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Statistical Note

SEPTEMBER 2021 - ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

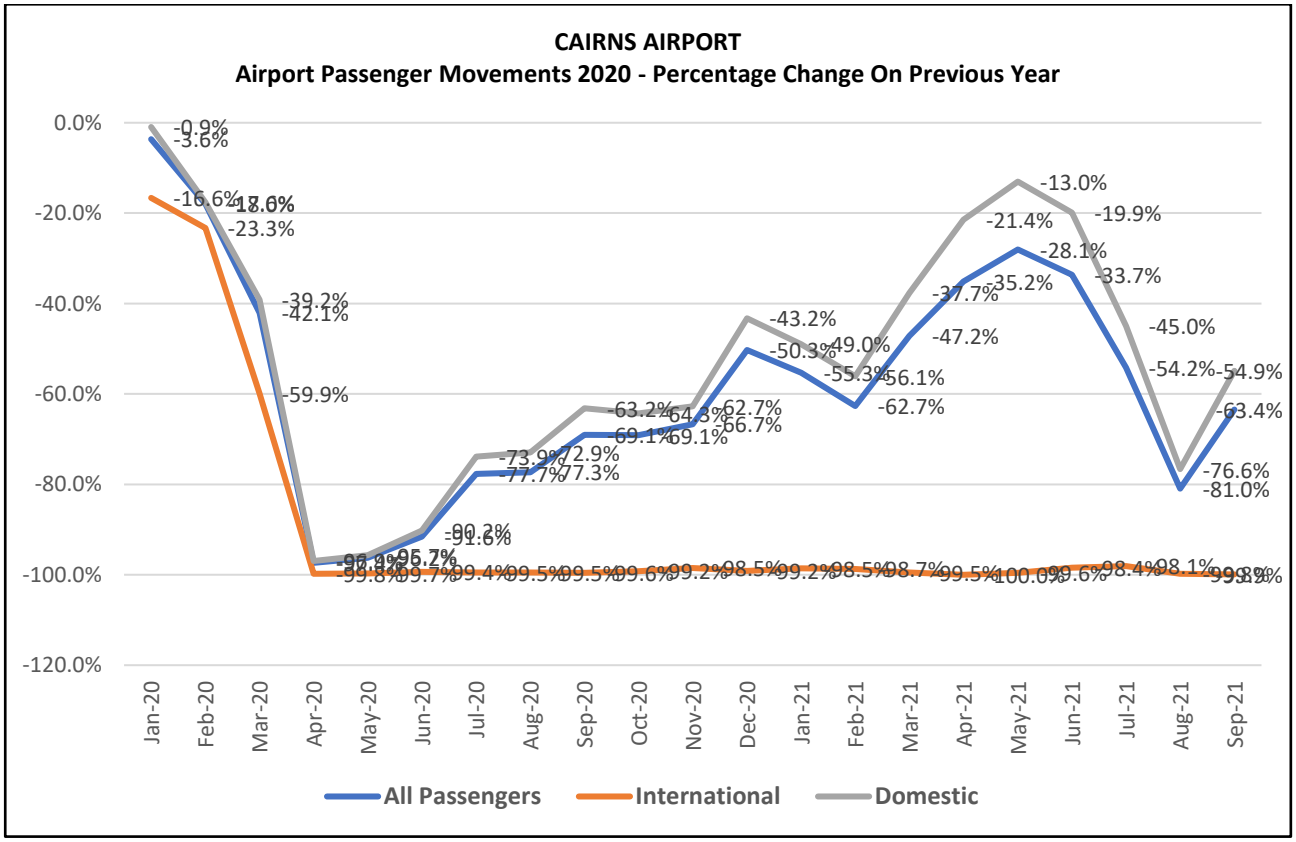
'HIT' TO RECOVERY STABILISES

September saw the "hit" to the local recovery, that occurred in July and August when the Delta Variant resulted in lockdowns in New South Wales as well as Victoria and for a time in SE Queensland, stabilize. The reopening of SE Queensland in particular saw numbers through the airport's domestic terminal recover to some degree but remain well down on pre-Covid levels. At national level, the Single Touch Payroll Jobs Index showed a strong continuing fall. However, the Cairns Index stabilized. Progressive end of lockdowns in NSW and VIC is likely to see the national situation improve in October and November but the Cairns region not likely to see strong improvement until Queensland borders open after 17th December.

AIRPORT PASSENGERS – PARTIAL RECOVERY

The end of the lockdown in SE Queensland saw domestic passenger numbers through the airport recover to some degree but with New South Wales and Victoria locked down in September, they remained 54% down on pre-Covid levels. This situation seems likely to continue until Queensland reopens its borders in December.

Chart 1 – Airport Passenger Movements 2021 - Percentage Change on Previous Year – Cairns Airport

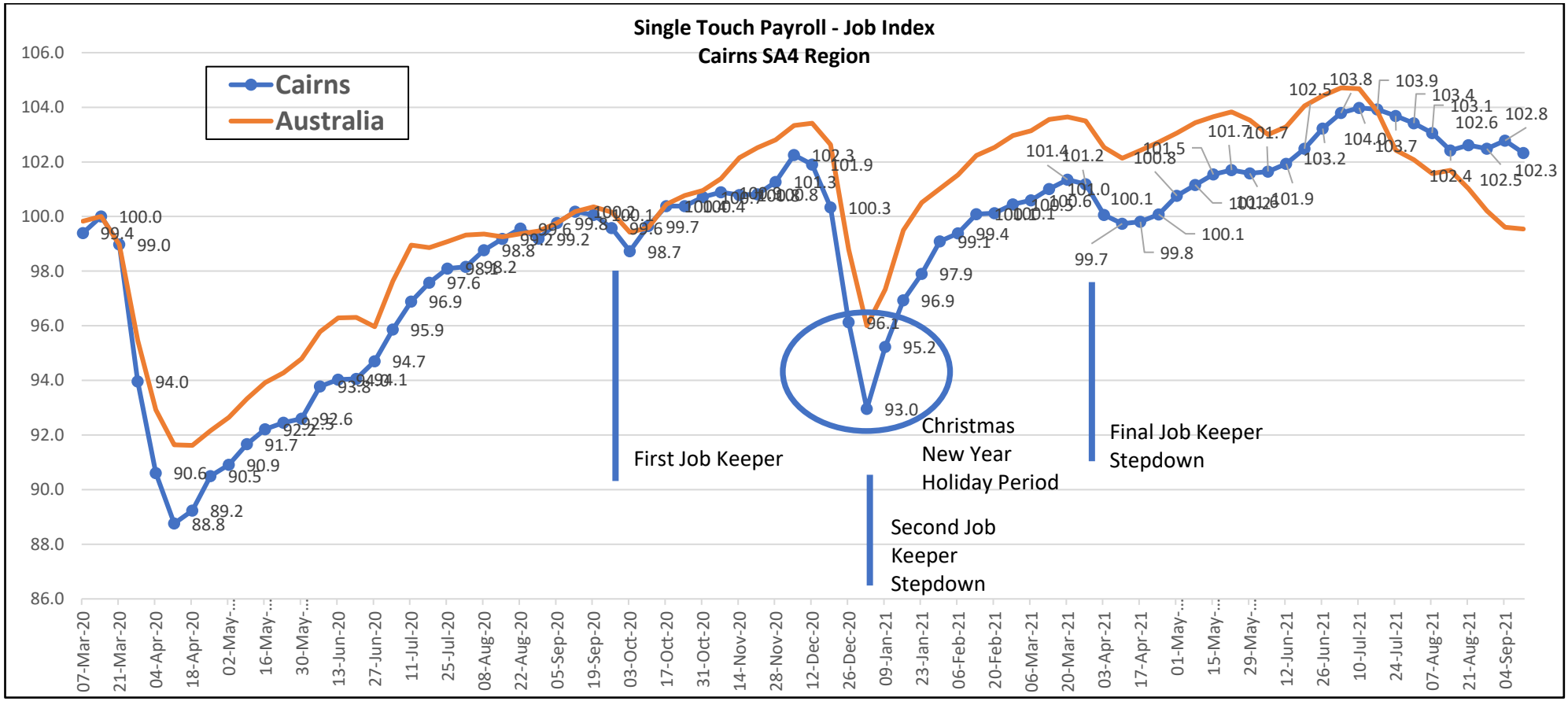


Source: Cummings Economics from Cairns Airport.

SINGLE TOUCH PAYROLL – JOBS INDEX – STABILISES

The Single Touch Payroll Jobs Index indicates that at national level, the lockdowns in both New South Wales and Victoria were resulting in continuing falls throughout September and into October. However, in the Cairns region, the downward trend in the Index evident in July and August has stabilised to be only a few percentage points down and the Index remains about the pre-Covid level of March 2020. While the National Index is likely to recover in October and November as NSW and VIC end lockdowns, it seems the Cairns Region Index is unlikely to resume growth until Queensland opens its borders in December.

Chart 2 – Single Touch Payroll – Jobs Index, Cairns SA4 Region & Australia-Wide



Source: Cummings Economics from Australian Bureau of Statistics.

JOBSEEKER NUMBERS ALMOST BACK TO PRE-COVID LEVELS

During September, the steady downward trend in numbers receiving JobSeeker unemployment benefits in the region slowed and remained slightly above pre-Covid (March 2020) levels. Lack of international (mainly backpacker) workers and usual seasonal upswing would have helped reach this point.

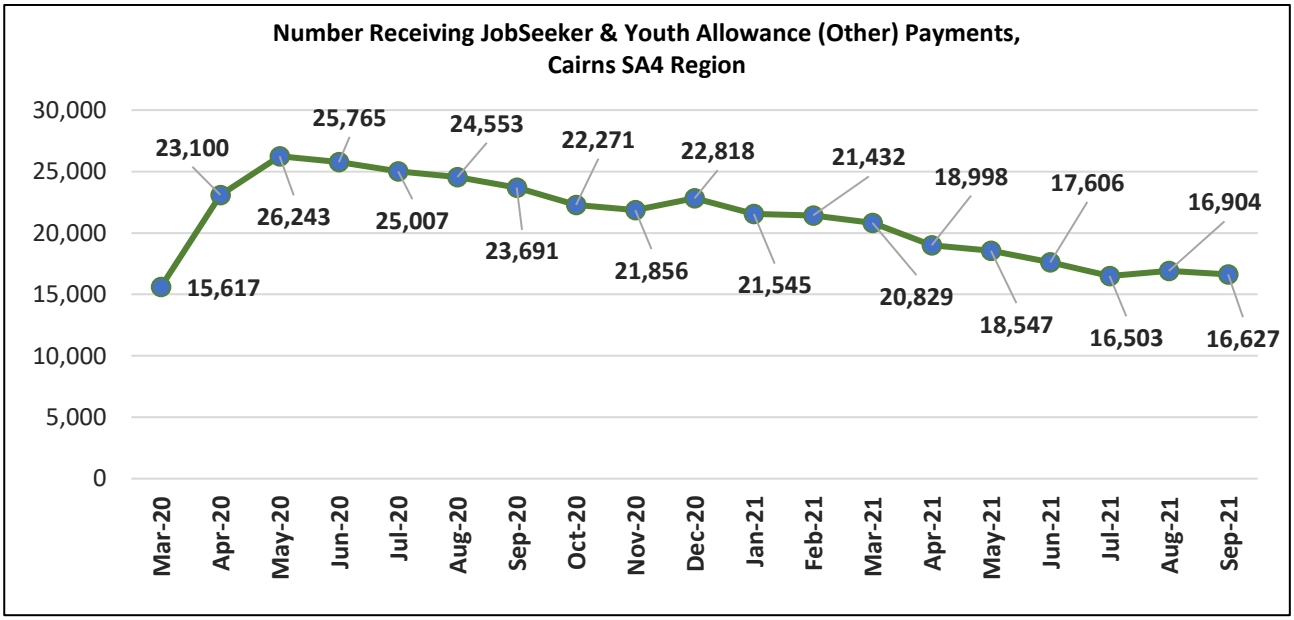
Table 1 – Numbers Receiving JobSeeker & Youth Allowance (Other)

Period	Cairns [1]	Cairns SA4 Region [2]
March 2020	9,256	15,617
April 2020	14,433	23,100
May 2020	16,181	26,243
June 2020	15,871	25,765
July 2020	15,476	25,007
August 2020	15,234	24,553
September 2020	14,651	23,691
October 2020	14,042	22,271
November 2020	13,661	21,856
December 2020	14,153	22,818
January 2021	13,380	21,545
February 2021	13,235	21,432
March 2021	12,824	20,829
April 2021	11,526	18,998
May 2021	11,258	18,547
June 2021	10,588	17,606
July 2021	9,851	16,503
August 2021	9,092	16,904
September 2021	9,930	16,627

Source: Cummings Economics from Australian Department of Social Services.

Note [1]: Cairns LGA excluding Babinda. Note [2]: Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Tablelands, Mareeba, Douglas.

Chart 3 – Numbers Receiving JobSeeker & Youth Allowance (Other) Payments, Cairns SA4 Region

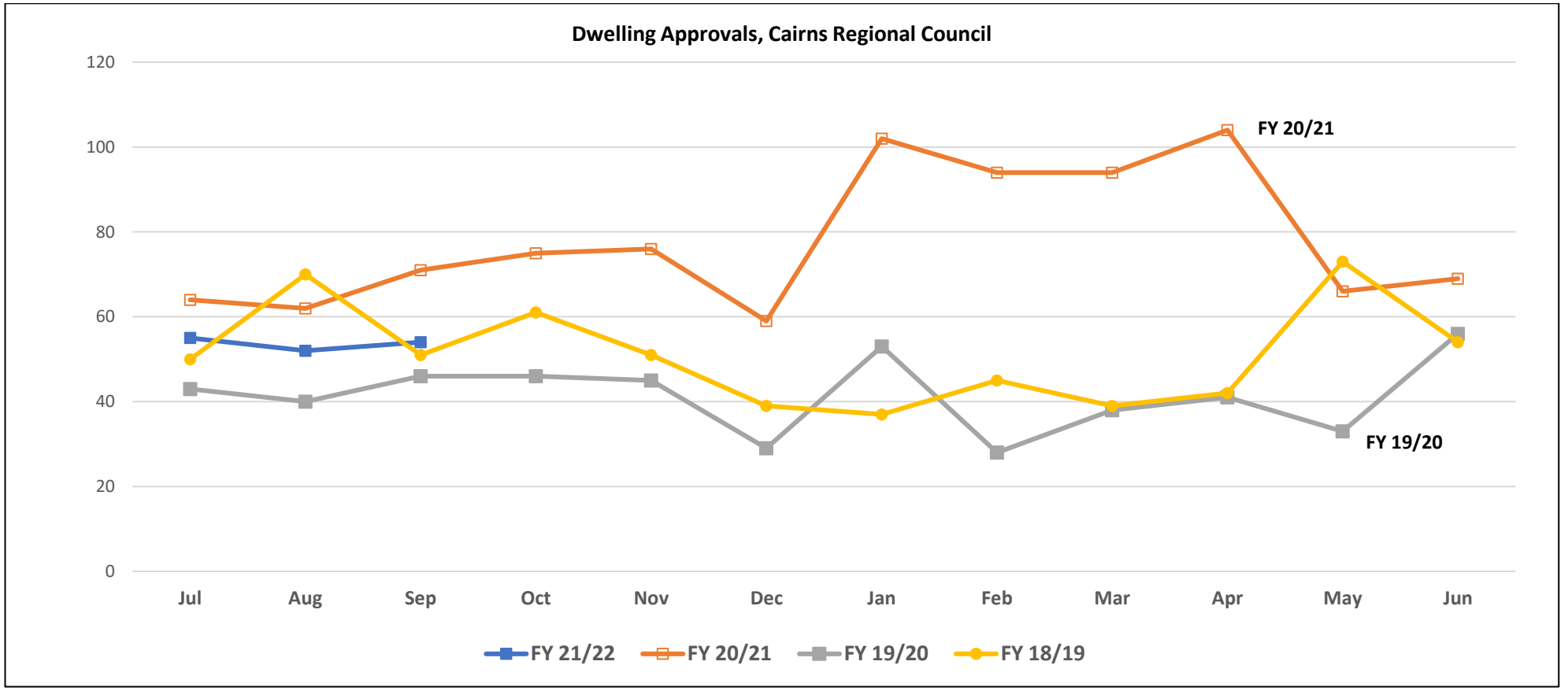


Source: Cummings Economics from Australian Department of Social Services.

CONSTRUCTION – DWELLING APPROVALS MODERATED BUT REMAIN ABOVE PRE-COVID LEVELS

The following chart illustrates that in September, dwelling approvals registered by Cairns Regional Council continued to be down on the high levels of 2020-21 but remained well above pre-Covid levels of 2019-20.

Chart 4 – Dwelling Approvals, Cairns Regional Council



Source: Cummings Economics from Cairns Regional Council.