

Tablelands Workforce – An overview of the workforce on the Tablelands

A higher skills level is needed for the future and a well-educated and skilled workforce is essential to the region's economic growth and social wellbeing. Educated and skilled workforces assist in building social capital and facilitate productive engagement with government and community organisations. One of the greatest challenges facing the Tablelands Region is the provision of sustainable employment across a diversity of industries. For the Tablelands to be successful in meeting its economic and social development objectives a number of issues will need to be addressed including population growth, an ageing workforce, reduced youth labour supply, low workforce participation, unemployment and underemployment, a low education and skills base and an upcoming mining boom. Collaboration and cooperation within the region will be required.

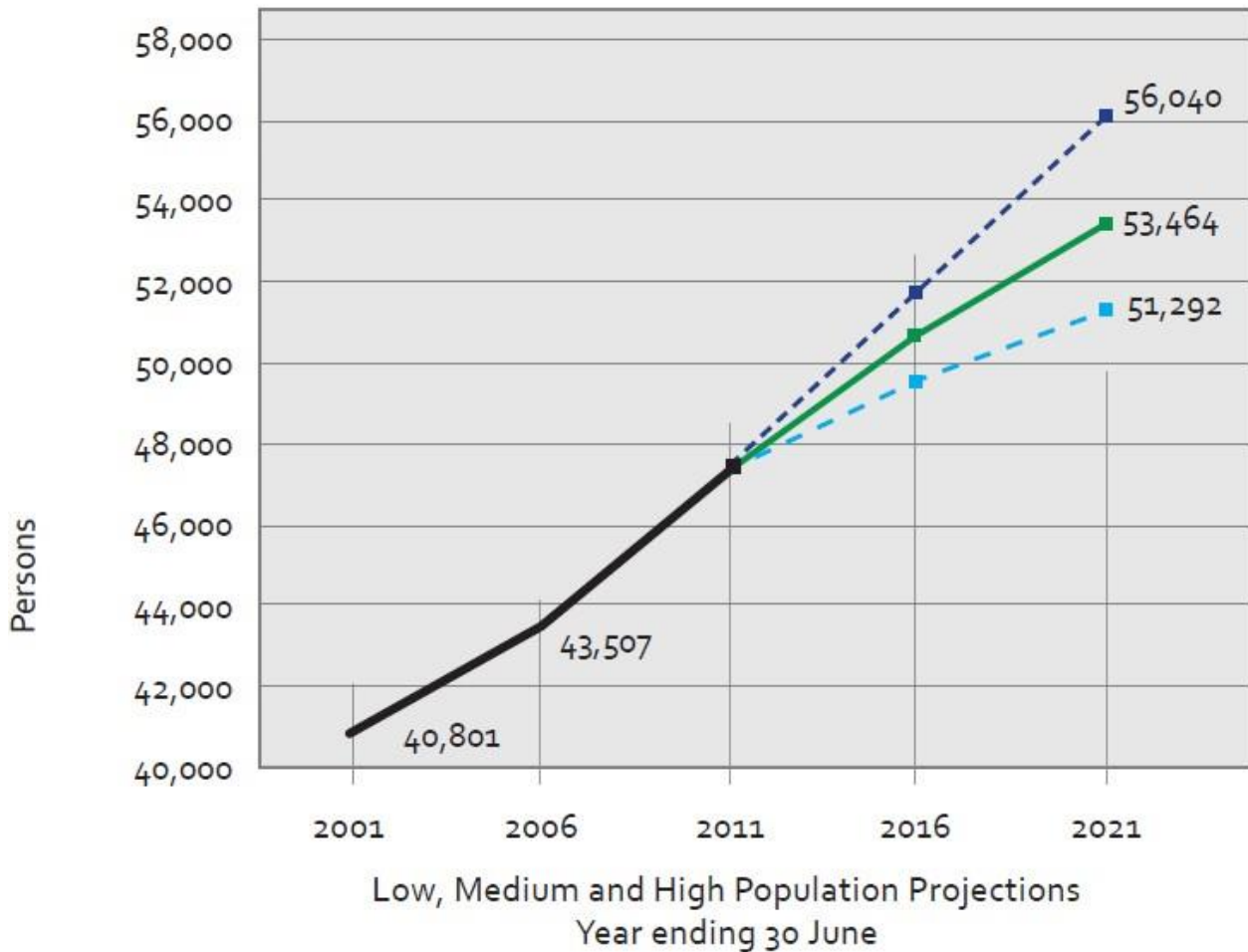
Employment on the Tablelands is dominated by agriculture, followed by retail trade, health care and social services, and education and training. The service sector provides the bulk of the region's jobs, notably retail, health and social services, and accommodation and food services. The region's agricultural sector is a significant wealth generator with the agricultural industry being the highest contributor to the region's total output. The region also has a high number of resident workers who travel to their places of employment outside the Tablelands everyday (predominantly to Cairns). As a result, the Tablelands have a notable leakage of jobs to other parts of the wider region. According to ABS data at the 2006 census, 78.2% of employed residents of the Tablelands region worked within the Tablelands region, 13.5% worked elsewhere (Cairns, Port Douglas, Mossman or elsewhere). 8.3% was not stated. As the region's population continues to grow, an increasingly critical issue facing the Tablelands will be its capacity to provide sufficient jobs in a diversity of industry sectors to support a sustainable economic future.

Population Growth

The Tablelands population has grown from 40,801 residents in 2001 to 46,937 in 2010 (estimated resident population at 30 June, ABS catalogue 3218.0, 2011). Annual growth over this period has been variable, with a low of 0.8% in the 2003-04 year to a high of 2.4% in 2007-08, slowing to 1.2% in the 2009-10 year. The average annual growth rate over the period June 2001 to June 2010 was 1.6%.

There will be demand for around 300 new dwellings per year and this demand is likely to be for smaller dwellings to accommodate the growth in the number of people living on their own.

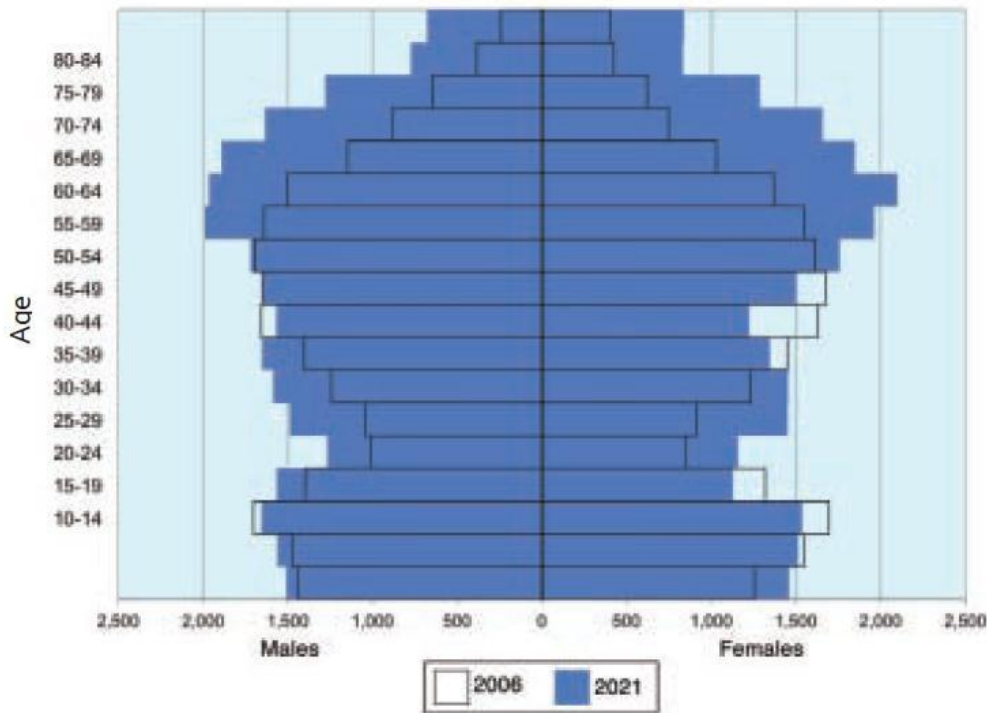
At the 2011 census, 4,516 persons identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This was 10.3% of the Tablelands population. 6,004 persons, 14.5% of the Tablelands population, were born Overseas. (ABS, 2011 Census).



Based on: ABS Cat 3218.0 (for 2001 ERP) and Queensland Government population projections to 2031: local government areas, 2011 edition, Office of Economic and Statistical Research, Queensland Treasury 2011

The Tablelands has an ageing population. When examining the change in age structure of the population of the Southern Tablelands, compared to the Far North SD, the Southern Tablelands has notably higher proportions of people in the older age group. As shown in the figure below, there are fewer young to middle aged adults aged between 20 and 49, suggesting that young people in this age bracket tend to move out of the region to seek educational and employment opportunities elsewhere. The median age of the Tablelands population at the 2011 census was 43 and is expected to be 46.0 years by the year 2021. Over the next ten years, the Tablelands population is likely to increase by 12.6% to around 53,500 people. Almost a quarter of our population will be over the age of 65 years in 2021.

Age Distribution, Tablelands Regional Council 2006 and projected 2021



Source: Queensland Government population projections to 2031: local government areas, 2011 edition, Office of Economic and Statistical Research, Queensland Treasury 2011

The challenge of an ageing population, with the associated loss of young people from the region, raises the question of how can we attract and retain skilled and professional people in the younger age groups to the Tablelands?

Current Workforce

There were 23,244 persons (15yrs+) in the Tablelands labour force in the June qtr. 2011. 90.2% were employed and 9.8% unemployed (Tablelands Community Plan 2021).

Based on the available information from the 2011 Census, the labour force participation rate for the Tablelands region was lower at 54.7% when compared to Queensland at 62.8%. Qualitative data obtained from stakeholder consultation suggests that many of the townships in the region are socially and economically disadvantaged due to their geographical location, limiting residents' access to employment. Moreover, according to a local job training provider, many residents lack skills in numeracy, literacy and communication required to engage in meaningful employment. Indigenous people and people who are disadvantaged by their location are most likely to be assisted by local job training services on the Tablelands. What the labour force participation rate does not show is underemployment and consultation data indicate that many of the resident workers are underemployed.

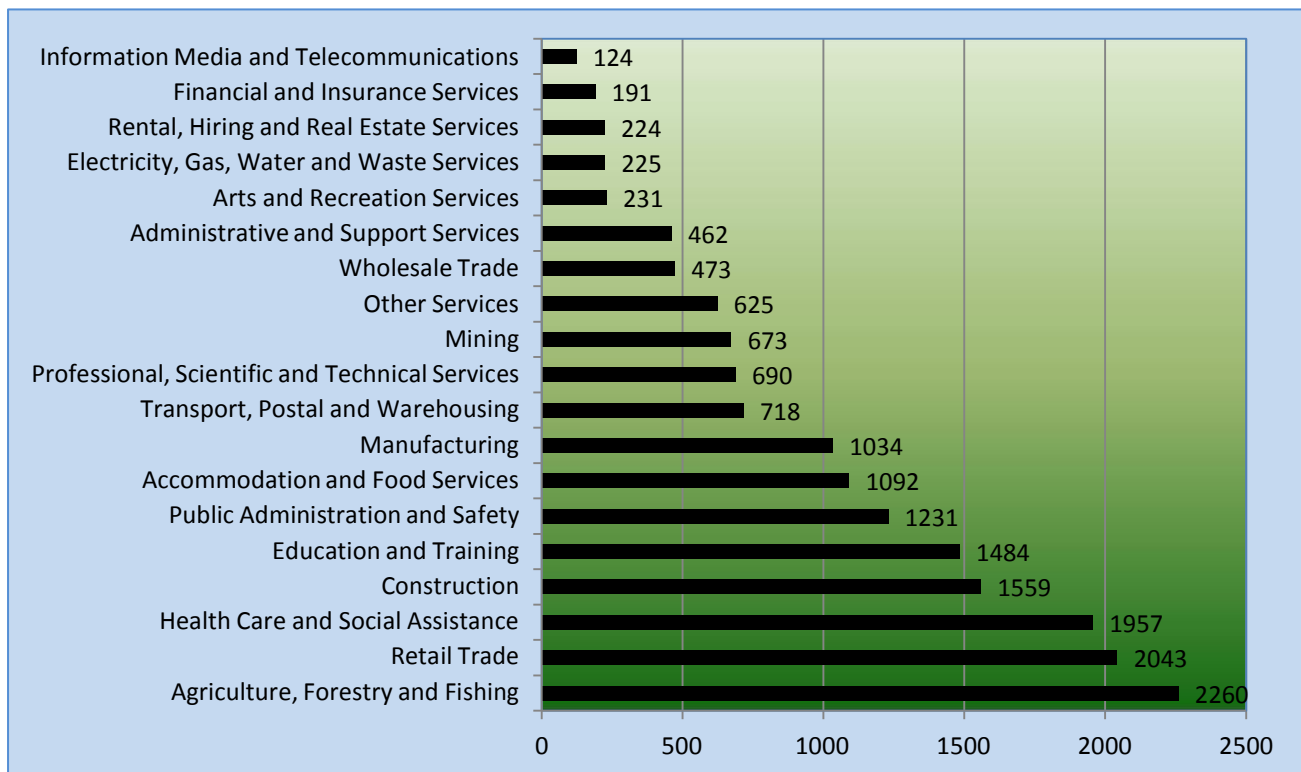
Tablelands Labour Force Status, 2011 Census.

Employed, worked full-time	10641
Employed, worked part-time	5887
Employed, away from work	1274
Unemployed, looking for full-time work	853
Unemployed, looking for part-time work	431
Not in the labour force	13413
Not stated	2427

Skill levels

35.5% of Tablelands adults have completed Yr. 12 schooling compared with 46.6% of Queensland adults (15yrs+ (ABS, 2011 Census). 36.9% of Tablelanders (15yrs+) have a qualification, compared with 43.6% of Queenslanders (15Yrs+). 20.7% of Tablelands people with a qualification have a certificate (I,II,III,IV), 6.3% an advanced diploma or diploma and 9.9% a Bachelor degree or higher, compared with 20%, 7.6% and 16.0% of Queenslanders (ABS, 2011 Census).

Tablelands Employment by Industry Sector, 2011



ABS 2011 Census

Within the Far North Queensland region the Tablelands has a strong representation in the industries of agriculture & forestry, manufacturing, education and training, Administrative and support services, transport & warehousing and health care and social assistance. By far the service sector

dominates employment on the Tablelands, notably retail, health and social services, and accommodation and food services. Despite the deregulation of the dairy industry, the agricultural sector is still a major wealth generator for the region. As the Tablelands region moves forward from its traditionally based industries to service-based industries, there is a threat of casualization of jobs, leading to job instability and further trends in underemployment.

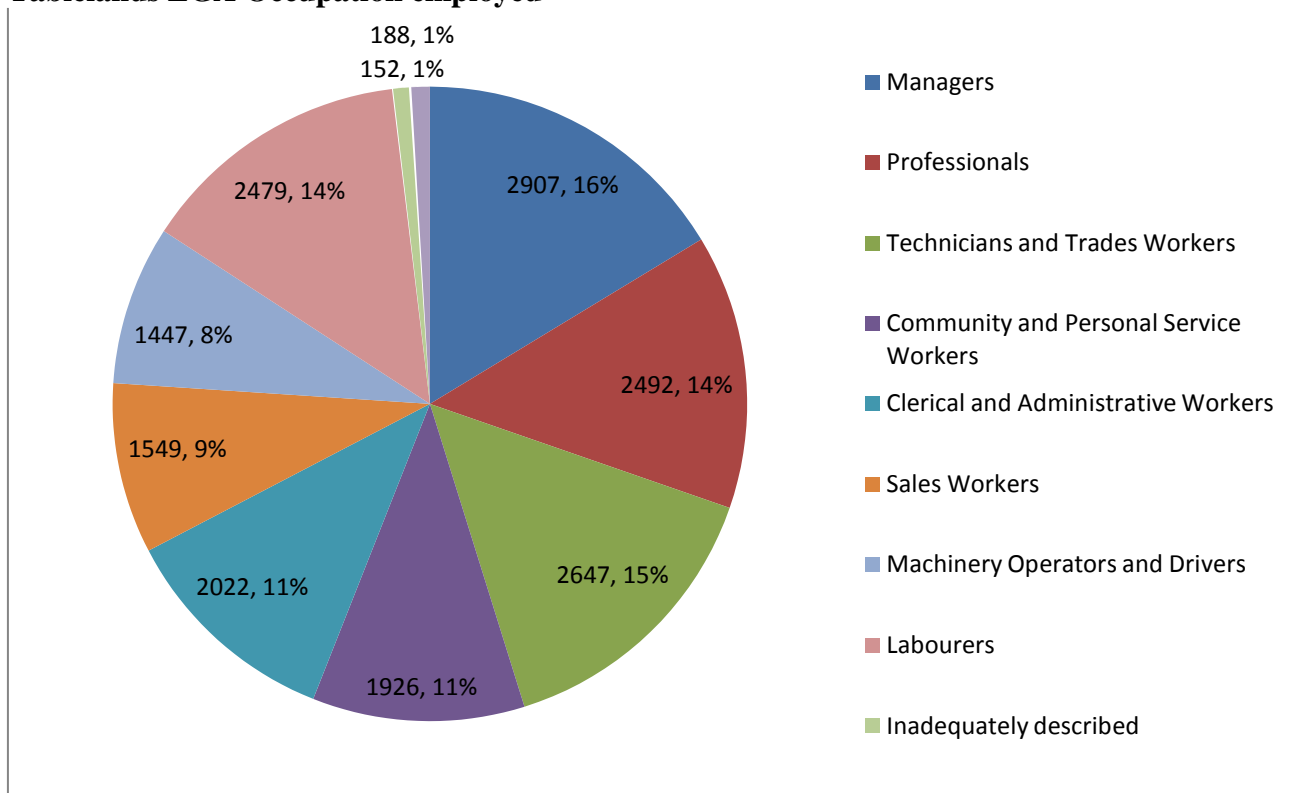
Of the 4,745 businesses in the Tablelands region, 94.3% were small businesses (employing less than 20 people) in 2008-09 (From OESR 2011, Source: ABS cat no. 8165.0 from Tablelands Community Plan 2021).

Tablelands Businesses by Employment Size
(2008-2009)

Small Less than 20 employees	Medium 20-100 employees	Large More than 100 employees
4,474 Businesses (94.3%)	241 Businesses (5.1%)	30 Businesses (0.6%)

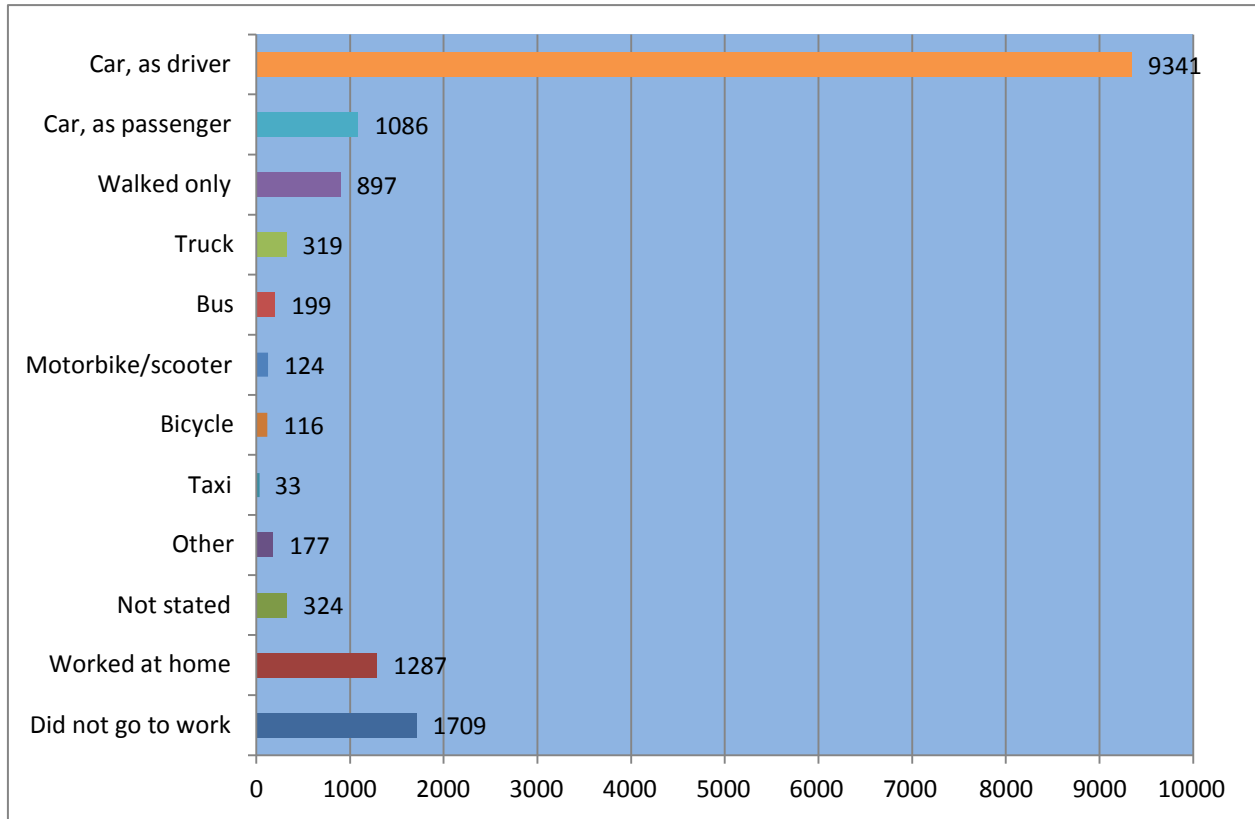
From OESR 2011, Source: ABS cat no. 8165.0

Tablelands LGA Occupation employed



*Courtesy of Economic and Structural Policy, Queensland Treasury and Trade 2011
 ABS Labour Force, Australia, 2011.*

Tablelands, Method of Travel to Work, 2011 Census.



References

Tablelands Community Plan 2021 - Unique communities working together.
www.trc.qld.gov.au/tablelands-community-plan