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1st July 2026

CE Ref-J3570

SHORT ON CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT STILL OWES THE CAIRNS REGION A LOT OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE.

While Queensland Budgets over the last two years have seen an increase in the capital expenditure provided for the Cairns SA4 Region, the State Government still owes the Cairns Region a great deal of additional expenditure to bring it up to levels of other equivalent regions.

The need for capital expenditure per head of population (especially on roads) is lower in Brisbane and the Southeast region than the rest of the State. The small populations in the very large Outback region have a consistently higher per capita need.

However, one would have thought that all of other six major regions based on the cities of Toowoomba, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay and Cairns would record about the same ratios of capital expenditure per head of population – **NOT SO**.

The following analysis shows that while the Cairns Region did not record the lowest per capita expenditure per head of population in the most recent 2026-27 Budget, over the past ten years, the Cairns Region has recorded the lowest ratio in total.

The following analysis indicates that, if on parity per head of population with the other regions, the Cairns Region would have received additional capital funding over the past ten years as follows.

Amount More than Cairns on a per capita basis

Central Qld\$7.4 Bn

Wide Bay\$3.4 Bn

Townsville Region\$2.3 Bn

Toowoomba Region.....\$0.7 Bn

Mackay Region\$0.7 Bn

The analysis also indicates that, if you aggregate the three northern regions of Cairns, Townsville and Mackay and aggregate the three southern regions based on Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Toowoomba, the three southern regions have received about 30% more capital expenditure funding per capita than those in the northern region. With the north, the Townsville Region has been receiving disproportionately higher funding.

Note – The regions used are as per the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Areas Level 4 (SA4) as recorded in Queensland Budget Papers.

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BEcon (UQ), HonDEcon (CQU)

Table: Ratios of capital expenditure per head of population

	Year	Toowoomba Total	Wide Bay	Central Queensland	Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday	Townsville	Cairns	South	North
Budget	2017-18	841,721,000	536,944,000	623,913,000	387,561,000	586,216,000	451,406,000	2,002,578,000	1,425,183,000
Population	2017	284,581	295,492	225,776	174,076	235,135	249,681	805,849	658,892
Per Person	2017-18	\$2,958	\$1,817	\$2,763	\$2,226	\$2,493	\$1,808	7,538	6,527
Budget	2018-19	1,154,155,000	488,365,000	918,233,000	452,750,000	736,229,000	411,922,000	2,560,753,000	1,600,901,000
Population	2018	287,369	299,004	226,529	175,526	235,458	252,209	812,902	663,193
Per Person	2018-19	\$4,016	\$1,633	\$4,053	\$2,579	\$3,127	\$1,633	9,703	7,339
Budget	2019-20	661,032,000	515,351,000	975,443,000	462,196,000	764,596,000	633,001,000	2,151,826,000	1,859,793,000
Population	2019	289,917	302,732	228,045	177,568	235,745	254,139	820,694	667,452
Per Person	2019-20	\$2,280	\$1,702	\$4,277	\$2,603	\$3,243	\$2,491	8,260	8,337
Budget	2020-21	571,677,000	819,807,000	1,002,422,000	418,553,000	565,811,000	749,958,000	2,393,906,000	1,734,322,000
Population	2020	292,143	306,220	229,579	180,641	236,652	256,262	827,942	673,555
Per Person	2020-21	\$1,957	\$2,677	\$4,366	\$2,317	\$2,391	\$2,927	9,000	7,634
Budget	2021-22	593,950,000	772,876,000	882,602,000	573,313,000	687,829,000	790,806,000	2,249,428,000	2,051,948,000
Population	2021	294,118	310,692	231,029	183,209	237,383	257,065	835,839	677,657
Per Person	2021-22	\$2,019	\$2,488	\$3,820	\$3,129	\$2,898	\$3,076	8,327	9,103
Budget	2022-23	549,793,000	1,033,025,000	871,782,000	492,169,000	769,395,000	706,291,000	2,454,600,000	1,967,855,000
Population	2022	297,822	316,719	233,890	185,924	239,780	260,197	848,431	685,901
Per Person	2022-23	\$1,846	\$3,262	\$3,727	\$2,647	\$3,209	\$2,714	8,835	8,570
Budget	2023-24	910,634,000	1,628,252,000	1,816,465,000	525,319,000	1,024,180,000	962,014,000	4,355,351,000	2,511,513,000
Population	2023	302,830	323,414	237,878	189,324	243,206	264,837	864,122	697,367
Per Person	2023-24	\$3,007	\$5,035	\$7,636	\$2,775	\$4,211	\$3,632	15,678	10,618
Budget	2024-25	1,605,102,000	3,293,893,000	2,085,815,000	1,141,720,000	1,257,198,000	874,470,000	6,984,810,000	3,273,388,000
Population	2024	306,715	329,969	241,317	191,937	246,548	268,688	878,001	707,173
Per Person	2024-25	\$5,233	\$9,982	\$8,643	\$5,948	\$5,099	\$3,255	23,859	14,302
Budget	2025-26	1,704,288,000	2,599,516,000	2,239,701,000	831,866,000	1,544,513,000	1,093,818,000	6,543,505,000	3,470,197,000
Population	2025	309,876	335,670	244,220	193,813	249,097	271,408	889,766	714,318
Per Person	2025-26	\$5,500	\$7,744	\$9,171	\$4,292	\$6,200	\$4,030	22,415	14,523
Budget	2026-27	1,109,990,000	2,064,932,000	2,344,167,000	741,972,000	1,410,952,000	1,122,622,000	5,519,089,000	3,275,546,000
Population	2025	309,876	335,670	244,220	193,813	249,097	271,408	889,766	714,318
Per Person	2026-27	\$3,582	\$6,152	\$9,599	\$3,828	\$5,664	\$4,136	19,332	13,629
Budget		9,702,342,000	13,752,961,000	13,760,543,000	6,027,419,000	9,346,919,000	7,796,308,000	37,215,846,000	23,170,646,000
Per Person		32,399	42,492	58,057	32,346	38,535	29,703	132,948	100,584
Rate		1.09	1.43	1.95	1.09	1.30			
Difference		707,618,816	3,356,929,300	7,442,442,286	693,717,947	2,318,403,744			

Source: Cummings Economics from Queensland Budget Papers.