

CUMMINGS ECONOMICS

38 Grafton St (PO Box 2148) CAIRNS Q 4870

Tel 07 4031 2888 Fax 07 4031 1108

Email cummings@cummings.net.au

Website : www.cummings.net.au

ABN 99 734 489 175



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Research Note

Cairns' Population Growth Rate Continues to Decline

Latest population statistics released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show a continuing fall in the growth rate recorded for Cairns.

Over the four years to 2010/11, growth rate for Cairns has fallen from 4.5% to 1.6%, a rate well below the city's long term average of about 3% per annum.

Growth in Estimated Residential Population				
Growth	Cairns Statistical Sub Division		Far North Statistical Division	
	No.	%	No.	%
2007/08	6072	4.5%	8589	3.4%
2008/09	4640	3.3%	6749	2.6%
2009/10	3524	2.4%	4900	1.8%
2010/11	2435	1.6%	3541	1.3%

Source: Cummings Economics from ABS data.

On the evidence available, it can be expected that Cairns' population growth could drop below 1% in the current 2011/12 year.

This is in contrast to Townsville and Mackay where growth has been maintained at a relatively high level over the past four years.

Growth in Statistical Sub Divisions			
Growth	Cairns	Townsville	Mackay
2007/08	6072	5255	1991
2008/09	4640	5117	2259
2009/10	3524	3594	1861
2010/11	2435	4354	1784

Source: Cummings Economics from ABS data.

While growth in the balance of the Far North Queensland Statistical Division has also fallen off to 0.9%, it remains at a comparatively high level.

Growth Balance of Statistical Divisions, 2010/11	
Statistical Division	No.
Mackay (less Mackay)	1403
Far North (less Cairns)	1106
Northern (less Townsville)	412
Northern Territory (less Darwin)	225
North West Queensland	211

Source: Cummings Economics from ABS data.

Although Cairns city remains about 12% less than Townsville in population (153,000 to 176,000), the regional residential population serviced by Cairns is now larger than that serviced by other northern cities.

Regional Residential Population Serviced by Northern Cities		
City	Service area	2011 est residential population
Cairns	Far North Statistical Division plus Gulf	283,326
Townsville	Northern Statistical Division plus Mt Isa/North West Statistical Division excluding Gulf	264,286
Mackay	Mackay Statistical Division	169,093
Rockhampton	Fitzroy Statistical Division plus Central West Statistical Division	239,906
Darwin	Northern Territory	230,369

The above figures are for residential population. It can be expected that census count figures including visitors and excluding residents away will show the Far North Queensland region’s census count population at over 300,000, and very clearly the largest in ‘on the ground’ population in northern Australia.