

MAJOR UNDERLYING FACTORS BEHIND THE RISE OF CAIRNS AS A FIRST WORLD TROPICAL CITY

Paper Presented by W S (Bill) Cummings to the
2021 Business, Economic Management and Sustainability Conference, Cairns

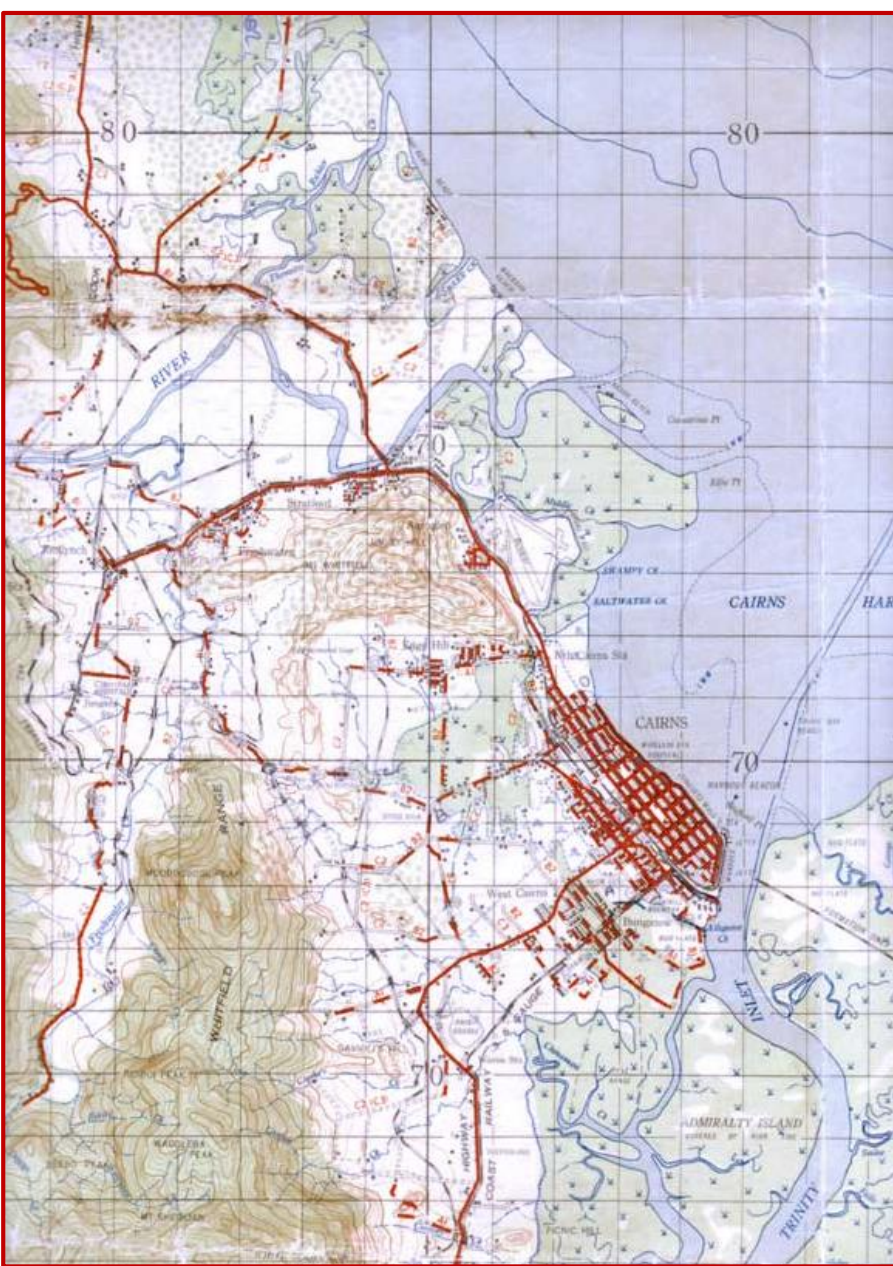


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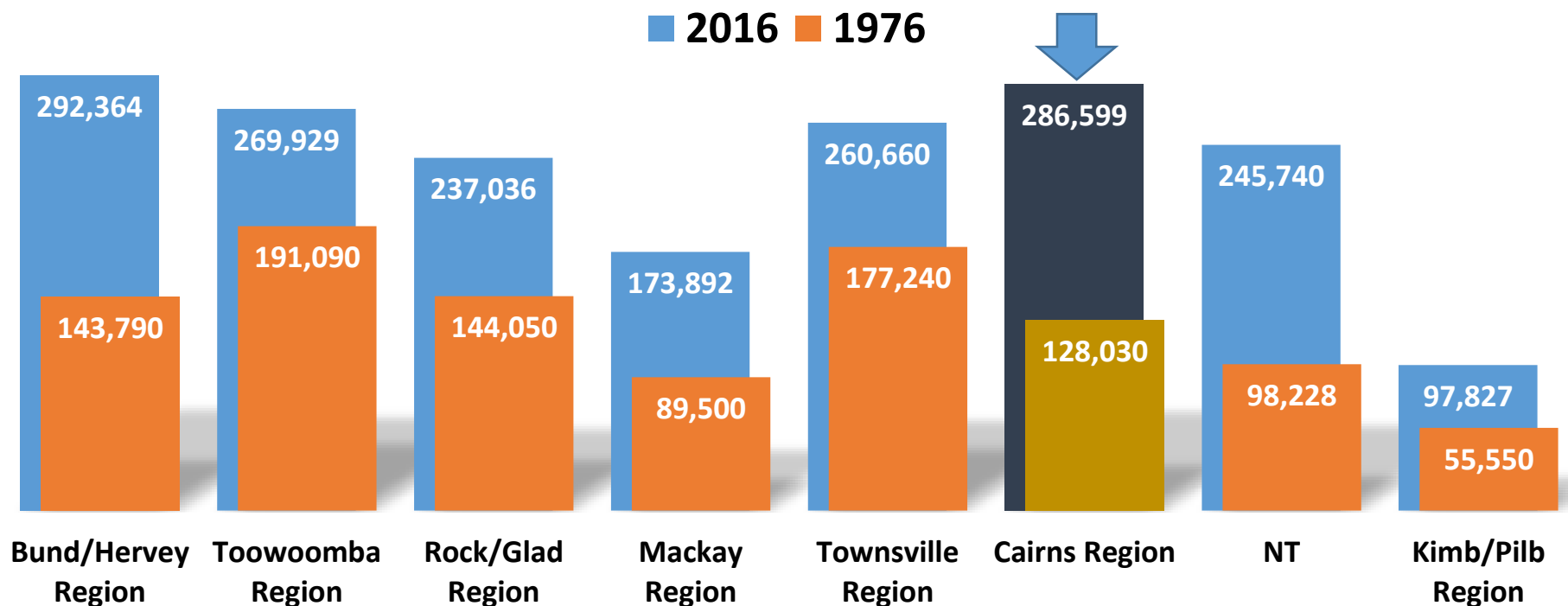
**CAIRNS in
the late 1940s**

**Population
1947 Census -
16,400**

Today - over 160,000

COMPARATIVE POPULATION GROWTH OF COMMERCIAL REGIONS⁽¹⁾ REGIONAL QLD & NTHN AUSTRALIA, 1976 – 2016

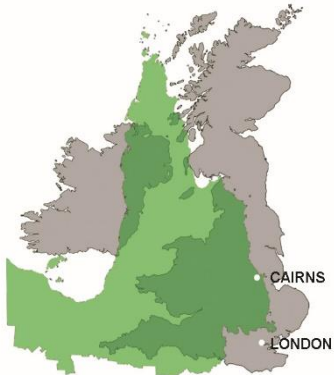
(1) Regions serviced by the regional city shown.



- **TNQ REGION NOW LARGEST REGIONAL POPULATION IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA & CLOSE TO LARGEST IN REGIONAL QUEENSLAND**
- **SINCE 1976 CAIRNS PASSES SEVEN OTHER REGIONAL CITIES IN POPULATION**

TO UNDERSTAND WHY – NEED TO FIRST RECOGNISE

FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND
BRITISH ISLES



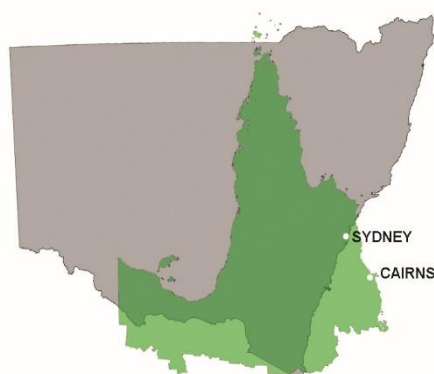
FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND
CALIFORNIA



FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND
VICTORIA



FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND
NEW SOUTH WALES

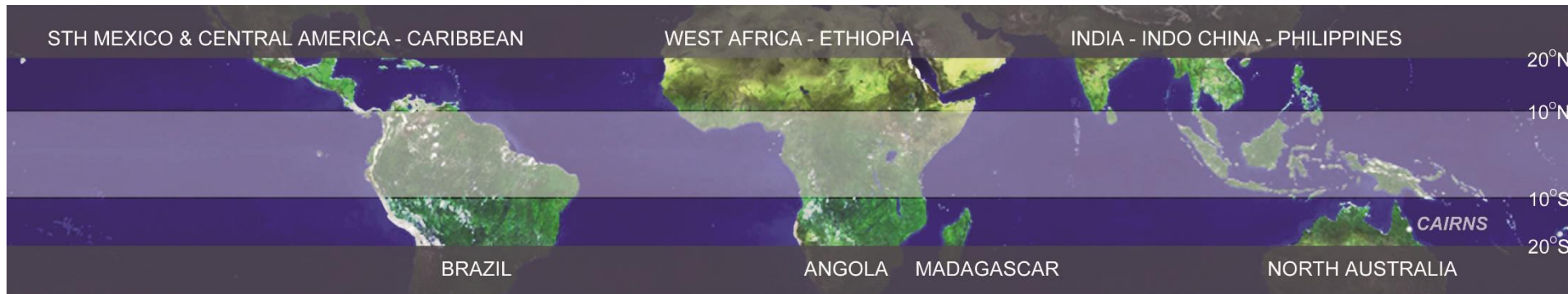


- **CAIRNS REGIONAL CAPITAL/
HUB CITY FOR A LARGE
REGION**
- **AREA EQUIVALENT TO
BRITISH ISLES & 1½ TIMES
AREA OF VICTORIA**
- **ALMOST AS LARGE AS
CALIFORNIA**
- **AS DEEP NORTH TO SOUTH
AS NSW**

NATURAL RESOURCE BASE

- **RICH IN BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**
- **26% OF AUSTRALIA'S WATER RUN-OFF**
- **STRONG MARINE LIFE**
- **NOT POOR IN MINERAL RESOURCES**

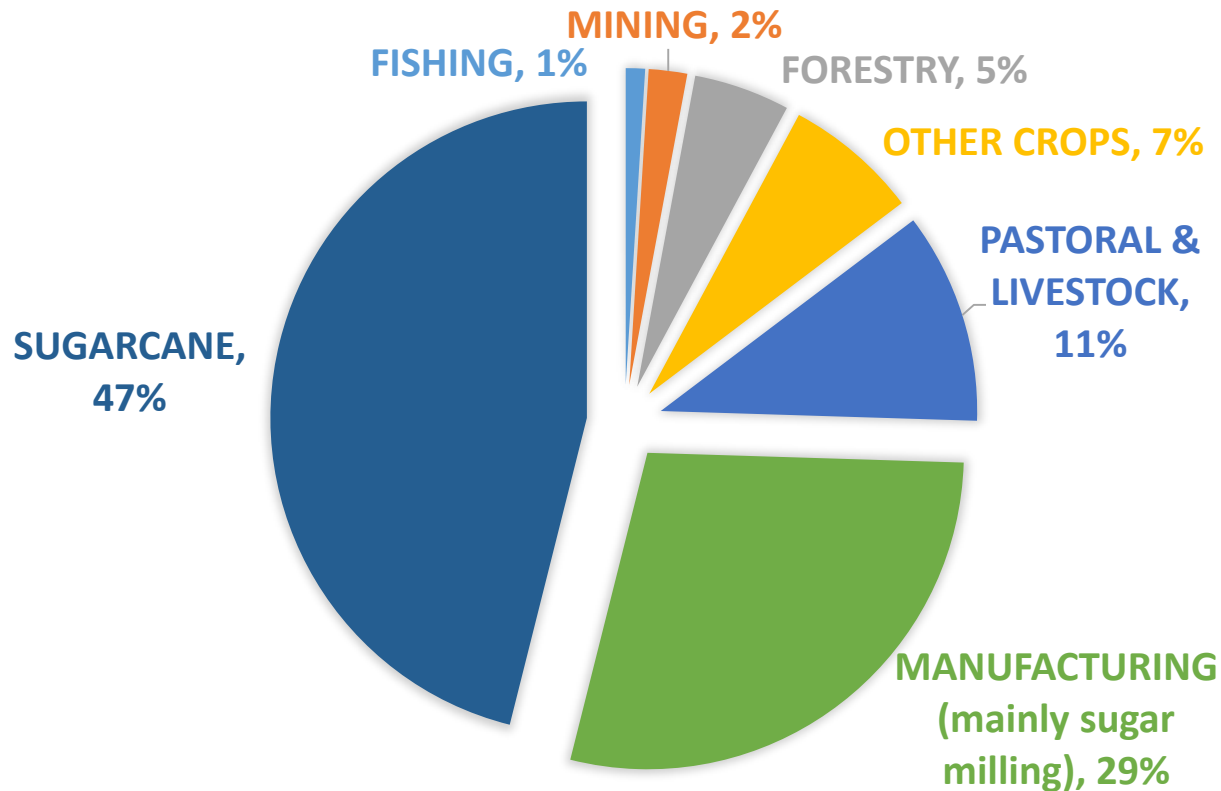
BUT DEEP INTO THE TROPICS



**CAIRNS NOT ESTABLISHED AS PORT UNTIL 1876 –
SYDNEY ALMOST 100 YEARS OLD**

**EARLY DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES & SETBACKS
(See Paper)**

1950s ECONOMIC BASE DOMINATED BY SUGAR



TOTAL £41m (1957-58)
(Cairns & Peninsula Statistical Districts)
Source: QLD Year Book 1959.

SINCE 1950s – MASSIVE GROWTH OF OUTSIDE EARNINGS

- **SUGAR HELD & EXPANDED – OTHER AGRICULTURE & PRIMARY INDUSTRIES NOW 3 TIMES AS MUCH AS SUGAR - OVER \$2B**
- **MAJOR MINING EXPANSION – ABOUT \$1B**
- **NEW TOURISM SECTOR – EQUAL TO PRIMARY INDUSTRIES & MINING COMBINED – ABOUT \$3.5B**
- **SKILLS BASED SECTORS DEVELOP**
 - **Aviation Services**
 - **Marine Services**
 - **International Education**
- **DEFENCE SECTOR ESTABLISHED**

WHY?

- **SELF HELP ATTITUDE OF THE CITY AND REGION**
- **REALISTIC DEVELOPMENTAL POLICIES**

UNDERLYING FOUR MAJOR FACTORS

1. GROWING GLOBAL MARKETS



- **EXPANDING MARKETS FOR MINERAL & AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT, FISHERIES & TOURISM**
- **AUSTRALIAN MARKET GROWS**
- **RELATIVELY CLOSE TO GREAT GLOBAL GROWTH AREA IN ASIA**
- **HIGHER INCOME INCREASES DEMAND FOR TRAVEL**

2. TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENTS BREAK DOWN OLD COST BARRIERS OF REMOTENESS



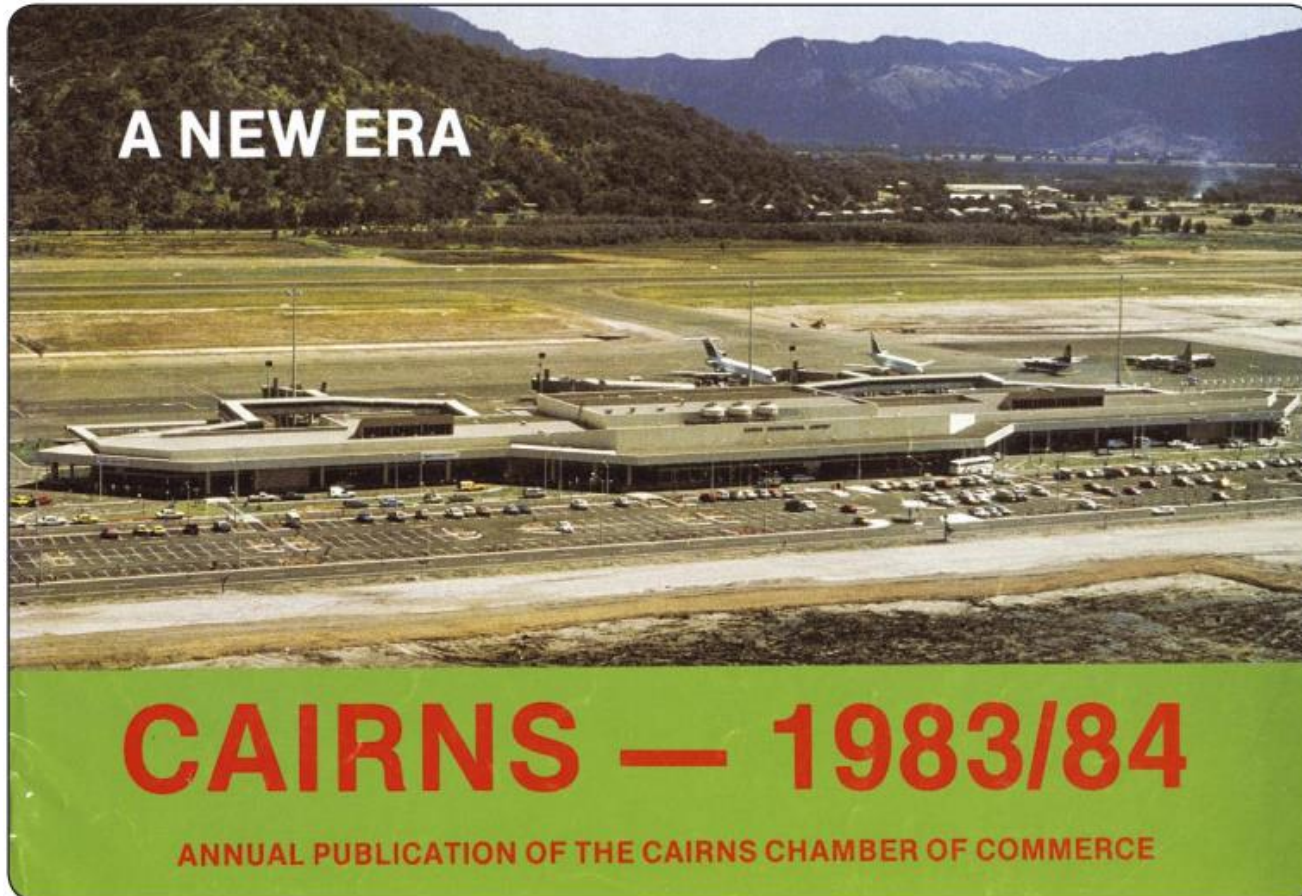
BULK ORE CARRIERS OPEN UP SEDIMENTARY TYPE DEPOSITS



SEALING LAST SECTION OF BRUCE HIGHWAY & SUPERIOR ROAD FREIGHT VEHICLES LEADS TO MAJOR HORTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

WHOLE HISTORY OF TOURISM

- COASTAL SHIPPING
- RAILWAY LINKED IN 1920s
- POST WAR – FAMILY CAR & COACHES
- AIRCRAFT – UPGRADE CAIRNS AIRPORT IN 1984



COMMUNICATIONS – TRAVEL – SECURITY

DARK SIDE OF TRANSPORT COSTS

- **LOSS OF BRICKWORKS & BREWERY**
- **CONTINUING CENTRALISATION PRESSURES**
- **IF DON'T KEEP EXPANDING OUTSIDE EARNINGS, GO BACKWARDS**

3. DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY SUITED TO THE TROPICS

- **SUGAR – MECHANISATION OF HARVESTING & BULK TERMINALS**
- **BEEF INDUSTRY – BRAHMAN CATTLE BREEDS**
- **TOURISM – LEADS WORLD IN REEF VIEWING & TRANSPORT**
- **HORTICULTURE & LANDSCAPING – NEW VARIETIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

TECHNOLOGY RELATED TO EVERYDAY LIVING

EARLY DOUBTS – WHITE SETTLERS IN THE TROPICS – 1930s

“All things considered, this chapter on the white settlers of north-eastern Queensland must end with a question mark. Up to the present, with an adequate living standard supported (and justly so) by the whole Australian nation, the progress of this tropical penetration has been excellent. But past successes are no certain proof of further advances, and the people of Australia who are making substantial contributions toward one of the most important experiments in world history, should see that while the national government treats north-eastern Queensland with sympathy and kindness, it at the same time subjects the area to continuous and vigorous scientific research.”

White Settlers in the Tropics – American Geographical Society.

HEALTH

1959 QLD CENTENARY – TRIUMPH IN THE TROPICS



Dr EA Koch Memorial

- **MALARIA**
- **WEIL'S DISEASE**
- **HOOKWORM**
- **DENGUE**

TEMPERATURE CONTROL

- **HOUSEHOLD REFRIGERATORS**
- **CHEAP LIGHTWEIGHT CEILING FANS**
- **WIDESPREAD AIRCONDITIONING**

GARDENING & HOUSEHOLD

- **MOTOR MOWERS**
- **WHIPPER SNIPPERS**
- **JET SPRAYS**
- **SUPERIOR PAINTS, DETERGENTS, INSECTICIDES**

HAZARDS

- **CYCLONES WARNING & BUILDING STANDARDS**
- **MARINE STINGERS**
- **SNAKE BITES**

CLOTHING

- **NEW EASY CARE LIGHTWEIGHT FABRICS**

4. SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS

GROWTH OF POPULATION, INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES ABLE TO SUPPORT HIGHER ORDER SERVICES -

- **UNIVERSITY STUDIES**
- **SPECIALIST MEDICAL FACILITIES**
- **CULTURAL & SPORTING FACILITIES**

**LOWERS “REAL” COST OF LIVING THROUGHOUT THE REGION
NOW MORE COMFORTABLE & CIVILISED PLACE TO LIVE**

LOOKING FORWARD

UNDERLYING FACTORS STILL RELEVANT

EXPANDING GLOBAL MARKETS

- China problem – but positive for defence
- Pandemic – tourism in trouble short term
- However, merchandise trade continues

AUSTRALIA

- Tourism, Horticultural & Fisheries Products
- Pandemic – possibly attractive to metropolitan residents

TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATIONS

DARK SIDE CONTINUING

AVIATION

- CHALLENGES SHORT TERM

ROADS

- CITY EFFICIENCY
- REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY
- NATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

SHIPPING

- DIRECT LINKS – PNG/ PACIFIC, ASIA

RAIL

- TOWNSVILLE – CAIRNS LINE

TECHNOLOGY SUITED TO THE TROPICS

- **MUCH BEEN ACHIEVED**
- **PLANT & ANIMAL BREEDS**
- **TROPICAL BUILD HOUSING DESIGN TO SAVE MORE HIGH COST ELECTRICITY**

SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS

CAPITALISE –

- **NOW MORE DESIRED PLACE TO LIVE**
- **NOW LARGEST POPULATION IN THE NORTH**
- **FACILITIES STILL BEHIND IN EDUCATION, HEALTH, CULTURAL & SPORTING FACILITIES FOR OUR POPULATION SIZE**

WAY FORWARD

- **CONTINUE EXPANDING OUTSIDE EARNINGS – RESOURCE BASED & INTO SKILLS BASED**
- **CAPITALISE ON SUCCESSES TO CATCH UP IN LOCAL HIGHER ORDER SERVICES**
- **INCREASING ROLE AS HUB CITY IN NORTH AUSTRALIA/ SW PACIFIC AREA**



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