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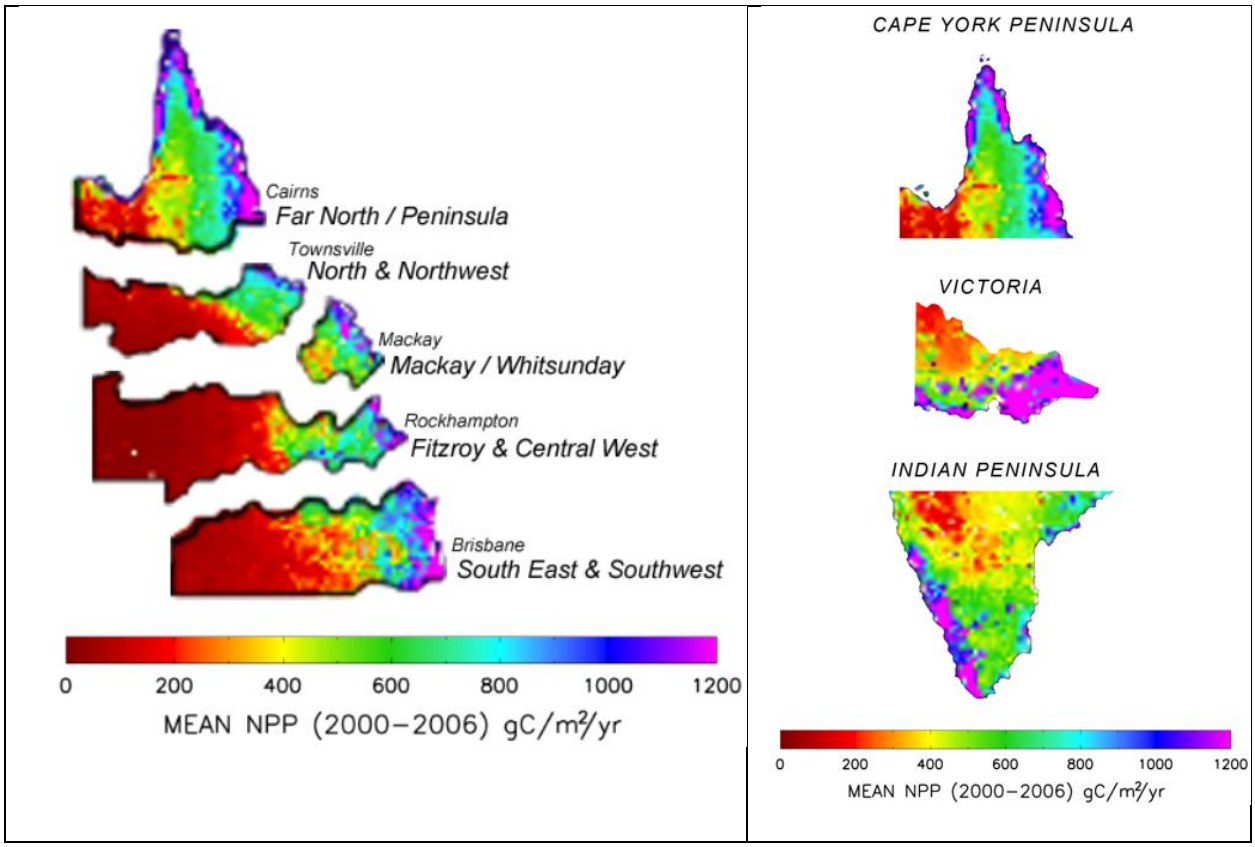
Paper:

TROPICAL NORTH QUEENSLAND
LEADER IN BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE ENDOWMENT

An item in a recent release of "Cairns and TNQ Matters" on population growth in 2024-25 resulted in some comment about relative 'resource' endowment of the Cairns/TNQ Region compared to other Queensland regions. The following is to clarify the picture and outline the reasons for the emergence over recent decades of the Cairns/TNQ Region as the largest in population in northern Australia.

Compared with other regions across the north and also most Australian regions, the Cairns/TNQ Region is massively endowed with 'biological resource' potential.

In the first place, this endowment stems from the fact that the region accounts for almost a quarter of Australia's total annual water runoff. Higher evaporation rates are, in part, balanced by lack of severe cold weather suppressing plant growth during winter months. The following satellite derived maps of plant growth potential as measured by plant absorption of carbon, illustrate the region's superior position in Queensland. They also give a comparison of TNQ with Victoria and Peninsula India.



Note: NPP (Net Primary Productivity) means the rate of absorption of carbon into plants.
Source: University of Montana, Numerical Terradynamic Simulation Group from Modis Satellite Data.

The leadership in terrestrial biological resource potential extends to the sea.

The region's length of coastline up to the Torres Strait, down the west coast of the Peninsula around to the Northern Territory border is almost equivalent to that from Brisbane around to Adelaide. Along the east coast, close to the coast and easily accessible is one of the world's outstanding marine environments - the northern half of the Great Barrier Reef. The Gulf of Carpentaria is also rich in marine life.

Based especially on the region's biological resources, the Cairns/TNQ Region outstrips the other northern regions by a long way in tourism, outstrips the other northern regions and even the State of Tasmania in value of agricultural production and is one of Australia's leading fishery regions.

Even though the mineral resources are not as extensive as in some other northern regions, mining employment is still substantial and added to by fly-in/fly-out mining workforce to other regions across the north based on a superior living environment built on biological endowment and tourism infrastructure and facilities.

Most of the Cairns/TNQ Region's earnings from the rest of Australia and the world come from these 'resource based' industries which provide the base for the region's economy and the attraction of a large amount of manufacturing and service industries to meet community needs.

Some of these activities have grown in size and sophistication to add to earnings from outside the region. Cairns has developed a leading role in northern Australia in maritime and aviation servicing and in international education.

A strategic location also results in defence earnings and to Cairns leading in contact with the nearby Pacific area and having a superior position in relation to contact with East and SouthEast Asia.

It is important to understand that with most of its people and technology historically derived from temperate zone NorthWestern Europe, Australia had a great deal of initial difficulty developing the biological resources of tropical areas such as the Cairns/TNQ Region.

Clearly, over the past fifty years, the region has benefited greatly from the development of its outstanding biological resource potential providing the basis for exploitation of other avenues for economic growth.

But it is also important to recognise that a great deal of the Cairns/TNQ Region's biological resource potential is still to be realised. With almost a quarter of the nation's water runoff, the region's value of agricultural production is still only about 3% of the nation's total.

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