



Opportunities for India in Tropical North Queensland

This document has been prepared to provide the Australian Government with an overview of the possible areas of cooperation between India and Tropical North Queensland (TNQ).

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Introduction to Advance Cairns

Advance Cairns is a member based organisation that acts as the peak economic development, investment attraction and advocacy organisation for the TNQ region. The members represent key stakeholders within our community and business leaders who all have a vested interest in driving our region forward.

The organisation has identified India as a priority country and is focussed on developing long term relationships that result in two way trade and investment. To this effect Advance Cairns is a member of the Australia India Business Council (AIBC) and actively engages with the AIBC executive in Brisbane. Mr. Shenal Basnayake also took part in the Vibrant Gujarat Summit in January 2015 and is currently working with Trade & Investment Queensland office in India to develop a business mission to India focussing on Tropical Expertise.

Introduction to Tropical North Queensland

The Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) region as defined by Advance Cairns comprises of 26 Local Government Areas (LGA's) covering a landmass of 383,558sq km.

The below map depicts the TNQ region geographically.



As of 30 June 2013, according to the Queensland Government Statistician's Office, the region was home to a population of 289,692 persons and growing. The fastest growing LGA is Cairns with a population in excess of 157,081 and growing at an average annual rate of 2.6% which is higher than the Australian and Queensland average. Based on the 2011 census the Indian population accounts for around 0.7% of the total population or around 1026 persons.

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Economically the region is renowned for its tourism, agriculture and resources sectors; however it has a significant healthcare, construction, education and retail sector. The Gross Regional Product is in excess of \$13 billion and growing. The value of exports for 2012-13 was in excess of \$6.5 billion and growing.

From a global perspective the TNQ region has proximity advantages to much of Asia over many parts of Australia, particularly the southern capital cities along the east coast. Cairns International Airport is the only major international airport in Australia to sit within a regional city and is Australia's seventh busiest airport with passenger movements in excess of 4.5 million in 2014. With Silk Air to commence direct flights between Cairns and Singapore on a twice weekly basis in June 2015, the connectivity to India will improve dramatically.

Proposed Sectors in TNQ for Immediate Consideration in India

Below are five proposed sectors immediately seeking investment, and worthy of exploration by Indian organisations. Advance Cairns believes that these sectors will provide immediate opportunities both in the short term and provide for longer term returns. The below sectors are in no specific order.

Tropical Health & Pharmaceuticals

The regions access to tropical rainforests and tropical ocean resources makes it an ideal destination for the development of a tropical health and pharmaceuticals industry unmatched elsewhere in Australia. The region is home to a number of world class research centres such as:

- Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine
- Mosquito Research Facility
- Centre for Biosecurity & Tropical Infectious Disease
- Queensland Tropical Health Alliance
- Anton Breinl Research Centre for Health Systems Strengthening
- Centre for Biodiscovery and Molecular Development of Therapeutics
- National Centre of Research Excellence to Improve Management of Peripheral Arterial Disease

Based on the above there are opportunities for collaborative research, the establishment of corporate headquarters and more importantly an opportunity to establish world class pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities, both for domestic Australian distribution and international distribution. The location and connectivity of the TNQ region to PNG and other pacific nations make it an ideal hub for research, development and distribution of pharmaceuticals and medicines.

An additional area worth exploring is the introduction of Ayurvedic treatment centres, integration of Ayurvedic treatments into public health systems in Australia, establishment of Ayurvedic medicinal research facilities, etc...

Disaster Management Planning and Tropical Construction

The region possess extensive capabilities surrounding disaster planning, response and recovery gathered over many years of practical experience dealing with disasters. The region is prone to cyclonic and flood incidents of various scales on an annual basis and has built a vast array of

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knowledge and expertise in dealing with natural disaster events.

The region has extensive management and leadership capabilities throughout its Local Government network in preparing for and dealing with disasters, as well as stringent building and planning codes to mitigate against disasters. This practical capability is boosted by the research work carried out by JCU, which also houses one of Australia's few Cyclone Testing Stations.

In addition to the work carried out by JCU the regions construction industry has a wealth of knowledge and expertise in building disaster proof buildings. The construction industry is backed up stringent regulations and building codes which require every property within the region to be built to a Cyclone Standard.

Given the above there are opportunities for regional expertise to be provided to India for disaster planning, response, recovery and building. There are also opportunities to establish joint research centres with the construction industry and research bodies.

Education

The region is home to two world class universities in the form of James Cook University (JCU) and Central Queensland University (CQU). CQU is a provider of both tertiary and vocational education and training therefore offers TAFE courses as well. CQU recently announced the establishment of a new CBD campus facility which will be operational by mid-2015 and plans to accommodate up to 2,500 students. CQU is recognised nationally and classified by the Australian Government as having above international standard expertise in Agriculture which works well into the region's economy. JCU is in the top 4% of research universities globally and is world renowned for its expertise in tourism, marine biology, tropical and sustainable sciences.

The region is home to TAFE North Queensland which provides vocational education and training. In addition the region has many government and private junior and secondary schools. The TAFE and schooling system in Cairns has several links with international partners across the globe and hosts exchange students throughout the year.

The region also has the benefit of teaching and learning amongst two World Heritage Listed zones, the Tropical Rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef. This provides for a unique environment unsurpassed globally.

Given the above capabilities and benefits, there are extensive opportunities for the regions education facilities to offer Indian students education opportunities in a regional city and targeted towards both general and specific programmes of study. The regional city experience provides for a safe, convenient, friendly environment within which to learn. In addition the regions Indian community would provide a good support base that can be harnessed to meet specific cultural needs.

Tourism

The region is already known as a global tourist destination, particularly due to the above discussed world heritage listed rainforests and great barrier reef. The region also has many international and Australian accommodation chains, a developing restaurant and café culture, nightlife and adventure activities. The tourism industry contributes over \$2 billion annually to the region's economy and is growing.

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From an opportunities perspective there is the potential for Indian investment into existing accommodation facilities, opening up new facilities, and particularly opening new facilities in some of the outer lying regional towns such as Innisfail, Mareeba, and Atherton. In addition there is an opportunity to get involved in either developing or working with existing tourism sectors by developing new products and services around food tourism, events, health & wellness tourism, eco-tourism, farm/agricultural tourism and education tourism. Many of these sectors would require infrastructure development, product and service development. The proposed Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort & Casino at a cost of \$8+ billion dollars is a perfect example of a recent development by a Hong Kong investor. It is also a game changer for the region spawning an increase in jobs and economic benefit to the region, as such as wholesale regional support by the community and all three levels of Government.

Agriculture

The Indian community has a strong presence in Agriculture in the TNQ region with the first Sikh community establishing itself towards the end of the 19th century. Many came to Australia to take part in the growing sugar cane industry as labourers, however many have gone on to actually owning and operating both sugar and banana farms throughout the region. This historical connection creates tremendous opportunity for a new age of Indian agricultural entrepreneurs and corporations to take part in what is undoubtedly one of the region's largest economic contributors. Agriculture contributes in excess of \$1 billion annually to the region's economy.

The region is currently experiencing a wave of Chinese investment into agriculture through the purchase of existing farms, sugar mills, etc... For example Tully Sugar was purchased around two years ago by COFCO Corporation of China, a Fortune 500 global corporation.

There are opportunities in traditional agriculture such as sugar cane and bananas but potential new opportunities for value added products, particularly around tropical fruits, herbs and spices. There are some growers within the region who have more than 150 varieties of tropical fruit, more than most places in the world. In addition there are opportunities to undertake joint research particularly around biosecurity, making natural disaster resistant crops, organic farming, etc...

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