

renewal area

**Palm Island**

## Who lives here?

Population: 2,098

Number of families: 314

Percentage of population aged under 15: 35.8%

Percentage of population born overseas: 1.1%

Indigenous population: 92.8%

Figures from Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001 Census

## Community Renewal in Palm Island

Palm Island was endorsed as a Community Renewal area in July 2000, and is the only Deed of Grant in Trust community to be targeted by the program.

The years of Government control and the forcible relocation of discrete cultural groups to the Palm group of islands have left a legacy of entrenched social issues. High unemployment, overcrowded and inadequate housing, disproportionate food costs, poor diets and health, and a prevalence of alcohol abuse and associated violence are major concerns. Physical infrastructure and facilities on the islands are also inadequate.

In July 1999, the community developed a Vision Plan, which identifies the key social, physical and economic needs of Palm Islanders and suggests specific responses to those needs. Key themes outlined in the plan include improved outcomes for young people, self-esteem and community pride, training and employment, health and safety, and economic development. The Vision Plan guides Community Renewal activity on Palm Island and provides a blueprint to help meet the long-term needs and aspirations of the community. The Vision Plan also provides a starting point to assist government agencies to determine priorities on the island.

In February 2001, Community Renewal began work with the Palm Island Aboriginal Council, the community and State Government agencies to implement the Vision Plan. A Coordinator was appointed to oversee the plan's implementation.

Opposite: Community Renewal will increase its focus on children and young people, who comprise over 60% of Palm Island residents.

## Island of natural bounty

"Palm Island lies forty miles north of Townsville. It was one of the most beautiful islands. As the ships steamed through the channels to anchor outside the reef you would see the mountains with the clouds scudding across them and on fine days you would see the island a mass of green and yellow. With the wattle trees in full bloom, their perfume would float down over the island or you would smell the sweet heady perfume of the orchids. You could stroll down to the pure white beach and look back to see palm trees gently swaying, blending in with the yellow flowers of the wattle trees.

On fine sunny days you could row over the reef and you would see corals, star fish, and many more small creatures ablaze with colour, a beautiful garden under the sea. There was an aura about this island. Something so beautiful it held you in awe. It is hard to believe that this island is a penal settlement. This island was meant for romance, love and to live happily ever after." (Kennedy, 1985:7)

The Palm group of islands is the traditional country of the Manbarra and the Bwgcolman (alternative spelling is Bwgaman) tribal people, and comprises about 16 islands, including Great Palm Island and the other major islands of Fantome and Curacao.

Manbarra are the traditional owners of the islands. Bwgcolman people include the various peoples brought to the islands by Europeans. The Bwgcolman have been welcomed as guests to Manbarra country and live under Manbarra law. Bwgcolman peoples include all Manbarra's immediate neighbours and kin: to the south, Birri Gubba, including wiri, juipera, gia, ngaro, juru, birri; around Townsville, the wulgurukaba and bindal; further west to kutjula and jirandali; and to the north, nyawagi, bandjin girrimay, kuk badhun, mamu, and others. Bwgcolman also includes people from all over the Cape and Queensland, including Kalkadoon, Pitta Pitta and other Gulf peoples.

"It gives our people the opportunity to speak and think for ourselves."

Palm Island Community Reference Group member

"In just a few years the communities of Garbutt and Palm Island have, thanks to the Community Renewal program, been able to genuinely 'take ownership' of much of their immediate environment. That program, by actively encouraging and supporting focused consultation, identified real needs and enabled the creation of practical partnerships between government and community. The end result has been restoration of pride of place, respect and well-being and a genuine sense of community."

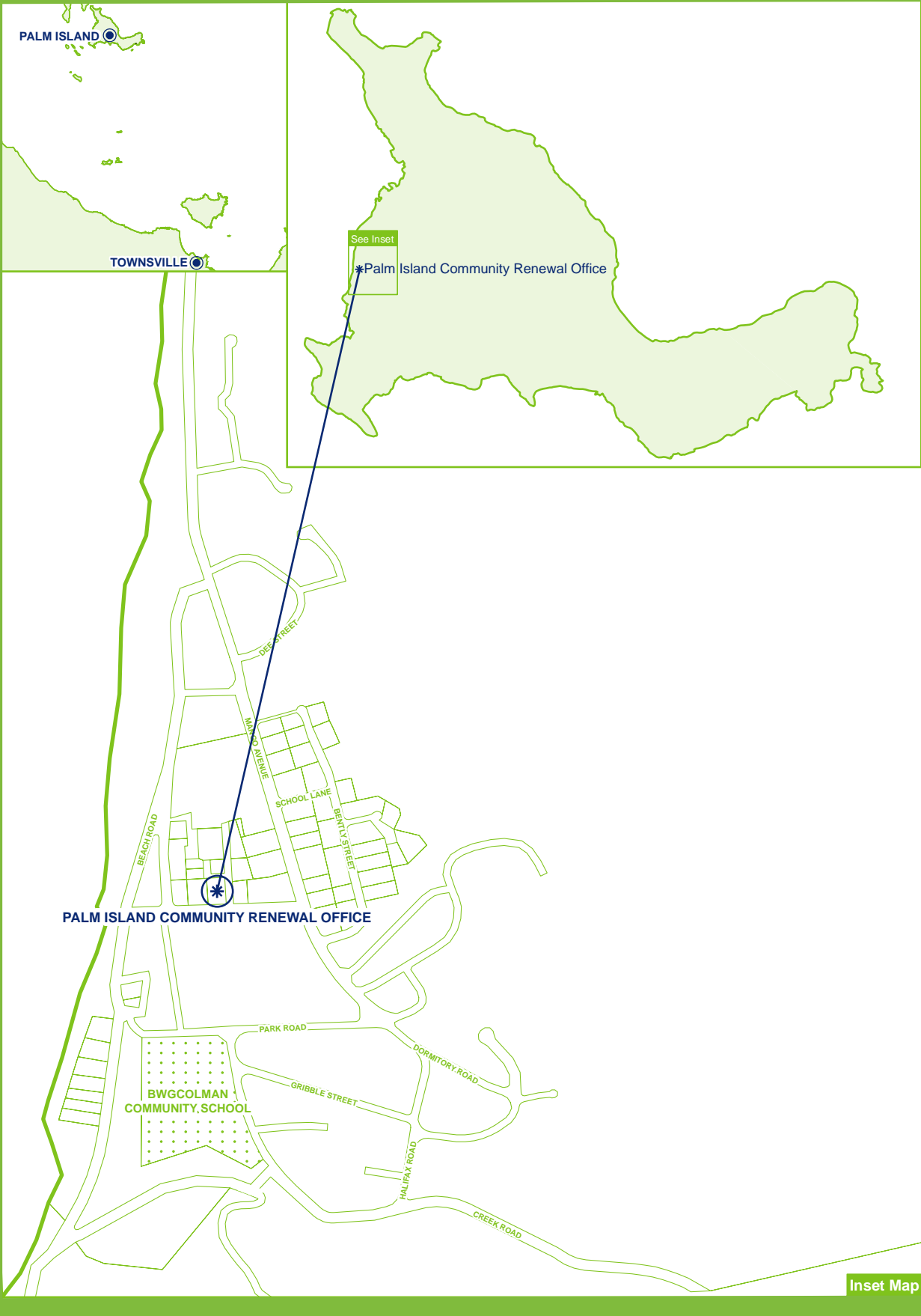
Hon. Mike Reynolds MP, Member for Townsville

# Palm Island Renewal Area



North

- Renewal Boundary
- Private Schools
- Public Schools
- Queensland Towns
- Community Renewal Office



Inset Map

Palm Island became a Government reserve in 1918, under the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*. The reserve was established to accommodate people living in the Hull River area, who faced hardship as a result of cyclonic devastation. This Act effectively

made the traditional owners wards of the State. Henceforth, Palm Island became a penal colony and Aboriginal people from around Queensland were sent there.

Up until the 1980s, the State acted as guardian to Palm Islanders,

controlling every aspect of their lives and property. A Deed of Grant in Trust was established on 27 October 1986, giving the community greater self-determination. An elected Aboriginal Council was established to manage the affairs of the community.

## Progress against the Palm Island Vision Plan

January 2002 – June 2003

During the period January 2002 to June 2003, 14 projects, valued at \$1.85 million, were approved for Palm Island. Highlights of progress against Vision Plan objectives are outlined below.

**Vision: Education to provide young Palm Islanders with the capacity to achieve physical, social and emotional well-being for themselves, their family and their community.**

In January 2002, funding was approved for the **Technological Enhancement Program**, which saw two technology centres established on Palm Island. The centres, located at St Michael's School and Bwngcolman Community School, provided students with computers and software, internet access, scanning facilities and web-cams. The centres are also available for use by parents, Elders, young people and the school community. An Information Technology trainee was appointed to provide training at times convenient to the wider school community. Parents have used the email and web-cam facilities to keep in contact with children who are studying on the mainland.

Funding was approved in December 2002 for a **Youth Development Camp**. Twelve young people spent two weeks at the Lord Somers Camp in Melbourne. The camp was designed to educate and empower young Palm



Palm Island children learn valuable computer skills at one of the two technology centres established on the Island.

Islanders to have the capacity to make informed choices in their lives and to develop into respected community leaders and role models. This project is one step in a series of steps to build and sustain capacity and leadership of the Palm Island community. The camp helped participants develop teamwork and leadership skills, loyalty, tolerance and respect for different viewpoints.

**Vision: Youth are the vision for the future of our community.**

Funding was approved in March 2003 to undertake preliminary work in the development of a \$5 million **youth and community centre**. Extensive community consultations were undertaken and residents participated in the design of the centre, ensuring it

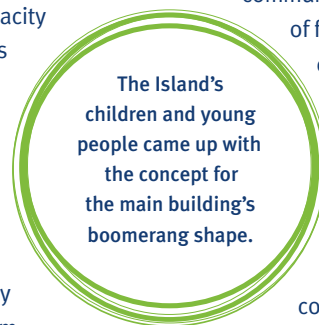
will be culturally appropriate and meet local needs. The Island's children and young people came up with the concept for the main building's boomerang shape. The community, in particular youth groups, will also participate in the management of the facility.

In June 2003, \$1 million in funding was approved to go towards the centre's construction. The centre will help improve social, cultural, educational and recreational opportunities for young people and the wider

community, by providing a range of facilities and activities currently lacking on the Island. Planned facilities include spaces for meetings, training and functions, a café with pool tables and computer games, a commercial grade training kitchen, computer room,

an undercover outdoor space for sports, performances and community gatherings, and Elders area. Social programs, including counselling and childcare, will also be available from the centre.

Community Renewal and the Palm Island Aboriginal Council worked extensively to assemble funding for the centre and develop plans to ensure its future sustainability, establishing partnerships with Australian and State Government agencies.



**Vision: Wide ranging family centred activities involving all age groups.**

In August 2002, funding was approved for a **mobile outdoor cinema**, the first cinema on the Island. The cinema has provided new recreation opportunities, proving popular with families. The project has been supported by local police, security officers and teachers.

**Vision: A community without self-harm and self-destructive behaviour.**

A number of initiatives to tackle significant Indigenous health issues have been implemented on Palm Island by other agencies. As there is an existing response to this vision, Community Renewal has directed its resources to other priorities, an approach endorsed by the community.

**Vision: A community without physical and social problems caused by high levels of alcohol and substance abuse.**

The Government's "Meeting Challenges Making Choices" strategy responds to this issue. As there is an existing response to this vision, Community Renewal has directed its resources to other priorities, an approach endorsed by the community.

**Vision: Create training programs and employment opportunities so that Palm Islanders have the same opportunities as anyone else living on the mainland and do not have to rely on handouts.**

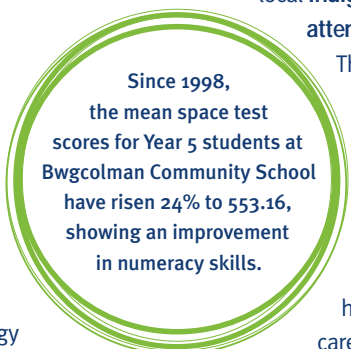
In January 2003, funding was approved for the **Parks and Gardens** project, which has seen the Island's foreshore revitalised. The project also provided 23 Palm Island residents with meaningful short-term employment and TAFE Queensland training. The trainees were expected to obtain a Certificate I in Construction, but excelled at their work, with 20 graduating with their Certificate II in Construction. The

trainees built infrastructure along the foreshore, including a pathway, barbecue facilities, Kup Murri pits for traditional cooking, shaded seating and a children's playground. Participants also put their own stamp on the foreshore by incorporating Indigenous designs into the pathway, helping create community ownership and pride in the area. The project was a joint initiative of Community Renewal, the Australian Army's Community Assistance Program and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services.

**Vision: A culturally appropriate health service. Palm Island health services staffed by 90% Indigenous people within 10 years.**

In January 2002, funding was approved to train and employ two local **Indigenous ambulance attendants** for two years.

The attendants have been mentored by the paramedics on the Island, and have undertaken TAFE Queensland training to assist with pre-hospital emergency care. Their duties include providing basic life support, transportation, monitoring of vital signs, administration of oxygen, splinting and community education. The project has helped to improve Palm Island residents' access to emergency health care and has provided a culturally appropriate health service on the island. The



A local police officer establishes rapport with Palm Island children.

Queensland Ambulance Service agreed to retain the attendants as permanent, full-time positions following the expiry of the two-year funding, which will provide lasting benefit to the Palm Island community.

**Vision: A healthy and safe environment for Palm Islanders.**

In partnership with Community Renewal, the Palm Island Aboriginal Council has undertaken measures to address environmental health issues, through the development of the Palm Island Master Plan.

In January 2002, funding was approved for a project which provided first-aid training to at least one person from each household. The **First Aid for the Community** project aimed to provide a foundation for healthy lifestyles on Palm Island, and improve self-esteem and leadership skills. At the completion of the course, participants received a certificate, helping to improve their employment opportunities.



Aerial view of Palm Island showing the site of the new youth and community centre.

Funding was approved in August 2002 for the second stage of the **Palm Island master plan**. The master plan is a blueprint for physical infrastructure works and was initially funded by Community Renewal in August 2001. The second stage of funding has enabled environmental master planning and schematic designs to be developed for the airport and the sports area, including the adjacent cemetery. The project will also see physical linkages, such as footpaths and walking tracks, established between specific geographic areas. Budget estimates will also be developed for proposed work.

**Vision: Decent facilities and high quality care for aged and disabled Palm Islanders living at the old persons' home.**

A new home for elderly people has been funded and constructed, external to Community Renewal, since the Vision Plan was established. Therefore Community Renewal has directed its resources to other priorities, an approach endorsed by the community.

**Vision: A community radio and local newspaper is needed to get information across the community and build a sense of strong community.**

Community Renewal has been involved in planning, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services, to establish a **radio station** on Palm Island. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services provided the Townsville Indigenous Radio Station, 4K1G, with \$55,000 to install the radio station on Palm Island. Community Renewal has been involved in negotiations to assist the station with further funding requirements. Estimates indicate a current shortfall in funding of about \$35,000. The radio station may be located in the youth and community centre.

**Vision: Provide a future for Palm Islanders through economic development.**

The Palm Island Aboriginal Council's Economic Development Committee has developed strategies to respond to this vision. Community Renewal's **Parks and Gardens** project has also provided 23 Palm Islanders with work experience and accredited training. Further, the two computer centres funded by Community Renewal through the **Technological Enhancement Program** are helping to build residents' employment skills.

**Vision: Enabling the capacity of Palm Islanders to achieve their own vision of physical, social and emotional well-being.**

The Palm Island **Community Reference Group** was established in mid-2003 and has provided the community with an opportunity to achieve their vision of physical, social and emotional well-being. The group has been instrumental in shaping and guiding renewal activities on Palm Island, especially in prioritising Community Renewal funding for the community.

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# My island home

PALM Island is about 70km north-east from Townsville. Palm Island is the biggest island out of the Palm Island group.

Around Palm Island is nice white sand and the Great Barrier Reef around the island.

On our island there are only two schools and they are St Michael's School and Bwgcorman State School.

I used to go to Bwgcorman in Year 4 and 5, but now I go to St Michael's School. There are about 3000 people on the island.

Our bays are nice to go camping and we have nice delicious fish around. I love going fishing and camping on the weekend. There is no place like home.

MARNI-ROSE JAY KYLE,  
St Michael's School,  
Palm Island.

Townsville Bulletin 26 August 2003

## Projects approved January 2002 – June 2003 mapped to Vision Plan priorities

Vision Plan priorities	Projects	Date funding approved
Education is the key to providing young Palm Islanders with the capacity to achieve physical, social and emotional well-being for themselves, their family and their community.	First Aid for the Community	9 January 2002
	Technology Enhancement project	9 January 2002
	Palm Island Youth Development Camp	18 December 2002
Youth are the vision for the future of our community.	Palm Island Amateur Boxing Club	9 January 2002
	Mobile Outdoor Cinema	28 August 2002
	Palm Island Youth Development Camp	18 December 2002
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – design phase	4 March 2003
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – construction phase	16 June 2003
Wide-ranging family centred activities involving all age groups.	Mobile Outdoor Cinema	28 August 2002
	Palm Island Master Plan: Stage 2	28 August 2002
	Palm Island Parks and Gardens project	15 January 2003
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – design phase	4 March 2003
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – construction phase	16 June 2003
A community without self harm and self-destructive behaviour.	This priority was not directly addressed during the reporting period.	–
A community without physical and social problems caused by high levels of alcohol and substance abuse.	This priority was not directly addressed during the reporting period.	–
Create training programs and employment opportunities so that Palm Islanders have the same opportunities as anyone else living on the mainland and do not have to rely on handouts.	First Aid for the Community	9 January 2002
	Palm Island Ambulance Attendant Initiative	9 January 2002
	Technology Enhancement project	9 January 2002
	Palm Island Master Plan: Stage 2	28 August 2002
	Palm Island Parks and Gardens project	15 January 2003
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – design phase	4 March 2003
A culturally appropriate health service. Palm Island health services staffed by 90% Indigenous people within 10 years.	Palm Island Ambulance Attendant Initiative	9 January 2002
A healthy and safe environment for Palm Islanders.	First Aid for the Community	9 January 2002
	Palm Island Master Plan	28 August 2002
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – design phase	4 March 2003
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – construction phase	16 June 2003
Decent facilities and high quality care for aged and disabled Palm Islanders living at the old persons' home.	This priority was not directly addressed during the reporting period.	–
A community radio and a local newspaper is needed to get information across the community and build a sense of strong community.	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – design phase	4 March 2003
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – construction phase	16 June 2003
Provide a future for Palm Islanders through economic development.	Palm Island Master Plan	28 August 2002
Enabling the capacity of Palm Islanders to achieve their own vision of physical, social and emotional well-being.	Palm Island Graffiti Busters	9 January 2002
	Palm Island Parks and Gardens project	15 January 2003
	Palm Island Vision Plan Liaison Officer	15 January 2003
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – design phase	4 March 2003
	Palm Island Youth and Community Centre – construction phase	16 June 2003

Projects may appear more than once if they meet multiple Vision Plan priorities.

**“Our Elders are our history; they are our walking libraries.”**

Palm Island Community Reference Group member

## Investment

To 30 June 2003, Community Renewal has funded 18 projects to the value of \$2.2 million in Palm Island. Approximately 53% of these funds were allocated to physical infrastructure development. Partners in Community Renewal initiatives invested \$3.9 million over the same period, bringing the combined investment in renewal activities to \$6.1 million.

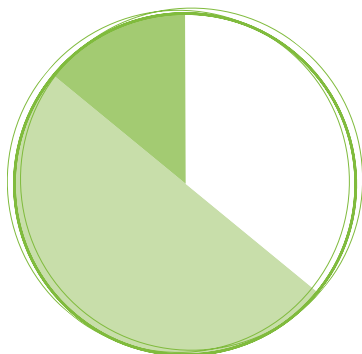
### Allocation of Community Renewal funding to project types 1998–03

Type of project	1998–99 (\$)	1999–00 (\$)	2000–01 (\$)	2001–02 (\$)	2002–03 (\$)	Total (\$)
Neighbourhood amenity	0	0	0	28,810	120,000	148,810
Community multi-purpose facilities	0	0	0	0	1,000,000	1,000,000
Health and well-being	0	0	0	126,202	0	126,202
Education, training and employment	0	0	0	89,000	0	89,000
Arts and culture	0	0	0	0	23,332	23,332
Economic development	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community safety	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sport and recreation	0	0	0	40,000	0	40,000
Childcare	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous*	0	0	229,011	128,061	421,256	778,328
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>229,011</b>	<b>412,073</b>	<b>1,564,588</b>	<b>2,205,672</b>

\*Includes projects which don't fit into other categories and projects related to Community Renewal program management

### Sources of funding for Community Renewal initiatives 1998–03

Community Renewal 36%	Local government 14%
State Government 50%	Other 0%



Linda Apelt, Director-General of the Department of Housing (June 1998 to February 2004) and Government Champion to Palm Island under the “Meeting Challenges Making Choices” strategy, talks with Palm Island residents.