A message from the president

Mayor Tom Gilmore reflects on the region
Your chamber working for Mareeba

Economy primed for big future

Regional statistics

The leader in rural area population growth
Building approvals and sales remain high

New road benefit to Mareeba Shire’s economy

Aviation set to soar at Mareeba Airport

Leadership in green power development

Mareeba Shire Council

Business excellence awards

Mareeba Hospital leads growth

Health services vital for growth

Tap into Tourism – an essential part of Mareeba

Water is the life blood of the region

Local jobs critical to industry

Agriculture remains the backbone of Mareeba Shire

Biggest Field Days in the North

The cost of rising power prices on local businesses

A crucial retail and service hub
Local events attracting thousands

Contributors

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Cover photo
Tourism Tropical North Queensland
I t has been another big year for the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce.

Over the past 12 months the Chamber has been involved in:

• Improved health services at Mareeba Hospital and GP services for the community
• Improved transport links for inland roads and the gulf, including the Hann Highway and an unhooking pad for B-double trucks between Kuranda and Mareeba
• Kuranda Range Road upgrade
• Proposed KUR-World development
• Mt Emerald Wind Farm
• Promoting tourism and encouraging all businesses to take advantage of these customers who are our guests
• Water infrastructure
• Queensland Electricity Users Network
• Estuarine Crocodile Management in Queensland and launch of @iSAWACROC Facebook page to help create awareness
• Business excellence awards
• Campaign on shopping locally, including the “Christmas on Byrnes” event

I would like to thank the management committee for all their hard work over the last 12 months, especially our operations manager Janet Greenwood, who carries out most of the activities to get things done for the Chamber.

Issues on the agenda

The area still needs new water infrastructure put in place to meet the current and future needs of urban growth, agriculture expansion and climate change. A three-point water plan is needed to guarantee future growth and sustainability.

That involves the modernisation of the Mareeba Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme, the construction of a pipe to tunnel water from North Johnstone River near Malanda to Kenny Creek (a tributary of the Barron River) and the construction of Nullinga Dam. Between the three projects, estimated yield of an additional 50,000 to 60,000 megalitres of water could be diverted to farms across the Mareeba Dimbulah Irrigation Area.

There is a need for more water in the MDIA, but also for more growth around Dimbulah and possibly as far as Chillagoe. If Nullinga Dam was built, there would be at least 80,000 megalitres of water that would become available to these areas. We have seen significant investment in the Dimbulah area in the past few months with further expansion of citrus, table grapes and mangoes, which will lead to up to $100 million of investment around Dimbulah and will have flow on effects to the Mareeba economy.

The region is growing

We continue to see good growth in Mareeba and throughout the shire. Mareeba is a vibrant, growing and progressive community and the Chamber sees the importance of maintaining and improving healthcare services that are appropriate for our community.

Mareeba Hospital is no longer eligible (as of October 1, 2017) for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Section 19(2) Exemptions Initiative, which allowed the hospital to operate a GP clinic. Over the past six months, the Chamber has worked with all parties to make sure the community continues to have access to a GP service at the hospital with bulk billing. This will continue with Amaroo Medical who are providing the service in the short term.

The Chamber also welcomes the $2 million in Federal funding to improve primary health care in Mareeba, more of which you will read about in this publication.

Kuranda Range needs an upgrade

We are seeing too many accidents and delays on the Kuranda Range Road whenever there is rain. We have reached peak flows of 9000 vehicles per day on the range and the growth rate will be between 1.5 to 2% per year. By 2036 that number will reach about 15,000 vehicles per day. The road will just continue to get worse every year for commuters to use – urgent action is needed.

We believe that additional planning needs to be included to ensure transport routes, not only for urban commuters but for the whole spectrum of transport/freight movements within and through the region. Developments like KUR-World should not be put at risk because governments have done nothing to provide key infrastructure.

There are still many opportunities in our shire. We are an innovative region with many assets and numerous new projects in development – some of which you will read about in this publication.

Mareeba, Go for Gold.
ENSURING the continued growth and prosperity of local business is the core mission of the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber president Joe Moro said the organisation played a vital role in representing businesses within the Mareeba district and championing their cause at all levels of government.

“Think there’s a clear need for the Chamber and we receive good support from the business community,” he said.

“In addition to local councils, we also work with both State and Federal government departments where needed to highlight issues affecting the business community, such as water and electricity prices.”

In addition to lobbying on behalf of its members, the Chamber is also active within the local community promoting and encouraging the vital role played by business.

“At the end of the day, we are acting on behalf of local businesses and have their support,” Mr Moro said.

But major projects are not forgotten either, with the Chamber involved with several major developments in the area to ensure opportunities for local businesses, such as the proposed $640 million KUR-World eco-resort at Myola and the $360 million Mt Emerald Wind Farm project currently underway.

Mr Moro encouraged every business within the Mareeba district to become a member of the Chamber.

“It’s important that people become members to have their say in the process when it comes to planning future economic strategy. After all, we’re an organisation that’s representing you and you have the opportunity to put your view forward,” he said.

“The reality is the Chamber is largely a volunteer organisation and needs support from its many members to continue performing its vital role in the community.”

Chamber members are able to choose from several attractive membership packages which offer a number of benefits.

“I think the Chamber has a bright future as long as it continues to represent its members,” Mr Moro said.

“The greater the membership, the greater the diversity of views and opinions that leads to more discussion and debate on the issues that matter.”
MAREEBA Shire’s economy is powering ahead like never before, with several major projects already underway this financial year.

The shire, and areas surrounding it, is in the grip of an infrastructure boom.

On the renewable energy front there is MSF Sugar’s $75 million green power station in Arriga, RATCH-Australia Corporation’s $360 million Mt Emerald Wind Farm, the $120 million Genex Kidston Solar Farm near Georgetown and a further two solar farms at Lakeland worth $42.5 million and $220 million all being built.

Meanwhile, Mareeba’s $18 million airport upgrade continues to progress while both Lindsay Australia and Blenners Transport celebrated the opening of new multimillion dollar facilities in late 2016, based in the town’s industrial park.

KUR-World, a proposed $640 million eco-resort at Myola, is undergoing an approval process with the State Government, with the promise of 600 jobs once operational.

And further afield near Chillagoe, Auctus Resources has invested $100 million restarting mining operations at the Mungana and King Vol sites, generating more than 220 jobs and economic spinoffs for Mareeba Shire.

Add those projects to the Tablelands region’s $552 million agricultural industry and you have an economic powerhouse.

Mareeba Shire mayor Tom Gilmore said there was no doubt the recent wave of development had created an economic buzz across the region.

“If someone is looking for a place to invest, the first thing you do is take advantage of your natural assets,” he said.

“And the natural assets we have here is land and water, but we also have an experienced workforce and that is also a major part of our capacity to produce.”

Cr Gilmore said access to quality health, education and trade services in the shire positioned the area as an attractive place to invest in.

“We’ve got the climate and all of those things, but we’ve also got a council that is friendly towards investment and innovation,” he said.

“We’re there to help, not to hinder.”

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce president Joe Moro said economic conditions were ripe for the current wave of development seen in and around the shire.

“We have a lot of support from the Federal government with regards to developing our renewable energy industry here and on top of that the Northern Australia White Paper,” he said.

“But aside from that, the reality is Mareeba Shire and the wider Tablelands region have got some great attributes.”

Mr Moro said the shire’s proximity to Cairns and its international airport, favourable weather and reliable water supply have helped drive development in the area.

“The Chamber by no means takes credit for any of these projects underway, but what we have helped do is highlight the positives of these projects and encouraged an environment where investment is welcome across Mareeba Shire,” he said.

“The only area we can see that’s holding us back is that the Kuranda Range has not been upgraded to cater for better movement between Cairns and Mareeba.”

Mr Moro said improved road access to Cairns and the coastline would help the shire economically.

“Overall, the benefits would far outweigh the negatives of an upgrade to the Kuranda Range or even an alternative route,” he said.

“It needs to be looked at again as a matter of urgency.”

Cr Gilmore said Mareeba was “developing as a major service centre” for projects both within and outside of the shire thanks to its industrial base, and it was incumbent upon council to continue facilitating economic growth.

“Council doesn’t create jobs but what we can do is ensure our planning arrangements, local laws and the way we do things is all aimed towards facilitation of business,” he said.

“We need to keep doing what we’re doing and that is to have a decent set of rules in place, an open mind, get the decisions made and then get out of the road to let people get on with it.

“We are still responsible in terms of environmental matters, but the basic underlying philosophy is to let private enterprise invest, grow, create jobs and create wealth.”
The following statistical information provides a snapshot of business, industry and population activity within the Tablelands area.

### ESTIMATED RESIDENTIAL POPULATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>40,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>40,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>40,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>41,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>41,414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>41,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>42,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>43,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>44,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>44,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>45,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>45,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>46,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>46,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>47,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>47,467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cummings Economics from ABS Cat. No. 3218.0.

### RESIDENTIAL POPULATION PROJECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mareeba Shire</th>
<th>Balance of Tablelands</th>
<th>Total Tablelands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>22,157</td>
<td>25,312</td>
<td>47,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>26,178</td>
<td>27,475</td>
<td>53,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2035</td>
<td>30,931</td>
<td>29,940</td>
<td>60,871</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Note: Projected at average growth rates 2006-2016, ABS Cat. No. 3218.0. Source: Cummings Economics.

### MAREEBA SHIRE BUSINESS NUMBERS (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non employing</td>
<td>1244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 4 employees</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 19 employees</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 or more employees</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cummings Economics from ABS Cat. No. 8165.0.

### AGE PROFILE COMPARED (CENSUS 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mareeba Shire</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-54</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M/Age 43 yrs: 38 yrs

Source: Cummings Economics from ABS 2016 Census.

### MEDIA INCOMES (CENSUS 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mareeba Shire</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Individual Income</td>
<td>$541</td>
<td>$662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Family Income</td>
<td>$1,274</td>
<td>$1,734</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cummings Economics from Census data.

### DWELLING CHARACTERISTICS (CENSUS 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mareeba Shire</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% in Separate House</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Dwelling Fully Owned</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cummings Economics from Census data.

### INDUSTRY OF WORKFORCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>2679</td>
<td>+18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>(-27.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>(-23.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas, water, waste</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>(-12.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1398</td>
<td>(-10.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>(-31.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>1808</td>
<td>(-11.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation, food services</td>
<td>1122</td>
<td>+2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, postal, warehousing</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>(-2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media, telecommunications</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>(-6.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and insurance</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>+6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental, hiring, real estate</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>+2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, scientific and technical</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>(-9.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and support</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>+17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration and safety</td>
<td>1189</td>
<td>(-3.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training</td>
<td>1630</td>
<td>+9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care, social assistance</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>+12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, recreation services</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>+9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>+4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately described/Not stated</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 17,938 +0.7%

Source: Cummings Economics from Census data.

### OCCUPATION PROFILE MAREEBA & TABLELANDS

### INDICATORS OF CHANGING PATTERN OF EMPLOYMENT

The above table indicates the changing pattern of employment recorded in the 2016 Census compared with the 2011 Census.

The table indicates that in employment by industry, the long-term trend for numbers employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing to fall was strongly reversed with a +18.6% increase recorded. Also strongly increased were health care (+12%), education and training (+9.8%) and arts and recreation services (+9.1%).

In occupations, the highest increases were in community and personal service workers (+12.0%) and labourers (+6.7%). The largest drop was in machinery operators and drivers (-9.8%) and technical and trades (-7.1%).

### Changing pattern of employment

The above table indicates the changing pattern of employment recorded in the 2016 Census compared with the 2011 Census.
Mareeba Shire leads in rural area population growth

Census 2016 results confirm Mareeba Shire’s leading role in Tropical North Queensland’s population growth. The following table gives growth figures over 10 years between 2006 to 2016, highlighting the populations usual place of residence.

### Intercensal Population Growth, Hinterland Areas, Tropical North Qld and Northern Qld 2006 – 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Government Area</th>
<th>Increase 2006 – 2016</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mareeba Shire</td>
<td>3346</td>
<td>+18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablelands Regional Council</td>
<td>2134</td>
<td>+9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas Shire</td>
<td>1523</td>
<td>+13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weipa</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>+38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassowary Coast Regional Council</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>+3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Shire</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>+22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other TNQ</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cairns/TNQ Hinterland</td>
<td>12115</td>
<td>+13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Island</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>+23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charters Towers</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>+3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burdekin</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKinlay Shire</td>
<td>(-97)</td>
<td>(-11)%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloncurry</td>
<td>(103)</td>
<td>(-3)%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>(-109)</td>
<td>(-12)%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flinders</td>
<td>(-252)</td>
<td>(-14)%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinchinbrook</td>
<td>(-673)</td>
<td>(-6)%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt Isa</td>
<td>(-889)</td>
<td>(-5)%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Townsville/Northern Hinterland</td>
<td>(-1309)</td>
<td>(-2)%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although in the last intercensal period between 2011 and 2016 saw Townsville as a city increase in population marginally faster than Cairns, the net result of relative hinterland growth on regional population growth results in the Cairns/Tropical North Queensland region continuing a long term trend to lead population growth in regional Queensland and across the North.

### Intercensal Population Growth (usual place of residence count) 2011 - 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cairns/TNQ</td>
<td>18,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin/NF</td>
<td>16,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide Bay</td>
<td>14,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toowoomba Darling Downs/SW Qld</td>
<td>11,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockhampton/Hervey</td>
<td>9,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsville/Mt Isa</td>
<td>7,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackay/Whitsunday</td>
<td>2,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley/Pilbara</td>
<td>1,767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the total census count including visitors, the Cairns/Tropical North Queensland region passed a milestone to record a population of 317,000 in 2016 – the first region in northern Australia to pass the 300,000 mark. The region now has a total census count population about two-thirds that of the state of Tasmania. With so much to offer, it’s no wonder Mareeba and the winder shire is leading the way in population growth.

Building approvals and house sales remain high

After bottoming out in 2010-11, the number of house and land sales in Mareeba rose in 2013-14 and remained high for house sales, although land sales recorded a fall in 2016-17.

Building approvals for dwellings issued in the 2016-17 financial year and total value of total building approvals remained high but were down on the very high level of the previous year.
MAREEBA is a thriving transport hub connecting the Tablelands and Cape York to the rest of Australia. A proposal to seal the Ootan Road link from south of Mt Garnet through to Almaden would provide major benefits to Mareeba Shire’s economy and the region as a whole.

While providing major benefits to the cattle and mining industries, it opens up prospects of bringing a “back door” triples road freight route right into Mareeba as part of a fast, freight efficient inland route to and from Melbourne and all centres in between.

At present, the inland triples route terminates at Mt Garnet. Apart from major advantages in the movement of produce and cattle from the Mareeba district and the Peninsula to southern markets, it will bring the triples break up point 100km closer into Cairns (62km) with the benefits of bringing goods from the south directly into the region.

With about $50m committed to sealing the missing link of the Hann Highway between the Lynd Junction and Hughenden, sealing the Ootan Road link is the next step in the development of the direct inland route that will run from Mareeba down through Barcaldine, Charleville, Burke, Cobar to Melbourne and across to Adelaide (see map, right).

Potential savings for heavy transport moving through this route compared with coastal routes have been estimated at:

- Distance Saving – Melbourne 800km and Adelaide 1300km;
- Cost Saving – Melbourne 10¢/kg and Adelaide 15¢/kg.

It is estimated that about 150,000 tonnes of produce are moving south each year from the Mareeba district and Lakeland area and that if fully sealed, 60,000 tonnes a year would divert over the inland route making a major contribution to justifying the project.

Additional benefits

Sealing of the Ootan Road would also have major benefits for movement of cattle from the Mitchell Basin and the Peninsula to the south and inward movements of station inputs. About 55,000 head of cattle are estimated to be moving over the road at present and it is estimated this would increase to over 80,000 if the road was fully sealed. The savings involved include less damage to vehicles and stock, which would further help justify the project.

Similarly, mining now taking place at Mungana has large volumes of concentrate to move to Mourilyan or Townsville ports and inputs to bring in.

On top of this, tourism and various other local movement savings are estimated to bring the total combined present value of savings from all sources up to about $120 million, almost double the estimated cost of $60 million to seal the link.
Mareeba is poised to become the general aviation capital of Far North Queensland. The town’s airport is undergoing an $18 million upgrade, which will give it a longer and strengthened runway, additional taxiways, a 52-lot aviation commercial precinct and upgraded drainage, lighting and roads.

Economic modelling published by Mareeba Shire Council predicts the upgrade will create 639 direct and indirect jobs over 30 years, with 238 new jobs to be generated within the next decade.

Supporting general aviation

Due to be completed in August 2018, North Queensland Aero Club vice-president David Graham said he was excited about the upgrade’s potential.

“It’s something that needs to happen. There will be more hangar space and maintenance facilities, plus they’re going to re-seal the runway,” he said. “It’s only going to get busier as other airports are closed down or privatised like Cairns.

“If we’d stayed in Cairns, we’d be gone. We simply couldn’t afford to stay there.”

The aero club, which relocated permanently to Mareeba from Cairns in 2016, has benefitted from more favourable flying conditions and far less air traffic for its pilots to contend with.

“As a training facility where time is money for a student, we moved away from Cairns for the simple reason we can give students more time flying in the aircraft instead of sitting on the ground and waiting,” Mr Graham said.

“It’s also a lot better weather conditions for flying.”

Mr Graham said the club had big plans for further expansion at Mareeba, including the ability to offer a twin-engine aircraft endorsement for student pilots, instrument flight rules (IFR) training at ground school and the construction of a shelter to house their aircraft.

“It’s definitely been an extremely positive move for us to set up at Mareeba,” he said.

“We’re still nowhere near capacity and have plenty of room for growth as far as training goes. With a lot of the ground schools now you’ve got people coming from overseas wanting to learn to fly. That’s not only going to benefit the airport but it’s going to benefit local accommodation and shopping in the community.”

The club is also joined by GBR Aviation’s Flight Training Centre at Mareeba Airport, which trains helicopter pilots.

A training and maintenance hub

Mareeba Shire mayor Tom Gilmore said the upgrade would help transform the airport into an aviation maintenance and training hub for the wider region.

“We need thousands of new pilots worldwide on an annual basis, so there’s an opportunity there,” he said. “We already have some flight training at the airport and I’m hoping for a major advancement in that either in 2018 or 2019.

“But the airport will also house general aviation maintenance facilities, such as engines, airframes, instruments, painting and those sorts of things.

“Those things don’t need to be in Cairns or Brisbane. We can cater for that right here in Mareeba.”

Cr Gilmore said council had actively engaged with the airport’s user group throughout the upgrade process to ensure it went as smoothly as possible.

“This upgrade is going to be an incubator for a considerable amount of jobs out there over the next 10 or 15 years,” he said.

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce president Joe Moro said the airport served as an important piece of infrastructure for the entire Far North.

“I think Mareeba will become the secondary airport to Cairns, with its growing aviation presence and training facilities,” he said.

“From the projections we’re looking at, we’re going to see a doubling of jobs at the airport over the next five years, and as that momentum starts to happen we’ll see continuous growth in to the future.”

Mr Moro agreed with Mr Graham that Mareeba’s favourable weather conditions compared to coastal areas meant the airport was a preferred base for the region’s pilots.

“The fact we’re in the dry tropics is part of the reason why this area is seen as a good place to invest in,” he said.

“We still have our weather events but because of where we’re situated, it protects us from the brunt of natural disasters.”

Growing aviation activity at Mareeba Airport – The table tells the story...

![Recorded Aircraft Total Landings][Mareeba Airport]

Source: Mareeba Shire Council.

Note (1): Including touch & go and stop & go.

Note (2): Estimated based on information up to Oct 2017.
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**Mareeba Shire is leading the way in green power generation in the North, with two projects underway involving a capital expenditure of an estimated $425m and a further two proposed with an estimated capital investment in the order of $200m.**

**Under Construction**
- Wind (Variable Load) 240MW
  - Ratch Australia, Mt Emerald
- Bio Energy (Base Load) 24MW
  - MSF Sugar, Tablelands Mill

**Proposed**
- Solar (Variable Load) 75MW
  - Tilt Renewables, Chewko Road
- Solar (Variable Load) 60MW
  - Cleangen, Lockwood Road

Investments in the Mareeba Shire are paralleled by other major investments in the region in electricity generation of solar at Lakeland (under construction and proposed), a wind farm on the southern Tablelands, and wind, solar and pumped storage in Etheridge Shire (first phases under construction).

Existing power generation in the region is the wind farm at Windy Hill (variable) and the long functioning Tully and Barron hydro-electricity (peak load dispatchable). There have been strong moves in the Queensland Parliament renewing interest in the Kareeya B (Tully Millstream) projects, which would introduce 600MW of peak load dispatchable power into the Queensland system with a capability to offset variability of some of the other power sources becoming available.

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce president Joe Moro said renewable energy was an industry with a bright future.

"There’s no doubt the future of electricity generation in Australia lies in renewable energy," he said.

"Mareeba Shire is leading the way in that regard and we are working with developers of these projects to maximise the economic benefits for businesses in our region."

**A winner for Mareeba Shire's economy**

LEADING contribution to Mareeba Shire’s economy at present is the sugar industry.

While not the largest agricultural earner in the overall Tablelands region at present, the sugar industry is emerging as a leading agricultural industry in Mareeba Shire.

The 2016 value of output (growing and milling), was $61 million – above the next largest in the shire, bananas at $47 million and avocados $41 million.

As with other industries, especially those that bring money into the region, sugar production has flow-on effects through the economy.

Recent analysis of MSF Sugar operations in the Tablelands region estimated that addition to Gross Regional Product is around $45 million in a Mareeba Shire economy with an estimated Gross Regional Product of about $1 billion.

Actual employment at the MSF Sugar Mill of up to 60 underpins direct employment in farming estimated at about 110 and with flow-on effects through the economy, underpins further jobs making a total of estimated direct and indirect employment generated of about 290.

Introducing a major new value adding dimension

Looking forward however, the contribution is set to grow strongly. The $75 million Green Power Station under construction next to the mill is expected to produce about 100,000 megawatt hours (MWh) of base load green power that will add an estimated $8 million to revenue. This will strengthen the industry’s earnings per tonne of cane produced and the industry’s viability in the long run.

However, MSF Sugar is currently shaping up a further phase of development that would see it in the form of a distillery to produce ethanol. As part of this phase, the company has plantings going in of a new crop to the shire, blue agave, the source of Mexico’s famous tequila.

Once the power station is on stream along with a distillery, it is expected that the sugar industry’s contribution to Gross Regional Product with “flow-on” effects, in 2017 values, will have risen to an estimated $97 million, with direct employment rising to about 210 and employment with “flow-on” effects to about 480.

**Blue agave a natural fit for the area**

Blue agave is a highly developed plant that has been growing in Mexico on a large scale for a long period of time at similar latitudes to the Mareeba Shire and under similar rainfall conditions. One of its great advantages is that it will grow without the need for irrigation and does not require high quality soils.

Apart from producing a large volume of juice that can be distilled into ethanol, the plant produces substantial amounts of fibre that can be used to generate green power. A further advantage is that while sugar harvesting and milling takes place over the winter/early summer months, the blue agave can be harvested and processed over the summer months, that will help extend power station operations and distillery operations year round, something that will enhance the economics of the distillery and the power station as a base load supplier of up to 200,000 MWh of electricity a year.
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Mount Emerald Wind Farm on target for delivery

Construction of the Mount Emerald Wind Farm, between Mareeba and Atherton, continues to meet major milestones with the arrival of the first tower blades and sections during October 2017. The 180MW wind farm will consist of 53 turbines with the first tower due to be completed in late November 2017. The project will be finished one year later in October 2018.

Ratch-Australia Corporation’s $360 million project, will see the blades and more than 400 tower components transit through Cairns Port down the Bruce Highway, up the Palmerston Highway, through Malanda, then onto Tolga via the B-double route past Kairi, along Lawson Street, Tolga to the Kennedy Highway, into Hansen Road at Walkamin, then Kippen Drive to the wind farm site. The journey takes approximately five hours. Many locals have, and will continue to, enjoy the spectacle of seeing the blades and components being delivered over the period October to May 2018.

The shared benefits of the project are being felt widely, with the induction of more than 300 people on-site with more than one-third of those being locals. Civil, labour and technical contractors from across the Tablelands and region have been employed over the first six months.

Selection of some permanent staff for the site has commenced, to ensure they can be part of the build and commissioning process, and enhance their familiarity with the technology and support personnel from Ratch-Australia and Vestas.

The project uses turbines manufactured and supplied by wind energy global leader Vestas. The tallest turbine has a 90m tower height and 57m blade length. Each blade weighs 16 tonnes, while the heaviest part is the turbine head or nacelle, which is 120 tonnes. Around 380 cubic metres (the equivalent of 90 concrete trucks) are required for the foundations for each of the towers. The first foundation was poured in August 2017.

Powerlink has started construction of a dedicated 275kV substation to connect the wind farm to its transmission network.

Ratch Business Development Manager, Mr Anthony Yeates said no stone had been left unturned to deliver a project that the region could be proud of. “We’re confident that we will deliver a world class wind farm project that will serve as a global benchmark,” Mr Yeates said. The wind farm will deliver renewable energy which is predicted to meet the annual needs of approximately 75,000 north Queensland homes over a 25+ year period.

Once fully operational, Mount Emerald will be the biggest wind farm in Queensland.
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KUR-Cow

KUR-Cow Cattle enterprise involves 18 properties across the Atherton Tablelands from Dimbulah to Millaa Millaa. A growing number of local businesses provide goods and services to KUR-Cow which is a subsidiary of the proposed KUR-World development.

KUR-Cow activities include breeding, weaning, joining and fattening cattle as well as marketing the beef to both local restaurants and exporting cattle to Indonesia. The breeding program is designed to yield the highest-grade beef from cattle which are adapted to the tropical conditions of the Northern Australia. Steers are grown on grass up to 350 kg and finished for 100 days on grain and silage until they reach 550 kg. There are currently approximately 4500 cattle across the operation.

KUR-Cow is a 100% locally operated business, relying upon a number of local businesses to supply transport, stockfeed, building materials, fertilizer, pasture remediation products, machinery and livestock handling goods and services. These excellent local goods and services, combined with experienced local people providing the knowledge and labour for the operations has enabled KUR-Cow to become a quality new beef brand which is rapidly expanding in the region.

KUR-World

REEVER & OCEAN Pty Ltd, proud proponent of the proposed KUR-World Project in the Mareeba Shire Council

To register your interest in offering products and services, please go to: www.kur-world.com/business-register

E: info@kur-world.com.au

We look forward to hearing from you
The Shire is strategically located for residential, agricultural, industrial and commercial development in far north Queensland.

Mareeba Shire stretches across the base of Cape York Peninsula westwards from Cairns and is known for its environmental, agricultural and cultural diversity.

THE SHIRE

- Gateway to far north Queensland communities and industries
- Environmentally secure and well-priced land
- Proximity to World Heritage-listed environments
- Diverse industry base
- Diverse and multicultural community
- Closest inland regional area to Cairns
- Easy access to higher education and training
- Over 1 million visitors to the region every year
- Sustainable investment and growth
- 300 sunny days a year

AGRI-BUSINESS HUB FOR THE FAR NORTH

Agriculture remains the largest industry in the Shire, estimated between $300 to $330 million gross value production, with long-term growth pattern of 1.4% and 2% since the 1980s. It is experiencing significant diversification and value-adding e.g. crops, bio-industries, packaging and manufacturing. This growth underlies the development of the transport and logistics sector in the Shire.

Mareeba is developing as a hub for support services for far northern agriculture i.e. transport and logistics, financial and extension services and agricultural supplies.

GROWTH FACTORS

The Shire’s potential to grow and contribute to the economic growth of the broader region is influenced by three main factors:

1. Mareeba is the largest urban population centre in the wider Tablelands region and is the service and supply hub for the area north into Cape York Peninsula and west to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

2. Mareeba is the closest service centre to Cairns and is now the largest centre outside it, giving Mareeba an important interaction with the growing major regional city.

3. Mareeba is the urban service centre for the Mareeba Shire area.
On completion in 2018 the airport will deliver:

- A 52-lot aviation commercial precinct connected to water, sewerage, power and telecommunications
- Improved runway, aprons and taxiways
- Upgraded supporting infrastructure e.g. drainage, lighting, and access roads.

**BUILDING APPROVALS - 2016/2017**

- Total building approvals issued: 345
- Number of dwellings approved: 373
- Total value of building approvals: $41,998,671.56

**PLANNING APPROVALS - 2016/2017**

A total of 65 new planning development applications were received during the 2016/2017 financial year.

**MAREEBA AIRPORT UPGRADE**

Mareeba Airport has developed as the main airport for the wider Tablelands region and has retained its role as a secondary airport in the region due to its proximity to Cairns and its favourable weather conditions for aviation operations.

The airport is undergoing an $18 million redevelopment. It has attracted maintenance and flying businesses in addition to international aid organisations (Mission Aviation Fellowship). An upgraded Mareeba Airport will expand the region’s aviation sector with the potential to build export income and meet the need for efficiencies at a regional and national level from development of an alternative to a growing Cairns Airport for different types of services and activities.

Mareeba Airport is now integral to the economy in terms of aircraft movements, tourism, industrial precinct facilities, expansion capacity and a hub for aerospace in the far north Queensland/Cairns Region. Within close proximity to Cairns, having a very large training area, excellent weather conditions, uncontrolled airspace (with controlled airspace near at hand when required).

On completion in 2018 the airport will deliver:

- Improved runway, aprons and taxiways
- Upgraded supporting infrastructure e.g. drainage, lighting, and access roads.

**MAREEBA INDUSTRIAL PARK**

A Council initiative to drive economic development, the future-proofed site has some of the most flexible land use zoning in Queensland for heavy and noxious industries. It is suitable for biotechnology, fuels, chemicals and products, general aviation, rural suppliers, heavy manufacturing and logistics. Over 300 hectares are available for development, with capacity for high power users. Land is very competitively priced, $56m2 compared with Woree Business Industry Park, 4km from Cairns CBD, at $200m2. The Mareeba Industrial Park has attracted national companies such as Visy, Orora (packaging) and freight and logistics companies - Lindsay Rural and Blenner’s Transport, investing $20 million in development.

**$16M PLANT SUPPORTS FUTURE GROWTH**

The Mareeba Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade was officially opened in July 2017. The $16 million upgraded Wastewater Treatment Plant will provide for the current population and into the future whilst also providing significant environmental benefits for the receiving waters of Two Mile Creek; a tributary of the Mitchell catchment.

Mayor Tom Gilmore said this is a significant achievement of this Council and the most important improvement in environmental outcomes for Mareeba Shire in many years.

“The current plant which is being replaced served Mareeba well for many years, however simply could not manage the growth in the community and could no longer meet environmental standards demanded of it,” Cr Gilmore said.

“The current Mareeba Shire Council has pursued this vision of replacing the old plant with vigour and I am delighted to see the culmination of that vision.”

The facility will have a capacity of 12,500 equivalent persons and allows for future expansion to increase the plant’s capacity to 16,500 equivalent persons.

The Mareeba Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade project is funded through a $6 million grant from the Australian Government’s National Stronger Regions Fund, a $1.5 million grant from the Queensland Government’s Building our Regions program, with the remainder funded by Mareeba Shire Council.
Mareeba turned on one of its finest occasions of the year with the 2017 Mareeba Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards. Delivering on a number of levels, the 'Go for Gold' themed biannual business awards recognise, showcase and celebrate success, skills, innovation, customer service and dedication within our business community – all aimed at continuing to grow our economy. The awards also promote the tireless volunteers and community groups that help to make this area one of the most liveable in the region.

2017 saw 50 local businesses, community groups and individuals nominated in the following categories:

**The Awards Went To…**

- **Business of the Year**
  - The Gateway Hotel
- **Best New Business**
  - The Gateway Hotel
- **Excellence in Retail**
  - So Swish
- **Excellence in Rural/Agriculture**
  - Skybury
- **Excellence in Tourism**
  - Kuranda Koala Gardens
- **Excellence in Trade**
  - NQ Signworks
- **Community Group of the Year**
  - Rotary FNQ Field Days
- **Communitarian of the Year**
  - Guiliano Cordenos
- **People’s Choice Customer Service (individual)**
  - Joanne Lea (Amaroo Medical)
- **People’s Choice Customer Service (business)**
  - Mareeba Heritage Coffee House
Celebrating 30 years

- Employment & Job Placement
- Harvest Labour Services
- Recruitment
- Labour Hire
- QT’s Early Learning Centre
- Community Enterprises & Passenger Transport Services

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Working with the Community
STATISTICAL data available on the Australian Health and Welfare My Hospital website details the growth that has taken place in Mareeba Hospital’s role in catering for health needs in the region.

Mareeba Hospital recorded growth between 2011 and 2014 (latest available) of 57% in admissions from 3276 to 5133, the highest of the district hospitals in the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service area.

In 2014, Mareeba Hospital recorded an admissions’ profile of child births (209), medical emergencies (4356), medical other (425), surgical emergencies (40) and surgical other (103). Cairns Hinterland Hospital and Health Service is now the largest in admissions in northern and central Queensland.

HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
ADMISSIONS 2015/-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospital Area</th>
<th>Admissions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cairns and Hinterland</td>
<td>97,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsville</td>
<td>75,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>47,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Queensland</td>
<td>61,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cummings Economics from Queensland Health Region Annual Reports.
A healthy Mareeba Shire equals a healthy economy

Health services vital for growth

With a growing and increasingly ageing population within the shire, adequate health services are essential to meeting the needs of the community.

The township of Mareeba itself includes two private GP clinics, an indigenous health clinic and a 52-bed level 3 hospital equipped with an emergency department, maternity ward, pathology, palliative care, radiology and several other services.

Meanwhile, Dimbulah’s new $4.5 million Primary Health Centre has replaced the previous asbestos-ridden building, which had been in use for more than 50 years.

The nurse-led centre sees hundreds of patients every week, with a GP visiting twice a week from Mareeba as part of an outreach service.

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce president Joe Moro said the organisation wanted to ensure the town was equipped with “the best possible hospital” combined with improved GP services.

“We have a culturally diverse population and a thriving business sector which needs a good hospital to be able to provide treatment to a variety of health conditions and injuries,” he said.

“We don't want to see people leave Mareeba because of a lack of services or facilities.”

“This is important, not just for local residents, but for visitors to our shire, like backpackers and grey nomads, who can be reassured they have access to good health care if needed.”

Mr Moro said the shire’s ageing population further highlighted the need for not only adequate health services, but retirement homes and aged care facilities.

“We don’t want to see people leave Mareeba because of a lack of services or facilities. We want them to stay, so all those things need to be a focus of both the Federal and State governments,” he said.

In October 2017, Mareeba private practice Amaroo Medical commenced a GP service at Mareeba Hospital. Amaroo’s agreement, which expires in June 2018, allows it to run the bulk-billed GP clinic using available hospital doctors.

It comes as Amaroo plans to offer bulk billed GP services at their existing Karobean Dr clinic with a $600,000 extension featuring three consultation rooms. Construction is due to finish in mid-January 2018.

Amaroo owner Dr Cheryl Harnischfeger said once operational, the new clinic would help alleviate pressure on Mareeba Hospital.

“Like many rural towns, Mareeba is underserved with a limited number of GP services available,” she said.

“Waiting times are long, patients can’t get in, but, along with the help of government policy, we’re trying to change that.”

Dr Harnischfeger said one of the first steps to improving health services in Mareeba was attracting more GPs to the area, with Amaroo’s new bulk-billing clinic to help solve that problem.

“Hopefully we’ll start seeing an improvement in that area as more GPs graduate and look for areas to work in,” she said.

“There is a segment of the Mareeba community who generally can’t afford private health care services. The challenge from a business point of view is going to be to provide that bulk billing service and still be financially viable in the long term.

“You’re not going to get doctors to stay if they can’t earn a reasonable income.”

Dr Harnischfeger said bulk-billed GP services would free up resources at Mareeba Hospital that could otherwise be diverted to providing more critical healthcare.

“One of the goals of primary care services is to take the strain off the hospital with patients who don’t need emergency care,” she said.

“In most cases, they don’t need to attend a fully staffed emergency department to sort out their sore throat or scripts.

“From a purely financial point of view, it costs twice as much to see a patient at a hospital as it does at a GP practice.”

Dr Harnischfeger said it was imperative the shire’s community continued supporting Mareeba Hospital to ensure a strong healthcare system that would serve their needs both now and in the future.

“At the moment we have a highly skilled group of doctors with procedural experience at the hospital who have taken up residence in Mareeba. So potentially, we’ve got that long-term stability at the hospital,” she said.

“We work well with the hospital in trying to make the area an attractive place for trainee registrars and that’s what I think is crucial to trying to increase the health workforce and general practice services in Mareeba.”

The Federal government announced in September 2017 that it would spend $2 million to improve primary health care in Mareeba.

The grant itself provides $1 million over two years (2017-18 and 2018-19) to address any gaps in after-hours services and $1 million in 2017-18 to support a Primary Healthcare Development Program focused on reducing hospitalisations and strengthening local general practices.
OURISM continues to be an exciting growth industry for Mareeba Shire’s economy.

With a plethora of visitor experiences on offer including hot air balloon rides, Skyrail, coffee farm tours, outback getaways and much more, there’s certainly something for everyone — and every budget.

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce president Joe Moro said the shire needed to have “the best possible infrastructure” in order for tourism to thrive.

“Right now, Mareeba Shire doesn’t have enough accommodation for people to stay overnight or a few nights,” he said.

“Obviously, the market will determine that but we need to make sure our roads are sufficient and visitors can easily find what they’re looking for through things like adequate signage and our Visitor Information Centres.

“There’s more potential in tourism, not only from marketing the shire as an attraction by tourism operators but capitalising on our visitors who are coming through Mareeba to encourage them to spend a few more days in the town and a few more dollars.”

Mr Moro said it was imperative that all Mareeba businesses embrace tourism, given the flow-on effects it produced.

“Even if they don’t get a direct benefit from a backpacker or a grey nomad coming to the area, one of their fellow businesses does in the way of services,” he said.

“Tourism is part of our economic fabric and it’s important that businesses are able to sell what’s on offer in our shire, such as destinations like Davies Creek, Emerald Creek Falls, Kuranda, Chillagoe and Mareeba itself.

“Visitors need to be welcomed and encouraged to spend more time in the shire.”

One example of an innovative tourism business is Biboohra’s internationally-recognised Golden Drop Winery.

Situated just 14 minutes north of Mareeba, the mango winery was founded by the late Charlie Nastasi and his two sons, Sam and Dino, in the 1990s.

The first of its kind in the world, the winery leverages the Nastasi family’s extensive mango tree plantation to create a variety of mango-based drinks, which have since attracted thousands of visitors from both Australia and overseas.

Golden Drop director Maria Nastasi said the family’s vision to create a major tourist attraction within the shire proved to be ahead of its time.

“They saw it as a way to value-add to the existing farm and they did see that tourism was on the rise, especially in the Cairns area,” she said.

“We’re fortunate to be located along the way between Mareeba and Port Douglas, so it’s easy for self-drive tourists, such as grey nomads or families, to drop in.”

A continual advertising campaign across tv, radio and newspapers, combined with prominent signage pointing visitors in the direction of the winery ensures the Golden Drop continues to welcome a constant flow of visitors throughout the year.

Mrs Nastasi said visitors were able to sample the winery’s 10
different products on site and see the mango farm in operation. “People like to come to farms because most are from the city and don’t understand what it’s all about,” she said.

Mrs Nastasi said she saw a bright future for tourism within Mareeba Shire and agreed that a welcoming attitude, combined with strong local business networks were the keys to ensuring tourism continued to grow.

“People come here and afterwards we might send them off to other attractions like Jaques Coffee Plantation or Coffee Works. “There are opportunities to do things like big organised tours to see attractions around the shire. Kuranda have done that well with buses, the railway and Skyrail.”

“Tourism doesn’t just help the operators. It helps everybody. If visitors stay in town, people like hairdressers and mechanics all benefit from tourism.”

Tourism Tropical North Queensland CEO Pip Close said Mareeba’s positioning on the doorstep of the World Heritage Wet Tropics Rainforest provided “a great base to explore the beautiful natural assets around the region”. “The National Parks, waterfalls and swimming holes offer great opportunities for visitors to relax and explore,” she said.

“Early morning dawn hot air ballooning is a unique activity and the opportunity to try superb tropical fruit and world class coffee make it a distinctive place to visit in the Tropical North Queensland region.”

Ms Close said Mareeba was playing its part in Tropical North Queensland’s $3 billion tourism economy, with new product offerings such as the proposed KUR-World resort at Myola set to build on that growth.

“Mareeba and the Tablelands industry and stakeholders have a strong opportunity to increase tourism particularly if they work in partnership as collaboration makes a louder voice.”

Non-tourism businesses also have a part to play.

“Tourism is the portal through which global visitors see and experience the region. In many ways it is the shopfront to every business – from newsagent to supermarket, from service station to farms,” Ms Close said.

“It’s why people visit the first time - and come back to study, live or work.” Ms Close said families, grey nomads and Chinese tourists visiting the shire on road trips were three growing visitor markets.

“Our greatest source of revenue comes from the Australian traveller with 1.8 million visitors to Tropical North Queensland and expenditure of $1.87 billion last financial year,” she said.

"Tourism is part of our economic fabric and it's important that businesses are able to sell what's on offer in our shire."

“Driving is an especially important component of this figure, accounting for 1.04 million of our domestic visitors. This figure grew by 12 per cent for the year ending June 2017, highlighting that road trips are becoming increasingly popular especially with families and grey nomads.

“This is a market that Mareeba is well placed to capture further.”

Likewise, Chinese millennials are also keen to explore what Mareeba Shire – and the wider region – has to offer.

“China is our largest international source market with 214,000 visitors in 2016-17,” Ms Close said.

“I can see no reason why Mareeba will not start to see this market disperse from Cairns up into the Tablelands in future.”

Ms Close said the shire was primed for a bright future when it came to tourism, with an increasing number of flights to Cairns Airport providing the perfect springboard for visitors to explore the wider region.

“This will benefit areas such as Mareeba for years to come and despite world geo-political challenges, we anticipate the tourism industry will thrive in the coming year,” she said.

Mareeba Shire – and the wider region – has to offer.

“Early morning dawn hot air ballooning is a unique activity and the opportunity to try superb tropical fruit and world class coffee make it a distinctive place to visit in the Tropical North Queensland region.”

Ms Close said Mareeba was playing its part in Tropical North Queensland’s $3 billion tourism economy, with new product offerings such as the proposed KUR-World resort at Myola set to build on that growth.

“Mareeba and the Tablelands industry and stakeholders have a strong opportunity to increase tourism particularly if they work in partnership as collaboration makes a louder voice.”

Non-tourism businesses also have a part to play.

“Tourism is the portal through which global visitors see and experience the region. In many ways it is the shopfront to every business – from newsagent to supermarket, from service station to farms,” Ms Close said.

“It’s why people visit the first time - and come back to study, live or work.” Ms Close said families, grey nomads and Chinese tourists visiting the shire on road trips were three growing visitor markets.

“Our greatest source of revenue comes from the Australian traveller with 1.8 million visitors to Tropical North Queensland and expenditure of $1.87 billion last financial year,” she said.

“Tourism is part of our economic fabric and it’s important that businesses are able to sell what’s on offer in our shire.”

“Driving is an especially important component of this figure, accounting for 1.04 million of our domestic visitors. This figure grew by 12 per cent for the year ending June 2017, highlighting that road trips are becoming increasingly popular especially with families and grey nomads.

“This is a market that Mareeba is well placed to capture further.”

Likewise, Chinese millennials are also keen to explore what Mareeba Shire – and the wider region – has to offer.

“China is our largest international source market with 214,000 visitors in 2016-17,” Ms Close said.

“I can see no reason why Mareeba will not start to see this market disperse from Cairns up into the Tablelands in future.”

Ms Close said the shire was primed for a bright future when it came to tourism, with an increasing number of flights to Cairns Airport providing the perfect springboard for visitors to explore the wider region.

“This will benefit areas such as Mareeba for years to come and despite world geo-political challenges, we anticipate the tourism industry will thrive in the coming year,” she said.
The continued growth of Mareeba Shire’s thriving agricultural industry hinges on a stable and efficient water supply.

A hot button issue amongst many irrigators, Mareeba District Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (MDFVGA) and Tablelands CANEGROWERS have released a three point water strategy that will guarantee future growth and sustainability.

Under the proposal, both farming bodies are calling for not only the construction of Nullinga Dam but the modernisation of the Mareeba Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme (MDWSS) and the construction of a pipe to tunnel water from North Johnstone River near Malanda to Kenny Creek, a tributary of the Barron River.

Between the three projects, the MDFVGA and CANGROWERS estimate an additional 50,000 to 60,000 megalitres of water could be diverted to farms across the MDWSS with up to 80,000 megalitres for expansion in the Dimbulah area.

MDFVGA president Joe Moro said all three projects would go towards ensuring the future prosperity of agriculture in the shire.

“Water availability is important for farmers to ensure they protect their crops from fluctuations in rainfall. Those three projects enable farmers to do that themselves by giving them the ability to put buffers, or insurance, in their water allocation,” Mr Moro said.

“The other aspect people need to appreciate is we’re coming to the point where there is less water available for farmers to expand their businesses and as a result, that pushes water allocation prices further up.

“It’s critical that pressure be taken off by allowing other projects to come online to make more water available.”

The MDWSS modernisation project was assessed as not suitable for funding under the first assessment round of the Federal Government’s $500 million National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (NWIDF) - Capital Component.

Mr Moro estimated that the scheme’s modernisation would result in savings of more than 20,000 megalitres of water, which is currently lost through the existing, inadequate infrastructure in place.

Water provider SunWater put forward the application for NWIDF funding of the MDWSS earlier in 2017 and has submitted a revised application in the NWIDF’s second assessment round, with successful projects to be announced in February 2018.

SunWater’s Mareeba service manager Charlie Martens said the MDWSS modernisation project would provide valuable savings in water efficiency.

“By modernising the scheme, we can improve our channel efficiencies and in doing so, some of that water classed as “lost allocation” could be converted over to a tradable allocation,” he said.

“That would create more available water for irrigators.”

The gross value of production for crops grown within the MDWSS was worth almost $380 million in 2015.

Mr Martens said there had been increasing demand placed on water available out of Tinaroo Dam by growers due to expansion of more crops within the scheme and recent dry seasons.

“Bananas, avocados and sugar cane are the three biggest water users, but they also contribute the highest economic value in the area,” he said.

“As more of those crops are planted, there’s definitely a greater demand for water and then you’ve got new crops like blueberries that are emerging as well.

“But there’s some farms that aren’t being used because of limits on water, so if we can make more water available through something like the MDWSS modernisation, there’s every chance those farms will become productive again.”

Mareeba mayor Tom Gilmore said there was no doubt water was “the single most important thing which is central to future development in this area”.

“We can no longer afford to have water run off to the sea. We’ve got to harness it, whether that’s for power, agriculture or both,” he said.

In addition, since 2015, income in the Tablelands area from avocados, blueberries and citrus is believed to have risen and is likely to rise further, pushing value of Tablelands agricultural production well up over 2015’s $550 million with a substantial amount of the increase from the MDWSS.

In the MDWSS during 2015, the value of banana production led at $82 million followed by sugar (cane and milling) at about $60 million, avocados at $54 million and mangoes at $51 million.
MAINTAINING a strong and stable workforce remains vital to the future of agriculture in Mareeba Shire.

Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network is leading the charge in this area through their Far North Queensland Agriculture Workforce manager, Leanne Kruss.

Ms Kruss, from Dimbulah, works in partnership with the Mareeba District Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (MDFVGA) and is involved in several Far North projects aimed at building a sustainable agricultural workforce for the future.

“The region is very passionate about agriculture and is only going to keep growing,” she said.

“At a national level, the Federal Government is focusing on the development of Northern Australia so it is crucial we are set up to meet future demands placed on our workforce.

“When I started in this role five years ago, we didn’t have enough skilled workers in the Tablelands region and we didn’t have enough of an interaction with our schools when it came to promoting agriculture as a career.”

But since then, a number of innovative programs led by Ms Kruss have helped spur on interest in agriculture amongst young people.

One of the key projects she has helped establish is the Natural Science Award, which recognises Far North Year 12 students who have excelled in agriculture and natural science. Students who receive the award also receive a bursary towards their tertiary or vocational studies in an agriculture-related field.

“That has been running for four years and it’s gaining massive momentum amongst students,” Ms Kruss said.

Ms Kruss is also behind a push to get agricultural degrees into Cairns-based universities, giving students from Mareeba Shire and across the Far North a chance to remain in the region and contribute to their local communities.

Modern agriculture (plant and animal science), agricultural mechanical engineering and technology would be among the three degrees offered under Ms Kruss’ proposal.

Having received the Queensland Rural Regional and Remote Strong Women Leadership Award for 2015, Ms Kruss frequently works in all areas of local agriculture, including sugar, beef, aquaculture and broad acre crops.

She is currently heading up workforce development plans for Costa Berries in Tolga and a proposed abattoir at Hughenden.

“The purpose of those plans is to create a sustainable workforce within the Far North so they don’t have to search outside the region to fill their labour needs,” Ms Kruss said.

Conversely, the high cost of labour remains an issue for farmers in the industry, meaning automation could be a viable aid to improve efficiency and reduce labour costs.

“But what we need is skilled workers able develop that technology and design things like state-of-the-art packing sheds and other equipment.”

MDFVGA president Joe Moro said Ms Kruss and Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network (QAWN) provided a vital partnership in helping to both alleviate the current agricultural labour shortage and develop the region’s next generation of farmers, engineers and innovators.

“Our industry must be both agile and proactive in trying to maintain a stable workforce,” Mr Moro said.

“The work that Leanne does on behalf of QAWN is extremely helpful to the entire Mareeba district and I am confident the programs she has put in place will ensure a thriving agricultural sector for many years to come.”
Agriculture remains the backbone of Mareeba Shire’s economy, accounting for almost $380 million in gross value of production as recently as 2015.

The latest figures, which account for growers within the Mareeba Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme (MDWSS), show bananas ($81.9 million), avocados ($53.9 million), mangoes ($50.2 million) and sugar cane ($33.2 million) are the shire’s most profitable crops.

Farming within the MDWSS forms part of the wider Tablelands agricultural industry, which was estimated by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to have a gross production value of $552 million in 2015 alone.

Mareeba District Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association president Joe Moro said there was no doubt the shire’s agricultural value had grown since then, with several new crops emerging.

“Almost any crop can be grown in the Tablelands region and that applies to the MDWSS,” he said.

“The only thing that prevents that crop being grown is availability of markets and being able to supply it in a competitive manner so the business, or grower, makes money.”

Mr Moro, who is also president of the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce, said the agricultural industry was both dynamic and well-equipped to handle any future challenges in the shire.

“Overall, things are placed very well for the future,” he said.

“But there are some issues on the horizon, which the Chamber will work with the agricultural industry to address.”

Water availability and improving inland transport routes remain the most pressing issues for the industry in the short to medium term.

Mr Moro said while the Ootan Road upgrade was an important link to the Hann Highway system, an upgraded and expanded Kuranda Range Road was a greater priority given it was the primary method of transport for produce to southern, coastal markets.

Mareeba mayor Tom Gilmore said the shire’s agricultural industry had been both resilient and innovative since the loss of tobacco as a major crop.

“Since the tobacco industry disappeared, the evolution and innovation seen in agriculture has been extraordinary,” he said.

“It has supported the service industries which are now being set up in the Mareeba Industrial Park and other places.”

Cr Gilmore said he had been impressed by the expansion and diversification of new crops grown in the shire, such as citrus, grapes and other exotic fruits.

“It would be a very brave person who could predict what the future of our agricultural industry will look like in 15 or 20 years because I think the exponential change that we are seeing now will continue,” he said.

“I think it’s an exciting time to be in the shire because of the amazing things we’re seeing people do. And that’s not going to slow down any time soon.”
Biggest Field Days in the North

OFTEN billed as North Queensland’s best agricultural expo, this year’s Rotary FNQ Field Days was no exception. A biennial event hosted by the Atherton and Mareeba Rotary clubs at Kerribee Park in May, Field Days combined tradition with change.

By far the biggest was a move to extend the region’s largest and most comprehensive display of agricultural equipment and associated services and industries over three days instead of two.

Buoyed by the success of past Field Days, the committee took the bold move and was rewarded with 400 exhibitor sites sold out and 18,000 people passing through the gates.

The action-packed event delighted visitors and exhibitors alike, with overwhelmingly positive feedback given to organisers.

Field Days committee chair Pauline Spackman said the turnout was sensational.

“The move was really well received by both our long time loyal exhibitors who return to every event along with a number of new exhibitors,” she said.

“Given our event is the best of its kind in North Queensland, and certainly up there on the circuit across the rest of the state, we decided now was the time to extend it over three days.

“As a community event, it’s important we keep it evolving and growing.”

The event offers more than just exhibitor sites with market stalls, cattle stalls and inventor sites, the latter of which showcases the region’s innovative products related to the agricultural industry.

With the region a hotbed of agricultural innovation, the theme for 2017’s event was “Leading the Way”, which Mrs Spackman said helped shine a light on the region’s innovators.

With machinery and agricultural displays, police and emergency services rescue demonstrations, cattle and goat displays, men’s health education and much more, there was no shortage of things for visitors to see and do.

One of the crowd favourites – the Rotary John Deere Tractor Pull and Vintage Static Tractor Display also returned this year with more than 30 tractors from across regional Queensland going head-to-head.

And for the first time ever, a garden tractor pulling demonstration was added, generating even more interest amongst rev heads.

The next Rotary FNQ Field Days will be held in 2019 from May 29 to 31.
Mareeba businesses provide feedback on impacts of rising power prices

Over 200 Mareeba district businesses have provided feedback on how they are coping with increasing power prices.

The Mareeba Chamber of Commerce, along with Mareeba District Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and Canegrowers have assisted with the Mareeba element of a survey of Queensland regional businesses in four Queensland regional centres - Mareeba (northern agricultural), Southern Downs (southern agricultural), Whitsundays (tourism) and Mt Isa (mining) conducted by Cairns-based Compass Research for the Queensland Electricity Users Network.

The results are being sent by QEUN to the Commonwealth and State Governments, the Australian Electricity Market Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to highlight the damage being done to regional businesses by skyrocketing electricity prices and to provide reliable evidence to help key bodies devise new approaches that will bring electricity costs down.

The survey results for the Mareeba area indicate while businesses are reasonably satisfied with system reliability, they are extremely dissatisfied with the price increases of recent years and believe they are damaging the local economy.

The survey indicates that only about 26% of businesses have been able to pass on the increased costs, most have had to absorb the costs resulting in stress on their business viability through accepting lower profits (63%) and the resulting increase in debt (37%). To avoid stress and debt, 14% of businesses reduced staff numbers and hours.

A high proportion (62%), have sought to curtail consumption by modifying behaviour and 47% have installed more efficient equipment.

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce is a member of the Queensland Electricity Users Network that consists of 20 regional industry, local government and development organisations.
Key events attract thousands

WHEN it comes to holding local events that attract thousands of visitors each year, Mareeba is certainly punching above its weight.

From celebrating the region’s diversity with the Mareeba Multicultural Festival to three days of pushing a wheelbarrow following the footsteps of pioneers in the Great Wheelbarrow Race and the heart-stopping action of Mareeba Rodeo, there’s something for everyone.

Other events held each year include Christmas in July, Gold Panning Championships, a metrogaine, Pink Ribbon garden party, a bike show, country music festival, Carols by Candlelight, Australia Day celebrations, country horse races and so much more.

Mountain biking is also a sport continuing to attract more riders to the region from across the country and even worldwide.

Even when it’s not directly in the spotlight, Mareeba acts as a waypoint for several other events which pass through the town on the way to their final destination, such as FNQ Hospital Foundation’s Cardiac Challenge.

Mareeba a crucial retail and service hub for visitors

MAREEBA is perfectly positioned to take advantage of several tourism opportunities in the Gulf region. Mareeba and Tablelands continues to be a crucial retail and service hub for people living in Gulf Country.

In fact, Gulf Savannah Development’s small business officer Annie Cork said visitors from all six Gulf shires of Burke, Carpentaria, Croydon, Doomadgee, Etheridge and Mornington all benefitted immensely from what was offered in Mareeba.

“I think there’s probably more of it happening than what every day people know about,” she said.

“I know people that come here to get mechanical work on their cars done and buy feed for their cattle and horses. There’s a lot of big grazing properties up there.”

Mrs Cork said the region’s abundant supply of fresh fruit and vegetables and country-style retail outlets was another factor in helping local business benefit from Gulf customers.

“The synergies and linkages between Mareeba, the Tablelands and the Gulf are enormous,” she said.

“Everyone has to come through Mareeba, it’s on the Savannah Way.”

Gulf Savannah Development continues to drive economic and tourism-focused progress in the Gulf, but values Mareeba given the town is a gateway point for many visitors.

With a good diversity of businesses across Mareeba, the town offers every customer a great choice of products and services.

Mareeba Rodeo & Festival

– 14TH & 15TH JULY 2018 –

A tropical celebration of all things country

July each year brings over 14,000 people to Kerribee Park, Mareeba for the Mareeba Rodeo and Festival. This rodeo has been held since 1949 and is one of the largest in Australia.

The festival runs for two weeks during which many local clubs hold events, including golf, tennis, bocce, and bowls – indoor and outdoor. Other events held during this period are the garden competition, junior cowpokes, lute muster, art show, queen competition, cutting, horse sports and best western theme shop and staff. The township of Mareeba really buzzes at this time of year.

The festival culminates in an action-packed rodeo held over two days. Friday night leads the way with a Downtown Parade and the crowning of the Rodeo and Festival Queen and Princess.

All the rodeo events of bull riding, saddle bronc, bareback riding, steer wrestling, barrel racing, rope and tie, steer undecorating and breakaway roping are hotly contested by the nation’s best competitors from near and far.

On Saturday night there is the interstate challenge between Queensland and New South Wales, one very fierce competition.

The rodeo caters to all age groups and provides whole family entertainment with the running of the Agricultural Show and Exhibit, Woodchops and a large side show alley. Lots of yummy food stalls and various other stalls help to provide interest and excitement to this big weekend.

2018 is the 69th Annual Mareeba Rodeo, so come on over for the thrills, spills and drama that make this one exciting weekend.

For a full rundown of the Mareeba Rodeo & Festival visit www.mareebarodeo.com.au
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Mareeba & Dimbulah Bendigo
Community Bank
Mareeba Heritage Museum
& Visitor Information Centre
Mareeba Cleaning Service
Mareeba Community Housing
Mareeba District Flexi Support Association
Mareeba Electrical Services
Mareeba Kids Campus
Mareeba Leagues Club
Mareeba Mazda & Mitsubishi
Mareeba Rodeo Association
Mareeba State High School
Mareeba Tyrepower
Millar Teitzel
Moro Auto Repairs
My Mareeba Dentist
Nastasis Takeaway
NEATO
NQ Lawns
O'Donnells Office Power
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Invest in your business and become a member of Mareeba Chamber of Commerce
MAREEBA

A great place to live, play & do business!

With 300 Sunny days a year and only 50 minutes from a regional city and international airport, Mareeba offers all the lifestyle benefits one could want. This locality has resulted in a diverse and vibrant town with extensive manufacturing, education, government, health, retail, tourism, agricultural and professional services.

POPULATION
11,334 people call the Mareeba district home

LOCATION
A short 50 minute drive to a regional city and international airport

EDUCATION
Public and private primary and high schools, plus several day care centres

GROWTH
1.6% population growth – Mareeba Shire is leading the way

WEATHER
Perfect climate with 300 sunny days a year