

CARDWELL TROPICAL MOUNTAIN BIKE PROJECT

Preliminary Business Plan

August 2025

'Ride where our ancestors once walked, Girramay Country'



Acknowledgement of Country

Cassowary Coast Regional Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and sea on which we operate, the Mamu, Djiru, Girramay, Gulgnay, Warrgamay, Jirrbal and Bandjin Peoples. We wish to acknowledge our respect for their current and emerging leaders and those in the dreaming. We thank all First Nations people for the contributions they make in building this community.

Acknowledgement of Support

The Cardwell Tropical Mountain Bike Project Business Plan was developed with the support of the Queensland Government in association with the Cardwell community and Girramay Peoples Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC. The Cassowary Coast Regional Council would like to thank all stakeholders that were involved in and supported the development of the Cardwell Tropical Mountain Bike Project Business Plan.

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Executive Summary

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The Cardwell Tropical Mountain Bike Project (the Trails or the Project) includes the proposed development of a new 94km, 26-trail mountain bike network in the picturesque national park and World Heritage rainforest areas surrounding Cardwell, Far North Queensland. The Project is focused on establishing Cardwell and the broader Cassowary Coast region as a ‘Ride Destination’ and integrates and promotes the unique culture and heritage of the local Traditional Custodians, the Girramay People.

As a community-led initiative that has been jointly developed by the Cassowary Coast Regional Council (CCRC or the Council), in partnership with the Girramay People Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (Girramay), Giringun Aboriginal Corporation (Giringun) and Cardwell Mountain Bike Trails Inc. (CMBT), the Project represents an important step towards advancing the Cassowary Coast as a leading adventure and lifestyle destination.

Furthermore, the Project presents the opportunity to support the delivery of several strategies established by the Council through the development of new eco-tourism offerings that will create new business and employment opportunities. This in turn is expected to contribute to the attractiveness of the Cassowary Coast as a destination for people to visit, work and stay.

Business Plan Context

Following completion of a preceding Feasibility and Concept Study (Feasibility Study) in 2020 and a Detailed Business Case (Business Case) in 2023, the Queensland Government committed funding to the Project under the Tracks and Trails Pilot Program, administered by the Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games (DSROPG). The funding was provided to support the delivery of early works in relation to the Project, including the development of this Business Plan. This Business Plan is intended to build upon the recommendations of the Feasibility Study and the Business Case and support the delivery of a long-term, sustainable operation.

Vision, Mission, Values and Benefits

As outlined in Figure 1, the vision, mission, values and benefits for the Project were clearly articulated by the key stakeholders to be:



Figure 1: Project Vision, Mission, Values and Benefits

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Project Overview

The Trails are proposed to commence from the primary trailhead that will be adjacent to the Cardwell pump track on Brasenose St, approximately 500m from the Cardwell town centre and foreshore areas, refer to Figure 2. The trailhead is a key feature of the Project that will enable the Trails to be a genuine ‘ride in, ride out’ network. Leveraging the natural elevation of the mountain range to the west of Cardwell, the Trails are proposed to span across three distinct sections, including Seven Sisters (Elphinstone Range), Lookout Hill and Attie Creek.



Figure 2: Project Concept and Location

Cardwell is bounded to the east by the Coral Sea, Hinchinbrook Island and the Great Barrier Reef and to the west by the Cardwell Range. The Cardwell Range features a rugged topography and is covered in rainforest. The environment and biodiversity of the Cardwell Range is protected by Forestry Reserves, National Parks and World Heritage Wet Tropics Areas.

A detailed tenure and planning assessment, and constraints analysis is proposed to be completed as part of the Detailed Design and Due Diligence stage of the Project. As part of this work, the planning pathways for advancing approvals for the development of the Trails, particularly across the Wet Tropics WHA and National Park areas, and the existing forestry areas maintained by HQ Plantations, will be considered.

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Project Delivery

The completion of this Business Plan signifies the end of the Business Case (Stage 2) stage of the Project. Subject to funding commitments, the Project will advance to Stage 3 (Detailed Design and Due Diligence) prior to progressing to Stage 4 (Construction). The work packages associated with Stage 3 are outlined below:

Work Package 1 - Approvals and Due Diligence	Completion of detailed environmental, cultural heritage and land tenure assessments. These activities will be required to secure legal, regulatory, planning and other approvals for the Trails.
Work Package 2 - Detailed Design and Updated Cost Estimates	Develop a detailed design and updated capital and operational cost estimates for the Trails, incorporating key findings from the approvals and due diligence package of work where required.
Work Package 3 - Construction Planning and Procurement	Develop construction documentation in preparation for the procurement of the relevant construction contracts.
Work Package 4 - Operational Planning	Commence operational planning, recruitment and employee training. This may include establishing financial and administrative processes, appointing key personnel, developing operating agreements and practice manuals, and establishing social media and other promotional channels.

Market, Products and Services

The mountain biking market is growing rapidly and is evolving in terms of core rider demographics. While the rider market is still dominated by males between the age of 25 and 50 years, there is a growing number of females, older and younger riders participating in the sport. Additionally, the mountain biking tourism market is growing rapidly, with riders often visiting ‘Ride Destinations’ for several days at a time. Considered as ‘high value’ tourists, due to their contribution to the visitor economy, the mountain biking tourism market presents a significant opportunity for the Trails.

Several On Trail (provided through the trails and trailhead infrastructure) and Off Trail (provided away from the Trails) products are anticipated to be offered through the Project. These offerings have the potential to generate revenue to directly offset operation and maintenance costs associated with the Trails, and for businesses located in Cardwell. These have been outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Products and Services

On Trail Products & Services	Off Trail Products & Services
Trail Operations and Maintenance	Equipment Hire, Servicing and Sales
Trailhead Operations, Signage and Wayfinding	Accommodation
Events	Retail
Trail Shuttles	Food and Beverage (Town Centre)
Guided Bike Tours and Coaching	Transportation Services
Cultural Tours	Complimentary Tourism Offerings
Merchandise Sales	Complimentary Cultural Offerings
Food and Beverage (Trailhead)	Community Events

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Demand Analysis

The demand analysis prepared as part of the Business Case was reviewed and updated during development of this Business Plan with the results presented in Figure 3. The peak demand for the Project is anticipated to be 28,000 riders by 2040.

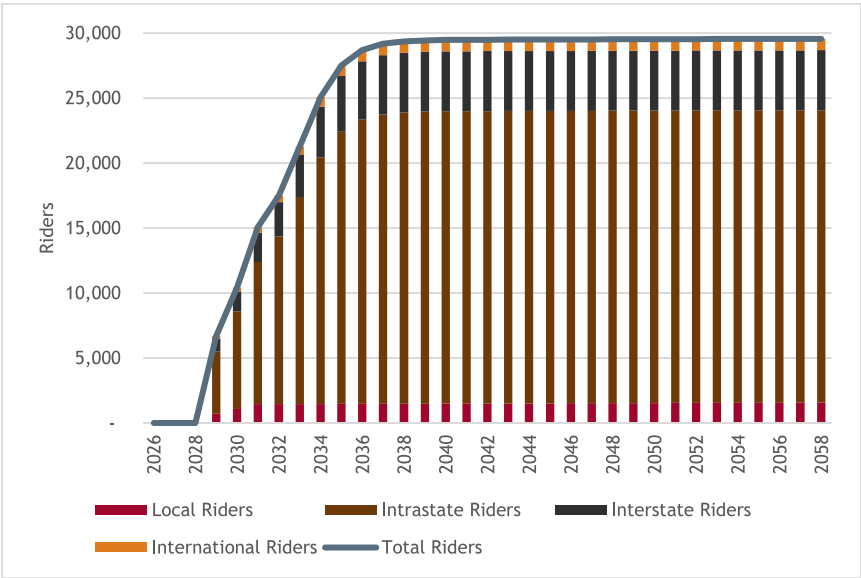


Figure 3: Project Demand Analysis

Marketing and Communications

The promotion of the Project and enticement of visitors to Cardwell and the broader Cassowary Coast will be critical to achieve the vision and mission for the Trails. While a detailed marketing and branding strategy is yet to be completed, preliminary branding and marketing guidelines have been developed. The marketing and branding strategy will form an integral part of the delivery phase of the Project. Figure 4 presents the preliminary reference material for the Project.



Figure 4: Marketing and Branding Reference Information

Marketing and communications for the Project will be undertaken through a variety of channels and platforms. The key channels and platforms recommended include:

Project Website	Email Marketing
Social Media	Brochures and Print Media
Community Engagement and Events	Destination Marketing
Partnerships	Branded Merchandise
Signage	Sponsorships

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Ownership, Management and Operations

To deliver the objectives of the Project and ensure that a sustainable operation is established, a staged ownership, management and operational structure is proposed. The Council will play a fundamental role in the early establishment of the Project, supported by key stakeholders and strategic advisors. Following delivery of the trail and trailhead infrastructure, and once operations of the Trails have been fully established, the Project is anticipated to transition to the target ownership, management and operating structure, overseen by the Community Owned Entity (comprising of representatives from key stakeholder organisations), refer to Figure 5.

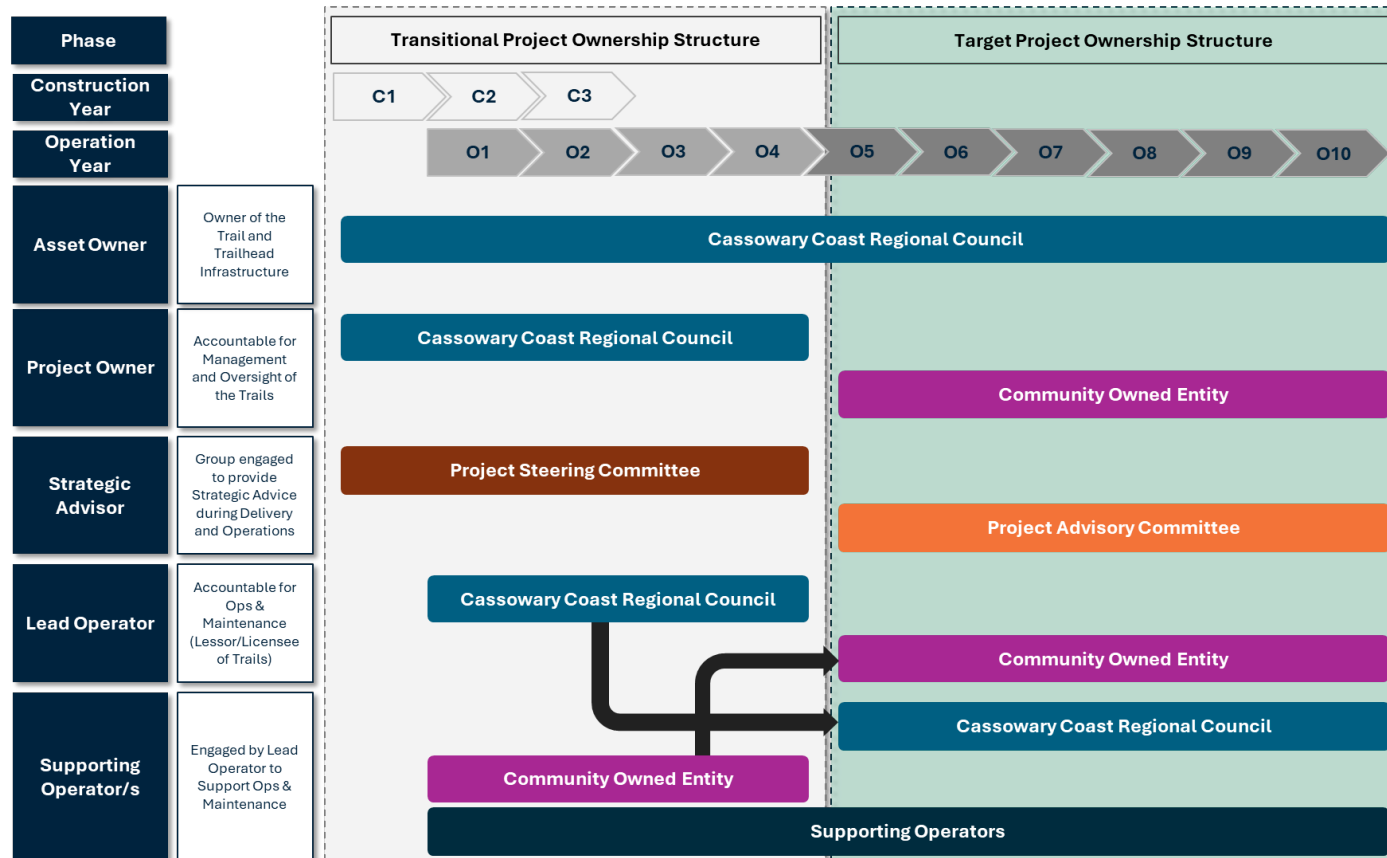


Figure 5: Transitional and Target Ownership, Management and Operational Structure

Executive Summary

Financial Plan

The capital costs for the Project, presented in Table 2, will be incurred between 2026 to 2030 with a total cost of \$14.4m (\$ nominal terms), inclusive of contingency.

Table 2: Capital Costs

Cost Element	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Project Stage	Stage 3 - Detailed Design & Due Diligence		Stage 4 - Trail and Trailhead Construction			
Detailed Design & Approvals	1,168,158	1,203,982	-	-	-	2,372,140
7 Sisters Segment	25,034	25,810	3,775,641	-	-	3,826,485
Lookout Hill Segment	6,349	6,546	-	864,921	-	877,816
Attie Creek Segment	63,086	65,042	-	-	6,395,346	6,523,473
Trail Head	-	-	542,703	-	-	542,703
Equipment	-	-	-	263,518	-	263,518
Total	1,262,627	1,301,379	4,318,344	1,128,439	6,395,346	14,406,135

The operating financial performance of the Project for the initial five years (2028 to 2032) (\$ nominal terms) have been outlined at Table 3.

Table 3: Profit and Loss - 2028 to 2032

Cost Element	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Project Stage - Stage 4 Construction	7 Sisters	Lookout Hill	Attie Creek		
Project Stage - Stage 5 Operations	7 Sisters	7 Sisters & Lookout Hill	All Segments	All Segments	
Revenue	-	351,437	488,142	693,031	792,714
Operating Costs					
Labour	98,342	677,602	783,513	1,226,714	1,257,382
Consumables, Materials and Road Maintenance	-	22,972	29,671	61,253	63,090
Other Costs	-	48,670	63,303	129,374	133,823
Total Operational Costs	98,342	749,244	876,486	1,417,340	1,454,295
Net Operating Position	(98,342)	(397,807)	(388,345)	(724,310)	(661,581)
<i>Add: CCRC funded costs</i>	98,342	100,800	103,320	264,758	271,377
<i>Add: Girringun Indigenous Rangers funded costs</i>	-	268,801	321,441	447,148	458,326
Net Operating Position (After Funded Costs)	-	(28,205)	36,417	(12,404)	68,123

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Implementation

To advance the Project, several short- and medium-term actions are recommended, including:

Short Term Action (<6 Months)

Council Endorsement	Council resolution to be sought to endorse the Business Plan and to advance towards seeking funding for Stage 3 (Detailed Design and Due Diligence).
Detailed Design and Due Diligence Funding	Council to prepare submissions to secure the requisite funding to complete the activities outlined for Stage 3 (Detailed Design and Due Diligence).
Ownership Structure and Operating Model	Final validation, refinement and endorsement of the proposed transitional and target ownership, management and operating structures for the Project.
Girramay/ Girringun Partnership	Formalise the partnership between the Council and Girramay/ Girringun regarding their roles in relation to the Project delivery and operations.
Branding, Marketing and Promotion	Development of a comprehensive marketing strategy and branding exercise and integrate this within a dedicated Project website and social media pages.

Medium Term Actions (6 to 12 Months)

Detailed Design and Due Diligence	Subject to receipt of funding, commence work on the Stage 3 activities, specifically Work Package 1 (Approvals and Due Diligence).
Trailhead Infrastructure	Finalise the primary trailhead design and seek to designate this as a priority project within Council that will support current and future community events, and the Trails (once delivered).
Community Owned Entity Establishment	Subject to endorsement of the ownership, management and operating structure, advance the establishment of the Community Owned Entity to support the delivery of the Trails.

Opportunities

To optimise the outcomes of the Project, several on and off trail projects and offerings may be established.

Trailhead Infrastructure	Trailhead Services	Off Trail Accommodation	Off Trail Services	Events Program and Calendar	Booking Platform	Ride Passes
Multipurpose facility to support the Trails and community events.	Complimentary services at the trailhead to optimise the rider experience.	Bespoke mountain bike accommodation located near the Trails.	Tourism and cultural services that may grow the visitor economy in Cardwell.	Events calendar that connects the mountain biking trails across NQ and FNQ.	Centralised booking platform for trail services, accommodation and related attractions.	Membership passes that contribute back to the Trails and unlock exclusive benefits for riders.

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Risks

Several strategic risks and considerations have been identified and must be managed to support ongoing progress of the Project. The critical strategic risks and the corresponding proposed mitigation strategies include:

Maintaining Traditional Owner and community support for the Project

- Ongoing and proactive engagement with Girringun and Girramay to support the design of the Project, development of new commercial opportunities and creation of new employment and training opportunities
- Regular and open communication with key Project stakeholders and community members to provide updates regarding the Project and to respond to questions as they arise.

Obtaining sufficient funding to advance the Project through the Detailed Design phase

- Through the Business Plan, clearly outline the approach to advancing the Trails, and the cost associated with the different elements associated with the Detailed Design phase
- Actively engage with Government agencies and key decision makers to highlight the opportunities presented by the Project to support funding requests.

Securing the necessary land use permits and approvals for the Project

- Develop an early understanding of tenure authority between QPWS, other relevant State bodies and HQ Plantations
- Undertake regular and transparent engagement between the Council, QPWS and HQ Plantations to communicate the status of the Project and requirements regarding land access and permitting.
- As part of the Detailed Design phase, undertake a comprehensive tenure and approvals assessment that includes engagement with QPWS and HQ Plantations.

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Implementation Roadmap

A phased roadmap has been provided at Figure 6 which outlines the key activities and timeframes for the implementation of the Project.

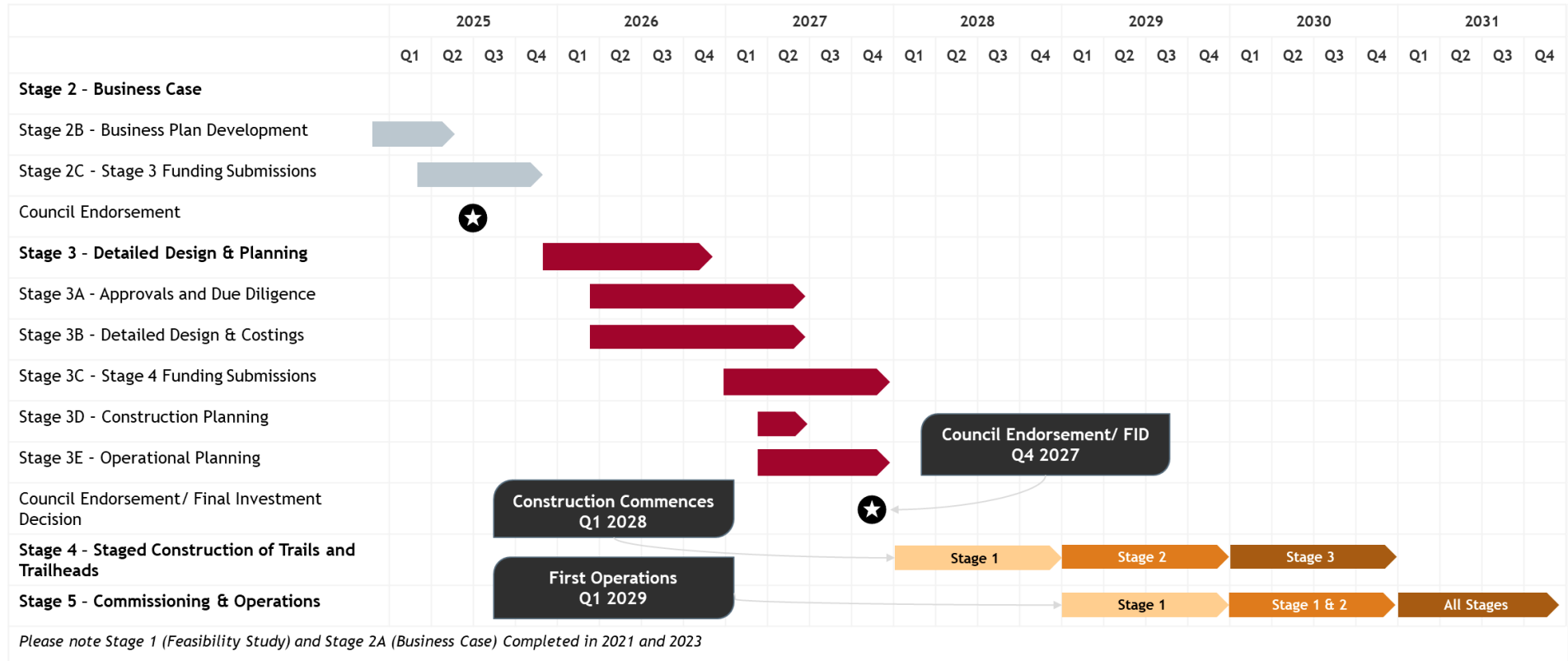


Figure 6: Implementation Roadmap