

ECONOMIC  
SNAPSHOT  
2025-2026

# Mareeba



GROWING THE FUTURE

MAREEBA  
CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**THIS** year has seen our Mareeba business community continue to thrive, even as we navigated the lingering impacts of recent natural disasters and shifting economic conditions.

Still in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Jasper infrastructure challenges, disrupted freight and tourism alike in particular the Mareeba Cairns connection, testing the resilience and patience of our farmers, operators, community and local businesses.

Yet true to form, Mareeba has bounced back. Farms have steadily recovered, bolstered by strong commodity prices and renewed investment in disaster resilience.

Tourists have returned in impressive numbers, drawn by our region's natural beauty, vibrant events like Savannah in the Round and the Rotary FNQ Field Days, and the growing appeal of lifestyle-driven travel. With the established LTO (Local Tourism Organisation), Mareeba Shire tourism is now promoting the shire and we've seen more tourists coming to Mareeba and the whole shire.

The Mareeba Chamber of Commerce has remained steadfast in its mission – advocating for our members, providing timely information, and supporting businesses through change. We extend our sincere thanks to our members for their continued support. Your engagement ensures we remain a strong voice on key issues, from infrastructure to workforce development.

With the 2024 State Election now well behind us, we have been working closely with our local member for Cook, Mr David Kempton.

His decision to establish a permanent

office in Mareeba is a welcome step toward more responsive representation. We have been engaging with him on pressing matters such as youth crime prevention and the long-overdue upgrade of the Mareeba–Cairns transport corridor.

In November we hosted our Business Excellence Awards night. With the Premier in attendance and an excellent lineup of nominees who all provide great service to the Mareeba Shire, it made for a great night.

Looking ahead, we're excited by initiatives like the Mareeba Shire Business Resilience and Digital Capability Program, which is helping local tourism and hospitality businesses build digital strength and disaster preparedness. Programs like these are vital to future-proofing our economy and ensuring Mareeba remains a great place to live, work, and invest.

As the festive season approaches, our "Shop Local" campaign continues to gain momentum. Gift cards and local promotions are encouraging residents to support Mareeba homegrown businesses and keep our economy strong. Make sure you keep the money local and use our Gift Cards to help promote Mareeba businesses.

On behalf of the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce, I wish you a safe, joyful, and restorative holiday season. May it be filled with good friends, good family, and good times.

We look forward to working with you in 2026.

**Joe Moro**  
President, Mareeba Chamber of  
Commerce

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### ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

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### CONTRIBUTORS

Tourism Tropical North Queensland  
Mareeba Shire Tourism  
Andrea Falvo  
Ebony Faichney / Farmour  
Nadine Cockrem  
Zoe Maree Media

**COVER PHOTO:** Mareeba Shire Councillor Amy Braes and Mareeba Chamber of Commerce President Joe Moro look over the CBD Masterplan for Mareeba.



# live, work play *Mareeba*

A town that is powered by people – it's future driven and community strong. Mareeba beautifully balances its agricultural heritage with a modern lifestyle. With its stunning natural landscapes, strong community ties, and diverse economic opportunities. Mareeba offers something for everyone, making it a truly special part of Far North Queensland...

#### LIVE

Mareeba offers the comfort and connection of a close-knit township with the convenience of a regional centre. Families thrive here thanks to affordable housing, excellent schools, sporting clubs and community facilities. The warm, sunny climate boasting 300 days of sunshine a year – sets the scene for a relaxed, outdoor-focused lifestyle. Whether it's wandering through local markets, enjoying fresh farm produce or spending weekends exploring waterfalls and walking trails, life in Mareeba feels both peaceful and full of possibility.

#### WORK

With one of the most diversified economies in northern Australia, Mareeba is a powerhouse for agriculture, transport, construction, tourism, and service industries. Its role as a major hub for the Tablelands and Cape York makes it a natural choice for business growth and investment. From mango and citrus farms to aviation training and logistics operations, opportunities are abundant for workers, business owners and innovators alike. Here, career growth pairs seamlessly with a lifestyle that values balance.

#### PLAY

Adventure seekers and nature lovers quickly discover why Mareeba is known as the gateway to outdoor experiences. The region is dotted with attractions such as Emerald Creek Falls, Davies Creek, Granite Gorge and the Mareeba Wetlands. Hot-air ballooning at sunrise, mountain biking through rugged bushland, fishing in freshwater rivers, or enjoying a round of golf in the sunshine – Mareeba makes outdoor recreation easy and accessible. Regular annual events also bring the community together and draw visitors from across the country.

Above all, what truly sets Mareeba apart is its people. The town's rich cultural heritage, warm hospitality and strong community spirit create an environment where newcomers feel welcome and long-time residents feel proud.

It's a place where businesses support each other, neighbours look out for one another, and community values run deep.

Mareeba is more than a destination – it's a place to call home and live, work and play.



WITH 300 SUNNY  
DAYS A YEAR,  
MAREEBA IS ONE OF  
THE BEST PLACES  
TO LIVE...  
IN AUSTRALIA!

## MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBER FOR COOK

IT'S been a busy and rewarding first year back in office as Member for Cook. Representing one of Queensland's largest and most diverse electorates has been both a privilege and a challenge – but above all, a pleasure.

Since returning to Parliament in late 2024, I've focused on shining a spotlight on the region by delivering record investment, with big steps in infrastructure, housing and economic growth, and community development. The Cook Electorate Office was immediately returned to Mareeba, improving access for residents and restoring local representation to the heart of the community.

I have been supportive of the Savannahlander bringing vital repairs to the rail network, including the Copperfield Bridge, allowing services to extend through to Wirra Wirra next year. Beautification works around the railway precinct, supported by the Mareeba Shire Council, Lions, Rotary, and community groups, will further revitalise the Mareeba CBD, providing a new tourism experience.

Mareeba also welcomed new sports and recreation projects, with Minister Tim Mander MP visiting to launch upgrades at the Mareeba Tennis Club. The Minister and I met with local sporting organisations, including the outstanding Mareeba Gymnastic Club and the Mareeba Turf Club.

I was pleased to support long-overdue changes to disaster assistance eligibility, ensuring more primary producers – including those with off-farm businesses – can now access disaster recovery grants and low-interest loans through QRIDA. This reflects the modern reality of regional farming and strengthens our communities' resilience.

Through the Crisafulli Government's Country Roads Connect Program, we're sealing and widening key sections of Ootann Road, improving safety and reliability on a vital transport link for regional industries.

Mareeba Shire Council has also secured funding under the \$2



“As your Member for Cook, I'm honoured to represent one of Queensland's most diverse and dynamic electorates. At the heart of Mareeba lies the Chamber of Commerce – a driving force behind local enterprise, economic opportunity, and community growth. Having lived, worked, and raised my family in Far North Queensland, I've dedicated much of my life to serving the people, communities, and industries that make our region unique. It's a privilege to continue advocating for your needs and aspirations in the Queensland Parliament.

billion Residential Activation Fund, unlocking essential sewage infrastructure and paving the way for new residential developments. In partnership with the Australian Government, we've committed \$245 million to finally deliver the long-awaited Barron River Bridge – a critical link for commuters, students, patients, freight, and tourism.

Looking ahead, I'm setting in motion a Regional Roads Advisory Group to provide advice and options in relation to our expansive and complex road and freight network.

Representing Cook is about being a strong voice in Brisbane on behalf of everyone in my electorate and not just a messenger doing the bidding of the south.

I remain committed to ensuring the voices of Far North Queenslanders are heard and that our region continues to build and thrive.

**David Kempton MP**  
**Member for Cook**

## MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

**MAREEBA** Shire is a growing, confident, and sustainable Shire, and as Mayor, I am proud to present this year's economic update.

Mareeba Shire's population continues to grow, with an increase of 301 people, bringing the total to 24,003 residents. Our community is also remarkably diverse, with 75 cultural associations and ethnic backgrounds represented.

The Gross Regional Product (GRP) measures the net wealth generated by the local economy. For the year ending June 2024, the GRP for Mareeba Shire was \$1.42 billion – an increase of 6.9% compared to the previous year. The construction industry saw the largest increase in new registered businesses, with 12 new businesses, followed by the transport, postal, and warehousing sector with 7.

Agriculture remains the largest industry in Mareeba Shire. It generates 1,419 local jobs and supports 643 businesses – representing 28.7% of all local businesses, well above the state average of 8.1%. The total value of agricultural output reached \$756 million.

Mareeba Shire Council works closely with local businesses and industries to attract and facilitate investment in the region – from managing the Mareeba Industrial Precinct to owning and operating the Mareeba Airport.

A major initiative that commenced this year is the Mareeba CBD Blueprint. This once-in-a-generation project is guided by community feedback, to deliver construction-ready plans to revitalise Mareeba's main shopping area – addressing drainage, accessibility, lighting, and amenities.

Council continues to advocate strongly for the region, particularly in relation to critical transport routes such as the Kuranda Range, Ootann Road, and Burke Developmental Road, ensuring our local businesses have reliable and efficient travel connections.

In the 2024/25 financial year, \$445,000 was allocated to the Community Partnership Program to support not-for-profit organisations and community events throughout the Shire.

Council also continues to support the Mareeba Local Tourism Organisation and the Visitor Information Centres in both Kuranda and Mareeba. We actively host and support events across the Shire, creating economic opportunities for local businesses and enhancing community spirit.

I commend the business community and the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce for their dedication and contribution to making Mareeba Shire a fantastic place to live, work, and play. I would also like to acknowledge the incredible sporting, volunteer and not-for-profit groups that continue to showcase our Shire and provide valuable opportunities for our residents and visitors alike.



**Mayor Angela Toppin AM**  
**Mareeba Shire Council**

# Built for BUSINESS ready for GROWTH

Mareeba is a great place to do business. A unique blend of opportunities and challenges, characterised by its vibrant agricultural sector, growing tourism industry, and strong community ties. Its perfect location means Mareeba is a growing, confident and sustainable town. A town of diversity with a vibrant, multicultural population and varying landscapes to productive agricultural farms, trade and professional services.

**MAREEBA** has a lot going for it. It's a smart spot for entrepreneurs, especially in agriculture, tourism, and trade or service industries.

Mareeba Shire is one of the fastest growing local government areas in Queensland and the largest urban centre outside of Cairns.

Mareeba has a diverse and resilient economy. The town isn't reliant on one industry. Agriculture, tourism, construction, and services all play major roles. This diversity helps buffer the local economy against big ups and downs.

It is strategically located and sits as the gateway between Cairns and the Tablelands. That means easy access to both rural and coastal markets – you can serve local communities and tap into tourism and export opportunities through Cairns.

Mareeba is also a critical transport and services hub in Far North Queensland.

Mareeba is affordable for businesses. Commercial property, housing, and land are much cheaper than in Cairns or Brisbane. That makes it easier to start or expand a business without crushing rent or mortgage costs.

One of the standout features of Mareeba is its status as an agricultural hub. The region is renowned for producing high-quality crops, including coffee, tropical fruits, and vegetables.

The climate and fertile soil create ideal conditions for farming, and many businesses benefit from the strong agricultural base.

Tourism is another key sector contributing to the business landscape in Mareeba. With its stunning natural beauty, including waterfalls, and the picturesque national parks, the area attracts a diverse range of visitors.

Local businesses can capitalise on this influx of tourists by offering accommodation, guided tours, and unique experiences that highlight the region's natural and cultural attractions.

One of the strengths of doing business in Mareeba is the strong sense of community and support for local enterprises.

The Mareeba Chamber of Commerce and various local business groups offer resources and networking opportunities, helping entrepreneurs connect with other business owners and potential customers.

This collaborative environment fosters a culture of mutual support, where businesses often refer customers to one another, strengthening the local economy.

While challenges exist, the potential for growth and innovation in this beautiful part of Queensland makes it an appealing location for those looking to start or expand a business.

## Key Stats MAREEBA SHIRE

## GRP

**\$1.42 billion**

Year ending June 2024, growing 6.9% since the previous year.

## PEOPLE

**POPULATION OF 24,003**

Grown by 1.27% (previous year)

## BUSINESS

**2,242 LOCAL BUSINESSES**

## LARGEST INDUSTRY

(by employment)

**Agriculture, Forestry and  
Fishing businesses**

# Caring for the community, close to home

FOR generations, Mareeba Hospital has been at the heart of healthcare for the Tablelands, providing high-quality, compassionate services close to home.

As part of the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service, it ensures residents can access essential care without the need to travel far from family and community support networks.

The hospital's commitment to community-centred care recently led to major improvements to its end of life care room and the creation of a new adjoining Serenity Garden.

Mareeba Hospital Director of Nursing and Midwifery Michelle Bombardieri said the \$425,000 refurbishment relocated the palliative care room to a quieter area of the hospital, now featuring garden views, a kitchenette, lounge and private ensuite in a larger space to provide privacy and comfort for families of all sizes.

"The adjoining \$24,000 Serenity Garden provides a calming nearby space, with features including a rock garden, plants, seating areas and water feature.

"The upgrades reflected the hospital's long-standing focus on compassionate, local care and its close partnership with the community.

"The garden was funded through donations to the Mareeba Hospital Friends of the Foundation and made possible by generous contributions from a private donor, Mareeba Lions, Mareeba Rotary, and FNQ Growers."

The hospital provides a 24-hour emergency department, maternity services, surgical and general medical services and an Older Persons Evaluation Rehabilitation Unit through a dedicated team of doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals.

The Community Health Team also provides many services to the community including child health, adult community health, palliative care, specialist outreach clinics and a new wound clinic service.

Visiting specialists, outreach programs and telehealth options broaden access to care in our region, while community health, mental health, dental and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services ensure our care is locally grounded and inclusive.

Mareeba Hospital serves the wider Mareeba district – including a large First Nations population – and provides outreach services to Chillagoe, Dimbulah and the nearby Lotus Glen Correctional Centre.

Mareeba Hospital remains the primary public health provider for the district, delivering safe, high-quality care with the same sense of community and connection that has defined it for decades.

**PROVIDES** emergency, surgical, maternity, paediatric, and outpatient services to the Mareeba District.

**PROVIDES** outreach services to Chillagoe, Dimbulah and the Lotus Glen Correctional Centre, supporting equitable access to care across the region.

**MORE** than 2000 emergency department presentations per month

**183 babies born in 2024 and 126 babies born so far this year**

**MORE** than 400 inpatient admissions each month



## Celebrating three decades of stories, community and culture in Mareeba

**SINCE** opening its doors on October 14, 1995, the Mareeba Heritage Museum and Visitor Information Centre has been proudly preserving the stories and spirit of our region.

In the early 1990s, a group of passionate Mareeba locals realised something was missing – a dedicated space to preserve and share the town's rich history.

Mareeba has a past shaped by Indigenous heritage, agriculture, wartime efforts, and migration. With artefacts and stories at risk of being lost, the community decided to take action.

This vision led to the founding of the Mareeba Heritage Museum and Visitor Information Centre, a place where history would not only be stored but brought to life

Now 30 years on, the centre features more than 6000 items showcasing Mareeba's stories, from everyday life to the tobacco industry. The Museum honours the people who made Mareeba what it is today.

### HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Thirty years ago, a group of locals came together with a big dream: to create a place that would honour Mareeba's unique history and give visitors a warm welcome to our region. They didn't just want a museum – they wanted a community hub that brought our stories to life.

"Our goal was simple: to make

sure Mareeba's history is never forgotten," says one of the founders.

"We wanted a space where locals and visitors could connect with the past while feeling part of the present."

Today, that dream has become a reality. The Museum has grown into a much-loved space, thanks to the support of our community and visitors from all over.

### THE COLLECTION: A TREASURE TROVE OF LOCAL STORIES

Over the years, the Museum has gathered more than 6,000 fascinating items, each with its own story to tell. From old tools and machinery to everyday objects and cultural artefacts, everything here reflects the lives and traditions of Mareeba's people.

One of the most popular exhibits is our tobacco industry display, the largest of its kind in Australia. It highlights Mareeba's important role in the tobacco farming industry, which shaped the region's economy and way of life for decades.

During the year the centre held a series of celebrations that included a Super Heritage Hunt, a Trivia Night, Murder Mystery at the Museum, Bingo and the grand finale in October – a week filled with special programs and a spectacular celebration.

# TOURISM on the RISE



**TOURISM** across Mareeba Shire continues to grow, with new investment, expanding events, and strong council support driving one of the region's most important and vibrant industries.

From iconic festivals to innovative agritourism ventures, the sector is delivering real results for local businesses and the broader economy.

The latest data from 2023/24 shows Mareeba Shire's tourism industry achieved record results, with total tourism sales reaching \$192.6 million, an 8.9% increase on the previous year.

The sector contributed \$85.5 million in value added to the regional economy, up 5.5% year-on-year showing clear evidence of tourism's growing importance to Mareeba's economic story.

The region's two accredited visitor information centres continue to play a vital role in engaging travellers and supporting local operators.

The Mareeba Heritage Centre welcomed around 45,000 visitors in 2024/25, consistent with the previous year, while the Kuranda Visitor Information Centre recorded approximately 115,000 visitors, slightly down from 119,000 in 2024.

These strong figures reflect Mareeba's enduring appeal as a self-drive destination where rainforest meets outback, and as a key stop for travellers exploring Tropical North Queensland.

Mareeba's calendar of major events continues to underpin its tourism success.

The Great Wheelbarrow Race and Mareeba Multicultural Festival remain community favourites, drawing thousands of participants and spectators each year. Meanwhile, Savannah in the Round continues to strengthen its reputation as one of Queensland's premier music festivals, injecting significant spending into local accommodation, hospitality, and retail sectors while showcasing the region's distinctive country charm.

Tourism's benefits extend well beyond tour

operators and accommodation providers, they flow through every part of the Mareeba economy.

From local pubs to petrol stations, retailers to service providers, every visitor who stops, stays, and spends contributes to the shire's prosperity. With record-breaking results and expanding opportunities across events, agritourism, and digital capacity, Mareeba is proving that tourism is not only thriving but shaping the region's future.

Agritourism is one of the shire's strongest emerging growth areas, with visitors increasingly drawn to authentic rural experiences such as farm stays, paddock-to-plate dining, and boutique accommodation.

The expansion of these experiences is expected to further strengthen the shire's visitor offering in the years ahead.

Mareeba Shire Council continues to play a central role in growing the region's tourism potential. The Visit Mareeba Shire website is now live and attracting strong engagement, while a new Visitor Guide is set for release in February 2026.

In another milestone, Mareeba will host the Queensland Visitor Information Centre Conference in 2026. This is the first time this prestigious event will be held locally, presenting an excellent opportunity for businesses to get involved and connect with the wider tourism industry.

Mareeba Shire Tourism has also moved to a new tiered membership program, including a free level that provides brochure display at both visitor centres, helping local operators reach more potential customers.

To help local tourism businesses build resilience and capability, Council has launched a Business Resilience Program, supporting operators to enhance their online presence, strengthen customer experience, and adapt to evolving traveller expectations. For more information visit [www.tourismtribe.com/programs/mareeba-2025](http://www.tourismtribe.com/programs/mareeba-2025)





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# New shopping hub to bring jobs and growth to Mareeba

The Mareeba township is set to undergo a significant transformation with the looming construction of a new multimillion-dollar shopping centre development



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**AFTER** many years of advocacy and planning, local development company the Grgenti Group is bringing its long-held vision to life – to revitalise and repurpose the vacant land situated at 232 Byrnes Street and Close Avenue, Mareeba.

This landmark project is poised to deliver a modern retail hub that will not only enhance local amenities but also stimulate economic growth and employment opportunities within the region.

The development is expected to generate up to 300 jobs during construction and then ongoing once fully operational.

Now, the final piece of the puzzle for the developers is to secure a 1128sqm parcel of State Government land within the proposed project to ensure it can

move forward.

Mareeba Shire Council has thrown their support behind the project and the freeholding of the land. But, the final decision is still in the hands of the State Government.

Grgenti Group representative Salvatore Grgenti said he was hoping there would be "no more roadblocks" and they could "start building as soon as possible".

"Everything is in place expect for one little piece of land. We're working in the background, but onsite we can't do anything more," Mr Grgenti said.

"I don't think people realise the spinoff that the shopping centre would have. The shopping centre's the small part.

"We believe it will attract the attention of services and multi-nationals once they see Woolworths open up. Right now,

nothing has happened for decades."

Mr Grgenti has revealed that Woolworths would be the lead tenant of the shopping complex, with other tenants also showing interest.

He said despite the road blocks and hurdles they've had to face so far, the development was a passion project in honour of his father.

Sibi moved to Mareeba 60 years ago and spent decades farming, growing a business and watching his family grow in the town.

"We're trying to improve Mareeba and grow the town, that's always been our aim," Mr Grgenti said.

"It's Sibi's dream to give back to Mareeba. That's the reason we are doing this."

## Mareeba Toyota



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## Hansen Ford

# AMAROO VILLAGE

## Amaroo Village Expands Again

The heart of Mareeba's Eastern Corridor is entering its next chapter. With hundreds of families already calling Amaroo home, we're growing Amaroo Village to bring even more lifestyle, convenience, and opportunity to the community.

The next stage will feature a vibrant mix of cafés, boutique shops, and professional office spaces. A welcoming hub where locals can connect, shop, and do business.

### For Business Owners:

Now is your chance to secure a custom built commercial space in Mareeba's fastest growing area.

#### Key Benefits:

- Prime location within a thriving residential community
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#### Expressions of Interest now open

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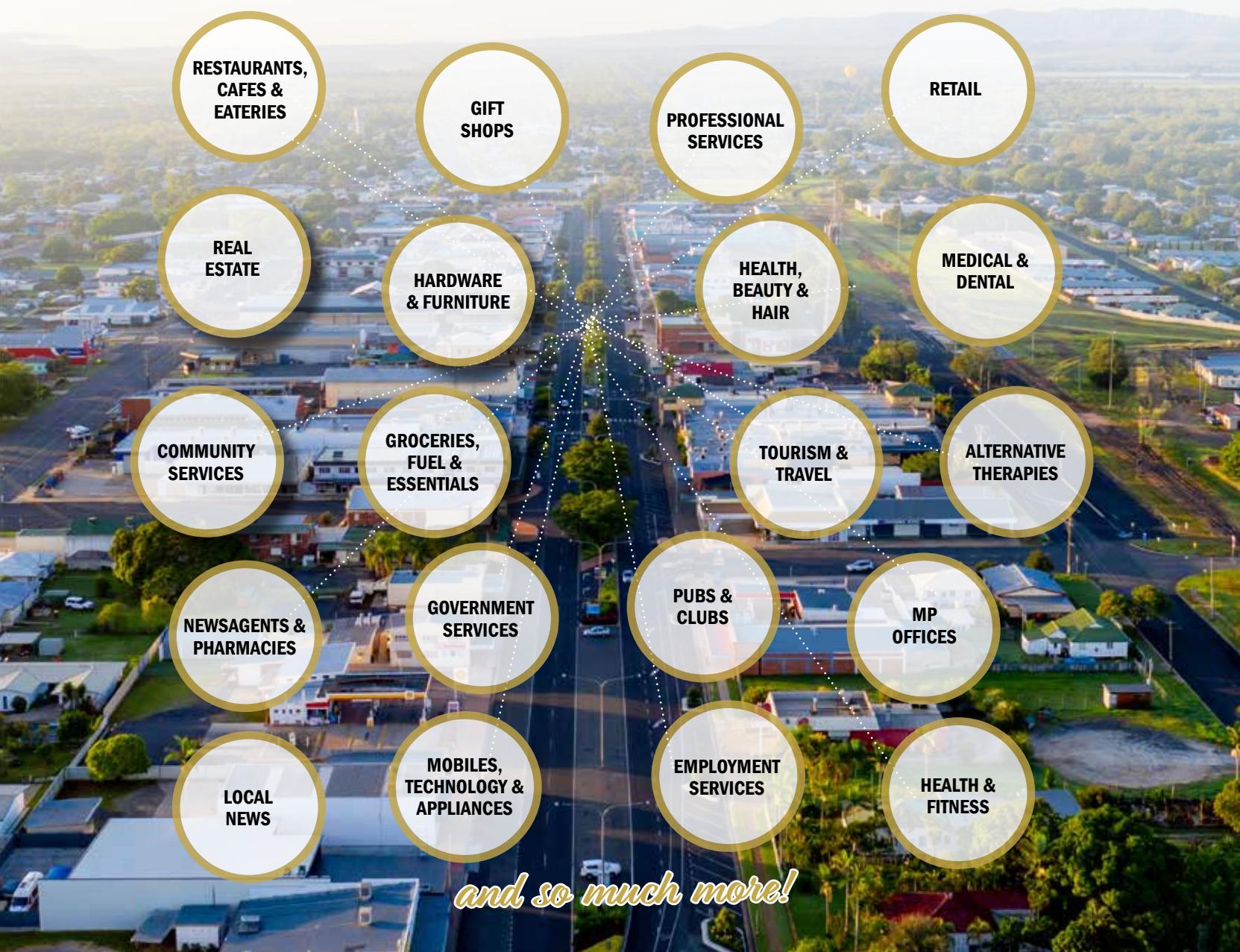
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# shop, stroll, enjoy BYRNES st.

Step into the heart of Mareeba and experience the main street – it's a hive of activity with something for everyone. New businesses are rolling into town and existing businesses have revitalised to grow into the future – these coupled together have brought renewed energy to the town's shopping precinct.

Byrnes Street isn't just a place to shop – it's a place to connect, explore and experience the spirit of Mareeba. A mix of retail, professional services, daily essentials, food and leisure all in one street – it's convenient and easy to get around.

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# Action packed events calendar drives tourism and economic growth

A strong and vibrant calendar of events is providing a welcome boost to the Mareeba economy, drawing visitors from across Australia and abroad

As crowds flock to the region for its unique festivals and attractions, local businesses and workers are reaping the benefits, with increased tourism spending helping to support jobs and strengthen the community.

Now in its 21st year, the Great Wheelbarrow Race has become an iconic event on Mareeba's event calendar.

The 140km race takes participants from Mareeba to Chillagoe over a fun-filled three days and kicks off with a parade through Mareeba's CBD.

Held in tribute of the early pioneers who used wheelbarrows to transport their belongings in the late 1800s, the one-of-a-kind event has featured on national television and attracts competitors from as far south as Brisbane.

The Great Wheelbarrow Race promotes community spirit and has raised more than \$2.8 million for various charities since its inception in 2004.

The Rotary FNQ Days, which is held every second year, is another major event on Mareeba and the Far North Region's calendar.

The three-day event is held in May at the Mareeba Rodeo Grounds and has grown to become the largest agricultural field day in Northern Australia, bringing together the best in farming, innovation, and community spirit.

Featuring more than 500 sites and 450 exhibitors, organisers estimated about 19,000 people attended in 2025.

Hosted by the Rotary Clubs of Atherton and Mareeba, all funds raised are donated to charities and community organisations.

2025 event chairman Andrew McCosh said planning for the next event in 2027 was already underway, with plans to add more sites and further grow the Ag and Innovation aspect of the event.

"This has been our most successful event ... the whole social atmosphere was incredible

and I know the exhibitors had a very good time," he said.

"It's a huge boost to the local economy and the benefit is massive for the whole area.

"The Ag and Innovation section was new to the Field Days and has been an eye opener. We have plans to make it bigger and better in 2027 and I'm really looking forward to that."

But the event that now injects the most into to local economy for Mareeba and surrounding Far North Region is Savannah in the Round.

Held at Mareeba Rodeo Grounds in October, the popular four-day festival attracted 32,000 people from all over the country in 2025, as well as a large lineup of local, national and international acts.

In a major win for the region, Savannah in the Round is set to continue to be held in Mareeba until at least 2029, after the State Government announced a \$1 million funding commitment.

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce Chair, Joe Moro said various other smaller, but just as significant, events also gave a major boost to the local economy.

These include the Mareeba Rodeo, Mareeba Multicultural Festival, the Great Northern Bullriding Series, Christmas in July celebrations, and many more events that fill up the local social calendar.

"Savannah in the Round is probably the biggest injection into the local economy, but all the events we have annually bring people into Mareeba and they spend," Mr Moro said.

"It's not only the performers, competitors and people that participate, but also people that come along just to spectate.

"Those people buy locally and they spend money on local accommodation, in the shops, bars and restaurants, fuel and much more.

"Many businesses rely on those big events that happen each year and it's all about growing the economy to support local jobs and businesses."





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# Landmark CBD plan in works

The Mareeba Central Business District is poised for a transformative “once-in-a-generation” upgrade that will shape the town’s future for decades to come

**WHAT** began as a necessary infrastructure project to address long-standing stormwater drainage issues has evolved into a visionary plan to revitalise the heart of Mareeba.

Recognising the opportunity to deliver broader benefits, Mareeba Shire Council has expanded the scope of works to include a comprehensive CBD renewal – aimed at improving functionality, aesthetics, and economic vitality.

This ambitious redevelopment will not only resolve essential infrastructure needs but also create a more vibrant, accessible, and attractive town centre that supports local businesses and enhances community pride.

The Blueprint will deliver construction-ready plans to improve liveability, accessibility, and economic resilience. It will include designs to address stormwater drainage, car parking, and accessibility for people walking and cycling, while creating an inclusive space for people of all abilities. It will also provide plans to upgrade public toilets and add new amenities like shade, seating, lighting, and features that support night-time activation and events.

Mareeba Shire Councillor and Chair of the Project Blueprint Working Group, Amy Braes said Project Blueprint was “so much more than just an infrastructure project.”

Project Blueprint will encompass Rankin

Street in the south, to Lloyd Street in the north, and also includes Byrnes Street, Walsh Street and Constance Street – the drainage footprint.

“Geographically it’s not a huge area, but from an infrastructure perspective the works are very significant,” Cr Braes said.

“It all started because the stormwater drainage in the CBD requires significant upgrades, and there will be major works over many years to achieve the goal of taking the stormwater underground.

“But if we’re digging up the CBD to achieve this, we’ve got the chance to ask the community ‘what are we going to put back down that reflects the community’s aspirations and needs moving into the future?’

“We’ve acknowledged that it is a once-in-a-generation project because an opportunity to plan and to consult in this way is very rare.

“It is an infrastructure project at its core, but we have taken it as an opportunity to consult with the community to create the Masterplan that demonstrates a vision for Mareeba’s future.”

This initiative is funded by \$2,143,249.00 from the Australian Government’s regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (rPPP). Initial consultations were held in early 2025, with 200 people attending



in-person sessions, and more than 190 surveys were returned from the community.

In November 2025, Mareeba Shire Council unveiled draft design concepts for Project Blueprint – a milestone that followed extensive community engagement and the dedicated contributions of the Mareeba Blueprint Stakeholder Reference Group.

Several community sessions were held to allow stakeholders to view the draft design concepts and provide further feedback, with more than 600 people having their say.

“By the end of 2026 we’ll have construction-ready plans, which will mean that we are ready to apply for funding from the State and Federal Government when it becomes available,” Cr Braes said.

“Project Blueprint represents a strategic step forward for Mareeba, laying the foundations for a vibrant and thriving CBD for generations to come.”

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce is also a major partner of Project Blueprint, and is integral in gathering business community input.

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# Major step in restoring Mareeba-Cairns route after years of disruption

A VITAL link in the transportation network for the Mareeba region is moving closer to being restored after several years of non-compliance, significant delays and major reconstruction works.

For almost two years the route from Mareeba to Cairns has been littered with road works, delays and an increase in road closures.

The Kuranda Range Road has remained under traffic control, with only one lane of traffic open to vehicles in various sections, since December 2023 after the road suffered significant damage during Tropical Cyclone Jasper.

Various parts of the road were completely washed away and destroyed and assessments identified "more than 30 landslips requiring critical upslope and downslope reconstruction", according to the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

SEE Civil Pty Ltd was awarded the contract for the reconstruction works, which included geotechnical solutions like soil nailing, geomesh installation, gabion baskets, as well as reshaping embankments, clearing table drains, and removing loose materials.

According to the Department of Transport and Main Roads "the majority of the works are expected to be completed by late-2026, site and weather conditions permitting".

"However, some works including repairs to the additional landslips from early 2025 may take longer due to the severity of the damage."

Another bump in the road for the Mareeba Region has been the controversial Barron Bridge at Kuranda.

The 62-year-old bridge has failed to meet compliance for many years and inspections conducted in 2020 revealed 'fatigue cracks in certain steel components of the bridge'.

According to the Department of Transport and Main Roads "these cracks are attributed to decades of exposure to heavy vehicle loads, which have significantly increased since the bridge's construction".

Thorough investigations, testing and repairs were carried out to ensure the safety of the aging bridge, and a 42.5t load limit was put in place.

Additionally, a comprehensive monitoring and testing program has been implemented to continuously assess the bridge's condition and uphold safety standards.

After a tough fight from local residents, representative groups and politicians, the Australian and Queensland Governments committed \$245 million each to the project for a new bridge to improve network reliability and safety for all road users.

With a total investment of \$490 million, pre-construction works started May 2025, with construction on the major project expected to start in 2028 and expected to be completed by 2031.

The new Barron River bridge will be built on a new alignment, downstream from the existing bridge and will include a new pathway for pedestrians, mobility device users and bike riders, separated from traffic with a barrier, wider traffic lanes to meet the latest design standards, and a turnaround facility on the Kennedy Highway.

## BRIDGE TIMELINE

**EARLY 2026:** design development begins

**2028:** construction starts

**2031:** replacement bridge opens to traffic

**2031:** existing bridge decommissioned and removed.

## Freight and travel reliability set to strengthen with Ootann Road upgrade

A VITAL transport link for growers, graziers and tourists across Mareeba and the surrounding regions has undergone an essential upgrade.

The project delivered progressive pavement widening and sealing works along key sections of Ootann Road within the Mareeba Shire Council area, significantly enhancing the route's safety, reliability and efficiency.

These improvements are set to boost freight productivity, strengthen access to major gateways, reduce congestion and deliver faster, more dependable travel for all road users.

The project commenced in July 2024 and was completed in July 2025, with the Australian Government contributing \$2.65 million and \$0.64 million contributed by Mareeba Shire Council.

In September 2025, it was announced that another 5.2km of Ootann Road would be sealed and widened after Mareeba Shire Council received a share of \$100 million for road upgrades to improve safety and protect vital transport links.

The works will include works 3.2km from the approach to Soda Creek through to Four Mile Creek, and a further 2km from Soda Creek connecting to a previously upgraded section.

Mareeba Chamber of Commerce President, Joe Moro said Ootan Road had been identified by a number of councils and mayors in the past as a "significant economic driver".

"The road is essential not only for fruit and vegetables to go to Melbourne and Adelaide, but also the cattle out of the Gulf that comes through Chillagoe to local sale yards," he said.

"The road is also an important road to provide a resilience when we have major flooding events where other roads get cut off."

"Sometimes both the inland and Bruce Highway can get cut off, but they do alternate and that helps move produce and food goods and all the necessities of life."

"(Ootann Road) has a two-way function – one is to bring stuff in when we're stuck during weather events, but it can also help keep costs down for freight movement for a lot of the products that come out of the Mareeba Shire and the whole area."

"Tourists use these roads as well, so the more tourist options that people have the more people can move around."



## A Growing, Confident, Sustainable Shire.

### SHIRE SNAPSHOT

Located in the stunning tropical north of Australia, Mareeba Shire is in proximity to two World Heritage Areas, the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics.

Within one hour's drive to Cairns and stretching across the base of Cape York, Mareeba Shire comprises of rural and remote agricultural communities, high cultural diversity and world class tourism destinations.

At the centre of the region is the township of Mareeba, a busy town with a population of just under 12,000 in the district (ABS 2021 Census), which acts as a vital services and transport hub for Northern Australia.



**Gross Regional Product**  
**\$1.42 billion**  
Year Ending 30/06/24  
NIEIR 2024

**Population**  
**24,003**  
ABS ERP 2024

**Local Businesses**  
**2,242**  
ABS 2024

**Employed Residents**  
**9,255**  
NIEIR 2024

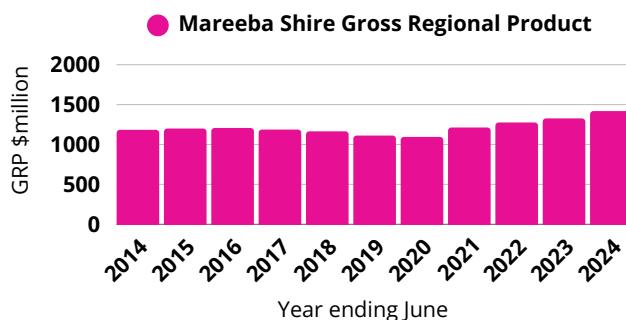
**Largest Industry**  
**Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing**  
NIEIR 2024

### THRIVING INDUSTRY

Council is committed to creating conditions to attract investment and facilitate economic growth and the Shire has continued to keep pace with the Queensland average for population growth. Mareeba is the largest town outside of Cairns in Far North Queensland, acting as a vital transport and services hub for Northern Australia, including Cape York Peninsula and Gulf of Carpentaria areas.

The opportunities for workforce growth, innovation and diversity abound in the Shire. The Shire's Gross Regional Product was \$1.42 billion in the year ending June 2024, growing 6.9% since the previous year.

In Mareeba Shire, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the most productive industry, generating an output of \$756 million in 2023/24, an increase of 5.5% since the previous year. The industry had the largest number of total registered businesses in Mareeba Shire, comprising 29% of all total registered businesses, compared to 8% in Queensland. The industry is also the Shire's largest employer, generating 1,419 jobs in 2023/24. The diversity of the Shire which has access to reliable water, enables a wide range of high-quality produce to be farmed year-round.



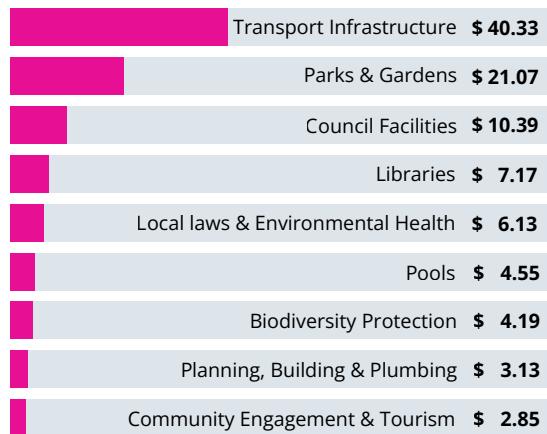
Source: NIEIR 2025 Compiled and presented in economy.id

### COUNCIL'S BUDGET SNAPSHOT

**\$58.5M**  
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET

**\$25.7M**  
TOTAL CAPITAL BUDGET

### HOW EVERY \$100 IN GENERAL RATES IS SPENT



### Median Weekly RENT

Mareeba \$285  
Queensland \$365  
Australia \$375

### Median Monthly Mortgage REPAYMENTS

Mareeba \$1,495  
Queensland \$1,733  
Australia \$1,863

### Building Approvals

Value of residential approvals  
Value of non-residential approvals  
Total building approvals

### Development Approvals

Dwellings approved  
Planning development applications

A strong sign of confidence is gauged by the value of building approvals within the Shire and in 2024/25 the total value of both residential and non-residential approvals reached over \$72.3 million.

# Shaping the Heart of Mareeba: The CBD Blueprint



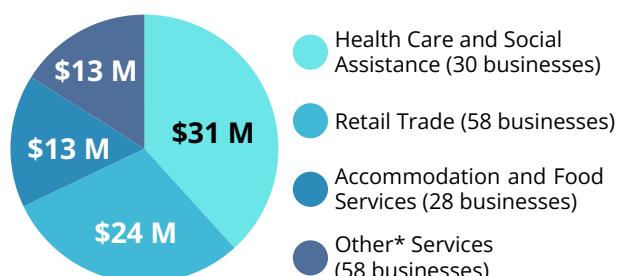
Mareeba Shire Council, in partnership with the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce, is excited to announce the development of the Mareeba CBD Blueprint, a shared vision to revitalise our town centre and strengthen its role as the vibrant heart of the region.

The Blueprint will deliver construction ready plans to improve liveability, accessibility, and economic resilience. It will include designs to address stormwater drainage, carparking, and accessibility for people walking and cycling, while creating an inclusive space for people of all abilities. It will also provide plans for new public toilets and add new amenities like shade, seating, lighting, and features that support night-time activation and events. This project builds on the extensive community engagement held between June and September 2025, where locals voiced a strong desire for a greener, safer, and more welcoming town centre.

The Blueprint is a major step toward unlocking funding and investment for future stages of design and construction. It aims to deliver not just infrastructure renewal, but a vibrant and connected "heart of town" that reflects Mareeba's unique character and multicultural heritage. The Blueprint is designed to enable infrastructure upgrades and revitalisation initiatives to be delivered progressively over time.

The Blueprint initiatives are expected to drive economic growth, attract new businesses, and support the expansion of existing ones. As of October 2025, Council reported 174 businesses operating in the Mareeba CBD, generating an estimated \$81.9 million in value during 2023/24. Mareeba's CBD businesses operate across a range of industry sectors, primarily retail trade, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services.

## Estimated \$ Value Added by Mareeba CBD Businesses



Source: Base data from National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2025; A.P. SHEERE CONSULTING

\* Other Services include Finance and Insurance, Arts and Recreation, Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services and Information Media and Telecommunications.

The Mareeba CBD plays an important role in the region's economy, contributing around 7.23% of Mareeba Shire's total Value Added (economic productivity).

The Mareeba CBD upgrades are expected to lead to a progressive uplift in economic activity over time. Additionally, construction activity will bring a short-term boost in local jobs and spending.

- **Retail turnover / revenue: +5% to +20%**
- **Foot traffic: +10% to +30%**
- **Property values / rental rates: +2% to +10%**

The Mareeba CBD Blueprint positions Council to secure funding for future construction stages and deliver lasting improvements to our town centre.

This initiative is funded by \$2,143,249.00 from the Australian Government's regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (rPPP).



## mareeba & communities family healthcare

Mareeba & Mutchilba Medical Clinics | Black Cockatoo Foundation | Mareeba Health Workforce Alliance

# COMMUNITY NEEDS AT FOREFRONT

**Mareeba & Communities Family Healthcare (MCFHC)** is a **community-led social enterprise** run by a community Board of Directors with the aim of providing accessible, quality healthcare services to Mareeba Shire communities. Since purchasing the Mareeba Medical Clinic in 2021, MCFHC has continued to grow and deliver general practice services through the Mareeba and Mutchilba Medical Clinics.

In 2024, MCFHC took another major step forward by partnering with the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) to secure funding under the Commonwealth's Innovative Models of Care (IMOC) Program. This led to the launch of the Primary care Rural Integrated Multidisciplinary Health Service (PRIM-HS) trial, a ground-breaking trial focused on collaborative, cross-sectoral care. The trial unites general practice, mental health and allied health services while engaging with other community sectors. It aims to boost rural health workforce retention while improving patient outcomes through integrated, coordinated care.

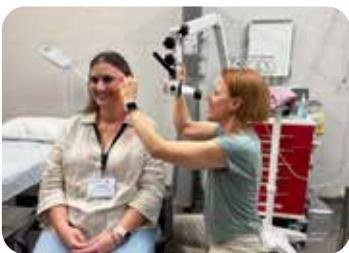
The NRHA's *Forgotten Health Spend* Report tracked government health, disability, and aged care expenditure across metropolitan and rural Australia and found that rural Australians receive, on average, \$1,073 less in healthcare spending per person each year – bringing the issue of access into sharp focus.

MCFHC is actively working with the communities surrounding Mareeba to understand their healthcare needs through dedicated 'Community Voices Consultations' across the Shire, and has established the Mareeba Health Workforce Alliance to strengthen collaboration.

The Black Cockatoo Foundation is also delivering initiatives to enhance the mental wellbeing of residents, including the new Mareeba Parkrun, the creation of the Mareeba Mental Health Champions Network, and early fundraising activities.

MCFHC is demonstrating what is possible when rural communities are empowered to challenge systems that are not working, and given the flexibility to innovate and shape health systems which are reflective of need.

### Mareeba & Mutchilba Medical Clinics



Workforce development in action: Dr Sabine sharing knowledge with GROW Rural medical student.

**Providing** accessible, high-quality primary care across two locations, with a growing multidisciplinary team, including GPs, nurses and allied health, to meet community needs in Mareeba, Mutchilba and Dimbulah.

### Black Cockatoo Foundation



Dad's Army Great Wheelbarrow Race Team: proud supporters of the Black Cockatoo Foundation.

**Building** community wellbeing through initiatives like Parkrun Mareeba, the Mental Health Champions Network, and local fundraising efforts.

### Mareeba Health Workforce Alliance



Susi Tegen, CE of the NRHA, and Ross Cardillo, Board Chair MCFHC, at Parliament House, Canberra.

**Uniting and advocating** for health providers, training bodies, and community to address workforce shortages and grow a vibrant rural health workforce.

Connect with us | Learn more | Get involved

Phone: 07 4092 2877 | Visit: 2 Lloyd Street, Mareeba

Online: [www.mcfhealth.com.au](http://www.mcfhealth.com.au) | Follow us on Facebook

The PRIM-HS Mareeba Community Primary Care Trial is supported through the IMOC Program, funded by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.



# ADVENTURE STARTS HERE



WATCH HERE!

# DESTINATION DAVIES

## Showcasing Mareeba's mountain biking potential

**MAREEBA'S** reputation as an outdoor playground is gaining new momentum with the launch of Destination Davies, a dynamic promotional video created by the Mountain Goats Mountain Bike Club to highlight the Davies Creek Mountain Bike Park and position the region as a premier adventure destination.

Launched on Sunday, 16 November on the Flow MTB homepage, the video marks an exciting milestone for both the club and the wider Mareeba community. It showcases the variety of riding experiences the region offers.

"We wanted to show that Mareeba has multiple places to ride and a real diversity of experiences," Treasurer Rudi De Faveri explains.

For Mountain Goats President Steven Soda, the project is the culmination of years of vision and planning.

"We always knew the potential of the Mareeba and Davies Creek area to be a truly unique and spectacular location for people to enjoy the outdoors," he says.

"But it can be difficult for non-outdoor enthusiasts to see that vision in a PowerPoint. That's where the Destination Davies video came to life."

Partnering with Flow MTB, the club set out to visually capture what makes

Mareeba ideal for riding: a reliable climate, low rainfall, resilient soils, and easy access to Cairns' domestic and international airport. Combined with the shire's cultural and visitor experiences, these advantages help set Mareeba apart in Queensland's growing mountain biking landscape.

Since its establishment in 2010, the Mountain Goats have advocated for safe, off-road recreation and now maintain two key trail networks: Davies Creek Mountain Bike Park and the Skills Park near Hales Street.

The economic benefits of growing mountain bike tourism are significant with rising visitor numbers, extended overnight stays, and increased spending at local businesses. The club also collaborates with several local partners, including Bendigo Bank, Mount Emerald Wind Farm, Trail Algebra, Mareeba Toyota and Hansen Ford, Soncin Electrical, and RTS Concreting.

Looking ahead, the club will reintroduce its signature 100km event in June 2026, offering riders a range of distances and formats. The event will help fund the establishment of the club's Trail Maintenance Fund, supporting long-term trail sustainability across the region.



# Chamber leads the way in advocating for safety, growth and support

As a strong and proactive voice for the local business community, the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to representing the interests of its members in meaningful and effective ways.

Whether advocating for a reliable, safe and efficient transport network, pushing for the removal of dangerous saltwater crocodiles from public waterways, or supporting businesses through grant applications, the Chamber remains front and centre on the issues that matter most.

"The aim of the Chamber is to improve the economic environment for businesses in the Mareeba and surrounding Shire," passionate local business owner, farmer and President of the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce, Joe Moro said.

"We take on advocacy roles as well with all levels of Government to try to deliver projects for the business members of the chamber.

"The general feedback that we are getting is that people are doing well. I'm sure there are some businesses that may be struggling, but overall, the general mood is positive.

"I think with the new (LNP State) Government dealing with certain issues, the return of the Member for Cook's office to Mareeba, dealing with crime has been an improvement under the new Government. I think that's flowed through with the businesses feeling a bit more confident."

Mr Moro said currently the Chamber was working with Mareeba Shire Council on Project Blueprint.

The major redevelopment project will not only resolve essential infrastructure needs in the CBD, but also create a more vibrant, accessible, and attractive town centre that supports local businesses and enhances community pride.

Project Blueprint will consist of construction ready designs and plans, including upgrades to carparking, accessibility for people walking and cycling, public toilets and amenities, shade, seating, lighting, outdoor dining, night-time activation, and much more.

"While it's about the beautification of the CBD and improved drainage, we see Project Blueprint as an important project and we want to make sure that it leads to

“The aim of the Chamber is to improve the economic environment for businesses in Mareeba and surrounding Shire



good outcomes for businesses for decades to come," Mr Moro said.

"It's a 30-year plan, but it's important to have shovel-ready plans in place for when funding becomes available."

Mr Moro said the Chamber was also working with organisation, Mareeba Shire Tourism.

Initiated from a partnership between Mareeba Chamber of Commerce and Mareeba Shire Council, the organisation is now independent and aims at highlighting the vast array of attractions in the area.

Some of which include, coffee, wine, food, wildlife, museums, interactive farm-stays, camp grounds, holiday parks and much more.

"There are some activities that we will help them with in promoting the Mareeba shire overall," Mr Moro said.

"Every tourist that stops in the CBD hopefully spends some money in one of the shops, if not multiple in the Mareeba area."

In a further move to support business and help local dollars stay local, the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce has launched 'Shop Local' gift cards.

The cards work like traditional gift cards, but are specifically for businesses in the Mareeba area.

"It's picking up momentum and it's all about getting people to support businesses in the CBD and across the Mareeba township," Mr Moro said.

"We think it's a great initiative, especially around Christmas or to give to employees as a gift and it keeps money local."

"Every dollar spent locally is money that goes into employing people and it certainly makes the economy a bit stronger."

There are many places to purchase the cards and many businesses have come on board to support the initiative. A full list is available on the Chamber website.

To keep up to date with the Mareeba Chamber of Commerce, visit [www.mareebachamber.com.au](http://www.mareebachamber.com.au)



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# Field Days highlight Ag & Innovation

THE FNQ Rotary Field Days returned this year with renewed energy, and a new highlight – the Ag & Innovation area. The initiative celebrated technology, sustainability, and collaboration, reinforcing the critical role agriculture plays in Mareeba Shire's economy and community.

"This was a great opportunity for us to connect with members in a casual setting and discuss issues relevant to Mareeba locals," said Trevor Dunmall, CEO of Australian Mangoes.

"It was also fantastic to see so many other peak industry body groups present, allowing us to engage with a broader network all in the one place."

Rabobank was a key partner in the Ag & Innovation section, contributing its RaboTruck to connect with farmers and share knowledge on emerging technologies, practices, and market insights.

"As part of the FNQ Field Days & Ag & Innovation display, Rabobank contributed its RaboTruck to the Ag & Innovation section, aiming to connect with farmers and share knowledge on emerging technologies, practices, and market insights. The event aligned with Rabobank's mission to foster collaboration across the agri-food supply chain and promote long-term resilience in rural communities," said Clare Weiss from Rabobank Atherton.

Rabobank's involvement highlighted the importance of agriculture in Mareeba.

"Rabobank was founded by farmers, for farmers, and our local team is proud to be on the ground in Mareeba, working closely with clients to help them achieve their goals. As one of Australia's key fruit-producing regions, Mareeba plays a vital role in the country's agricultural landscape. Rabobank recognises this significance and actively supports local producers through tailored financial solutions, sustainability initiatives, and knowledge-sharing platforms," Clare said.

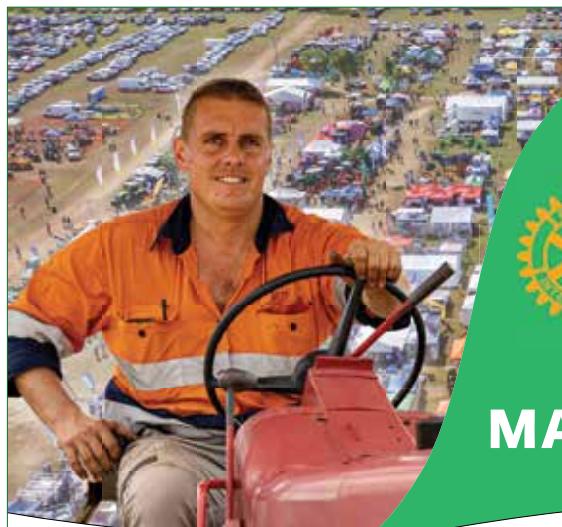
"The RaboTruck, a knowledge sharing vehicle, served as a hub for community engagement and education, offering a mobile space for presentations and discussions. A standout session was delivered by Stefan Vogel, Head of RaboResearch Australia & New Zealand, who presented on Agri Commodities, providing valuable insights into global market trends and their implications for local producers. A breakfast was held for Rabobank Clients on the Thursday with key presentations which provided exclusive insights and value for our valued clients," Clare added.

Joe Moro, Chair of FNQ Growers, said the initiative demonstrated the region's growing influence.

"The fact that we could attract so many peak bodies and the NFF, QFF, Canegrowers, and AgForce senior leadership team to Mareeba on the same day was a milestone. It shows the importance of our region as Australia's third-largest food bowl. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees on our bus tours, and the QFF breakfast sold out, even drawing two ministers."

The success of the Ag & Innovation initiative demonstrates the sophistication and resilience of Mareeba Shire's agricultural sector.

By bringing together growers, industry leaders, financial partners like Rabobank, and technology experts, this new addition to the Field Days not only showcased production strength but also highlighted the importance of collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and forward-looking innovation.



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# HORTICULTURE

## A pillar of the regional economy

**HORTICULTURE** has long been at the heart of Mareeba Shire, shaping the region's economy, communities, and way of life.

Generations of growers have cultivated tropical and subtropical crops, sustaining local businesses, providing employment, and supporting families across the Tablelands. From bananas and citrus to papaya and avocados, horticulture has been more than just an industry - it has been a backbone of the Shire, driving growth and opportunity across the region.

**New data from the 2024 Mareeba & Atherton Tablelands Horticulture Profile reinforces this enduring significance. The total Gross Value of Production (GVP) has reached \$748 million – a remarkable 42% increase since 2019.**

This growth reflects a mix of maturing orchards, new plantings, and strong market demand for a diverse range of crops. Citrus has experienced particularly strong gains, with lemons and mandarins increasing in value by 200% over the past five years as high-yield plantings come into maturity. Bananas, table grapes, and papaya have also seen notable growth, demonstrating the region's diverse and resilient horticultural output.

Not every sector has shared equally in this growth. The avocado industry tells a more complex story. While total hectares have doubled over the past five years, market prices have halved, resulting in a net decline of \$25 million in GVP. Cyclone Jasper's wet conditions contributed to the loss of some older trees, though most young orchards remained largely unaffected.

Geoff Dickinson from the Department of Primary Industries explains, "Most of the trees that died were older, and only in rare cases were young orchards severely impacted. With many orchards now entering peak production between five and ten years old, overall volumes are expected to remain stable. Pricing and export opportunities will be key factors shaping the future of the avocado industry."

While these figures highlight strong production values, they do not necessarily reflect farm profitability. Rising input costs, regulatory compliance, and supermarket price pressures continue to challenge growers.

Ebony Faichney from Farmour, notes,

"These figures can easily be mistaken for rising farmer profits, which is not always the case. Our growers face a mountain of challenges from rising input costs and excessive red tape to price pressures from supermarkets. Just because the GVP or price at the checkout has risen doesn't mean farmers are getting more for their produce."

Despite these pressures, horticulture continues to sustain jobs, support families, and underpin the wider economy across the region.

The 2024 report confirms what generations of farmers have long known: horticulture remains a vital economic engine for Mareeba Shire.

With a combination of established orchards, emerging crops, and ongoing innovation, the region's horticultural sector continues to demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and growth, ensuring it will remain central to the Shire's economic and community wellbeing for years to come.

### GROSS VALUE OF PRODUCTION OF MAREEBA AND ATHERTON TABLELANDS HORTICULTURE INDUSTRIES – 2024 (Queensland Government, 2024).

Horticultural Commodity	Grower No.	Area (ha)	Volume sold (T)	Industry Gross Value (\$)
Australian Natives <sup>A</sup>	11	264	304	10,551,900
Avocado	85	5047	38335	150,774,542
Banana	29	2017	61292	169,377,210
Basil	<5	12	5	543,750
Berries	6	195	1665	47,645,236
Blueberry	<5	194	1628	47,212,000
Other	<5	1	37	433,236
Citrus	104	1656	47166	169,615,640
Grapefruit	6	53	1060	1,590,000
Lime	92	826	16520	49,560,000
Lemon	34	402	16080	51,456,000
Mandarin	6	324	11546	63,505,640
Orange	<5	8	240	408,000
Pummelo	12	43	1720	3,096,000
Coffee	8	300	356	4,977,000
Custard Apple	6	14	213	1,384,500
Longan	12	250	1250	7,500,000
Lychee	40	350	745	11,175,000
Mango	60	2900	11613	53,982,493
Melons <sup>B</sup>	10	42	1667	1,417,382
Mixed fruit – other <sup>C</sup>	17	19	351	2,530,000
Mixed vegetable – other <sup>D</sup>	36	45	889	4,454,000
Papaya	8	325	12673	40,202,701
Red	5	290	10873	35,632,564
Yellow	<5	35	1800	4,570,137
Passionfruit	18	40	600	3,214,286
Pineapple	<5	150	2800	3,360,000
Potatoes	21	447	26129	15,425,300
Potato	18	436	25779	14,575,300
Sweet Potato	<5	11	350	\$850,000
Pumpkin	24	250	8600	5,480,000
Table Grape	<5	397	4446	44,464,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>748,074,941</b>

<sup>A</sup>Gross Value of Production: Value of production figures are based on wholesale prices at Brisbane Markets for the previous 12-18 months, multiple industry, government and grower sources and should be recognised as best estimates only.

<sup>B</sup>A: including finger lime, lemon myrtle, macadamia and tea tree.

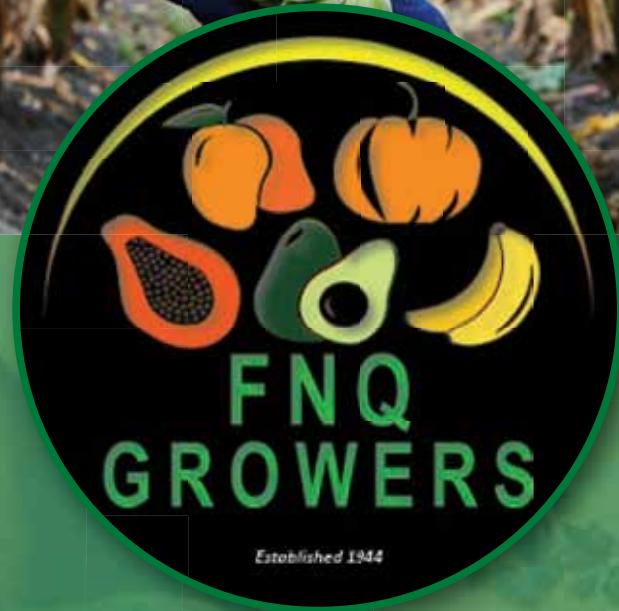
<sup>B</sup>B: including rockmelon and watermelon.

<sup>C</sup>C: including carambola, dragon fruit, jackfruit, persimmon, pomegranate, soursop, star apple, stonefruit.

<sup>D</sup>D: including Asian greens, broccoli, capsicum, eggplant, garlic, ginger, other herbs, hydroponics, lettuce, mushrooms, spinach, tomato, zucchini.

Full report available online at [www.farmour.com.au](http://www.farmour.com.au)





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# Broadacre agriculture takes centre stage at growers awards

For the first time, the FNQ Growers Charlie Nastasi Farmer of the Year has come not from horticulture, but from the district's thriving cropping and cane industries. Local grower Jason Salvetti has been recognised for his leadership, innovation, and commitment to advancing Mareeba's broadacre sector, a sign of how vital cropping, sugarcane and now the emerging cotton industry, have become to the region's agricultural mix

**JASON** works in the family-run operation which spans sugarcane, cotton, soybeans, and rotational grains, a diversity that reflects the modern face of agriculture in Mareeba.

"Winning the award means a lot," he said. "It makes me realise I'm on the right track in my farm business, and I'm proud to be a leader for agriculture in our region. It also shows how important it is to diversify and not focus on just one area."

This philosophy of diversity and innovation underpins Jason's approach to farming. His business is focused on integrating new technology to improve efficiency, overcome labour shortages, and manage seasonal variability.

"We're always looking at how technology can make life easier and turn weather variability into more reliable yields," he said.

"Right now, we're just finishing the cane harvest. It's been an average year, better than last year's below-average season after Cyclone Jasper. Next, we'll move into planting our summer crops - soybeans and cotton."

Jason sees great value in cotton as part of a rotational farming system. "I like cotton as a rotation with cane. It improves weed control, gives us a productive fallow crop, and helps spread financial risk," he explained.

"Markets are driving cotton expansion across northern Australia and in Mareeba, we've got the climate and skills to make it work."

Most of Mareeba's cotton is exported to China and Southeast Asia, while soybeans are sold domestically for cattle feed or seed stock. Wheat, grown as part of his rotation, is supplied locally for chicken feed.

"There's a strong local network around us; mechanics, transporters, equipment suppliers are all part of that local value chain," Jason said.

"It's great to grow crops we can sell locally and support other local



Jason Salvetti, Lucy Nastasi and FNQ Growers Joe Moro.

businesses at the same time."

As President of the FNQ Sustainable Cropping Group, Jason also plays a key role in supporting industry growth. The group was established as cotton emerged in the region, providing a platform for growers to share knowledge, adopt best practices, and advocate for a sustainable, profitable broadacre industry.

While markets and weather can be unpredictable, Jason remains optimistic about the future of agriculture in the north.

"We need to build a cotton industry that's profitable and sustainable, that will attract more growers and eventually a local gin," he said.

"The best thing about agriculture up here is that diversity is our strength. Different farmers grow different crops, and there's always one or two commodities doing well, which helps support the wider community."

He added a reminder for the broader community: "Farmers need your support. There's a lot of noise out there, but local people should know that farmers are doing the best they can, because they love their land and want to keep farming it well and profitably".

Together, cane, cropping and cotton account for a major share of Mareeba's farm production, sustaining local employment and fuelling the Shire's economic growth.

# Mareeba Industrial Park powers ahead

MAREEBA Industrial Park is rapidly emerging as one of North Queensland's most attractive business and investment destinations, with strong land sales, rising demand, and new development plans shaping a positive outlook for 2025 and beyond.

All lots in the current stage have now been sold, underscoring the park's appeal to a wide range of industries. A new masterplan for the next phase of development is already underway, with Mareeba Property Office appointed as the dedicated sales agent following a successful tender process.

According to Mareeba Shire Council, the park continues to be a cornerstone of the region's economic development strategy.

The site already hosts a diverse mix of transport and logistics operators, manufacturers, and service providers including electrical, mechanical, and fabrication businesses, reflecting Mareeba's growing industrial capability and strategic location advantage.

"Mareeba Industrial Park has seen strong interest through 2025, and all current lots are now sold," said Damon Falvo, Residential & Rural Sales Agent from Mareeba Property Office.

"Prices per square metre are rising, and we're seeing solid demand from both local businesses and out-of-town investors. The park is well positioned for anyone doing business across northern Australia."

Falvo said planning for the next development stage is progressing, with plans expected to be available to interested parties by early 2026.

"We're hopeful to see lots developed and titled within that year," he added.

"The continued growth of the park reflects the strength of the Mareeba region as a place to live, work, and do business. There's a real trend of people and enterprises moving up the hill for its affordability, climate, and connectivity."

Mareeba Industrial Park offers investors and operators an abundant supply of relatively inexpensive, appropriately zoned industrial land, with more than 180 hectares to be progressively developed over the next 30 years. The precinct provides underground power, water, sewerage, and telecommunications to each lot, as well as a secure potable water supply and sealed all-weather road access.

Located close to major road transport routes, fuel depots, and the Mareeba Airport, the park's position makes it an ideal base for manufacturing, logistics, and regional services. It is also one of the few industrial precincts in North Queensland able to accommodate all types of industrial activity, from light industry to heavy manufacturing.

Business owners can invest with confidence, knowing that Mareeba Industrial Park offers the infrastructure, utilities, and resources needed to support future growth and expansion.

With all lots in the current stage now sold and planning progressing for the next release, Mareeba Industrial Park remains a significant driver of the shire's industrial development.

**"The continued growth of the park reflects the strength of the Mareeba region as a place to live, work, and do business."**



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# Strong markets and good seasons strengthening cattle industry

**“Mareeba has become the service and rural supplier centre for the Gulf and Peninsula that underpins our viability”**

**MAREEBA’S** cattle industry continues to perform strongly, underpinned by favourable seasonal conditions, high global demand for Australian beef, and growing confidence across the sector.

Local grazier Alan Pedersen of Karma Waters Station says 2025 has been a good year, both seasonally and financially.

“2025 has been good with demand for Australian beef at an all-time high,” Mr Pedersen said.

“The demand for heavier meatworks type cattle has been strong this year compared to lighter store cattle. The record amounts of Australian beef going into the US is driving this. As we have always bred and fattened bullocks for the processor market, we were in a good position to capitalise on the strong demand. The 10% tariff imposed by the US has only accelerated the demand for Australian beef”, he said.

Cattle agent Bram Pollock of Prophurst describes both cattle and rural property markets as buoyant, with strong buyer confidence across northern and western Queensland.

“The market is currently strong for cattle, and property prices are buoyant, particularly in western QLD,” Mr Pollock said.

“The cattle market outlook is very good. Graziers’ hopes are up with cattle and property making good money. However transport, energy and diesel costs keep going up. The last two years seasons were good, and this coming season is also looking good with early storms in the west already.”

Mr Pollock says Mareeba’s saleyards play a crucial logistical role as a “funnel” for cattle moving south from Cape York and the Peninsula. “After coming from Coen or Laura the stock need a rest,” he said. “It’s a terrific centre, a really well-run facility.”

However, he noted that limited road train access remains a

challenge, adding cost pressures to transport and logistics.

“It gets expensive running B-doubles or shunting trucks around the place,” Mr Pollock said.

“But overall, the Mareeba Saleyards is a really good all-round show with good people.”

Mr Pedersen says Mareeba’s position as a service and supply centre for the Gulf and Peninsula underpins the strength of the industry.

“Mareeba has become the service and rural supplier centre for the Gulf and Peninsula that underpins our viability,” he said.

“Mareeba Shire Council keeps our rates to a minimum and maintains our massive road network in the western part of the shire, allowing road train access to our southern markets. Mareeba Shire’s climate and rainfall averages are far more consistent than most areas in Australia. The local industry is quite diverse, supplying meatworks in Townsville and Mackay, southern feedlots, western fattening properties, live exports and the Mareeba Saleyards. I believe we have a strong future.”

For Mareeba, the strength of the cattle sector flows through the broader economy, supporting transport operators, fuel and feed suppliers, rural merchandise businesses and local services.

“Every box of beef that leaves our shores is traceable back to the property of origin,” Mr Pedersen said.

“Australian beef has some of the highest biosecurity and animal welfare standards in the world making it one of the most trusted food products in the world.”

With reliable seasons, sound infrastructure and a strong network of producers and agents locally and to the north and west, Mareeba’s cattle industry continues to be an important part of the region’s economy and long-term growth.

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# “WE OPENED A BANK TO HELP A COMMUNITY GROW

## 20 YEARS OF GIVING BACK – A local bank that belongs to the community

When Mareeba and Dimbulah Community Bank branches of Bendigo Bank first opened its doors in 2005, it set out to be more than just a financial institution.

From the very beginning, the bank's vision was clear: to serve, support, and grow alongside the communities it calls home.

Two decades later, that vision hasn't changed. In fact, it has only grown stronger – the bank was built by the community and continues to help grow the community.

**INVESTING IN PEOPLE**  
At the heart of your local Bendigo Bank success is its commitment to people. Over the past 20 years, the bank has proudly reinvested in the region by supporting youth, not-for-profit organisations,

local events that boost the region, scholarships, backing sporting clubs and so much more.

## A CULTURE OF GIVING BACK

Our team are always out in the community ready to lend a hand when and where it's needed most. Our team are locals, many who were born and raised in the region and are engrained in the local community.

**LOOKING AHEAD**  
As the bank celebrates its 20th anniversary, the focus remains firmly on the future. The next chapter will bring new opportunities to give back and it thanks to the people who support us, so we can continue to give back.

Twenty years on, one thing is certain: Mareeba and Dimbulah Community Bank branches of Bendigo Bank isn't just in the community – it is part of the community.



# Mareeba Airport takes flight as a regional aviation hub

**EVOLVING** from a local aerodrome into an expanding aviation hub, the Tom Gilmore Mareeba Aviation Industrial Precinct is establishing a significant presence within the industry.

Located approximately 22 nautical miles (10-15 minutes flying time) west of Cairns Airport, the facility supports about 1,000 aircraft movements each month, with training flights accounting for roughly half of all landings.

A \$23 million redevelopment completed in 2019 established a strong foundation for growth, and the past year has seen continued progress as more businesses and investors recognise the airport's potential.

Over the past 12 months, demand for airport lease-lots has accelerated, with only two recreational sites remaining and several new commercial hangar leases now underway.

A new refuelling facility in the western precinct, complementing the existing eastern service, has been a significant addition, enhancing convenience for operators and helping drive a rise in enquiries from prospective tenants and aviation businesses.

Mareeba Airport today offers a strong platform for aviation activity and investment, with modern facilities supporting a broad mix of users from flight training and aircraft maintenance to agricultural, charter, and logistics operations. Its infrastructure includes sealed runways, full lighting for night operations, and dual refuelling points across the precinct, providing year-round reliability and efficiency.

Strategically positioned just outside controlled airspace yet only a short flight from Cairns, the airport's inland location delivers excellent flying conditions and easy access for both recreational and commercial aviation. The precinct also plays a vital role in regional resilience, supporting mining, agricultural, and emergency response operations as an alternate landing and supply hub when needed.

A cornerstone of the airport community is the North Queensland Aero Club (NQAC), which continues to expand its presence in Mareeba. With a 76-year history in Far North Queensland, the Club welcomed two new flight instructors to Mareeba this year and continues to draw students nationwide.

“Mareeba is the perfect training location,” says Jake Western, President of NQ Aero Club.

“There's enough traffic to keep students alert, but still plenty of airspace to train efficiently. We can do 10 or 11 circuits an hour, and students are flying solo after just 10-15 hours. It's a great environment with a strong sense of community.”

Western also operates Aircraft Maintenance Australia, employing six staff locally to service general aviation aircraft.

“The taxiways and lighting improvements have made a huge difference,” he says. “The flexibility, the facilities, and the supportive atmosphere make Mareeba a great place to do business.”

With near-full occupancy and growing investor confidence, Mareeba Airport is poised for an exciting future. As demand for aviation services, training, and logistics continues to rise, the airport will remain an important part of the Shire's economic fabric for years to come.

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# NEW LAND

## opportunities emerging

LAND development in Mareeba is experiencing a period of remarkable growth and transformation.

The region has seen a significant increase in the number of new residential and commercial allotments, creating fresh opportunities for both local residents and newcomers seeking to settle in the area.

This surge in development reflects Mareeba's growing appeal as a vibrant and accessible regional hub, supported by expanding infrastructure, lifestyle advantages, and investment potential.

Amaroo Estate continues to be a leader in local land development, with stage 14A Karobean Drive and Allambee Close set to begin earthworks in early November 2025.

Established in 2006 by a local family, interest for blocks at the highly popular family friendly residential estate flood in before works even begin.

With an average block size of 1100sqm, Developer Josh Musumeci said a further almost 60 lots would be released in the coming years as part of stages 14B, 15 and 16, which had been approved by Mareeba Shire Council.

"Every stage has sold out as we've released them and we've got a lot of interest and enquires in the next coming stages so we're trying to get it out as quick as we can," Mr Musumeci said.

"Every stage is a little bit different in terms of who is buying in Amaroo, but in the last two stages, about half have been local owner occupiers from around our region, with the balance being interstate investors and relocating owner occupiers.

"It feels very rewarding for our family to have contributed to the growth of the town that we care so much about."

Mr Musumeci said he was proud to see his family's vision for Amaroo Estate and surrounding development come to life after many years of hard work.

"A highlight for our family, after more than 15 years of advocacy, was the completion of Stage 1 of the Mareeba

East Destination Park (Amaroo Park) located at the corner of Karobean Drive and Hastie Road, which features a new playground and picnic area," he said.

"In 2023, a masterplan was created after consultation with the Amaroo Estate residents and major stakeholders including Mareeba Shire Council and the developers.

"We are looking forward the Council fulfilling their commitment to completing all planned stages of the Park in a timely manner for the benefit of the community as a whole."

Plans are now in place to add a café, office spaces, and shops, with Council approvals complete and expressions of interest open to the public.

"We've got approximately 1300sqm of commercial space designed, approved and ready to build, and we are in the process of securing tenants to go ahead with the builds," Mr Musumeci said.

Mr Musumeci also said the Eastern Corridor will continue to grow, with submissions for a further 96 lots at The Rise Country Estate having been made to Council, featuring acreage blocks off Catherine Atherton Dr, Mareeba.

More new lots for residential housing are also being developed at the thriving Edge Estate. Developer Sibi Girgenti Holdings Pty Ltd is moving ahead with Stage 2, and developer NQ Farming Pty Ltd is also making moves in the estate.

In early 2025, Mareeba Shire Council has also approved an extension of the Wylandra Estate, which would see an additional 14 rural residential lots come to market.

Several other development applications have also been made to Council, some of which include 19 lots at Highland Estate Stages 5-6 (Ray Road and Cater Road, Mareeba), the development of a further 12 lots at McGrath Road Mareeba, and an additional 38 lots as part of the next Stages within the Country Road Rural Residential Estate.

## Mareeba property market on the rise as demand continues to grow

WITH its idyllic climate, strong sense of community, and convenient proximity to an international airport, the Mareeba region is attracting a growing number of families, retirees, and working professionals seeking a balanced lifestyle.

Reflecting this surge in demand, RealEstate.com reports that the median house price in Mareeba has risen by 3.5 per cent in the 12 months to September 2025.

Even more striking is the growth in the unit market, which has seen a 32.7 per cent increase from October 2024 to September 2025, bringing the median unit price to \$347,000, up from \$261,500 the year prior.

"In (September 2025) Mareeba had 10 properties available for rent and 75 properties for sale," according to RealEstate.com reports.

"Median property prices over the last year range from \$487,500 for houses to \$347,000 for units.

"If you are looking for an investment property, consider houses in Mareeba rent out for \$450 PW with an annual rental yield of 5.1 per cent and units rent for \$330 PW with a rental yield of 6.8 per cent.

"Mareeba has seen an annual compound growth rate of 3.5 per cent for houses and 32.7 per cent for units."

Reflecting on the past 12 months, Real Estate Agent Katrina Kazim said the Far North market had "definitely gotten stronger, it's a lot more heated and competitive".

With more than 16 years of experience in the Queensland property industry, she said it was reassuring to see people make the move to regional areas such as Mareeba.

"Prices have increased significantly and the 'days on market' are shorter," Ms Kazim said.

"We're seeing a lot more interstate investors, Cairns buyers and new families coming to the area.

"There are also a number of retirees, people looking to downsize, and also a lot of working professionals that work from home part of the week and don't want to live in Legoland in Cairns.

"The vacancy rates for rentals in Mareeba have been consistently less than 1 per cent ... since September 2023."

Ms Kazim said Mareeba's location and regional town atmosphere, was one of the biggest drawcards for people making the move to the region.

"They're relocating (to Mareeba) because of the proximity to an International Airport, the favourable climate and we've still got a median house price under \$500,000," she said.

"The southern corridor of Cairns is where investors were focusing more, but now they're focusing further North based on the fact that there's too much competition in the Cairns market."

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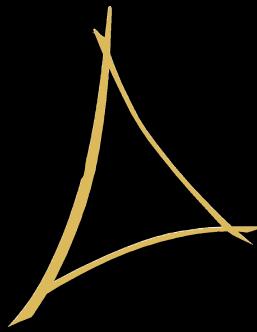
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2025

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Kelly Hodgkinson  
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# Mareeba

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#### EDUCATION

Public and private primary and high schools, several day care centres and only 50 minutes from universities



#### GROWTH

Mareeba is the second largest urban centre in FNQ outside Cairns



#### LOCATION

It's perfect. A short 50 minute drive to Cairns and international airport



**POPULATION**  
11,825 people call Mareeba home

