

## Media Release

### Reimagining downtown Cairns: Urban Regeneration Framework Charts Path for Housing, Liveability and Climate Resilience

**Cairns, Australia (11.06.25)** - Cairns Regional Council has endorsed a bold new framework to guide the transformation of central Cairns into a more connected, climate-resilient and community-focused city centre.

Funded through the Australian Government's Housing Support Program, the Cairns City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project sets out a design-led regeneration framework and roadmap to help Cairns accommodate projected population growth while improving liveability, housing diversity and public space outcomes.

The project delivers detailed precinct masterplans for three key city areas CBD South, the Health Precinct, and the Major Events Precinct, an integrated strategy to connect, activate, green and cool these precincts and an implementation Road Map to guide future infrastructure, planning and investment decisions.

SMEC was engaged alongside design partner Pilot Places to develop a concept design report, developed through an iterative process of comprehensive consultation with industry stakeholders and the community. Traditional Owners, local businesses, and community groups played a central role in shaping the outcomes, with on-Country engagement and co-design sessions embedded throughout the process.

"Together, we've delivered an integrated plan that tackles complex challenges like flooding and housing supply and diversity while enhancing what makes Cairns special. The outcome is a shared vision for a more connected, climate responsive and liveable city that genuinely reflects its people and place." Désirée Houston Jones, Project Director at SMEC.

A key focus of the project has been the delivery of "Cool Green" connectors: shaded, tree-lined walking and cycling corridors that link major destinations while also functioning as blue-green infrastructure. These connectors aim to reduce heat, increase greenspace, manage stormwater, and support active transport across the inner city.

The framework also introduces a more flexible approach to housing, moving beyond traditional detached or apartment models to enable diverse infill typologies such as duplexes, triplexes, and low-rise apartments, supported by planning levers tested for feasibility in the current market.

"This project shows how regional cities can lead the way in climate-conscious regeneration. We've combined tropical design principles with deep community engagement to shape places that are both resilient and distinctly local." Caroline Stalker, Principal at Pilot Projects.

The final roadmap, adopted by Council in May, will guide implementation of the Cairns City Plan and underpin future funding applications for infrastructure and public realm investment. It provides a platform to deliver a significant contribution to the 33,000 additional homes the city needs by 2050 without pushing growth onto the urban fringe.

A new benchmark for precinct planning with housing 'front of mind', the project shows how design-led thinking can deliver resilient, practical outcomes at scale.

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## Additional information

[Project website - haveyoursay](#)

[SMEC project summary](#)

[CCPURP Design - Final Report](#)

## About SMEC and SJ Group

SMEC is committed to positively impact the people, the environment and the clients and communities we serve.

Through our network of global specialists, our teams draw on deep expertise and systems thinking to simplify the complex and deliver integrated engineering solutions across a range of diverse environments.

We stand apart through our historically diverse, globally connected workforce, operating out of more than 40 countries with strong local relationships.

SJ Group is a diverse collective of problem solvers for the built environment, continually reimagining ways to create a smart and sustainable future.

Headquartered in Singapore, the group has a global talent pool of 16,000 in its member companies AETOS, Atelier Ten, B+H, CHIL, KTP, Prostruct, Robert Bird Group, SAA, SMEC and Surbana Jurong, based in more than 120 offices in over 40 countries.

They include architects, designers, planners, engineers, facilities managers, and other specialists driven by progressive thinking and creative ideas to shape a better future.

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