

The State of the Shire- Year 2000 Benchmark

Chapter 7 - Economic Development Technical Paper

April 2001

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CHAPTER 7 – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

7.1. Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the economic development occurring in the Shire. Topics addressed include agricultural production of commodities such as sugar and beef, horticultural (banana, exotic fruit, papaya, pasture and grass, flower/nursery, citrus fruit, vegetable, and tropical fruit), as well as forestry and other sundry products.

Also addressed in this paper is the topic of tourism in the Shire. Tourism is a growing industry in the Shire, with nature-based tourism being most prominent. In the year 2000, the Shire had an array of major tourism attractions and cultural events, with other potential attractions and events such as the Olympic Torch celebrations.

This report also deals with urban development issues such as transport and building activity. Availability of transport is closely related to economic development, as all industry requires access to markets vital to the viability of industries in the Shire. Building activity, particularly an increase in residential and commercial building applications, is a good indicator of regional prosperity.

Employment is another issue closely related to the issue of economic development, however, this data was unable to be collected during this reporting period. It is anticipated that this will be an issue addressed further in future reports.

7.2. Agriculture

7.2.1. Sugar Production¹

The Australian Sugar Industry participates in a world market which is increasingly over-supplied and suffers from continuing distortions related to government intervention. Returns to producers in Australia for sugar exports, and sugar sold on domestic markets, depend on world market price. Australia is one of the few sugar producing countries to have a domestic sugar industry that is not subsidised. The only subsidy is from the raw sugar producers to the refining sector to prevent sugar imports.

Exports account for 95 percent of Queensland’s raw sugar production.

For over 100 years the viability of growing sugarcane and the production of raw sugar has been a profitable agricultural industry. In fact, for most of those eighty years Far North Queensland was the most profitable and viable cane growing and raw sugar producing area in the State of Queensland.

The Innisfail district has suffered heavy cane and sugar losses from adverse weather conditions in 1998, 1999 and 2000 and also suffered from the detrimental effects of declining Commercial Cane Sugar (CCS) for over 5 seasons. Grower incomes have fallen and production costs have continued to increase, resulting in severe economic hardship for the industry. This severe reduction in both growers’ and millers’ incomes results in a devastating economic decline for the Johnstone Shire community. Using the economic “rule of thumb” growers’ disposable income circulates the Shire economy three times in total. Hence losses for the sugar industry are detrimental to the entire Shire.

Farm expenditure can represent more than a third of economic activity in small towns, highlighting the importance of farming to employment in these towns.

The 2000 season saw difficult market conditions continue, due to a combination of an oversupplied world sugar market, extremely low world sugar prices, lower than expected Queensland raw sugar production and the increased availability of Brazilian sugar in traditional Queensland markets. At the end of 2000 the South Johnstone Sugar Mill was

¹ Hopkins, Telford, & Garrat pers. comm, 2001

placed in receivership, having debts of some 15 million dollars. This is further bad news for the Shire community and the possibility of further industry rationalisation of the mill is a real possibility.

One positive in the Queensland Industry during 1999-2000 was the establishment of the industry-owned raw sugar marketing company, Queensland Sugar. The greatest advantages of the company are a commercial focus and increased industry involvement.

Improvements in the market and the low value of the Australian dollar indicate price recovery to a more acceptable level. There is also the likelihood of a world sugar deficit for the first time in seven years which coupled with the low value of the Australian dollar, if sustained, should lead to substantially higher prices in 2001.

General Statistics (Johnstone Shire):

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| No of cane growers | 549 |
| Estimated jobs directly employed | 800 |
| Estimated jobs indirectly employed | 2,400 |
| Average cane farm size: | 5,644.81 tonnes |
| Cost per tonne of cane | \$20.03 |
| Avg Total cost of production | \$113,066.00 |

Pressures on the sugar industry in general include:

- Declining CCS
- 1998 lowest production on record in all North Queensland
- Significant reduction in income
- Low World Sugar Price 2000
- Worst Queensland sugar price drop in history
- Lowest expected pool price for 15 years
- Lowest world sugar price in over 12 years
- Lowest world sugar price in current dollar terms in history
- Considerable reductions in income and cash flow
- La Nina Weather Patterns
- Flooding during harvest season 1998 resulting in extensive crop damage, significant disruption to harvest, prevented crop maturity, reduced income and increased costs.
- Cyclone Rona resulting in the worst flooding in 30 years in North Queensland, declared disaster areas, flood and wind damage, severe crop damage.
- March 1999 flooding resulting in severe crop damage and crop death and further declared disaster areas.
- 2000 flooding and rain

The following responses have been proposed to improve the current situation:

Council support for ethanol production

In the past, the major catalyst for economic activity within the Shire has been the sugar industry and with the decline in World Sugar Prices, declining CCS, and a number of years of unfavourable weather conditions, the financial viability of many of the farmers in the sugar industry is now threatened. The flow-on effect to the overall economic well-being of the Shire, and the State of Queensland, is therefore a major concern.

In an effort to bring about an improvement in the economic stability of the area, the Johnstone Shire Council has agreed to foster and facilitate the possible development of an ethanol industry within the Shire.

Council acknowledges that such a move is not the answer to the Cane Farmers woes. However, if successful, it will help bring a value adding opportunity to the Shire which will provide a stabilising influence on the Sugar Industry, an increase in employment prospects generally and a desirable flow-on effect to the whole business community of the Region

Exceptional Circumstances Submission

In April 1999 CANEGROWERS forwarded a detailed Submission in Application for Declaration of Exceptional Circumstances for North Queensland. The submission detailed the devastation that occurred in North Queensland and requested the Government declare any area of Exceptional Circumstance.

CANEGROWERS continued to provide information to both the State and Federal Government in support of the Exceptional Circumstances Submission, which demonstrated that the weather which ravaged North Queensland was a one in twenty-five year event.

Finally on 15 December 1999, some eight months after the application was forwarded, the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Warren Truss, announced that the application for Far North Queensland had been unsuccessful. Independent assessment found that the application did not meet the criteria for assistance and that the cause of the income downturn experienced by producers was due mostly to falls in commodity prices and declining cane sugar content. A decision which CANEGROWERS denied and have stated that they have hard evidence to prove otherwise.

CANEGROWERS Innisfail also questioned how such a decision could be made without an inspection of the region being carried out. Had CANEGROWERS been asked they have said they could have demonstrated that without the substantial rain and flooding during the 1998 season coupled with Cyclone Rona and two further instances of flooding during the first quarter of 1999, growers would have been in a much better financial position.

Sugar Industry Assistance Package

CANEGROWERS prepared a submission to the Federal Government seeking a comprehensive Industry Assistance Package in March/April 2000.

Following constant lobbying of and meeting with Government Representatives by Sugar Industry Leaders, the Federal Government announced the details of the Sugar Industry Assistance Package in September 2000. Under the Assistance Package the following forms of assistance are available:

- Interest subsidies on loans up to \$50,000 used to plant cane this season and next season
- Interest subsidies on loans up to \$100,000 associated with the business of producing cane
- Family Relief Payments to assist cane farmers and their families
- Farmbiz Programs to target the cane industry, offering assistance with farm skills and business management training
- Vouchers up to \$1,000 per farmer to access financial counselling services, where these services are not already available.

A Centrelink Officer has been operating out of the CANEGROWERS Innisfail Office to assist growers with applications for assistance.

Innisfail-Babinda Sugar Industry Strategic Planning

CANEGROWERS Innisfail, CANEGROWERS Babinda and Bundaberg Sugar are working on a project which aims to identify, modify and implement those elements of whole of system sugar production that can be improved to ensure the sugar industry in the region is world competitive and profitable on a sustainable basis. The objective of the plan is to maximise the long term wealth of the industry through an on-going strategic planning and management process, implemented in a co-operative way in partnership between the mill owner and CANEGROWERS.

Strategies being considered to improve industry competitiveness include;

- Evaluating the benefits and costs of alternative forms and degrees of industry structure and regulation
- Improving the interaction between researchers, extension staff, growers, millers, marketers and sugar users

- Analysing the adverse effects of urban encroachment and other competing resources uses on sugar production
- Improving extension methodologies and techniques for the industry as a whole
- Benchmarking industry performance against sugar industries in other countries.

CP2002 Accelerated Enhancement of Productivity and Profitability for the Australian Sugar Industry

CP2002 is one multi level program activity outlined in the Sugar Research and Development Corporations R and D Plan which was established to manage the special allocation of \$13.45 million for North Queensland in August 1998. These funds were allocated to address problems of declining sugar content, pest control and associated productivity issues.

The desired outcomes of the plan, which runs for four years from 1998 to 2002, are;

- Identifying, implementing and monitoring R and D to increase the profitability of the sugar industry
- Increased levels of collaboration among research providers and industry participants
- Enhanced adoption of Best Management Practice by industry to improve the viability of the sugar industry, with emphasis on improving sugar content and pest control
- Identification of means to increase sugar mill throughput without significant capital investment.

BSES Far North Queensland Improving CCS Program

This program aims to improve CCS across all districts without compromising yield of cane.

Changes to the BSES plant breeding program have been made to ensure future varieties maximise productivity and industry profitability.

Varieties released now will have higher CCS, be more erect and have fewer suckers.

7.2.2. Beef Production²

The beef industry is going well in the Shire at present, in comparison to the other main industries. The most prominent issue in the industry at present is live exports. During the wet season, when most of the Far Northern areas are isolated by the wet, the number of cattle exported live from Mourilyan Harbour increases dramatically and is good for the local producers.

Although the cattle price is currently fair, increased on farm costs such as the price of diesel and the price of chemical for on farm control of weeds is significantly reducing the profitability.

| Commodity | Commodity Measure | Estimated Number of Farms |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Beef breed bulls & bull calves used/intended for service (no.) | 142 | 38 |
| Beef cows and heifers, 1 year and over, total (no.) | 5,311 | 154 |
| Beef calves, under 1 year (excl bull calves for service) (no.) | 1,962 | 85 |
| Beef cattle, 1 year and over, nec (no.) | 5,629 | 161 |
| Beef cattle (excluding bulls and bull calves for service) (no.) | 12, 901 | 167 |
| Meat cattle at 31 March 98 – total (no.) | 13,044 | 167 |
| Cattle for all purposes (excluding house cows, total (no.) | 13,044 | 167 |
| Sales of steers, bullocks and bulls – 1 year and over (no) | 4,450 | 139 |
| Sales of cows and heifers – 1 year and over (no) | 1,150 | 55 |
| Sales of calves – under 1 year (no) | 6 | 1 |
| Sales of cattle and calves, total (no) | 5,605 | 146 |

Table 7.1 Beef Production in the Johnstone Shire

² Elliot, pers. comm, 2001

The Johnstone Shire is fortunate in having the only remaining meatworks in North Queensland. It is located just west from Innisfail and is export accredited. It is the largest employer in the Shire with about 200 employees. The abattoir is currently spending some \$800 000 to improve its effluent quality to meet the Environmental Protection Agencies requirements.

7.2.3. Banana Production³

From the Johnstone Shire, approximately 8,000,000 cartons of bananas are supplied to central markets in all capital cities in Australia. Each carton contains 13kg net weight of bananas. The combined production of the Cardwell and Johnstone Shires represents about 85% of total domestic consumption in Australia. There are only sample export shipments.

The value of production within the Shire depends on trading conditions each year, however, may be robustly set at \$110,000,000. Bananas continue to trade in central markets where prices are set with reference to market conditions on a daily basis. There is some concern among growers that the total volume supplied when seasonal conditions improve and when current young plantings come on stream, will exceed 20,000,000 cartons in the Wet Tropics, a rise of about 25% in supplies. Bananas are not believed to be price elastic: reductions in price are not consistently matched with improvements in demand. For this reason, concerns are being expressed about future trading conditions.

The Federal Agency Biosecurity Australia is in the process of considering an application from the Philippines to import bananas into Australia. Growers are concerned that if the application is successful, and especially if disease were introduced through the imported fruit that the cost of production here would greatly exceed the cost of imported bananas, thereby diminishing the viability of the industry.

The banana industry is a significant local employer, if not the biggest. Bananas are a labour intensive enterprise. Only limited mechanisation has been possible. Industry representatives estimate that an employer requires one person for each 3ha of bananas. On this basis, banana production would directly employ about 1500 people in the Johnstone Shire. Persons travelling on work visas take up some part of this employment.

There are a range of support industries, which supply goods and services to the banana industry. Noteworthy in this is the transport industry, which uses bananas as backloading to major metropolitan centres, thus reducing the cost of freight for incoming goods. In addition, there are carton suppliers, centralised packing sheds, rural houses, hostels, and machinery businesses.

7.2.4. Exotic Fruits⁴⁵

The exotic fruit industry is increasing rapidly at present. Single desk marketing and cluster packing sheds are major initiatives that are successfully increasing economies of scale within the industry. Approximately 60% of the crops are now going overseas.

The major issues facing the industry are;
 The dramatically different growing conditions in the wet tropics such as lack of sunlight
 Flying fox control to avoid damaged fruit

Research has begun on smell and taste deterrents to limit the damage caused by flying foxes and also non-lethal adaptations of electric grids so that the damage mitigation process can be avoided. Nets are not seen as appropriate due to associated problems with shading and damage from storms and cyclones.

Other significant contributors to the industry now include longon, mangosteen, and abiu.

³ Hine pers. comm, 2001

⁴ Elliot, pers. comm, 2001.

⁵ O'Connor, pers, comm, 2001

| Commodity | Commodity Measure | Estimated Number of Farms | Index | Meaning/Comment on Index |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Carambola – trees 6 years and over (no.) | 360 | 6 | | |
| Carambola – production (kg) | 5,730 | 6 | | |
| Carambola – total trees (no.) | 360 | 6 | | |
| Jackfruit – trees 6 years and over (no.) | 1,020 | 6 | | |
| Jackfruit – production (kg) | 26,286 | 6 | 26 | Avg 26 kg per tree |
| Jackfruit – total trees (no.) | 1,020 | 6 | 170 | Avg 170 trees per farm |
| Lychees – trees 6 years and over (no.) | 4,871 | 18 | | |
| Lychees – production (kg) | 2,259 | 18 | | |
| Lychees – total trees (no.) | 4,871 | 18 | | |
| Rambutan – trees under 6 years (no.) | 1,457 | 9 | | |
| Rambutan – trees 6 years and over (no.) | 6,930 | 22 | | |
| Rambutan – production (kg) | 42,740 | 16 | 5 | Avg 5kg per tree |
| Rambutan – total trees (no.) | 8,388 | 25 | | |
| Orchard fruit nec – trees 6 years and over (no.) | 324 | 7 | | |
| Orchard fruit nec – production (kg) | 3,830 | 7 | | |
| Orchard fruit nec – total trees (no.) | 324 | 7 | | |
| Orchard trees (including nuts) – area (ha) | 285 | 41 | 7 | Avg 7 ha per farm |

Table 7.2 Exotic Fruit Production in the Johnstone Shire

7.2.5. Papaya⁶⁷

In 2000 the price for papaya was high due to shortages in supply caused by the extremes. Since this time there have been management plans but further plantings are large and dependent on how profitable other industries are.

The major issues facing the industry are:

- Consistency and quality in supply of fruit
- Phytophthora damage to the plants

Packing and picking is the major cost within the industry because it is slow and labour intensive. Research is being conducted on new varieties with better eating quality and the export market is being assessed.

| Commodity | Commodity Measure | Estimated Number of Farms | Index | Meaning/Comment on Index |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| Pawpaws/Papaya – not yet bearing area (ha) | 30 | 20 | | |
| Pawpaws/Papaya – bearing area (ha) | 123 | 57 | | |
| Pawpaws/Papaya – production (t) | 3,603,538 | 57 | 29,297 | Avg 29,297 kg per ha |
| Pawpaws/Papaya – Total Area (ha) | 153 | 57 | | |

Table 7.3 Papaya production in the Johnstone Shire

⁶ Elliot, pers. comm, 2001.

⁷ Zappala, pers. comm, 2001

7.2.6. Pastures and grasses⁸

| Commodity | Commodity Measures | Estimated number of Farms |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Sown grasses – area at 31 March 1999 (ha) | 1,875 | 57 |
| Native or naturalised pasture at 31 March 1999 (ha) | 64,132 | 21 |
| Mix of perennial grasses & legumes – area at 31 March 1999 (ha) | 167 | 3 |
| Mix of annual grasses & legumes – area at 31 March 1999 (ha) | 84 | 1 |
| Sown pastures at 31 March 1999 – total area (ha) | 3,178 | 66 |
| Sown pastures – total area sown/resown during y/e 31/2/99 (ha) | 162 | 3 |

Table 7.4 Pastures and grass production in Johnstone Shire

7.2.7. Flowers/Nursery⁹

| Commodity | Commodity Measure | Estimated Number of Farms |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Nurseries, flowers and turf – area (ha) | 13 | 13 |
| Nurseries – area (ha) | 12 | 7 |
| Cut Flowers – area (ha) | 1 | 6 |

Table 7.5 Flower/Nursery production in the Johnstone Shire

7.2.8. Citrus Fruits¹⁰

| Commodity | Commodity Measure | Estimated Number of Farms | Index | Meaning/Comment on Index |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Oranges – total production (kg) | 548 | 1 | 13 | Avg 13 kg per tree |
| Oranges – total trees (no.) | 41 | 1 | | |
| Lemons and Limes – production (kg) | 19,641 | 8 | 35 | Avg 35kg per tree |
| Lemons and limes – total trees (no.) | 564 | 8 | | |
| Citrus fruit, other (nec – trees under 6 years (no.) | 53 | 1 | | |
| Citrus fruit, other (nec) – trees 6 years and over (no) | 533 | 12 | | |
| Citrus fruit, other (nec) – production (kg) | 12,408 | 13 | | |
| Citrus, other (nec) – total trees (no.) | 586 | 13 | | |
| Citrus , trees under 6 years (no.) | 442 | 5 | | |
| Citrus, trees 6 years and over (no.) | 749 | 13 | | |
| Citrus fruit – total production (kg) | 32,598 | 16 | 27 | Avg 27 kg per tree |
| Citrus Fruit – total trees (no.) | 1,191 | 17 | | |

Table 7.6 Citrus production in the Johnstone Shire

⁸ Elliot, pers. comm, 2001

⁹ Elliot, pers. comm, 2001

¹⁰ Elliot, pers. comm, 2001

7.2.9. Vegetables¹¹

| Commodity | Commodity Measure | Estimated Number of Farms | Index | Meaning/ Comment on Index |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Chokos – area (ha) | 9 | 1 | | |
| Chokos – production (kg) | 227,027 | 1 | | |
| Curcubits – area (ha) | 8 | 6 | | |
| Curcubits – production (tonne) | 94 | 6 | | |
| Sweet Potatoes – area (ha) | 9 | 1 | | |
| Sweet Potatoes – production (t) | 363 | 1 | 40 | Tonne/ha |
| Vegetables for human consumption - area (ha) | 27 | 10 | Avg 2.7 ha/farm | |
| Vegetables for human consumption – total area (ha) | 27 | 10 | | |

Table 7.7 Vegetable production in Johnstone Shire

7.2.10. Tropical Fruits¹²

| Commodity | Commodity Measure | Estimated Number of Farms |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Passionfruit - bearing area (ha) | 2 | 6 |
| Passionfruit – production (kg) | 11,996 | 6 |
| Passionfruit – total area (ha) | 2 | 6 |
| Small, berry and tropical fruit, total area not yet bearing (ha) | 621 | 72 |
| Small, berry and tropical fruit, total bearing area (ha) | 3,740 | 276 |
| Small, berry and tropical fruit, total area (ha) | 4,360 | 276 |
| All fruit (excluding grapes – total area (ha) | 4,645 | 304 |

Table 7.8 Tropical Fruit production in Johnstone Shire

7.3. **Other Production Industries**

7.3.1. Forestry Production¹³

The Johnstone Shire is the site of a number of joint ventures in forestry established between 1997 and 1999. These joint ventures are share-farming arrangements between landholders and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). Such arrangements are legally binding agreements between the government and the landowner to grow timber resources for future needs.

In the year 2000, there were approximately 60 hectares of *Eucalyptus pellita* in mixed plantations in the Shire, with these stands on a 18-20 year rotation.

More recently, the private sector has expressed interest in the forestry sector. A company called NCE Forestry held a meeting at South Johnstone DPI/Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to introduce the concept to the public. The company will operate on the principle of paying annuities to landholders for growing saw logs. Unlike the DPI scheme where landholders had an equity share and had to wait until harvest to get a direct monetary return, the NCE venture will give landowners an annual cash return paid quarterly in advance. By doing so, NCE aims to establish a few thousand hectares in the next few years. Such a venture will provide beef farmers with an opportunity to diversify production, with cattle able to be restocked in plantations after 2-3 years, provided the company is satisfied that no damage is

¹¹ Elliot, pers. comm, 2001

¹² Elliot, pers. comm, 2001

¹³ Killin, pers. comm, 2001

being done to the stand. The local NCE employee is Tony Sturre who can be contacted on 0427 008 062

The main issues for this new emerging private forestry industry are;

- The development of Mourilyan Harbour as a timber port.
- The high price of land and the current valuation system,
- A lack of scale. There needs to be an increase in the size of farm forestry to make it a viable industry in the area.
- A lack of awareness of potential amongst the community
- A lack of experience in growing and maintaining trees for timber.
- Current legal survey standard of DNR for sharefarming to be registered on the land title. DNR requires a high degree of accuracy for surveying, whilst this is unnecessary for forestry which can be delineated for aerial photographs.
- Cyclones and associated insurance costs.

As part of the Federal and State Governments contribution toward Farm Forestry, Private Forestry North Queensland has been established with state and federal funding to assist the growth of the private sector and landholders to help the industry grow. They assist potential farm foresters to overcome the hurdles involved in the industry. The North Queensland Timber Co-operative has also been formed in North Queensland to work with growers and help the industry to improve.

7.3.2. Additional Statistics¹⁴

The following table shows the scale of various primary industries of lesser importance in the Shire.

| Commodity | Commodity Measure | Estimated Number of Farms |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Tea – area (ha) | 125 | 1 |
| Tea – production (dry weight) (KD) | - | 1 |
| Horses – stud (no) | 3 | 1 |
| Horses – except stud (no) | 286 | 64 |
| Horses – total (no) | 290 | 65 |
| Sales of horses – total (no) | 5 | 1 |
| Layers, hens and pullets – number at 31 March (no) | 38,850 | 4 |
| Layers, hens and pullets – no. disposed of year ended 31/3/99 (no) | 13,300 | 4 |
| Layers, replacement stock – no. on holding at 31/3/99 (no) | 20,650 | 4 |
| Eggs produced for human consumption (doz) | 549,500 | 4 |
| Nuclei & other hives (inc small and pollination) not robbed (no) | 10 | 1 |
| Hives kept – total (no) | 10 | 1 |
| Total area of holding (ha) | 117,423 | 708 |
| Crops (excluding pastures and grasses) – total area (ha) | 34,672 | 648 |

Table 7.9 Miscellaneous production in the Johnstone Shire

¹⁴ Elliot, pers. comm, 2001

7.4. Fishing

7.4.1. Aquaculture¹⁵

Prawn farming is steadily increasing in production primarily with the black tiger or leader prawn. The main constraint facing the prawn industry at present is the lack of black tiger brood stock which in turn has an effect on the timing of production which is sometimes out of sink with the timing of demand for the product.

Extensive research has been carried out in the previous 10 years into closed breeding systems, with this research ongoing. The industry has developed a code of practice, which has been implemented, and concentration is now on adopting research for sustainability, treatment pond systems and recirculation systems.



There are now new requirements on the industry through federal legislation enforced by GBRMPA. Although this caused some delays in approvals at first, the treatment systems now proposed for developments are meeting the specified requirements and approvals are being given.

Production in barramundi farming is steadily increasing and currently the focus in the industry is diversifying, including 0.5kg plate size fish and fillet size fish. Over production in the past has caused some market problems. The industry has not faced any major disease problems. Improvements in the cost of production through investigation into the type and quantity of feed may still benefit the industry. Production is mainly in fresh water systems and true barramundi farming is not faced with as many issues in effluent release. Mostly the effluent is used for irrigation of primary production land.

The redclaw industry is slowly expanding outside of the Shire but little change is happening within the Shire. Most farms are now diversifying into the aquaculture ventures. The lack of uptake of new technologies may be the reason the industry is virtually at a standstill at present.

There are 22 individuals or companies undertaking aquaculture enterprises in Johnstone Shire as at December 2000. The total area under ponds is 276 ha.

The composition of the industry is as follows:-

| Licensed Pond size range (ha) | Number of Holdings |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| <1 ha | 6 |
| 1 –5 ha | 14 |
| 6 – 10 ha | 4 |
| 11 –20 ha | 1 |
| 21 –50 ha | 1 |
| >50 ha | 2 |
| Total | 28 |

Table 7.10 Aquaculture in Johnstone Shire

The type of species produced are:-

| | <1 ha | 1-5 ha | 6-10 ha | 11-20 ha | 21-50 ha | >50 ha |
|---------------|-------|--------|---------|----------|----------|--------|
| Aquarium | | 1 | | | | |
| Barramundi | 4 | 6 | 3 | 1 | | 2 |
| Redclaw | | 5 | | | | |
| Prawns | | 4 | 3 | | 1 | 1 |
| Other species | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | | 1 |

Table 7.11 Aquaculture Species farmed in Johnstone Shire

¹⁵ Elliot, pers.comm, 2001

¹⁵ Robertson, pers.comm, 2001

7.5. Tourism

7.5.1. Nature-based tourism

Boat Cruises

Tour operators and fishing charters operate within the Shire and most are based at the Innisfail Port or Clump Point Jetty at Mission Beach. Tour operators are based around fishing and scenic/wildlife tours. Tourists tend to get an extra buzz out of seeing an animal such as a crocodile in the wild, and are amazed at the large expanses of uninhabited country.

Flying Fish Point Jetty¹⁶

The Flying Fish Point Jetty was the original communication and transport facility at the mouth of the Johnstone River, making possible the settlement of Innisfail and its hinterland and enabling the foundation of the Flying Fish Point village community. It served as the main link into the interior until storms and floods destroyed it in the 1960’s and a sealed road from Innisfail to Flying Fish Point was completed. The jetty has high heritage value, both for residents and for tourists and some residents of the Shire are now lobbying to have the facility rebuilt.

Efforts are presently underway to seek funding to restore the jetty. The restoration of the jetty would provide a valuable historical facility, and additional infrastructure in Johnstone River providing a multi-purpose fishing and boating facility for the likes of private boat owners and the greater community.

Beaches¹⁷

The Johnstone Shire has a number of beaches catering for a variety of peoples’ needs. The beaches and their facilities are summarised in the table below.

| Beach | Facilities |
|-------------------|--|
| Kurrimine | Caravan park, picnic facilities, stinger net, showers and toilets, boat ramp and playground |
| Cowley | Caravan park, toilets and showers, and boat ramp |
| Garners | Picnic tables |
| Etty Bay | Caravan park, picnic facilities, stinger net, lifeguards, showers and toilets, playground and night swimming |
| Clump Point | Picnic tables and a boat ramp |
| Narragon | Toilets and showers and picnic facilities |
| Ella Bay | Toilets and camping area for tents |
| Flying Fish Point | Picnic facilities, toilets, and playground |
| Bingil Bay | Picnic facilities, camping, toilets and showers |
| The Coconuts | Boatramp, picnic facilities, toilets, and playground |
| Mission Beach | Caravan Park, picnic facilities, stinger net, showers and toilets, and night swimming |

Table 7.12 Beaches and their facilities in Johnstone Shire

7.5.2. Harbour

Innisfail Boat Harbour¹⁸

The Innisfail Boat Harbour is located within 100 metres of the town centre and incorporates the following infrastructure :

¹⁶ Raudzens, pers. comm, 2001

¹⁷ O’Brien, pers. comm, 2001

¹⁸ Harbour Management Pan

- A 270m long river wall, with steel kingposts and concrete infill planks,
- The ‘Commercial Wharf’, at the mouth of the South Johnstone River, however a section of the wharf has been partly closed due to salt damage of the concrete reinforcement.
- A relatively new ‘Public Wharf’ opposite Edith Street
- The Fish Board Wharf, adjacent to the Innisfail Fish Depot
- Some twenty-one tubular steel piles, two concrete piles and seven H-section steel piles used for mooring vessels.
- A single land boat-launching ramp, adjacent to the Commercial Wharf.

As a result of matters raised during public and stakeholder meetings various development options for additional facilities have been considered. These are:

- Multipurpose wharf with multi purpose berths and service area
- Mid river trot moorings
- Redevelopment of area adjoining boat harbour reserve along west bank north from junction of Johnstone and South Johnstone Rivers and south from Fossey Park
- Pontoon berths at Dalrymple Esplanade
- Commercial use area (boat hire, fishing tackle hire and sales, food outlet)
- Dinghy storage
- Improved public access to river (via small jetties of pontoons)
- Improved on shore facilities

As Trustee of the Reserve, Johnstone Shire Council is committed to preserving the area known as the Innisfail Harbour for use by the community for designated port and harbour purposes. The existing primary use of the site is for mooring of commercial fishing and recreational boats. Jetties and complementary on shore facilities cater for an Innisfail based fishing fleet.

Secondary use of the area is considered essential to the effective provision of designated primary uses. These secondary uses will be managed within the overall purpose of the Reserve and community utilisation in mind. Granting of leases of licences to appropriate organisations over designated secondary use areas where appropriate, will serve to develop the trust area and provide for an improved facility for the community.

Mourilyan Boat Harbour¹⁹

Local residents and tourists previously utilised the Port of Mourilyan Main Wharf, however in 1994 the Main Wharf was closed to public access due to safety and operational issues.

It is clear that recreational activities cannot coexist with commercial activities, with such conflicts being accentuated as the throughput and range of trades increase through the life of the port. Sound port management and planning is required to ensure safety and efficiency within the confines of the Port area.

Ports Corporation of Queensland (PCQ) recognises the importance of the availability of recreational facilities and has made commitments to maintain public facilities in the port for enjoyment by local residents and tourists.

7.5.3. Other Nature Based Tourism Activities

Warrina Lakes²⁰

Situated near the centre of Innisfail, just 3km from the Post Office, the rainforest walking trails at Warrina Lakes have particular appeal to the whole family.

The trails are level, well marked and extremely easy, being classified as pathways (the easiest National Parks classification). Winding through dense patches of tropical rainforest, shaded by the thick overhead canopy, walkers have the opportunity to experience the rainforest at

¹⁹ Brunner, pers. comm, 2001

²⁰ As provided in Johnstone Shire Council brochure on Warrina Lakes, Innisfail.

their own pace. The rainforest is a re-creation of the forests of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, some 900,000 hectares of tropical rainforest and associated vegetation between Townsville and Cooktown.

Man-made lakes, playing areas, shaded children’s play area, landscaped swimming pool and spa, gas barbecues and gazebos dotted throughout the complex provide ideal settings for relaxation. Centrepiece is a large, attractively designed timber Function Centre. This entertainment area contains a kiosk, kitchen, bar, toilets, seating and a raised stage. The Function Centre is available for hire and is ideally suited for events such as weddings, meetings, parties and concerts. Bocce and volleyball equipment is also available for hire. All this is backdropped by majestic Mount Bartle Frere, Queensland’s highest mountain.

7.5.4. Major Attractions

Johnstone River Crocodile Farm²¹

Situated in Innisfail along Flying Fish Point Road the farm has over 1500 crocodiles, which are mostly estuarine. The crocodile sizes range from 30cm to the farm’s 5-metre monster, Gregory, weighing in at 1200 kilos. Visitors can also see freshwater crocodiles, kangaroos, a variety of wallabies, emus, parrots, finches, other birds and endangered Cassowaries. Free food is provided to guests to feed the animals. There are educational tours available explaining how crocodiles breed, survive and are farmed. There are public tours everyday. Gates open 8:30 am and close at 4:30pm. Tours begin at 9:30 am with feeding times at 11:00am and 3:00pm.

Australian Sugar Industry Museum²²

Over the past 3 years a great deal of the Museum’s resources have been consumed by the preparation of the Museum’s Development Program. The program incorporates 3 major activities that are scheduled for implementation in 2001, making the year a significant one for the Museum. These activities include;

The Building Program - The revitalisation of the 1955 Sugarama Theatre adjoining the Museum as a multipurpose exhibition and event space. As well as the upgrade of the Retail Area, Storage/Workshop facility and improvements to the front of the building that will include a new Museum entry, Outdoor dining area and major sculptural feature. The objective of this work is to extend the Museum’s cultural tourism potential. *Opening scheduled 2 September 2001*

Marketing Program - The Sugar Trail Network - Implementation of Stage 1. The staging of a program of events to be developed by a curator/artsworker working with regional communities around 3 selected regional ‘hubs’ of the Sugar Trail: Bundaberg, Mackay and Innisfail. *Launch proposed November 2001.*

Events Program - Refined White - Centenary of Federation travelling exhibition. An exhibition that celebrates the culture and contribution of the Australian South Sea Islander. *Launched in Mackay 21 January 2001, to open at the Museum 2 September 2001.*

These activities address several key aspects of the Museum’s Strategic Plan. They will in enable the Museum to achieve the following goals:

- Self - sufficiency.
- Key centre in the museum industry.
- Increase visitation.
- Identified and utilised as a resource for information specific to the sugar industry.
- Adopt professional museum practice.
- Implement an exhibition program.
- Implement an education and public program.

²¹ Graham, pers. comm, 2001

²² Waldron, pers. comm, 2001

Fund Raising

Fund raising for these activities and the Museum’s operations are ongoing. In the past 18 months the Museum applied to 12 local, state and federal government funding programs as well as to the Queensland Sugar Corporation. The total combined amount requested was \$778,000.00. From these applications 7 were successful with the Museum receiving \$636,595.00.

Operations

Museum staff have continued to improve the Museum’s operations with:

- The completion of a Business Plan
- The commencement of a Display refurbishment and development plan
- The installation of a Computer network
- The installation of a Telephone network
- Cataloguing of the Library (to date 2030 items have been processed).
- Cataloguing of the Collection (to date 758 items have been processed).
- Upgrading the existing displays.
- Exhibition preparation – Refined White and Curkit, Panoramic images of Queensland 1914 -1930, by Robert Belbin.
- Improved digital and physical storage of the collection.

Marketing/Visitation

Brochure distribution has been the Museum’s main marketing activity. 30,100 brochures have been distributed throughout Queensland, since April 1999. This along with increased print media editorial, road signage, Internet coverage, newsletter distribution and community promotional activities, have resulted in a 16% increase in visitation for the 1999/2000 year. It is expected that with the completion of the Building Program that Museum’s visitation will see a substantial increase particularly by regional visitors.

The Museum’s profile has also been further enhanced through the professional involvement of its staff. By being involved with museum and community networks and committees the Museum has gained a reputation as a resource for the museum network and a contributor to the community’s development.

The program of development has targeted the Centenary of Federation year, 2001. The significant funding from the State’s Millennium Arts Projects has put the Building Program back on schedule. September 2001 has been designated as the month to celebrate the Museum’s redevelopment as it is the month when;

- The Centenary of Federation will be celebrated in Far North Queensland
- Refined White will be opened and on display at the Museum
- The Annual Museums Australia Queensland conference will be held in Cairns. The Museum has been chosen to host a component of the conference.
- 250 national and international delegates attending the sugar conference will visit the Museum.

The Museum’s aim is to become a more energetic and accessible facility. An important resource and a cultural tourism draw card for the region, that not only develops innovative activities improving opportunities for people to explore Australia’s sugar heritage, but also contributes to the development of community.

Paronella Park – The Dream Continues.....²³

What started as a dream for Spanish immigrant Jose Paronella in 1913 became a reality in the 1930s. Jose’s “Castles in the Rainforest” opened to the public in 1935 after six years of

²³ Evans, M & J, pers. comm, 2001

determination and hard labour. One and a half hours drive south of Cairns, the 5.2 hectare property consisted of the Castle – an ornately decorated Grand Ballroom, Picture Theatre and Restaurant; the Cafe-by-the-Pool beneath the magnificent Mena Creek Falls, Tennis Courts, the Tunnel of Love, and mysterious rainforest garden walks.

Jose proudly guided his visitors through his creation until his death in 1948. Succeeded by his wife Margarita, then his son Joe, the property had mixed fortunes until 1977 when it was sold out of the family. Two years later the magnificent Castle burnt down and the Park was closed for several years. A series of Caretakers and Lessees attempted to bring it back to life, but it wasn't until it was sold again in 1993 that Jose's Dream came alive again. The new owners injected some much needed capital, marketing expertise, and a passion equal to Jose's.

Paronella Park is now the premier Tourist Attraction in the region, having won regional Tourism Awards for Heritage and Cultural Tourism and Marketing and Promotional Campaigns for three successive years. In addition the Park has reached Finalist in the State Tourism Awards in those years.

In excess of 100 000 visitors will pass through the Gates in 2001 to experience the passion and imagination of Jose Paronella by participating in a Guided Tour. Swimming, picnics, movies, weddings and functions are still a part of the Park as they were in Jose's era. A staffing level of at least 20 will look after the Visitors needs in the Tearoom and Souvenir shop, take them on a Guided Tour, and maintain the Gardens for their enjoyment.

Heritage Listing at both National and State level firmly recognise the Park's significance in our nation's Heritage, as does listing by the National Trust.

Today, the Dream Continues by way of the interpretive Guided Tour. The visitor is greeted at the front entrance by the owner Mark Evans, who some say is the re-incarnation of Jose! After being promised the “Experience of a Lifetime”, the group is taken on a 45 minute interpretive walk encompassing Jose's life and endeavours. The visitor is taken back to a more elegant era, and retraces the steps of Jose and his visitors.

The Flora and Fauna are of as much interest to some as the romance and history. Rare Giant Ferns (*Angiopteris evecta*) proliferate, alongside native and exotic Gingers, Palms and Cycads. Birds are more often heard than seen in the thick rainforest canopy, apart from the ground dwellers such as brush turkeys, emerald ground doves, scrub fowls and the like. The creek is home to two varieties of river turtles, eels, and a large number of fish, all readily seen in the clear waters of Mena Creek. Platypus have been sighted, but rarely.

All in all, there is something for everyone at Paronella Park. The interpretive Guided Tour is the absolutely essential starting point to the visit. Without it, the visit may be a visually stunning experience, but without the story of Jose's Dream – the passion and the romance – the visitor is truly being shortchanged.

7.5.4.1. *Potential Attractions*

*Ulysses Link*²⁴

The Ulysses Link is a foreshore walking track which will ultimately link the communities of South Mission Beach, Wongaling Beach, Mission Beach and Bingil Bay – a distance of some 14 kms.

Stage one of the Ulysses Link from the Village green to Clump Point and the Cutten Brothers walking track is currently under construction as part of the Queensland Heritage Trails Network. Funding has been sourced by the community from the Queensland Heritage Trails Network, the Centenary of Federation Community Assistance Program and Arts Queensland.

²⁴ Phillips, pers. comm, 2001

The Ulysses Link will not only provide a link between the communities but it will also allow for unique interpretative signage, highlighting historical anecdotes and places of interest as well as an environmental educative experience. It will also incorporate ‘functional art’ such as seating and BBQ areas which will be created by local artisans. The sculptural entranceway which will be situated in the park opposite the Hideaway Caravan Park in Mission Beach will include columns carved from the old Clump Point Jetty pylons and feature a ceramic message stick 2 metres in height which will reflect the history and unique environs of this special area.

The Ulysses Link will be a significant all weather tourist attraction at Mission beach as it is envisaged that we will provide ‘Ulysses Butterfly Blue’ umbrellas for people to hire to enable them to experience the track no matter what the weather conditions.

Queensland Heritage Trails Network

The Queensland Heritage Trails Network (QHTN) is a partnership between the Queensland Government, and local communities to help celebrate the Centenary of Federation in 2001. The network will link heritage sites throughout the state, and support new heritage-based opportunities, to add value to our tourism and heritage resources. The network is an investment in the future of our state and the communities that make it up. Not only will it bring our past alive, the Network will also benefit our present and enrich our future. While preserving and promoting our natural, indigenous and cultural heritage, this initiative will develop education resources, create employment, stimulate development and foster tourism. The Network will establish models for the conservation and presentation of our heritage, help us to define our local identities, and bolster pride in our local communities”.

The North Queensland Component of the Queensland Heritage Trails Network contains a program to implement a series of walking trails that provide linkage with other projects in the Network and present the region’s cultural and natural heritage assets. The four Shires of Johnstone, Eacham, Herberton and Cardwell have collaborated to develop a proposal to build a major network of walking tracks that link the Cassowary Coast region with the central and western Tablelands area.

The Far North Queensland Heritage Trails Network comprises 11 discrete projects. One such project is the proposed Palmerston canopy walkway. The walkway is an initiative of the Johnstone Shire Council, and aims to construct a world class suspended walkway in the rainforest of the Wet Tropics. Projects funded by the QHTN within North Queensland will be linked by a major interpretive strategy. This will enhance visitor experiences and provide a marketing tool and interpretation of tropical North Queensland natural resources and cultural heritage.

The Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQ ROC) (in association with the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA)) were recently granted \$4.93 million to implement an innovative program of Presenting the Wet Tropics as part of the Queensland Heritage Trails Network. The program involves 10 major projects spread across seven Shires (\$3.2 million), an interpretive component to ensure effective linkages between projects (\$0.5 million), and an as yet unspecified network of walking track that present aspects of the region’s cultural heritage (\$1.23 million).

The Wet Tropics Walking Strategy has identified that there is a need for a network of tracks that provides a range of walking experiences at a number of difficulty and distance levels. The region covered by the four Shires offers a huge variety of walking experiences. A number of reports have identified that the region has very good tourism potential and that it is currently operating under capacity. There is potential to create a network of linked tracks encompassing the Tully, Palmerston, Koombooloomba areas that would offer walking experiences in a range of settings from a half day to several days. There is opportunity to allocate the funds available from the Heritage Trails Network for one major project that would result in a new tourism attraction.

The region has a rich and active Aboriginal heritage story and an important story of European settlement in the region. The opportunity exists to drive dollars further by pooling resources of Councils, Traditional Owners and land management agencies in the construction and ongoing maintenance of this track. The construction and maintenance of the track has the potential to provide a significant number of jobs. The construction of the track would provide a number of opportunities for local people to gain a source of income from tourism and tourism services enterprises.

*Palmerston Canopy Walkway*²⁵

The proposed canopy walkway to be constructed near Crawford's Lookout on the Palmerston Highway will be a major regional tourism attraction and a landmark tourism development project for the Johnstone Shire. It has been estimated to attract 150,000 visitors annually, increasing to 250,000 over 5 years.

Located in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, it will provide a unique tropical rainforest canopy experience. The project will lead the way in best practice environmental management, and an understanding and appreciation of environmental issues, local cultural heritage and exploration history will be the major interpretive themes.

Strong support for the project has been forthcoming from all levels of government, the Mamu people who have traditional links with the area, and the Innisfail community. Funding for certain pre-construction studies and approvals has been provided through the Queensland Heritage Trails Network, and the project is expected to reach completion by early 2003.

The proposed Canopy Walkway is to be situated along the Palmerston Highway approximately 30km west of Innisfail, and will incorporate the site of Crawford's Lookout. The Walkway is to form part of the Queensland Heritage Trails Network project – Presenting the Wet Tropics which aims to present the regions natural and cultural heritage assets. This location will provide a view across the North Johnstone River and Valley, with the Mt Poorka Range to act as a backdrop. An allotment bordering the World Heritage Area was chosen for a service area because of its:

- Availability of cleared land for visitor infrastructure,
- Close proximity to escarpment and vantage points to spectacular vistas,
- Good inner-canopy experiences,
- Cultural interpretation of the Bora Ground, and
- Natural 'gateway' location.

Facilities for the site are proposed to include:

- 1200-1400 metre elevated canopy walkway (with spurs)
- Carpark with safe vehicle access/egress from Palmerston Highway
- An interpretive centre
- Food and beverage outlet
- Administration/management facilities and toilets
- Small exclusive walking trail (may be at ground level), available for use by Mamu guides and some tour operators

To ensure the cultural integrity of the site, it is envisaged that the local indigenous people of the area (the Mamu) will be involved in the design, development of interpretation program, ownership and general management of the attraction. Possible business and employment opportunities could be created through the development and provision of specialist-guided tours or cultural activities (GHD, 2000).

Community Issues and Benefits

Issues associated with the proposal include potential negative impacts on biodiversity conservation and undue pressure on nearby National Park Walking Track infrastructure

²⁵ Dunn, pers. comm, 2001 (partly)

and places, and concerns regarding maximisation of benefits to local communities in terms of utilisation of accommodation and associated services. Benefits are anticipated to include showcasing the region and many environmental attractions/experiences, enhanced tourism economy, opportunity for locals to become involved in the development of a major attraction in their own backyard, and visitors gaining a greater understanding/appreciation of the rainforest and local indigenous people. However, the extent to which benefits accrue is dependent on the cooperative effort of local communities in terms of marketing and tourism information (GHD, 2000).

(Draft) Wet Tropics Walking Strategy

The (Draft) Walking Strategy proposes to create a high quality walking network which will provide walkers with opportunities to learn about and appreciate the region’s World Heritage and Aboriginal cultural values and to enjoy a range of recreational and educational experiences. The strategy is about cooperative management of walks between state and local government land managers, Rainforest Aboriginal people, walkers, private walk managers, the tourism industry, conservation groups, researchers and other stakeholders.

The strategy’s plans for walking in the Wet Tropics Region will produce benefits for the tourism industry, local communities, Rainforest Aboriginal people, land managers and walkers alike. Walking provides social, recreational and educational benefits for all sectors of the community as well as contributing significantly to providing employment and economic benefits for the Wet Tropics region. These benefits will be achieved by providing a diverse network of walking experiences.

The Walking Strategy will operate under the broad policy framework provided by the Nature Based Tourism Strategy for the management of nature based tourism within the Wet Tropics, and will coordinate management of walking experiences throughout the Wet Tropics region, both inside and adjoining the World Heritage Area. A database of managed walks will be developed to enable walkers to search a website for walk information, with educational information about the many aspects of the Wet Tropics environment and history available on particular walks also.

A track classification system will correlate different kinds of walking tracks with a range of service standards, walk settings and degrees of safety and risk management. Walks will be regularly monitored with regards to track conditions, vegetation damage, wildlife disturbance, visitor numbers, satisfaction and behaviour and Aboriginal concerns. Research will also be undertaken into walker use, satisfaction and demand, prevention of adverse environmental and social impacts, and the economic and social benefits of walking.

WTMA and state and local government land managers will implement most of the strategy’s actions. A Walking Advisory Group made up of representatives from stakeholder groups will provide expert advice to land managers about the strategy’s implementation as well as communicating with the public and interest groups about walking issues. The implementation process will be flexible and coordinate available funds, projects and management agencies to achieve the aims of the strategy, with implementation to be reviewed annually.

Nature Based Tourism Strategy

There are many existing and proposed opportunities for Nature-based recreation in the Shire, many of which are guided by the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA) Nature-Based Tourism Strategy. ‘The strategy provides a blue print for tourism development and management in the Wet Tropics area and surrounds’. It provides a vision, objectives, guiding principles, a policy and planning framework and an implementation process for nature-based recreation.

Tourism in the WTWHA is estimated to generate over \$750 million p.a. and also produces benefits for the local community and traditional owners. ‘The strategy recognises that tourism must be considered in the context of overall management of the WTWHA, including conservation, research, traditional cultural heritage practices, community services and recreation by local users. The approach adopted by this strategy is value-based and emphasises management of potential and actual impacts of visitor use on World Heritage values rather than management of uses per se’.

Innisfail Scenic Route Signage

Plans are currently under public review to promote Innisfail’s beauty and encourage the travelling public into the Innisfail Town Centre through the provision of road signage. The plan is to provide an alternative route through town, with the suggested route being McGowan Drive, Fitzgerald Esplanade and Grace Street. Guide and directional signs will be placed on the northern and southern approaches to Innisfail and in the Town Area to guide people to the services they desire and advise of parking facilities for the likes of caravans.

7.5.5. Marine Tourism²⁶

Clump Point Jetty serves as the main marine tourism node in the Shire. Three private businesses operate from this jetty and own their own bookings building on beachfront reserve.

Approximately 40 000+ visitors pass by this facility with the majority in the latter half of the year. While the facility is sufficient for the needs for the operators, it has been suggested by the operators that the area would benefit by being more attractive to tourists including:

- Landscaping the entrance and carpark
- Sheltered waiting area (possibly joint owned by operators)
- Improved signage to Clump Point
- Improved signage to Cutten Brothers Walking Track
- Bitumen surfacing of the main service area.
- A consistent theme for all buildings

Total visitation numbers (on commercial vessels and aircraft) for the Reefs in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park between Mission Beach and Brampton Beach have varied greatly over the past few years most probably in response to the peak tourist season and the weather conditions at the time.

| Date | # of visitors |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1/7/99 – 30/9/99 | 2 649 |
| 1/10/99 – 30/6/00 | 19 162 |
| 1/7/00 – 30/9/00 | 7 147 |

Figure 7.13 Marine Tourism in the Johnstone Shire

The database maintained by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority does not record the type of tourist activities undertaken by tourist with the commercial operators, however they have advised that the main activities include scuba diving, fishing, swimming, snorkelling, coral viewing, sight-seeing and kayaking. The most popular destinations in the area are Beaver, Nathan, Taylor, Eddy and the Sisters Reefs.

7.5.6. General Tourism/Events

Chinese Temple

History - Every North Queensland town of significant size had one or more Chinese temples in the late nineteenth century. These temples combined several functions. Each was the

²⁶ Quickcat Cruises, pers. comm, 2001

²⁶ Ilett, pers. comm, 2001

political symbol of a community identifying with a specific district in China: in Innisfail’s case Chung Shan. Besides being a place of worship, it functioned as a secular meeting hall and as a focus for charitable and benevolent work within the community, more closely resembling a European lodge than a church. The temple attendant, besides being spiritual leader and political spokesperson, was often physician and herbalist as well.

There was substantial Chinese population in the Innisfail district from the first decades of settlement, initially involved in gold mining and then agriculture, particularly sugar and banana growing. During the 1880s a timber-framed temple, Lit Sung Goong, was built at the corner of Edith and Owen Streets. Like most of Innisfail’s early buildings, this temple was destroyed in the great cyclone of 10 March 1918. This was 40 years after the wave of Chinese immigration to the northern goldfields peaked in the 1870s and spiritual tradition and cultural cohesiveness within the Chinese community had greatly diminished. Thus 22 years elapsed before the present temple was built in 1940 to replace the one destroyed, there is some oral evidence that another temple was built during the intervening period but this has not been confirmed.

It has very little of its predecessor’s cultural significance within the Chinese community. A leaflet available at the temple says it is still in use by a handful of worshippers “in the evening of their life’. May (1984:80) says more bluntly that the new temple, “built... primarily as a tourist attraction, is not patronised by the present Chinese population”. None-the-less, the temple represents the continuity of at least a vestige of Chinese cultural tradition prompted by migration from Southeast Asia and China in the last two decades.

*River Reflections*²⁷

River Reflections omprises eight sculpted panels, set in the coping wall on the Innisfail Esplanade and depicts scenes from: the Mamu; Irish cane industry pioneers; recreation; destruction; food; individual sagas; the economy of the site; and visions for the future.

In 1998, Innisfail born artist, Sam Di Mauro, worked with local artists and tradespeople to create this visual narrative of the history of the Johnstone River.

*Aboriginal Tourism*²⁸

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the Shire recognise the importance of indigenous tourism to the economic health of the Shire. Opportunities to showcase their unique talents and knowledge of the Shire are just beginning to open up.

- The Gadugai Dance Troupe performs at community events and festivals.
- The Mamu people are establishing a medicinal nutritional plant garden within the Warrina Lakes complex. Guided walks for tourists will be a feature of this project within 5 years.
- The Clump Mountain wilderness Camp at Mission Beach has open days when local Aborigines conduct guided walks.
- Good quality didgeridoos and boomerangs can be purchased from a small Aboriginal owned and operated studio in Murdering Point Road, Kurrimine.
- The proposed Canopy Walk in Wooroonooran National Park will significantly expand opportunities for many of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islader residents in indigenous tourism.

*Town Walk*²⁹

The town walk is a circuit of 11 culturally significant sites in the Innisfail CBD. The walk commences at the Innisfail Information Centre situated in the old Commonwealth bank building (Edith Street) which was built in the 1920’s and has now been Heritage Listed. The walk starts at the Cancutter Statue and proceeds to dominant histrocial locations such as the

²⁷ Lipscombe, pers. comm, 2001

²⁸ Mamu, pers. comm, 2001

²⁹ Extracted from Town Walk Brochure

Memorial School of Arts, Court House, Grand Central Hotel, the site of the former See Poy and Sons (now Coles Supermarket) and Geraldton School, the fourth rebuild of the Shire Hall, Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic church, and many other buildings and sites of historical significance in the Shire.

*Religious Events*³⁰

The Throwing of the Cross is an annual Greek Orthodox tradition held on a Sunday closest to the 6th January. Single men dive to retrieve the gold cross thrown into the water at Kurrimine Beach. The man who claims the cross is said to have good luck for the next 12 months. He is presented with a gold cross and chain to keep and the church holds the gold cross until the next year.

*The Feast of Three Saints*³¹

The Legend

The Feast of the Three Saints had its beginning in the town of Gascony, Spain where the three brothers Alfio, Filadelfo and Cirino were born between 230-233 AD. The three brothers were brought up as Christians under the peaceful reign on the Roman Emperor, Alexander Severus.

In 251, Decius Alexander’s successor set out to get rid of Christianity. In Gascony, the brother’s mother was the first to be martyred. Her husband and three sons were marched a thousand miles to Rome, where their father, was tortured and killed together with Bishop Onesimus and thirteen fellow Christians.

The three brothers were then led to Sicily, where it was hoped to convert them to pagan worship. Their great courage and miracles on the journey helped convert 20 of the forty guards escorting them, who later shared their martyrdom in Sicily.

After forty weeks of prolonged torture, Alfio was left to bleed to death after having his tongue cut off for praising Jesus Christ; Filadelfo was roasted alive, and Cirino was dropped into a cauldron of boiling tar. The end came at Lentiini, close to where the town of St Alfio exists today. The date of their martyrdom was May 10, 253 AD.

The Feast of the Three Saints, Silkwood, Australia

To celebrate the Feast of the Three Saints, Alfio, Filadelfo and Cirino, the chant ‘*Con buona Fedem Viva Sant’ Alfio/With true faith, long live Saint Alfio*’, is heard on the first Sunday in May each year.

Earlier in the last century, Mr Rosario Tornabene, a former Silkwood resident, made a promise to God. His wife Alfia was dangerously ill giving birth to their daughter, and Mr Tornabene promised that if his wife were to recover, he would have the statues of the Three Saints bought out to Australia.

Mrs Tornabene did survive, and in 1950, Mr Tornabene donated the three statues of the Three Saints to the St John’s Parish Church at Silkwood. That year marked the first celebration of the Feast of the Saints in Australia. Every year since 1950 the feast has been held on the first Sunday of May.

There are two significant identifiable elements along with other less tangible elements that are impacting on the continued viability of the feast.

- Social diversity away from the traditional religious faiths.
- Economic constraints in hosting the level of event expected by the community.

³⁰ Graham, pers. comm, 2001

³¹ Olsen, pers. comm, 2001

- The other pressure elements include competing activities within the region, limited population base, maintenance of core personnel, inclement weather and a lack of broad-based promotion.

The linkage of the Feast with the Australian Italian Festival in the township of Ingham over the last three years has improved the viability of both events. The recent fiftieth anniversary Feast indicated that there was still good future potential capacity for the continuance of the Feast. The introduction of merchandising such as video sales and a book outlining the history of the Feast in Italy and Silkwood written by Mr Stefan Giarola and funded in part by the Italian Government added a further dimension to support the ongoing capacity of the Feast.

The current level of economic benefit to the community is calculated at approximately \$300,000 per year.

Continued affiliation with the Ingham event will, in the short term, be necessary to maximise the potential of both events. Structured promotion of the events must extend outside the immediate region to continue to attract attendance from supporting communities. Long-term corporate sponsorship needs to be integrated into the promotional aspect of the feast.

Town Beautification ³²

During 2000, Canecutter Court was constructed at an approximate cost of \$709,000 with State Government assistance of 50%. The project consisted of a series of supply contracts with Council who were supported by a local consortium of contractors who installed the furniture, infrastructure, and landscaping. Future works include Riverside Carpark, Intersections of Edith/Rankin and Owen Streets and Edith Street between Owen and Rankin Streets.

Markets ³³

Four markets are held regularly in the Shire:

- Innisfail Red Cross – 3rd Saturday of the month held in ANZAC Memorial Park.
- Mission Beach – 1st Saturday and 3rd Sunday of the month held opposite Hideaway Caravan Park.
- Mission Beach Monster Markets – last Sunday of the month held in the Recreation Centre.
- Kurrimine Beach – 2nd Sunday of the month held at the Silkwood Red Cross

Olympic Torch Relay. ³⁴

On Sunday June 25 2000, one of the Shire’s most successful community events occurred when the 2000 Olympic Torch Relay ran through the Shire. A crowd of over 9000 Shire residents witnessed local triathlon hero and world champion, Brad Beven light the replica Olympic Cauldron at Pease Park.

The event was coordinated by a local working group of 12 who were responsible for organising the various aspects of the event including promotion, catering, volunteers, indigenous and multicultural involvement, entertainment, site and policing logistics.

A crew of 1000 strong volunteers helped present the Torch Relay celebrations to the Shire.

50 local residents carried the Torch from Mission Beach through El Arish and Mourilyan into Innisfail. A further 20 carried the Torch out of the Shire the following morning.

Entertainment coordinators focused on showcasing local talent, which featured in the official celebrations. A total of 400 schoolchildren waving glowsticks formed a guard of honour through which the flag of Olympic Nations, the Shire’s world sporting champions, local

³² Verily, pers. comm, 2001

³³ Graham, pers. comm, 2001

³⁴ Hyde, pers. comm, 2001

sporting clubs, past and present Torch bearers and the Charter Oak March band passed before the Torch.

Local dance schools; the Gudjaguy Dance troupe; Junior Theatre Group; Choral Society and Innisfail State High School Choir; dancers and singers of the Hmong Greek, and Italian communities, as well as Torres Straits and Scottish and local youth bands delighted crowds and impressed SOCOG organisers, with over 2 hours of entertainment accompanying the official ceremony. Local Sculptor, Scribbles, created a magical cane sculpture that “burnt” throughout the ceremony which depicted the “people of the rain and cane”.

A mini Olympics and Kiddies Venue kept young ones entertained whilst waiting for the torch arrival. An International food hall satisfied all tastes with foods from a variety of nations representing the Shire’s multicultural community.

The highlight of the event... apart from the cauldron being lit, had to be the arrival of Gertrude, a 3 year old croc from The Johnstone River Crocodile Farm who briefly interrupted proceedings to join her namesake Beven, “The Croc” on stage to assist the ceremony.

*Annual Show*³⁵

The Innisfail Annual Show has displays of cars and machinery, sugar cane, cattle, poultry, bananas, pawpaws, horticulture, needlework, and arts and crafts. Wood chops, ring events, fireworks and sideshow alley are added attractions. The show usually attracts about 8000 people each year.

*Innisfail District Ballet & Dance Society – Annual Dance Competition*³⁶

This event is held each year at the Shire Hall in Rankin Street Innisfail. Competitors for the competition come from Ayr., Townsville, Ingham, Tully, Innisfail, Babinda, Gordonvale, Cairns, Smithfield, Port Douglas, Atherton and Mareeba with the dance adjudicator usually coming from Sydney. Over 900 entries are usually received each year with styles of dance including tap, modern, classical ballet, demi character, national character, song and dance, and novelty. Performances include solos, duos, trios and group sections. Local motels are usually booked out for this week and cafes, clubs and eating venues are usually very busy catering for the intake of visitors to Innisfail.

Harvest Festival 2000

Harvest festival was held on the 14th October 2000, with celebrations commencing on the 8th October with the inaugural Kulture Karnival. The theme for the festival in 2000 was “Harvesting our Shire” with activities and events including:

- Performance of harvest song written by Sam Pappalardo
- Photographic competition
- Performance of “Women in Docs”
- Annual parade led in 2000 by Guduguy dance troupe
- Children’s parade
- Innisfail State High Art exhibition in central arcade.

*Flying Fish Point Van Park Fishing Tournament*³⁷

The Flying Fish Point Van Park Fishing tournament is an annual fishing tournament, which commenced in 1999. In 2000, the 2nd Annual event was held on the weekend of the 23rd and 24th of September. Conditions for the tournament were less than ideal, with strong winds limiting the number of boats making it far offshore.

³⁵ Graham, pers. comm, 2001

³⁶ Thaggard, pers. comm, 2001

³⁷ Raudzens, pers. comm, 2001

The 2000 tournament attracted a total of 200 participants, 162 of which were boating anglers (29 juniors), and the remaining 38 were beach anglers (10 juniors). A total of 131 fish of 8 species were caught from boats, with 11 fish of 5 species caught by beach anglers.

Other Statistics included:

- 20 boats out of 51 caught no fish
- 73 boat anglers caught no fish
- 89 out of 162 boat anglers caught 131 fish
- 30 beach anglers caught no fish
- 8 out of 38 beach anglers caught 11 fish
- The biggest fish was a travelly over 4kg
- Most of the bream were less than 400 grams.

Innisfail Bill Fishing Tournament ³⁸

The Innisfail Bill Fishing Tournament has been staged for the last 20 years and draws attendance from all over the region and the nation. It has been featured in National Fishing Publications, and as such, draws attention to and showcases the area, not just the tournament. The tournament is a catch and release usually run in early-mid September, and targets small billfish species proliferating off the coast line. Entry is open to persons from all backgrounds and all levels of experience from beginners, to intermediates, and regular anglers.

Garra Barra Classic ³⁹

The classic is held the first weekend after the opening of the barramundi season and the area covered extends from the Mulgrave River in the north to the Tully River in the south. The Garra Barra Classic operates in freshwater only but excludes Tinaroo Dam.

Fishing Tourism In General ⁴⁰

The Johnstone Shire offers the broadest range of fishing opportunities that are easily accessible in the Country. Whilst the Shire does not possess the best fishing in any individual sector, it does, however, contain the best aggregation of fisheries in the Country. By using Innisfail as a base, anglers have easy access to quality freshwater and impoundment fisheries, intertidal and estuary fisheries, beach and inshore/island fisheries, and the Great Barrier Reef fishery, as well as world class pelagic sport fisheries (Mackerel and Marlin). Especially pertinent is the fact that such a fishery is supported by complete community infrastructure such as sealed roads, accommodation, easy accessibility of Highway 1, shopping facilities, etc. Whilst fishing currently manifests itself a tourism asset, it also produces indirect benefits via investment in the area. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that angler investment in the Shire thus far amounts to millions of dollars.

7.5.7. Accommodation ⁴¹

The Johnstone Shire has a long established history in providing temporary/short-term accommodation to the itinerant workers of the Agricultural Sector. The move to mechanisation in the sugar industry has seen the decline in the need for this form of accommodation and the industry has endeavoured to make the transition into the Tourism Industry, with limited success. In more recent times, the enormous growth in the Banana Industry has again caused a rising demand for workers accommodation. This demand is being met by the “Backpacker Accommodation” sector.

Opportunities for larger scale accommodation facilities have not arisen, with most emphasis by Government Agencies and Regional Promotion Bodies being placed on the Cairns area,

³⁸ Pagano, pers. comm, 2000

³⁹ Aggis, pers comm, 2001

⁴⁰ Pagano, pers. comm, 2000

⁴¹ Hopkins, pers. comm, 2001

depriving the Johnstone Shire of the necessary numbers of overnight stays by domestic and international tourists.

While the Shire offers a wide range of accommodation types, there is a lack of facilities of a sufficient size to attract large numbers of Tourists or to be able to cater for Conferences etc.

The Accommodation Industry in the Johnstone Shire can be categorised in three distinct geographic areas:

- Innisfail Area
- Mission Beach
- The rest of the Shire

In an attempt to quantify the extent and range of accommodation facilities available, Accommodation Clusters are being established in each of the three areas. One of the tasks of these clusters will be to survey all of the providers in each area to enable a database to be prepared on all facets of the services provided. To date only the Innisfail Cluster has been formed.

At the time of compilation (Jan 2001) the following table represented a summary of the available accommodation in the Innisfail area. The Innisfail Area includes those establishments within 15kms of the town centre.

Innisfail Accommodation Types:

| Accommodation Type | No. of Establishment | No. of Beds | No. of Van Sites | No. of camp sites | Highest RACQ Rating |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Hotels | 12 | 94 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Motels | 4 | 125 | N/A | N/A | 3.5 |
| Caravan Parks | 5 | 78 | 233 | 74 | 4 |
| Backpackers | 5 | 153 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Bed & Breakfasts | 1 | 4 | N/A | N/A | 4 |
| Farm Stays | Nil | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Accommodation Units | 4 | 52 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Total | 31 | 506 | 233 | 74 | |

Table 7.14 Accommodation in Innisfail Area

As the other Clusters are formed, these figures will become available for the other areas.

Opportunities for development of a greater depth in the industry will arise in the future with implementation of tourism facilities such as the proposed Canopy Walkway. A project of this nature will provide the catalyst for further investment in accommodation facilities in the traditional area of Motels, etc., as well as in more recent formats such as Bed & Breakfasts, Farmstays and Eco- Accommodation.

7.6. Other Industries

7.6.1. Retail ⁴²

The Johnstone Shire is predominantly a Rural Shire and has developed over time as a solid rural service centre. The majority of retail outlets are centred in Innisfail, but each of the smaller towns and villages are serviced by a collection of small retail outlets covering the basic needs of their respective communities.

⁴² Hopkins, per. comm, 2001

More recently, Innisfail has become a regional focus for banks and other institutions. While banks have been closing branches in Rural Australia, recent years have seen some of the major banks upgrading their facilities in Innisfail. This, in turn, has given added confidence to the retail sector, encouraging the development of the Central Shopping Arcade based around a major food chain, Franklins.

Innisfail currently boasts three major food outlets (Coles, Woolworths, Franklins), three budget variety stores (Treasure Kingdom, Crazy Clarks, Rampage), three major white goods retailers (Retravisision, Harvey Norman, Mellicks), numerous chemists, clothing/footwear stores, hairdressers, butchers, bakeries, coffee shops, cafes and other specialty stores.

In a recent survey, over 1000 shoppers in Innisfail were questioned on a variety of shopping issues. Clearly, Innisfail was seen as a regional shopping centre with more than 10% of the shoppers surveyed being from out of town. While Innisfail has a population of approximately 10,000 and the Shire has approximately 20,000, a catchment area of radius 50 kms from the Innisfail CBD encompasses a population of some 35,000 people. Clearly, the future for the Innisfail CBD will be dependent on the introduction of strategies to attract those 35,000 to utilise the retail facilities in Innisfail.

In relation to opportunities within the retail sector, the survey indicated a need for additional facilities including a variety store (eg. K-Mart/Target), a Cinema and Medical Centre. The Rising Sun Centre in the Innisfail CBD has, for some time, housed limited medical facilities. However, with the recent movement of further medical practitioners into the Centre, the foundations have been laid for it to become a dedicated Medical Centre. Investigations into a Cinema have been instigated a number of times without outcomes. Currently, Council is looking into the feasibility of a multi-purpose facility which may include a Cinema format.

7.6.2. Services

Trades⁴³

Innisfail is generally well served with the presence of the majority of what would be considered traditional trades such as builders, plumbers’ etc. There is also evidence of the emerging trades in areas such as IT and those associated with primary industry.

A primary census of the actual number of trades was carried out using local data base information, yellow pages listing and business premise surveys. The accuracy of this data cannot be relied on, as there appears to be discrepancies between data information and actual numbers. The builders are a case in point given that there are some 60 registered builders in the Shire according to the Builders Registration Boards however there appears to be only 26 active in the community.

Large enterprises such as the sugar mills and the foundry have been the mainstay of the electrical and engineering trades, providing an excellent supply of those trades back into the community. Historically trade activity is very responsive to community demand with economic cycles dictating actual resident numbers. This is particularly true of the sole proprietor trades.

Trades appear to be divided into two major groupings:

Sole proprietors operating out of private residences:

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Builders | 26 |
| Carpenters | 6 |
| Electricians | 10 |
| Painters | 8 |
| Plaster/Tilers | 4 |
| Plumbers | 5 |

Multiple Trade Employees operating out of established business premises

⁴³ Olsen, per. comm, 2001

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Auto Electricians | 5 |
| Boat Builders | 2 |
| Boilermakers/Engineering | 6 |
| Cabinet Makers | 7 |
| Electronic Technicians | 4 |
| Marine Technicians | 2 |
| Motor Mechanics | 20 |
| Panel Beaters | 8 |
| Refrigeration Technicians | 5 |
| Sheet Metal | 2 |

Economic cycles impact heavily on the numbers of available trades-persons particularly in building related fields

- Reduced numbers of available trainee positions
- Multi skilling of trades-persons.
- Aging of current trades-persons.
- Throwaway society
- Environmental compliance.
- Training and physical standards.
- Economic compliance, GST

The combination of some or all of these pressure elements provide difficult environment for the majority of trades to flourish. However, in times of high economic growth the impact of these pressures is more easily absorbed. Currently, at a low point in the economic cycle, there is evidence of a resource drift in some of the trades, while in other areas there is a clear indication of trade over supply.

Most trade trainees are required to travel outside the region to attend technical training institutions despite the Shire having a large under resourced TAFE College.

This is a difficult challenge as the field is one of such diversity that would resist the application of a single strategy being applied to all pressure elements. A more workable approach would be to identify common strengths and weaknesses within aligned trade fields prior to attempting to implement any strategies designed to enhance the viability of the sector.

The initial step in this process would require the unifying of the aligned trades and recognition by that particular sector as to the need for a structured approach to be adopted. This action would need to be driven by identified leaders within the sector.

Maintenance of a strong trades sector is essential to the Shire’s ability to fulfil its role as regional centre. However the traditional nature of trades suggests that they will continue to operate on a supply and demand basis without any structured planning associated with retaining a core element, other than any particular trades persons’ desire to continue to operate in the Shire.

Strong economic growth is the single most effective means of ensuring retention of a broad variety of trades. Maintaining a diverse economic base will also greatly assist the retention process. The continued degradation of training capacity within the Shire will also greatly limit the trades potential.

7.6.3. Professionals ⁴⁴

The Johnstone Shire, and in particular, Innisfail, is well served by the professions to the extent that Innisfail is now seen as a regional centre for professional services, similar to the Banks etc.

The professions have been involved in the evolution of the Shire and have played a major role in the development of both the rural and business sectors. The most prominent of the

⁴⁴ Hopkins, per. comm, 2001

professions is the legal profession and many of its predecessors have played major roles in the development of the economic growth of the Shire, not only as legal advisers, but also as actual participants.

As well as the legal fraternity, other professions that are well established in the Shire include Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacists, Physiotherapy, Veterinary Science, Accounting, Architecture, Engineering, Surveying, Valuing, Town Planning, Environmental Science, Agricultural and Horticultural Science, Education and Training, and Marine Sciences.

7.6.4. Banking Industry ⁴⁵

Banks will continue to rationalise branches and encourage customers to use electronic access.

The four major banks are represented in the Shire in addition to SUNCORP METWAY and 1st Australian, with all banks having their branches in Innisfail. All of the banks represented offer full banking facilities and electronic access through ATMs, either directly or through partnership agreements with other banks represented in the Shire. The Shire’s population is well catered for with lending Managers located in all the banks to handle any rural or residential application, large or small. Investment and retirement planning advice is also available through the above outlets.

All banks that had dual representation in the Shire have rationalised branches to one outlet. The Internet will play an ever-increasing role in day to day banking activities.

7.6.5. Government ⁴⁶

STATE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

| Department | Office Location | Other Information |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| Education | Atherton | |
| Emergency Services | Cairns | The Department of Emergency services is an umbrella organisation that recognises and promotes the distinct and unique histories, cultures and operational roles of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Counter Disaster and Rescue Service. |
| Queensland Ambulance Service | District Office in Innisfail | Ambulance stations also located in Mission Beach, Silkwood and South Johnstone |
| Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority | Area Office in Innisfail | Fire Stations also located at Kurrimine Beach, El Arish, and Mission Beach. Firecom Far Northern is the communication centre for all stations including Rural Fire Service. The centre is located in Cairns and shares facilities with Queensland Ambulance Service. |
| Rural Fire Service | Innisfail | The regional office in Innisfail co-ordinates activities in the outlying areas. |
| Counter Disaster and Rescue Services | Office in Innisfail | Local Volunteer units manned only during disasters and emergencies. Volunteer Marine Rescue (Coastguard) also operating. |
| Department of employment, training and industrial relations | District Office in Innisfail | |
| Workplace Health and Safety | District Office in Innisfail | |
| Technical and Further Education | Campus in Innisfail | |

⁴⁵ Dyason, pers. comm, 2001

⁴⁶ Thaggard, pers. comm, 2001

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| Queensland Transport | Office in Innisfail | Police Stations at El Arish, Moruilyan, Silkwood and South Johnstone act as Queensland Transport Agents |
| Environmental Protection Agency | Office in Cairns | Regional office in Cairns services the Johnstone Shire. |
| Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service | District Office in Innisfail | Ranger Bases are also located at Wooroonooran National Park (Palmerston Section), Garner’s Beach and Josephine Falls (although not in the Shire, the ranger-in-charge looks after some parks within the Shire. |
| Department of Families, Youth and Community Care | Office in Innisfail | |
| Department of Primary Industries | Office at South Johnstone | Incorporates the Queensland Horticultural Institute, Animal Plant Health Services, Rural Industry Business Service, and the Farming Systems Institute |
| Department of Natural Resources | Office at South Johnstone | Incorporates the Land Protection Unit, Water Management Unit, Forestry, as well as a customer service centre in Innisfail, and the Catchment Centre also located in Innisfail. |
| Department of Justice | Magistrate’s Court in Innisfail | Magistrate’s Court also acts as an agent for the Public Trust and Justice of the Peace. |
| Department of Main Roads | Office in Cairns | Main Roads Depot near Cowley Beach turnoff |
| Department of Public Works | Office in Innisfail | |
| Queensland Rail | Office in Innisfail | Q-Link and Maintenance Offices also located in Innisfail |

Table 7.15 Government Departments Servicing Johnstone Shire

7.7. Employment

Unemployment in the Innisfail area is similar to the surrounding townships with the lowest level of unemployed persons in Innisfail in 2000 being 863 in November and the highest being 1178 in March. This level of unemployment is similar to surrounding areas and the situation in the whole state. The employment rate is variable in this community due to the amount of seasonal work.

Initiatives for the area include the job network member intensive programs such as job search training and work for the dole programs like Greencorps.

According to Centrelink, Innisfail has a good level of service provided for the size of the population

7.8. Transport

7.8.1. Public and School Transport⁴⁷

A review of public transport services throughout Queensland in the early 1990’s which in the introduction of *the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act and Regulation 1994*, Commercial Service Contracts or Performance Contracts were negotiated in all major cities and most provincial towns with populations greater than 7,500 persons. The contract arrangements were designed to enhance the existing level of services, to provide for greater accountability of operators to achieve defined minimum levels of service and to facilitate the provision of assistance to operators in areas such as marketing, business management and direct subsidies.

Two contracts were negotiated in the Johnstone Shire for the provision of school and public passenger services in and around Innisfail. The operators involved are Trans North Bus and Coach and Hastie’s Bus Service.

⁴⁷ Queensland Transport, pers. comm, 2001

Trans North Bus and Coach provides a comprehensive service involving a town loop service, services to Innisfail East, Innisfail West, services to Japoonvale, Silkwood, Kurrimine, Mourilyan township and Mourilyan harbour. Some sections of these route services are operated on a demand responsive basis and are accessed through Telebus that requires the user to phone for a bus to pick them up on the next adjacent services. Users residing in Mourilyan, Wangan and South Johnstone are collected from their homes.

Hastie’s Bus Service provides services between Flying Fish Point and Belvedere Estate via Innisfail Estates.

These operators are assisted financially by the provision of concession fare top ups for pensioner fares, interest and direct subsidy and through access to various schemes including Queensland Transport’s Local Operator Marketing Assistance Plan and the Accessible Bus Pilot Program.

The Local Operator Marketing Assistance Plan provides assistance in the form of contributions to direct advertising, assistance with the development of marketing plans, timetables and displays. Queensland Transport’s Media and Marketing Division has approved funding for the installation of A3 and A4 cases to be installed at prominent and high usage bus stop locations in the Innisfail area for the display of timetable and route map information. This project will be completed by June 2001.

Operators may apply under the Accessible Bus Pilot Program, which was introduced to assist operators comply with the Anti Discrimination Act, for a 20% contribution towards the purchase of new accessible low floor buses.

With the introduction of these contracts a grant of \$200,000 was provided to Johnstone Shire Council to facilitate the provision of roadside infrastructure including bus shelters, bus stop signs, timetable cases and display cases. This funding was provided under the Public Transport Infrastructure Program established to facilitate the provision of urban bus services in contract areas and is provided to Local Government on a 50/50 cost-sharing basis.

7.8.2. Air⁴⁸

The Johnstone Shire is serviced by one airport, this being the Innisfail Aerodrome at Mundoo. The Johnstone Shire Council is the owner of Innisfail Aerodrome, with the Innisfail Aerodrome Management Committee being authorised and empowered by a Local Law for responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the Aerodrome on Council’s behalf.

Facilities at the Aerodrome include a passenger terminal and public toilets. Two runways are in operation at the site, with one being a sealed runway. The main services operating out of the facilities include light aircraft charter operations, an aviation school, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Air Ambulance and Government aircraft as well as general aviation. No statistics are kept on the number of aircraft utilising the facility.

There are no plans for future expansion or increased usage of the facility, with any additional traffic from the Cairns airport being directed to the Mareeba aerodrome.

7.8.3. Road⁴⁹

The Johnstone Shire lies within the Northern Region of the Queensland Department of Main Roads, with the whole region covering some 683,000 square kilometres. The region comprises some 8,840 kilometres of State Controlled Roads, 1,100 kilometres of which are National Highways, for which Federal Government has funding responsibility. These roads service some 450,000 people in major provincial cities, as well as small rural and isolated and indigenous communities across the region.

⁴⁸ Colleton, pers. comm, 2001

⁴⁹ Department of Main Roads, 2001

The main pressures identified for roads in the region include the need for appropriate roads infrastructure to support the high volumes of heavy freight, public transport and passenger vehicles, resulting from the region’s growing tourism industry and its strong export orientated mining, pastoral and agricultural industries. The climate experienced by the region also contributes to the cost of production and maintenance of roads.

The Department of Main Roads Traffic Census 1996 indicates one permanent traffic counter location within the Shire and another just outside the Shire’ boundary operating on State-controlled roads. A description of these locations and their corresponding traffic volume details are presented below.

| | Bruce Highway at Silkwood | Palmerston Highway |
|---|--|--|
| Description of location | 200 metres north of the Kurrimine Beach turn off | 100 metres east of Brooks Road |
| Trends in Traffic Volume | Increasing volume since 1991 2.7% growth p.a. in last year 4.6% growth p.a. in last 5 years 4.3 % growth in last 10 years | Increasing volume since 1985 6.9% growth last year 6.0% growth p.a. in last 5 years 4.9% growth p.a. in last 10 years |
| Average Weekday Volume (combined directions) | 4302 vehicles 5989 vehicles on the busiest day recorded (1996) | 900 vehicles 1974 vehicles on the busiest day recorded (1996) |
| Busiest Day of the Week | Friday | Sunday |
| Busiest Period and Peak | June to November peaking in July | June to December peaking in September |
| Greatest Traffic Direction | South Bound | East Bound |

Table 7.16 1996 Traffic Counter Statistics of importance to Johnstone Shire

In addition to the permanent counter, Main Roads also operates mobile counters on state-controlled roads and some intersections in the Shire with information Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) figures available for the mobile counter locations.

Declared state-controlled roads in the Johnstone Shire are:

| | |
|---|------------------|
| National Highway | 55.15 km |
| Other State-Controlled Roads – Highways | 38.70 km |
| Other State-Controlled Roads – Other Main Roads | 96.33 km |
| Total Other State Controlled Roads | 135.03 km |

TOTAL DECLARED ROADS 190.18 km

The Department of Main Roads funds works conducted on State-controlled roads and National Highways in the Johnstone Shire through the Department’s Roads Implementation program (RIP). Additionally, the Department of main Roads funds works on Council roads and transport initiatives within the Shire through the Department of Main Roads Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS).

Works planned in the 2000-2001 to 2002-2003 RIP include:

National Highways:

- Intersection improvement
- Overtaking lanes
- Road pavement reconstruction

Other State-controlled Roads:

- Replacement of bridges
- Installation of culverts
- Road widening and sealing
- Auxiliary lanes
- Construction of bridges and their approaches
- Realignment of lanes
- Road rehabilitation and widening

The total cost of these projects is \$25,722,000. \$11,491,000 is allocated for the financial year 2000/2001.

Works planned to be funded in Johnstone Shire by the TIDS include:

- Cowley Beach Road upgrading – widen and seal
- Upper Daradgee Road - upgrade formation, widen and seal
- GERALTON BRIDGE – safety rail for cyclists and pedestrians
- Laurie Street – bicycle path
- Various school bus set-down areas – installation of bus shelters on school bus route
- Daradgee Environmental Education Centre – improved parking and set-down facilities
- Innisfail State School – improved parking and set-down facilities
- El Arish State School – improved parking and set-down facilities
- Mother of Good Council School – improved bus set-down and traffic movement
- Goondi State School – bus shelter and footpath at set-down area
- Silkwood State School – improved parking and set-down area
- Australian Road Rules Infrastructure.

The total cost of these projects is \$967,440,000 with Council and the Department of Main Roads each contributing \$483,940,000.

7.8.4. Rail Corridors

The main Brisbane to Cairns rail line passes from south to north through the Shire and carries significant freight and passenger loads. There are several stations and sidings in the Shire, the most important of which is the Innisfail Railway Station. Queensland Rail have recently upgraded the freight transfer facility in the Innisfail yards. Queensland Rail are also undertaking a major upgrade of the line through the Shire to cater for the Tilt Train operation which will commence in the next few years.

The EDI Rail Group and Queensland Rail have formed an alliance to design, procure, manufacture, test, commission and project manage a contract for this innovative product. The train will consist of seven fully air-conditioned passenger cars with two low weight high performance power cars operating in a push pull configuration. Each power car is powered by two 12-cylinder turbo charged diesel engines each capable of producing 1350kW. The combination of tilt technology and track improvements will allow the train to achieve its design speed of 160 km/hr frequently, decreasing the journey time between Brisbane and Cairns by 18 % to 27 hours.

7.8.5. Sugar Cane Rail Network

The privately owned and operated Sugar Cane Rail Network covers an extensive part of the Shire and plays an important role in reducing transport costs and minimising sugar industry related traffic on the road network. Maintenance and use of this network is important for the sugar industry and the Shire as a whole.

7.8.6. Mourilyan Port

The Port is a Major point of export and import of products and goods for the Shire.

7.8.7. Boat ramps and jetties

There are numerous facilities in the Shire catering for recreational boating and fishing industry needs.

7.8.8. Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

The provision of paths for pedestrian and bicycles are an important contributor to personal health and mobility for residents. They also help to reduce the need for motor vehicle use on

short trips. The network of paths and various secure parking and change facilities should be recorded and monitored.

7.9. Building Activity

The value of building activity in the Shire during the year 2000 was \$10.5M, which is about half of the value in the previous year. There has been an Australia wide trend of reduced building activity following the introduction of GST. Queensland figures compiled by Construction Research of Australia show a reduction in new dwelling construction by 40% in the 6 months following GST compared with the previous 6 months.

Johnstone Shire has not been exempt from the GST effect, in addition to a general downward trend in building activity in the Shire since 1996 as shown in Figure 7.1. The marked decline can be attributed to the unsustainable level of activity in the 1991 to 1996 period when population in the Shire increased by 8.7% while the number of dwellings increased by 12.7% combined with a general decline in the value of the sugar harvest returns in and the associated flow on effect on the community. The local real estate industry advises that there over 1000 dwellings listed for sale in the Shire.

The table below summarises building applications received for the year ending 31 December 2000.

| Type of Building | Number | Value (\$) |
|---------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Houses | 45 | 5 069 027 |
| Duplex | 1 | 200 000 |
| Multiple Dwelling (units) | - | - |
| Accommodation units | 1 | 40 000 |
| Commercial buildings | 32 | 2 747 170 |
| Other Structures | 168 | 2 363 649 |
| Total | 247 | 10 419 846 |

Table 7.17 Building application and value in Johnstone Shire in 2000

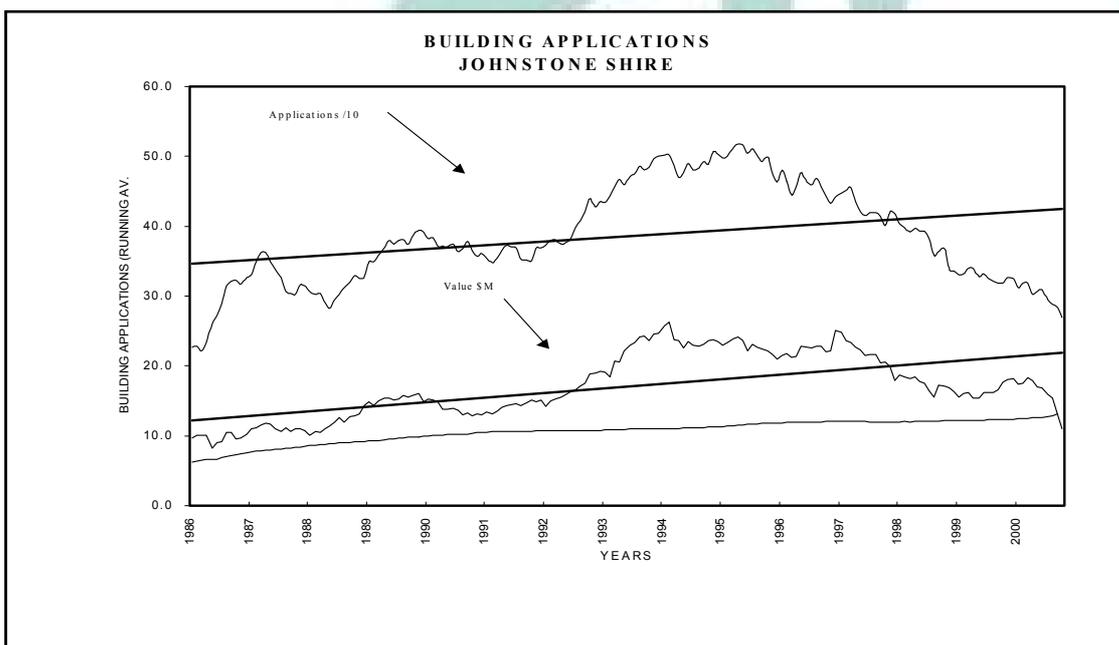


Figure 7.1 Trends in Building Applications since 1986

The figures experienced by the Johnstone Shire in the year 2000 are likened to those in other Shires possessing similar characteristics such as population, area, demography, etc.

7.10. Deficiencies in Existing Data

Further economic development information is needed on accommodation in the Shire (outside of the Innisfail), employment opportunities and employment figures.

7.11. Recommendations

Business and Tourism

- That further research be conducted on treatment pond systems and in particular the recirculation systems to increase the sustainability of the prawn farming industry.
- That the Flying Fish Point Jetty be restored to provide a valuable historical facility and multi purpose fishing and boating facility.
- That secondary uses be established at the Innisfail Boat harbour to improve the attraction of the facility to the public.
- On completion of stage 1 of the Ulysses Link Track, a study be commissioned to ascertain the viability of extending the track either north or south.
- That the construction of a network of walking tracks in the Wet Tropics be constructed by December 2002.
- That the Palmerston Canopy Walkway be commissioned by December 2003.
- That the Innisfail Scenic route Road Signage be erected by December 2001.
- That a calendar of events be established on the Council website to assist in the promotion and coordination of events in the Shire.
- That a survey of the Mission Beach and the balance of the Shire area’s accommodation be completed to complement the survey already completed in the Innisfail area.
- That strategies be established and implemented to attract more people from the regional shopping catchment area to utilise the retail facilities in Innisfail
- That assistance be given to private investors to act upon the opportunity to establish needed facilities in Innisfail such as a variety store and a Cinema complex.

Forestry

- A regional greenhouse strategy is required to look at trees/forestry and evaluate their potential to absorb carbon dioxide. This may encourage landowners to undertake tree planting as it may create an additional income through the development of a carbon credits market in the future.
- Investigation of a market for the utilisation of farm forestry thinnings as a source of electricity (e.g. thinnings can be burnt in sugar mill boilers to generate energy which can be sold back to the grid).

Cane

- Research continues into improving and enhancing farming practices and cane varieties so as to maximise industry profitability and sustainability.
- The cane industry enhances its good working relationships with local state and federal government and continues to consult with government on, and stay abreast of, policies affecting the industry.
- Johnstone Shire Council continues to offer rate deferment to growers in financial hardship without imposing interest charges.
- Industry continues work on the strategic plan which aims to modify and implement those elements of whole of system raw sugar production that can be improved to ensure the sugar industry is world competitive and profitable on an economically sustainable long term basis.
- That Council continue to foster and facilitate the possible development of an ethanol industry

7.12. Bibliography and Further Reading

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