural Economic Development grants – up to \$200,000 as a co-contribution grant to strengthen primary production sectors and bolster rural communities (DAF).
- The Queensland Biofutures Roadmap and Action Plan (June 2022) (DSDI).
- Queensland Circular Economy (Industry-Research) Program and Smart Precinct NQ (Townsville) (DESI).
- Rural Agricultural Development (sheep and goats) grants of up to \$200,000 as a co-contribution grant to support economic development in relevant rural areas and support growth within the industry (DAF).



*Cotton gins*

# Priority 4: Sustainable supply chains

Increasing uptake in new technologies and supporting sustainability outcomes across supply chains in the North West Queensland region.



Sustainable supply chains

**Priority 4.1:** Increased rail freight mode share between Mount Isa and Townsville through resilient, accessible and price-competitive rail infrastructure.

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**Priority 4.2:** A lower carbon regional transport network for the North West Queensland region through innovation and skills training.

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**Priority 4.3:** Increased uptake of electric and/or hydrogen powered road and rail freight to decarbonise the transport industry.

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**Priority 4.4:** Support research and investment into biofuels production in the region, particularly through the use of agricultural by-products.

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The economic prosperity of the North West Queensland region is dependent on the strength of its supply chains, which facilitate the movement of goods produced in the North West Queensland region to their final destination and vice versa.

Freight networks are vital for regional economic growth, present an opportunity to decarbonise through investment in new, innovative technologies and skills development which enable sustainable transport and promote sustainability across all aspects of the supply chain.

By investing in cleaner technologies, fostering innovation, and enhancing the skill set of the workforce, the region can move toward a more sustainable and economically prosperous future.

These priorities are supported by the Queensland Freight Strategy<sup>20</sup> and the rolling two-year Queensland Freight Action Plan<sup>21</sup> which supports regions in:

- building effective partnerships between industry, customers and government
- unlocking economic opportunity
- smarter connectivity and access
- a more resilient freight system, and
- safer freight movements.

#### Notes

<sup>20</sup> <https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/queensland-freight-strategy-advancing-freight/resource/ae528968-a698-422c-bdc7-2a38a911de45>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/queensland-freight-strategy-advancing-freight/resource/92f80of1-c8e5-4eaf-801b-3585e3883aeb>

## Queensland Government actions to support implementing this priority:

The REFF is a new fund that supports economic and community development initiatives. REFF funding that aligns to this priority is expected to be announced in 2024.

### Other activities include:

- LEO Network engages through the region and hosts a dedicated webpage identifying current State and Federal funding programs and opportunities (DSDI).
- ecoBiz is a free Queensland Government-funded program, delivered by Business Chamber Queensland, providing personal coaching, site surveys, training and tools to small and medium sized businesses. ecoBiz supports businesses to engage in sustainable supply chains, understand circular economy opportunities and increase their competitiveness to pursue procurement opportunities (DEC).
- Science Into Industry Initiative aims to make Queensland's science sector more competitive by accelerating the translation of research and development, supporting universities and research institutes to partner with industry to build new products and services (DESI).
- Manufacturing Sustainability Benchmarking Program enables manufacturers to benchmark their progress towards sustainability and provides a report outlining opportunities for further action. The program is subsidised by DRDMW.
- Manufacturing Capability Development program provides a range of workshops, seminars and events to increase manufacturers knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues and challenges within and facing the industry (DRDMW).
- \$7.1 million Manufacturing Energy Efficiency Grant (MEEG) Program providing \$5,000-\$25,000 matched funding grants to Queensland Based manufacturers looking to increase energy efficiency measures and technology, reduce energy usage and costs, reduce emissions and increase awareness of energy use (DRDMW).
- \$249,000 in funding to Australian Information Industry Association to deliver an AI Adoption Micro-credential statewide (DESBT).
- Queensland's Biofutures Roadmap and Action Plan provides a vision for Queensland to be an Asia-Pacific hub for biofutures, including biofuel production. This strategy includes working with industry and research to support growth in the emerging Biofutures sector and Queensland's existing industry strengths (DSDI).
- The Queensland Government's Resource Recovery Industries Roadmap and Action Plan will not only reduce the impact of waste on the environment, but also transition to a circular economy while building economic opportunity in Queensland's regions (DSDI).
- Up to \$30 million to accelerate development of resource projects in the North West Minerals Province in the next five years and up to \$20 million for an economic structural adjustment package for Mount Isa (DSDI, QT and DoR).
- The NWQEDS Implementation Plan to 2025 has a strong focus on focus on enabling efficient and stable supply chains that connect the region's business and industry outputs to markets (DSDI).
- The Resource Centre of Excellence is working in collaboration with the mining industry to support suppliers to the mining industry to supply lower emitting and more sustainable inputs to their supply chains, to help reduce scope 3 emissions and retain local purchasing (DoR).

# Priority 5: Tourism opportunities

Develop and grow sustainable tourism experiences and opportunities across the North West Queensland region.



Tourism opportunities

**Priority 5.1:** Increase First Nations tourism experiences across North West Queensland to ensure the industry is positioned as a differentiated and growing economic contributor.

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**Priority 5.2:** Growth in education-based tourism around attractions that are anchored in the culture and identity of communities within the North West Queensland region.

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**Priority 5.3:** Increased marketing of the North West Queensland region to tourists in order to increase visitor numbers, provide a direct boost to local economies and encourage investment in the industry.

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**Priority 5.4:** Enhanced capability across the North West Queensland region for agri-tourism, paleo-tourism and outback tourism experiences.

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Tourism is already a key industry in the North West Queensland region, making a strong contribution to the region's economy. However, there is significant opportunity for further development and enhancement of the tourism industry throughout the region to drive economic growth and promote sustainable communities, including First Nations peoples agri-tourism development opportunities.

The North West Queensland region boasts a wealth of natural attractions, including its landscapes, globally renowned fossil deposits, expansive national parks, and rich First Nations cultural heritage. These unique assets are compelling drawcards for visitors, both nationally and globally, and are perfectly complemented by the region's vibrant communities.

By leveraging these natural and cultural resources, the North West Queensland region has the potential to bolster its existing tourism industry and diversify and expand its offerings to the visitor economy year-round.

These priorities are supported by the NWQEDS which speaks to the opportunities in the North West Queensland region for:

- Building the region's profile as an education tourism destination, and
- Promoting the region's First Nations cultural heritage and developing authentic art/photography workshops, story-telling, and interpretive centres to engage visitors seeking immersive experiences.





#### Queensland Government actions to support implementing this priority:

The REFF is a new fund that supports economic and community development initiatives. REFF funding that aligns to this priority is expected to be announced in 2024.

#### Other activities include:

- LEO Network engages through the region and hosts a dedicated webpage identifying current State and Federal funding programs and opportunities (DSDI).
- The Queensland tourism industry strategy (Towards Tourism 2032 [TT32] – Transforming Queensland’s visitor economy future) was developed in partnership with industry to guide industry and government’s partnership to deliver long term growth and success for Queensland tourism. Key progress to date includes overnight visitor expenditure reaching \$34.3 billion (for the 12 months ending September 2023); government-industry partnership investment in international aviation and route attraction under the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund; delivering marketing initiatives to grow visitation from target markets; supporting improvements in accessibility and resilience of industry; attracting major international sporting events; ongoing delivery of grant funding programs to develop and enhance tourism product, infrastructure and experiences; private investment facilitation (Department of Tourism and Sport [DTS]).
- The NWQEDS Implementation Plan to 2025 has a strong focus on increasing the economic benefit of tourism and supporting the development of catalytic tourism projects (DSDI).
- The Queensland Government offers support for tourism businesses, including the Building Bush Tourism Fund, and marketing and event support through Tourism and Events Queensland (DTS).
- DTMR’s Queensland Tourism and Transport Strategy has been developed jointly by DTMR and DTS and details the Queensland Government’s plan to improve access to Queensland’s world class tourism destinations in an effort to enhance the visitor experience and grow the tourism industry.

[statedevelopment.qld.gov.au](http://statedevelopment.qld.gov.au)



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