

## EXTENSION OF NATIONAL HIGHWAY THROUGH CAIRNS

The Bruce Highway is part of the National Highway and provides the vital linkage between Cairns, other Queensland coastal cities and Brisbane.

Currently the Bruce Highway terminates in the Cairns CBD, almost adjacent to the Port of Cairns, but some distance from Cairns Airport.

Access to Cairns City from the north is via the Captain Cook Highway, which links Cairns and Port Douglas / Mossman and via the Kennedy Highway which intersects with the Captain Cook Highway at Smithfield. The Kennedy Highway (via the Kuranda Range) provides the principal link to the Atherton Tablelands and Cape York Peninsula and eventually links to the Kennedy Development Road to provide access from Far North Queensland to Gulf of Carpentaria communities and to the Northern Territory. The Captain Cook Highway terminates at Cairns Airport, on the northern fringe of the Cairns CBD.

The Kennedy Highway is currently a critical freight route for the efficient distribution of fuel, fertiliser and other products from Cairns to Tablelands, Peninsula and Gulf industries and communities and for transport of product from these areas to Cairns. The road is also a growing commuter route for residents of Kuranda and the Northern Tablelands who work in Cairns.

The Cairns Airport is the single most critical piece of infrastructure in North Eastern Australia. Whilst providing the point of entry or exit for tourists visiting the region, it is a critical freight hub enabling the export of a variety of products including seafood, fresh flowers and fruit and vegetables and it provides expertise and service capability in aviation services. It is considered that there is significant potential to expand export activities, particularly to Asian markets. Some airlines operating services to / from Cairns have an ever increasing reliance on the freight component of the flight which serves to sustain seasonal variation in passengers. Connectivity to the Airport from the north and south is a critical enabling factor in the future development of the airport as an export and service hub.

There is an obvious “missing link” in the current road configuration:

1. the National Highway does not connect with the principal regional export hub i.e. the Cairns Airport;
2. the National Highway does not connect with the principal freight route into Cairns from the region’s productive agricultural regions i.e. Atherton Tablelands, Cape York Peninsula and Mossman.

### **Recommendation:**

***The designation of the National Highway be extended from the current terminus in the Cairns CBD to the intersection of the Captain Cook and Kennedy Highways at Smithfield.***

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