



STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2028

VISION

‘To work with partners and the community to sustainably manage waterways to protect people, livelihoods and property.’

This entails the management of the Barron, Mulgrave and Russell Rivers, their tributaries, and creeks draining to Trinity Inlet and to the coast at the Northern Beaches to protect the community, State and local government transport and other infrastructure, and the extensive agricultural areas adjacent to those watercourses in the Cairns Local Government Area, (including the centres of Cairns, Edmonton, Gordonvale and Babinda), against flood damage, erosion and sediment transportation.

In maintaining this vision, the Cairns River Improvement Trust recognizes that these rivers and their tributaries will experience cyclone damage, major flood events and flood breakouts.

PURPOSE

The Cairns River Improvement Trust is a statutory body and operates in accordance with powers and responsibilities of the River Improvement Trust Act 1940 and associated *Regulation* and operates under the powers and responsibilities of that legislation.

ROLE

The primary role of the Trust is to plan, design, finance, undertake and maintain stream improvement works for the benefit of the community within the Trust area.

FUNCTIONS

The key functions of the Trust are to:

- operate within its statutory limits,
- maintain strong networks with key, state, regional and local organisations, and communities,
- improve the health of waterways and riparian areas within the Cairns Regional Council
- mitigate flooding, reduce flood damage, and protect State and local government transport and other infrastructure from effects of extreme weather events or cyclones,
- undertake works of stream improvement to help prevent changes in course of the rivers and creeks, and to address erosion and associated riverine problems that cause economic, social, and environmental problems for the State and the community.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

The Trust works with the Cairns Regional Council, primary producers, the local sugar industry grower organisation, landholders and others with like interests such as government departments and natural resource management groups concerned with water quality improvement for river flows to the Great Barrier Reef.

FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Base funding for the Trust's annual works programs is an annual precept provided by the Cairns Regional Council. This funding is further supplemented by landholders contributing 50% towards works included in our Annual Works Program and completed on their behalf.

Since constituted in 1972, the Trust has also been successful in securing funding from:

- State and Commonwealth Grants
- Department of Natural Resources and Mines
- Commonwealth's Regional Flood Mitigation Program
- Flood damage disaster recovery funding under the Commonwealth/State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery and Community Resilience Arrangements
- Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and
- Queensland Reconstruction Authority under the 2016-17 and 2018-19 Grants and Subsidies Natural Disaster Resilience Programs.

Currently the Trust is awaiting the outcome of an Urban Rivers and Catchments Program 2023 Grant Application. If successful, the Trust will contribute \$108,258 (25%) of the total \$433,033 to rehabilitate five urban waterway sites within Cairns city.

KEY CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Expectations of Stakeholders

Strategy

Actively engage with stakeholders to ensure that the role, functions of the Trust are understood, any concerns are addressed and agreed projects delivered.

Actions

- Develop and implement a community education program covering the Role, Functions and Financial Capacities of the Trust to deliver to Council, landholders and community groups.
- Encourage local property owners to report areas of riverine concern.
- Work closely with the Cairns Regional Council on planning (land use), the flood mitigation works and associated flood management.
- Effectively utilise the State River Trusts Web Page (currently under final development) to broaden networks and communicate with stakeholders.

2. Impacts of Natural Disasters

Strategy

Work in partnership with stakeholders to encourage an understanding of the geomorphic history of natural disaster flooding events in the Barron, Mulgrave, and Russell River catchments.

Actions

- Develop a database of historical flooding events in the Barron, Mulgrave, and Russell catchments to engage with stakeholders to facilitate discussion and future project planning.

- Interact with and encourage the State Government to participate in the funding of the investigation and construction of priority flood mitigation and river management works in the Barron, Mulgrave, and Russell River catchments.
- Inspection and removal of debris to enable clear flows where works are within the financial capacity of the Trust to deliver.
- Support flood studies being undertaken by James Cook University.

3. Governance

Strategy

To operate within statutory limits and best practice corporate governance frameworks.

Actions

- Complete the CRIT Draft 'Policies and Procedures Manual'.
- Create a compliant 'Grievance Procedure' Policy for use by 1 July 2024
- Develop a 'Local Benefits Procurement Policy'.
- Develop and then regularly review a Risk Management Framework.
- Follow specific acts and policies.

4. Physical integrity of watercourses

Strategy

Limit stream erosion, siltation, and channel migration.

Actions

- Maintain the extensive river management work assets (> 600) constructed by the Trust from Cairns to Babinda.
- Prioritise watercourse locations through bank stabilization, restoration, and riparian revegetation in both urban and rural areas.
- Mitigate flood breakouts and inundation of urban and rural lands. Annual maintenance of stabilization works is a priority to continue to deliver those benefits.
- Improve water quality by reducing the contribution of sediment from bank erosion to suspended sediment load moving out to the inner Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

This strategic plan was reviewed in May 2024 and remains current. It will be supported with an Annual Works and Operational Plan.

Cairns River Improvement Trust

May 2024