

# CUMMINGS ECONOMICS

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## Statistical Note

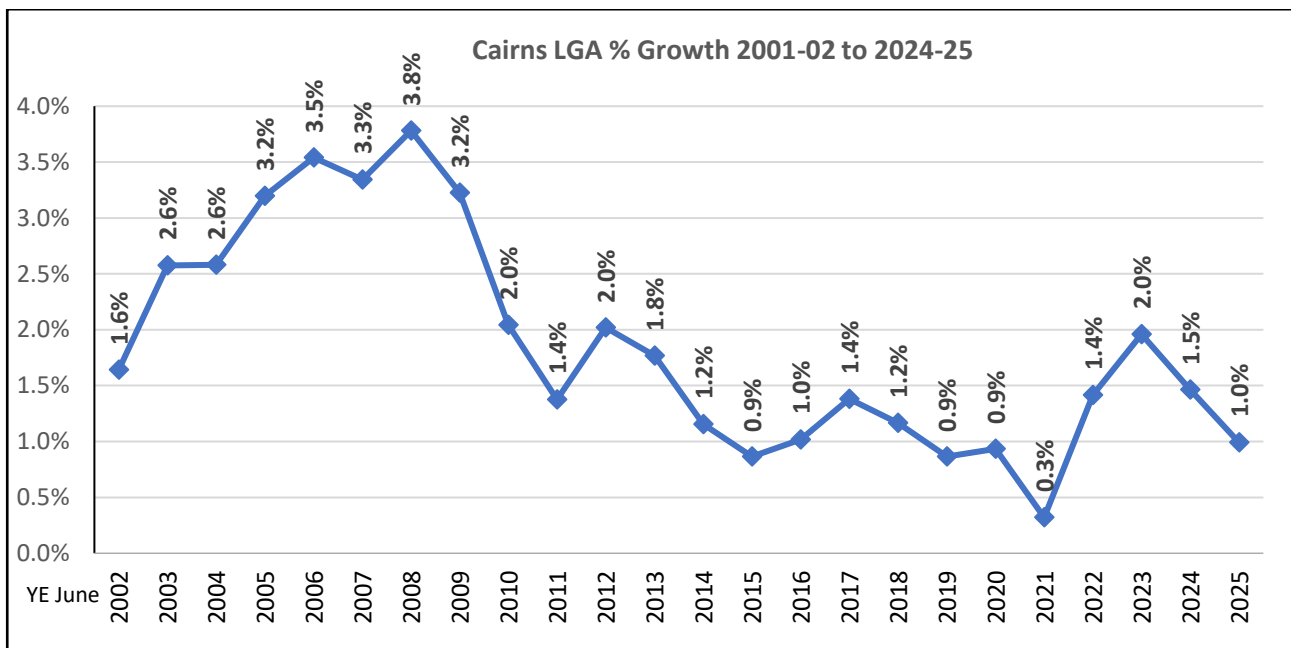
# DISAPPOINTING POPULATION GROWTH FIGURES

Latest population growth figures for 2024-25 released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) are disappointing for Cairns and for the Tropical Far North Queensland region.

For Cairns, they indicate that after a post-Covid spike, when growth of population reached up to 1.4% in 2021-22, 1.8% in 2022-23 and 1.5% in 2023-24, the figure for 2024-25 fell back to 0.99%.

This result seems to be taking the city back to the low-growth pattern the city fell into over the period 2014-15 to 2018-19 before Covid saw a plunge to a record low of 0.3% (see Chart).

**Chart: Cairns LGA Estimated Residential Population 2001-02 to 2024-25**



What is especially disturbing for Cairns is that this has resulted in Cairns losing its position as the fastest growing city in northern Australia to Darwin and Townsville. In 2024-25 Townsville recorded a population growth of 2,288 persons compared with Cairns 1,761 persons (see separate Statistical Note "A Tale of Two Cities". This led to the wider Cairns/ Tropical North Queensland region also losing its long-term position as the fastest growing in northern Australia to the Northern Territory.

What is also disturbing is that, unlike what occurs in most regional areas of Australia, where the regional city population growth rate exceeds their near hinterland rural population, in Cairns' case, the city's growth is barely on a par with the rest of the hinterland.

The slow growth of Cairns led to the wider Tropical North Queensland region based on the city of Cairns that includes areas west to the Gulf and north to the Torres Strait lose its traditional leadership to the Northern Territory.

However, the remainder of the Tropical North Queensland region outside of Cairns leads in growth (see following Tables), and in percentage terms, was on a par with the city.

**Table 1: Estimated Residential Population Growth Northern Australia-Major Cities 2024-25**

LGAs	2024-25 No.
Darwin SA4	2,719
Townsville LGA	2,288
Cairns LGA	1,761
Mackay LGA	1,057
Gladstone LGA	1,057
Rockhampton LGA	624

Source: ABS Data.

**Table 2: Estimated Residential Population Growth Northern Australia-Major Regions 2024-25**

Major Regions	2024-25 No.
Northern Territory	3,672
Cairns/ Tropical North	3,065
Central Queensland	2,864
Townsville North	2,444
Kimberley/ Pilbara	2,159
Mackay	1,870

Source: ABS Data.

**Table 3: Estimated Residential Population Growth Northern Australia-Major Regions Hinterland Areas 2024-25**

Major Regions Hinterland Areas	2024-25 No.
Cairns/ Tropical North Qld	1,304
Rockhampton Gladstone Central Qld	1,145
Northern Territory Outback	953
Mackay Region	762
Townsville North Qld	156

Source: ABS Data.

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