

# HOLISTIC APPROACH

Advance Cairns regional development and tourism officer Margaret Darveniza is adopting a holistic approach to development in the Far North.



Photo courtesy Bundaberg Sugar.



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“Everything Advance Cairns is doing is for the four local government areas: Cairns Tableland, Cook, and Cassowary Coast,” she says.

“Agriculture and tourism are the main drivers of the region’s economy, while the manufacturing sector is small, but significant, and has great potential.

“I believe the Cassowary Coast region has many really great assets, with a heap of potential we are not capitalising on.

“We need to maximise what we already have, such as the Ma:mu canopy walk, which is continuing to attract more tourists, but it has the potential to be even more attractive, with a modern interpretive centre – something like Skybury or the Mareeba Wetlands.

“It is a phenomenal asset. We should use it to link it back to the coast – too many tourists just go through Belvedere to the Palmerston and Millaa Millaa without spending time in the town.

“The revamped Johnstone Shire Hall, the Joss House and our art deco buildings are also major attractions, but while we have heaps of backpacker units, the town is lacking in accommodation.

“We need to cater also for the growing ‘grey nomad’ market, which moves at a slower pace but is more authentic tourism.

“In agriculture, we should be looking at the foods we produce, and seeking to value-add, using the region’s biomass to make bio-products – such as pharmaceuticals, plastics and fibre, for foods like breakfast cereals, as well as



drying fruit and pulping bananas, and using bagasse for fuel.”

“You can drive around the Cassowary Coast, Cairns and Tableland in a day, and we should consider how we can work with the Tableland and Cairns, promoting food tourism across the region to see and taste rare and exotic fruit and fruit wines, pepper and vanilla,” she said.

“I am setting up also to bring the four business groups in the Cassowary Coast – the Innisfail, Tully and Cardwell chambers of Commerce, and Mission Beach Business and Tourism, together.

“The idea of Innisfail as a transport hub, with Mourilyan Harbour and the roads down from the hinterland, demands investigation.

“We would be looking at more lines – North Queensland could become a fruit and vegetable market instead of it all coming from Brisbane.

“For niche products – the bottom line can be just as good as economies of scale, so long as the right product is sold into the right market.

“It needn’t be on a big scale – possibly like the Sciacca family’s Pacific Coast Eco Bananas – we need people to look at things a bit differently.

“The community has to be a bit more entrepreneurial, particularly businesses.

“I am sure they’re out there, and we need to recognise and acknowledge them as being entrepreneurial, and use them as inspirations and models.” ”