

# Future-Proofing Aged Care Far North Queensland

A regional and industry environmental scan



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### Further enquiries

For enquiries or further information about this report:

**Telephone:** (07) 3294 4706

**Email:** [info@jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au)

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	Grow Your Own Regional Workforce program .....	2
1.2	Why the aged care industry in Far North Queensland.....	2
1.3	Project scope.....	3
1.4	Governance and methodology.....	4
1.5	Region and industry of focus.....	4
1.6	The aged care industry ecosystem .....	6
<b>2</b>	<b>Summary highlights and findings.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>An overview of the Far North Queensland region .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1	Population profile .....	13
3.2	Workforce and labour market profile .....	21
3.3	Business profile.....	23
3.4	Job vacancies.....	24
3.5	Education level profile.....	24
3.6	VET training activity .....	26
3.7	VET and employment pathways.....	32
3.8	Far North Queensland regional development.....	34
3.9	Employment projections and jobs growth .....	39
<b>4</b>	<b>An overview of the aged care industry.....</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1	Industry sectors and regional operations .....	40
4.2	Workforce profile .....	43
4.3	Training profile .....	46
4.4	Training pathways .....	47
4.5	Vocational training and tertiary education.....	49
4.6	Employment projections and jobs growth .....	53
4.7	Labour shortage and recruitment challenges .....	56
4.8	Skills and training requirements.....	57
4.9	Future opportunities .....	58
4.10	Regional preparedness for economic, environmental and technological shocks .....	59
4.11	Business confidence and economic outlook in the aged care sector .....	60
<b>5</b>	<b>Development of a workforce plan .....</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>Appendix A – Aged Care admissions in Far North Queensland. ....</b>	<b>62</b>
	<b>Appendix B – Selected occupations in the aged care sector. ....</b>	<b>64</b>
	<b>Appendix C – Selected occupations in the aged care sector. ....</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>Appendix D – The aged care sector in Far North Queensland. ....</b>	<b>70</b>
	<b>Appendix E – Characteristics of the aged care workforce across service types .....</b>	<b>74</b>
	<b>Glossary .....</b>	<b>76</b>

# 1 | Introduction

## 1.1 Grow Your Own Regional Workforce program

The Queensland Government collaborates with industry, business, community and government stakeholders to build a strong, skilled workforce that supports the state's economic prosperity. Given the distinct industry profiles and workforce challenges across Queensland's regions, applying a regional perspective to workforce planning and capability development is essential to address local needs and opportunities.

Jobs Queensland (JQ) is working alongside regional and industry partners to support locally driven workforce planning through its Grow Your Own Regional Workforce Program (GYO). GYO is facilitating the development and implementation of codesigned, place-based workforce strategies. These projects are focusing on locally driven solutions, led by regional stakeholders.

Research suggests that connection to family and community is important to Queensland workers. Having a strong connection to their region often motivates individuals to remain living and working locally. When workers, especially those with families, are established with local services, such as having children enrolled in local schools and partners with employment, they can be hesitant to relocate to a different region.<sup>1</sup> This creates a solid basis for the GYO Regional Workforce Program model, which motivates regions to enhance their local population's skills and abilities to meet the present and future demands of local industries.

## 1.2 Why the aged care industry in Far North Queensland

The aged care sector in Far North Queensland is facing critical workforce shortages, with demand for skilled workers expected to increase significantly due to the region's ageing population. This shortage reflects a nationwide trend where it is estimated that even if the workforce continues to grow at its current rate, there will be a shortage of 110,000 direct aged care workers nationwide by 2030.<sup>2</sup> This issue will continue to be a significant concern despite existing efforts to expand the workforce.<sup>3</sup>

The aged care sector is closely interconnected with other industry sectors that provide essential support to older Australians and aged care service providers, particularly the healthcare and hospitality sectors.

These interconnected industry sectors share workforce challenges with the aged care sector. The healthcare sector has been the subject of workforce reviews and planning by both private sector and government entities over a considerable period with ongoing initiatives in place to build capacity. In contrast, the regional aged care workforce has not received a similar level of sustained attention. Ageing Australia is working to remedy this through initiatives such as the *Future-Proofing Aged Care: Workforce Planning for Far North Queensland* project. Maximising the value of the project requires a tight focus on the workforce needs of the aged care sector in the Far North Queensland region.

In this context, the scope of this environmental scan has been informed by contemporary developments in aged care and consultation with regional stakeholders. It examines the aged care sector in Far North Queensland (i.e. the Cairns – North, Cairns – South, Far North, Innisfail - Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas – Daintree and Tablelands (East) – Kuranda Statistical Area 3 (SA3) regions) and encompasses personal care workers specific to the aged care sector, workforce roles that contribute to care minutes in residential aged care and roles that provide critical support to the provision of aged care services. This concentrated focus on the needs of the region is an important aspect of this project. In Far North Queensland, chronic disease, disability and mental health issues are increasing the demand for skilled care, particularly in-home and palliative care services. The region faces a significant shortage of skilled aged care workers, exacerbated by geographic isolation, limited access to training and a lack of residential care services. The preference for in-home care and the growing number of palliative care patients, further strains the sector. Despite these challenges,

1 Jobs Queensland. (2023). *Supporting individuals in the transition to future work framework*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. [https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/\\_resources/files/pdf/supporting-individual-transition.pdf](https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/_resources/files/pdf/supporting-individual-transition.pdf)

2 CEDA. (2021). *Duty of care: Meeting the aged care workforce challenge*. Australia: Committee for Economic Development of Australia. <https://www.ceda.com.au/researchandpolicies/research/health-ageing/duty-of-care-meeting-the-aged-care-workforce-chall>

3 CEDA. (2023). *Duty of care: Aged-care sector running on empty*. Australia: Committee for Economic Development of Australia. <https://www.ceda.com.au/researchandpolicies/research/health-ageing/duty-of-care-aged-care-sector-running-on-empty>

there is currently no region-specific workforce plan to address the unique needs of the aged care sector in this region.

A comprehensive workforce plan is urgently needed to address existing workforce gaps. *The Future-Proofing Aged Care: Workforce Planning for Far North Queensland* initiative aims to tackle critical workforce shortages in the region's aged care sector by creating a strategic, long-term workforce plan. This initiative will focus on developing a sustainable and skilled workforce capable of meeting the growing demand for aged care services in the region. Through targeted strategies for training, recruitment and retention, the plan will ensure the delivery of high-quality care to the ageing population in Far North Queensland.

This workforce planning project aims to outline short, medium and long-term strategies for developing a skilled workforce capable of meeting the growing demand over the next three to five years. By focusing on enhancing access to training, improving recruitment and creating sustainable care models for both residential and community-based services, the aged care sector in Far North Queensland will be well positioned to deliver high-quality care in the years to come.

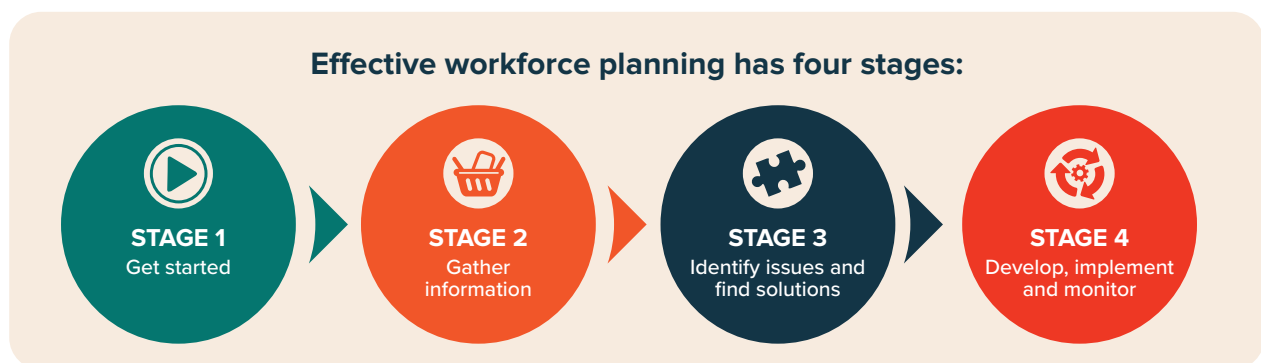
### 1.3 Project scope

Ageing Australia has partnered with Jobs Queensland to gain insights into labour market challenges, the scale of skills shortages and identify opportunities to strengthen the future workforce of the aged care industry in Far North Queensland.

This regional and industry environmental scan aims to provide demographic information, a profile of the aged care sector industry and related education and training needs. The report provides an evidence base for the development of a workforce plan with practical, actionable recommendations designed to enhance the aged care workforce in Far North Queensland.

This workforce planning project will:

- provide an understanding of the current labour market challenges experienced in Far North Queensland
- assess the extent of skills and labour shortages
- explore solutions and opportunities to meet current and future workforce needs to support the aged care industry in Far North Queensland.



Developing a dedicated workforce plan that emphasises skills development, job placement support and industry collaboration with educational institutions will help the region address labour shortages, strengthen resilience and drive economic stability and employment growth.

## 1.4 Governance and methodology

### Stage 1: Get started

To support delivery of the project, an Advisory Group has been established to provide an industry perspective on issues impacting the aged care sector in Far North Queensland and develop solutions for inclusion in a workforce plan. The Advisory Group includes representatives drawn from a range of industry organisations with roles in home and residential aged care, First Nations aged care, primary healthcare, education and training in the region:

- Bolton Clarke
- CheckUP Australia
- Freestone Associates
- Health Workforce Queensland
- Independent Living Support Association
- James Cook University
- Northern Queensland Primary Health Network
- St Johns Community Care
- TAFE Centre of Excellence
- Uniting Care QLD
- Wunun Consultancy Pty Ltd

Ageing Australia is highly appreciative of the contribution made by these partner organisations.

### Stage 2: Gather information

This environmental scan draws on targeted desktop research to build a picture of the aged care workforce landscape in Far North Queensland, with a particular focus on Cairns and surrounding areas. The research involved reviewing a wide range of publicly available sources, including government and industry reports, workforce data sets, regional profiles and previous studies relevant to the aged care sector. This research maps current workforce characteristics, identifying existing gaps and pressures and highlighting opportunities to strengthen the region's aged care workforce. The findings provide a foundation for identifying priority areas for action and inform the next phase of consultation and planning.

## 1.5 Region and industry of focus

Far North Queensland (FNQ) is a strategically significant region in Northern Australia with Cairns serving as the principal urban centre. The region's economy is diverse with key industries including agriculture, aquaculture, tourism, healthcare and mining. Agricultural activities are robust producing tropical fruits, sugar cane and coffee. Aquaculture is expanding due to favourable climatic conditions and proximity to infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1: Map of Cairns Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4)**



Source: QGSO, Queensland Statistical Areas, Level 4 (SA4), 2021 - Cairns (ASGS Code 306)

This workforce environmental scan focuses on the five SA3 areas that make up the Cairns Statistical Area Level 4 region (Cairns – North, Cairns – South, Innisfail - Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas – Daintree and Tablelands (East) – Kuranda Statistical Area 3 regions) Cairns SA4 and the Far North SA3. The Cairns SA4 area is located approximately 1700 kilometres from the Brisbane Central Business District (CBD) and 350 kilometres from the Townsville CBD. The Cairns SA4 encompasses five Statistical Area Level 3 regions: Cairns – North, Cairns – South, Innisfail – Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas – Daintree and Tablelands (East) – Kuranda. Within these regions, there are 33 Statistical Area Level 2s.

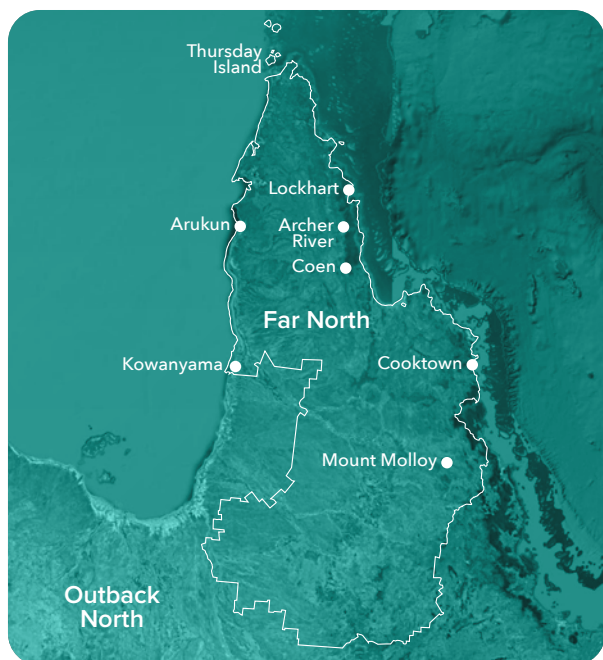
4 National Institute of Economics and Industry Research (NIEIR). (2025). *Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, economic profile. Compiled and presented by economy.id. Findings based on use of NIEIR data.* Collingwood: .id informed decisions. <https://economy.id.com.au/fnqroc>

5 .id (informed decisions). (2023). *2023 Population Forecast Review, Queensland – Cairns SA4 region.* Collingwood: .id informed decisions. <https://home.id.com.au/forecast-review/cairns-june-2023>

The geographically larger Far North SA3 neighbours the Cairns SA4 area and is the northernmost part of Queensland with local communities including Cooktown, Thursday Island and Weipa (see Figure 2). Within the Far North SA3 region are 8 Statistical Area Level 2s.

Characterised by its tropical climate, the region is experiencing an increasingly diverse economy and exhibits a range of demographic trends that directly impact workforce planning, service delivery and economic development.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2: Map of Far North Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3)**



Source: QGSO, Queensland Statistical Areas, Level 3 (SA3), 2021 - Far North (ASGC Code 31501)

The diverse geography of the region poses logistical challenges for service delivery, especially in rural and remote areas where access to healthcare, aged care and training facilities is limited.

The majority of the Cairns region's population resides in areas classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as Outer Regional Australia under the ABS Remote Area classification. Approximately 1.5 per cent of the population reside in areas designated as Remote Australia or Very Remote Australia.<sup>6</sup> The Far North SA3 is recognised for its remoteness, with 83 per cent of the population residing in areas designated as Remote Australia or Very Remote Australia.<sup>7</sup>

The geographical challenges in Far North Queensland are particularly pronounced for community based aged care providers.

It is often difficult to find local workforce to deliver services to older individuals who may only require one hour of care at a time. Aged care providers must cover the minimum hourly rate for workers, travel time and kilometre allowances, complicating service delivery and increasing operational costs. Innovative solutions such as telehealth and other mobile services are essential for addressing these challenges.

Far North Queensland has a diverse and evolving economy. The Cairns SA4 region has particular strengths in defence, manufacturing and construction, health and education, tourism, agriculture and resources.<sup>8</sup> Economic growth in recent years has been driven by tourism, infrastructure development and healthcare. In 2021, the Gross Regional Product (GRP) of Cairns was \$19.9 billion.<sup>9</sup> Traditional industries are adapting, while new industries are emerging, reflecting a dynamic industrial landscape.

Cairns is recognised as a key gateway to the Asia-Pacific region, with strong domestic and international connectivity via Cairns International Airport and Ports North. The newly developed Regional Trade Distribution Centre at the Cairns Airport has enhanced the region's airfreight capabilities, supporting export growth.

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Remoteness Structure, Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3. Census of population and housing*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/remoteness-structure>

7 Ibid

8 CommBank. (2024). *Newsroom: CommBank data shows tourism in Cairns and Far North Queensland is on the up*. Australia: Commonwealth Bank of Australia. <https://www.commbank.com.au/articles/newsroom/2024/06/cairns-sector-growth.html>

9 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts. (2025). *Experimental Gross Regional Product estimates*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/departments/media/publications/experimental-gross-regional-product-estimates>

Climate change is impacting the region, with rising temperatures and increases in the number of hot days. These changes are particularly affecting industries such as agriculture and tourism, necessitating adaptation strategies.<sup>10</sup>

Population growth is reshaping the region, attracting investment and stimulating residential and commercial development. In 2021, the population of Far North Queensland was 290,217 and is forecast to grow by 1.4 per cent annually to reach 368,493 by 2046, representing around 3 per cent of Queensland's total population growth over the period. One contributing factor is increased migration to regional areas, supported by the rise of remote work and advances in digital technology.<sup>11</sup>

The region is also experiencing demographic change, with an ageing population increasing demand for aged care services and necessitating workforce development in this industry.

Across industries, workforce availability remains a challenge, particularly in healthcare and aged care where recruitment and retention issues persist.<sup>12</sup>

Dwelling growth is expected to follow population trends, with the number of dwellings projected to increase by approximately 28,400 between 2021 and 2046, reaching 143,771. Most of this growth is forecast in:

- Gordonvale - Trinity SA2 (5186 dwellings or 18.3 per cent)
- Edmonton SA2 (3014 dwellings or 10.6 per cent)
- Trinity Beach - Smithfield SA2 (2819 dwellings or 9.9 per cent).<sup>13</sup>

## 1.6 The aged care industry ecosystem

One in four Australians aged 65 and older reside in rural or remote areas. In addition to mainstream aged care services, flexible programs such as the Multi-Purpose Services (MPS) Program and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFAC) Program play a crucial role in ensuring facilitating widespread access to care.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reported that in 2022-2023, over 218,000 individuals in rural and remote Australia (areas defined by the Modified Monash Model as classifications 3-7; large rural towns through to very remote communities) accessed entry-level home support services under the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP). As of 30 June 2023, more than 100,000 people were receiving permanent residential care or home care services. The proportion of care recipients identifying as Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples increases with increasing remoteness, while the proportion of those born in a non-English speaking country decrease. However, a greater proportion of individuals in remote areas prefer to speak a language other than English, which may include Australian First Nations languages.<sup>14</sup> The AIHW findings are highly relevant to Far North Queensland where communities are classified as Monash Model 2-7 (regional centres through to very remote communities). Far North Queensland exhibits similar demographic patterns with remoteness influencing aged care service delivery.

Aged care services primarily support people aged 65 years and older as well as Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 50–64. Access to government-funded services is subject to an individual needs assessment.

10 Queensland Government. (2024). *Queensland Future Climate, Regional Impact Summaries*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. [https://data.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/static/Regional%20Impact%20Summaries/Qld%20Climate%20Change%20Impact%20Summary\\_Far%20North.pdf](https://data.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/static/Regional%20Impact%20Summaries/Qld%20Climate%20Change%20Impact%20Summary_Far%20North.pdf)

11 Regional Australia Institute. (2025). *Regional Movers Index*. Canberra: Regional Australia Institute. <https://regionalaustalia.org.au/Web/Web/Toolkits-Indexes/Regional-Movers-Index.aspx>

12 Department of Trade, Employment and Training. (2024). *Case study: Supporting workforce priorities in Far North Queensland*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/support-employers/workforce-strategy/stories/workforce-priorities-fng>

13 id (informed decisions). (2023). *2023 Population Forecast Review, Queensland - Cairns SA4 region*. Collingwood: id informed decisions. <https://home.id.com.au/forecast-review/cairns-june-2023>

14 Australian Institute of Health and welfare. (2024). *Factsheet 2022-23, Aged care in rural and remote Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. [https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/getmedia/31f416f6-19a9-4332-a687-a661ed1d0ebe/Aged-care-in-rural-and-remote-Australia\\_2022%e2%80%9323.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/getmedia/31f416f6-19a9-4332-a687-a661ed1d0ebe/Aged-care-in-rural-and-remote-Australia_2022%e2%80%9323.pdf?ext=.pdf)

## Far North Queensland aged care population aged 65+

Port Douglas - Daintree

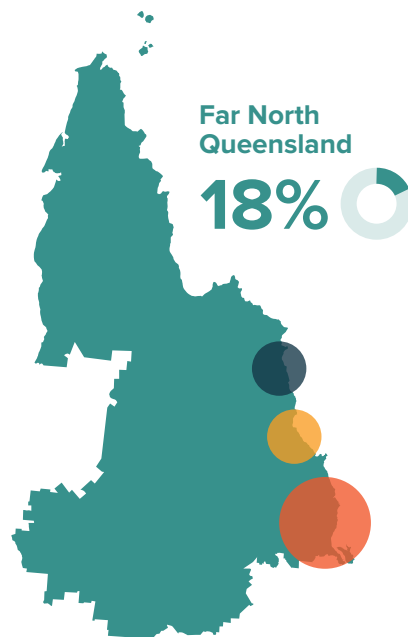
**21.2%**

Tablelands (East) - Kuranda<sup>15</sup>

**24.9%**

Innisfail - Cassowary Coast

**22.7%**



These figures are comparable to rural and remote areas across Australia, where 25 per cent of the population is aged 65 and older.<sup>16</sup>

AIHW data indicates that 7.4 per cent of people in Far North Queensland aged 50 and older identify as Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Far North Aged Care Planning Region (ACPR) has the second highest proportion of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as residents among Queensland's 15 ACPRs and ranks twelfth among all 73 ACPRs across Australia. Nationally, the median proportion of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 50 and older in ACPRs is 1.9 per cent, significantly lower than in Far North Queensland.<sup>17</sup>

## CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS IN AGED CARE<sup>18</sup>

### CULTURAL DIVERSITY



**26.3%** of aged 65+ Born overseas

Highlighting the need for culturally inclusive aged care services.

**9%**

Speak another language other than English at home.



### DISABILITY & ASSISTANCE NEEDS



**11.7%** aged 55 and older require assistance with core activities underscoring the importance of accessible aged care services.

### SOCIAL ISOLATION

**23%** of residents aged 65 and older live alone.

Reinforcing the need for services that support independence reduce social isolation.<sup>19</sup>



Information on aged care recipients in Far North Queensland can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Remoteness Structure, Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3. Census of population and housing*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/remoteness-structure>

<sup>16</sup> Australian Institute of Health and welfare. (2024). *Factsheet 2022-23, Aged care in rural and remote Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. [https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/getmedia/31f416f6-19a9-4332-a687-a661ed1d0ebe/Aged-care-in-rural-and-remote-Australia\\_2022%e2%80%9323.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/getmedia/31f416f6-19a9-4332-a687-a661ed1d0ebe/Aged-care-in-rural-and-remote-Australia_2022%e2%80%9323.pdf?ext=.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *GEN Aged Care Data: Dashboard supplementary tables*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/resources/access-data/2024/august/gen-data-dashboard-supplementary-tables>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *The detailed classification, Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC)*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/australian-and-new-zealand-standard-industrial-classification-anzsic/2006-revision-2-0/detailed-classification>

For this project, the following industries have been identified based on ANZSIC classifications defined by the ABS. The classifications cover the various aspects of the aged care industry, from residential care services to support and auxiliary services that contribute to the overall functioning of aged care facilities in Far North Queensland:

**Table 1: ANZSIC classifications for the aged care sector**

Division	Group	Class	Description
Q Healthcare and Social Assistance	<b>860 Residential care services</b>	<b>8601 - Residential Care</b> Aged care residential services	The provision of residential aged care combined with either nursing, supervisory or other types of care as required (including medical).
	<b>879 Other Social Assistance Services</b>	<b>8790 - Other Social Assistance Services</b> Aged care assistance services	The provision of social support services directly to their clients, such as home care support, not including accommodation services except on a short stay basis.

The ABS Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) provides detailed classifications for employees within the aged care industry, including occupation codes specific to this workforce (refer Table 8). Notably, the aged care worker category replaces the superseded ANZSCO classification of personal care worker. The updated OSCA framework enables clearer differentiation between aged care workers and personal care workers employed in other industries, allowing for more accurate workforce planning and analysis.

**Table 2: ABS occupation standard classification for Australia, codes for the aged care workforce**

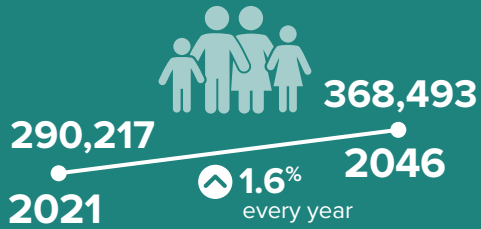
Category	Occupation Standard Classification	OSCA code
Aged care workers	Aged care coordinators and team leaders	4211
	Community aged care support workers	4212
	Residential aged care workers	4213
Chefs	Chef – including aged care chef	321131
Cleaners and laundry workers	Domestic cleaner	811231
	Domestic housekeeper	811432
	Laundry worker (incl. hospital linen workers)	811332
Community and welfare support workers	Diversional therapist	411331
	Lifestyle coordinator, activities coordinator, leisure and lifestyle coordinator	411332
	Lifestyle officer	411333
Health support workers	Enrolled nurse	441131
Patient and health care assistants	Assistant in nursing	442231
Nursing professionals	Registered nurse (aged care)	265433
	Nurse practitioner	265431

Source: ABS, Classifications, OSCA - Occupation Standard Classification for Australia.

Further information on in scope occupations is at Appendix B.

## 2 | Summary highlights and findings

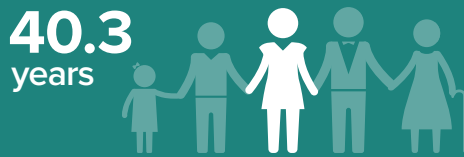
### DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND



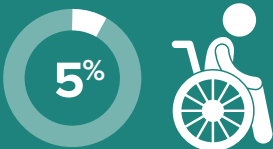
#### | Population



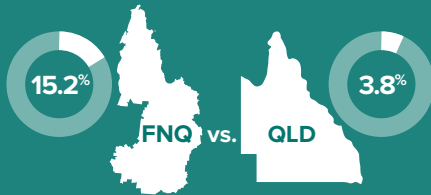
#### | Female vs. Male population



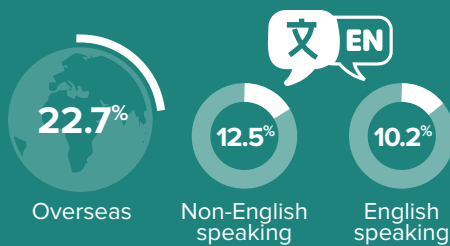
#### | Median age in 2023



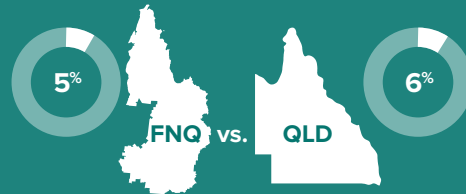
#### | Living with a disability



#### | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples population



#### | Country of origin



#### | Requiring core activity assistance



#### | Prevalence of dementia

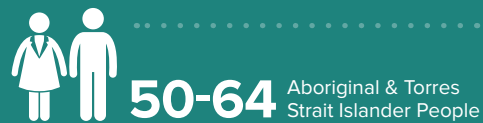
Predominantly 60+ years



#### | Socio-economic disadvantage

Targetted strategies for quality care needed

#### | Access to funded services



#### | Residents aged 65+



#### | Age 50+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

## WORKFORCE AND LABOUR MARKET LANDSCAPE CAIRNS SA4 AND FAR NORTH SA3 REGIONS\*



**142,000** Cairns SA4

**15,000** Far North SA3

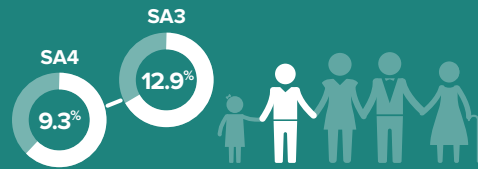
| Employed individuals



| Unemployment rate



| Participation rate



| Youth unemployment rate\*\*

Suggests a pool of youth exists that could be attracted to work in the aged care sector

\* The Cairns SA4 region that encompasses the Cairns – North, Cairns – South, Innisfail - Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas – Daintree and Tablelands (East) – Kuranda SA3 areas.

\*\* March 2025



### 3. Business ecosystem and challenges

The aged care sector is enduring a period of unprecedented growth driven by a significant ongoing increase in demand for its services by an ageing population.

*The implementation of the Aged Care Act 2024 brings new obligations and conditions for aged care providers.*

Staff must be trained to understand and implement these changes to ensure compliance and maintain high standards of care. Staff training has been identified as an important driver of quality improvement in the sector.

There is considerable government investment in healthcare and social assistance infrastructure underway in the region. The aged care sector in the region will benefit from increased availability of health services for care recipients and a growing health workforce.

The aged care sector experiences tight competition for workers from the healthcare and disability sectors, driven in part by low wages, high workloads and limited career progression opportunities. These challenges are heightened in rural and remote areas. The skilled aged care workforce is highly mobile across industries, leading to strong competition for staff from other sectors such as disability care, healthcare and hospitality sectors.

Several initiatives are already underway to address the current and future workforce training needs of the sector. The TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support has been established to develop innovative healthcare training solutions to address critical skills gaps in health, nursing and community services, with a focus on aged care, disability support and mental healthcare.

Additionally, Health Workforce Queensland in partnership with Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN), is working to build a sustainable health workforce by recruiting and retaining general practitioners, nurses and allied health professionals. This initiative includes both external recruitment and upskilling of existing workers in areas of high need. Personal care workers and domestic support workers are not within scope of the NQPHN initiative.

### 4. Vocational education and training (VET) trends

There were over 33,000 VET enrolments in Far north Queensland in 2023 including 9880 enrolments in school-based VET and over 600 school-based apprentice and trainees. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people account for approximately 22 per cent of VET students in Far North Queensland. People living with disability accounted for around six per cent of VET students in Far North Queensland. The largest area of VET enrolments support employment in the Healthcare and social assistance industry.

#### Far North Queensland aged care industry analysis

The Healthcare and social assistance that encompasses aged care, is the largest employing industry in the Far North Queensland, employing over approximately 20,000 people, or 16.7 per cent of the local workforce. The region's workforce is projected to grow by 4.3 per cent over the five years to 2027-2028 with the highest employment growth occurring in the health care and social assistance industry (12.4 per cent).

The workforce is predominantly female.

*Approximately, 43 per cent of directly employed nursing and personal care staff are aged 45 years and older, with a significant portion nearing retirement.*

This demographic shift is intensifying the need to attract new entrants to the sector.

Housing availability and affordability are barriers to attracting workers to the region to fill roles in the aged care sector. The availability of childcare also presents a barrier to employment within the region.

#### 1. Education and skills development

For approximately 22 per cent of the population in the region, Year 10 or equivalent is the highest education attainment, while the Year 12 or equivalent is the highest education attainment for 49 per cent of the population.

For non-school qualifications, the proportion of individuals with the highest education attainment at certificate level, bachelor's degree or postgraduate qualification is 39 (18 and 5 per cent respectively). Certificate level qualifications are the relevant level of educational attainment for personal care workers in the aged care sector.

In Far North Queensland the field of education (FOE) with the largest enrolments is human welfare studies and services. This FOE also exhibits the highest numbers of apprenticeship/trainee commencements. Consistent with these statistics, Carers and Aiders is the top occupational enrolment in the region. This is consistent with the predominance of the healthcare and social assistance industry encompassing aged care, as the largest employer in the region, strong demand for skilled staff and forecast strong future employment growth.

A very different picture is evident in the uptake of school-based VET programs where the greatest uptake of training is in FOEs food and hospitality, sport and recreation and tourism. Overall, training within the human welfare studies and services FOE is a very minor component of school-based VET enrolments. This is at odds with the predominance of the healthcare and social assistance industry as a contributor to employment in the region.

TAFE Queensland and registered training organisations in the region play important roles in providing a VET training pathway into the aged care workforce. Formal and informal traineeships offered by aged care providers are an important avenue for attracting and retaining personal care workers.

## 2. Labour market dynamics and challenges

The fast growth in the sector has led to labour shortages in a wide range of roles. The most acute shortage is in the availability of trained personal care workers, including workers specifically upskilled for complex aspects of aged care, such as dementia care.

## 3. Future directions and skills needs

It is important for the sector that a higher proportion of personal care workers are supported to attain a relevant VET qualification. Specific workforce training needs also exist in cultural competency, digital literacy, dementia care, palliative care and allied health assistance.

Consideration should be given to increasing the completion rates for VET training, possibly through candidate selection processes and raising candidate awareness of the sector prior to enrolment. Similarly, school-based VET programs present an opportunity to attract young workers to the sector.

The region's population includes a substantial number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents and the provision of culturally safe care is essential to meet their needs. Training programs that enhance cultural awareness among aged care workers are essential to ensure respectful and tailored care. It is also important that an Indigenous workforce brings their unique technical and sociocultural skills to improve care, improve access to services and support the provision of culturally appropriate care in the services that they and their non-Indigenous colleagues deliver.

Future directions in training should include micro-credentials aiming to up-skill a growing workforce to undertake a broader range of activities required for high quality care.

# 3 | An overview of the Far North Queensland region

## 3.1 Population profile

In 2021, the estimated resident population of Far North Queensland was 290,217 accounting for approximately one per cent of Australia's total population (Table 1).<sup>20</sup>

The region's population is projected to grow by 1.4 per cent annually, reaching 368,493 by 2046.<sup>21</sup>

The male and female proportion of the population is evenly distributed at 50 per cent and 50 per cent respectively.<sup>22</sup>

Within the Far North Queensland region, Cairns - South SA3 is expected to experience the fastest population growth between June 2021 and 2046, reaching 153,861 residents by 2046.<sup>23</sup> Population growth is forecasted to be concentrated mainly in urban areas, with nearly half of the expansion occurring in the Mount Peter region, located 15 kilometres south of Cairns. This area is projected to accommodate two-thirds of Tropical North Queensland's population growth (approximately 45,000) over the next 20 to 30 years.<sup>24</sup> Population growth is expected to be more modest across the Far North Queensland SA3 regions—such as Innisfail – Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas - Daintree and Tablelands (East) – Kuranda. Dwelling growth is expected to be more modest, reflecting smaller population bases and more dispersed settlement patterns.

**Table 3: Projected population in Far North Queensland (by SA3) and Queensland**

FNQ/SA3/State	As at 30 June (#)						Average annual growth rate %
	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041	2046	2021-2026
Far North Queensland	290,217	306,292	322,648	338,733	354,063	368,493	1.4
Cairns - North	58,585	62,575	66,056	68,816	71,557	73,126	0.9
Cairns - South	107,020	114,865	123,946	133,775	143,407	153,861	1.5
Far North	33,068	33,734	34,273	34,644	34,852	34,851	0.2
Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	35,830	36,859	37,574	38,192	38,702	39,120	0.4
Port Douglas - Daintree	12,360	12,870	13,573	14,203	14,749	15,207	0.8
Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	43,354	45,389	47,226	49,103	50,796	52,328	0.8
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>5,217,653</b>	<b>5,663,247</b>	<b>6,079,887</b>	<b>6,492,441</b>	<b>6,899,969</b>	<b>7,299,934</b>	<b>1.4</b>

Source: QGSO, Queensland Government population projections, 2023 edition.

20 Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2024). *Population Projection, 2023 edition update*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/population/population-projections/2023-edition-update>.

21 Ibid.

22 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Regional population by age and sex*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population-age-and-sex/latest-release>

23 Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2024). *Population Projection, 2023 edition update*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/population/population-projections/2023-edition-update>

24 Cairns Regional Council. (2012). *Mount Peter Structure Plan Summary Report*. Cairns: Local Government. [https://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/65186/Part-1-Final-Summary-Report.pdf](https://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/65186/Part-1-Final-Summary-Report.pdf)

The region is experiencing an overall ageing population, driven by longer life expectancies and net inward migration.<sup>25</sup>

In 2023, the median age was estimated at 40.3 years, an increase of 3.1 years since 2013.<sup>26</sup> Within the region, the median age in the Cairns SA4 is slightly higher at 41.2 years and Tablelands (East) - Kuranda SA3 was estimated to have the highest median age of 46.8 years.<sup>27</sup> This trend is expected to continue, with

the median age in the region projected to reach 47.2 years by 2046.<sup>28</sup>

Approximately 18 per cent of the region's population is aged 65 or older and this figure is projected to grow by 1.8 per cent per year. The Tablelands (East) - Kuranda SA3 had the highest proportion of residents aged 65 and older at 24.9 per cent (Table 4). The growth of the older population is predicted to be fastest in the Cairns SA4 region, where by 2046 the number of residents aged 65 and older is expected to exceed 80,000, an increase of 32,473 people over 25 years.<sup>29</sup>

**Table 4: Estimated resident population by age in Far North Queensland (by SA3) and Queensland, 2021**

FNQ/SA3/State	AGE GROUP									
	0-14		15-24		25-44		45-64		65+	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Far North Queensland	56,006	18.7	34,846	11.7	76,521	25.6	78,799	26.4	52,657	17.6
Cairns - North	11,553	18.8	7,243	11.8	15,381	25	17,461	28.4	9,886	16.1
Cairns - South	20,314	18.4	13,770	12.5	31,438	28.5	27,521	25	17,094	15.5
Far North	7,965	23.8	4,295	12.8	9,621	28.8	7,961	23.8	3,621	10.8
Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	6,580	18.1	3,847	10.6	7,770	21.4	9,892	27.2	8,260	22.7
Port Douglas - Daintree	1,859	14.6	1,133	8.9	3,175	24.9	3,866	30.4	2,702	21.2
Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	7,735	17.3	4,558	10.2	9,136	20.5	12,098	27.1	11,094	24.9
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>1,003,442</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>698,957</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>1,505,093</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>1,326,176</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>926,752</b>	<b>17</b>

Source: QGSO, Queensland Government population projections, 2023 edition.

The growing number of older residents is a key factor in aged care planning. In 2021, approximately 33,000 residents (11.2 per cent) in Far North Queensland were aged 70 and older, while approximately 10,000 residents (3.3 per cent) were aged 80 and older.<sup>30</sup>

25 .id (informed decisions). (2023). *2023 Population Forecast Review, Queensland - Cairns SA4 region*. Collingwood: .id informed decisions. <https://home.id.com.au/forecast-review/cairns-june-2023>

26 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *Regional population by age and sex, regions of Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population-age-and-sex/2023>

27 Ibid

28 Ibid

29 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Population Projections, Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/population-projections-australia/2022-base-2071>

30 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *Regional population by age and sex, regions of Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population-age-and-sex/2023>

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples are estimated to make up 15.2 per cent of the population, significantly higher than the national average of 3.8 per cent.<sup>31</sup> Approximately 40 per cent (16,534) of the region's Aboriginal peoples and

Torres Strait Islander peoples population reside in the Far North SA3, while 30 per cent (13,069) of the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples population reside in the Cairns - South SA3 (refer Table 5).

**Table 5: Indigenous status in Far North Queensland (by SA3) and Queensland, 2021**

FNQ/SA3/State	FIRST NATIONS PERSONS					Non-Indigenous persons		Total persons
	Aboriginal #	Torres Strait Islander #	Both #	Total #	%	#	%	#
Far North Queensland	23,799	10,844	8,812	43,462	15.2	217,334	76.07	285,955
Cairns - North	1742	602	427	2769	4.8	51,975	90	57,774
Cairns - South	6573	3483	3011	13,069	12.4	82,145	77.9	105,489
Far North	6686	5854	3987	16,534	51.3	12,509	38.8	32,207
Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	4653	514	741	5916	16.7	26,248	74.3	35,333
Port Douglas - Daintree	700	98	205	998	8.1	9865	80.5	12,252
Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	3445	293	441	4176	9.7	34,592	80.6	42,900
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>193,405</b>	<b>21,772</b>	<b>22,122</b>	<b>237,303</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4,635,042</b>	<b>89.9</b>	<b>5,156,138</b>

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile – I02.

Individuals born overseas make up 19 per cent of the region's population, slightly lower than the Queensland average of 23 per cent. The largest number of overseas born residents live in the Cairns - South SA3 region, while the highest proportion is found in the Cairns - North SA3 region.

31 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimates-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/latest-release#data-downloads>

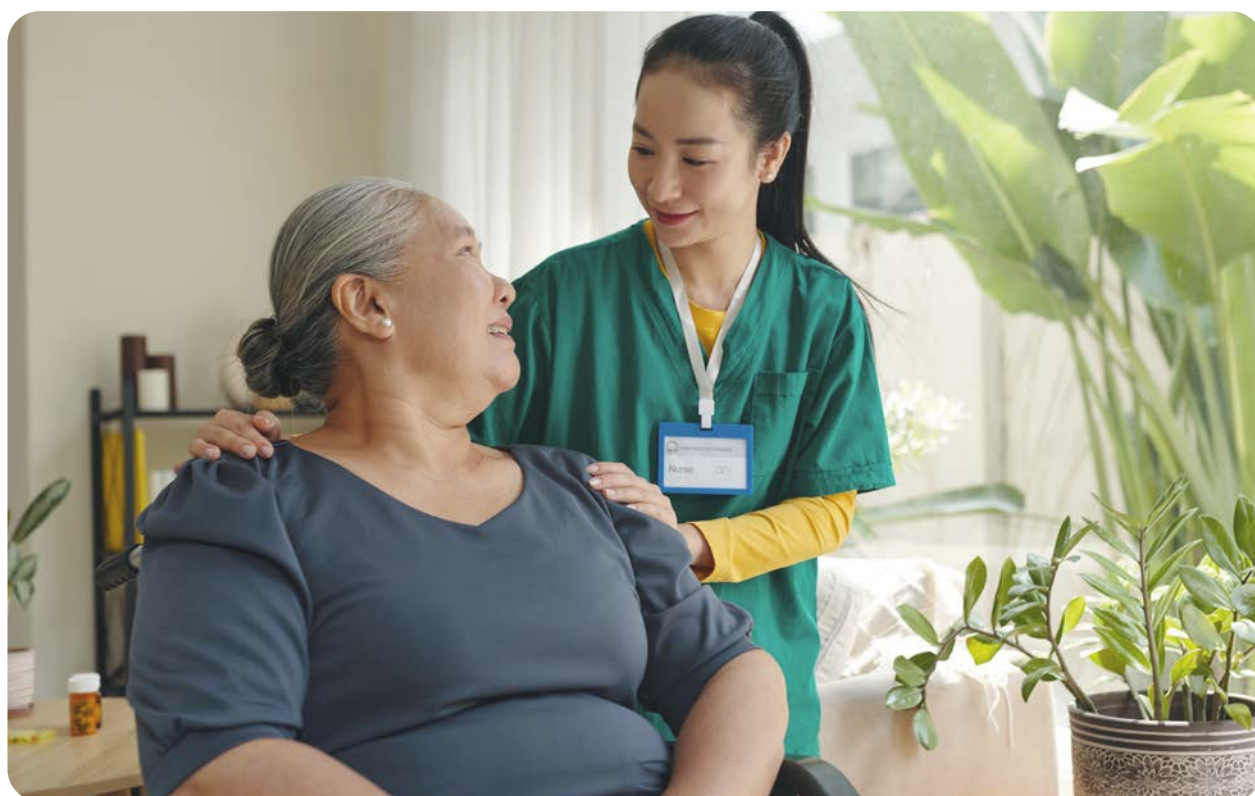
**Table 6: Country of birth in Far North Queensland (by SA3) and Queensland, 2021**

FNQ/SA3/State	Born in Australia (a)		BORN OVERSEAS				Total		Total persons (d)
	#	%	Born in ESB countries (b)	Born in NESB countries (c)			#	%	#
			#	%	#	%			
Far North Queensland	205,634	71.9	21,568	7.5	31,569	11.0	53,160	18.6	285,955
Cairns - North	40,444	70	7169	12.4	7053	12.2	14,233	24.6	57,774
Cairns - South	72,004	68.3	7341	7.0	15,306	14.5	22,639	21.5	105,489
Far North	26,177	81.3	1112	3.5	1411	4.4	2529	7.9	32,207
Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	27,065	76.6	1683	4.8	2946	8.3	4634	13.1	35,333
Port Douglas - Daintree	8124	66.3	1383	11.3	1238	10.1	2632	21.5	12,252
Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	31,820	74.2	2880	6.7	3615	8.4	6493	15.1	42,900
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>3,680,014</b>	<b>71.4</b>	<b>524,705</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>645,628</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>1,170,334</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>5,156,138</b>

- (a) Includes 'Australia', 'Australia (includes External Territories), not further defined', 'Norfolk Island' and 'Australian External Territories, not elsewhere classified' responses.
- (b) English Speaking Background (ESB) countries: the main English-speaking countries of UK, Ireland, Canada, USA, South Africa and New Zealand.
- (c) Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB) countries: includes countries not identified individually, 'Inadequately described' and 'At sea' responses.
- (d) Includes not stated responses.

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G01 and G09

Providing culturally appropriate services and developing a culturally competent workforce is essential for effectively addressing the needs of the community.



## Health and disability

The prevalence of long-term health conditions in Far North Queensland is generally similar to that in both the Queensland and Australian populations (Table 7).

**Table 7: Prevalence of long-term health conditions in Far North Queensland, Queensland and Australia, 2021**

Type of long-term health condition	Far North Queensland		Queensland		Australia	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Arthritis	21,513	7.4	456,139	8.8	2,150,396	8.5
Asthma	17,611	6.1	438,183	8.5	2,068,020	8.1
Cancer (including remission)	8050	2.8	159,887	3.1	732,152	2.9
Dementia (including Alzheimer's)	2009	0.7	37,680	0.7	189,162	0.7
Diabetes (excluding gestational diabetes)	12,912	4.4	231,642	4.5	1,198,721	4.7
Heart disease (including heart attack or angina)	11,096	3.8	215,678	4.2	999,096	3.9
Kidney disease	2560	0.9	47,737	0.9	231,777	0.9
Lung condition (including COPD or emphysema)	5275	1.8	106,989	2.1	441,109	1.7
Mental health condition (including depression or anxiety)	29,598	7.1	496,662	9.6	2,231,543	8.8
Stroke	2611	0.91	49,769	1.0	234,609	0.9
Any other long-term health condition(s)	20,404	7.5	434,963	8.4	2,041,929	8
No long-term health condition(s)	169,086	58	3,001,387	58.2	15,292,718	60.2
Not stated	25,675	12.3	459,562	8.9	2,066,251	8.1

Note: Respondents had the option of reporting multiple long-term health conditions. Therefore, the sum of all long-term health condition responses for an area will not equal the total number of people in the area.

Note: Calculated percentages represent a proportion of the number of people in the area (including those who did not answer the long-term health conditions question).

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G19.

Chronic conditions such as dementia and Type 2 Diabetes (a risk factor for dementia), significantly impact the health and quality of life of those affected, as well as their family and friends. The high prevalence of dementia among older age groups also poses challenges for the aged care sector. In 2021-2022, more than half of the residents in permanent residential aged care in Australia were living with dementia.<sup>32</sup>

Dementia becomes more prevalent with age. AIHW report that dementia affects fewer than one in 1000 Australians under 60, 71 per 1000 for those aged 75–79 and 429 per 1000 for those aged 90 and older. AIHW further reports that among the oldest age groups, dementia rates are higher in women (479 per 1000) than men (337 per 1000).<sup>33</sup> For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 60 and older living in urban and regional areas, the prevalence of dementia is approximately three times higher than the overall Australian prevalence for the same age group.<sup>34</sup>

Five per cent of the population of Far North Queensland are living with disability that necessitates assistance to complete core activities, lower than the proportion within the Queensland population (6 per cent).

32 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *Dementia in Australia, Residential aged care*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dementia/dementia-in-aus/contents/aged-care-and-support-services-used-by-people-with/residential-aged-care>

33 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *Dementia in Australia, Prevalence of dementia*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dementia/dementia-in-aus/contents/population-health-impacts-of-dementia/prevalence-of-dementia>

34 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *Dementia in Australia, Population health impacts of dementia among First Nations people*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dementia/dementia-in-aus/contents/dementia-amongst-first-nations-people/population-health-impacts-dementia-first-nations>

**Table 8: Number of persons in Far North Queensland needing assistance to complete core activities, 2021**

Sex	Need for assistance		No need for assistance		Need for assistance not stated		Total #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Male	7764	5	119,362	83	15,902	11	143,025
Female	7627	5	122,293	85	13,019	9	142,934
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,391</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>241,655</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>28,921</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>285,959</b>

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G18.

The Innisfail - Cassowary Coast SA3 has the highest proportion persons in need of assistance with 6.4 per cent, while the Far North SA3 had the lowest percentage with 3.4 per cent (refer Table 9).

**Table 9: Need for assistance with a profound or severe disability in Far North Queensland (by SA3) and Queensland, 2021**

FNQ/SA3/State	Need for assistance		No need for assistance		Total #
	#	%	#	%	
FNQ	15,389	5.4	241,660	84.5	285,955
Cairns - North	2717	4.7	51,624	89.4	57,774
Cairns - South	6040	5.7	88,406	83.8	105,489
Far North	1079	3.4	26,047	80.9	32,207
Innisfail Cassowary Coast	2274	6.4	29,540	83.6	35,333
Port Douglas Daintree	608	5.0	10,216	83.4	12,252
Tablelands (East) Kuranda	2671	6.2	35,827	83.5	42,900
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>309,366</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>4,513,222</b>	<b>87.5</b>	<b>5,156,138</b>

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G18.

## Personal and family income

The median total personal income in Far North Queensland was \$38,249 per year, lower than the median total income across Queensland of \$40,924. Residents in Cairns - North SA3 had the highest median total personal income of \$45,968 per year, while residents of the Far North SA3 had the lowest median total personal income of \$31,096 per year (refer Table 10).

**Table 10: Total personal income in Far North Queensland (by SA3) and Queensland, 2021**

FNQ/SA3/State	Less than \$20,800 per year		\$20,800 to 51,999 per year		\$52,000 to \$103,999 per year		\$104,000 or more per year		Total (a)	Median (year)
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Far North Queensland	54,620	23.6	75,522	32.6	55,266	23.9	18,362	7.9	231,346	38,249
Cairns - North	10,033	21.5	13,931	29.9	13,769	29.6	5,482	11.8	46,563	45,968
Cairns - South	18,535	21.7	28,085	32.9	21,905	25.6	6,667	7.8	85,466	40,508
Far North	6,848	27.9	6,528	26.6	4,401	17.9	1,948	7.9	24,572	31,096
Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	7,826	27.1	10,647	36.8	5,600	19.4	1,485	5.1	28,898	32,084
Port Douglas - Daintree	2,158	20.7	3,885	37.3	2,351	22.6	609	5.8	10,420	38,428
Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	9,220	26.0	12,446	35.1	7,240	20.4	2,171	6.1	35,427	33,280
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>999,942</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>1,316,078</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>1,085,654</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>461,162</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>4,191,812</b>	<b>40,924</b>

(a) Includes personal income not stated.

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G02 and G17

The median total family income in Far North Queensland was \$92,277 per year, lower than the median family income for Queensland of \$105,247. Cairns - North SA3 had the highest median total family income with \$111,956 per year, while Far North SA3 had the lowest with \$74,152 per year. (Refer Table 11).

**Table 11: Total family income in Far North Queensland (by SA3) and Queensland, 2021**

FNQ/SA3/State	Less than \$33,800 per year		\$33,800 to 77,999 per year		\$78,000 to \$155,999 per year		\$156,000 or more per year		Total	Median (year)
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Far North Queensland	6,284	8.7	21,103	29.3	24,060	33.4	12,884	17.9	71,931	92,277
Cairns - North	892	5.6	3,696	23.2	5,853	36.8	4,022	25.3	15,901	111,956
Cairns - South	2,030	7.9	7,292	28.5	9,203	36	4,665	18.2	25,591	95,524
Far North	1,077	15.2	2,083	29.4	1,711	24.1	1,130	15.9	7,090	74,152
Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	970	10.7	3,260	35.9	2,777	30.5	1,080	11.9	9,093	75,192
Port Douglas - Daintree	237	7.8	990	32.8	1,095	36.2	398	13.2	3,022	87,776
Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	1,078	9.6	3,782	33.7	3,421	30.5	1,589	14.1	11,234	79,456
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>94,168</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>36,338</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>464,993</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>332,448</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>1,366,657</b>	<b>105,248</b>

(a) Includes same-sex couple families. Excludes 'Lone person', 'Group', 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households. Excludes overseas visitors.

(b) Includes partially stated and not stated income responses.

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G02 and G32

## Socioeconomic disparities

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) measures the social and economic conditions of geographic areas across Australia, ranking them based on relative socio-economic disadvantage (Table 12).

Within Far North Queensland the index shows that:<sup>35</sup>

- 30.6 per cent of the population falls within the most disadvantaged quintile, compared to the Queensland average of 20 per cent.
- Socioeconomic disparities exist across the region, with Cairns – South, Innisfail – Cassowary Coast and Tablelands having a higher proportion of residents classified as most disadvantaged compared to other SA3 areas. Only 2.7 per cent of the population falls within the least disadvantaged quintile, approximately half of the Queensland average.

**Table 12: Population by Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage quintiles in Far North Queensland (by SA3) and Queensland, 2021**

FNQ/SA3/State	Quintile 1 (most disadvantaged)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (least disadvantaged)
	%	%	%	%	%
FNQ	33.9	21	19	15.9	10.1
Cairns - North	3	17	24.5	29.8	25.7
Cairns - South	39.1	19.7	17.1	14.4	9.8
Far North	61.2	17.2	10.5	3.2	7.9
Innisfail Cassowary Coast	48.2	28.7	20.7	2.3	0.1
Port Douglas Daintree	18.6	28.1	20	33.3	0.0
Tablelands (East) Kuranda	35.8	24.1	20.9	16.6	2.7
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>20.0</b>

Source: ABS, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2021.

The SEIFA Index underscores significant socio-economic disadvantage in Far North Queensland which has several implications for the aged care industry:

- Increased demand for services: disadvantaged communities often have a greater need for subsidised aged care due to limited financial resources.
- Resource allocation: governments and service providers may prioritise funding and resources in these areas to meet rising demand and support vulnerable populations.
- Workforce challenges: attracting and retaining qualified aged care professionals in disadvantaged areas can be difficult, potentially affecting service availability and quality.

The relatively low SEIFA scores in these regions highlight the need for targeted strategies to enhance aged care services, ensuring equitable access and high-quality care for the ageing population.

35 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/socio-economic-indexes-areas-seifa-australia>

### 3.2 Workforce and labour market profile

Far North Queensland is shaped by its unique demographic profile, economic activities and emerging industry trends. This analysis assesses the current workforce composition, highlights critical shortages and explores opportunities for skill development, reskilling and upskilling to meet current and future demands.

As of April 2025, approximately 141,000 individuals were employed in the Cairns SA4 region that encompasses the Cairns – North, Cairns – South, Innisfail - Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas – Daintree and Tablelands (East) – Kuranda SA3 areas.<sup>36</sup>

The unemployment rate in the region was 3.7 per cent, the eighth lowest among Queensland's 19 SA4 areas and below the state average of four per cent.<sup>37</sup> The participation rate was 65.4 per cent, closely aligning with the Queensland rate of 67.7 per cent.<sup>38</sup> Youth unemployment stood at 9.3 per cent in April 2025, suggesting a pool of potential workers who could be reskilled for aged care and other growing industries<sup>39</sup>

The Far North SA3 area is encompassed within the Queensland – Outback SA4 region that also includes the Outback – North SA3 area. Approximately 15,000 individuals are employed in this SA4 region. In April 2025 the unemployment rate was 5.5 per cent, the participation rate was 67.3 per cent and youth unemployment was 11.2 per cent.<sup>40</sup> Overall, unemployment and participation are both higher than in the Cairns SA4 region.

**Table 13: Number of workers per Industry, Far North Queensland, 2021**

Industry	Far North Queensland		Industry	Far North Queensland	
	#	%		#	%
Accommodation and food services	11,878	9.9	Manufacturing	4928	4.1
Administrative and support services	3812	3.2	Mining	1666	1.4
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	7267	6.1	Other services	4991	4.2
Arts and recreation services	1746	1.5	Professional, scientific and technical services	4708	3.9
Construction	8280	6.9	Public administration and safety	9531	8.0
Education and training	11,208	9.4	Rental, hiring and real estate services	1790	1.5
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	1304	1.1	Retail trade	11,580	9.7
Financial and insurance services	1327	1.1	Transport, postal and warehousing	5881	4.9
Health care and social assistance	19,887	17.0	Wholesale trade	2216	1.9
Information media and telecommunications	574	0.5	<b>Total</b>	<b>119,439</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G54.

36 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2025). *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed*. Canberra: Australian Government.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release>

37 Jobs and Skills Australia. (2025). *Small Area Labour Markets*. Canberra: Australian Government.

<https://www.dewr.gov.au/employment-research/small-area-labour-markets>

38 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2025). *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed*. Canberra: Australian Government.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release>

39 Ibid

40 Ibid

Many younger workers migrate to metropolitan areas in search of better employment opportunities. However, in 2021 inward migration to Far North Queensland from interstate and metropolitan areas was estimated to exceed departures across all age groups.<sup>41</sup> Domestic migration remains the primary driver of population growth in the region, significantly outweighing international migration. Between 2016 and 2021, 35 per cent of Far North Queensland had relocated from other parts of Australia, while three per cent had migrated from overseas.<sup>42</sup>

The region's workforce is projected to grow by 4.2 per cent over the five years to 2027-2028. Jobs Queensland's forecasts indicate the highest employment growth will occur in the following industries:<sup>43</sup>

- Health care and social assistance – 12 per cent
- Professional, scientific and technical services – 8.4 per cent
- Administrative and support services – 7 per cent
- Transport, postal and warehousing – 6.3 per cent
- Public administration and safety – 4.2 per cent.

## Future workforce needs in Far North Queensland

By 2027–2028, employment in the Far North Queensland region is projected to grow by 4.5 per cent, reaching approximately 149,082 employed individuals.<sup>44</sup>

### Key industries driving this growth include:

**Construction:** ongoing infrastructure projects and residential developments will drive demand for construction workers, project managers and skilled tradespeople.

**Education and training:** expanding vocational training and higher education institutions will require more educators and support staff.

**Health care and social assistance:** as the fastest growing industry driven by an ageing population and rising demand for health services, this industry will see high demand for aged care workers, nurses and allied health professionals.

**Professional, scientific and technical services:** growing demand for professionals in engineering, IT and scientific research will supporting various industries across region.

**Tourism and hospitality:** as the tourism industry recovers, there will be a resurgence in demand for roles such as hotel management, tour operators and food service workers.

The workforce demands of emerging industries are expected to create new employment opportunities.

### Two industries anticipated to drive job growth include:

**Renewable energy:** investment in solar and wind energy projects will create jobs in production, maintenance and related services.<sup>45</sup>

**Advanced manufacturing and aerospace:** developments such as the proposed spaceport complex on the Cape York Peninsula are expected to generate employment in aerospace engineering, manufacturing and support services.

**Qualified tradespeople:** tradespeople in electrical and mechanical fields will remain in high demand.

### Additionally, demand is expected to grow for the following skills:

**Digital literacy:** proficiency in digital technologies will be increasingly essential across industries such as healthcare, education and professional services.

**Specialised health skills:** expertise in aged care, mental health and chronic disease management will be crucial to meet the needs of an ageing population and increasing healthcare demands.

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41 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Regional internal migration estimates, provisional*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-internal-migration-estimates-provisional/latest-release>

42 Ibid.

43 Jobs Queensland. (2025). Data portal. *Anticipating Future Skills*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal>

44 Jobs Queensland. (2025). *Anticipating Future Skills Series, Cairns Region*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. [https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/\\_resources/files/pdf/afs-5/cairns-regional-summary-afs.pdf](https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/_resources/files/pdf/afs-5/cairns-regional-summary-afs.pdf)

45 Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (2025). *Far North Queensland Major Projects Pipeline*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/regions/queenslands-regions/far-north-qld/far-north-queensland-major-projects-pipeline>

### 3.3 Business profile

As at 30 June 2024, there were 25,921 businesses operating in Far North Queensland. Of these, 26 per cent (or 6745 businesses) employed between 1 and 4 employees. The Cairns - North SA3 area recorded the highest proportion of businesses in this category, with 28 per cent employing 1 to 4 staff. In contrast, the Port Douglas - Daintree SA3 recorded the highest proportion of medium size businesses, with 3.7 per cent employing between 20 and 199 employees.<sup>46</sup>

**Table 14: Registered businesses by employment size in Far North Queensland (by SA3), 30 June 2024**

FNQ/SA3	Non-employing		1-4 employees		5-19 employees		20-199 employees		200+ employees		Total #
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Far North Queensland	15,417	59.5	6745	26.0	2952	11.4	773	3.0	28	0.1	25,921
Cairns - North	2783	60.7	1284	28.0	429	9.4	101	2.2	3	0.1	4582
Cairns - South	5528	56.4	2631	26.8	1242	12.7	355	3.6	19	0.2	9807
Far North	1220	60.9	476	23.8	244	12.2	44	2.2	3	0.1	2004
Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	2326	63.6	882	24.1	363	9.9	84	2.3	3	0.1	3660
Port Douglas - Daintree	853	57.7	387	26.2	178	12	54	3.7	0	0	1478
Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	2707	61.7	1085	24.7	496	11.3	135	3.1	0	0	4390

Source: ABS, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, July 2020 – June 2024.

The industry with the largest number of registered businesses in Far North Queensland as at 30 June 2024 was Construction (17.3 per cent). The health care and social assistance industry comprised 1727 registered businesses (6.7 per cent).

**Table 15: Registered businesses in Far North Queensland, 30 June 2024**

Industry	Far North Queensland		Industry	Far North Queensland	
	#	%		#	%
Accommodation and food services	1373	5.3	Manufacturing	912	3.5
Administrative and support services	1337	5.2	Mining	132	0.5
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3754	14.5	Not classified	24	0.1
Arts and recreation services	333	1.3	Other services	1528	5.9
Construction	4475	17.3	Professional, scientific and technical services	2244	8.7
Education and training	347	1.3	Public administration and safety	59	0.2
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	61	0.2	Rental, hiring and real estate services	2844	11.0
Financial and insurance services	710	2.7	Retail trade	1455	5.6
Health care and social assistance	1727	6.7	Transport, postal and warehousing	1928	7.4
Information media and telecommunications	142	0.5	Wholesale trade	536	2.1
			<b>Total<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>25,921</b>	<b>100</b>

(a) Includes inadequately described and not stated response.

Source: ABS, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, July 2020 – June 2024

46 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *8165.0 Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/business-indicators/counts-australian-businesses-including-entries-and-exits/latest-release#data-downloads>

### 3.4 Job vacancies

To understand labour market trends in the Far North Queensland region, internet job vacancy (IVI) data was reviewed and provides insights into current demands for occupations and skills. Regional data identified in the IVI may not fully correlate to the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) regions referenced on other data sets. Further information on the regional structure used to collate internet job vacancy data is available on the Jobs and Skills Australia website.<sup>47</sup>

#### Jobs advertisement trends

In March 2025, there were 6204 total vacancies in the Far North Queensland region down from 6730 in March 2024, representing a decrease of 526 vacancies or 7.8 per cent. Monthly job postings averaged 6391 in the 12 months up to and including March 2025, fluctuating from the least number of postings in February 2025 (5601) to 6815 in October 2024.<sup>48</sup>

#### Occupations in demand

In March 2025, data revealed the diversity of in-demand skillsets and employment opportunities available in the region:<sup>49</sup>

1. Professionals (1351 ads) – Significant demand exists for highly-skilled roles across various sectors that often require a degree
2. Technicians and trades workers (1274 ads) – Likely driven by complimentary industries such as manufacturing and construction, the region has a high need for skilled technical and trade workers
3. Clerical and administrative workers (864 ads) – Strong demand exists for organisational and support roles throughout the region
4. Community and personal services workers (654 ads) – Considerable demand exists, reflective of the growing aged population
5. Labourers (560 ads) – The data shows that while there is a much higher demand for skilled trade roles, unskilled labour is still in demand in the region.

### 3.5 Education level profile

This section provides information on the education levels obtained by residents of Far North Queensland, including levels of schooling and non-school qualifications. The highest level of schooling for approximately 50 per cent of the population is year 12 or equivalent, while highest level of schooling for a further 22 per cent of the population is year 10 or equivalent (refer Table 16).

Thirty-nine per cent of the population have a certificate level qualification as their highest non-school qualification (refer Table 17).

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47 Jobs and Skills Australia. (n.d.). *Internet Vacancy Index Methodology, Regional structure*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/internet-vacancy-index/methodology#regionalstructure>

48 Jobs and Skills Australia. (2025). *Internet Vacancy Index*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/internet-vacancy-index>

49 Jobs and Skills Australia. (2025). *Internet Vacancy Index, Data downloads, Internet Vacancies, ANZSCO2 Occupations, IVI Regions – March 2025*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/internet-vacancy-index>

**Table 16: Highest level of schooling attained in Cairns SA4, Far North Queensland SA3 and Queensland, 2021**

SA3/SA4/State	Did not go to school, or year 8 or below		Year 9 or 10 or equivalent		Year 11 or 12 or equivalent		Total (a)
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Cairns SA4	9566	4.8	51,555	26	115,615	58.3	198,201
Cairns – North	989	2.2	9754	22	30,648	69.1	44,351
Cairns – South	3886	4.7	19,395	23.7	48,717	59.5	81,893
Innisfail – Cassowary Coast	2078	7.5	9298	33.4	13,222	47.5	27,812
Port Douglas – Daintree	362	3.6	2499	24.7	5923	58.6	10,109
Tablelands (East) – Kuranda	2250	6.6	10,609	31.2	17,113	50.3	34,037
Far North SA3	1527	6.4	7245	30.6	11,584	48.9	23,704
Aurukun	81	9.8	517	62.4	155	18.7	828
Cape York	390	6.6	1814	30.6	2600	43.9	5926
Croydon – Etheridge	77	9.5	284	35.1	322	39.8	809
Kowanyama – Pormpuraaw	135	10.9	461	37.1	435	35.1	1241
Northern Peninsula	73	4.3	314	18.5	1068	62.9	1698
Tablelands	369	7.7	2160	41.3	2048	39.2	5225
Torres	118	5	456	19.2	1550	65.1	2381
Torres Strait Islands	266	9.9	600	22.3	1591	59.1	2691
Weipa	36	1.2	640	22.1	1806	62.2	2902
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>178,101</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>989,350</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>2,554,330</b>	<b>63.6</b>	<b>4,017,211</b>

(a) Includes highest year of schooling not stated.

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G16



**Table 17: Highest non-school qualifications<sup>(a)</sup> in Cairns SA4, Far North Queensland SA3 and Queensland, 2021**

SA3/SA4/State	Bachelor degree or higher <sup>(b)</sup>		Advance diploma or diploma		Certificate <sup>(c)</sup>		Persons with a qualification <sup>(d)</sup>		Total persons
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Cairns SA4	34,843	16.9	18,923	9.2	49,095	23.7	128,814	62.3	206,767
Cairns – North	11,030	23.7	5287	11.4	11,068	23.8	31,327	67.3	46,563
Cairns – South	14,485	16.9	7803	9.1	20,207	23.6	53,978	63.2	85,466
Innisfail – Cassowary Coast	2790	9.7	1962	6.8	6966	24.1	15,689	54.3	28,898
Port Douglas – Daintree	1666	16	944	9.1	2564	24.6	6788	65.1	10,420
Tablelands (East) – Kuranda	4878	13.8	2925	8.3	8287	23.4	21,025	59.3	35,427
Far North SA3	2169	8.8	1416	5.8	5943	24.2	13,543	55.4	24,572
Aurukun	24	2.9	17	2	47	5.6	197	23.6	836
Cape York	545	9	334	5.5	1379	22.7	3544	58.3	6082
Croydon – Etheridge	62	7.6	56	6.9	176	21.5	437	53.5	817
Kowanyama – Pormpuraaw	47	3.7	28	2.2	228	17.9	575	45.1	1274
Northern Peninsula	130	7.2	118	6.5	559	30.8	1154	63.6	1814
Tablelands	437	8.1	305	5.7	1005	18.7	2439	45.3	5388
Torres	379	15	206	8.2	609	24.1	1558	61.8	2523
Torres Strait Islands	108	3.9	139	5	902	32.2	1481	52.9	2801
Weipa	424	13.9	225	7.4	1026	33.7	2157	70.9	3044
<b>Queensland</b>	<b>918,468</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>395,615</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>927,894</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>2,618,666</b>	<b>62.5</b>	<b>4,191,812</b>

(a) Includes persons aged 15 years and over with a qualification within the scope of the Australian Standard Classification of Education.

(b) Includes Bachelor's degree, graduate diploma, graduate certificate and post-graduate degree.

(c) Includes Certificates I, II, III, IV and certificates without further defined responses.

(d) Includes inadequately described or education level not stated.

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G43 and G49

### 3.6 VET training activity

#### Total VET program enrolments

Far North Queensland's educational institutions offer a broad range of vocational education and training (VET) programs, which attract a large number of students across the region. In 2023, total VET enrolments exceeded 33,000, representing a 7 per cent decline compared to 2021 (see Table 18). Students located in the Cairns – South SA3 area accounted for around 40 per cent of enrolments, while the Port Douglas – Daintree SA3 area had the smallest share, with approximately 3 per cent of students.

**Table 18: Vocational education and training enrolments in Far North Queensland by SA3, 2021-2023**

Statistical area 3	2021	2022	2023	Statistical area 3	2021	2022	2023
Cairns - North	7255	6935	7015	Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	4075	3765	3685
Cairns - South	14,270	13,735	13,625	Port Douglas - Daintree	1390	1080	1090
Far North	4465	3680	3810	Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	4870	4440	4585
				<b>Totals</b>	<b>36,330</b>	<b>33,635</b>	<b>33,805</b>

Source: ABS, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2021.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for approximately 22 per cent of VET students in Far North Queensland (see Table 19). The Far North SA3 has the highest proportion of Indigenous students, with 57 per cent of its VET enrolments identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. In contrast, Cairns – North SA3 records the lowest proportion of Indigenous enrolments.

**Table 19: Indigenous status of enrolling VET students in Far North Queensland by SA3, 2023**

Indigenous status	Cairns - North	Cairns - South	Far North	Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	Port Douglas - Daintree	Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	Total	%
Indigenous	590	3100	2255	1115	210	925	8190	22.4
Non-Indigenous	6450	10,565	1495	2725	890	3680	25,805	70.7
Not known	605	1020	235	180	100	365	2,500	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>7645</b>	<b>14,685</b>	<b>3980</b>	<b>4020</b>	<b>1195</b>	<b>4970</b>	<b>36,495</b>	

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

Students living with disability make up approximately 6 per cent of VET enrolments in Far North Queensland (see Table 20). The highest proportion of students with disability is in the Tablelands (East) – Kuranda SA3 (6.4 per cent), while the Far North SA3 records the lowest proportion (2.9 per cent).

**Table 20 Proportion of enrolling students living with disability in Far North Queensland by SA3, 2023**

Disability status	Cairns - North	Cairns - South	Far North	Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	Port Douglas - Daintree	Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	Total	%
With disability	400	890	115	230	65	320	2020	6.5
Without disability	6490	12,325	3345	3520	1010	4115	30,800	84.4
Not known	755	1470	525	270	120	535	3670	10.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7645</b>	<b>14,685</b>	<b>3980</b>	<b>4020</b>	<b>1195</b>	<b>4970</b>	<b>36,495</b>	

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

### VET program enrolments by field of education

Table 21 outlines the study intentions of VET students in Far North Queensland, listing the ten most popular fields of education at enrolment, based on the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED) Fields of Education (FOE). In 2023, more than 11,000 enrolments were recorded in FOE 0905 (Human Welfare Studies and Services), which includes training in aged care, disability support and residential client care. The strong focus on this field aligns with the healthcare and social assistance industry's role as the region's largest employer.

**Table 21 The ten FOE with the largest VET enrolments in Far North Queensland, 2023**

FOE (4-digit ASCED code)	Cairns - North	Cairns - South	Far North	Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	Port Douglas - Daintree	Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	Total
0905 - Human welfare studies and services	620	1445	185	405	115	360	3135
0921 - Sport and recreation	705	1050	220	315	120	470	2885
1201 - General education programmes	415	1250	280	265	45	365	2615
0701 - Teacher education	520	900	345	260	60	275	2355
0403 - Building	545	780	240	185	80	360	2190
1101 - Food and hospitality	360	795	165	300	60	245	1925
0809 - Office studies	375	815	185	185	30	265	1860
Not known	355	485	210	145	80	250	1530
0307 - Mechanical and industrial engineering and technology	280	550	170	180	45	250	1470
0803 - Business and management	345	550	185	110	45	150	1385
<b>FOE 4-digit total</b>	<b>7645</b>	<b>14,685</b>	<b>3980</b>	<b>4020</b>	<b>1195</b>	<b>4970</b>	<b>36,495</b>

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

### Apprenticeship and traineeship enrolments

Table 22 details the types of training within the largest Fields of Education (FOE) in 2023, showing their share of total enrolments. Notably, 97 per cent of students enrolled in FOE 0905 (Human Welfare Studies and Services) were undertaking non-apprenticeship or non-traineeship programs. Similarly, 75 per cent of students in FOE 1101 (Food and Hospitality) were also enrolled in programs outside of apprenticeship or traineeship pathways.

**Table 22 Apprenticeship and traineeship commencements (selected FOE) in Far North Queensland, 2023.**

FOE 4-digit	Type of training	Apprentice/trainee status	Total	%
<b>0905 - Human welfare studies and services</b>	<b>Type of training total</b>		<b>3015</b>	
	Training package qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	2990	99.2
		Apprentice or trainee	70	2.3
		Not an apprentice or trainee	2915	96.7
	Accredited qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	10	0.3
		Not an apprentice or trainee	10	0.3
	Accredited courses	Apprentice/trainee status total	15	0.5
Not an apprentice or trainee		15	0.5	
<b>0921 - Sport and recreation</b>	<b>Type of training total</b>		<b>2765</b>	
	Training package qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	2195	79.4
		Apprentice or trainee	10	0.4
		Not an apprentice or trainee	2185	79
	Accredited qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	5	0.2
		Not an apprentice or trainee	5	0.2
	Accredited courses	Apprentice/trainee status total	565	20.4
Not an apprentice or trainee		565	20.4	

FOE 4-digit	Type of training	Apprentice/trainee status	Total	%
<b>01201 - General education programmes</b>	<b>Type of training total</b>		<b>2570</b>	
	Training package qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	1870	72.8
		Apprentice or trainee	340	13.2
		Not an apprentice or trainee	1535	59.7
	Accredited qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	400	15.6
		Not an apprentice or trainee	400	15.6
	Accredited courses	Apprentice/trainee status total	300	11.7
Not an apprentice or trainee		300	11.7	
<b>0701 - Teacher education</b>	<b>Type of training total</b>		<b>2295</b>	
	Training package qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	2255	98.3
		Apprentice or trainee	175	7.6
		Not an apprentice or trainee	2080	90.6
	Accredited qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	35	1.5
		Not an apprentice or trainee	35	1.5
	Accredited courses	Apprentice/trainee status total	5	0.2
Not an apprentice or trainee		5	0.2	
<b>0403 - Building</b>	<b>Type of training total</b>		<b>2110</b>	
	Training package qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	2025	96
		Apprentice or trainee	1005	47.6
		Not an apprentice or trainee	1020	48.3
	Accredited qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	5	0.2
		Not an apprentice or trainee	5	0.2
	Accredited courses	Apprentice/trainee status total	80	3.8
Not an apprentice or trainee		5	0.2	
<b>1101 - Food and hospitality</b>	<b>Type of training total</b>		<b>1860</b>	
	Training package qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	1855	99.7
		Apprentice or trainee	470	25.3
		Not an apprentice or trainee	1385	74.5
	Accredited courses	Apprentice/trainee status total	5	0.3
Not an apprentice or trainee		5	0.3	
<b>0809 - Office studies</b>	<b>Type of training total</b>		<b>1830</b>	
	Training package qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	1830	99.7
		Apprentice or trainee	365	25.3
Not an apprentice or trainee		1465	74.5	
<b>Not known</b>	<b>Type of training total</b>		<b>1450</b>	
	Training package skill sets	Apprentice/trainee status total	1450	100
		Not an apprentice or trainee	1450	100
<b>0307 - Mechanical and industrial engineering and technology</b>	<b>Type of training total</b>		<b>1425</b>	
	Training package qualifications	Apprentice/trainee status total	1425	100
		Apprentice or trainee	545	38.2
		Not an apprentice or trainee	880	61.8

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

### School-based VET commencements

School-based VET training plays a key role in Far North Queensland's education system, with strong participation across the region. The highest number of enrolments in school-based VET programs is found in the populous Cairns – South SA3 area, while the lowest enrolments occur in the Port Douglas – Daintree SA3 area (see Table 23).

**Table 23 Vocational education and training enrolments in schools in Far North Queensland (by SA3), 2023**

SA3	Apprentice/trainee status	2021	2022	2023
<b>Cairns - North</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>2060</b>	<b>2145</b>
	School-based apprentices and trainees	160	170	135
	Other VET in schools - students	1810	1890	2005
<b>Cairns - South</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>4000</b>	<b>3835</b>	<b>4070</b>
	School-based apprentices and trainees	225	240	220
	Other VET in schools - students	3770	3595	3850
<b>Far North</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>1405</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>1185</b>
	School-based apprentices and trainees	30	45	45
	Other VET in schools - students	1375	980	1140
<b>Innisfail - Cassowary Coast</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>1475</b>	<b>1310</b>	<b>1215</b>
	School-based apprentices and trainees	75	60	45
	Other VET in schools - students	1400	1250	1170
<b>Port Douglas - Daintree</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>150</b>
	School-based apprentices and trainees	15	5	20
	Other VET in schools - students	340	220	135
<b>Tablelands (East) - Kuranda</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>1115</b>	<b>1115</b>
	School-based apprentices and trainees	145	135	140
	Other VET in schools - students	1055	975	970

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

Table 24 presents enrolment data for school-based apprenticeship and traineeship training packages in Far North Queensland in 2023, highlighting the fields of education pursued across the region. The table focuses on the five FOE with the highest enrolments. FOE 0905 (Human Welfare Studies and Services) is included in the table even when it does not feature in the top five FOE due to low enrolment numbers. Overall, there were over 9880 enrolments in school-based VET in 2023, including over 600 school-based apprentice and trainees.

A closer look at school-based apprentices and trainee data shows that only a small percentage are training in direct care roles relevant to the aged care sector. Notably, FOE 0905 appears among the top five enrolments only in the Port Douglas SA3 area, with other SA3 areas showing much lower participation (2–3 per cent). This limited uptake contrasts with the strong regional demand for workers qualified in human welfare studies and services.

Training in FOE 1101 (Food and Hospitality) is also significant for the aged care sector, as chef training plays an important role in service provision. This FOE ranks among the top five enrolment areas in all SA3 areas except Port Douglas - Daintree.

**Table 24 FOE pursued by school-based apprentice/trainees in Far North Queensland, by SA3, 2023**

Student SA3	Field of education - 4-digit code (FOE)	2021	2022	2023	Total	% of apprentice / trainees in SA3
<b>Cairns - North</b>	0921 - Sport and recreation	405	465	430	1305	21.1
	0403 - Building	190	180	145	520	8.4
	1101 - Food and hospitality	145	160	190	495	8
	0307 - Mechanical and industrial engineering and technology	125	145	180	450	7.3
	0809 - Office studies	105	115	220	440	7.1
	0905 - Human welfare studies and services	95	45	10	145	2.3
<b>Cairns - South</b>	0921 - Sport and recreation	590	590	625	1800	15
	1101 - Food and hospitality	500	445	425	1370	12
	1201 - General education programmes	575	275	355	1205	10
	0809 - Office studies	225	300	350	875	7
	0403 - Building	380	260	200	840	7
	0905 - Human welfare studies and services	195	75	15	285	2
<b>Far North</b>	0807 - Tourism	195	145	105	445	12
	1101 - Food and hospitality	155	150	115	425	12
	0921 - Sport and recreation	130	115	105	350	10
	0403 - Building	110	85	105	300	8
	1201 - General education programmes	185	30	80	295	8
	0905 - Human welfare studies and services	40	25	5	70	2
<b>Innisfail - Cassowary Coast</b>	1101 - Food and hospitality	260	205	195	660	16
	0921 - Sport and recreation	185	150	210	540	13
	1201 - General education programmes	170	110	70	350	9
	0301 - Manufacturing engineering and technology	100	90	95	285	7
	0305 - Automotive engineering and technology	75	80	90	245	6
	0905 - Human welfare studies and services	75	25	10	110	3
<b>Port Douglas - Daintree</b>	0807 - Tourism	65	70	0	135	19
	0921 - Sport and recreation	55	25	45	120	17
	0403 - Building	50	50	10	110	15
	0613 - Public health	45	10	5	60	8
	0905 - Human welfare studies and services	35	5	10	55	8
<b>Tablelands (East) - Kuranda</b>	0921 - Sport and recreation	295	265	265	820	24
	0809 - Office studies	110	150	100	360	11
	1101 - Food and hospitality	115	110	125	350	10
	0503 - Horticulture and viticulture	105	110	70	285	8
	0307 - Mechanical and industrial engineering and technology	45	70	125	235	7
	0905 - Human welfare studies and services	65	30	5	100	3
<b>Total school-based apprentice/trainees* (*figure includes Fields of Education not listed)</b>		10,410	9565	9880	29,855	100

Note: Totals include all school-based apprentice/trainees many of which are not listed – data not presented is included in the totals for each SA3 region.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

### 3.7 VET and employment pathways

The top five enrolments in accredited courses, accredited qualifications and training package qualifications in Far North Queensland in 2023 are detailed in Table 25.

**Table 25 Top five enrolments in VET accredited courses, accredited qualifications and training package qualifications in Far North Queensland by SA3, 2023**

Type of training	Program name	Cairns - North	Cairns - South	Far North	Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	Port Douglas - Daintree	Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	Total
<b>Accredited courses</b>	11029NAT - Course in Firearms and Weapons Safety (Approved for Firearms Licensing in Queensland)	115	170	85	45	55	150	620
	11138NAT - Course in Skills to Develop Learning Pathways	10	105	0	10	0	10	135
	10794NAT - Course in Community Justice Services (Justice of the Peace [Qualified])	25	35	5	10	5	25	105
	22556VIC - Course in the Management of Asthma Risks and Emergencies in the Workplace	20	40	5	0	10	20	95
	22578VIC - Course in First Aid Management of Anaphylaxis	20	40	5	0	10	20	95
<b>Accredited qualifications</b>	11139NAT - Certificate I in Skills for Education and Training Pathways	20	85	0	5	5	10	125
	10971NAT - Certificate IV in Justice Studies	50	50	5	10	0	5	120
	11140NAT - Certificate II in Skills for Education Training and Employment Pathways	20	70	0	5	0	10	105
	11054NAT - Certificate II in Plumbing Services	35	30	5	0	0	5	75
	10290NAT - Certificate I in Skills for Education and Training Pathways	5	35	0	5	0	0	45
<b>Training package qualifications</b>	FSK20119 - Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways	310	735	250	165	30	190	1680
	CHC33015 - Certificate III in Individual Support	275	700	75	250	55	180	1535
	BSB30120 - Certificate III in Business	160	480	130	120	20	200	1110
	SIS30321 - Certificate III in Fitness	275	380	45	110	25	140	975
	CHC30121 - Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care	135	350	115	105	20	115	840

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

The top five VET occupational enrolments in Far North Queensland in 2023 are shown in Table 26. Community and Personal Service Workers is the largest area of occupational enrolment by a significant margin.

**Table 26 Top five VET occupational enrolments in Far North Queensland (by SA3), 2023**

Occupation (2-digit ANZSCO code)	Cairns - North	Cairns - South	Far North	Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	Port Douglas - Daintree	Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	Total
42 - Carers and Aides	775	1830	395	610	110	465	4190
53 - General Clerical Workers	560	985	220	290	40	390	2485
41 - Health and Welfare Support Workers	495	1065	235	250	80	215	2340
45 - Sports and Personal Service Workers	535	845	235	235	80	240	2170
82 - Construction and Mining Labourers	255	585	195	140	15	305	1495

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

The top five employer industries for apprenticeship/traineeships in Far North Queensland in 2023 are shown in Table 27. Apprentices and trainees working in the agricultural and automotive industry reside across Far North Queensland, while apprentices and trainees in the aviation industry are located in Cairns - North and Cairns - South.

Table 27 shows the top five employer industries where individuals are included in an apprenticeship or traineeship program. While there is a very significant amount of VET training in the health care and social assistance industry it mostly occurs outside of formal apprenticeship or traineeship programs and therefore does not appear in Table 27.

**Table 27 Top five employer industries for apprenticeship/traineeships in Far North Queensland (by SA3), enrolments in 2023**

Industry	Cairns - North	Cairns - South	Far North	Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	Port Douglas - Daintree	Tablelands (East) - Kuranda
Aviation	20	20	-	-	-	5
Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management	20	35	30	25	40	40
Animal Care and Management	-	10	-	5	-	15
Australian Meat Processing	5	25	-	10	5	25
Automotive Industry Retail, Service and Repair	110	195	40	85	15	125

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

### 3.8 Far North Queensland regional development

#### Regional development

The *Tropical North Queensland Economic Development Strategy 2024-2029* was developed in partnership with the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC), a peak body representing 12 local governments, to establish a unified vision for the region across economic, environmental, social and cultural pillars.<sup>50</sup> The Strategy identifies key priority development areas and infrastructure projects, incorporating land-use planning, emerging growth industries and considerations for population growth and liveability. These insights aim to guide government investment decisions effectively.

A key focus of the Strategy is strengthening social and human services sectors by improving enabling infrastructure, place-based training programs and remote service delivery models. It highlights a gap in vocational training qualifications in remote communities and recommends embedding supervisors locally, providing cadetships and traineeships and addressing compliance-related barriers to workforce development.

Additionally, the Strategy emphasises the need to expand healthcare training programs in Cairns. It also notes the competition for workers between the aged care and NDIS sectors, recommending long-term, place-based training solutions and the exploration of alternative care models suited for small populations.

Local councils throughout the region have similarly incorporated development priorities into their corporate and strategic planning frameworks:

**Table 28 Regional and strategic frameworks**

Council	Initiative	Reference
Douglas Shire Council	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with the Mossman District Nursing Home Committee to deliver on the vision of the nursing home and advocate for additional aged care services, including the need for allied health facilities.</li> <li>2. Partner with aged care and allied health businesses to provide wrap around services to the aged care nursing home in Mossman.</li> </ol>	Douglas Shire Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024 <sup>51</sup>
Cook Shire Council	<p>Advocate for a palliative care facility in Coen to service central Cape York.</p> <p>On-going advocacy at all levels of government for adequate aged care facilities to meet the needs of an ageing population.</p>	Cook Shire Council Ten Year Community Plan 2021-2031 <sup>52</sup>
Etheridge Council	Ensure that services to the community for childcare, youth hostel and aged care are provided	Etheridge Council 2021-2025 Corporate Plan <sup>53</sup>
Croydon Shire Council	<p>Croydon Precinct Growth Plan (Stream 1)</p> <p>Funding will support the delivery of a shovel ready master plan to support both economic and population growth in Croydon over the next 10 to 15 years.</p>	Regional Precincts and Partnership Program (rPPP) <sup>54</sup>
Mareeba Shire Council	<p>Mareeba CBD Revitalisation (Stream 1)</p> <p>Funding will support the delivery of a precinct plan that will identify issues, opportunities and priorities to deliver the necessary improvements to activate and revitalise the Mareeba CBD.</p>	Regional Precincts and Partnership Program (rPPP)

A detailed list of Regional and Strategic Plans is available on the Regional Development Australia Tropical North website.<sup>55</sup>

50 Regional Development Australia Tropical North. (2024). *MEDIA RELEASE: Tropical North Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029)*. Cairns: Regional Development Australia Tropical North.

<https://www.rdatropicalnorth.org.au/media-release-tropical-north-economic-development-strategy-2024-2029/>

51 Douglas Shire Council. (2019). *Corporate Plan 2019-2024*. Mossman: Local Government.

[https://douglas.qld.gov.au/download/publications\\_reports/Douglas-Shire-Council-Corporate-Plan-2019-2024.pdf](https://douglas.qld.gov.au/download/publications_reports/Douglas-Shire-Council-Corporate-Plan-2019-2024.pdf)

52 Cook Shire Council. (2021). *Ten Year Community Plan 2021-2031*. Cooktown: Local Government.

<https://www.cook.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2021-2031-Cook-Shire-Community-Plan.pdf>

53 Etheridge Shire Council. (2021). *2021-25 Corporate Plan*. Georgetown: Local Government.

<https://www.etheridge.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/1211/esc-corporate-plan-2021-2025-final>

54 Regional Development Australia Tropical North. (2024). *Regional Precincts and Partnership Program (rPPP)*. Cairns: Regional Development Australia Tropical North. <https://www.rdatropicalnorth.org.au/regional-precincts-and-partnership-program-rppp/>

55 Ibid

## Infrastructure development

- Health and community infrastructure: The *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan (July 2024)* outlines strategic regional priorities, including fostering a healthy region with liveable communities. The plan supports aged care and services for older Australians through targeted investments in health infrastructure and services.<sup>56</sup>
- Regional health investment: Under the *Queensland Government Regional Action Plan Budget 2025–2026*, \$181 million has been allocated to health services to refurbish selected areas within the existing Cairn Hospital. A further \$200 million has been allocated to Cooktown Multipurpose Health Service Facility as part of the Hospital Rescue Plan, which also services the local Cook Shire catchment in FNQ.<sup>57</sup>
- Roads and transport: Strengthening transport infrastructure remains a priority to improve connectivity and support economic growth. The Queensland Government's North Queensland strategy includes substantial investments in the region's road network to enable future development.
- Energy transmission: The \$5 billion CopperString 2032 project will deliver a 1000-kilometre energy transmission line connecting Mount Isa to North Queensland's grid. This major project is designed to stimulate mining activity and create new employment opportunities.
- Water security: A reliable water supply remains critical to support the region's agricultural and industrial sectors. Various government initiatives are underway to improve water security across Far North Queensland.

## Research, innovation and diversification

- Innovation investments: The Tropical North Queensland Regional Economic Development Strategy recognises the critical role of research and innovation in diversifying the economy and driving regional growth.<sup>58</sup>
- Tourism, trade and investment: Expanding the tourism sector and attracting new investment are key strategies for economic diversification. Notable initiatives include the \$100 million Whitsunday Skyway tourism development, aimed at enhancing the region's appeal to visitors.<sup>59</sup>

## Industry trends

### Agriculture and horticulture

- The Tablelands region has experienced population growth alongside the expansion of fruit and vegetable farming, signalling continued growth in the horticulture sector.<sup>60</sup>
- The closure of the Mossman Sugar Mill in early 2024 has had a significant impact on the region's sugar industry. The Douglas Shire Council estimates that the end of sugarcane farming in the area could result in a \$188 million reduction in total economic output and the loss of approximately 575 local jobs—highlighting the urgent need for a successful transition to alternative agricultural industries.<sup>61</sup>

### Mining and resources

- The region is placing growing emphasis on critical minerals mining, including tungsten. The reopening of the Mount Carbine mine is contributing to economic diversification and creating new opportunities in the sector.<sup>62</sup>

56 Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (2025). *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/infrastructure/infrastructure-planning/regional-infrastructure-plans/far-north-queensland-infrastructure-plan>

57 Queensland Government. (2025). *Delivering for Far North Queensland, Regional Delivery Plans, Queensland budget 2025-26*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://budget.qld.gov.au/regional-delivery-plans/far-north-queensland/>

58 Regional Development Australia Tropical North. (2024). *TNQ Development Strategy (TEDS) 2024-2029*. Cairns: Regional Development Australia Tropical North. <https://www.rdatropicalnorth.org.au/our-projects/tnq-economic-development-strategy-teds-2024-2029/>

59 Whitsunday Skyway. (2025). *Whitsunday Skyway*. Airlie Beach: Australian Adventure Tourism Group. <https://www.whitsundayskyway.com.au/>

60 Herrmann, B. (2023, May 12). Tablelands buoyed by agriculture as northern Australia's biggest rural population reaches 50,000, *ABC News*. Australia. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2023-05-12/horticulture-creating-population-boom-in-queenslands-north/102307688>

61 Douglas Shire Council. (2024). *Douglas Community Rallies in Support of Mossman Sugarcane Farmers*. Mossman: Local Government. <https://douglas.qld.gov.au/douglas-community-rallies-in-supports-of-mossman-sugarcane-farmers/>

62 Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development. (2025). *Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.nrmrrd.qld.gov.au/mining-exploration/initiatives/critical-minerals/invest/why-invest-in-queensland/critical-minerals-strategy>

### Renewable energy

- The Cairns region continues to attract strong investment in solar and wind farm developments, supporting Queensland’s broader carbon emissions reduction goals.<sup>63</sup>

### Tourism

- The tourism sector has experienced a strong recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- While visitor numbers as of June 2024 remain below pre-pandemic (2019) levels, they have significantly improved compared to pandemic-era lows.<sup>64</sup> Hospitality venues in Cairns recorded a 31 per cent increase in spending between April and June 2024, compared to the same period in 2023.

### Housing, accommodation and rental markets

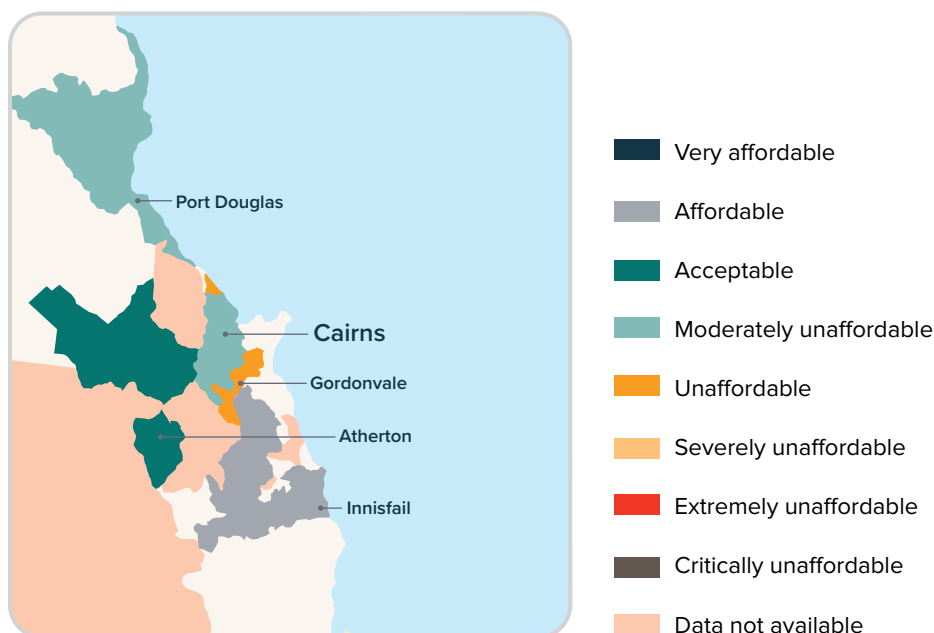
Most Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Queensland are experiencing 'tight' rental markets, with vacancy rates below 2.5 per cent. As of March 2022, 77 per cent of Queensland LGAs had vacancy rates under one per cent.<sup>65</sup>

A picture of housing affordability in Far North region is available via the SGS Economics and Planning 10th Annual Rental Affordability Index that reports on the Cairns SA4 region.<sup>66</sup> The Index highlights a decline in the affordable housing availability in the Cairns region between 2020 to 2024. While Cairns remains generally more affordable than some other Queensland regions such as the Sunshine Coast, it is classified as moderately unaffordable overall. Certain areas, including Gordonvale, Palm Cove, Kewarra Beach, Trinity Park, Trinity Beach and Clifton Beach are considered unaffordable.

Average rental affordability is measured based on median household income outside the Greater Brisbane area. Affordability is classified according to the percentage of income spent on rent:

- Severely unaffordable: 38-60 per cent
- Unaffordable: 30-38 per cent
- Moderately unaffordable: 25-30 per cent
- Acceptable: 20-25 per cent
- Affordable: 15-20 per cent
- Very affordable: 15 per cent or less

**Figure 3 Average rental affordability in the Cairns SA4 region**



Source: SGS Economics & Planning, Rental Affordability Index November 2024

63 (Former) Department of Energy and Climate. (2024). *Renewable Energy in Your Region: Far North QLD*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.energyandclimate.qld.gov.au/energy/renewable-energy-in-your-region/far-north-qld>

64 CommBank. (2024). *Newsroom, CommBank data shows tourism in Cairns and Far North Queensland is on the up*. Australia: Commonwealth Bank of Australia. <https://www.commbank.com.au/articles/newsroom/2024/06/cairns-sector-growth.html>

65 SGS Economics & Planning. (2024). *Project, Rental Affordability Index: research report*. Australia: SGS Economics & Planning. <https://sgsep.com.au/projects/rental-affordability-index>

66 Ibid

## Infrastructure and development

In June 2022, the Queensland Government released the *Queensland State Infrastructure Strategy 2022*, outlining a 20-year vision (2022-2042) for infrastructure investment.<sup>67</sup> Key projects include:

- The \$5 billion CopperString 2032 initiative targeting enhanced energy transmission across the region.<sup>68</sup>
- A social housing delivery target of 53,000 homes by 2046, including housing in the Cairns region.<sup>69</sup>

Building on this, the *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan* was released in July 2024.<sup>70</sup> The plan was developed in consultation with regional stakeholders to prioritise regionally significant infrastructure needs.

## Infrastructure investments in the healthcare and social assistance industry

The *Queensland State Infrastructure Strategy 2022* outlines a strong commitment to enhancing healthcare services and expanding digital infrastructure in rural and remote areas.<sup>71</sup> Key priorities include planning for future health and ambulance services, aged care facilities and community and neighbourhood centres.

The strategy promotes innovative and flexible design and construction methods, such as modular buildings, to deliver more affordable and faster-to-build facilities. These include staff accommodation, Primary Health Care Centres, Multi-Purpose Health Services, residential aged care homes and rural hospitals. To complement infrastructure investment, the strategy also emphasises the importance of local cross-sectoral planning, policy development and collaboration to maximise the use of alternative facilities and services.

In the Cairns region, several major projects are underway to strengthen health care and social assistance infrastructure. A flagship initiative is the Cairns Tropical Enterprise Centre (CTEC), alongside the Cairns Hospital expansion project which will deliver 64 beds and a 32-bed purpose-built surgical centre adjacent to the CTEC.<sup>72</sup> These developments build on the recently completed refurbishment of the Cairns Hospital emergency department in August 2023.<sup>73</sup>

Additional infrastructure projects include the Cairns Mental Health Unit, the new Cow Bay Primary Health Centre and a youth residential rehabilitation and treatment service.<sup>74</sup> The Dugurrdja Health Precinct (formerly the Cairns Health and Innovation Precinct) will further expand Cairns Hospital's capacity and provide education, training and research facilities for future healthcare professionals.<sup>75</sup>

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- 67 Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (2024). *State Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2042*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/infrastructure/infrastructure-planning/state-infrastructure-strategy?form=MG0AV3>;
- Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (2025). *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan*. Brisbane: Queensland Government.
- 68 Courier Mail. (2024). *CopperString spark: \$5 billion project gets underway in NQ*. Australia: Nationwide News Pty Ltd. [https://www.couriermail.com.au/subscribe/news/1?sourceCode=CMWEB\\_WRE170\\_a&dest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.couriermail.com.au%2Fnews%2F5bn-copperstring-project-on-track-for-2029-finish-after-breaking-ground-in-hughenden%2Fnews-story%2F5a46f81f87cd29194b7f98712843a558&memtype=anonymous&mode=premium&v21=GROUPA-Segment-2-NOSCORE](https://www.couriermail.com.au/subscribe/news/1?sourceCode=CMWEB_WRE170_a&dest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.couriermail.com.au%2Fnews%2F5bn-copperstring-project-on-track-for-2029-finish-after-breaking-ground-in-hughenden%2Fnews-story%2F5a46f81f87cd29194b7f98712843a558&memtype=anonymous&mode=premium&v21=GROUPA-Segment-2-NOSCORE)
- 69 Department of Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility. (2024). *Cairns Seniors Community Housing Project*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.naif.gov.au/our-projects/cairns-seniors-community-housing-project/>; Ian Horswill, I. (2024, September 24). Queensland's biggest social housing project includes two-bedroom homes for people over 55. *The Weekly Source*. <https://www.theweeklysource.com.au/housing/queenslands-biggest-social-housing-project-includes-two-bedroom-homes-for-people-over-55>
- 70 Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (2025). *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/infrastructure/infrastructure-planning/regional-infrastructure-plans/far-north-queensland-infrastructure-plan>
- 71 Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (n.d.). *State Infrastructure Strategy Health*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. [https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/72096/state-infrastructure-strategy-health.pdf](https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/72096/state-infrastructure-strategy-health.pdf)
- 72 James Cook University. (2023). *Construction starts on landmark CTEC*. Townsville: James Cook University. <https://www.jcu.edu.au/news/releases/2023/august/construction-starts-on-landmark-ctec>; Hansen Yuncken. (n.d.). Cairns Hospital Expansion Project. Australia: Hansen Yuncken. <https://www.hansenyuncken.com.au/project/cairns-hospital-expansion-project-2/>
- 73 Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service. (2023). *Cairns Hospital Emergency Department expansion open*. Cairns: Queensland Government. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250322223911/https://www.cairns-hinterland.health.qld.gov.au/about-us/news/cairns-hospital-emergency-department-expansion-open>
- 74 Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service. (2025). *Infrastructure projects*. Cairns: Queensland Government. <https://www.cairns-hinterland.health.qld.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/infrastructure-projects>
- 75 Queensland Government. (2024). *Doing what matters for Far North Queensland, Regional Action Plan, Queensland budget 2024-25*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. [https://s3.treasury.qld.gov.au/files/RAP\\_2024-25\\_FarNorthQueensland.pdf](https://s3.treasury.qld.gov.au/files/RAP_2024-25_FarNorthQueensland.pdf)

The Cairns Private Hospital, a 144-bed facility offering a range of medical, surgical, cardiology and allied health services, recently completed a multi-million-dollar redevelopment. This includes a state-of-the-art operating theatre, a second theatre shell to support future demand and upgraded pre-operative areas, medical offices and sterilisation facilities.<sup>76</sup>

There has also been significant investment in aged care infrastructure to meet increasing demand. Providers are focusing on modernising facilities to enhance resident comfort and care quality. A recent notable project is the \$9.5 million expansion of the Pyramid Residential Care Centre in Gordonvale, completed in 2024.

## Impact of new and emerging technologies on regional industries

Emerging technologies are expected to play a transformative role in driving innovation, improving productivity and fostering economic growth across a range of industries in the Far North Queensland region.

Key developments include:

### Advanced manufacturing and robotics

- 3D scanning and printing: local engineering firms such as EDMS Australia are implementing 3D scanning and printing technologies to optimise production efficiency, lower costs and improve product quality.<sup>77</sup>
- Robotic systems: companies like CSF Industries are integrating robotic systems into fabrication processes, improving workplace safety, boosting

productivity and creating new opportunities for skilled workers.<sup>78</sup>

### Renewable energy technologies

- Solar and wind energy: Cairns' natural environment is supporting increased investment in solar and wind energy projects, promoting energy resilience and contributing to economic diversification.<sup>79</sup>

### Digital and information technologies

- Telehealth services: the widespread adoption of telehealth is enhancing healthcare accessibility in remote communities and improving patient outcomes through timely service delivery.<sup>80</sup>
- Smart infrastructure: initiatives such as the Cairns Smart Green Economy project are leveraging digital technologies in urban planning to advance environmental sustainability and economic resilience.<sup>81</sup>

### Aerospace and space technologies

- Space Centre Australia: the development of a spaceport complex on the Cape York Peninsula is progressing. The project is expected to generate global interest and deliver economic stimulus to the region.

### Agricultural technologies

- Precision agriculture: the use of drones, sensors and data analytics is supporting sustainable practices and greater productivity in the agricultural sector.<sup>82</sup>
- Agri-tech startups: innovation is being driven by a growing number of startups developing solutions tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities in the region's agricultural industry.<sup>83</sup>

76 Cairns Private Hospital. (2024). *Cairns Private Hospital unveils multi-million dollar*. Cairns: Cairns Private Hospital.

<https://www.cairnsprivate.com.au/News/Media-Releases/Cairns-Private-Hospital-unveils-multi-million-dollar-redevelopment>

77 Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development. (2025). *3D scanning and printing technology helps Cairns manufacturer make its mark*. Brisbane: Queensland Government.

<https://www.nrm.mrd.qld.gov.au/manufacturing/success-stories/3d-scanning-and-printing-technology-helps-cairns-manufacturer-make-its-mark>

78 Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development. (2025). *Cairns manufacturer using robotics to enhance their business*. Brisbane: Queensland Government.

<https://www.nrm.mrd.qld.gov.au/manufacturing/success-stories/robotics-enhance-cairns-business>

79 (Former) Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. (2023). *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan Regional Priorities Discussion Paper February 2023*. Brisbane Queensland Government.

[https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/79161/fnqip-regional-priorities-discussion-paper.pdf](https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/79161/fnqip-regional-priorities-discussion-paper.pdf)

Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (2025). *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan*. Brisbane: State Government.

<https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/infrastructure/infrastructure-planning/regional-infrastructure-plans/far-north-queensland-infrastructure-plan>

80 National Rural Health Alliance. (2024). *Digital health and connectivity in rural Australia*. Curtin: National Rural Health Alliance.

<https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/nrha-digital-health-connectivity-factsheet-apr-24.pdf>

81 Cairns Regional Council. (2024). *Smart Green Economy*. Cairns: Local Government.

<https://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/council/projects-and-priorities/major-projects/closed-projects/smart-green-economy>

82 The Cairns Institute. (n.d.). *Agricultural futures: growing with technology*. Townsville: James Cook University.

<https://www.cairnsinstitute.jcu.edu.au/agricultural-futures-growing-with-technology/>

83 Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy and Minister for Small Business. (2017, June 29). *Far North Queensland innovation hot spot for entrepreneurs*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/81736>

### 3.9 Employment projections and jobs growth

Far North Queensland is forecast to experience strong employment growth across several industries over the five years to 2028.

The most significant growth is expected in the health care and social assistance industry, with employment projected to increase by 12 per cent.

Conversely, some industries are expected to see a decline in employment, including information media and telecommunications (down 2.3 per cent), agriculture, forestry and fishing (down 3.3 per cent) and financial and insurance services (down 9.2 per cent).

**Table 29 Predicted growth in employment by industry in Far North Queensland, 2023-2028**

Industry	Employment	Change %
Health Care and Social Assistance	32,278	12%
Retail Trade	16,862	0.9%
Construction	14,813	-0.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	14,362	2.3%
Education and Training	13,834	2.9%
Public Administration and Safety	13,328	4.2%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	10,481	6.3%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	9591	8.4%
Administrative and Support Services	7374	7%
Manufacturing	6178	-0.3%
Other Services	5543	0.4%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	4973	-3.3%
Wholesale Trade	2946	3.7%
Mining	2674	0.4%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	2435	3.9%
Arts and Recreation Services	1973	-0.2%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1576	0.5%
Financial and Insurance Services	1146	-9.2%
Information Media and Telecommunications	983	-2.3%

Source: Jobs Queensland, Anticipating Future Skills, Data portal

## 4. An overview of the aged care industry

### 4.1 Industry sectors and regional operations

#### Profile of the aged care industry

As of June 2024, the AIHW Aged Care Service List shows that 37 providers were delivering a 70 aged care services across Far North Queensland.<sup>84</sup> These services include home care packages, multipurpose services, residential aged care, short-term restorative care and transition care; the AIHW Aged Care Service List does not include CHSP providers. In addition, there are 56 providers supported by the CHSP program.<sup>85</sup> Many providers offer multiple service types to meet the diverse needs of the local population. A full list of providers (other than for CHSP) is included in Appendix C.

Services funded under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFAC) Program are not currently available in Far North Queensland.

**Table 30 Aged care services in Far North Queensland by SA3 area, June 2024**

SA3	Home care	Multi-purpose service	Residential	Short-term restorative care (STRC)	Transition care	Grand total
Cairns - North	3	-	3	-	-	6
Cairns - South	16	-	9	1	1	27
Far North	9	2	3	-	-	14
Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	6	1	4	-	-	11
Port Douglas - Daintree	-	1	2	-	-	3
Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	6	-	3	-	-	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>70</b>

Source: AIHW, Aged care service list: 30 June 2024

The Department of Social Services provides the following information on CHSP providers in the region (refer Table 31). Providers were counted if physically located in the region and operational at any time during the 2024-25 financial year.

**Table 31 Number of CHSP providers in Far North Queensland by SA3 area**

SA3	Number of CHSP providers
Cairns - North	3
Cairns - South	25
Far North	14
Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	11
Port Douglas - Daintree	2
Tablelands (East) - Kuranda	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>

Source: Australian Government, Care Sector Demand Map

<sup>84</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). Queensland service list, 30 June 2024. *Aged care service list: 30 June 2024*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/resources/access-data/2024/september/aged-care-service-list-30-june-2024>

<sup>85</sup> Australian Government. (2025). Care Sector Demand Map. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://caresectordemandmap.dss.gov.au/>

Home care and residential aged care (RAC) are the primary services delivered in Far North Queensland. Cairns - South functions as the regional hub, offering the highest number of providers and the most diverse range of services, including short - term restorative care (STRC) and transition care. In contrast, Port Douglas – Daintree has a more limited selection of services, with no home care services currently available in the area.

The Care Sector Demand Map, published by the Department of Social Security, provides data on the number of care recipients in the Far North Queensland region receiving support through CHSP, HCPP and RAC programs (Table 32).<sup>86</sup> Associated Australian Government expenditure is presented in Table 33.

**Table 32 Number and profile of care recipients in selected Australian Government programs, Far North Queensland (by SA3)**

Service Type	Cairns - North #	Cairns - South #	Far North #	Innisfail - Cassowary Coast #	Port Douglas - Daintree #	Tablelands (East) - Kuranda #
CHSP	1631 - 1640	4071 - 4080	951 – 960	1531 – 1540	371 -380	2361 - 2370
HCPP	461 - 470	1991 - 2000	111-120	221 - 230	-	341 – 350
RAC	621 - 630	1481 - 1490	81-90	401 - 410	181 - 190	381 – 390
Participant profile						
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care recipients	121 - 130	631 - 640	781 – 790	261 - 270	81 – 90	181 - 190
Cultural and linguistically diverse care recipients	521 - 530	1531 - 1540	61-70	231 - 240	51 – 60	621 - 630

Individuals may have been care recipients in more than one service type. To protect the identity of people receiving services, current counts are provided in a 10-person range (e.g. 21-30) or are shown as <20. Less than 20 is used for areas when less than 20 care recipients reside in the postcode.

Source: Australian Government, Care Sector Demand Map

## 1. Service type distribution

The number of care recipients varies significantly across the region, reflecting differences in population size, service availability and care needs:<sup>87</sup>

- Cairns - North: 2713–2740 care recipients, with the CHSP accounting for the largest share (1631-1640).
- Cairns - South: 7543–7570 care recipients, the largest number across all regions, primarily driven by RAC (1481–1490).
- Far North: 1143-1170 care recipients, with CHSP accounting for the largest share (951-960).
- Innisfail - Cassowary Coast: 2153–2180 care recipients, with Home Care and CHSP services comprising the majority.
- Port Douglas - Daintree: 552–570 care recipients, the lowest total, with a notable reliance on Residential Care.

- Tablelands - Kuranda: 3083–3110 care recipients, with a relatively balanced distribution across all service types.

## 2. Participant profile

The distribution of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) care recipients is uneven across the region:

- Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples care recipients:<sup>88</sup>
  - highest in Cairns - South (631–640)
  - lowest in Port Douglas - Daintree (81–90)
- Culturally and linguistically diverse care recipients:<sup>89</sup>
  - highest in Cairns - South (1531–1540)
  - lowest in Port Douglas - Daintree (51–60).

<sup>86</sup> Australian Government. (2025). *Care Sector Demand Map*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://caresectordemandmap.dss.gov.au/>

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

**Table 33 Australian Government expenditure on selected aged care programs in Far North Queensland by SA3**

	Cairns - North	Cairns - South	Far North	Innisfail - Cassowary Coast	Port Douglas - Daintree	Tablelands (East) - Kuranda
CHSP	\$9,655,433	\$17,651,654	\$6,049,184	\$5,920,325	\$2,048,609	\$7,164,523
HCPP	\$9,955,440	\$39,356,562	\$3,179,762	\$3,938,521	-	\$7,732,362
RAC	\$45,073,340	\$108,329,543	\$15,543,539	\$28,464,836	\$11,573,935	\$27,807,196

Source: Australian Government, Care Sector Demand Map

### 3. Current spending

Expenditure on aged care services varies by both region and service type:<sup>90</sup>

- Cairns - South reports the highest total expenditure at \$165.3 million, with residential aged care accounting for \$108.3 million of this amount.
- Port Douglas – Daintree reports the lowest overall spending at \$13.6 million, reflecting a smaller participant base.
- Breakdown by service type:<sup>91</sup>
  - **CHSP:** expenditure ranges from \$2.0 million in Port Douglas - Daintree to \$17.7 million in Cairns - South.
  - **Home Care:** concentrated in Cairns - South \$39.4 million, with no data reported for Port Douglas - Daintree.
  - **Residential Aged Care:** highest expenditure in Cairns - South (\$108.3 million) and lowest in Port Douglas – Daintree (\$11.5 million).

The Cairns – South region shows a higher uptake of aged care services per eligible individual than other SA3 areas. This trend reflects the higher number of registered providers and the presence of more established aged care infrastructure. When considering demographic data (refer Table 2), the expenditure figures suggest an unmet need for services in the Far North, Innisfail - Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas - Daintree and Tablelands (East) – Kuranda SA3 regions.

Further details on aged care providers in Far North Queensland are available in Appendix D.

### Industry concentration and indicative business cycle stage

The aged care sector in Far North Queensland exhibits a moderate level of industry concentration and is currently positioned in the mature stage of its business cycle.

The industry comprises a blend of large national providers and smaller, locally based operators. This market structure allows for a balance between the broad service offerings and efficiencies of larger organisations and the personalised, community-focused care typically delivered by smaller providers.

The industry’s maturity is underpinned by a well-established provider network and a stable, growing demand driven by the region's ageing population. Growth is expected to be steady, with an increasing focus on improving service quality and embedding innovative models of care. This evolution reflects the sector's responsiveness to shifting care standards, regulatory requirements and the changing needs of older people across the region.

89 Australian Government. (2025). *Care Sector Demand Map*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://caresectordemandmap.dss.gov.au>

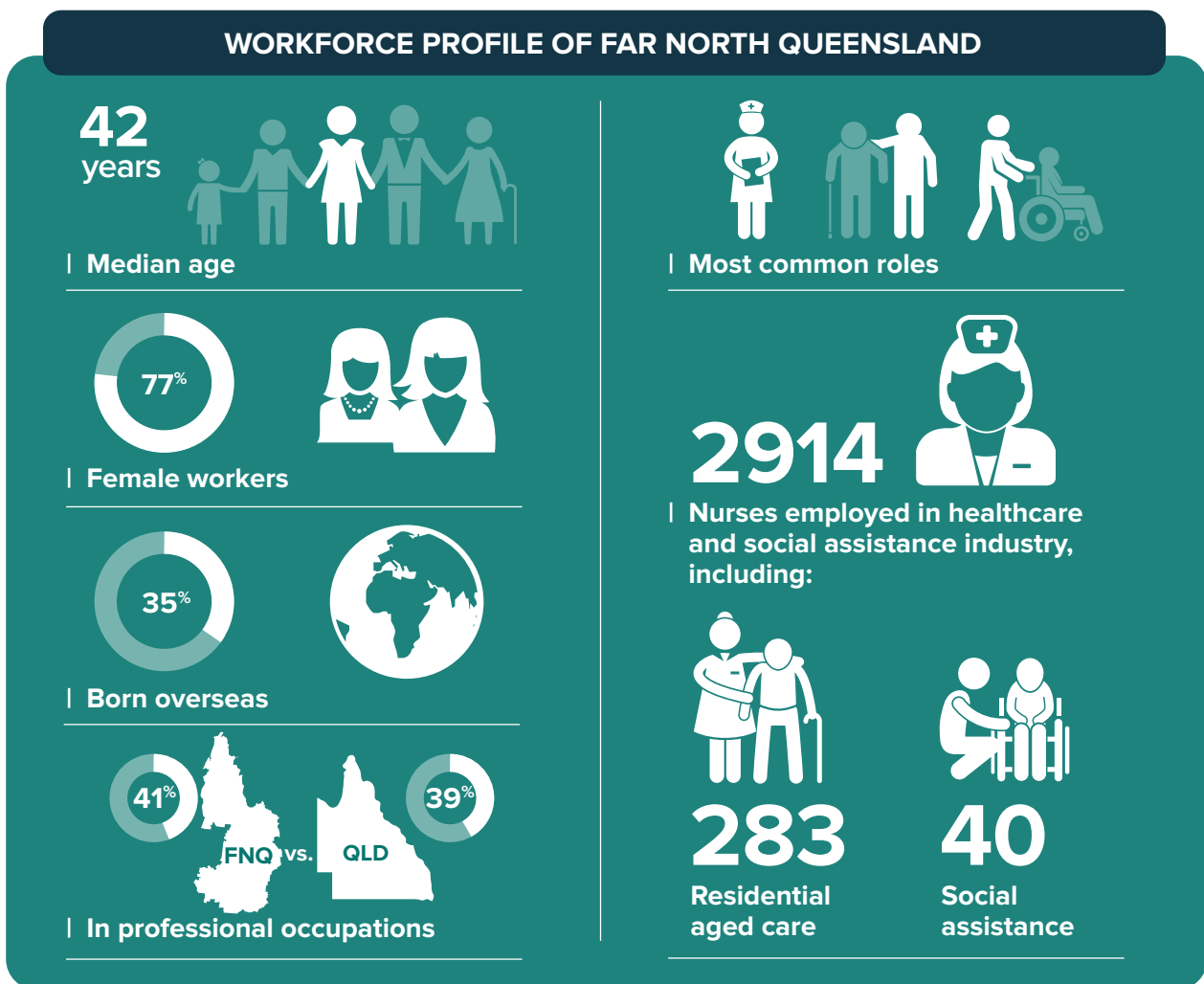
90 Ibid

91 Ibid

## 4.2 Workforce profile

The aged care industry operates within the broader healthcare and social assistance industry, Australia's largest employing industry accounting for approximately 15.6 per cent of the national workforce.<sup>92</sup> This diverse industry encompasses home and residential aged care; allied and dental health services; ambulance services, childcare, diagnostic imaging, disability support, hospitals, general and specialist medical services and pathology.

In 2022, healthcare and social assistance was the largest employing industry in the Far North Queensland, employing over approximately 20,000 people, or 16.7 per cent of the local workforce.<sup>93</sup> Data available describing the workforce profile in the Cairns region demonstrates close similarities with the industry across Queensland:<sup>94</sup>



Key healthcare infrastructure in Far North Queensland includes a major public hospital, six smaller regional public hospitals, 18 regional health centres, a private hospital and a broad network of allied health providers.<sup>95</sup>

92 Jobs and Skills Australia. (n.d.). *Health Care and Social Assistance*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-and-industry-profiles/industries/health-care-and-social-assistance>

93 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Census of Population and Housing, Working Population Profile – W09*. Data compiled and presented by Queensland Government Statistician's Office. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>

94 Cairns Regional Council and .id (Informed Decisions). (n.d.). *Healthcare and Social Assistance Industry 2022/23*. Cairns: Local Government. [https://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/683456/Cairns-Industry-Profile-Healthcare-and-Social-Assistance.pdf](https://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/683456/Cairns-Industry-Profile-Healthcare-and-Social-Assistance.pdf)

95 Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (2025). *Strengthening Far North Queensland*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/regions/queenslands-regions/far-north-qld>

## Aged care workforce

The aged care workforce encompasses a broad range of roles, typically categorised as direct care and non-direct care roles:

Direct care roles involve hands-on service provision and include nurses, support staff, personal care workers and assistants. These positions are part of the healthcare and social assistance industry.

- Non-direct care roles support service delivery through administration, catering, cleaning, maintenance, transport and pastoral care. These roles may be classified under different industries such as janitorial services or hospitality.

Although detailed regional workforce data for Cairns is limited, national insights are available through the *2023 Aged Care Provider Workforce Survey*, which provides data across five key service types:

- Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP)
- Home Care Packages Program (HCPP)
- Residential Aged Care (RAC)
- Multi-Purpose Services Program
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program.

A summary of workforce characteristics by service type is available in Appendix E.

Key findings from the national survey include:<sup>96</sup>

- The direct care workforce is predominantly part-time, with some individuals working across multiple service types
- 86 per cent of nursing and personal care staff are female
- Approximately 48 per cent of personal care workers hold a Certificate III or higher in a relevant field

- 1.2 per cent of directly employed nursing and personal care staff identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, based on available data (noting a low survey response rate).

## Workforce diversity and emerging industries

Efforts to enhance workforce diversity in Far North Queensland include targeted initiatives to increase Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation across industries. These efforts are supported by culturally appropriate recruitment and training programs.<sup>97</sup> A recent example is Ageing Australia's 'Aged Care is the Place to Be!' program, which was delivered in 2024 with support from the Queensland Government. This initiative aimed to attract young talent and underrepresented groups, including Aboriginal peoples or Torres Strait Islander peoples, into the aged care industry.<sup>98</sup>

In addition, the Department of Training and Employment has funded Ageing Australia with \$992,500 through the Workforce Connect Fund (WCF) to deliver the Gerontological Nursing project. While not specific to Far North Queensland, the project targets one of the occupations identified in shortage (aged care nurses) and is expected to benefit the region. Delivered state-wide, the project aims to attract more nursing graduates into aged care through a range of strategies that include:

- a targeted marketing campaign to rebrand aged care careers
- a Gerontological Specialist Portfolio micro-credential providing a pathway for career extension
- a tailored induction module specifically for nursing graduates
- the introduction of complex clinical reviews in aged care settings to enhance clinical skills development.

96 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *GEN Aged Care Data, 2023 Aged Care Provider Workforce Survey: Report*. Canberra: Australian Government.

97 Department of Trade, Employment and Training. (2024). *Case study: Supporting workforce priorities in Far North Queensland*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/support-employers/workforce-strategy/stories/workforce-priorities-fnq>

98 Ageing Australia. (2024). *Engaging youth and Indigenous people, Tapping into under-represented cohorts to break down barriers*. Melbourne: Ageing Australia. <https://ageingaustralia.asn.au/aged-care-today-article/engaging-youth-and-indigenous-people/>

99 Study Cairns. (2020). *Local Jobs Program*. Cairns: Study Cairns. <https://studycairns.com.au/finder/fnq-employment/>

These workforce development initiatives reflect broader efforts to support skills growth in ageing and care-related sectors while also improving career appeal and retention.

The region's growing multicultural population also contributes to a more diverse workforce. This diversity enriches service delivery and also highlights the need for inclusive practices and strategies to address language and cultural barriers.<sup>99</sup>At the same time, Far North Queensland is experiencing economic diversification through the growth of several emerging industries. While this diversification creates valuable employment opportunities and strengthens regional resilience, it may also pose challenges for the aged care sector, particularly due to increased competition for labour. Unless the overall regional workforce expands, emerging industries could contribute to workforce shortages in aged care.

Key emerging industries in the region include:

- Aviation maintenance and manufacturing: expansion of the Cairns Aviation Skills Centre is supporting the development of aviation maintenance and manufacturing capabilities.<sup>100</sup>
- Cairns Marine Precinct Development: significant infrastructure investment is enhancing the region's shipbuilding and maintenance capacity, particularly in support of the emerging defence and marine sectors.<sup>101</sup>

- Film and television production: Cairns' unique landscapes are attracting screen productions. Local initiatives are strengthening infrastructure and workforce capability in the creative industries.
- Solar and wind energy projects: abundant natural resources are driving investment in large-scale renewable energy projects, helping to reduce emissions and support long-term energy sustainability.<sup>103</sup>
- Value added agriculture: investment in food processing is helping producers enhance product value, expand markets and boost regional economic activity.<sup>104</sup>
- Vocational training: institutions such as TAFE Queensland are expanding their educational pathways to include skills for emerging industries and ensure the local workforce is prepared for future challenges.

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100 Jobs Queensland. (2024). *Cairns Region Workforce Development Plan: Aviation industry, and Maritime and Marine industry*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. [https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/resources/files/pdf/JQ\\_CairnsRegion\\_Work\\_Dev\\_Plan.pdf](https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/resources/files/pdf/JQ_CairnsRegion_Work_Dev_Plan.pdf)

101 Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (2025). *Cairns Marine Precinct*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/regions/regional-priorities/cairns-marine-precinct>

102 (Former) Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. (2023). *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan Regional Priorities Discussion Paper February 2023*. Brisbane Queensland Government. [https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/79161/fnqip-regional-priorities-discussion-paper.pdf](https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/79161/fnqip-regional-priorities-discussion-paper.pdf); TAFE Queensland. (n.d.). Training to deliver skilled workers in emerging industries. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://tafeqld.edu.au/employers/case-studies/emerging-industries>

103 (Former) Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. (2023). *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan Regional Priorities Discussion Paper February 2023*. Brisbane Queensland Government. [https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/79161/fnqip-regional-priorities-discussion-paper.pdf](https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/79161/fnqip-regional-priorities-discussion-paper.pdf)

104 (Former) Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. (2023). *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan Regional Priorities Discussion Paper February 2023*. Brisbane Queensland Government. [https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/79161/fnqip-regional-priorities-discussion-paper.pdf](https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/79161/fnqip-regional-priorities-discussion-paper.pdf)

## 4.3 Training profile

### Training and education

Training requirements for workers in the aged care industry vary depending on the role being undertaken. The training requirements for key roles in the aged care industry outlined in the ABS Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) are outlined below:

**Table 34 Training requirements for key roles in the aged care industry**

OSCA Code <sup>105</sup>	Occupational title	Qualifications and experience
265431	Nurse practitioner	Bachelor degree, higher qualification, or at least five years of relevant experience.
265433	Registered nurse (aged care)	Bachelor degree, higher qualification, or at least five years of relevant experience.
321131	Chef, including aged care chef	AQF Associate degree, Advanced diploma, Diploma, or at least three years of relevant experience.
411331	Diversional therapist	AQF Associate degree, Advanced diploma, Diploma, or at least three years of relevant experience, OR Skill Level 3: AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, AQF Certificate IV, or at least three years of relevant experience.
411332	Lifestyle coordinator	AQF Associate degree, Advanced diploma, Diploma, or at least three years of relevant experience, OR Skill Level 3: AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, AQF Certificate IV, or at least three years of relevant experience.
421131	Aged care coordinator	AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, AQF Certificate IV, or at least three years of relevant experience.
421132	Aged care team leader	AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, AQF Certificate IV, or at least three years of relevant experience.
421231	Community aged care support workers	AQF Certificate II, AQF Certificate III, or at least one year of relevant experience.
421331	Residential aged care worker	AQF Certificate II, AQF Certificate III, or at least one year of relevant experience.
441131	Enrolled nurse	AQF Associate degree, Advanced diploma, Diploma, or at least three years of relevant experience.
442231	Assistant in nursing	AQF Certificate II, AQF Certificate III, or at least one year of relevant experience.
811231	Domestic cleaner	AQF Certificate I, or compulsory secondary education.
811332	Laundry worker (including hospital linen workers)	AQF Certificate I, or compulsory secondary education.
811432	Domestic housekeeper	AQF Certificate I, or compulsory secondary education.

AIHW have reported that 48 per cent of personal care workers hold a Certificate III or higher in a relevant field.<sup>106</sup>

The Aged Care Transition to Practice Program, a partnership between Ageing Australia, the Australian College of Nursing and the University of Wollongong, supports new aged care nurses with training and professional development opportunities.<sup>107</sup>

To address the growing and increasingly complex demands of the aged care industry, it is essential to strengthen training and education opportunities.

Key areas for development include:

- **Specialised care training:** additional training is required in areas such as dementia care and palliative care which are critical to quality service provision.

<sup>105</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *OSCA - Occupation Standard Classification for Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0>

- **Cultural competency:** training that fosters cultural awareness and sensitivity is essential to ensure care is respectful and tailored to the diverse cultural backgrounds of aged care recipients in the region.
- **Technology proficiency:** care givers need to be skilled in using assistive technologies that support mobility, communication and daily activities. Programs such as the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) provide training in modern care technologies that enhance the quality of care.

There are growing opportunities to support skills development and workforce retention through:

- increased uptake of VET qualifications, including the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) and Certificate IV in Ageing Support
- flexible digital learning, which enables workers to balance study with personal and work commitments
- earn while you learn models, including traineeships that combine paid employment with accredited training, particularly in aged care and health sectors.

With the integration of telehealth and other digital tools, it is increasingly important to build digital literacy across the aged care workforce.<sup>108</sup> Training in digital competencies enables staff to maintain accurate records, navigate care platforms and deliver more responsive and efficient services. Ongoing professional development in this area is vital to support quality care and compliance in an evolving digital landscape.

#### 4.4 Training pathways

Aged care traineeships are an established and valuable pathway into roles in the aged care industry. Traineeships typically provide a combination of workplace training and formal education and may cover areas including personal care, nursing and administration. Within Queensland many organisations offer traineeships in aged care including UnitingCare and Wesley Mission.<sup>109</sup>

#### UnitingCare Queensland's personal carer traineeship program

UnitingCare Queensland's personal carer traineeship program is a strong example of how strategic investment in traineeships can effectively attract, retain and support the professional growth of employees. Since its launch in February 2022, BlueCare, UnitingCare's aged care division—has enrolled 475 trainees in the Certificate III in Individual Support. This investment is significantly strengthening BlueCare's employee value proposition and enhancing its competitiveness in a challenging labour market, particularly in regional areas where attracting workers is often difficult. Anecdotal feedback gathered through monthly check-ins with trainees indicates that the program is also improving employee engagement and loyalty. High retention rates (70 per cent) support this, helping to reduce recruitment and onboarding costs while enhancing BlueCare's capacity to grow and retain its client base.

Beyond addressing critical workforce shortages and high turnover, the program ensures that services are better equipped to meet increasing client demand by building workforce capability. The program is underpinned by strong organisational commitment, with top-down support and substantial investment in both financial and human resources to ensure long-term sustainability and success. It is also supported by robust partnerships with preferred Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), which help ensure consistent, high-quality training delivery. The initiative is built on a collaborative, cross-functional model, integrating teams from across the organisation. Regular check-ins with training partners, trainees and supervisors foster accountability and contribute to ongoing improvement, reinforcing the program's effectiveness and adaptability.

106 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). *GEN Aged Care Data, 2023 Aged Care Provider Workforce Survey: Report*. Canberra: Australian Government.

<https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/resources/publications/2024/december/2023-aged-care-provider-workforce-survey-report>

107 Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. (2025). *Aged Care Transition to Practice Program*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-transition-to-practice-program>

108 Advance Cairns. (2024). *FNQ Health and Innovation Precinct*. Cairns: Advance Cairns. <https://www.advancecairns.com/advocacy/fnq-health-and-innovation-precinct/>

109 BlueCare. (2025). *Personal Carer Traineeship Program*. Brisbane: UnitingCare. <https://www.bluecare.org.au/working-with-us/traineeship-program>

The Queensland Government's Gateway to Industry Schools program aims to build partnerships between schools and industry to enable young people to acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes to participate effectively in the Queensland economy. The Health Gateway to Industry Schools project is being delivered by CheckUP Australia funded by Queensland's Department of Trade, Employment and Training (DTET). The project which encompasses aged care, aims to develop school students' knowledge and understanding of the varied roles available in the health workforce and improve their access to learning and experiential opportunities in Queensland's growing health sector.

Complementing this, the Community Services Gateway to Industry Schools Project (also supported by DTET) is focused on increasing awareness and pathways into community services careers, including disability support, child protection, family and youth services and community development. The project builds connections between schools, training providers and industry to promote meaningful career exploration and skill development aligned with workforce needs in Queensland's human services sector.

The *Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System – Final Report* noted that aged care has a relatively low take up of apprenticeships and traineeships and attributed this to the industry often using pathways requiring vocational training through a registered training organisation rather than apprenticeship pathways. The report noted that more needs to be done to increase the aged care workforce to meet the growing demand for aged care services, including ensuring apprenticeships and traineeships are more fit for purpose for these sectors.<sup>110</sup>

The Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) initiative has an annual budget of \$80 million to assist up to 15,000 disadvantaged Queenslanders each year to enter and remain in the workforce. It delivers a suite of targeted skills and training programs designed to improve employability and workforce participation across the state.

SQW plays a critical role in increasing workforce participation and enhancing the performance of the Queensland economy. The initiative provides disadvantaged individuals with access to nationally recognised training (including up to Certificate III qualifications), skills development, and direct job opportunities. Through its focus on tailored and practical support, SQW helps participants overcome barriers to employment and build pathways into sustainable work.

In the Community Services sector, SQW is helping to meet the employment needs of local employers by supplying a pool of skilled and job-ready Queenslanders. The initiative supports training and employment pathways into key growth industries such as aged care, disability support, and broader community services.

Since 2015, a total of \$64.93 million has been invested state-wide to create 20,663 training places for participants in the Community Services industry. This investment represents 8.4 per cent of total SQW funding across all industry sectors in Queensland (as at 30 June 2025).

In the Cairns SA4 region, SQW has invested \$5.23 million to support 1412 disadvantaged jobseekers. As of 30 June 2025, 1397 Queenslanders have participated, with 1369 having exited the program. Of those, 854 (62 per cent) secured employment as a direct result of the initiative. Similarly, in the Far North SA3, \$14.19 million has been invested to support 837 jobseekers. As of the same date, 604 participants have completed the program, with 547 exiting and 323 (59 per cent) gaining employment.

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110 Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2025). *Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System Report, Skills for tomorrow: Shaping the future of Australian apprenticeships*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.dewr.gov.au/newsroom/articles/skills-tomorrow-shaping-future-australian-apprenticeships>

## 4.5 Vocational training and tertiary education

### Training and education

A sustainable and skilled aged care workforce relies on access to high-quality training and education. However, regional and remote areas often face challenges in this regard, including limited access to training facilities, which can restrict the ability of individuals to obtain necessary qualifications locally. Lack of access, along with fewer opportunities for career progression, contributes to staff turnover and skills gaps within the industry. Additionally, constrained funding for aged care services in regional areas can limit the resources available for ongoing staff development.<sup>111</sup>

In Far North Queensland, aged care training is provided by local institutions including CQ University, James Cook University (JCU), TAFE Queensland, MiHaven training and the Royal College of Healthcare (refer Table 31).<sup>112</sup> Table 34 demonstrates the range of training offerings in the region based on a scan of publicly accessible information. This list of providers and courses is based on online information and may not be comprehensive.



111 CEDA. (2023). *Duty of care: Aged-care sector running on empty*. Australia: Committee for Economic Development of Australia. <https://www.ceda.com.au/researchandpolicies/research/health-ageing/duty-of-care-aged-care-sector-running-on-empty>

112 Royal College of Healthcare. (n.d.). *Cairns Aged Care and Disability Courses*. Brisbane: Royal College of Healthcare. <https://staging.royalcollege.edu.au/cairns-aged-care-disability-courses/>

**Table 35 Examples of aged care workforce providers and training available in Far North Queensland**

VET/ Tertiary Education Provider	Course code	Course name
<b>CQ-University</b>	CL91, CM77	Bachelor of nursing
	CHC33021	Certificate III in Individual Support
	HTL33115	Certificate III in Health Service Assistance
	HTL23221	Certificate III in Health Support Services
	HLT30121	Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care
	HLT40221	Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice
	HLT54121	Diploma of Nursing Science
	CL16	Graduate Certificate in Clinical nursing
	CH79	Graduate Certificate in Nursing (re-entry)
	CL22	Master of Clinical Nursing
<b>James Cook University</b>	316139, 316031, 326031, 336031, 346031, 386031 (QTAC)	Bachelor of Nursing Science
	337120, 347120 (QTAC)	Diploma of Health (Nursing Pathway)
	76711	Graduate Certificate of Infection Control
	300011	Graduate Certificate of Nursing
	300006	Graduate Diploma of Nursing
	300004	Master of Nursing
<b>TAFE Queensland</b>	CHCSS00070	Assist Clients with Medication Skill Set (Accredited Skill Set)
	HED007   114595J	Bachelor of Nursing
	SIT30821	Certificate III in Commercial Cookery
	HTL23221	Certificate II in Health Support Services
	HLT30121	Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care
	HLT40121	Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care
	HLT33115   CRICOS: 095191B	Certificate III in Health Services Assistance
	CHC33021   CRICOS: 112854M	Certificate III in Individual Support
	SIT40521   CRICOS: 109683G	Certificate IV in Kitchen Management
	CHC43015	Certificate IV in Ageing Support
	CHC43415	Certificate IV in Leisure and Health
	CHCSS00123	Dementia Support (Accredited Skill Set)
	HLT54121   CRICOS: 109308H	Diploma of nursing
	CHCSS00129	Individual Support – Ageing (Accredited Skill Set)
<b>MiHaven training</b>	CHC33021	Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)
	CHC43015	Certificate IV in Ageing Support
<b>Royal College of Healthcare</b>	CHC33015	Certificate III in Individual Support
	CHC43015	Certificate IV in Ageing Support
	CHC43415	Certificate IV in Leisure and Health

Courses such as Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) provide an entry-level qualification for personal care workers while the Certificate IV in Ageing Support provides advanced skills for supervisory roles.<sup>113</sup> A range of additional VET courses are also available via online training providers located both within and outside the region and may provide an important additional avenue for training, while recognising that hands-on training is often crucial for preparing workers to handle real-world scenarios in aged care settings.

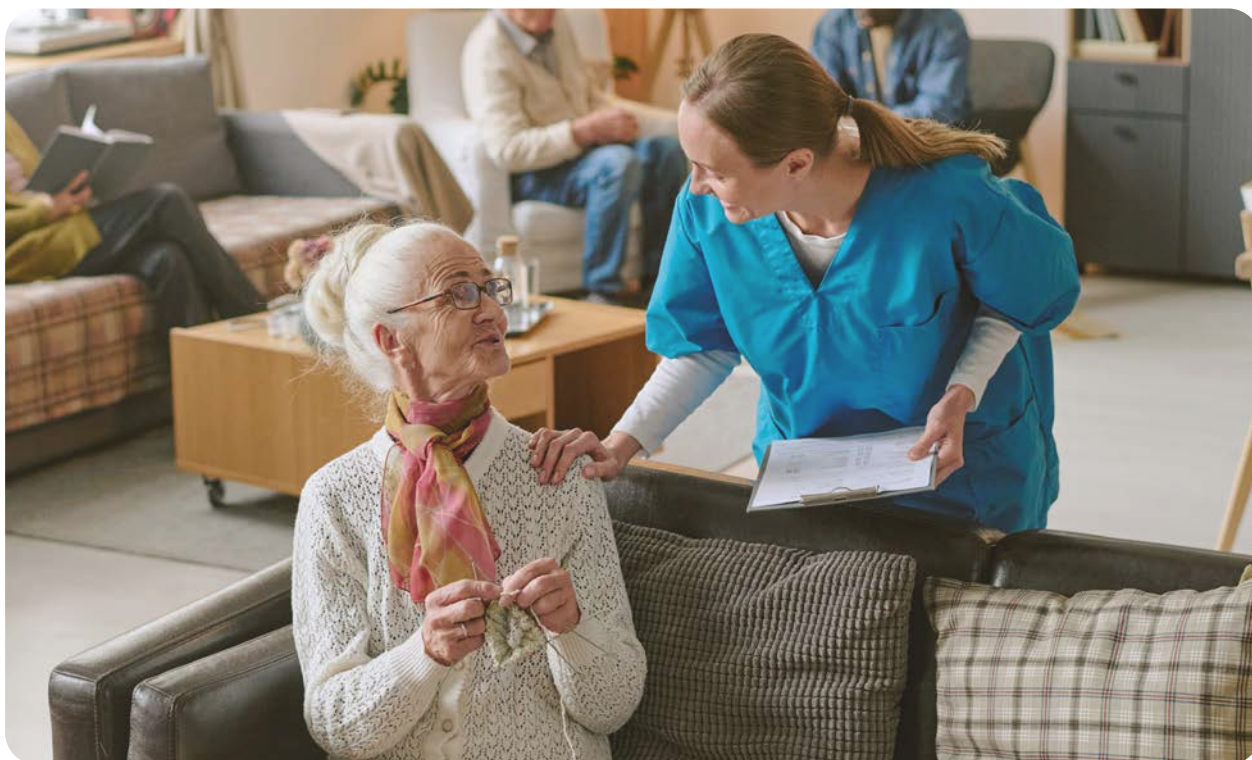
JCU offers nursing and allied health programs with a focus on rural and remote healthcare of high relevance to the workforce training requirements of the region.<sup>114</sup> CQ University offers a range of tertiary and vocational education spanning nursing, primary healthcare and individual support.

The Far North Queensland's diverse population necessitates consideration of service provision to care recipients from a range of cultural backgrounds.

The region's population includes a substantial number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents and the provision of culturally safe care is essential to meet their needs. Training programs that enhance cultural awareness among aged care workers are essential to ensure respectful and tailored care.<sup>115</sup>

TAFE Queensland's training offerings include a Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care. While it is critical for mainstream services to be culturally competent, it is also important the Indigenous workforce brings their unique technical and sociocultural skills to improve care, improve access to services and support the provision of culturally appropriate care in the services that they and their non-Indigenous colleagues deliver.<sup>116</sup>

Enrolment and completion rates for relevant VET courses in Far North Queensland during the years 2021-2023 can be found in Table 36.



113 TAFE Queensland. (2025). *Courses, Aged Care*. Brisbane: Queensland Government.

<https://tafeqld.edu.au/courses/study-areas/education-and-community/community-services/aged-care>

114 James Cook University. (2025). *Explore JCU study areas and find your course*. Townsville: James Cook University.

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/b/study-areas>

115 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and National Indigenous Australians Agency. (2024). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, Tier 3 – Health system performance, 3.08 Cultural competency*. Canberra: Australian Government.

<https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/3-08-cultural-competency>

116 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and National Indigenous Australians Agency. (2025). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, Tier 3 – Health system performance, 3.12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the health workforce*.

Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/3-12-health-workforce>

**Table 36 Enrolments and completions in relevant vet courses Far North Queensland, 2021-2023**

Course code	Course name	Enrolments			Completions		
		2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
CHC33015	Certificate III in Individual Support	1890	1650	1530	625	570	590
CHC33021	Certificate III in Individual Support	-	-	110	-	-	10
CHC43015	Certificate IV in Ageing Support	65	65	30	35	15	15
CHC43415	Certificate IV in Leisure and Health	65	65	30	5	-	5
HLT20113	Certificate II in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care	25	40	25	-	10	-
HLT23221	Certificate II in Health Support Services	-	-	245	-	-	170
HLT30121	Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care	-	-	-	-	-	-
HLT33115	Certificate III in Health Services Assistance	235	250	325	170	170	215
HLT40113	Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care	25	25	20	-	10	-
HLT40121	Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care	-	-	-	-	-	-
HLT40221	Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice	-	-	-	-	-	-
HLT54121	Diploma of nursing	-	40	165	-	-	15
SIT30816	Certificate III in Commercial Cookery	170	160	120	-	-	5
SIT30821	Certificate III in Commercial Cookery	-	-	45	30	40	40
SIT40521	Certificate IV in Kitchen Management	-	-	10	-	-	5

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), DataBuilder

Aged care workers seeking advanced qualifications may face obstacles such as financial constraints, lack of local availability of advanced courses and limited capacity for employers to support further education. These barriers may impact skill enhancement and career progression.

Ongoing professional development is essential for aged care workers to stay updated with best practices and evolving care standards. The integration of digital health technologies such as telehealth, is transforming service delivery, especially in remote areas. Further, the Australian Government

Aged Care Data and Digital Strategy 2024–2029 aims to modernise and better connect aged care services through data and digital innovation.<sup>117</sup> Both current and new aged care workers will need training in emerging technologies designed to increase workplace efficiency, including those that reduce administrative and physical demands, allowing more time for direct care.

Several initiatives are underway to address the current and future workforce training needs of the sector. In 2024, the TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support was established to develop

117 Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. (2024). *Aged Care Data and Digital Strategy*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-data-and-digital-strategy>

118 TAFE Queensland. (2025). *TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://tafeqld.edu.au/about/centres-of-excellence/health-care-and-support>; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2024). *Care and Support TAFE Centre of Excellence, Cairns, Queensland*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.dewr.gov.au/newsroom/articles/care-and-support-tafe-centre-excellence-be-established-cairns>

innovative healthcare training solutions to address critical skills gaps in health, nursing and community services, with a focus on aged care, disability support and mental healthcare. The TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support is a joint initiative of the Australian Government and the Queensland Government under the National Skills Agreement.<sup>118</sup>

Additionally, the Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) is working with residential aged care facilities to develop their digital health capability and capacity.<sup>119</sup> An independent organisation funded by the Australian Government, NQPHN collaborates with various organisations and stakeholders to strengthen workforce capacity and capability in primary healthcare across the region. Current initiatives with Health Workforce Queensland focus on developing a sustainable health workforce by supporting the recruitment and retention of general practitioners, nurses and allied health professionals. Personal care workers and domestic support workers are not within scope of the NQPHN initiative.<sup>120</sup>

## 4.6 Employment projections and jobs growth

The Healthcare and social assistance industry in Far North Queensland is experiencing a period of strong growth.

The industry is predicted to grow by 12 per cent over the five years to 2028. While all industry sectors are predicted to experience strong growth, the fastest growing sectors are predicted to be residential care services (15 per cent) and other social assistance services (14.9 per cent).

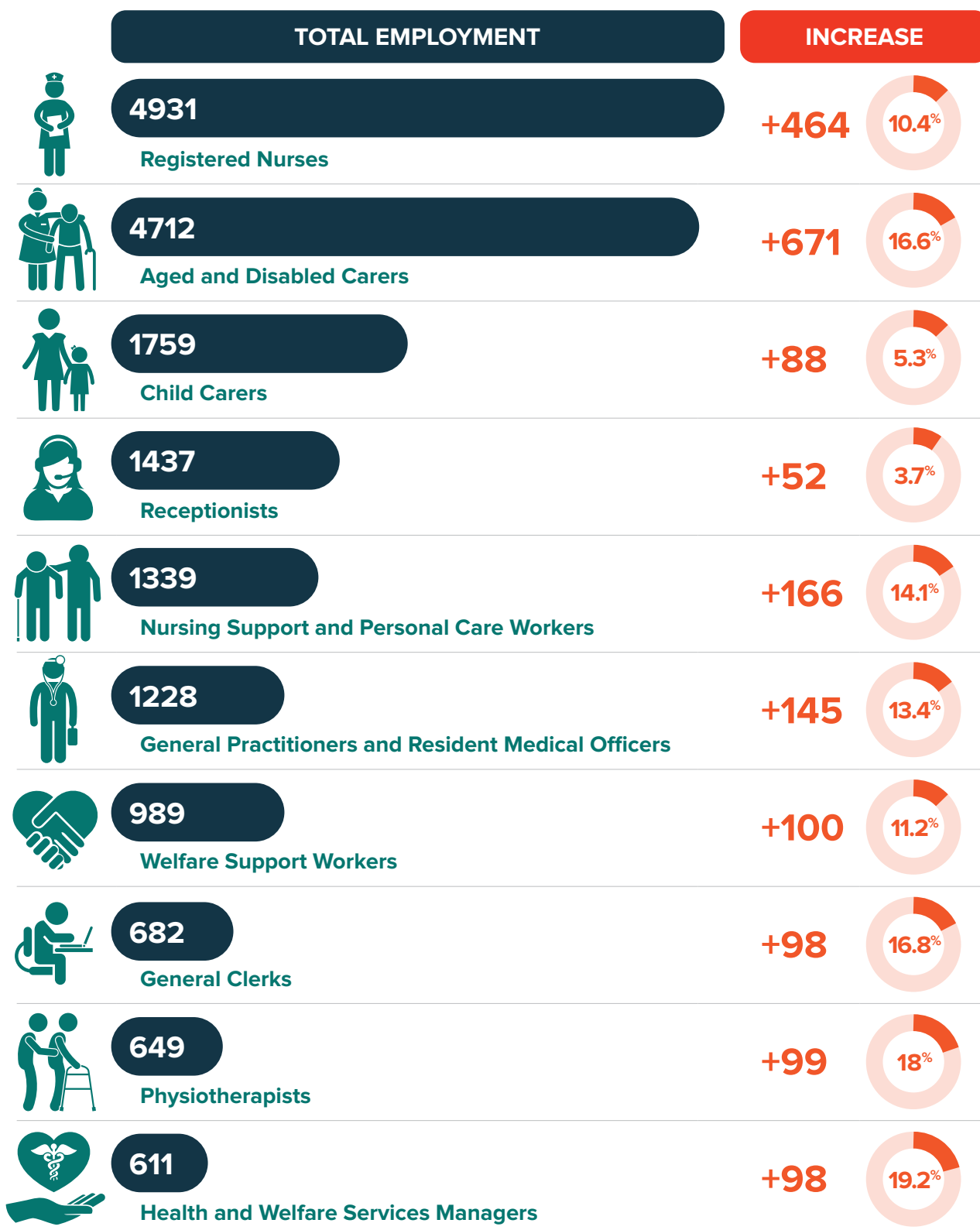
This predicted growth in the sector will lead to an increase in employment numbers in the aged care sector. Aged and disabled carers are the second largest occupation group in health care and social assistance industry, and it is expected to grow significantly by over 16 per cent by 2027-2028 (Table 37).



119 phn Northern Queensland. (2023). *Aged care future lies in digital health technologies*. Cairns: Northern Queensland Primary Health Network. <https://nqphn.com.au/news/aged-care-future-lies-digital-health-technologies>

120 phn Northern Queensland. (2025). *Health provider hub*. Cairns: Northern Queensland Primary Health Network. <https://nqphn.com.au/healthcare-professional/workforce-development>

Table 37 Top ten occupation groups in the healthcare and social assistance industry in Far North Queensland, 2027-2028



Source: Jobs Queensland, Anticipating Future Skills, Data portal

## Drivers of change and industry adaptation

Several drivers of change are impacting the workforce requirements of the aged care sector in Far North Queensland. A number of these drivers are outlined below:

### Specialised care skills

A growing number of permanent care residents require specialised care including chronic illnesses, dementia management and palliative care. It is essential the workforce is appropriately trained to meet these needs. These skills ensure caregivers can provide comprehensive care tailored to individual needs.

### Adaptability to regulatory changes

The implementation of the *Aged Care Act 2024* brings new obligations and conditions for providers. Staff must be trained to understand and implement these changes to ensure compliance and maintain high standards of care.

### Interdisciplinary collaboration

Emphasising collaborative approaches among care professionals, including nurses, allied health workers and support staff, enhances the quality and continuity of care provided to residents.

### Community engagement and home-based care

With a preference for ageing in place, caregivers need skills in delivering home-based care, requiring adaptability and the ability to work independently while maintaining high care standards.

It is important these drivers are considered when planning the future aged care workforce, ensuring high-quality, person-centred care.

## Challenges and skills shortages

The aged care sector in Far North Queensland is experiencing significant workforce challenges. The region faces a critical shortage of aged care workers, exacerbated by an ageing population and increased demand for services. Staffing shortages have led to the closure of aged care facilities across Australia, including regional Queensland in 2023.<sup>121</sup>

The sector struggles to attract and retain qualified personnel with factors such as low wages, high workloads and limited career progression opportunities contributing to high turnover rates.<sup>122</sup>

Notably, aged care workers including registered and enrolled nurses working in aged care, received award wage increases in early 2025 as part of broader government reforms to improve conditions in the sector.<sup>123</sup>

Approximately, 43 per cent of directly employed nursing and personal care staff are aged 45 years and older, with a significant portion nearing retirement.<sup>124</sup>

This demographic shift is intensifying the need to attract new entrants to the sector. At the same time, the skilled aged care workforce is highly mobile across industries, leading to strong competition for staff from other sectors such as disability care, healthcare and hospitality sectors.

121 Beavan, K and Culliver, P. (2023, July 13). Nationwide worker shortages lead to closure of regional Queensland aged care centres. *ABC News*. Australia. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-13/regional-queensland-aged-care-centres-to-close-staff-shortages/102591310>

122 Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union. (2023). *QNMU calls for national approach to boost nurse & midwife numbers Australia-wide*. Brisbane: Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union. [https://www.qnmu.org.au/Web/Media\\_and\\_Publications/Media\\_Releases/Media\\_release\\_uploads/2023/QNMU\\_calls\\_for\\_national\\_approach\\_to\\_boost\\_nurse\\_midwife\\_numbers\\_Australia-wide.aspx](https://www.qnmu.org.au/Web/Media_and_Publications/Media_Releases/Media_release_uploads/2023/QNMU_calls_for_national_approach_to_boost_nurse_midwife_numbers_Australia-wide.aspx); CEDA. (2023). *Duty of care: Aged-care sector running on empty*. Australia: Committee for Economic Development of Australia. <https://www.ceda.com.au/researchandpolicies/research/health-ageing/duty-of-care-aged-care-sector-running-on-empty>

123 Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. (2025). *Better and fairer wages for aged care workers*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care-workforce/what-were-doing/better-and-fairer-wages>

124 Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union. (2023). *QNMU calls for national approach to boost nurse & midwife numbers Australia-wide*. Brisbane: Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union. [https://www.qnmu.org.au/Web/Media\\_and\\_Publications/Media\\_Releases/Media\\_release\\_uploads/2023/QNMU\\_calls\\_for\\_national\\_approach\\_to\\_boost\\_nurse\\_midwife\\_numbers\\_Australia-wide.aspx](https://www.qnmu.org.au/Web/Media_and_Publications/Media_Releases/Media_release_uploads/2023/QNMU_calls_for_national_approach_to_boost_nurse_midwife_numbers_Australia-wide.aspx)

Rural and remote areas face additional challenges in attracting and retaining staff due to geographic isolation, limited access to amenities and fewer professional development opportunities, potentially affecting service quality and availability. It is recognised that industries with irregular hours, such as hospitality and healthcare, exhibit higher staff attrition rates compared to industries with more flexible work arrangements.

#### 4.7 Labour shortage and recruitment challenges

There is a critical workforce shortage in the aged care industry in Far north Queensland. A key driver of this shortage is the ageing population that has driven the expansion of the Healthcare and social assistance industry including the aged care sector and created additional demand for appropriately skilled workers. Key economic, social and cultural considerations specifically impacting Far north Queensland include:

##### Economic factors

**Regional disparities:** Far North Queensland experiences economic challenges. In particular, the Far North and Innisfail Cassowary Coast SA3 areas have lower than average incomes compared to parts of the region and Queensland overall. These disparities can discourage skilled professionals from relocating to the area by, for example, affecting employment opportunities for family members, reducing the availability of qualified aged care workers.

**Funding constraints:** limited funding for aged care services in regional areas such as Far North Queensland, can lead to lower wages and reduced resources for staff training and development, thereby reducing the availability of qualified aged care workers. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety highlighted that regional and remote aged care providers often face higher operational costs and funding challenges which can impact their ability to attract and retain qualified staff and invest in training programs.<sup>125</sup>

##### Social factors

**Ageing population:** the region has a higher proportion of people aged 65 and over, increasing the demand for aged care services. The growth in this age group has placed additional pressure on the existing workforce and necessitates a significant workforce expansion. There is currently a critical shortage of aged care workers in Far North Queensland.

**Training and education gaps:** limited access to training facilities in regional areas hampers the development of individuals who are essential to expand the skilled aged care workforce. This limitation makes it difficult for prospective aged care workers to obtain necessary qualifications locally while creating barriers to the timely recruitment of an expanded workforce.

##### Cultural factors

**Diverse population:** Far North Queensland is home to a significant number of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as other culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Providing culturally appropriate care requires a workforce that is trained in cultural competency.

**Cultural competency training:** there is a need for training programs that enhance cultural awareness among aged care workers to ensure care is respectful and tailored to the cultural backgrounds of all residents.

##### Expanding the available workforce

The aged care sector in Far North Queensland is experiencing critical workforce shortages, with demand for skilled workers expected to rise significantly due to the region's ageing population.

Several programs are underway to support the development of a sustainable aged care workforce.

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125 Royal Commissions. (2021). *Aged Care Quality and Safety, Final Report*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/aged-care/final-report>

Health Workforce Queensland in partnership with Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN), is working to build a sustainable health workforce by recruiting and retaining general practitioners, nurses and allied health professionals. This initiative includes both external recruitment and upskilling of existing workers in areas of high need.<sup>126</sup> However, this initiative does not currently include personal care workers.

The Diverse Queensland Workforce program, funded by the Department of Trade, Employment and Training as part of the Future Skills Fund, has been expanded under the Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–2032. This program funds not-for-profit organisations to deliver client focused employment services to work ready migrants, refugees and international students. Participants are gaining jobs (ranging from lower-skilled entry level jobs to professional occupations) across a broad range of industry sectors including health and community services. In Cairns, the program is being delivered by Centacare FNQ Employment Hub until 30 June 2026.<sup>127</sup>

It is also important to attract and retain workers in aged care by highlighting the opportunities and positive aspects of working in aged care, including personal growth and contributing to a brighter community. The long-term outlook for job prospects in aged care is positive, with the number of care workers in aged and disability care expected to grow.

Roles in the aged care sector may have more regular working hours than roles in sectors competing for the same skilled workforce. An example is Ageing Australia's Aged Care Is the Place to Be program sponsored by the Queensland Government, that highlighted flexible work hours and provided complimentary foundation skills training. The program was designed to attract individuals at the beginning of their career to entry level roles in the aged care sector, offering an opportunity to gain qualifications while enjoying a healthy work-life balance.

## 4.8 Skills and training requirements

### Future workforce skill requirements

The *Australia's Current, Emerging and Future Workforce Skills Needs* report published by the National Skills Commission (now the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)) underscores the significant contribution of the healthcare and social assistance sector to employment growth.<sup>128</sup> Registered nurses and workers in aged and disability care are identified as critical occupations addressing Australia's workforce needs, reflecting the growing demand for skilled professionals in aged care and health services. The report highlights registered nurses and personal care workers in the aged and disability sectors as two of the top three occupations in demand. These roles are integral to addressing Australia's demographic shifts, including an ageing population and increasing healthcare needs, which continue to drive workforce shortages in these sectors.

The report emphasises that employment growth is likely to be dominated by the four service industries, led by health care and social assistance. The report also identifies the 'Five Cs' (Care, Computing, Cognitive Ability, Communication and Climate) as foundational skills for the future workforce. Among these, Care is particularly significant, encompassing the skills required to respond to demographic changes such as an ageing population and the rising demand for healthcare services. The focus on the Care skill group reflects its central role in addressing Australia's most pressing health-related workforce challenges. Fostering these capabilities is critical to ensuring the workforce can adapt to future demands and provide the necessary support to Australia's ageing population.

The Far North Queensland region reflects the broader national trends in health and aged care workforce demand. By 2027–2028, the healthcare and social assistance workforce in Cairns is projected to have the highest growth rate of any sector, an anticipated increase of 12.4 per cent since 2023-2024.<sup>129</sup>

126 Health Workforce Queensland. (n.d.). *Rural Workforce Enhancement Campaign for North Queensland*. Brisbane: Health Workforce Queensland. <https://www.healthworkforce.com.au/rural-workforce-enhancement-campaign>

127 Department of Trade, Employment and Training. (2024). *Diverse Queensland Workforce program*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/training/future-skills-fund/diverse-qld-workforce>

128 (Former) National Skills Commission. (2022). *Australia's current, emerging and future workforce skills needs*. Canberra: Australian Government. [https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-04/australias\\_current\\_emerging\\_and\\_future\\_workforce\\_skills\\_needs.pdf](https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-04/australias_current_emerging_and_future_workforce_skills_needs.pdf)

129 Jobs Queensland. (2025). *Anticipating Future Skills Series, Cairns Region*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/resources/files/pdf/afs-5/cairns-regional-summary-afs.pdf>

The largest occupational groupings within the healthcare and social assistance industry are registered nurses, personal care workers in both the aged and disability sectors, child carers and receptionists. The projected growth highlights the urgency of addressing skill shortages in key occupations such as personal care work and registered nurses to ensure the delivery of quality care and support in the region.

The ageing of the Australian population is expected to be reflected in significant shifts in the age profile of the health workforce. Australia's workforce participation rate is projected to fall from a record of 66 per cent in 2021 to 63 per cent in 2060-2061, reflecting the growing proportion of older Australians in the population.<sup>130</sup> This decline, together with the expected growth in healthcare demand will have significant implications for the health system and its work force. Deloitte modelling suggests that unless the system evolves, the health workforce must become four times more productive by 2050 to meet forecast demand.<sup>131</sup>

The projected increase in the older population necessitates a strategic focus on training, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to meet current and future demand. In the short-term, an initial focus to raise the average level of training undertaken by personal care workers, skills in culturally appropriate care and digital competencies would be beneficial.

## 4.9 Future opportunities

Strategic investment and policy initiatives are central to enhancing aged care services and improving the quality of life for older residents in Far North Queensland. Initiatives are in place to build the capacity and capability of the sector. In particular, developments in the regulatory and funding

landscape, training initiatives and technologically driven advancements in aged care practice present opportunities to strengthen the workforce. Key focus areas include:

- Infrastructure development: expanding and modernising aged care facilities is vital to meet increasing demand. The \$9.5 million expansion of the Pyramid Residential Care Centre in Gordonvale is a recent example of such investment.<sup>132</sup>
- Workforce development: training programs such as TAFE Queensland's Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) and Certificate IV in Ageing Support are crucial in building a capable workforce.<sup>133</sup> Establishing Centres of Excellence can further strengthen regional training capacity.<sup>134</sup>
- Recruitment and retention: incentives and policies encouraging professionals to work in regional areas are essential to addressing workforce shortages.
- Funding and financial support: government grants (e.g. through the Aged Care Capital Assistance Program) and incentives for private investment can drive the development and sustainability of aged care services.
- Technology integration: expanding telehealth and assistive technologies can significantly enhance service delivery and support ageing in place.
- Community and home-based care: growing access to home care packages and community programs can improve social connection and align with preferences for ageing at home.
- Policy reforms: strengthening regulatory frameworks (e.g. staffing ratios, quality assessments) and updating funding models to reflect the true cost of care are key to long-term industry sustainability.<sup>135</sup>

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130 The Treasury. (2021). *2021 Intergenerational Report*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://treasury.gov.au/publication/2021-intergenerational-report>

131 Deloitte. (2024). *Australia's Health Reimagined, Voices of the Workforce*. Australia: Deloitte. <https://www.deloitte.com/au/en/Industries/life-sciences-health-care/perspectives/australias-health-reimagined.html>

132 Egan, C. (2024, April 18). \$9.5M expansion of aged care home south of Cairns puts cost of bed at \$430,000-plus, *The Weekly Source*. Balmain East. <https://www.theweeklysourc.com.au/aged-care/aged-care-home-south-of-cairns-opens-95m-22-bed-expansion>

133 TAFE Queensland. (2025). *Courses, Aged Care*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://tafeqld.edu.au/courses/study-areas/education-and-community/community-services/aged-care>

134 Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2024). *Care and Support TAFE Centre of Excellence, Cairns, Queensland*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.dewr.gov.au/newsroom/articles/care-and-support-tafe-centre-excellence-be-established-cairns>

135 Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. (2025). *Aged care reforms and reviews*. Canberra: Australian Government.

## Supply chain mapping

The effectiveness of aged care services depends on a well-functioning supply chain with multiple independent components:<sup>136</sup>

### Core components:

- Regulatory bodies: establish standards and ensure compliance
- Service providers: deliver residential, home and community-based care
- Suppliers: provide essential medical equipment, pharmaceuticals and materials
- Support services: including catering, cleaning, maintenance and transport
- Workforce: comprises nurses, personal care workers, allied health professionals and support staff

### Key interdependencies:

- Regulatory frameworks shape service delivery models and require ongoing compliance
- Reliable supply chains are essential for uninterrupted access to medical and care-related resources
- Support services are critical to maintaining facility standards and resident wellbeing
- A skilled and available workforce underpins the quality and continuity of care

### Challenges:

- Regulatory compliance: requires continuous training and resourcing
- Supply disruptions: natural disasters and other events can impact supply continuity, necessitating strong risk management strategies
- Workforce shortages: persistent shortages in Far North Queensland are compounded by the region's ageing population, highlighting the need for urgent, long-term workforce planning

## 4.10 Regional preparedness for economic, environmental and technological shocks

The aged care sector in Far North Queensland's capacity to respond to external shocks (economic, environmental or technological) is influenced by several factors.

### Economic factors

The importance of tourism to the region's economy makes it vulnerable to broad economic downturns, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aged care sector while essential, faces challenges in funding and resource allocation during such periods.

The aged care sector in Australia is undergoing significant reforms, starting 1 July 2025, with the implementation of the new *Aged Care Act 2024*, focusing on empowering older people and improving care quality, including a shift to the 'Support at Home' program for in-home care. These reforms are driving review of industry standards and change in workforce composition.

### Environmental factors

The Cairns region is susceptible to extreme weather events, including cyclones and flooding. The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service's Strategic Plan 2023–2027 emphasises the need for infrastructure resilience to ensure continuity of care during environmental disruptions.<sup>137</sup> Investments in cyclone-resistant aged care facilities and emergency preparedness plans are crucial. An example within the healthcare and social assistance industry is the Cairns Health and Innovation Centre project that includes considerations for environmental resilience in its design.<sup>138</sup>

### Technological adaptability

The adoption of telehealth and electronic health records has been accelerated by the pandemic, providing new opportunities for service delivery in regional areas. The Cairns Smart Green Economy project highlights the region's commitment to leveraging technology for sustainable development, which can benefit the aged care sector.<sup>139</sup>

136 Queensland Health. (2023). *Residential Aged Care Planning Resource, Business Continuity and Disaster/Emergency Management – July 2023*. Brisbane: Queensland Government.  
[https://www.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/403267/BCP-and-DM-planning-resource-for-residential-aged-care-facilities.pdf](https://www.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/403267/BCP-and-DM-planning-resource-for-residential-aged-care-facilities.pdf)

137 Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service. (2025). *Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service Strategic Plan 2023-2027*. Cairns: Queensland Government.  
<https://www.cairns-hinterland.health.qld.gov.au/about-us/corporate-publications-and-reporting/strategic-plan>

138 Advance Cairns. (2024). *Cairns Health & Innovation Centre*. Cairns: Advance Cairns.  
<https://www.advancecairns.com/advocacy/cairns-health-and-innovation-centre/>

139 Cairns Regional Council. (2025). *Smart Green Economy*. Cairns: Local Government.  
<https://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/council/projects-and-priorities/major-projects/closed-projects/smart-green-economy>

## 4.11 Business confidence and economic outlook in the aged care sector

The aged care sector in Far North Queensland is currently navigating a complex economic landscape, influenced by both regional and national factors.

### Business confidence

**Workforce challenges:** the sector faces significant workforce shortages, with demand for skilled workers expected to increase due to the region's ageing population.

**Financial pressures:** regional aged care facilities are grappling with financial distress, with more than 65 per cent operating at a loss. Factors contributing to this include funding shortfalls, recruitment challenges and compliance costs associated with new aged care quality standards.<sup>140</sup>

### Economic outlook

**Government initiatives:** the Australian Government has announced significant aged care quality reforms aimed at ensuring safe, quality care for older residents in Far North Queensland. These reforms are expected to bring confidence to older Australians and their families in deciding on aged care options.<sup>141</sup>

**Regional development:** the Queensland Government's Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan outlines strategic regional priorities, including the development of a healthy region with liveable communities. This plan aims to support the aged care sector by improving health infrastructure and services.<sup>142</sup>

### Housing affordability

**Affordable housing for workers:** limited availability of affordable housing options has a negative impact on attracting and retaining aged care workers to the region.

**Residential aged care homes:** investment in construction and maintenance of aged care homes will be necessary to meet growing demand as the population ages.

### Retention and support

**Career progression:** clear career pathways and professional development opportunities are a means to attract staff and reduce turnover rates.

**Supportive work environment:** a positive work culture with adequate support systems and flexible job requirements are a means to enhancing job satisfaction and employee well-being.



140 Stewart Brown. (2024). [https://www.stewartbrown.com.au/images/documents/StewartBrown\\_-\\_Aged\\_Care\\_Financial\\_Performance\\_Survey\\_Report\\_June\\_2023.pdf](https://www.stewartbrown.com.au/images/documents/StewartBrown_-_Aged_Care_Financial_Performance_Survey_Report_June_2023.pdf)

141 Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. (2025). *Aged care reforms and reviews*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-reforms>

142 Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. (2025). *Far North Queensland Infrastructure Plan*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/infrastructure/infrastructure-planning/regional-infrastructure-plans/far-north-queensland-infrastructure-plan>

## 5. Development of a workforce plan

This environmental scan highlights the region's significant demographic, economic and workforce changes. As the population grows and ages, with increasing cultural diversity and unique geographical challenges, the region faces a range of opportunities and pressures related to workforce development, infrastructure and service delivery.

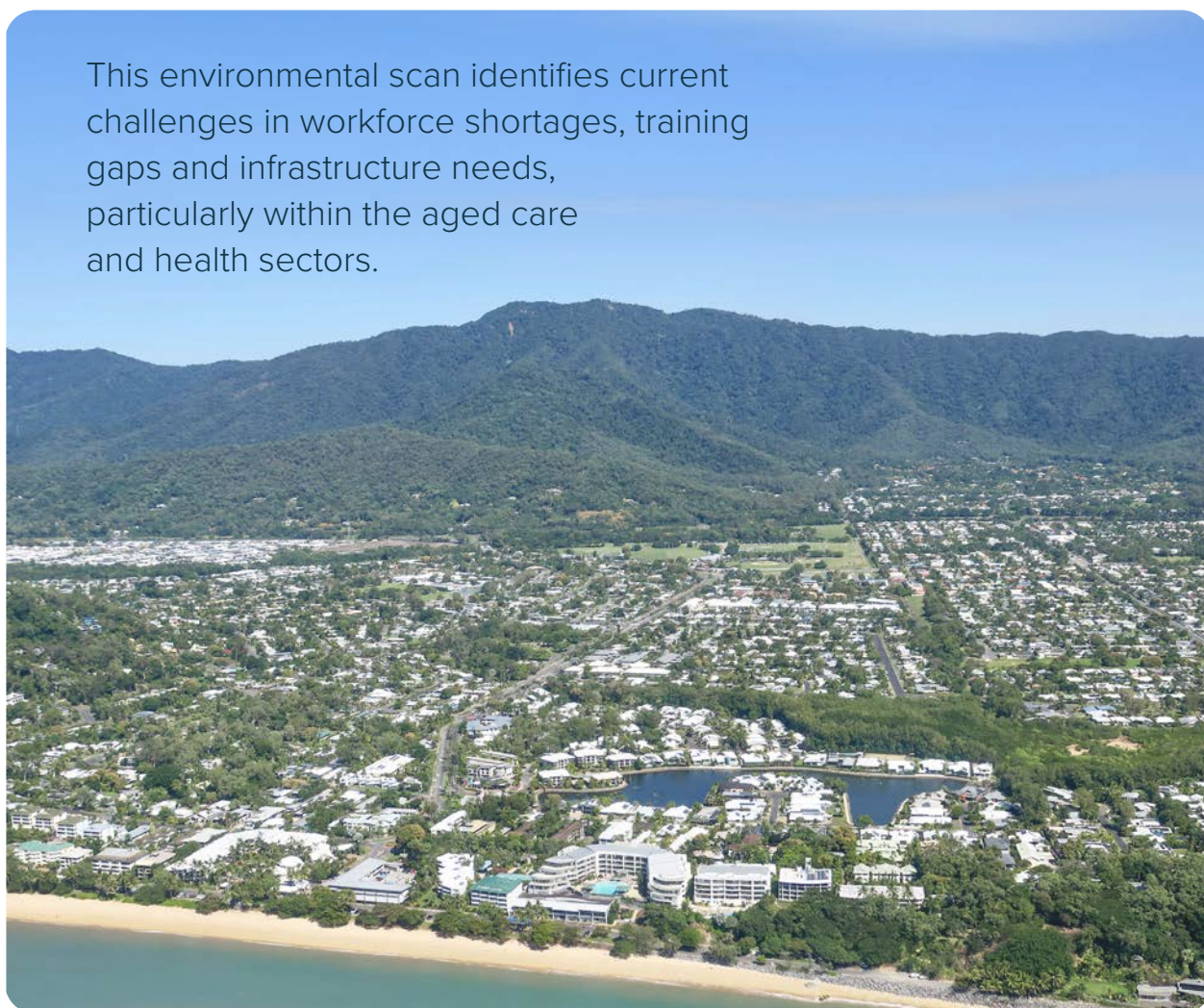
Key findings include projections of significant growth in the population aged 65 and older, driving increased demand for aged care services. The healthcare and social assistance sector emerges as the fastest-growing industry, with a projected increase of 14.7 per cent by 2025–26. Workforce shortages, particularly in aged care are compounded by challenges such as an ageing workforce, migration of younger workers to metropolitan areas and training gaps. Additionally, the region's cultural diversity, including a 12 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, underscores the critical need for culturally competent care.

Addressing these challenges may involve exploring strategies such as targeted recruitment and retention initiatives, expanding training opportunities and further investing in innovative infrastructure solutions. Strengthening collaboration across government, industry and community stakeholders should also help the region respond effectively to its evolving needs and support the delivery of quality care and services to its diverse and ageing population.

Potential topics for consultation:

- A.** Attracting and retaining workforce numbers
- B.** Building a diverse and inclusive workforce
- C.** Skilling and upskilling of the existing workforce
- D.** Conversion of graduates from training to roles in the aged care workforce

This environmental scan identifies current challenges in workforce shortages, training gaps and infrastructure needs, particularly within the aged care and health sectors.



# Appendix A – Aged Care admissions in Far North Queensland.

Source: AIHW, GEN data: Dashboard supplementary tables

**Table 38 Admissions by provider type and age - Home care in ACPR 306 (Far North), 2022–2023**

Age range	Men	Women	Total
0-49	0	0	0
50-54	0	1	1
55-59	2	4	6
60-64	1	9	10
65-69	32	43	75
70-74	62	103	165
75-79	97	129	226
80-84	95	127	222
85-89	89	115	204
90-94	48	60	108
95-99	10	10	20
100+	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>1,038</b>

**Table 39 Admissions by provider type and age, Permanent residential care in ACPR 306 (Far North), 2022–2023**

Age range	Men	Women	Total
0-49	0	0	0
50-54	0	1	1
55-59	2	0	2
60-64	6	7	13
65-69	23	19	42
70-74	35	36	71
75-79	74	77	151
80-84	69	82	151
85-89	100	102	202
90-94	58	91	149
95-99	11	35	46
100+	2	12	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>842</b>

**Table 40 Admissions by provider type and age, Respite Residential Care in ACPR 306 (Far North), 2022–2023**

Age range	Men	Women	Total
0-49	0	0	0
50-54	0	1	1
55-59	3	4	7
60-64	13	6	19
65-69	27	31	58
70-74	75	60	135
75-79	124	102	226
80-84	132	113	245
85-89	134	162	296
90-94	98	123	221
95-99	17	25	42
100+	3	12	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>1,265</b>

**Table 41 Admissions by provider type and age, Short-term restorative in ACPR 306 (Far North), 2022–2023**

Age range	Men	Women	Total
0-49	0	0	0
50-54	1	0	1
55-59	0	2	2
60-64	2	1	3
65-69	11	36	47
70-74	30	42	72
75-79	39	56	95
80-84	22	36	58
85-89	20	41	61
90-94	12	9	21
95-99	0	2	2
100+	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>362</b>

**Table 42 Admissions by provider type and age,  
Transition care in ACPR 306 (Far North),  
2022–2023**

Age range	Men	Women	Total
0-49	0	0	0
50-54	0	0	0
55-59	0	1	1
60-64	0	1	1
65-69	6	9	15
70-74	13	19	32
75-79	10	20	30
80-84	17	21	38
85-89	16	14	30
90-94	10	2	12
95-99	1	0	1
100+	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>160</b>

# Appendix B – Selected occupations in the aged care sector.

The aged care sector employs people in a wide range of occupations. The table below shows occupations in scope of this project.

**Table 43 Occupation Standard Classification for Australia codes for selected occupations within the aged care sector**

OSCA Code <sup>143</sup>	Occupation title	Tasks/Activities
265431	Nurse practitioner	<p>Provides advanced and extended nursing care to people as authorised in relevant nursing legislation, in a range of health, welfare and community settings.</p> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assesses and diagnoses people's health conditions and needs</li> <li>Orders and interprets diagnostic tests and investigations</li> <li>Prescribes and administers medications and treatments independently, within the scope of nursing practice</li> <li>Develops and implements patient care plans and management strategies</li> <li>Provides education and guidance to people and their families on health promotion, disease prevention and self-care</li> <li>Refers patients to specialist Medical Practitioners and other Health Professionals for further assessment and treatment</li> <li>Evaluates and monitors peoples' responses to treatments and interventions</li> <li>Maintains accurate and up-to-date patient records and documentation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor degree, higher qualification, or at least five years of relevant experience.</li> </ul>
265433	Registered nurse (aged care)	<p>Provides nursing care to the elderly in community settings, aged care homes, retirement villages and healthcare facilities.</p> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assesses the health needs of elderly patients and develops individualised care plans</li> <li>Administers medications and treatments as prescribed by healthcare professionals</li> <li>Monitors and records vital signs such as blood pressure and heart rate</li> <li>Assists elderly patients with activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing and eating</li> <li>Provides emotional support and companionship to elderly patients</li> <li>Collaborates with other Health Professionals to coordinate and manage patient care</li> <li>Educates elderly patients and their families on health promotion and disease prevention</li> <li>Performs wound care and dressing changes</li> <li>Assists in the management of chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension</li> <li>Responds to emergencies and provides immediate medical assistance when necessary.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor degree, higher qualification, or at least five years of relevant experience.</li> </ul>
321131	Chef, including aged care chef	<p>Plan and organise the preparation and cooking of food in dining and catering establishments.</p> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists in the planning of menus and determining food quantities and costs</li> <li>Prepares and cooks food according to recipes or personal judgment and experience</li> <li>Monitors food quality and presentation</li> <li>Manages and trains cooks and kitchenhands in food preparation, cooking techniques and food safety</li> <li>Orders and maintains inventory of food and kitchen supplies, ensuring it meets daily production needs</li> <li>Collaborates with management to develop new dishes and improve existing recipes</li> <li>Coordinates with front-of-house staff to ensure efficient food service</li> <li>Ensures compliance with health and safety regulations in the kitchen.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AQF Associate degree, Advanced diploma, Diploma, or at least three years of relevant experience.</li> </ul>

143 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). *OSCA - Occupation Standard Classification for Australia*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0>

OSCA Code <sup>143</sup>	Occupation title	Tasks/Activities
411331	Diversional therapist	<p>Plans, designs and coordinates individualised recreational, lifestyle and leisure-based activities to support, challenge and enhance the psychological, spiritual, social, emotional and physical wellbeing of individuals primarily in healthcare or aged care homes.</p> <p><b>Alternative title:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreational Therapist</li> </ul> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies individual needs, interests, skills, autonomy and abilities through task analysis and encourages participation and independence in suitable leisure and recreational events</li> <li>Evaluates and assesses clients' levels of abilities, interests, needs, strengths, weaknesses and their ability to carry out a range of tasks and interact with others</li> <li>Adapts programs to suit individual needs, interests, skills and abilities</li> <li>Plans, implements and coordinates leisure-based activity programs for groups and individuals to assist with their social development and promote their sense of wellbeing</li> <li>Maintains a knowledge of resources available within a facility and the community</li> <li>Assists with training and supervising volunteers and staff.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AQF Associate degree, Advanced diploma, Diploma, or at least three years of relevant experience</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skill Level 3: AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, AQF Certificate IV, or at least three years of relevant experience.</li> </ul>
411332	Lifestyle coordinator	<p>Develops and coordinates recreation, lifestyle and leisure based activity group programs to support, challenge and enhance the psychological, spiritual, social, emotional and physical wellbeing of individuals primarily in healthcare or aged care homes.</p> <p><b>Alternative titles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities Coordinator</li> <li>Leisure and Lifestyle Coordinator</li> </ul> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops and coordinates leisure-based activity group programs to assist with social development and promote a sense of wellbeing</li> <li>Evaluates and reviews programs, seeks feedback on activities and makes adjustments to programs if required</li> <li>Maintains a knowledge of resources available within a facility and the community</li> <li>Engages with community groups to build a network of support and provides information on available support resources within the local community</li> <li>Assists with training and supervises volunteers and staff</li> <li>May coordinate and promote cultural and religious celebrations and activities within a facility.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AQF Associate degree, Advanced diploma, Diploma, or at least three years of relevant experience</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skill Level 3: AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, AQF Certificate IV, or at least three years of relevant experience.</li> </ul>

OSCA Code <sup>143</sup>	Occupation title	Tasks/Activities
421131	Aged care coordinator	<p>Plans and organises person-centric services for older people in an aged care home or person's own home to improve quality of life.</p> <p><b>Alternative title:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Care Coordinator</li> </ul> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports families and provides education and care for persons in their home or aged care homes</li> <li>• Monitors and reports on the progress of clients and patient care plans</li> <li>• Evaluates clients' needs and plans and develops and implements educational, training and support programs</li> <li>• Facilitates access to clinical services and health practitioners</li> <li>• Interviews clients and assesses the nature and extent of their abilities</li> <li>• Provides practical and emotional support to individuals</li> <li>• Complies with relevant policies to optimise safety and wellbeing of clients.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, AQF Certificate IV, or at least three years of relevant experience.</li> </ul>
421132	Aged care team leader	<p>Oversees the day-to-day operations of a team of aged care workers and ensures the delivery of high-quality care and support to older people in various aged care settings.</p> <p><b>Alternative title:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aged care supervisor</li> </ul> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages a team of aged care support workers and ensures efficient running of day-to-day operations</li> <li>• Maintains attendance records and rosters</li> <li>• Manages, anticipates and responds to unpredictable emerging situations</li> <li>• Onboards and responds to queries and feedback from clients and their families</li> <li>• Oversees team training, education and professional development programs</li> <li>• Complies with relevant policies to optimise the safety and wellbeing of clients</li> <li>• May support older people with daily activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, AQF Certificate IV, or at least three years of relevant experience.</li> </ul>
421231	Community aged care support workers	<p>Provides general household assistance, emotional support and direct person-centred care for older people in their own homes.</p> <p><b>Alternative titles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Aged Care Worker</li> <li>• Community Care Worker (Aged Care)</li> <li>• Home Care Worker (Aged Care)</li> </ul> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports older people with daily activities such as mobility, housekeeping tasks, personal care and meal preparation</li> <li>• Negotiates with individuals and families regarding the acceptance of care provided</li> <li>• Oversees medication usage and monitors healthcare plans as directed by healthcare professionals</li> <li>• Provides emotional support and assists older people in managing depression, confusion and grief</li> <li>• Identifies and facilitates community-based social activities for older people</li> <li>• Manages risks and emergencies in a home care setting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQF Certificate II, AQF Certificate III, or at least one year of relevant experience.</li> </ul>

OSCA Code <sup>143</sup>	Occupation title	Tasks/Activities
421331	Residential aged care worker	<p>Provides general assistance, emotional support and direct person-centred care for older people residing in an aged care home.</p> <p><b>Alternative titles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aged Care Support Worker</li> <li>• Care Service Employee (Aged Care)</li> <li>• Personal Care Assistant (Aged Care)</li> <li>• Personal Care Worker (Aged Care)</li> </ul> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports residents with daily activities, such as mobility and personal care</li> <li>• Monitors medication administration to ensure it is used correctly and effectively</li> <li>• Negotiates with individuals and families regarding the acceptance of care provided</li> <li>• Provides community engagement and social support to residents</li> <li>• Supports a multidisciplinary team to adhere to health plans as directed by healthcare professionals</li> <li>• Provides emotional support and assists residents in managing depression, confusion and grief</li> <li>• Complies with standards within an aged care facility</li> <li>• May perform specialised personal care, such as palliative care and dementia support</li> <li>• May facilitate basic medical procedures, such as catheterisation and peg feeding.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQF Certificate II, AQF Certificate III, or at least one year of relevant experience.</li> </ul>
441131	Enrolled nurse	<p>Provides nursing care to patients in a variety of health, aged care, mental health, welfare and community settings under the supervision of Registered Nurses.</p> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs physical exams, including checking patients' pulse, temperature and blood pressure</li> <li>• Records and interprets clinical observations, including temperature, pulse and blood pressure, urine tests, blood glucose and other tests used in specific areas of practice</li> <li>• Provides basic wound care in line with an agreed patient care plan</li> <li>• Assists with the administration of medications under the supervision of a Registered Nurse</li> <li>• Provides patients with personal care activities such as bathing, dressing, grooming and eating</li> <li>• Provides first aid in medical emergencies</li> <li>• Works with Registered Nurses, doctors and other Health Professionals to create patient care plans</li> <li>• Participates in health promotion activities and community education.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQF Associate degree, Advanced diploma, Diploma, or at least three years of relevant experience.</li> </ul>
442231	Assistant in nursing	<p>Provides limited patient care under the direction of nursing staff in a hospital or aged care facility.</p> <p><b>Alternative titles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistant Nurse</li> <li>• Nursing Assistant</li> </ul> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports patients with daily activities such as mobility and personal care</li> <li>• Follows therapy plans such as interventions, to assist patients</li> <li>• Observes and reports changes in patients' conditions and reports complaints about care provided</li> <li>• Provides basic treatment and delivery of medications under the direction of nursing staff, including vaccinations</li> <li>• Participates in planning the care of patients and residents</li> <li>• Assists with rehabilitation exercises</li> <li>• Assists in workplace health and safety.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQF Certificate II, AQF Certificate III, or at least one year of relevant experience.</li> </ul>

OSCA Code <sup>143</sup>	Occupation title	Tasks/Activities
811231	Domestic cleaner	<p>Cleans and tidies private dwellings, such as houses, units, flats, apartments and townhouses.</p> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleans and sanitises rooms in private dwellings, such as houses, units, flats, apartments and townhouses</li> <li>• Sweeps, mops and vacuums floors in living areas</li> <li>• Cleans and disinfects kitchen and bathroom areas, including countertops, sinks, appliances, toilets and showers</li> <li>• Dusts and polishes furniture, surfaces and fixtures</li> <li>• Empties and cleans rubbish bins and disposes of waste</li> <li>• Reports any maintenance or repair needs to the homeowner</li> <li>• Follows health and safety guidelines to ensure a clean and safe environment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQF Certificate I, or compulsory secondary education.</li> </ul>
811332	Laundry worker (including hospital linen workers)	<p>Sorts, cleans, irons, presses, folds and packages linen, clothing and other garments in a commercial laundry or private residence.</p> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sorts and separates soiled linen, clothing and other articles by type, colour and hygiene requirements</li> <li>• Mixes and adds detergents, dyes, bleaches, starches and other chemicals used in the cleaning process</li> <li>• Operates washing machines, dryers and other laundry equipment to clean and dry linen, clothing and other articles</li> <li>• Irons and presses clothing, garments and other articles using steam irons or pressing machines</li> <li>• Checks clothing, linen, fabrics and other articles for damage or defects</li> <li>• Folds or hangs garments, fabrics or other articles for storage or delivery</li> <li>• May perform minor repairs or alterations to clothing, linen or other articles.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQF Certificate I, or compulsory secondary education.</li> </ul>
811432	Domestic housekeeper	<p>Cleans, cooks and performs other housekeeping tasks in private residences.</p> <p><b>Main tasks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleans and tidies private residences, including dusting, vacuuming, mopping floors and cleaning surfaces</li> <li>• Makes beds and changes bed linen and washes and irons clothes and linen</li> <li>• Cleans and organises bathrooms, including toilets, showers and sinks</li> <li>• Cleans and organises kitchens, including washing dishes, cleaning appliances and organising pantries</li> <li>• Shops for groceries and household supplies and prepares and cooks meals according to clients' preferences and dietary restrictions</li> <li>• Takes care of household pets, including feeding, walking and grooming</li> <li>• Performs light gardening and outdoor maintenance tasks</li> <li>• Assists with other household tasks as needed, such as running errands or organising cupboards.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications and experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AQF Certificate I, or compulsory secondary education.</li> </ul>

# Appendix C – Aged care service providers (other than CHSP) in Far North Queensland.

Data from AIHW identify the following providers of aged care services (other than CHSP) of the following types in the Far North Queensland: Home Care Packages, Multi-Purpose Services, Residential Aged Care, Short Term Restorative Care and Transition Care.<sup>144</sup> Many providers offer multiple service types.

- Adermina Pty Ltd
- Aurukun Shire Council
- Bupa Aged Care Australia Pty Ltd
- Cairns and District Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation for Elders
- Carinya Home for the Aged
- Churches of Christ in Queensland
- Comlink Australia Limited
- FNQ Independent Living Support Association Inc
- Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
- IC (Cairns) Pty Ltd
- IC (Edge Hill) Pty Ltd
- IC (Edmonton) Pty Ltd
- Integrated Living Australia Ltd
- Kewarra Lifestyles Pty Ltd
- Life Without Barriers
- Masajoda Pty Ltd
- Mercy Aged and Community Care Ltd
- Mutkin Residential and Community Care Indigenous Corporation
- MyHomecare Pty Ltd
- Napranum Aboriginal Council
- Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council
- Ozcare
- Pyramid Residential Care Centre
- Queensland Health
- Ravenshoe Rural & Remote Aged & Disabled Care (Radcare) Inc
- Regis Aged Care Pty Ltd
- RSL Care RDNS Limited
- St John's Community Care Limited
- Ten Years Younger Home Care Pty Ltd
- The Salvation Army (Queensland) Property Trust
- The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Q.)
- Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service
- Torres Strait Home for the Aged Association Inc
- Tully Nursing Home Inc.
- Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council

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144 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). Queensland service list, 30 June 2024. *Aged care service list: 30 June 2024*. Canberra: Australian Government.  
<https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/resources/access-data/2024/september/aged-care-service-list-30-june-2024>

# Appendix D – The aged care sector in Far North Queensland.

**Table 44 Organisation type of aged care providers (other than CHSP) in Far North Queensland, by SA3 area, 20 June 2023**

Type of training	Organisation Type	Home Care	Multi-purpose service	Residential	Short-Term Restorative Care (STRC)	Transition Care	Grant Total
<b>Cairns - North</b>	Community Based	1					1
	Private Incorporated Body	1		3			4
	<b>Cairns - North - Total</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>			<b>5</b>
<b>Cairns - South</b>	Charitable	4		2			6
	Community Based	5		1	1		7
	Private Incorporated Body	7		5			9
	Religious	2		1			3
	State Government	1		0		1	2
	<b>Cairns - South - Total</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Innisfail - Cassowary Coast</b>	Charitable			1			1
	Community Based	2		2			4
	Religious	1		1			2
	State Government		1				1
	<b>Innisfail - Cassowary Coast - Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>			<b>9</b>
<b>Far North</b>	Community Based	2					2
	Local government	7		1			8
	Private Incorporated Body			1			1
	Religious			1			1
	State Government		2				2
	<b>Far North - Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>			<b>14</b>
<b>Port Douglas - Daintree</b>	Charitable			1			1
	Religious			1			1
	State Government		1				1
	<b>Port Douglas - Daintree - Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Tablelands (East) - Kuranda</b>	Charitable			1			1
	Community Based	1		1			2
	Religious	1		1			2
	<b>Tablelands (East) - Kuranda - Total</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>			<b>5</b>

Source: AIHW, Aged care service list: 30 June 2024

**Table 45 Occupancy rates in residential aged care in ACPR 306 (Far North), 20 June 2023**

ACBR Code	ACPR name	Occupancy rate in residential care
306	Far North	86.2%

Source: AIHW, GEN data: Dashboard supplementary tables

**Table 46 Number of aged care places, by care type and organisation type in ACPR 306 (Far North), 30 June 2023**

Variable	Type of service	Number of places
Care type	Residential care	2237
	Transition care	42
	Short-term restorative care	80
	Multi-purpose service	107
Organisation type	Government	169
	Not-for-profit	1167
	Private	1130

Source: AIHW, GEN data: Dashboard supplementary tables

**Table 47 Older people (who might need aged care services) by selected characteristics in ACPR 306 (Far North), 2021**

Variable	ACPR name	Far North
People aged 50 and over by Indigenous status	First Nations	7930
	Non-Indigenous	89,971
	Unknown	8665
	First Nations (%)	7.4
People aged 55 and over by need for assistance with core activities	Requires assistance	10,191
	Does not require assistance	69,108
	Unknown	7571
	Requires assistance (%)	11.7
People aged 65 and over by country of birth	Born overseas	12,851
	Born in Australia	31,288
	Unknown	4732
	Born overseas (%)	26.3
People aged 65 and over by language used at home	Other language	4410
	English	39,914
	Unknown	4550
	Other language (%)	9
People aged 65 and over by relationship in household	Lives alone	11,260
	Lives with others	34,256
	Unknown	3405
	Lives alone (%)	23

Source: AIHW, GEN data: Dashboard supplementary tables

**Table 48 Number of places in residential care per 1,000 target population (70 years and older) in ACPR 306 (Far North), 30 June 2017-2023**

Year	Number of places	Target population (70+)	Places per 1000 target population
2017	1747	26,239	66.6
2018	1992	27,627	72.1
2019	2310	29,012	79.6
2020	2330	30,384	76.7
2021	2432	31,823	76.4
2022	2333	33,173	70.3
2023	2237	34,564	64.7

Source: AIHW, GEN data: Dashboard supplementary tables

**Table 49 Number of people per 1,000 target population (aged 65 and older) using aged care, by care type, in ACPR 306 (Far North), 30 June 2023**

Care type	Number of people	Target population (65+)	Places per 1000 target population
Permanent residential care	1876	51,077	36.7
Home care	2109	51,077	41.3
Home support	10,498	51,077	205.5

Source: AIHW, GEN data: Dashboard supplementary tables

**Table 50 People in permanent residential care in ACPR 306 (Far North) by dementia status, 30 June 2022**

ACBR Code	ACPR name	Dementia	No dementia	Dementia (%)
306	Far North	895	887	50.2%

Source: AIHW, GEN data: Dashboard supplementary tables

**Table 51 Number of people using home support, by service type in ACPR 306 (Far North), 2022-23**

Year	Number of places
Allied Health and Therapy Services	2779
Assistance with Care and Housing	90
Centre-based Respite	99
Cottage Respite	15
Domestic Assistance	4186
Flexible Respite	326
Goods, Equipment and Assistive Technology	207
Home Maintenance	3283
Home Modifications	623
Meals	1765
Nursing	1127
Other Food Services	41
Personal Care	558
Social Support Group	1051
Social Support Individual	3012
Specialised Support Services	1218
Transport	2899

Source: AIHW, Dementia in Australia, Residential aged care

# Appendix E - Characteristics of the aged care workforce across service types

The *2023 Aged Care Provider Workforce Survey* offered numerous insights into the characteristics of the aged care workforce across five service types: the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP), the Australian Government Home Care Packages Program (HCPP), Residential Aged Care (RAC), the Multi Purpose Services Program (MPHS) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program. The following summary provides insights into the aged care workforce in Australia by service type.

**Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP)** – It is estimated that 97,900 staff were employed by providers participating in the CHSP which helps older Australians access entry-level support services to live independently and safely at home. Of these, 88,600 staff (91 per cent) were directly employed, while the remaining nine per cent of staff were indirectly employed under various agency, contractor or other non direct employment arrangements. A total of 63,200 staff members, making up 65 per cent of the workforce, were employed in direct care roles. Across all employment types, direct care workers comprised an estimated 49 nurse practitioners, 4100 registered nurses, 1200 enrolled nurses, 50,000 personal care workers and 7800 allied health professionals and assistants. Fifty-four per cent of directly employed nursing and personal care staff were aged 45 years or older.<sup>145</sup>

**Australian Government Home Care Packages Program (HCPP)** – It is estimated that 170,000 staff were employed by providers to the HCPP which supports older people with complex needs in remaining at home. Of these, 142,000 staff (84 per cent) were directly employed, while the remaining 16 per cent of staff were indirectly employed under a variety of agency, contractor or other non-direct employment arrangements. 128,000 (75 per cent) staff were employed in direct care roles. The HCPP direct care workforce was estimated to consist of 100 nurse practitioners, 5500 registered nurses, 1700 enrolled nurses, 114,000 personal care workers and 7100 allied health professionals and assistants. A large proportion of direct care workers occupy part-

time positions: 121,300 nursing and personal care staff comprised 43,000 FTE positions. Fifty-eight per cent of directly employed nursing and personal care staff were aged 45 years or older.<sup>146</sup>

**Residential Aged Care (RAC)** – It is estimated that 273,000 staff were employed in residential aged care (RAC) with 217,000 (79 per cent) working in direct care roles. Of these, 246,000 (90 per cent) staff were directly employed, while the remaining ten per cent of staff were indirectly employed under a variety of agency, contractor or other non-direct employment arrangements. The RAC direct care workforce was estimated to consist of 200 nurse practitioners, 36,900 registered nurses, 17,000 enrolled nurses, 156,000 personal care workers and 6400 allied health professionals and assistants. A large proportion of direct care workers occupy part-time positions: 209,900 nursing and personal care staff comprised 111,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. Thirty-three per cent of directly employed nursing and personal care staff were aged 45 years or older.<sup>147</sup>

AIHW report that in 2021 over half (51 per cent) of aged care residential service employees were born overseas with 36 per cent of this group being born in Southern and Central Asian countries. The five most common countries of birth for aged care residential service employees who were born overseas were Nepal, India, Philippines, England and New Zealand. Around two in five (39 per cent) aged care residential service employees also spoke a language other than English at home.<sup>148</sup>

**Multi-Purpose Health Service (MPHS)** – It is estimated that 6300 staff were employed by providers to the MSP program which provides integrated health and aged care services to rural and remote communities, including residential and home care. Of these, 4700 (75 per cent) staff were directly employed while the remaining 25 per cent of staff were indirectly employed under a variety of agency, contractor or other non direct employment arrangements. The MPHS direct care workforce was estimated to consist of 15 nurse practitioners, 2000 registered nurses, 1100 enrolled nurses, 1200 personal care workers and

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145 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). GEN Aged Care Data, 2023 Aged Care Provider Workforce Survey: Report. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/resources/publications/2024/december/2023-aged-care-provider-workforce-survey-report>

146 Ibid

147 Ibid

148 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). GEN Aged Care Data, Aged Care Workforce. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/topics/aged-care-workforce/#changesintheagedcareworkforcevertime>

205 allied health professionals and assistants. A large proportion of direct care workers occupy part-time positions: 4300 nursing and personal care staff comprised 2,100 FTE positions. Forty-eight per cent of directly employed nursing and personal care staff were aged 45 years or older.<sup>149</sup>

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (NATSIFAC) – It is estimated that 1500 staff are employed by providers to the NATSIFAC Program which provides flexible, culturally appropriate aged care to older Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples close to their home and community. The program delivers a mix of aged care services, including residential care, with most services being located in rural and remote areas. Around 1400 staff (93 per cent) were directly employed, with the remaining seven per cent of staff being indirectly employed under a variety of

agency, contractor or other non-direct employment arrangements. The NATSIFAC direct care workforce was estimated to consist of 115 registered nurses, 55 enrolled nurses, 790 personal care workers and 22 allied health professionals and assistants.

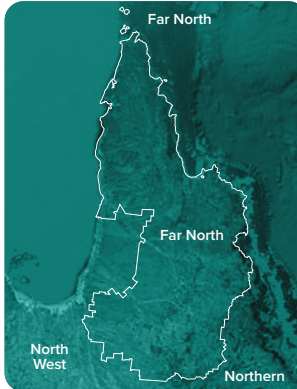
A large proportion of direct care workers occupy part-time positions: the 960 nursing and personal care staff comprised a total of 285 full-time equivalent positions. Thirty-seven per cent of directly employed nursing and personal care staff were aged 45 years or older.<sup>150</sup>

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149 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). GEN Aged Care Data, 2023 Aged Care Provider Workforce Survey: Report. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/resources/publications/2024/december/2023-aged-care-provider-workforce-survey-report>

150 Ibid

# Glossary

Acronym	Name	Description
ACPR	Aged Care Planning Region	<p>Aged Care Planning Regions are areas determined by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing for the purpose of planning aged care services across Australia. The 2018 ACPRs are based on Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) boundaries from the ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard 2016.</p> <p>ACPR 306 is larger in size than the Cairns SA4 region encompassing six SA3 statistical areas: Cairns – North, Cairns – South, Far North, Innisfail - Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas – Daintree and Tablelands (East) – Kuranda.</p> <p>ACPR 306 data has been used in this document in instances where data focussing on Far North Queensland SA3 areas is not available.</p> <p>Further information on ACPRs is available from AIHW.<sup>151</sup></p>
		
CHSP	Commonwealth Home Support Programme	The Commonwealth Home Support Programme provides entry-level support to help older people live independently in their homes and communities.
DEWR	Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations	
	Direct care roles	Direct care roles include nurses, support staff, medical practitioners, personal care workers, allied health practitioners and assistants. All other employee types are classified as non-direct care employees (e.g. cleaners, gardeners, transport drivers and volunteers).
EN	Enrolled Nurse	Provides nursing care to patients in a variety of health, aged care, welfare and community settings under the supervision of Registered Nurses. Registration or licensing is required.
HC	Home Care	Home care, also known as in-home care, is a range of services that help people live independently in their own homes (e.g. nursing)
HCP	Home Care Packages Program	Australian Government Home Care Packages provide individualised support to help people stay at home longer and delay entry into residential aged care. The Home Care Packages Program addresses the level of need between the entry level and residential aged care which provides 24-hour care.
LGA	Local Government Area	Local Government Areas cover legally designated parts of a state or territory for which incorporated local governing bodies have responsibility.
MMM	Modified Monash Model	The Modified Monash Model (MMM) is means of classifying locations within Australia as metropolitan, rural, remote or very remote. The model measures remoteness and population size on a scale of Modified Monash (MM) categories MM 1 to MM 7. MM 1 is a major city and MM 7 is very remote.
NATSIFAC	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care	A program funded by the Australian government to provide culturally appropriate aged care to older Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The service providers in this program deliver a mix of aged care services, mainly in rural and remote areas.
NQPHN	Northern Queensland Primary Health Network	The Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) is a not-for-profit organisation that coordinates and funds primary and preventive healthcare in northern Queensland.
PCW	Personal Care Worker	Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers provide assistance, support and direct care to patients in a variety of health, welfare and community settings.

151 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2018). GEN Aged Care Data, Aged Care Planning Region Maps. Canberra: Australian Government.

Acronym	Name	Description
PHN	Primary Health Network	Primary Health Network (PHN) work is the coordination of primary healthcare in a local area by independent, government-funded organisations.
	Restorative Care	Restorative care is a specialised type of care that helps people regain or maintain their independence after an illness or injury. It can also help people delay the need for long-term care or residential care.
RAC	Residential Aged Care	Residential aged care is for senior Australians who can no longer live in their own home. It includes accommodation and personal care 24 hours a day, as well as access to nursing and general healthcare services.
RN	Registered Nurse	Registered Nurses provide nursing care to patients in hospitals, aged care and other healthcare facilities and in the community.
SA4	Statistical Area Level 4	<p>Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) are the largest sub-state regions in the Main Structure of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard and are designed for the output of a variety of regional data, including data from the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. SA4 areas encompass multiple Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3s) regions.</p> <p>The Cairns SA4 area comprises of five SA3 statistical areas: Cairns – North, Cairns – South, Far North, Innisfail - Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas – Daintree and Tablelands (East) – Kuranda.</p> <p>The Far North SA3 statistical area one of two SA3s in the Queensland – Outback SA4 region.</p>

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