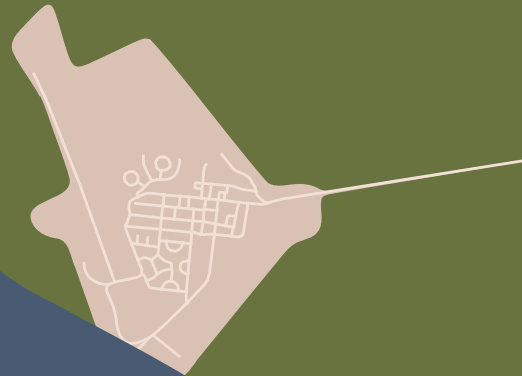


AURUKUN MASTER PLAN

OCTOBER 2025



A photograph of two birds of prey, possibly eagles or hawks, in flight. They are positioned in the upper half of the frame, with their wings spread wide. The background is a dense, green forest, and the foreground shows a body of water. The lighting suggests it might be late afternoon or early morning, with a warm glow on the birds' feathers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We recognise that Aurukun is cared for by First Nations people, as Country has been nurtured for millennia.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Wik, Wik Way, and Kugu peoples, whose deep cultural and spiritual connections to Country continue to shape this place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge their enduring knowledge, traditions, and custodianship of the lands, waters, and skies.

We recognise that this connection to Country has been integral to the identity, sustainability, and future of Aurukun. We honour the strength, resilience, and wisdom of the community and seek to learn from and work alongside them to build a shared future that respects culture, Country, and community aspirations.

A photograph of a bird, possibly a frigatebird, in flight over a body of water. The bird is silhouetted against the sky, with its wings spread. In the background, there is a dense forest of green trees. The water is calm and reflects the light.

USE OF WIK MUNGKAN

Wik and Wik Way people have proudly kept the language, Wik Mungkan, alive. It is used daily by our people. As such, Wik Mungkan is used throughout this Master Plan in ways that reflect the everyday conversations that play out in homes (aawuch), in workplaces and in community spaces.

Wik Mungkan terms are followed by their English translation when used for the first time in this document.

Please refer to the Wik Mungkan dictionary if further assistance is required.

Prepared for



Remote Indigenous Land and
Infrastructure Program Office

Prepared by



DOCUMENT SCHEDULE

Rev No.	Date	Description	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
A	08/09/2025	Draft document for client comment	OS, RMS, UK	UK, JB	JW
B	10/10/2025	Final document for Council endorsement	RMS, UK	UK	RILIPO & Council
B	14/10/2025	Council resolution for endorsement			

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART A:

CONCEPT MAP AND PROJECTS

INTRODUCTION	8
AURUKUN'S HISTORY	11
AAK'S (LAND) RIGHTS ARRANGEMENTS	14
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	18
AURUKUN MASTER PLAN	23
CONCEPT MAP	25
ACTION PLAN	26

PART B:

BACKGROUND REPORTING

DEMOGRAPHICS	34
LOCAL CLIMATE AND CLIMATE CHANGE	36
LANDSCAPE CONTEXT	38
LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES	40
PLANNING ANALYSIS	42
LAND SUITABILITY ANALYSIS	46
RISK ASSESSMENT	48
PROJECT DESIGN	49
INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS	50

PART A

CONCEPT MAP & PROJECTS



INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The right combination of housing choice and employment opportunity is a key ingredient to achieve successful and vibrant communities with a diversified economy. A practical, long-term plan for the delivery of new housing, industry and other employment generating land use is intended to provide a clear indication of future growth and development within the community. A draft Aurukun Master Plan was first prepared in 2018-2021 to guide future residential, industrial, commercial, tourism, community facilities, and recreation and open space development within Aurukun, in a way that accords with land use planning objectives and community needs and aspirations. However, this draft Master Plan was never endorsed by Aurukun Shire Council (Council) and therefore never publicly realised.

Since the last Master Plan project in 2021, Council and the local community have been affected by numerous policy and governance changes. Some key changes include the release of new demographic data in 2021, a new Mayor and Councillors in 2024, and numerous capital works and development projects have been completed. All of which are key considerations for the Master Plan as they have a direct implication on the growth of Aurukun.

The purpose of this 2025 Master Plan project is to review the 2021 draft Master Plan and prepare a new Master Plan in collaboration with Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office (RILIPO), within the Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, and Multiculturalism (DWATSIPC) and Council, and in consultation with the local community and stakeholders.

The objectives of the new Master Plan is to:

- Support local business development, job creation, and infrastructure investment, while ensuring the protection of key environmental and cultural assets
- Assess the impact of mineral resource development, including bauxite mining, on land use planning, employment, housing demand, and service infrastructure
- Ensure that industrial land use planning is aligned with mining-related infrastructure needs while safeguarding community interests and environmental protections
- Consider opportunities for economic diversification that build on resource development while supporting Indigenous-led businesses, tourism, and cultural enterprises
- Identify infrastructure needs to support industry growth, including transport, utilities, and workforce accommodation
- Address environmental and land tenure considerations linked to mining expansion, including protection of culturally significant areas, native title, and long-term sustainability; and
- Provide a roadmap for community-led development, ensuring that the benefits of industrial expansion are equitably shared and that planning decisions reflect the aspirations of the Aurukun community.

MASTER PLAN PURPOSE

This Master Plan is a living document that outlines the strategic planning and future development intentions for the Aurukun township. As an overarching document, it encompasses the aspirations and hopes for Aurukun and as such should be reviewed on a regular basis allowing for the update and addition of new priorities.

This is the first Master Plan for Aurukun, prepared and endorsed by Council in 2025. The Master Plan provides a range of strategies and projects required to realise the preferred Master Plan Concept Map. Implementation of some projects will commence immediately, while others will take longer to deliver. Individual projects and timeframes will be subject to normal legislative processes and approvals before implementation.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

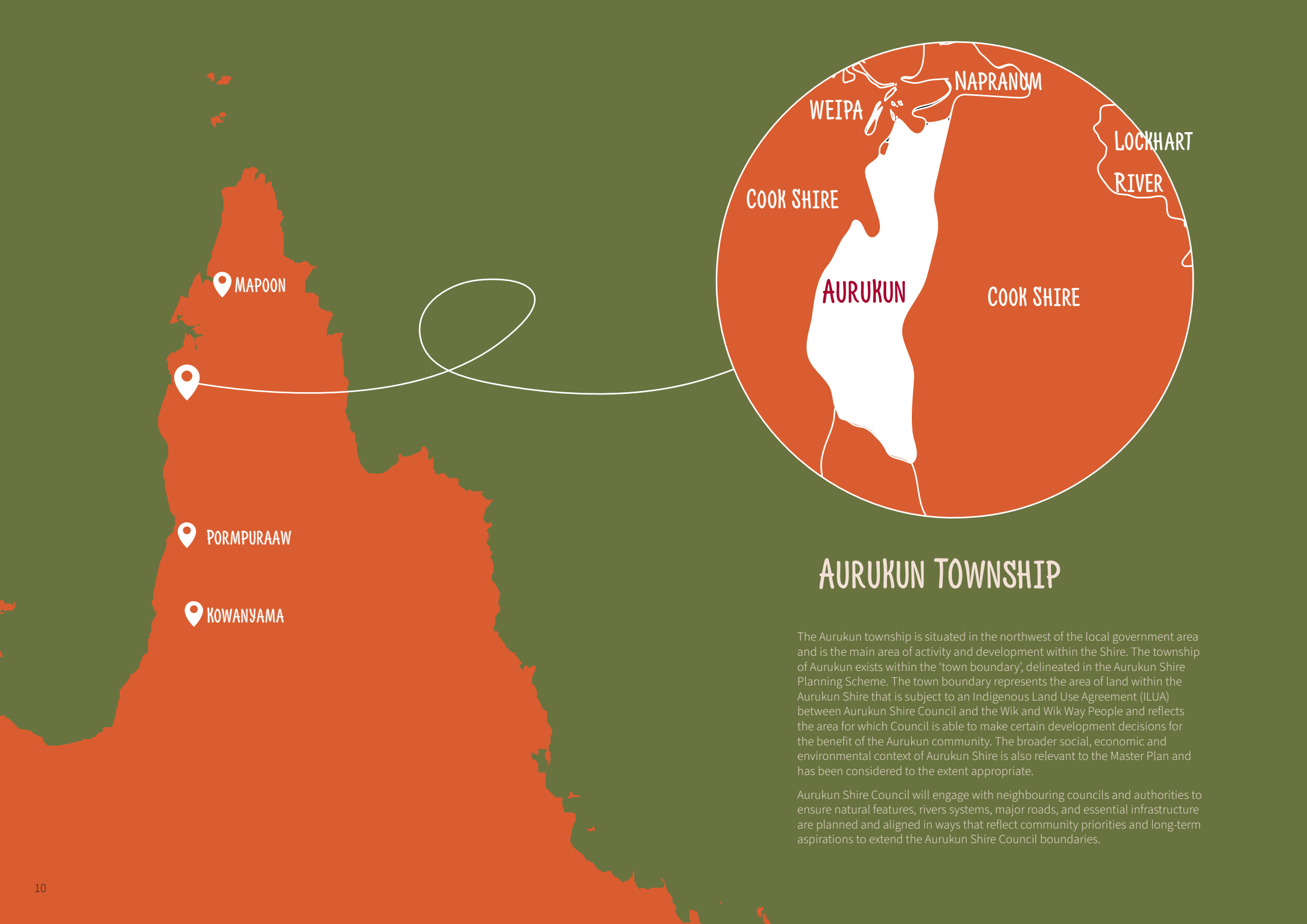
This Master Plan document is split into Part A and Part B:

- Part A: Master Plan concept and projects
 - This section includes the Master Plan concept map, projects and actions linked to the delivery of the master plan. It also details the key underlying theory, engagement findings and analysis which have guided the development of the new Master Plan.
- Part B: Background reporting
 - This section details supporting evidence which has informed the development of the Master Plan, including land tenure and Native Title arrangements, demographic data, climate change risks and analysis of planning and infrastructure matters relevant to the Master Plan area.

MASTER PLAN AREA

The geographical scope of this Master Plan applies to the Aurukun Shire Local Government Area boundary, as well as freehold lots owned by the Council in the immediate vicinity (but outside of the LGA).





AURUKUN TOWNSHIP

The Aurukun township is situated in the northwest of the local government area and is the main area of activity and development within the Shire. The township of Aurukun exists within the 'town boundary', delineated in the Aurukun Shire Planning Scheme. The town boundary represents the area of land within the Aurukun Shire that is subject to an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) between Aurukun Shire Council and the Wik and Wik Way People and reflects the area for which Council is able to make certain development decisions for the benefit of the Aurukun community. The broader social, economic and environmental context of Aurukun Shire is also relevant to the Master Plan and has been considered to the extent appropriate.

Aurukun Shire Council will engage with neighbouring councils and authorities to ensure natural features, rivers systems, major roads, and essential infrastructure are planned and aligned in ways that reflect community priorities and long-term aspirations to extend the Aurukun Shire Council boundaries.

AURUKUN'S HISTORY

Pre-colonisation

Aurukun lies on Wik, Wik Way and Kugu peoples Country, a network of multilingual clans. Their lores, ceremony and kinship systems link the Archer River wetlands to inland woodlands.

Knowledge of fire, seasons, flora and fauna underpin land management. Wik Mungkan remains a strong community language.

Presbyterian missions

The Archer River Mission was opened in Aurukun 4 August 1904 under Presbyterian missionaries Arthur and Mary Richter. Operating within Queensland's protection regime, people from a wide surrounding area were brought to the settlement. A dormitory system separated many children from families until its abolition in 1968. These years reshaped daily life through church authority, ration economies and schooling, while families maintained cultural practice on nearby Country.

Mines and protest

Bauxite discoveries in the surrounding areas drove state interest in the lands of Aurukun. The Queensland Parliament passed the Aurukun Associates Agreement Act in 1975. This gave statutory force to a mining agreement over Aurukun area leases, while providing payments into an 'Aboriginal Welfare Fund'. This top-down approach was harshly opposed by community and church leaders. The implications of this decision set the stage for national controversy.

Conflict and self-determination

Some years later, in 1978 the Queensland Government moved to take control of the Aurukun reserve from the Uniting Church. This promoted a highly public dispute. Community members feared resource access would override their rights to Country. After negotiations between the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments, the Shire of Aurukun was created under the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act 1978. The new Council was granted a 50-year lease to their lands, marking an early, yet imperfect step toward local self-determination.

Land tenure reforms

In the 1980s, the Queensland Government introduced Deeds of Grant in Trust (DOGIT). Transferring many former reserves, including Aurukun, to community-level land trusts. These arrangements expanded local control over how land was used. Nationally, the 1996 Wik High Court decision found that native title could coexist with pastoral leases where land rights were not inconsistent.

Cultural resurgence

A series of Federal Court consent determinations culminated in 2012 with final recognition of Wik and Wik Way native title around Aurukun and Weipa. This affirmed their rights to live, camp, hunt and conduct ceremony across large areas of Country.

Local governance and service models have continued to evolve, while Wik & Kugu Arts Centre has achieved national prominence through works such as the Ku' (camp dogs) sculptures.



Gathering of group of people under a tree outside the Post Office at Aurukun (source: Queensland State Library)

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

STAGE

1

Project Set-up and Stewardship

Inception meeting and co-design engagement plan with Council.

STAGE

2

Round 1 Engagement

Engagement with residents, Council and local stakeholders to understand community aspirations, new opportunities, and Council priorities for consideration in planning for Aurukun's future growth and development.

STAGE

3

Technical Analysis and Development of Options

Development of a land suitability analysis and development of three concept options.

STAGE

4

Round 2 Engagement

Engagement on three concept options developed in Stage 3, and determination of one preferred option.

STAGE

5

Master Plan Report

Development of draft Master Plan structure and initial research, followed by a co-design action plan meeting with Council and submission of concept map.

STAGE

6

Project Finalisation

Submit and present Master Plan report to Council and address all feedback before endorsement final Master Plan report by Council.

CONNECTION TO OUTSTATIONS

Bamboo Outstation was a cattle outstation run by the mission along the Archer River. Stockmen used to go by boat during the dry season to muster and brand cattle and loaded those for sale onto a barge further down the river.

Munth (Love River) Outstation flows into the bay and is a good place for fishing for barramundi and stingrays. There is a quicksand beach on the other side of the river that is quite dangerous and usually avoided. The outstation is home to many oysters in the mangroves and turtle eggs during August and September.

Peret Outstation is to the south and is good for shooting pigs and ducks and riding horses. The missions and a mixture of clans used to run cattle there all year round.

Ti-Tree Outstation recieved its name due to being home to an abundance of Bark trees. It is a good place for hunting and during the mission, 20 people used to live out there. There was a small store with a two way radio to contact Weipa and arrange transport to the Weipa Hospital.

Kendall Outstations known as Kuchanteypanh (North Kendall) and Empadha (South Kendall) are seperated by the Kendall River. During the mission days, people recieved grants to build homes in this area. The outstations housed a garden, a small store and a two way radio to contact Aurukun and Weipa to arrange trasnport to the Weipa Hospital.



AAK (LAND) RIGHTS ARRANGEMENTS

OVERVIEW

The Wik and Wik Way peoples have lived in the Aurukun region for many thousands of years and are recognised as the Traditional Owners for the area stretching between Pormpuraaw and Weipa. The area has five recognised clan groups – Apalech, Winchanam, Wanam, Chara and Puutch – who have continuously cared for and managed Country through their cultural laws and governance systems.¹

Today, Council operates under the Local Government Act 2009, with a Mayor and four Councillors elected every four years to provide leadership, guide decision-making, and manage service delivery. The joint freehold arrangement between Council and Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation provides a governance structure that balances the responsibilities of local government with the custodianship and rights of Traditional Owners.

TENURE

Council was constituted with the introduction of the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act 1978. Under this Act, a renewable 50-year lease of approximately 750,000 hectares of traditional lands (former reserve lands) was issued to Council, forming the current Shire area. This lease was due to run until 3 November 2059.

On 18 September 2013, a long-awaited land transfer was realised when the Aurukun Shire Lease was cancelled and the land converted to Aboriginal Freehold, held jointly by Aurukun Shire Council and the Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation (NAKAC), the Registered Native Title Body Corporate (RNTBC) representing the Wik and Wik Way peoples. This transition marked a major step toward self-determination and community ownership.

This tenure supports the management of both township development and wider Shire lands, enabling Traditional Owners to participate in decisions about cultural heritage protection, infrastructure, and economic opportunities such as forestry, tourism and resource development.

In recent years, the outstation movement has grown in strength, with many families returning to traditional homelands during the dry season. These outstations, now locally governed, play an important role in preserving cultural practices, strengthening identity, and maintaining deep connections to Country.

1 National Native Title Tribunal (2000) Wik and Wik-Way Peoples determination QUD6001/1998.

Wik and Wik Way People's Clan Profiles

The Wik and Wik Way peoples have lived in the Aurukun region for many thousands of years and are recognised as the Traditional Owners for the area stretching between Pormpuraaw and Weipa. Within this area are the following five recognised clan groups who have continuously cared for and managed Country through their cultural laws and governance systems.

- **Apalech** – Custodians of coastal areas and significant cultural sites, with responsibilities linked to saltwater Country.
- **Winchanam** – Hold authority over key inland areas, managing important freshwater places and ecological knowledge.
- **Wanam** – Guardians of hunting and gathering grounds, sustaining community through traditional practices and seasonal cycles.
- **Chara** – Known for stewardship of cultural places and maintaining connections across clan boundaries.
- **Puutch** – Caretakers of distinctive landscapes, with responsibilities for story places and intergenerational teaching.

Together, these clans form the cultural and governance foundation of Aurukun, ensuring that Country is cared for, respected, and managed in line with the laws and traditions of the Wik and Wik Way peoples. 'Wik' itself refers to 'speech', reflecting the region's closely related tongues and multilingual life. Today these languages and cultural practices remain strong across the wetlands, coastal flats and woodlands on Country.



Artwork by Former Councillor Vera Koomeeta OAM

NATIVE TITLE

Aurukun holds a prominent place in Australia's land rights history. In 1996, the Wik Peoples v Queensland High Court decision confirmed that Native Title could coexist with pastoral leases, a precedent that reshaped Native Title law nationwide. Following this landmark ruling, the Wik and Wik Way peoples secured several native title determinations over land in and surrounding Aurukun since 2000 (as shown in right). Two of these determinations are of significance to the Master Plan area and detailed below:

Wik Peoples v Queensland [2000] was heard in the Federal Court of Australia, Cairns District Registry, on 3 October 2000 (determination ref: QUD6001/1998). Prior to the hearing, the applicants and the Cape York Land Council had reached an agreement regarding the terms of a native title determination over specific land and waters. The Court ordered that the claim be determined in two parts: Part A (shown in purple) and Part B (shown in orange). This division was based on the nature of the land within each area. Part A consisted of land that had either remained unallocated Crown land or had only ever been subject to tenures granted specifically for the benefit of First Nations people. In contrast, Part B included land subject to pastoral and mining titles.²

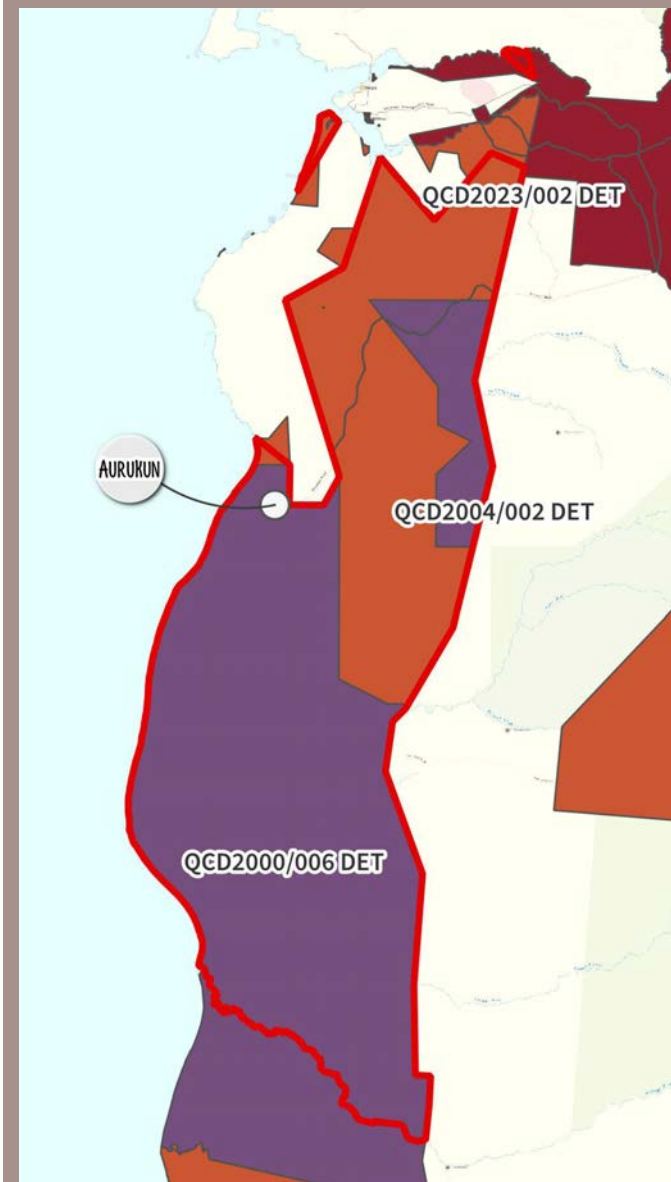
In relation to Part A, the Court determined that native title does exist. It found that the Wik and Wik-Way Peoples hold native title rights and interests over the area as common law holders. These rights and interests are communal, group-based and individual in nature, and are exercised in

accordance with the traditional laws and customs observed by the Wik and Wik-Way Peoples.³

Aurukun was also part of the broader Cape York United #1 Claim lodged in 2014, which covers almost 55 per cent of Cape York across nine Aboriginal Shire Council areas. Cape York United #1 Claim Group v Queensland (No 22) (Wik and Wik Way independent determination) [2023] was heard in the Federal Court of Australia, also in the Cairns District Registry, on 2 November 2023 (determination ref: QUD673/2014 and QCD2023/013).⁴

This hearing related to the determination of native title over the Aurukun Township area. Leading up to the hearing, the parties participated in mediation and resolved their issues, ultimately agreeing to two consent determinations, one for Exclusive Areas and another for Non-Exclusive Areas, subject to the Court's approval. The Court accepted the terms of the agreement and made orders accordingly. It recognised that the Wik and Wik-Way Peoples are the common law holders of native title over the most of the Aurukun Township area. In the Exclusive Areas, they are entitled to possess, occupy, use, and enjoy the land and waters. In the Non-Exclusive Areas, they hold native title rights and interests in accordance with their traditional laws and customs.⁵

These determinations are managed on behalf of Traditional Owners by the Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation (NAKAC), the Registered Native Title Body Corporate.



QCD2000/006 Wik and Wik-Way Peoples

QCD2004/002 Wik and Wik Way Native Title Determination No. 2

QCD2023/002 Weipa Peninsula People

² Native Title Determination, 3 October 2000, Wik Peoples v State of Queensland [2000] FCA 1443. Available online: https://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleRegisters/Pages/NNTR_details.aspx?NNTT_Fileno=QCD2000/006

³ Ibid

⁴ Native Title Determination, 2 November 2023, Wik and Wik Way independent determination [2023] FCA 1317. Available online: https://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleRegisters/Pages/NNTR_details.aspx?NNTT_Fileno=QCD2023/013

⁵ Native Title Determination, 2 November 2023, Wik and Wik Way independent determination [2023] FCA 1317. Schedule 4 – Map of Determination Area Available online: https://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleRegisters/NNTR%20Extracts/QCD2023_013/QCD2023_013%20Schedule%204%20-%20Map%20of%20Determination%20Area.pdf



October 2000

QCD2000/006 Wik and Wik-Way Peoples Native Title Determination

Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

Not applicable to the township area, only the surrounding areas as shown below:



October 2004

QCD2004/002 Wik and Wik-Way Peoples Native Title Determination No. 2

Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

Not applicable to the township area but applicable to the wider Aurukun Shire.



July 2009

QCD2009/002 Wik and Wik-Way Peoples Native Title Determination

Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

Not applicable to the township area but applicable to the wider Aurukun Shire.



October 2012

QCD2012/010 Wik and Wik-Way Peoples Native Title Determination No. 4

Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

Not applicable to the township area but determination borders the eastern boundary of Aurukun Shire.



July 2023

QCD2023/002 Weipa Peninsula People Native Title Determination

Weipa Peninsula People Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

Not applicable to the township area but the determination borders the northern boundary of Aurukun Shire.



November 2023

QCD2023/013 Wik and Wik-Way Independent Parcels Native Title Determination

Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

Applies to the township area.

ILUAS

A number of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) provide practical frameworks for development and land management within the Shire:

- Aurukun Township and Access Road ILUA – allows Council to carry out future acts within the township (construction, operation, maintenance, and upgrading of roads, reservoirs, drainage, housing and other public infrastructure). Council is exempt from formal negotiation processes but must notify and consult Traditional Owners about works in designated “Undeveloped Areas.”⁶
- Aurukun Bauxite Project ILUA – supports mining operations and sets conditions for how development intersects with native title rights.⁷
- Wik Timber Project ILUA – provides for forestry activities while embedding Traditional Owners’ rights and ensuring community benefit.⁸

Together, these agreements provide certainty for governance and investment, while ensuring that Traditional Owners remain central to decision-making over land, resources, and cultural heritage.

The Aurukun Local Government area includes several registered Land Use Agreements referenced above and in this Master Plan. The Aurukun Shire Council makes no representation regarding their validity, enforceability, or efficacy. Proponents relying on these agreements should seek independent legal advice to ensure accurate understanding, mitigate risks, and maintain compliance with legal requirements.



⁶ National Native Title Tribunal File No.:Q101/26, March 2003, Aurukun Township and Access Road Agreement. Available online: <https://agreements-treaties.squarespace.com/agreement?EntityID=1325>

⁷ National Native Title Tribunal File No.:Q12018/087, February 2015, Aurukun Bauxite Development Agreement. Available online: http://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleRegisters/Pages/ILUA_details.aspx?NNTT_Fileno=Q12014/087

⁸ National Native Title Tribunal File No.:Q12015/004, June 2015, Wik Timber Project Agreement. Available online: <https://agreements-treaties.squarespace.com/agreement?EntityID=6887>

Q101/26 Aurukun Township and Access Road Agreement ILUA

Q12015/004 Wik Timber Project ILUA

Q12014/087 - Aurukun Bauxite Development ILUA

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ROUND ONE - MAY 2025

The session was well attended by majority of the community, including Elders, Traditional Owners, residents, local businesses and service providers. Targeted conversations were had with Council staff and representative agencies.

Engagement activities were run over two days, and advertised through placement of posters on community notice boards, email invites to stakeholders, and through word of mouth.

Day 1 began with a meeting with Aak Puul Ngantam (APN) Cape York staff and board of directors, followed by an afternoon meeting with Council senior officers. APN Cape York not-for-profit company and a registered charity owned entirely by Southern Wik traditional owners, seeking to help families of the Aurukun community return to their traditional homelands. Both meetings involved mapping out ideas and long-term visions for the future of Aurukun.

Day 2 began with an informal conversation with Council staff and community members, including Elders and local business owners, setting a collaborative tone for the day. This was followed by a productive visioning session with elected officials including the Mayor. In the afternoon, a community barbecue provided an opportunity to connect with residents and gather ideas. The event was well attended, with strong community participation and valuable input shared throughout.

Engagement activity sheets were also dropped off at the local school.

Feedback from APN Cape York

- Housing availability
 - Housing availability is a critical issue in the township. Residents are sharing rooms or having to reside outside of Aurukun despite a desire to remain in community.
 - A lack of housing for APN staff impacts the ability to effectively support the community.
- Operations
 - There are concerns over restricted ability to expand APN's services due to a lack of a permanent home base.
 - Noise pollution from the diesel generator on adjacent site reduces productivity and operation of APN.
 - There is an increasing need to invest in climate resilient buildings and infrastructure, as service providers rely on continuously running air conditioning.
- Expansion
 - Increased interest in digitising the Shire and converting raw data gathered by APN into digital content
 - Strong need to invest in vocational training to build local skills in trades.

Feedback from Council

- Community health and safety
 - Many homes are not air-conditioned, despite extreme heat conditions, creating ongoing health and comfort risks.
 - A purpose-built Disaster Resilience Centre and a dedicated Emergency Services Centre is urgently needed to provide safe and central facility during times of social conflicts as well as extreme weather.
 - The Sewer Treatment Plant requires major upgrades to address odour and improve function.
 - A dedicated Aged Care facility is needed, with current services limited to a respite centre and end-of-life care.
- Infrastructure
 - A purpose-built Training Centre could serve as a Centre of Excellence for Indigenous education, featuring tailored programs and facilities.
 - A Men's Shed is needed to enhance community wellbeing, mentorship, and practical skills development.
- Economic development
 - The current business hub requires expansion.
 - A foreshore masterplan, including redevelopment of the boat ramp is needed to improve access, and support tourism and economic growth.
 - Upgrades to the airport runway (including security screening) are essential to accommodate larger aircrafts and promote tourism, including jet access and fishing.
 - Council is exploring the expansion of DOGIT land to accommodate future development opportunities.
 - The township requires additional planning for housing growth, including appropriate infrastructure to support expansion.

Feedback from Elected officials

- Community
 - Improved communication of available services is needed, as many are unaware of what's accessible.
 - A dedicated women's space is needed for personal care, connection, and wellbeing.
- Economy
 - Stronger support for local business is essential, with only two private businesses currently operating.
 - Some homes and buildings could be repurposed as office space, addressing the critical shortage and supporting service delivery.
 - Additional accommodation is needed to host guests during events and ceremonies.
 - It's vital to protect community spaces from being dominated by mining activity.



Feedback from Elders, business owners and community residents

- Housing
 - Urgent need for investment in housing to address overcrowding and demand for diverse housing types.
 - Homes and roads are in disrepair, highlighting inequity compared to government employee housing.
 - New housing should be climate-resilient and energy-efficient.
- Economic development
 - Strong support for local business and entrepreneurship, including a market garden, barbershop, and expansion of the supermarket.
 - Reviving the cattle farm.
- Youth
 - A bush school model could teach land management, language, and culture On Country.
 - More targeted vocational training is needed in trades, agriculture, and mining to empower youth and reduce crime.
- Open space
 - Strong support for more playgrounds, an outdoor gym, community garden, and shade/water bubblers in parks.
 - Safer pedestrian crossings and better street lighting are essential for safety.
- Access
 - Public transport options like shuttle buses would improve access to services, especially for Elders and youth.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ROUND TWO - JULY 2025

Engagement with elected officials, Elders, Council officers, residents, businesses, non-government organisations, and services providers across three days through community drop-in sessions, community BBQ, and yarns to review and test three development options for Aurukun's future town layout. Community participation was strong (approx. 60 people attended the community BBQ), with detailed feedback shaping the final Master Plan concept map.

The following three development options were presented and discussed.

Option 1 (Maintain current town layout)

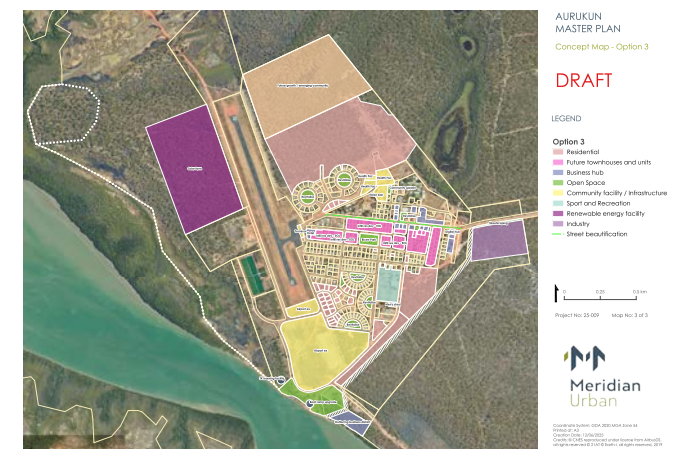
- This option has minimal change to the existing town layout. It reflects projects and developments that have been completed or approved and funded.
- Little support for this option.
- Seen as offering no real improvement and unlikely to meet future needs.

Option 2 (Modified town layout)

- This option has moderate changes to the existing town layout. It introduces centralised zones for community, cultural, commercial, residential, and open space, with clearer separation of industrial land.
- Some support for this option.
- Noted the value of centralising town functions while retaining the current structure; and seen as offering a moderate and achievable improvement.

Option 3 (Transformative town layout)

- This option transforms the existing town layout. A restructured town with a strong civic and cultural town heart, low and medium density residential clusters, enhanced open space, and clearly defined education, community, and industrial zones to support long-term sustainability.
- Overwhelming support (90%+) for a transformative town structure.
- Seen as a bold, future-focused option that could deliver long-term sustainability if supported with careful planning and collaboration with community.



Site-specific feedback

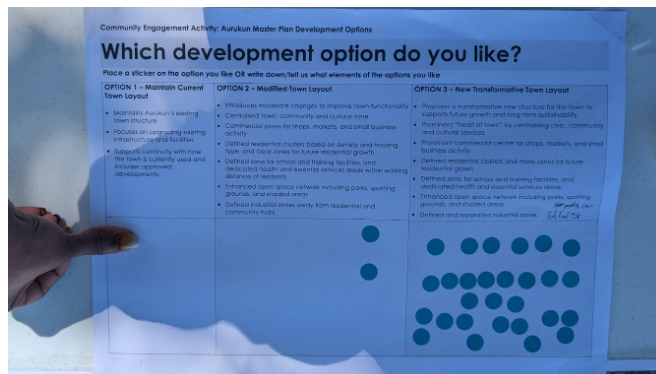
- Consolidate existing industrial uses into new designated areas.
- Provide a new jetty, shop, and children's playground/water feature at the marine precinct.
- Increase staff housing to meet workforce shortages.
- Concerns about infill housing may increase tensions.

Council feedback

- Major infrastructure flagged: airport lengthening, farm area for food security, cemetery upgrades, sewerage ponds, waste facility expansion, and water treatment plant.
- Include a distinct cultural centre zone separate from the Indigenous Knowledge Centre and Arts Centre.
- Sport and recreation planning project identified as a priority.
- New drainage infrastructure must connect into the natural ponding area south of the boat ramp.
- Can address concerns about infill housing by ensuring housing allocations are managed locally to reduce tensions.

Key takeaways

- The community has no appetite for maintaining the status quo.
- Option 3 (Transformative Town Layout) is strongly supported, with Council endorsing its progression subject to adjustments.
- Community supported actions include better industrial separation, new marine precinct facilities, more housing, and long-term infrastructure upgrades.



AURUKUN MASTER PLAN

VISION

Aurukun is a strong, resilient, and culturally grounded community where the Wik and Wik Way peoples' connection to rivers, bush Country, language, and traditions continues to guide everyday life. Guided by cultural values, local aspirations, and environmental stewardship, Aurukun envisions a future that supports safety, sustainability, and prosperity while protecting Country for generations to come.

Aurukun envisions:

- **Safe and Resilient Living** – Deliver secure and culturally appropriate homes that respond to community needs and reduce overcrowding. Housing will be located in safer areas, designed to withstand flooding, bushfire, and extreme heat, while incorporating cultural aesthetics and family structures. Infrastructure upgrades, including stormwater drainage, sewerage ponds, and water treatment, will protect health, improve liveability, and ensure safe water supplies.
- **Community-Centred Growth** – Strengthen Aurukun as a vibrant township with a clear “heart of town” where civic, cultural, commercial, and community life are centralised. Residential areas will provide choice for different household types, while dedicated staff housing supports local services. Outstations and homelands will continue to be supported, recognising their role in cultural continuity and resilience, particularly during the wet season when families “go bush.”
- **Economic Opportunities** – Diversify the local economy through forestry, resource projects, tourism, renewable energy, market gardens, and cattle re-establishment. Support small business and local enterprise, providing pathways for youth and families to build livelihoods on Country. Improved digital connectivity, port, airport, and transport access will underpin long-term economic independence.
- **Cultural and Recreational Spaces** – Celebrate cultural identity through a dedicated Cultural Centre, arts and knowledge precincts, and cultural land allocations for ceremony, youth training, and intergenerational learning. Create safe recreation areas including sporting grounds, shaded parks, playgrounds, and a foreshore precinct with new jetty and marine facilities. These spaces will support youth engagement, social cohesion, and community wellbeing.
- **Caring for Country** – Respect and protect the three rivers (the Archer, Watson, and Ward) as cultural arteries that sustain kinship, ceremony, and identity. Manage wetlands, tidal flats, and bushland as ecological and cultural assets. Promote nature-based solutions, renewable energy, and climate-resilient design to ensure the land and waters remain strong.
- **Collaboration and Good Governance** – Improve governance through transparency, local capacity building, and integrated service delivery. Foster partnerships that ensure funding, programs, and infrastructure projects are delivered efficiently, creating jobs and training opportunities for local people.

Together we will build a safe, sustainable, and culturally grounded Aurukun – strong for today, and stronger for our children and grandchildren.

The Master Plan will serve as a living document, evolving alongside community priorities and ensuring a vibrant, cohesive future for generations to come.



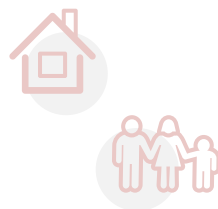
LAND USES

Residential

Residential areas relate to the provision of aawuch. Residential areas are intended to provide a variety of housing types and sizes. These may include single house, two houses on the same lot (called dual occupancies) or multiple dwellings such as apartments and townhouses.

Residential areas may also include other uses such as home-based businesses and residential care or retirement facilities. Open space is often integrated within residential areas to soften the built environment and provide land for passive and active recreation.

This Master Plan has two different residential land use types: low density residential and medium density residential.



Business

Business areas are intended for a variety of shopping, office and community services for local residents.

Typically, business areas would include small supermarkets, speciality shops, cafes, restaurants, offices and health services. Buildings in this zone would likely be low-rise, between 1 and 3 storeys high.



Industry

Industry areas are for industrial and employment uses. The types of industries expected here might include work-shops, transport depots and motor vehicle repairers. Other activities could include warehouses, storage facilities, as well as business services like cafes, design studios and co-working facilities.



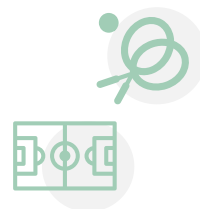
Community facilities

Community facilities support the delivery of services which provide community benefit. This could include health services, education (schools), arts and culture facilities, religion, community support and training.



Sports and recreation

Sports and recreation land is used for sporting, recreation, cultural and education facilities. The types of facilities or buildings that could be expected on this land include playing fields, clubhouses, community halls, gymnasiums, swimming pools or tennis courts. This use typically involves organised events which may generate increased traffic and noise or involve lighting.



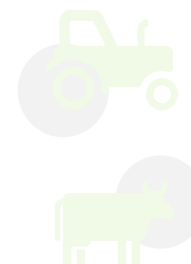
Open space

Open space land is used for recreation uses like parks and foreshore areas. The design of these spaces will depend upon the intended use of the park. Small, local parks may have basic facilities such as a small playground or basketball hoops. While larger parks may include car parking, lighting and toilet blocks.



Rural use

Rural land is for farming and other rural-type uses. These uses are usually located outside of towns. The types of activities that typically occur on this land include growing crops or other plants, animal farms including both open fields and large buildings. There are also a range of supporting industries such as storage and packaging. Land in this area may need to be protected to maintain large land areas, rather than smaller lots.



Infrastructure

The infrastructure use is for civic infrastructure, such as water, sewer, waste, transport and other similar facilities.



CONCEPT MAP

The revised Aurukun Master Plan concept map draws together *pam wanch* and Council's aspirations for Aurukun into the future.

The primary priority and focus for community is the adequate provision of *aawuch*, as there is currently an under-supply and overcrowding of existing *aawuch*.

Business uses, in the Master Plan include a hotel, marina precinct, and supporting facilities, like a digital hub and cultural centre. Further business and commercial infill of the existing town centre is also a key project, to ensure that service provision meets a growing population. Similarly, an industrial precinct has been identified on the western edge of the town.

There are a range of community facility projects identified in the Master Plan. Many of these are already being actively pursued by Council, ranging from some actively under funding consideration and others in the planning and design stage.

Sports and Recreation, as well as Open Space projects are proposed across the Master Plan area to address existing service deficiencies and providing for future needs. This includes master planning of the Sports and Recreation precinct and revitalisation of existing open spaces.

Several infrastructure upgrades will be required to meet existing service deficiencies but also provide for a growing population as more *aawuch* is built. These projects include essential upgrades to the water treatment plant, waste water treatment plan and waste disposal site. Others projects include new roads to support this growth and an expansion of the airport terminal and runway.



Inset over page



ACTION PLAN

The action plan lists all the projects shown on the concept map on the previous page. These projects are across a range of land uses, including *aawuch*. The table below sets out each project with a unique project ID (linked to the concept map), project title, land use category, description, level of commitment, and priority. Project priorities indicate the anticipated timeframe for delivery: Short-term (1–5 years), Medium-term (5–15 years), and Long-term (15+ years).

Levels of commitment, outlined below, reflect the current status of projects and have been categorised into six stages, developed using the best available knowledge as of 2025.

Conceptual – An early-stage idea or aspiration identified through community and stakeholder engagement which has not yet been formally scoped.

Preliminary commitment – A project that has received in-principle support from Council, government, or another partner agency.

Delivery / construction stage – A project currently under construction or being actively delivered.

Planning – A project that is undergoing or requires detailed investigation, design, or feasibility assessment. Planning projects are generally in the early pipeline, being refined to determine scope, costs, partners, and delivery pathways.

Committed in budget – A project with confirmed funding allocation and delivery is assured, but detailed design and procurement may still be underway.

Completed and operational – A project that has been fully delivered, commissioned, and is available for community use.

Project ID	Title	Land use category	Description	Expected Cost	Level of commitment	Priority
HLD01	Northern residential subdivision	Residential (Low den.)	The northern residential subdivision (approx 139 new lots) is intended to deliver new residential lots in line with the Aurukun Housing Strategy. This will help address overcrowding and provide more housing choice for local families, particularly for families requiring larger 3- and 4-bedroom homes.	\$58,030,696.92	Conceptual	Long-term
HLD02	Southern residential subdivision	Residential (Low den.)	Located south of the township centre, opposite the airport, this subdivision will provide 19 additional residential lots to relieve pressure on existing housing stock. The subdivision design should incorporate measures to mitigate airport noise, with shaded streets and safe pedestrian connections to community facilities.	\$6,614,581.16	Planning	Short-term
HLD03	Eastern residential subdivision	Residential (Low den.)	Delivery and construction of new housing in the western subdivision is underway through a staged approach. This subdivision (approx 51 new lots) will provide immediate housing relief, aligning with the 81 approved applications on the Housing Register and meeting the strong demand for smaller 1- and 2-bedroom dwellings.	\$17,467,545.62	Planning	Medium-term
HLD04	Staff housing	Residential (Low den.)	Staff housing for government workers is proposed over vacant land adjoining Circular Street. This area will support up to four residential lots to help attract and retain essential service staff.	\$1,045,929.21	Preliminary commitment	Short-term
HLD05	Targetted infill	Residential (Low den.)	An infill program will optimise underutilised sites within the existing township to provide new housing close to services and facilities. It responds directly to chronic overcrowding and maximises limited land availability. Council also aspires to employ a local housing officer to ensure housing allocations reflect the lived experience and cultural knowledge of the Wik, Wik Way and Kugu peoples.	\$119,629.90	Planning	Medium-term
HLD06	Northern growth front	Residential (Low den.)	The northern growth area has been identified to cater for long-term demand. Future development (approx 120 new lots) is subject to Council direction and dependent on infrastructure provision. This area will provide flexibility to meet housing needs of Aurukun's young and growing population, with 44% of residents under the age of 18.	\$38,541,254.37	Preliminary commitment	Medium-term

Project ID	Title	Land use category	Description	Expected Cost	Level of commitment	Priority
HMD01	Medium density infill residential development	Residential (Med. den.)	This area provides for duplexes, townhouses, or units to diversify Aurukun's predominant (95%) detached housing stock. Medium density options will meet the needs of singles, elders, and young families, particularly near community facilities. The Aurukun Housing Strategy (2024) also identifies opportunities for cohort-specific housing, such as seniors' units and men's and women's accommodation, which can be delivered through this program. A local housing officer will apply community knowledge and cultural context in supporting allocations.	\$261,340.95	Preliminary commitment	Medium-term
B01	Town centre commercial infill	Business	Opportunities exist to expand Aurukun's town centre with small-scale retail such as a hair and nail shop, food outlets, and business services. Engagement identified strong demand for greater shopping variety and spaces for local entrepreneurs. This precinct will also consolidate service providers into a central, accessible location, responding to community feedback that many residents are unaware of what services exist or how to access them. Improved service visibility and communication will ensure the town centre functions as both a commercial hub and a place to connect with essential support services.	N/A - assumed that the existing infrastructure would be repurposed and so no new civil work required.	Planning	Short-term
B02	Hotel	Business	A hotel development will provide short-stay accommodation for visitors, tourists, and professionals. It supports local employment and tourism aspirations.	N/A	Planning	Medium-term
B03	Marina precinct	Business	The marina precinct requires dedicated precinct planning to reflect community and Council's aspirations for revitalisation. Residents want the area to become a safe, family-friendly space with boating and fishing facilities, shaded seating, children's play equipment, water bubblers, picnic areas, and a small shop. There is also potential for office space to support tourism or cultural enterprises. In the longer term, the precinct could host a Bio-Industry Research Hub focused on native vegetation, health, and education, linking traditional ecological knowledge with scientific research.	\$572,360.75	Planning	Long-term
B04	Cultural centre	Business	The cultural centre will be included in the precinct planning of the wider business precinct. The centre is intended to house culturally significant artefacts and artworks created by Wik and Wik Way peoples, while also supporting cultural tourism and education. Precinct planning will explore opportunities to interface cultural and digital initiatives, such as using artificial intelligence to transform stories and artefacts into interactive exhibitions. This will ensure the hub becomes both a place of preservation and innovation.	N/A	Preliminary commitment	Short-term
B05	Digital hub	Business	The digital hub will also be delivered through precinct planning within the wider business precinct. It will provide training, education, online access, and youth digital programs. The precinct approach will explore opportunities for a Centre of Excellence in remote Indigenous education as part of the digital hub, featuring facilities such as a driving simulator and tailored skills development programs.	\$74,211.80	Delivery / construction stage	Short-term

Project ID	Title	Land use category	Description	Expected Cost	Level of commitment	Priority
IND01	Industrial subdivision	Industry	This industrial area has been identified to accommodate workshops, depots, and service industries away from residential areas. It will improve safety, support jobs, and provide land for essential infrastructure.	\$3,879,783.64	Preliminary commitment	Short-term
IND02	Depot relocation	Industry	Relocation of the existing depot from the town centre to the new industrial subdivision to reduce heavy vehicle traffic in residential areas and free up central land for community use.	\$4,036.50	Preliminary commitment	Short-term
CF01	Health facilities expansion	Community facility	Expansion of health facilities is required to meet growing demand. Engagement highlighted needs for aged care, women's health services, and visiting specialists to be consolidated in one location for better accessibility.	\$78,547.30	Committed in budget	Short-term
CF02	Men's Shed	Community facility	A place for men to gather, build skills, and share cultural knowledge. Engagement identified the need for a purpose-built Men's Shed is needed to support community wellbeing, mentorship, and practical skills development.	\$71,849.70	Planning	Medium-term
CF03	Neighbourhood centre	Community facility	Council has committed to transition the existing facility into a Neighbourhood Centre - community space for programs, meetings, and service delivery.	N/A	Planning	Medium-term
CF05	School master planning	Community facility	The Department of Education, Aurukun State School and Council are engaged in a master planning process support the growth of Aurukun's school. The master plan incorporates a new early years hub and configures the existing long-day care and school facilities to ensure the site feels safe and accessible. The concept designs have been prepared and anticipate for construction delivery in 2026.	\$117,656.50	Conceptual	Medium-term
CF06	Indigenous knowledge and women's hub	Community facility	The precinct will retain the Indigenous Knowledge Centre and incorporate a new dedicated women's space facility. Engagement identified a strong need for a safe, welcoming, and relaxing environment where women can gather, socialise, and access personal care services.	N/A	Conceptual	Medium-term
CF07	Cemetery upgrade	Community facility	Council has prepared a 4-staged plan to expand and improve cemetery facilities, including landscaping and cultural areas for remembrance. Stage one has been completed.	N/A	Conceptual	Medium-term
CF08	Old cemetery	Community facility	The old cemetery near the foreshore will be preserved and protected as an important place of cultural and community significance. There is an opportunity to enhance the site with sensitive landscaping, wayfinding, and pathways to improve its connection to the foreshore and surrounding precincts. These improvements will respect the cemetery's heritage while providing clearer access and reinforcing its role as a valued place of remembrance within Aurukun's cultural landscape.	N/A	Conceptual	Medium-term
SR01	Sports and recreation precinct master planning	Sports and recreation	Precinct planning to guide the future redevelopment of the sports and recreation centre including the sports fields. Engagement highlighted strong community demand for upgraded football ovals, multi-sports facilities and a rodeo ground.	N/A	Conceptual	Short-term

Project ID	Title	Land use category	Description	Expected Cost	Level of commitment	Priority
SR02	Indoor recreation centre	Sports and recreation	A new indoor recreation facility to provide year-round sporting and youth activities. Engagement highlighted community demand for a gym and indoor areas to play basketball and netball.	\$119,301.00	Conceptual	Long-term
OS01	Open space revitalisation	Open space	There are several open spaces and parks across the Aurukun township which can be revitalised. Engagement should occur with residents to understand what their desires are for these spaces into the future. Some may be suited to small gardens or playgrounds.	N/A	Conceptual	Medium-term
OS02	Bicentennial Park upgrades	Open space	This is the main park in Aurukun. It is a significant place for local residents. This space requires upgrades to improve its amenity, including lighting, landscaping and new playground equipment.	N/A	Conceptual	Medium-term
OS03	Town centre park upgrades	Open space	The open space adjacent to Council Chambers and the grocery store is a busy park. It is a meeting place for locals and is used to host events. Community feedback highlighted the need for shaded seating, lighting, and stage/event facilities.	N/A	Planning	Medium-term
OS04	Community garden	Open space	The community garden is a dedicated space to support healthy eating, local food production, and intergenerational learning. APN Cape York organisation and their local rangers have been leading efforts to rebuild the garden with a focus on educating the community about traditional foods and sustainable practices. Engagement highlighted a strong need to build local capacity and skills, particularly through school programs that foster leadership in young people. Traditional Owners and Rangers are well placed to play a central role in delivering this initiative, ensuring cultural knowledge is passed on while strengthening food security and community wellbeing.	N/A	Conceptual	Medium-term
OS05	Waterfront redevelopment	Open space	The Waterfront Redevelopment is a central project within the Foreshore Renewal, reflecting both community and Council aspirations for a revitalised foreshore. The waterfront is highly valued for recreation, culture, and identity. Engagement highlighted the need for shaded pathways, fishing spots, picnic areas, safe spaces for cultural gatherings, and play areas for children. Precinct planning will also explore opportunities for landscaping, public art, and small-scale amenities to enhance everyday use while protecting the natural environment. This redevelopment will establish the foreshore as a hub for recreation, culture, and community pride.	N/A	Committed in budget	Short-term
OS06	Jetty	Open space	An upgraded jetty and boat ramp will form a critical component of the foreshore renewal. The project will support fishing, boating, and tourism activities while improving safety and access for residents and visitors. Upgrades will enable larger boats to dock, improve recreational facilities, and provide resilience for supply chains by allowing barge access during flood events when the runway cannot be used. The upgraded jetty will strengthen Aurukun's connection to the water and underpin the success of both the Waterfront Redevelopment (OS05) and Marina Precinct (B03).	N/A	Preliminary commitment	Medium-term

Project ID	Title	Land use category	Description	Expected Cost	Level of commitment	Priority
OS07	Township core revitalisation	Open space	Improvements are proposed to the area surrounding Council offices, the supermarket, the art gallery, and the ANZAC memorial to strengthen Aurukun's central identity and encourage economic activity. This highly traversed space is both a functional and symbolic heart of the township. Upgrades will include shaded seating, landscaping, pathways, and cultural features to enhance safety, amenity, and pride of place. This project links with the Main Street Beautification (OS08) and Entrance to Town Beautification (OS09) projects to deliver a cohesive town centre renewal.	N/A	Conceptual	Medium-term
OS08	Main street beautification	Open space	Enhancements to Aurukun's main street will create a safer, more attractive, and welcoming entry into the township core. Improvements may include landscaping, shaded seating, signage, lighting, and public art that reflects Wik, Wik Way and Kugu identity. These works will complement the Township Core Revitalisation (OS07) and Entrance to Town Beautification (OS09), ensuring the central civic and commercial areas are integrated and revitalised as a vibrant community hub.	N/A	Delivery / construction stage	Short-term
OS09	Town entrance beautification	Open space	The entrance to Aurukun will be upgraded to create a strong sense of arrival and community pride. Proposed works may include landscaping, signage, and cultural art installations that reflect local identity and heritage. This project is directly linked with the Township Core Revitalisation (OS07) and Main Street Beautification (OS08), ensuring that the journey from the township's entry through to its civic heart is unified, attractive, and welcoming.	N/A	Conceptual	Long-term
RU01	Farm	Rural use	Aurukun has fertile land that has been allocated for agricultural and aquaculture initiatives. Engagement identified strong community interest in bush foods, small-scale farming, and food security projects to support healthier lifestyles and local enterprise. This precinct will require further detailed planning and ongoing engagement with the community to determine suitable farming models, potential partnerships, and training opportunities. The farm precinct has the potential to strengthen food security, create jobs, and build intergenerational knowledge around growing and preparing traditional and contemporary foods.	\$8,610,574.54	Committed in budget	Long-term
INF01	Water Treatment Plant upgrade	Infrastructure upgrades	Water security remains a pressing issue for Aurukun. Council, in partnership with the Department, is addressing wastewater conditions while progressing design for a new pump station. The existing water treatment plant will remain on its current site, with planned upgrades to improve reliability and safety of the community's drinking water supply. Works will include new pumps and associated infrastructure to reduce risks of contamination and ensure the facility can meet future demand.	\$10,400,000.00	Committed in budget	Short-term
INF02	Airport terminal upgrades	Infrastructure upgrades	Expansion of the airport terminal is required to improve passenger facilities and support increased regional air services. With SkyTrans changing capacity, upgrades such as security screening will soon be essential. Coupled with runway extension (INF06), these works will enable larger aircraft, create tourism opportunities and enhance links to fishing and foreshore experiences.	\$26,000,000.00	Preliminary commitment	Medium-term

Project ID	Title	Land use category	Description	Expected Cost	Level of commitment	Priority
INF03	Diesel generator noise mitigation	Infrastructure upgrades	Noise impacts from diesel generators are affecting nearby sensitive land uses, including residential and community facilities. Asset owners should investigate and implement noise mitigation measures to reduce impacts and improve liveability in the township.	\$2,990,000.00	Conceptual	Medium-term
INF04	Cemetery upgrade	Infrastructure upgrades	Council has prepared a four-stage cemetery expansion plan. Stage one has already been completed, with further stages to provide capacity and improved landscaping.	N/A	Delivery / construction stage	Short-term
INF05	Waste Water Treatment Plant upgrade	Infrastructure upgrades	A major long-term upgrade is required to manage wastewater sustainably and support population growth. Current ponds are at capacity and odour issues are impacting amenity. Council has commenced investigations into feasible upgrade options, which may include new ponds and firebreaks for safety. Wastewater impacts on groundwater quality are being considered through a discussion paper.	\$13,000,000.00	Committed in budget	Long-term
INF06	Airport runway expansion	Infrastructure upgrades	Aurukun Airport requires a runway expansion to accommodate larger aircraft. This project is linked with INF02, ensuring both passenger growth and tourism opportunities can be realised.	\$26,000,000.00	Preliminary commitment	Medium-term
INF07	Solar farm & BEES	Infrastructure upgrades	A site north-west of the airport has been identified for a solar farm and battery energy storage system to reduce reliance on diesel generation. Proximity to the airport will need careful design to avoid aviation conflicts. Council's broader renewable energy aspirations include off-grid solar, pipeline initiatives, and decarbonisation projects led by State agencies. Ergon has committed to transitioning from diesel generators to a solar farm solution.	N/A	Committed in budget	Medium-term
INF07	Waste disposal / dump upgrade	Infrastructure upgrades	Aurukun's waste facility is at capacity. Council is investigating upgrade options or potential relocation to a new site to ensure safe and sustainable waste management into the future.	\$3,900,000.00	Preliminary commitment	Medium-term
INF08	Haul road	Infrastructure upgrades	A new haul road is required to provide access to industrial areas and connect heavy vehicle traffic to the waterfront, reducing congestion in the town centre. The bypass road should be designed to accommodate large vehicles, including prime movers and road trains, in line with relevant standards.	\$3,556,066.80	Planning	Short-term
INF11	Northern connector road	Infrastructure upgrades	A stormwater upgrade is required in southern Aurukun to reduce flooding and support proposed residential subdivisions. Langtree Consulting undertook a stormwater assessment in 2023, identifying the need for a new drain along the eastern/southern boundary of the township.	\$475,410.00	Conceptual	Long-term
INF10	Northern drain	Infrastructure upgrades	A new drainage system is required to manage stormwater from the proposed northern subdivisions. The drain will reduce flood risk in future subdivisions.	\$1,052,448.31	Conceptual	Medium-term
INF09	Southern drain	Infrastructure upgrades	A residential bypass road has been identified to the east of the school, which is intended to facilitate access to future residential development to the north of the township (RS1). The bypass road will seek to avoid congestion in the town centre, particularly along War Street.	\$1,489,555.81	Planning	Short-term

PART B
BACKGROUND
REPORTING



DEMOGRAPHICS

Key population and housing characteristics of the Aurukun Shire Council have been analysed using the Australian Bureau of Statistics – 2021 Census data products (Aurukun) (S) (LGA30250) 7,500km2):

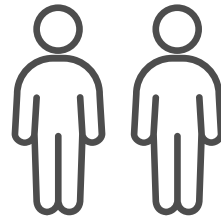
- Aurukun 2021 Census All persons QuickStats;
- Aurukun 2021 Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats;
- Queensland Government population projections, 2023 edition: projected population (low series), by local government area, Queensland, 2021 to 2046.

The 2021 Census data is the most recent overview of existing population and housing statistics at a local government area-level. The Queensland Government's Statisticians's Office has published population projections for the Aurukun local government area from 2021 to 2046 and have therefore been utilised to understand the population trends within the immediate community and into the future. This reflects data that informed the Aurukun Housing Plan released in September 2024.

The 2021 Census recorded the population within Aurukun to be 1,101 persons. However, there is a likely undercount of total population in Aurukun (based upon the 2021 Census). Previous studies undertaken by Council have suggested significant discrepancies between Census reporting and actual population. Therefore, census data should not be solely relied upon to inform decision making in Aurukun.

Given the nature of housing provision outside of the LGA, it is also noted that the overall population count and age profile evident in Census data may not be reflective of the Aurukun community. The population and general occupancy rates for housing increase during non-school periods and other key public holidays as locals head back to Aurukun. Additional key statistics from the Aurukun Housing Plan 2024:

- In Aurukun 14.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons aged 15 to 64 are employed, while only 3.7% report being unemployed. However, 77.9% of people are not in the labour force.
- According to equivalised data (adjusted to factor in differences in household sizes, including overcrowding), one-third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in Aurukun (33.8%) report household income of less than \$400 per week, with over 83.1% reporting household incomes under \$1,000 per week.
- Almost all homes in Aurukun are rented, including social housing and private rentals. Homeownership data does not include homeownership outcomes achieved since 2016.
- The average household size is 4 people for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Aurukun with over half (58.4%) of households having 5 or more usual residents. The proportion of dwellings that require one or more bedrooms is 33%, while 43% have one or more bedrooms spare.
- On census night 2016, 196 people in Aurukun identified as homeless, which is a rate of 1,529 per 10,000 people compared with 46 per 10,000 in Queensland.



1,101 PEOPLE



321 DWELLINGS

AURUKUN - PER HOUSEHOLD



3.1 BEDROOMS



3.9 PEOPLE

QUEENSLAND - PER HOUSEHOLD



3.1 BEDROOMS



3.2 PEOPLE

AUSTRALIA - PER HOUSEHOLD



2.7 BEDROOMS



3.1 PEOPLE

DWELLING COUNT

OCCUPIED	236
UNOCCUPIED	85
TOTAL	321

DWELLING STRUCTURE

SEPERATE HOUSE	215
SEMI-DETACHED, ROW, TOWNHOUSE, APARTMENT	13

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS

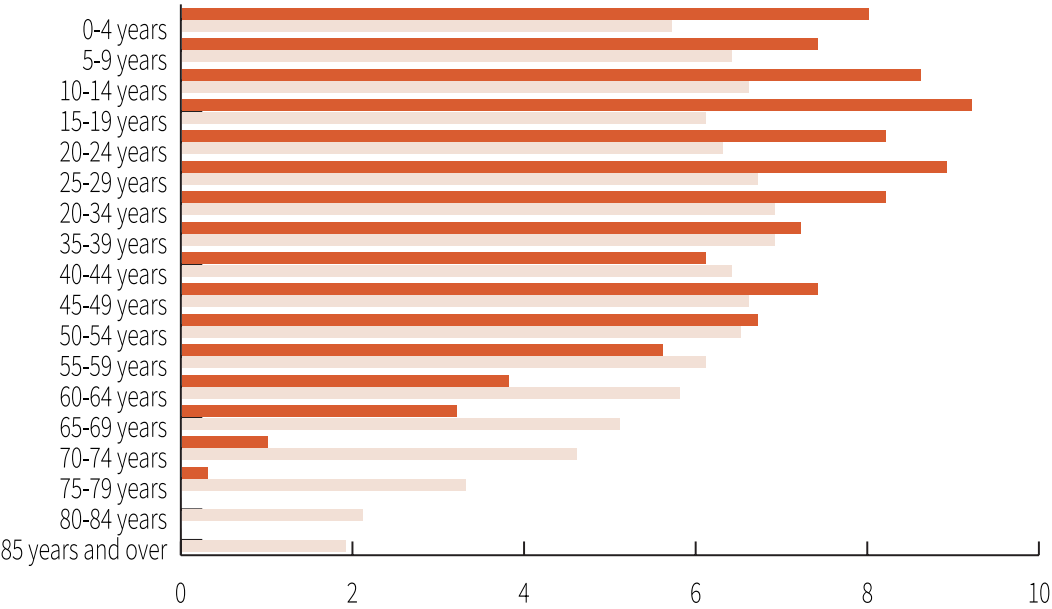
NONE	0
1 BEDROOM	5
2 BEDROOMS	44
3 BEDROOMS	123
4 OR MORE BEDROOMS	60

AVERAGE NUMBER PER DWELLING

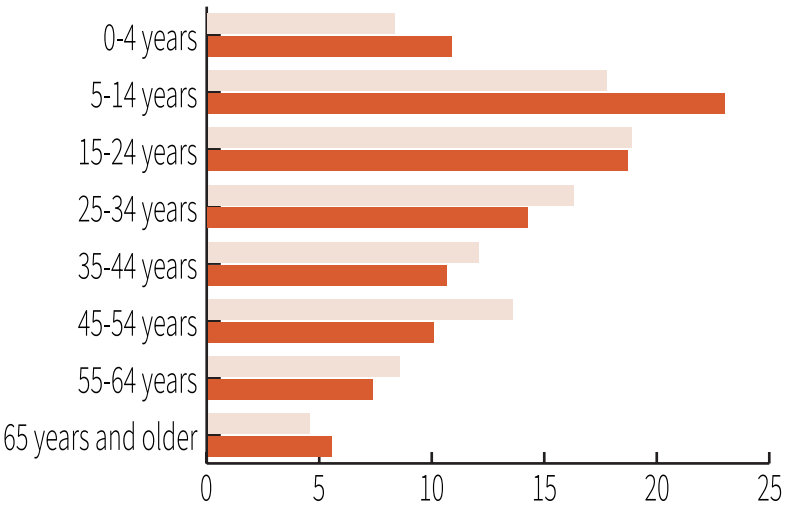
TENURE

RENTED	218
OTHER / NOT STATED	19

ALL PERSONS LIVING IN AURUKUN LGA VS QUEENSLAND (%)



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERES LIVING IN AURUKUN LGA VS QUEENSLAND (%)



The table adjacent benchmarks the 2021 ABS Census data against previous population projections prepared by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office and Aurukun Shire Council. There is a significant discrepancy between the Aurukun Planning Scheme population projections and the ABS / QGSO sources. This discrepancy can be attributed to the geographic area for each data source. The ABS and QGSO data sources relate to the Aurukun LGA whereas the Council projections relate to the LGA and land under Council ownership but outside of their boundaries. The Planning Scheme states these projections may not reflect the total number of people living in Aurukun as there are a high number of people moving in and out of the township at all times.

AURUKUN POPULATION PROJECTIONS

SOURCE	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041	2046
ABS CENSUS	1,101	-	-	-	-	-
QGSO MEDIUM SERIES POPULATION	1,101	1,221	1,341.5	1,461.75	1,582	1,080
AURUKUN PLANNING SCHEME	1,338	1,374	1,407	-	-	-

LOCAL CLIMATE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

TODAY'S CLIMATE

Aurukun is located in a tropical savanna climate zone (Aw), according to the Köppen climate classification. This climate is strongly influenced by the monsoonal circulation, with two dominant seasons: a pronounced wet season and a dry season. The wet season typically begins in November and extends through March, during which the majority of annual rainfall occurs.¹

Based on records from the nearest Bureau of Meteorology weather station at Weipa Airport, the average annual maximum temperature in the region is approximately 31–32°C, with summer peaks (November to February) often reaching higher. Extreme heat events can push temperatures above 40°C. For example, during the late 2018 heatwave, temperatures in western Cape York reached close to 44°C (QLD Government 2020).²

Aurukun experiences on average 1,500–2,000 mm of rainfall per year, though this can vary considerably depending on the intensity of the wet season. January and February are typically the wettest months, when rainfall is frequent and heavy, often leading to flooding of rivers, creeks, and low-lying areas.³

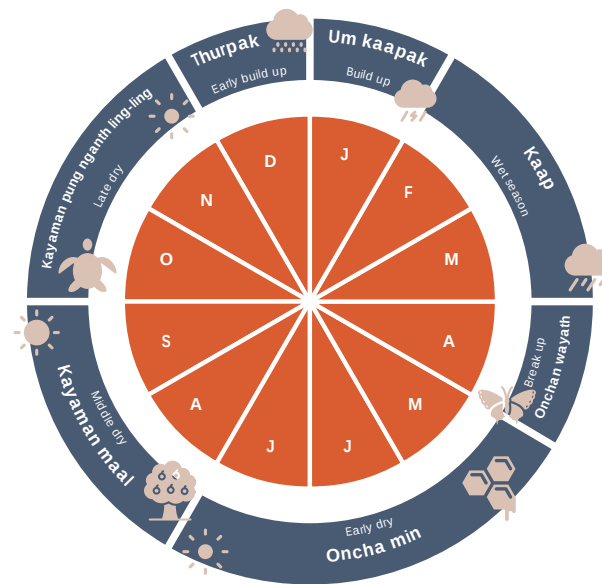
The Wik and Wik Way Peoples of Aurukun describe seasonal changes in greater detail than the western two-season model. Their knowledge is based on observation of wind patterns, rainfall, the flowering of plants, and the behaviour of animals and fish. These cycles guide cultural practices, subsistence activities, and the management of Country.⁴

Key Wik-Mungkan seasons include:

- Kaap (Wet Season): the sun can disappear for weeks as heavy rains fall and mildew flourishes inside houses.
- Onchan wayath (or onchan many) (Break Up): Dragonflies and butterflies abound and fish like Mangrove Jacks are easy to catch.
- Onchan min (Early Dry): Messmate trees are blooming now and show that sugar bag honey is ready to collect.
- Kayaman maal (Middle Dry): Soft Nonda Plum fruits are tasty at this time.
- Kayaman pung nganth ling-ling (Late Dry): As the swamps dry out, freshwater turtles are easier to find and water lily bulbs can be dug out.
- Thurpak Early Build Up): Hot and humid weather heralds the gathering of Magpie Geese in the swamps and flying ants emerge at night to mass around lights.

- Um kaapak (Build Up): Evening thunderstorms bring relief and high tides wash over the marine plains and mangroves.⁵

Winds typically come from the south-east during the dry season, shifting with the onset of the monsoon. The start of the northern Queensland wet season is often the windiest period (around October and November), while the end of the wet season is typically calmer. Humidity levels are highest during the later months of the wet season, often exceeding 75–80 per cent, creating hot and muggy conditions in December and January.⁶



FUTURE CLIMATE

We know that our climate is changing globally. This is having an impact locally for us in Aurukun already and will continue to into the future.

Hotter days will mean more heat stress for our people, flora and fauna. Higher demand for air conditioning during summer will increase the risks of power outages.

Hotter and drier air, combined with a small decrease in annual rainfall will mean increased rates of evapotranspiration. Plants and gardens will need to be watered more often, placing strain on water storage.

Longer fire seasons with increased fire risk will limit the amount of time each year we can do cool burns.

¹ Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), 2025. Climate statistics for Australian locations – Weipa Airport. Available: https://www.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw_027045.shtml

² QLD Government 2024, Climate change in the Cape York, Department of Environment and Science. Available https://data.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/static/Regional%20Impact%20Summaries/Qld%20Climate%20Change%20Impact%20Summary_Cape%20York.pdf

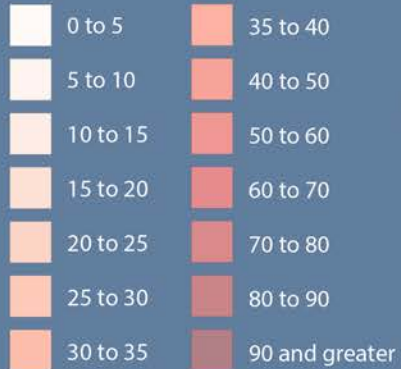
³ Ibid

⁴ Sutton, P. (1978). Wik: Aboriginal society, territory and language at Cape Keerweer, Cape York Peninsula, Australia. PhD Thesis, University of Queensland.

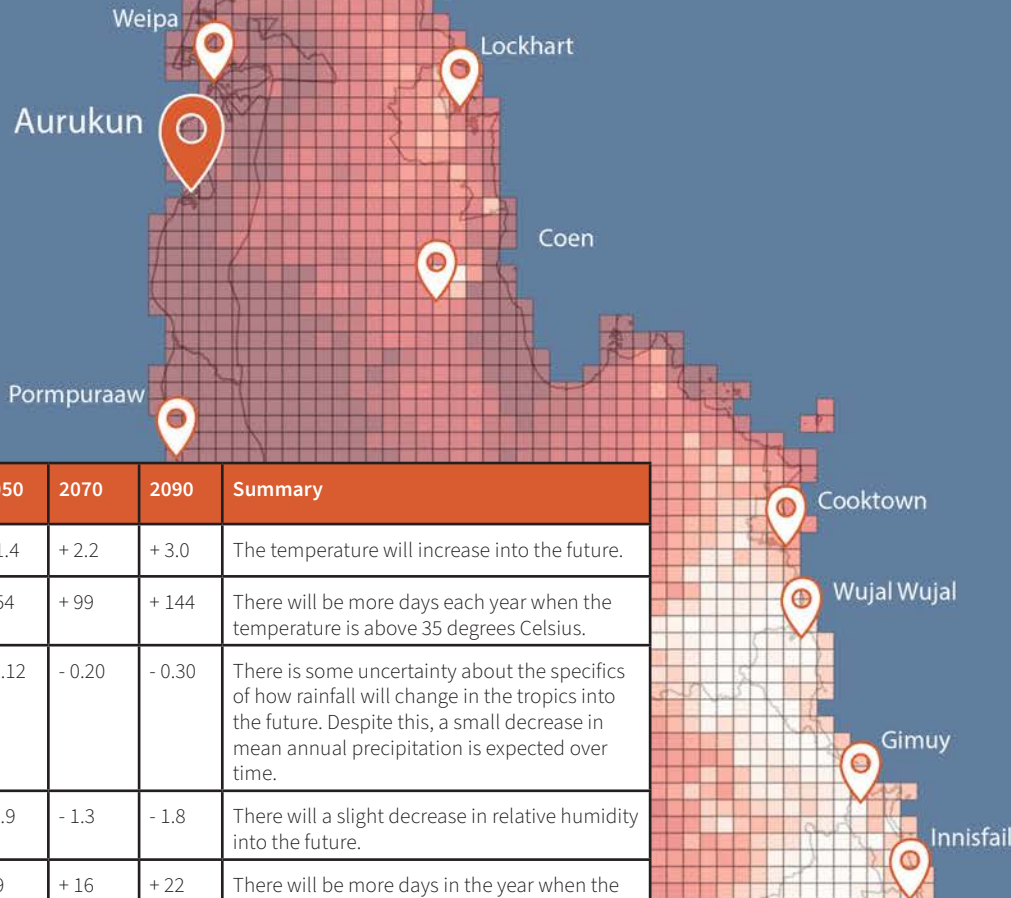
⁵ Wester Cape Communities Trust, 2025, Our Country Our Place, Traditional Seasonal Calendars. Available <https://www.westerncape.com.au/community/our-country/>

⁶ Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), 2025. Climate statistics for Australian locations – Weipa Airport. Available: https://www.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw_027045.shtml

CHANGE IN HOT DAYS (OVER 35°C) PER YEAR



Thursday



Climate signal	2030	2050	2070	2090	Summary
Max temperature (°C)	+ 0.7	+ 1.4	+ 2.2	+ 3.0	The temperature will increase into the future.
Hot days (change in days)	+ 23	+ 54	+ 99	+ 144	There will be more days each year when the temperature is above 35 degrees Celsius.
Mean annual precipitation (mm/day)	- 0.02	- 0.12	- 0.20	- 0.30	There is some uncertainty about the specifics of how rainfall will change in the tropics into the future. Despite this, a small decrease in mean annual precipitation is expected over time.
Relative humidity (change in %)	- 0.5	- 0.9	- 1.3	- 1.8	There will a slight decrease in relative humidity into the future.
Very high fire risk days (change in days)	+ 4	+ 9	+ 16	+ 22	There will be more days in the year when the weather presents very high fire risk.

HOT WEATHER & HEATWAVES

Aurukun currently experiences around 83 hot days per year. Hot days are days where the maximum temperature is 35 degrees Celsius or greater. Aurukun also experiences many hot nights, at around 265 per year. Hot nights are nights where the minimum temperature is less than 20 degrees Celsius.

Into the future, Aurukun can expect 54 more hot days per year by 2050 and 99 more hot days per year by 2070. When heatwaves happen, they will be more intense.

Heatwaves are expected to get hotter and longer. Heatwaves are periods of three or more days where day time and night time temperatures are unusual for a given location at that time of year. For instances, three days of temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius might be considered a heatwave in Brisbane, but similar conditions in Aurukun may not be.

During the wet season, heatwaves will be an additional 2.3 degrees Celsius hotter in 2050 and 3.8 degrees hotter in 2070. The length of heatwaves during the wet season will also increase, with heatwaves lasting on average an additional seven (7) days by 2050 and an additional 27 days by 2070.

Aurukun's geographic location on the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria means it does not receive the reprieve of sea breezes off the Pacific Ocean like locations on the eastern coast.

This is illustrated in the map to the left, which shows the projected change in hot days per year by 2070. Compared to communities east on the Cape, east of the Great Dividing Range, like Lockhart River, Cooktown and Wujal Wujal, they will receive a smaller increase in hot weather into the future.

Hot weather and heatwaves can impact our people and flora and fauna.

Our people might experience more heat sickness, like heat stress and heat stroke. These conditions can be dangerous for very young and older people. If they don't take actions to keep cool, they could die. It is important that everyone in our community has access to 'cool places' like underneath the trees near the Shop, in the Library, other community spaces and in our homes.

Warmer temperatures might change how our landscapes work. Some plants and animals that live high in the mountains where it is cooler might not survive if these places become warmer. Seasonal calendars show how certain things on our Country happen at certain times. Climate change might break some of these connections and flows. For instance, pollinating insects might hatch too early, before the flowers of their host plants are open, which might threaten the insects and plants.

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

Aurukun Shire is located on the western side of Cape York Peninsula within a landscape defined by low-lying floodplains, extensive wetlands, and coastal estuaries. The township sits within a landscape of low-lying floodplains, wetlands, and tidal estuaries, framed by three major river systems of deep cultural and ecological significance to the Wik and Wik Way Peoples. The topography plays a central role in shaping both opportunities and constraints for development. It determines drainage patterns, flood exposure, and the extent to which the community can expand without significant mitigation works. Understanding the topography is therefore essential to guiding land use planning, infrastructure design, and cultural protection.

Regional Context

- Aurukun sits within the Wik and Wik Way traditional lands, bordered by major river systems including the Archer, Watson, and Ward Rivers.
- The township is positioned inland from the coastal fringe, surrounded by flat to gently undulating country, with elevations generally less than 10 metres AHD.
- To the west, the landscape is dominated by tidal flats, mangroves, and storm tide-affected areas, which are highly unsuitable for development.
- To the east, areas of low escarpments and sandy rises provide slightly higher ground but are constrained by regulated vegetation and biodiversity values.

Township Context

- The Aurukun township itself is located on a slight rise above the surrounding wetlands but remains within an area of high flood risk.
- Drainage is slow-moving, with limited natural fall across the settlement area, contributing to pooling and stagnant water after rainfall.
- The town is encircled by wetlands and vegetation corridors, with cultural and ecological significance that further restricts expansion.
- Within the township boundary, the majority of land is classified as either moderately incompatible or moderately suitable for development under the Land Suitability Model.
- Elevation across the township ranges only a few metres, creating very limited differentiation between “high” and “low” ground. This topographic flatness amplifies hazard exposure:
 - Flood Hazard: Widespread inundation during heavy rainfall and cyclonic events.
 - Storm Tide Inundation: Coastal areas west of town are particularly exposed.
 - Drainage Hazard: Lack of natural slope limits capacity to disperse surface water.

Implications for the Master Plan

The topography of Aurukun directly shapes the Master Plan:

- Settlement Pattern: Expansion largely remains within the existing township footprint, where ground conditions are relatively higher and already serviced.
- Drainage Solutions: Engineering interventions are recommended, including new drains, ponds, and raised infrastructure to overcome flat terrain.
- Zoning Adjustments: Land use allocations must avoid western low-lying areas, instead consolidating around areas of moderate suitability.
- Cultural and Environmental Protection: Rivers, wetlands, and tidal flats are both ecological assets and physical barriers to growth; they are preserved as buffers within the Master Plan.



LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Residential and Housing

Aurukun's population of 1,101 people is projected to grow to 1,582 people by 2041, based on an average 5-yearly growth rate of 3.57% (QLD Government Statistician Office 2022). This growth, combined with chronic overcrowding, equates to an ongoing demand for approximately two new dwellings per year, plus immediate relief housing. The DHLGPPW Housing Register records an unmet need for 81 dwellings (176 bedrooms), though local evidence indicates higher demand. Another key issue is declining housing quality, with many homes dating from the 1980s, requiring significant repair.

Community and Council Feedback

Round 1: Desire for home ownership pathways, climate-resilient design, multi-dwelling models, women's accommodation, seniors' housing.

Round 2: More staff housing is needed, and concerns about infill housing increasing tensions unless managed carefully - possibly by appointing a local housing officer to oversee allocations.

Strategic Directions

- Deliver new residential areas to reduce overcrowding and enable long-term growth.
- Expand cohort-specific housing (seniors, single women, men's quarters).
- Support home ownership through 99-year leases, shared equity, and rent-to-buy schemes.
- Implement climate-resilient and elevated housing designs to withstand extreme heat, mould, and flooding.
- Provide more staff housing to retain essential services workforce.

Local business and tourism

Aurukun's business base is modest, with a supermarket, service station, post office, bank agency, bakery/café, and the Arts Centre and Gallery.

Community and Council Feedback

Round 1: Call for expanded CBD, office shortages, women's safe space, local entrepreneurship (e.g. barbershop), and food production initiatives (e.g. cattle farm, market garden).

Round 2: Request for new shop at the marine precinct, alongside recreation facilities.

Strategic Directions

- Expand the CBD and develop a commercial node (potentially foreshore-based).
- Support arts, culture, and digital initiatives as a centre of excellence and tourism driver.
- Provide visitor/tourist hub with information, accommodation, and jetty access.
- Encourage local enterprises and small business (retail, service trades, tourism).
- Deliver additional office accommodation, repurposing underused dwellings where appropriate.

Employment and Industrial

Aurukun is one of the most service-intensive communities in Queensland, with over 140 different providers operating across housing, health, education, community wellbeing, and emergency services.

Industrial activity is a key source of employment in all communities. Council recognises the need to encourage industrial development to facilitate a diversified and strong local economy. Industrial activity within the Aurukun township presently limited to a depot and workshop. The proposed Industrial Estate off Ngay Road is strategically located but constrained.

Community and Council Feedback

Round 1: Concerns over fragmented service delivery, lack of office space, and limited visibility of what services are available. Desire for diversification (marine industry, repairs, farming, cattle). Strong call to reinstate cattle farm and explore new types of industry (such as a bio-industry hub); and for a shared services precinct for to improve accessibility and coordination.

Round 2: Community supported consolidating industrial uses into new, dedicated areas.

Strategic Directions

- Expand or identify new industrial sites to meet long-term needs.
- Develop marine, service, and mining-support industries.
- Support local food production (market gardens, cattle farming).
- Investigate bio-industry and research opportunities linking traditional and scientific knowledge.
- Develop a service integration precinct with co-located facilities for service providers to improve accessibility and collaboration.

Recreation and open space

Aurukun has a splash park, sports centre, rugby field, and courts, but demand for safe, shaded, and family-friendly spaces is growing.

Community and Council Feedback

Round 1: Interest in community gardens, beautification, shaded ovals, expanded youth recreation, and cultural open space.

Round 2: Strong support for a new jetty, shop, and children's playground/water feature at the marine precinct.

Strategic Directions

- Develop community parklands, gardens, and beautification projects.
- Expand youth facilities (playgrounds, trampolines, outdoor gym, structured holiday programs).
- Provide entry statements, shaded spaces, and safer crossings.
- Activate the waterfront precinct with jetty, cultural events, and recreation.
- Deliver a Sport and Recreation Plan to guide long-term investment.

Community

Aurukun provides a wide range of facilities (PCYC, Knowledge Centre, childcare, aged care, school, radio, health services, community centre, sports centre). Many are stretched or under-resourced.

Community and Council Feedback

Round 1: Need for a Bush School, vocational training hub, women's hub, disaster resilience centre, cultural camps, youth spaces, improved lighting and street beautification.

Round 2: Endorsed the need for a Sport and Recreation Plan and more youth facilities, including playgrounds and shaded areas.

Strategic Directions

- Indoor multi-purpose centre to serve as both recreation and disaster management hub.
- Dedicated women's and youth spaces, including an On-Country Youth Training Centre.
- Expanded training and education pathways, including Centre of Excellence for remote education.
- Improved public realm, lighting, and beautification to strengthen safety and pride.
- Cultural and digital facilities to showcase knowledge, history, and creative industries.

Infrastructure and Utilities

Aurukun has an airstrip, landfill, power station, sewerage ponds, treatment lagoons, boat ramp, and telecommunications services. However, many are at or beyond capacity.

Community and Council Feedback

Round 1: Strong need for airport upgrades, port/foreshore redevelopment, water treatment relocation, sewerage upgrades, and renewable energy transition.

Round 2: Council reinforced these priorities: airport facility upgrade; farm area to support food security; cemetery upgrades; sewerage ponds upgrade; waste facility upgrade; and new water treatment plant.

Strategic Directions

- Upgrade airport terminal and runway for reliability and tourism.
- Relocate and upgrade water treatment plant to secure safe supply.
- Modernise waste and sewerage systems.
- Foreshore redevelopment including expanding port facilities (jetty, barge access) to maintain supply during flood isolation.
- Transition to renewable energy (solar farm, off-grid solutions).
- Upgrade drainage infrastructure to reduce waterlogging.



PLANNING ANALYSIS

AURUKUN SHIRE COUNCIL LOCAL PLANNING SCHEME

The applicable local government planning scheme for Aurukun is the Aurukun Shire Council Planning Scheme 2017 version 1.1 (Planning Scheme). The Planning Scheme sets out Council's vision for land use and development within the Shire, providing a 20-year planning horizon as required by the planning framework in Queensland, the *Planning Act 2016*.

In December 2017, the Planning Act 2016 Alignment Planning Scheme amendment took effect and replaced earlier scheme prepared under the repealed *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*. The planning scheme consistent with the Queensland Planning Provisions and has been amended to align with the State Planning Policy (SPP) July 2017. As outlined in this section,

the Planning Scheme provides a comprehensive framework for managing growth, development, and cultural values in the Shire. While zoning and overlays confirm significant environmental and hazard constraints, the Planning Scheme recognises community aspirations for a balance of township development, homelands occupation, and sustainable economic opportunities. Alignment with the SPP, Cape York Regional Plan, and local strategic plans ensures that Aurukun's planning framework is consistent with regional and state objectives while reflecting the unique governance and cultural context of the Wik and Wik Way Peoples.



Community Statement and Strategic framework

The Community Statement in the Planning Scheme reflects the aspirations of the Wik and Wik Way peoples and the Aurukun community. It highlights the importance of protecting cultural values, maintaining the strong connection to Country, and ensuring future development supports both liveability and economic opportunity. The Statement recognises key constraints and challenges, including:

- Physical constraints such as flood risk, bushfire hazard, coastal vulnerability, and extensive regulated vegetation.
- Limitations of developable land within the township and a growing reliance on outstations and homelands for housing and cultural practice.
- The need for improved infrastructure and essential services to support population growth and community wellbeing.

Zoning

Part 6 of the Planning Scheme contains the zones which organise the planning scheme area in a way that facilitates the location of preferred or acceptable land uses. The zones provisions and codes are in part 6, and the zone mapping is in Schedule 2 of the Planning Scheme. The zoning is generally reflective of the current land uses and tenure. Aurukun is mapped within the following zones:

Township – provides for majority of residential, commercial and community facilities development. A variety of uses, located in defined precincts, are developed to ensure land can be efficiently serviced and provide adequate services for the local community. These precincts are Precinct 1 (Business), Precinct 2 (Community Purposes) and Precinct 3 (Residential).

Overlays

The Planning Scheme includes a range of overlay maps which highlight particular environmental and physical matters which may affect development. It is evident that the township is extensively affected by the environmental and physical overlays. The overlay maps show how little unconstrained land is available in Aurukun has very Shire.

Whilst these overlays do not preclude development, these overlays trigger additional assessment benchmarks for development. They indicate that specific site-based design responses will need to be developed, often at significant cost or with additional mitigation measures.

The key overlays present in the Planning Scheme include:

- Natural Hazard Overlay – ensures development is

The Strategic Framework in Part 3 of the Aurukun Planning Scheme sets out the long-term planning direction for Aurukun. The framework emphasises:

- Township focus – Aurukun township will continue to provide the central hub for housing, services, community facilities and administration.
- Homelands and outstations – Consistent with community aspirations, outstations will remain an important part of settlement patterns, with opportunities for sustainable housing, land management and cultural strengthening.
- Economic development – Forestry, bauxite mining, ranger programs, and tourism are identified as important sectors for future jobs and revenue.
- Environmental protection – Large areas of the Shire are environmentally sensitive and require careful management to protect biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Environmental Management and Conservation – provide for areas identified as supporting significant biological diversity and ecological integrity.

Recreation and Open Space – provides for a range of sporting, recreation, leisure, cultural and educational activities.

The Planning Scheme zoning plan largely reflects the established land use structure within the township.

appropriately designed and sited to minimise the risk of damage associated with natural hazard events, including the impacts of:

- Bushfire
- Coastal
- Flood.
- Environmentally Protection Overlay – provides for the protection and maintenance of areas identified as:
 - Biodiversity Areas
 - Wetlands.
- Infrastructure Overlay – ensures the viability of the Aurukun airport, the Aurukun power station and the wastewater treatment facility.

Strategic alignment and required actions:

The Master Plan supports the township as the core settlement but recommends transformative restructuring (Option 3) of the township layout. This may require amendments to the planning scheme to reinforce:

- A new cultural and civic precinct in the town heart.
- Expansion of residential land to address overcrowding and staff housing needs.
- Integration of a commercial node and waterfront precinct for tourism and retail.
- Explicitly recognises climate change adaptation and resilience infrastructure.
- Embeds renewable energy and circular economy initiatives as core economic directions.
- Integration of cultural and heritage overlay with land use allocations.

Current references to economic development (forestry/mining) could be broadened to include bio-industries, renewable energy, digital enterprise, and cultural tourism, reflecting community aspirations.

Strategic alignment and required actions:

- Township Zone boundaries may need to expand or be reconfigured to deliver new residential clusters, staff housing, and commercial areas.
- Industrial land supply is constrained. A review of the proposed industrial estate off Ngay Road and consideration of alternative zoned land for industry is needed.
- Foreshore land may require rezoning to Recreation/Tourism purposes to facilitate jetty, marine precinct and open space activation.

Strategic alignment and required actions:

- The extent of hazard overlays significantly reduces available unconstrained land, reinforcing the need for strategic relocation and drainage upgrades.
- The Master Plan identifies new drainage infrastructure off McKenzie Drive, which may require updated stormwater and flood overlays.

STATE PLANNING INTERESTS

Regional plan

Regional plans provide a spatial representation of how a region, encompassing multiple local government areas, will grow and respond to change over the long term (20-25 years). They are statutory instruments under the Planning Act and must be followed by local governments when they prepare their local land use planning schemes.

Aurukun is part of the Cape York Regional Plan 2014–2031 (Regional Plan), which provides the statutory regional planning framework under the Planning Act. The Regional Plan emphasises the unique needs of Aboriginal Shire Councils, highlighting economic diversification, improved infrastructure, and sustainable land use.

Since the commencement of the Regional Plan in 2009, the region has undergone significant growth and change, making a review both necessary and timely. At the time of this Master Plan review in 2025, the Regional Plan is being reviewed to provide a 25-year framework to guide growth, support future jobs, and assist in Queensland's decarbonisation journey. The Queensland Government is working with local governments (including Aurukun), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, peak bodies and the community to review the Cape York Regional Plan to help guide future growth and ensure the plan is fit for purpose and beneficial for the region.

State Planning Policy

The SPP outlines 17 state interests that must be considered in every planning scheme across Queensland. These state interests are arranged under five broad themes:

- Liveable communities and housing
- Economic growth
- Environment and heritage

- Safety and resilience to hazards
- Infrastructure

The SPP also includes guiding principles to ensure that plan-making and development assessment systems are outcome-focused, integrated, efficient, positive, and accountable.

Strategic alignment and required actions:

- The Master Plan supports alignment with regional priorities of infrastructure upgrades, food security, and renewable energy.
- The Master Plan's transformative concept plan introduces priorities not strongly embedded in the current CYRP:
 - Disaster centres and emergency services hubs
 - Integrated cultural and tourism precincts.

These may need explicit recognition in the CYRP review to strengthen policy support for Aurukun.

Strategic alignment and required actions:

- Aurukun's Master Plan builds directly on SPP themes but goes further in proposing:
 - Cohort-specific and staff housing to address liveability and workforce stability.
 - Food security and agricultural precincts (farm areas, cattle projects, market gardens) as part of economic resilience.
 - Arts, culture, and digital innovation precincts linked to economic and tourism growth.
 - Climate resilience and renewable energy transition beyond current baseline requirements.

OTHER STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Tropical North Queensland Regional Economic Plan 2011 – 2031

The Tropical North Queensland Regional Economic Plan, developed by Advance Cairns with support from multiple levels of government, provides a comprehensive framework for economic development across the region.

For Aurukun, it identifies opportunities in:

- Forestry and timber processing (Wik Timber Project).
- Bauxite mining (Aurukun Bauxite Project).
- Indigenous ranger programs and nature-based tourism.
- Improved connectivity, transport and digital infrastructure.

Tropical North Queensland Economic Development Strategy 2024–2029

The Tropical North Queensland Economic Development Strategy (TEDS) 2024–2029, prepared collaboratively by RDA Tropical North, FNQROC, and the Torres Cape Indigenous Councils Alliance (TCICA), presents a cohesive five-year regional vision across economic, environmental, social, and cultural pillars. TEDS provides context and support for Aurukun's Master Plan goals through its regional transformational goals.

TEDS emphasizes key enablers that mirror Aurukun's priorities, such as connectivity, resilience, environmental stewardship, Indigenous-led development, and smart green growth, and strengthens the strategic case for investment in infrastructure, energy transition, tourism, and cultural-economic enterprises.

Master Plan alignment:

The Master Plan reflects these directions but updates them to current community aspirations:

- Mining and forestry remain recognised as economic drivers, but the Master Plan also highlights the need to balance them with cultural values and ensure community-led development of land.
- Ranger programs and cultural tourism are reinforced through the inclusion of a foreshore precinct and exploration of cultural tourism ventures, and a centre of excellence for arts and culture.
- Connectivity improvements are addressed through airport upgrades, port redevelopment, and investment in digital infrastructure, supporting both economic and community needs.
- The Master Plan expands the economic vision to include renewable energy transition, bio-industries, and digital enterprise, ensuring Aurukun is positioned for long-term resilience and diversification.

Aurukun Corporate Plan 2020 – 2025

Aurukun's Corporate Plan provides the Council's principal planning framework, setting priorities around governance, cultural preservation, land and infrastructure management, and community wellbeing. It emphasises:

- Strengthening governance in partnership with NAKAC and Traditional Owners.
- Supporting outstation development as part of cultural preservation.
- Improving housing, roads, and essential services to meet population needs.
- Fostering economic participation through resource projects, forestry, tourism, and ranger programs.

Master Plan alignment:

- The Master Plan builds on these priorities by proposing a transformative town layout that improves housing supply, supports staff accommodation, and establishes clear residential clusters. A new civic and cultural Centre Zone directly strengthen governance and cultural preservation.
- Outstations and homelands are recognised in the settlement pattern, consistent with the Corporate Plan.
- Infrastructure upgrades for airport, port, water, sewerage, and waste align with Corporate Plan commitments to essential services.

LAND SUITABILITY ANALYSIS

To inform the Aurukun Master Plan, a Land Suitability Analysis (LSA) was undertaken, underpinned by a bespoke Land Suitability Model (LSM). The purpose of the LSM is to ensure that land use decisions are evidence-based and risk-informed, recognising Aurukun's environmental constraints, hazard exposure, and regulatory settings. This work ensures that the Master Plan is grounded in realistic assessments of where development can occur, what may be mitigated, and what areas must be preserved.

Methodology

The LSM is a spatial model that integrates state, national, and local data inputs to depict levels of suitability through a “traffic light” system. Unlike conventional land supply models, it applies a risk-based lens to tolerability, reflecting both planning policy requirements and local context.

Spatial extent: Aurukun Local Government Area (LGA) and Aurukun Township.

Constraints considered: natural hazards (flood, bushfire, storm tide, sea-level rise), regulated vegetation, matters of state environmental significance (MSES), wetlands, wildlife habitat, agricultural land classifications, and cultural heritage.

Categories of suitability:

Land Suitability Category	Description
No potential mitigation	Areas where constraints are not able to be mitigated and therefore the suitability is unable to be adjusted.
High incompatibility	Areas of high incompatibility that are affected by severe constraints or, where compounding intermediate constraints (3 or more) are present.
Moderate incompatibility	Constrained land where suitability may be managed through mitigation measures/ land use planning policy responses
Potential incompatibility – investigation area	Areas with potential incompatibility requiring further investigation given Insufficient reliable data is available
Moderate suitability	Constrained land where suitability is able to be achieved without the need for mitigation
High suitability	Unconstrained land with high suitability

Findings

- Approximately 98% of the Aurukun LGA is unsuitable for development, classified as Highly Incompatible due to extensive environmental constraints.
- Most of this land falls within the Open Space zone, heavily constrained by regulated vegetation, MSES wetlands, and wildlife habitat.
- Large areas to the west are affected by storm tide inundation and sea level rise.
- Within the township, the LSM identifies a more mixed picture:
 - Moderate Incompatibility to Moderate Suitability characterises most of the township footprint.
 - Small pockets of Highly Suitable land are present but limited.
 - Development potential is therefore largely confined to the existing township footprint.
- Residential areas: 88% of land is Moderately Incompatible, primarily due to regulated vegetation and MSES. Flood hazard is also notable.
- Vacant land: 57% Highly Incompatible, 43% Moderately Incompatible. Larger vacant parcels in the south face vegetation, flood, and bushfire constraints but may offer some development opportunity with mitigation.
- Community zoned areas: Over half of land is Moderately Incompatible but with scope for planning responses to enable expansion.
- Industrial (Depot/Workshop/Yard): Mostly Moderately Suitable (89%), providing opportunities for industrial consolidation.

Mitigable constraints

The LSM identifies several constraints that may be partially mitigable through planning responses or engineering solutions:

- Regulated Vegetation (Class B – Least Concern): may be mitigated through clearing permits or offset arrangements.
- Flood Hazard (low-moderate): can be addressed through drainage infrastructure upgrades, elevated housing, and land use planning controls.
- Bushfire Hazard (moderate): may be managed through hazard reduction, buffers, and building design standards.
- Agricultural Land Class constraints: may be balanced through rezoning or state interest negotiations where land is required for urban development.

Other constraints, such as MSES wetlands, wildlife habitat, and storm tide inundation zones, are considered non-mitigable, requiring preservation and management rather than development, as development will require several approvals and permits. It is also important that Council undertake local assessments where possible to determine the applicability and relevance of these land use constraints as most of the mapping is based on statewide assessments and assumptions.

Implications for the Master Plan

The LSM demonstrates that:

- Future development must be focused within the existing township footprint, where land is most suitable.
- Expansion of housing, community facilities, and industrial land must carefully navigate Moderate Incompatibility areas, supported by mitigation measures.
- The LSM provides a transparent evidence base to guide zoning changes, site identification, and infrastructure prioritisation in the Master Plan.



N TOWNSHIP VIEW
ABILITY MODEL

LEGEND

- Local Government Area
- National Roads
- Collector Road
- Local Road

Map Number: 2
Project: 25-009
Page: A3
Date: 4/04/2025

0 0.1 0.3 km



RISK ASSESSMENT

Effective risk assessment is critical to the Aurukun Master Plan to ensure that future growth is safe, resilient, and sustainable. This requires not only a clear understanding of hazards and constraints but also recognition of risk multipliers (compounding vulnerabilities such as infrastructure gaps, housing shortages, and staff turnover).

Aurukun's risk environment is shaped by multiple, overlapping pressures. It is not enough to plan for hazards in isolation; resilience requires addressing the social, cultural, and governance systems that interact with environmental and infrastructure risks. The Master Plan responds by embedding risk-aware land use planning, prioritising infrastructure upgrades, supporting cultural resilience, and aligning with SPP compliance. In doing so, it provides a pathway for Aurukun to reduce vulnerability, strengthen governance, and create a more resilient future.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND HAZARD RISKS

- Flooding and Drainage: Large areas of Aurukun are subject to flood hazard, with drainage deficiencies creating stagnant water and public health risks.
- Bushfire: Moderate hazard zones are present around the township; fire breaks exist but are insufficient to manage spot fires during strong winds.
- Coastal and Climate Risks: Storm tide inundation and sea level rise constrain future development; increasing heat and extreme weather compound vulnerabilities.
- Biodiversity and Habitat: Extensive regulated vegetation, wetlands, and wildlife habitat restrict available land and require careful cultural/environmental stewardship.

INFRASTRUCTURE RISKS

- Water Supply: Reliance on a vulnerable back lake source; contamination from wastewater impacting quality.
- Sewerage: Old ponds affecting groundwater; urgent need for upgrade.
- Stormwater: Limited drainage capacity contributes to flooding and contamination.
- Transport: The Peninsula Development Road is flood-prone and regularly cut, isolating Aurukun and disrupting supply chains.
- Energy: Diesel reliance presents cost, reliability, and decarbonisation risks.

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY RISKS

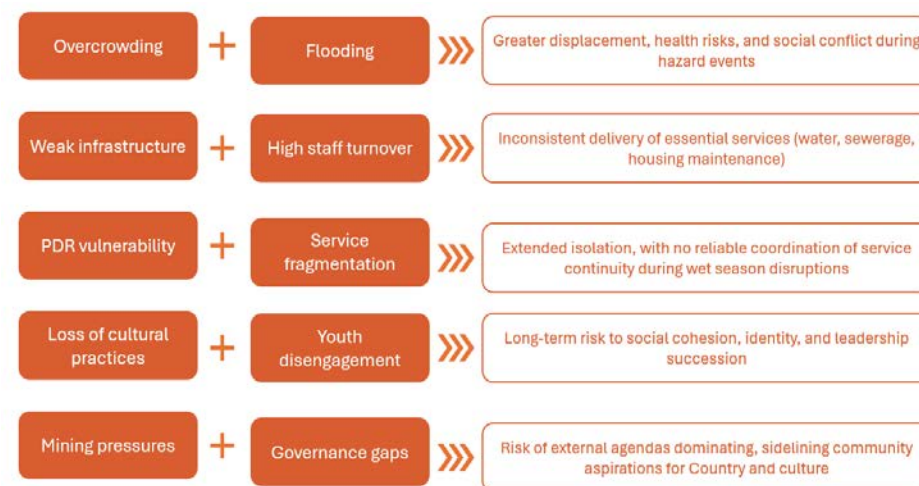
- Housing Overcrowding: A critical issue; increases health, safety, and social stress risks during hazard events.
- Service Fragmentation: Over 140 service providers create duplication and confusion, with low visibility of what services are available.
- Youth Disengagement: Limited safe spaces and structured opportunities increase vulnerability to disengagement and anti-social behaviours.
- Health and Wellbeing: Gaps in aged care, mental health support, and wellbeing services heighten risks for vulnerable groups.
- Cultural Resilience: Lack of dedicated spaces for ceremony and cultural practice risks erosion of identity and intergenerational learning.

GOVERNANCE RISKS

- Fragmented Decision-Making: Multiple agencies and short-term funding cycles create reactive rather than proactive planning.
- Staff Turnover: Loss of continuity in Council, government, and NGO positions weakens trust and progress.
- Funding Volatility: Dependence on external funds introduces uncertainty in project delivery.
- Accountability: Limited transparency in funding, milestones, and service delivery reduces community trust.

RISK MULTIPLIERS

Risks in Aurukun rarely occur in isolation. Instead, they intersect and multiply, creating higher-order vulnerabilities:



Master Plan Alignment with the State Planning Policy

The SPP requires planning to address liveability, economic growth, environment, safety, and infrastructure. Aurukun's risk profile demonstrates direct alignment:

- Liveable Communities: Addressing overcrowding, providing safe housing, and new community facilities.
- Economic Growth: Infrastructure upgrades enabling small business, tourism, and renewables.
- Environment & Heritage: Avoiding non-mitigable land and protecting cultural rivers, wetlands, and sites.
- Safety & Resilience: Flood, fire, coastal hazard, and drainage solutions embedded in land use planning.
- Infrastructure: Prioritisation of water, sewerage, stormwater, transport, and energy.

PROJECT DESIGN

Pathway Approach

The design of the Aurukun Master Plan was shaped through a locally informed and community-led process, recognising the cultural, environmental, and social context of Aurukun. Council officers, consultants, Traditional Owners, service providers, and community members participated in workshops, yarning circles, drop-in sessions, and BBQ engagements to ensure all voices were heard. The project design was informed by the Queensland Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment (QRAPTA) framework which is methodology for embedding resilience, adaptation and transformation in planning under uncertainty. The planning pathways were used to create the three development options to test different futures for Aurukun:

- Option 1 – Maintain (status quo)
- Option 2 – Modify (incremental change)
- Option 3 – Transform (bold change)

This pathway approach allowed the community to explore how different levels of change could address key issues such as overcrowding, infrastructure capacity, cultural identity, and economic opportunities.

Preferred Concept

In July 2025 the Deputy Mayor and Councillors, senior Council officers endorsed Option 3 – the New Transformative Town Layout, with modifications to incorporate technical, cultural, and community priorities. This decision provides a clear mandate to proceed with a final Master Plan that creates a new civic, cultural, and commercial heart for Aurukun; ensures infrastructure upgrades (airport, water, sewerage, drainage, waste, port); and supports economic diversification through tourism, renewables, bio-industries, and small enterprise.



Option 1 – Maintain Current Layout

- Minimal changes to the existing town layout.
- Upgrading existing infrastructure and approved developments.
- Retained existing residential patterns and service arrangements.

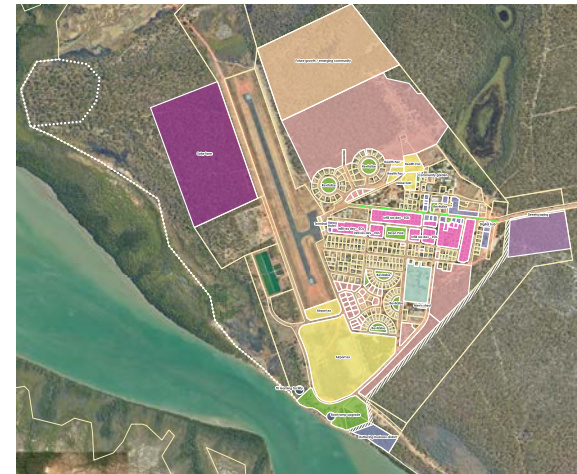
Community feedback: Received minimal support, as it was viewed as unsustainable for future needs.



Option 2 – Modified Town Layout

- Introduced moderate changes to improve functionality.
- Centralised zones for community, cultural, and commercial activities.
- Residential clusters with provision for future growth.
- Zones for schools, health, and services within walking distance.
- Enhanced open space network and separation of industrial uses.

Community feedback: Some support was given for incremental improvements, but concerns remained that it did not go far enough to meet long-term needs.



Option 3 – Transformative Town Layout

- Proposed a new structure for the township to support long-term growth and sustainability.
- “Heart of town” centralising civic, community, and cultural services.
- New commercial centre for shops, markets, and small business activity.
- Residential clusters and more land for future growth.
- Zones for education, training, health, and essential services.
- Open space network with parks, sporting facilities, and shaded areas.
- Separated industrial areas to reduce land use conflicts.

Community feedback: Over 90% of participants selected Option 3 as their preferred option, confirming strong appetite for transformative change.

INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

This section provides an overview of existing infrastructure servicing the Aurukun township.

Stormwater

Rainfall runoff is conveyed via table drains, open drains, and drainage swales to discharge points.

Transport

The Aurukun community is provided with both sealed and unsealed roads. Access by road to the community from Weipa and Cairns is restricted to the dry season only. The Planning Scheme requires that roads are designed and constructed in accordance with the FNQROC Regional Development Manual. Transport to and from Aurukun is provided by air on a daily basis throughout the year. A barge service is provided from Weipa for freight.

Water Supply

The Aurukun water supply is obtained from bore water which is pumped to two concrete above ground reservoirs and one concrete above ground water reservoir. The extent of the water reticulation network within the township is depicted in below.



Water Network Aurukun (BEIS Mapping 2025, QLD Government)

Sewerage

Sewerage reticulation comprises a network of gravity sewers, pump stations and rising mains, delivering the effluent to the treatment lagoons located in the west of the township. The extent of the sewer network within the township is depicted in above.



Sewer Network Aurukun (BEIS Mapping 2025, QLD Government)

Electricity

Aurukun is serviced by an isolated power station, which is owned and operated by Ergon Energy. The electricity supply system in the township is not connected to the national grid. The extent of the electricity network within the township is depicted in below.



Electricity Network Aurukun (BEIS Mapping 2025, QLD Government)

Communications

Landline telephone systems are in place and the 4G network provides mobile service to the township. The extent of the communication network within the township is depicted in below.



Communication Network Aurukun (BEIS Mapping 2025, QLD Government)

INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS

PROPOSED AND COMMITTED INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

To support the residential, industrial, commercial/tourism, community facility, and open space development proposed in the Aurukun Master Plan, significant upgrades to infrastructure networks are required. These upgrades are essential to improve liveability, support population growth, and ensure resilience against environmental hazards.

High-level costings are provided in action plan in Part A.

Road Works

New residential subdivisions to the north, south, and west will require roadworks designed in accordance with FNQROC Development Manual standards. Road reserves should be wide enough to incorporate drainage, utilities, and safe pedestrian connections. Street orientation should maximise shade, climate resilience, and effective surface drainage. An industrial bypass (haul road) will also be required to connect heavy vehicle traffic directly to industrial areas and the waterfront, minimising disruption within the town centre.

Aurukun has been activated for QRA DRFA and Betterment, and funding has been secured. These QRA works are planned for next financial year.

Stormwater Drainage

- Aurukun's flat topography limits the use of underground stormwater systems. Surface drainage swales, either grassed or concrete lined, will be essential to manage runoff.
- Southern Drain: Required to manage stormwater from the proposed southern subdivision, with design parameters established through a 2023 stormwater assessment.
- Northern Drain: Required to service new residential subdivisions in the north, reducing flood risk and supporting housing delivery. Drainage design must integrate with street layouts, with swales placed at appropriate intervals to provide lawful discharge of stormwater.

Please note that it is intended that all future development in the Township will be designed with "positive" drainage where physically possible, to minimise the extents of ponding surface water and road damage due to overland flow.

A flood model for the proposed future residential development has been completed. The main outcome of the flood modelling is that the southern drain was required to be formalised. Grant funding has been secured to construct this upgraded southern overland flow drain adjacent to Mackenzie Drive from Aurukun Road in the north to the boat ramp in the south. This will reduce flood levels in this area and facilitate residential and commercial development in this area. The intention is that all residential buildings be constructed above the 1 in 100-year flood level.

Sewerage

The existing combination of gravity system, pump stations, rising mains and treatment lagoons are at capacity and experiencing odour and environmental issues. Upgrades include:

- Upgrading of outdated pump stations to meet Workplace Health and Safety standards.
- Expansion of treatment lagoons and addition of new ponds to meet projected demand.
- New pump stations and pressure mains to service new residential and industrial developments.

These upgrades will ensure wastewater is managed sustainably and without further impact on groundwater quality.

A Sewerage Upgrade Project is currently being undertaken by Council in conjunction with Department of Local Government Water and Volunteers (DLGWV) to determine the requirements for the future sewerage capacity of the Township.

Water Supply

The current water treatment facility will remain in place but undergo significant upgrades, including installation of a new water storage reservoir and supporting infrastructure to improve the safety and reliability of drinking water. Bore water will continue to supply the township, with reticulated mains provided to new subdivisions in accordance with planning guidelines. Upgrades are critical to secure long-term water security and protect community health.

Council has undertaken a Gap analysis of the future water capacity requirements for the township in conjunction with DLGWV which has highlighted an \$8m funding requirement to provide the upgrades (water supply reservoir) required. The procurement of the design of the new water supply reservoir is currently in process.

Please note that this was not undertaken on this current Master Plan layout.

Electricity and Renewable Energy

New lots will be serviced with underground electricity connections and street lighting to Ergon standards. In parallel, Aurukun is pursuing a major shift to renewable energy:

- A solar farm and battery energy storage system has been identified north-west of the airport.
- Ergon has committed to decarbonising diesel generation with solar.

Future projects will also explore off-grid solar and State-led decarbonisation initiatives.

Waste Management

Aurukun's existing waste facility is at capacity. Council is investigating options to upgrade the existing facility or identify a new location outside the township. A modernised waste system is required to improve safety, reduce environmental impacts, and enable future recycling and separation initiatives.

Airport

The airport is a critical lifeline for Aurukun, particularly during flood events.

- Terminal Upgrade: Expansion is required to improve passenger facilities and security screening.
- Runway Expansion: The runway requires extension to accommodate larger aircraft, which will support improved freight access and unlock tourism opportunities.

Works associated with the Resealing of the Airport and maintaining the open drains is currently being procured.

Community and Cemetery Infrastructure

The existing cemetery to the west of the airport is being expanded through a staged plan, with Stage 1 already complete.

The old cemetery near the foreshore will be preserved and protected with landscaping and wayfinding improvements to strengthen its cultural connection to the foreshore renewal precinct.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Aurukun Master Plan provides a strategic and community-led framework to guide the township's growth and development over the next 20+ years. It builds on Council's Corporate Plan, state and regional planning frameworks, and extensive engagement with the Wik and Wik Way peoples, Council, service providers, and stakeholders.

The Master Plan responds to critical issues identified through the planning process:

- Housing overcrowding and staff accommodation shortages
- Aging water, sewerage, and drainage infrastructure that affects health and liveability
- Limited economic opportunities and reliance on external service delivery
- Environmental constraints including flood, storm tide, wetlands, and regulated vegetation
- Governance fragmentation and high staff turnover undermining consistency and delivery

The endorsed Transformative Town Layout development option provides a resilient and future-focused response, creating a strong "heart of town" for civic, commercial, and cultural life, while ensuring housing, infrastructure, and community facilities are delivered in safer and more sustainable ways.

This section set out an action plan that provides clear, Council-endorsed pathway towards a resilient, sustainable, and culturally strong future. The next phase of implementing the plan requires collaboration, funding, and strong governance, ensuring that projects move from vision to delivery, creating jobs, improving liveability, and securing Aurukun's place as a proud Wik community thriving on Country.

WAY FORWARD AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the Aurukun Master Plan should be staged and strategic, with early attention to projects that respond to urgent needs and also set up long-term growth. In addition to the project actions identified on the concept map, the following additional actions are recommended for Council to assist with the delivery of the master plan:

Business Area Strategy and Precinct Plan

– to guide development of the town centre, commercial infill, cultural and digital hubs, and hotel as an integrated business and cultural precinct.

Foreshore Renewal Precinct Plan

– prepare a coordinated plan for the Marina, Waterfront Redevelopment, and Jetty to balance recreation, culture, and resilience.

Industrial Precinct Plan

– consolidate land for industrial use, plan for depot relocation, and guide development of haulage links to the waterfront.

Planning Scheme Amendment

– update the Aurukun Planning Scheme and contribute to the Cape York Regional Plan review to embed the Master Plan's vision in statutory frameworks.



AURUKUN MASTER PLAN

