



Cairns Aviation Industry Snapshot



**Jobs
Queensland**

Future skills. Future work. Future Queensland.

Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of Country

The Queensland Government respectfully acknowledges the First Nations peoples in the state of Queensland and acknowledges the cultural and spiritual connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with the land and sea. We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique and diverse peoples with their own rich and distinct cultures, resilience and strengths. We specifically acknowledge the unique history and cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We are dedicated to the inclusion of cultural knowledge and values as critical factors in the development, implementation and evaluation of strategies and actions to support First Nations people.

Further enquiries

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Industry snapshot - 2021-2022¹



\$345M

output/total sales



1512

local jobs



76

local businesses



\$146M

gross value add

In 2021-2022 the Aviation industry was estimated to have generated \$146M in direct value to the Cairns region. The industry supported 1512 jobs, with 67 per cent employed full-time. The largest sub-industry for employment was air transport and airport operations, employing 1275 people.

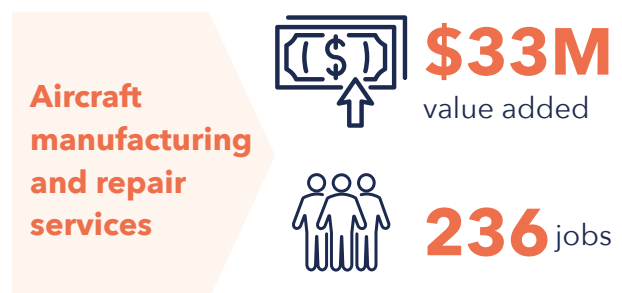


Anticipating Future Skills data shows that between 2021-2022 to 2025-2026 there will be a



increase in jobs (538 new jobs) for the aviation industry in Cairns.

Key sub-industries



1. Jobs Queensland. (2024). Cairns Region Workforce Development Plan: Ipswich: Queensland Government. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/_resources/files/pdf/JQ_CairnsRegion_Work_Dev_Plan.pdf

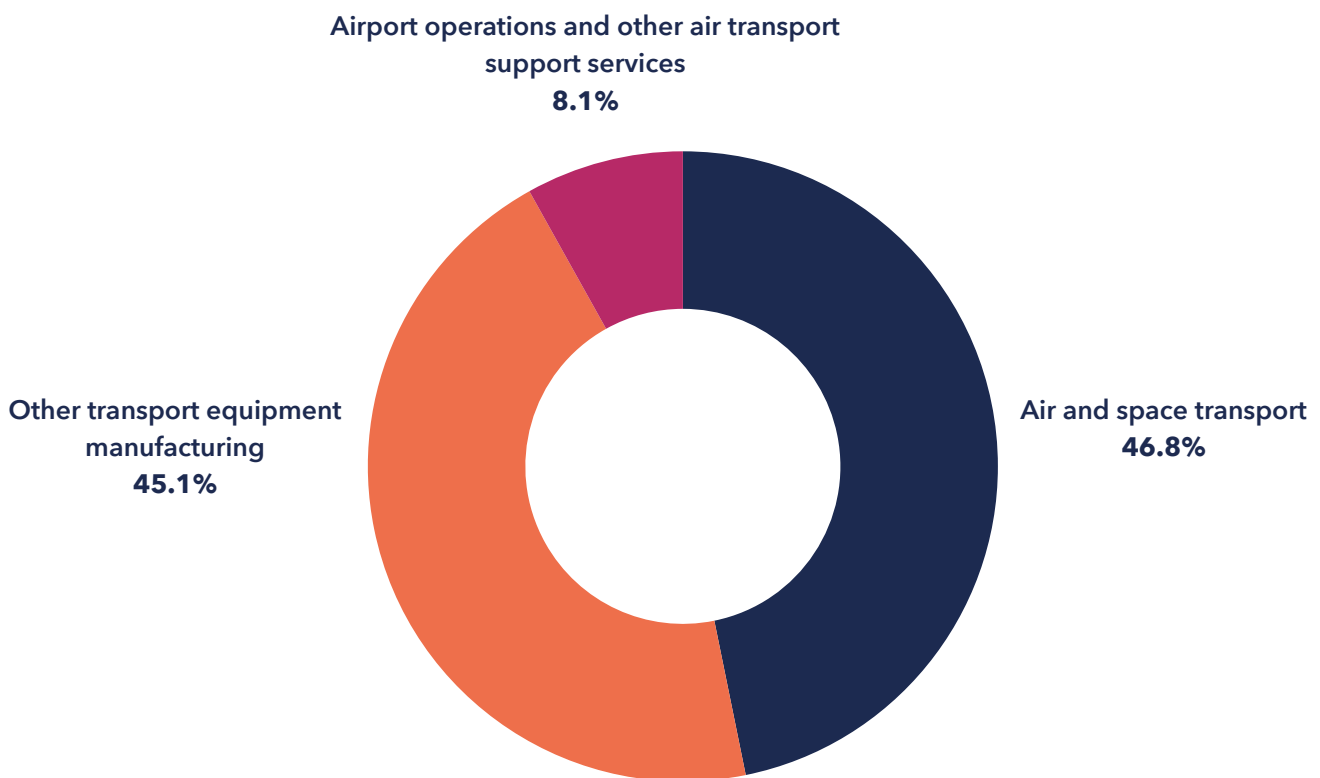
Industry size and composition²

Having a skilled workforce across a variety of Aviation roles is critical to the region's connectivity. Cairns services fixed-wing and rotary aircraft that fly the Cape, Torres Strait, Papua New Guinea and the wider Asia-Pacific.

Roles such as Aircraft engine building or repair, aircraft manufacturing, airframe building and repair all support local maintenance delivery. While Air traffic control, baggage handling and terminal operations are essential to the efficient and safe operation of the local international airport.

Anticipating Future Skills data shows that the industry is expected to increase by 20.9 per cent (538 new jobs) by 2025-2026.

Share of total industry employment 2021-2022³



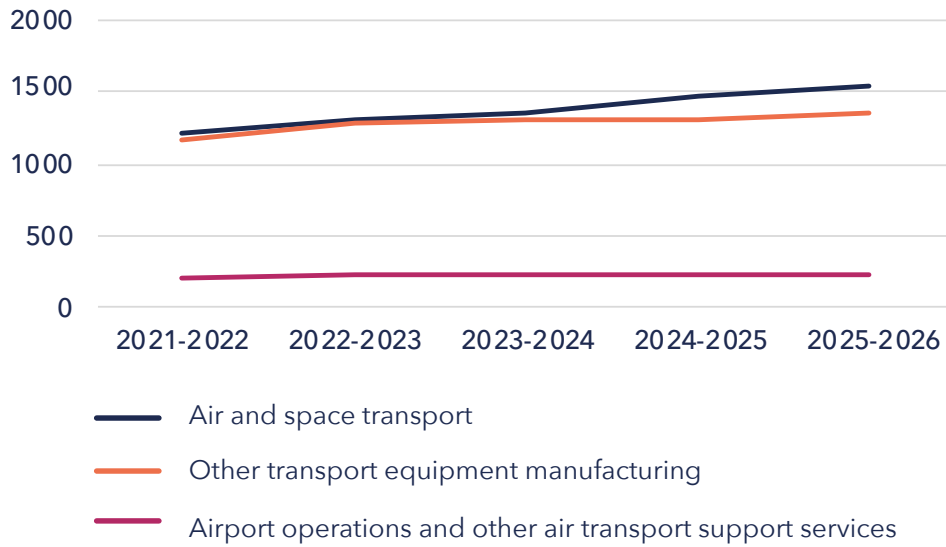
2. Jobs Queensland. (2024). *Cairns Region Workforce Development Plan*: Ipswich: Queensland Government. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/_resources/files/pdf/JQ_CairnsRegion_Work_Dev_Plan.pdf

3. Jobs Queensland, 2023., *Anticipating Future Skills Series*, Jobs Queensland: Ipswich. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/report>

Growth trends⁴

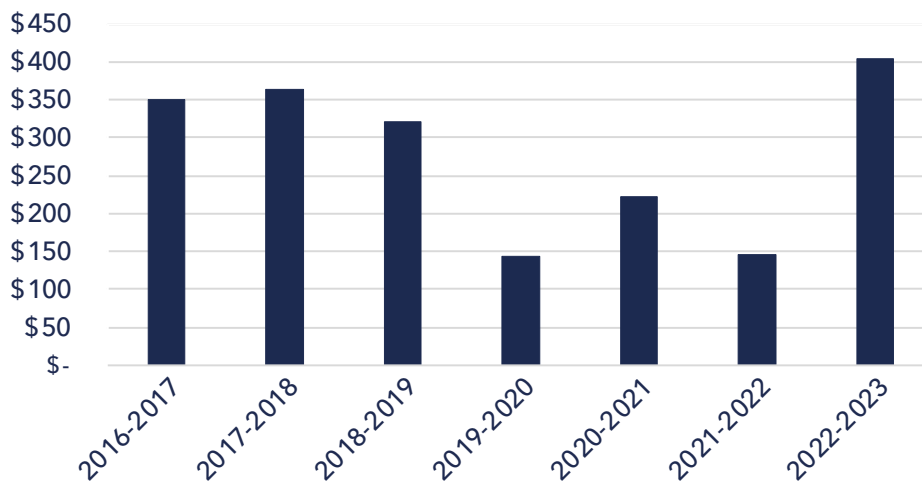
In 2021-2022 there were an estimated 1512 people employed in the Aviation industry in Cairns. The industry generated \$146M in value added, or \$87,711 per employee (full-time equivalent).

Aviation industry employment



Change in the industry is projected to average 40 per cent for employment through to 2025-2026 and after a significant drop due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the regions value add is recovering and is currently past pre-COVID-19 levels. It is important to note that the Aviation industry was one of the most impacted industries during the pandemic, and passenger numbers at the Cairns Airport in 2021-2021 were at 54 per cent compared to 2018-2019.

Value added (\$M)



4. Cairns Regional Council. (n.d.) economic profile, *Industry profile – Aviation*. Cairns: Cairns Regional Council. <https://economy.id.com.au/cairns/industry-profile?indKey=23804>

Competitive analysis⁵

The aviation industry in Cairns features a thriving General Aviation Precinct and an international airport, playing a key role in the regional economy. With more than 100 businesses operating in the area, it hosts significant Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) organisations, education and training institutions such as Cairns Aviation Skills Centre (CASC) and CQUniversity, freight consolidation services, as well as rescue and charter flight operations.



Seventh busiest airport

in Australia with domestic passenger numbers quickly recovering towards pre-COVID-19 levels



Servicing almost
Five million passengers
annually



Far Nth Qld's
heavy aircraft
maintenance base



Cairns Regional Trade Distribution Centre

opened in 2020 to support growth in fresh food exports



Major
Royal Flying Doctor
Service base



Home to the
largest avionics workshop
in the Southern Hemisphere



Central Queensland University and Cairns Aviation Skills Centre

deliver vocational and bachelor level qualifications in aircraft maintenance engineering and flight operations

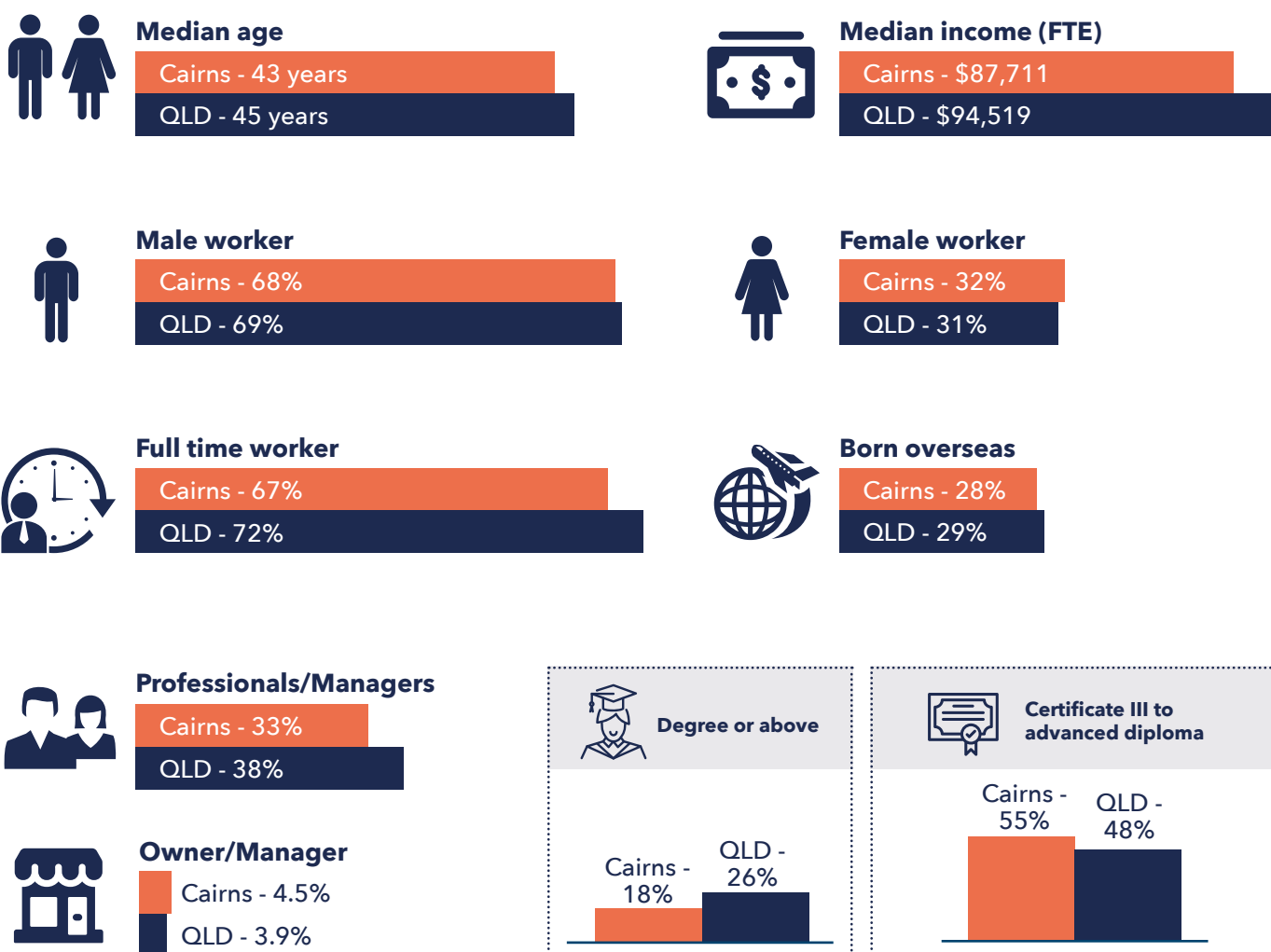
5. Jobs Queensland. (2024). *Cairns Region Workforce Development Plan*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/_resources/files/pdf/JQ_CairnsRegion_Work_Dev_Plan.pdf

Workforce profile⁶

In 2021, aviation industry workers in Cairns had a median age of 43, which was slightly younger than the state average. The industry is male dominated at 68 per cent, with 28 per cent born overseas.

Only 18 per cent of the aviation workforce held a degree, compared to 26 per cent at state level, and 33 per cent were employed in professional or managerial roles. In 2021, the median income for the Cairns aviation workforce was below the state average, possibly due to the smaller proportion of workers in professional roles or the lower levels of qualifications.

Characteristics of the aviation industry workforce 2021⁷

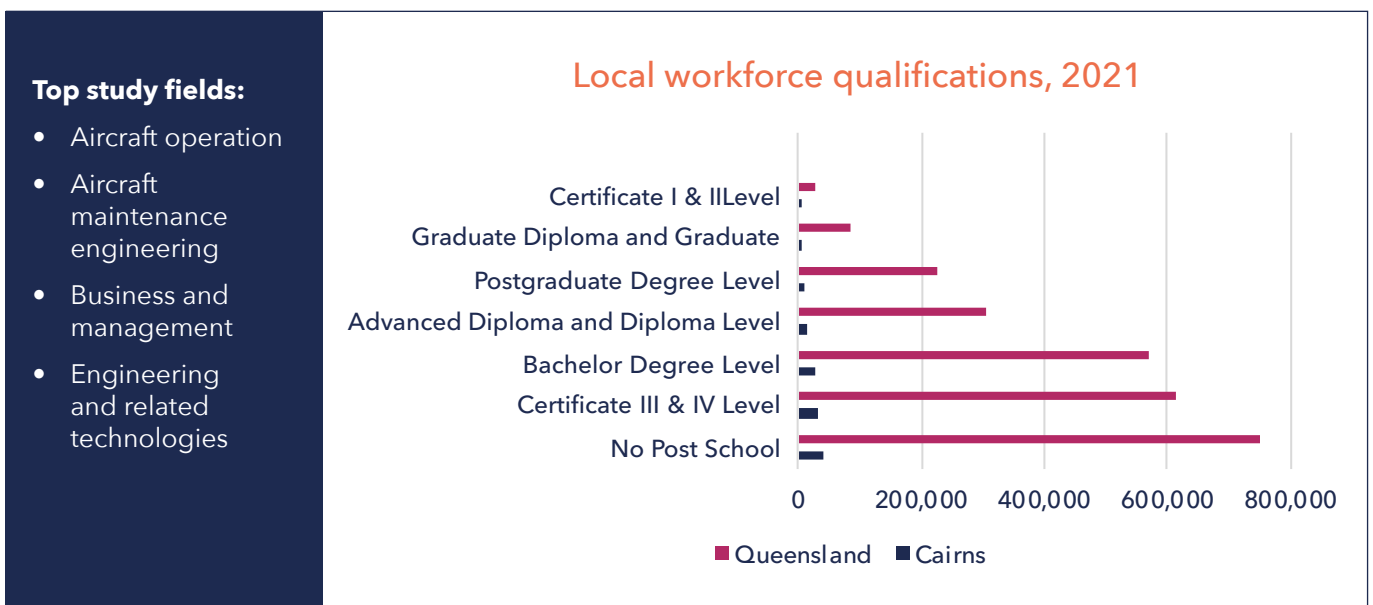
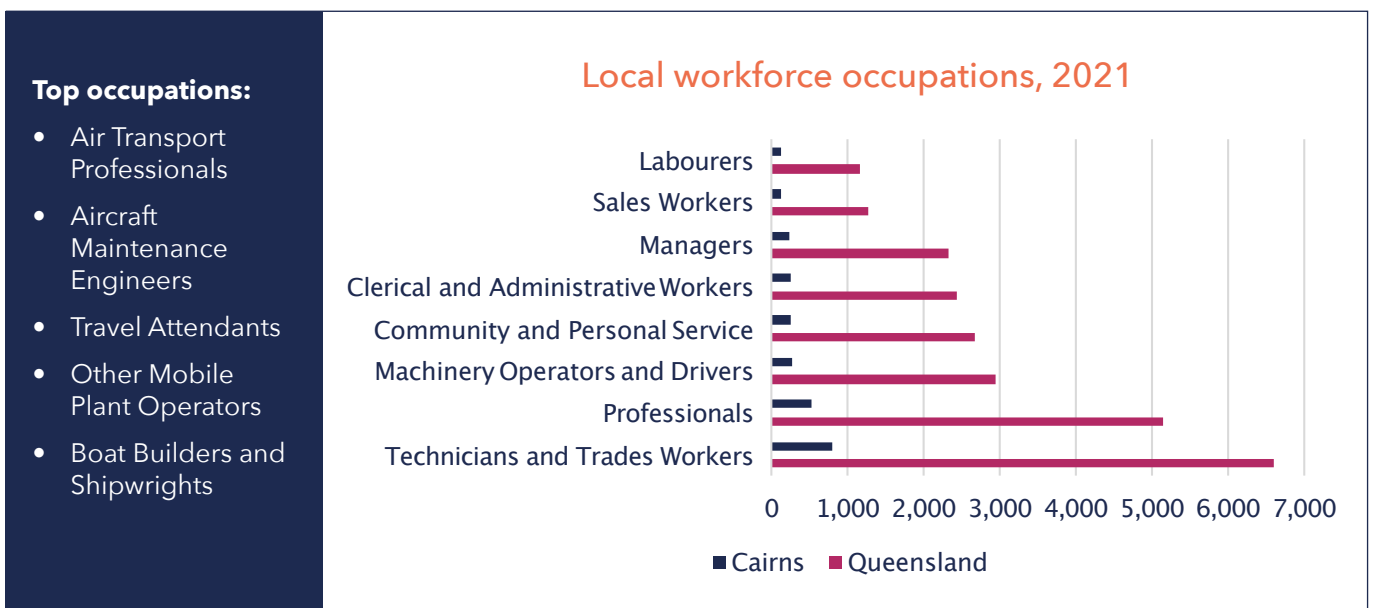


6. Cairns Regional Council. (n.d.) *economic profile, Industry profile – Aviation*. Cairns: Cairns Regional Council. <https://economy.id.com.au/cairns/industry-profile?indKey=23804>
 7. Cairns Regional Council. (n.d.) *Aviation Industry 2022/23*. Cairns: Cairns Regional Council. https://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/561957/Aviation.pdf

Education and skills⁸

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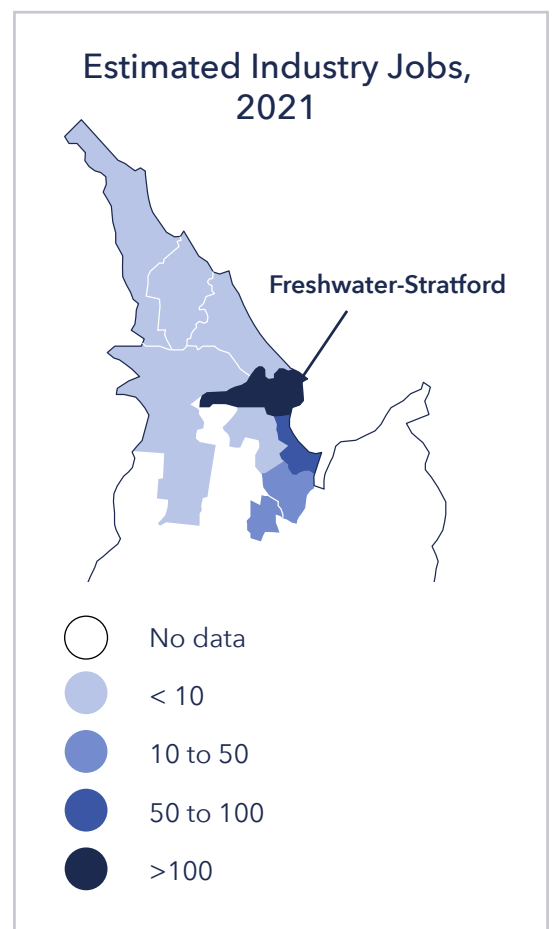


8. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Census of Population and Housing*. Canberra: Australian Government. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/education-and-training-census/2021#data-downloads>

Main employment precincts⁹

Key employers:

- All Calibration Services
- Cairns Airport
- Cairns Aviation Skills Centre
- CJ Aerospace
- Cobham Aviation Services Australia
- Daintree Air Services
- EastAir
- FNQ Avionics
- Hinterland Aviation
- Jet Aviation
- Jetstar
- Nautilus Aviation
- Qantas
- Queensland Government Air (QGAir)
- Royal Flying Doctor Service
- Skytek
- Skytrans
- Zoom Helicopters



9. Cairns Regional Council. (n.d.) *Aviation Industry 2022/23*. Cairns: Cairns Regional Council. https://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/561957/Aviation.pdf

Projects and trends shaping the future¹⁰



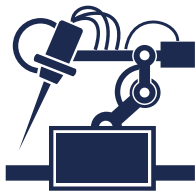
Cairns airport terminal upgrades

In 2020, Cairns Airport's Domestic Terminal underwent a \$55 million upgrade. In 2023, work began on a three-phase improvement project for the International Terminal, valued at \$40-50 million, with completion expected in 2025. These developments are designed to support future growth and ensure the airport remains competitive.



Cairns Regional Trade Distribution Centre

Air Freight Handling Services (AFHS) at Cairns Regional Trade Distribution Centre has recently launched a new specialised facility, paving the way for increased fresh food exports through Cairns Airport.



Advanced manufacturing facilities: Distribution Centre

A proposal is in the early stages for an Advanced Fibre Composites Maintenance and Repair Facility in Cairns, which would include access to 3D printing technologies. If this project moves forward, it could help local aviation companies focus on maintenance and repair services, especially for small to medium-sized aircraft.



New precincts

Cairns Airport is set to develop two new specialised areas. One will cater to aeromedical and emergency operations, which are already significant in the region. The other will be a dedicated helicopter precinct designed to minimise delays and enhance runway capacity.

10. Jobs Queensland. (2024). *Cairns Region Workforce Development Plan*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/_resources/files/pdf/JQ_CairnsRegion_Work_Dev_Plan.pdf

Challenges and opportunities¹¹



Challenges



Opportunities

Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in defence contracting • High reliance on the tourism industry • Access to skilled labour constrained by stringent licencing requirements • Ageing workforce • Decarbonisation and the transition to alternate fuel sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Terminal upgrade in 2020 and current refurbishment of International Terminal allowing for future expansion and maintaining competitiveness • Cairns Regional Trade Distribution Centre allowing growth in fresh food exports to Asia • Early-stage proposal for an advanced fibre composites maintenance and repair facility • Commitment to net zero by 2025 with all tenants supplied by 100 per cent renewable power by 2025 • Opportunity to address outdated cultural norms
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future space-based industry needs evolving regional relationships • Need to upskill trainers in composites to meet future demand • Leadership capability and skills to address issues • Shortage of pilots and aeronautical engineers • Entry into the industry - pathways, link with school curriculum, lack of awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established expertise in aircraft maintenance and repair • Quality aviation training facilities • Growth in the use of composites • Partnerships with educational institutions from primary up • Professional development opportunities for existing workers
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to grow workforce to meet population growth/passenger movements • Limited suitable short-term housing for contractors and students • Male-dominated industry - need to challenge stereotypes and outdated culture • Work conditions (shift work, staffing levels, pay, lack of opportunities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted attraction programs for underutilised cohorts • Cross-sector skilling, gap training for existing workers • Flexible work conditions • Promotion of the range of roles, subjects and skills required

