



CAIRNS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Cairns Historical Society Annual Report 2022



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Vision Statement



To grow a vibrant, inclusive and professional cultural organisation that provides best practice exhibitions, collections management, and research and conservation services, that is accessible, responsive and engaging for local residents, children and audiences from around the world.

Our Mission

The Cairns Historical Society (est.1958) and Museum (CHS&M) is committed to collecting, preserving and sharing its collection of archival documents, images and objects which are significant to the history of Cairns and Far North Queensland (FNQ).

To curate and manage a leading museum and cultural tourism experience in FNQ.

To recruit, train and enhance the skills and well-being of all staff (paid and volunteers).

To enable FNQ history, heritage, educational and creative projects with locals and visitors from around the world by providing expertise, quality, and access to collections.

Cairns Historical Society 2021–2022

The Cairns Historical Society is a unique organisation created in 1958 by volunteers from the community who had a vision to collect, protect and make available the region's history to locals and the rest of Queensland, and now with the internet: The World.

As a 'Mixed Collection' consisting of Archives, Images and Objects, the CHS&M collection consists of around 100,000 items either catalogued, yet to be processed, stored or on display. This makes our collection a significant local resource for the community and an asset of statewide significance to Queensland.

Our collecting area extends from Cardwell to the Torres Strait Islands and west to the Northern Territory border. It takes an integrated approach incorporating pre and post contact settlement records from FNQ. We rely on community donations and accession of new resources into the collection using international best practices.

The CHS&M Collection is the largest regional collection outside of a University or State run facility, and proudly bookends the activities of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Brisbane.

Not bad for a community run organisation!

President's Report



The Cairns Historical Society Inc. has a clear mission to collect, preserve and share the history of Cairns and FNQ for the community. Our greatest achievement this year has been to keep the Museum and Research Centre doors open to the public, despite Covid-19 disruptions and lacklustre tourism.

In February, we were delighted to appoint Dr. Sandi Robb to the position of Collections Manager. Sandi brings to this position knowledge, depth and experience in collections management and North Queensland history. This is our first professional appointment to the Society and a positive move for our organisation.

We also welcomed Fiona Jose as our first Indigenous Board Member. Fiona brings a strong track record of effective leadership in multiple roles, including CEO of Cape York Partnerships.

It is a pleasure to present the President's Report for the 2021–22 Financial Year. The purpose of this Annual Report to Members is to summarise our achievements over the previous year, and to highlight why we remain a leading community organisation in the Far North.

First and foremost, I would like to recognise the contribution that all of our Volunteers and Members have made to the Society. Through your day-to-day support, membership and ongoing patronage, we have been able to meet our clear strategic directions and operational objectives. Your ongoing commitment will continue to keep our Society strong and help us achieve the goals set out in our strategic plan.

I would like to thank our major sponsor Cairns Regional Council with whom we have renewed a four-year agreement, along with our platinum sponsors, MacDonnells Law, for their ongoing support.

Finally, a note of appreciation for the great support we have received from the local community and visitors alike. With over 23,947 visitors through our doors over a 12-month period, visiting the Museum or Research Centre, the Cairns Historical Society can certainly be proud of its success!

DR CLIVE SKAROTT, AM, HonDUniv
President

New Board Members in Profile



Fiona Jose

In February 2022, the Cairns Historical Society welcomed Fiona Jose to the Board. A proud First Nations woman and Cairns High alumni, Fiona's decision to join us is a huge asset as we chart the growth and development of the society and museum.



Ralph Peters

Ralph Peters moved to Cairns in 2005 from Papua New Guinea and attended local primary and secondary schools. He graduated from James Cook University with a Bachelor of Laws and is currently a solicitor with MacDonnells Law.

Meet The Board



Caption Left to Right: Treasurer David Goodman, Dr Nicky Horsfall, President Dr. Clive Skarott, Ralph Peters, Pauline O' Keeffe, Vice President Dr Jan Wegner, A/ Executive Officer, Dr Sandi Robb. Absent: Secretary Lyn Warwick, Fiona Jose, and Megan Lilly.

In 2022, the Cairns Historical Society Management Committee transitioned into a Board according to a revised constitution. This reflects the direction of our Strategic Plan 2021–24. Several new positions were created including that of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, four appointed members and one elected member.

The Cairns Historical Society Board is a multi-disciplinary and culturally diverse team including representation from regional First Nation's, three Doctors of Philosophy, a Chief Executive Officer, a Chartered Accountant,

a Lawyer, a former Politician and Librarian. A number of members sit on other Boards and contribute to public life in various ways. This makes the skills matrix for the Board extremely high.

This year we saw the retirement of two Board members, Geoff Wharton and Leslie Lofthouse, and welcomed two new members, Fiona Jose and Ralph Peters. Together they bring a diverse range of skills, experience and professionalism to the Society as it moves forward to meet its organisational challenges in the digital century.

POSITION	NAME	MEETINGS ATTENDED
President	Dr Clive Skarott	8
Vice-President	Dr Jan Wegner	7
Secretary	Lyn Warwick	6
Treasurer	David Goodman	7
Board Member	Dr Nicky Horsfall	7
Board Member	Pauline O'Keeffe	7
Board Member	Megan Lilly	6
Board Member	Fiona Jose (Appointed 28 February 2022)	3
Board Member	Ralph Peters (Appointed 11 July 2022)	2
Board Member (Retired)	Leslie Lofthouse (Resigned 23 May 2022)	1
Executive Officer	Fleur Anderson (Resigned 25 July 2022)	5
A/ Executive Officer	Dr Sandi Robb (Appointed 27 July 2022)	3

The Board gratefully acknowledge the support and dedication of the volunteers who contribute to its operations. There were 8 meetings held in the financial year 2021–22 and one Annual General Meeting.

Our Community

The Cairns Historical Society is made up from a dedicated community base. Currently 543 people are members of the Cairns Historical Society. This number has decreased slightly over the 2021-22 period due to lapsed memberships, the impact of Covid-19 and transitioning to a new system: Membership Pro.

The Society has responded to this reduction by undertaking an audit of memberships, offering membership at reception and offering three months' free membership when Covid-19 was at its peak.

Over the last year, 2021–22, the organisation underwent several staffing changes. Currently, the team consists of A/Executive Officer and Collections Manager Dr Sandi Robb; Curator, Dr Daniela Vavrova; Education and Children's Programming Lead, Carmen Mira; Operations and Volunteer Manager, Melissa McQuillan, and Accounts Manager, Debra Ferguson.

The Society is supported by a diverse community of **57 volunteers** who work in reception, as guides, on the School Trailer, in the Research Room, in the Archives and Images or with the Object Collection.

- Over the 2021–22 year, our volunteers provided a combined total **13,595** hours working approximately 5 hours per day across our organisation.
- The annual benefit of volunteer services to the Society over a 12 month period was **\$586,865.53**¹.
- When calculated against the national minimum wage per hour income², the combined contribution provided to the CHS&M in wage saving equals **\$276,386.35**.

Now that's a reason to value our wonderful volunteers!

Our Operating Environment

Throughout 2021–22, the Society continued to be challenged by Covid-19, just when things were about to pick up.

The arrival of Omicron in February not only affected our visitor numbers to the Museum, but also kept away our volunteers, either due to sickness, or as a preventative measure. On top of that, super colds did their seasonal rounds resulting in a slimline workforce at all times.

From late May onwards, visitor numbers started to pick up. This was due to the relaxation of State by State pandemic restrictions, along with tourism incentives aimed at attracting visitors to the Far North.

The presence of a late wet season, cooler weather, and numerous downpours, worked to the Society's advantage with tourists and locals alike visiting the Museum to avoid the rain. This resulted in some of the best visitor numbers gathered for some months.

The Society has proved to be resilient and optimistic. While not back to pre-Covid visitor numbers (national or international), our Historical Society Research Centre has continued to answer queries and accessioned many items into the collection.

We have managed to put on two excellent in-house exhibitions and attracted world class travelling shows. The Society has worked hard to maintain its connection with the local community and invest in the family and schools market. This keeps our status as one of the premier places in the community for children's activities, education, learning and family fun.

We continue to deliver a premier Museum and Research Centre experience for our visitors while building a world class Tropical Collection for the future community of FNQ.

Highlights & Achievements

- Recruitment of a Collections Manager.
- Re-negotiation of Resource and Performance Agreement (R&P) budget with Cairns Regional Council.
- Introduction of Patron Kit.
- Received Ports North sponsorship for Schools Trailer Program: 2022–2024.
- Invested in Community Engagement.
- Commenced Spatial Renewal program.

¹This takes in the replacement cost of a volunteer calculated using the average hourly part-time wage of a person of their age in Queensland plus 15% employer on-costs (inclusive of superannuation, payroll tax and administration expenses) if they were a paid employee. <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/calculator/>

²As set by the Fair Work Commission, was \$20.33 per hour in June 2022 (\$23,481.15) and \$21.38 per hour from 1 July 2022 (\$31,642.40), <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

Our Collections

The Cairns Historical Society and Research Centre is a best practice research facility which supports a large collection of local, state and nationally significant archival, image and object items.



The collection consists of

41,046

Archives

6,282

Objects

The Research Centre has **14 volunteers** working at least 5 hours per week.

42,000

Images

21,770

Archives items are fully or partly digitised or are digital born

214 researchers came into the Research Centre to undertake assisted or independent research.

Inclusivity

The Cairns Historical Society Collection Management team is committed to collecting material which reflects our broad and multicultural community which we know and love as typical FNQ. With its long history of many cultures and cultural interactions from a diverse migrant and First Nation community, our vision is to promote inclusivity – to collect material which preserves all types of narratives before it is lost. The Collection has an important role as a repository for the community of the future but also to support the thematic galleries of our visitor centre: The Museum.

Sharing our History

The Research Centre has helped researchers, organisations, and other community groups across North Queensland, Australia and far away places such as the Museum Gabriel Foucher in Bourges, France and even Finland! The diverse range of people and communities we have assisted include the Kuranda Historical Society, the MJD Foundation, Mulgrave Historical Society, Mapoon Museum, and the Returned Services League, we have also supported curator Nerelle Nicolls with her 'Lugger Bort Project.'

Quotes from our Research Centre



"Many, many thanks for this information. Really appreciate it, and receiving it so quickly. It's exceedingly helpful!"

*From Geraldine McKenna, Senior Researcher/Producer
Who Do You Think You Are?*

"I spent the most wonderful 2 hours with Terry at the Cairns Museum. Please pass on my thanks to him as he was so helpful in locating all the material I needed. I was extremely happy with my research so thanks again."

From Meg Dunn, email June 2021

"Fantastic! Thank you for all your help Pauline."

From Robert Davies, Head of Department Arts and Information Technology – Woree State High School

"You are amazing and this is wonderful information." Thank you SO MUCH.

"I can't thank you enough. I really appreciate the time you took to provide this level of detail – and on the same day of my request."

From Barbara Sweeney, email 10 Feb 2022

The Covid-19 pandemic affected visitor numbers to the Research Centre, reducing its number by 30% since it opened.

However, this did not affect the amount of requests for information or images from the Research Team who received queries from far and wide via email, online or by telephone.

The centre has maintained its ability to answer requests despite restrictions. Over the last three years we have answered a total of:

- **595** Research Centre (Archives and Image). *This compares to 651 in 2020–21 and 579 in 2019–20.*
- **2,154** research requests answered since the pandemic began.
- **73** donations formally received in images and archives, plus a number of informal digital submissions.

In response to the pandemic, and to keep up with research and collection trends, the Society has entered into a phase of operations. It has...

- Invested in new equipment: a Scanpro microfilm/microfiche scanner to digitise the microfilm.
- Commenced a new fee schedule and upgraded the online enquiry system.
- Embarked on a spatial renewal programme.
- Applied for grant funding to purchase equipment to enter into a broader digitisation phase.

YEAR	RESEARCH CENTRE VISITORS
2018–19	306
2019–20	240
2020–21	258
2021–22	214

Engagement and Learning

23,733 visitors to the Museum in 2021–22. That's an increase of 10,000+ visitors compared to the previous Covid-19 year, and 6,000 more than the 2018–19 period. A great achievement.

Recruited a Collections Manager to oversee the significant mixed collection in line with the Strategic Plan 2021–2024 objectives.

Re-negotiated the Society's Resource and Performance Agreement with the Cairns Regional Council which sets out our operational budget for the next four years.

Introduced a Patron Kit for individuals to contribute directly to the Cairns Historical Society.

Entered into a partner program with Ports North who now sponsored the Schools Trailer Program from 1 May 2022 for two years.

Invested in community building through diversity and inclusivity by sharing our knowledge, skills and facility with other community groups that explore culture, history and heritage.

Embarked on a programme of Spatial Renewal to expand our storage, streamline our Collection, and provide for future growth.



"I'd like to acknowledge Mitchell's highlight tour and say what a great experience that was for us both!"

From Dr. Jo Wills, Senior Museum Development Officer, Queensland Museum

YEAR	MUSEUM VISITORS	EVENT
2021–22	23,733	Pandemic restrictions relaxed
2020–21	10,792	Pandemic restrictions
2019–20	12,578	Pandemic declared
2018–19	17,856	First year open

Museum Exhibition



Temporary Gallery Program 2021–22

Percy Trezise: The man who loved Cape York Peninsula

Sep/Oct/Nov

An iconic exhibition about an iconic local man looking at his writing, art and life.

The Trouble with Parting

Dec/Jan/Feb

A look at everyday objects, why we hold onto them so dearly and are reluctant to throw them out.

Reawakening the Buk-ti

March/April/May

Exhibition from Ingham tracing the identities of the Chinese community that ran concurrently with the Chinese celebration of Ching Ming, the day of remembering ancestors. It included public programming about researching family history, as well as a public lecture.

Sihot'e Nioge - When Skirts Become Artworks

May/June/July

Tapa cloth show touring from Brisbane collector and Tapa specialist Joan G Winter. Collaboration with local Oro Province women and the Court House. This included an Open Day in collaboration with the Court House.

The museum has an amazing collection of Cairns' rich history, and I can't wait to come back and spend more time. And that was the general consensus amongst the team. So again, THANK YOU to all of you, and for the wonderful and talented volunteers behind that scenes that make the museum what it is.

From Kylie Brand, Business Development Manager TTNQ

Schools

The strategic focus of the Children's Program Coordinator is to connect the Museum to children and young people (and their families), and grow our audience through an active and relevant school's program and a creative and fun holiday program.

The Children's Program Coordinator is a qualified teacher who shares their expertise, resources and skills with children, other teachers, cultural workers and volunteers. This offers local children tangible, place-based experiences that increase their connection to the community.

Our programs at the Cairns Historical Society and Museum are aligned with current curriculum needs of both primary and secondary education, and aim to move into engaging with adult learning over the next year.

Despite the impact of Covid-19 on the education year for children, restricted volunteer interactions, and schools under lockdown, the 2021–22 year continued to reflect a positive appreciation for the programs that we deliver via school excursions to the Museum, our History in a Trunk program, visits from the Cairns Historical Society History Trailor, and through our lively School Holiday Program. Our numbers reflect our reputation to deliver a high quality education program aligned with the State Curriculum.

We take our role in education seriously!

- **4,921 total number of students** reached, an increase from **2,676** the year before.
- **27 School visits** reaching **1,819 children**
- **26 Museum visits** by schools to reaching **864 children**.
- **21 Trunk hire programs** – reaching an estimate of **1,420 children**.



School Holiday Program

Our School Holiday Programs are designed to entertain the young and young at heart! **328 students** participated in the school holiday programs offered over the 12-month period.

2021 Winter School Holiday Program

Tropical Print Making Workshop

Inspired by the 'Reef Productions: migrants, makers and merchandise', Temporary Gallery exhibition. This fun workshop delighted 5–12 year-olds with a range of simple print making techniques.

Tote-Ally Awesome Screen Printing

Local screen printer, Marnie Awram, assisted older children to design their own Cairns inspired image which was screen printed onto a personal tote bag.

Naidoc Week Activity Pack

NAIDOC Week was celebrated at the Society by offering children an opportunity to learn First Nations peoples culture, history and stories.

2021 September School Holidays

Big Scale Art

Inspired by the temporary exhibition and the methods used by Percy Tresize to record Aboriginal rock art from the Cape York region.

Shrink Craft

Discovering the fun and magic of shrink craft, by creating a tropical miniature keepsake!

2021–22 Festive Holiday Break

Merry and Bright Christmas workshop

Children got to make their own colourful decorations with a fun FNQ twist!

DIY Time Capsules

To herald the New Year, children got crafty and made their own time capsules full of memories to look back on in years to come.

Ongoing Museum and Temporary Gallery activities

Kids Audio Guide: Who's Up for an Adventure?

BYO device and earphones and get ready for lots of fun and laughs along the way.

Activity Super Sleuths

Our schools program is embedded in our families, and children can choose from a selection of family friendly activity trails and super sleuths.

Colouring in Competition

Children visiting the Museum can create their own masterpieces on the child friendly table on the verandah.

Adult Learning

Despite Covid-19 restrictions, the Society was able to offer.

- **3 “Meet the Curator”** tour talks aligned with Temporary Gallery openings.
- **1 bookable session** on “How to Research History”.
- **1 intern placement** with a student from University of South Australia.
- **2 partnering opportunities** with local community Curator Narelle Nicolls for her project ‘Lugger Bort’ – Lugger Boats of north Queensland and the men and families associated with them.
- **1 partnering day assessment** of the Melanesian collection with expert Joan Winter, curator of Sihot’e Nioge – When Skirts Become Artworks.
- **10 public lectures** through our Public Lecture Series.

Public Lectures Series

From July 2021 – June 2022 the community enjoyed 10 public lectures at the Cairns Historical Society and Museum. Numbers increased as Covid-19 restrictions eased across the north. Papers delivered include:

‘Walter (Catch ‘em Alive) Schridde’

By Linda Farnes

‘Coffee on George Peats Farm?’

By Rob Grace

‘Captain Austin, Sergeant Barnett, and birds on Mt Bartle Frere, 1945’

By Elinor C. Scambler and A. Frank Austin Jnr

‘The Clohesy River Brickworks’

By Dawn May

‘Herberton’s Chinese Temple’

By Duncan Ray

‘The Puzzle of Placement – A Survey of the First Generation Cemeteries in the Atherton Area’

By Carole Hardingham

‘A Man Before His Time: G H Griffiths’

By Meg Trimble

‘The men who served during times of conflict Gordonvale War Memorial’

By Pauline O’Keeffe

‘Edmund Morey, the first Police Magistrate in Cairns and Port Douglas’

By Noel Weare

‘Chinese Families in North Queensland’

By Dr Sandi Robb



Our visitor Satisfaction

Throughout 2021–22 the Cairns Museum has worked hard to attract local, interstate and international visitors through its doors as Cairns has opened up with the rest of the state and world, post-Covid. With tourists itching to stretch their legs and experience something new, the Cairns Museum has consistently met the challenge of exciting our visitors with Temporary Gallery exhibitions, School Holiday Programs and School Trailer excursions.

OUR VISITORS SATISFACTION

TRIPADVISOR ★★★★★

"A small but interesting museum well worth a visit. It details the history of Cairns and the surrounding region and is based in a lovely old building. The volunteers there are extremely knowledgeable. Tony showed me round which added to the experience. –5 stars"

David W.

"Excellent place to learn a bit about Cairns I wouldn't have known! Dee, John and Tony were super insightful! Highly recommend! –5 stars"

Anthony

"The three - level museum is beautifully organised, with ample artefacts, photos and descriptive text to bring various areas of settlement to life. The section on cane-cutting is interesting and adds a great deal of authenticity to the early Australian play about canecutters - Summer of the Seventeenth Doll. Staff are extremely friendly and helpful. –5 stars"

BrissieJim

OUR VISITORS SATISFACTION

GOOGLE STARS ★★★★★

"Excellent! The staff were so friendly and helpful. They engaged our 9 year old brilliantly and were very kind about her artwork! –5 stars"

Laura Prior

"Great place to learn the history of Cairns. Kids enjoyed doing the Super Sleuth Trail as they went through the museum. –4 stars"

Livia Chamberlain

"Exhibits were interesting; I appreciated the apparent care in involving Gimuy-walubarra yidi in displays. –5 stars"

Christopher Sharp

Our digital presence

Some of the highlights are:

- Best of Queensland Experiences Website Award by Tourism and Events Queensland 2022 Assessment.
- Identified as Best of Queensland Experience with consistent delivery of an exceptional experience.
- Active and engaging social media presence on Facebook and Instagram.
- We are in the 36% of TNQ operators who have an active and engaging social media presence, and are in the 46% of QLD operators who have an active and engaging social media presence.

SOCIAL MEDIA

OVERVIEW (4 CHANNELS)	TOTAL FOR 2021–22
Impressions	368,806
Reach	249,396
Engagements	4,133
Link clicks	1,698
Total number of followers	5,870

WEBSITE

OVERVIEW	TOTAL FOR 2021–22
Visitors	20,808
Page views	56,243
TOP 5 PAGES	FOR 2021–22*
Visit	4,381
Exhibitions	1,882
Book Now	1,164
Summer School Holiday Program	1,038
Kids and Families	977

*excludes homepage



Grants & Sponsorship



Over the 2021–22 year, a number of grants were applied for as well as other fundraising avenues explored including Corporate Sponsorship and Patronage.

All three areas of financial supplement remain a crucial aspect of our business model to ensure continuity of Museum operations and care for our significant Collection. Securing additional financial resources for any organisation remains difficult in an environment when everyone is competing for the same pool of money. However, we have been successful in securing a number of grants over the year, and benefited from a substantial sponsor partnership with Ports North.

Grant \$ Applied for	\$58,662k
Grant \$ Received	\$13,662 + 1 x in process

- Australian Council for the Arts – Digital Strategist in Residence: Access to Specialist.
- 21-CTA Experience Initiative QLD: Partnership opportunity – \$10,000.
- RADF Grant: Concept Development Partnership Opportunity – \$9,762.
- AmaGA Conference support – Successful \$1,000.
- AMAGA Chart Grant: Professional Marketing photography CHS&M – Successful \$2,900.
- Gambling Community Benefit Fund: for Publishing and Equipment – \$35,000.

Sponsorship

\$5,000pa over 2 years **\$10,000 total** – Ports North for Museum Trailer activities.

This year the Cairns Historical Society also introduced a Patron Kit for the community to have an opportunity to make a genuine contribution to the research, collection, preservation and interpretation of Cairns and FNQ history.

We are delighted to announce that three patrons have come forward since its inception and we thank them all for their kind generosity.

Patron Donations	\$7,500
1 x Gold: for amounts	\$3,000 + plus
1 x Silver: for amounts	\$1,500–\$2,999
1 x Bronze: for amounts	\$750–\$1,499

Our Priorities 2022–23

- Undertake Spatial Renewal in Collections Store for Collection growth.
- Increase digital capabilities through investment in equipment.
- Continue to develop a dynamic Temporary Exhibition schedule using the skills of our volunteers and showcasing our significant Collection.
- Explore and develop Adult Learning opportunities
- Develop and align a clear pathway for growth through Five Strategic Goals objectives which underpin the activities of the Society: Tropical Collections, Digital Gateways, Engagement and Learning, Governance and Growth, and Development.
- Maintain core budget expectations in CRC Resource and Performance Agreement and explore alternative financial growth areas through grants, sponsorship and patron donations.

We're ready to meet this challenge!



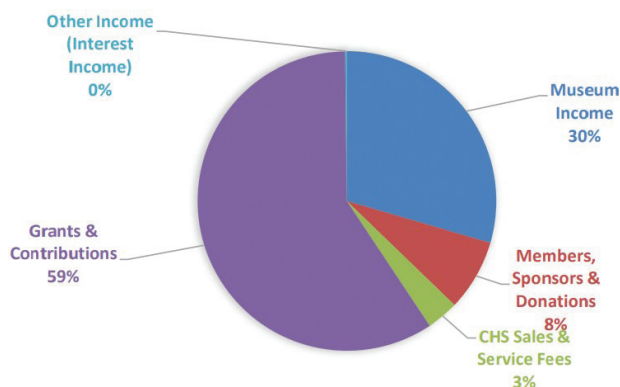
Financials

This financial summary provides an overview of the Society’s financial performance and position for 2021–22. A more detailed analysis is provided in the audited financial statements included in the appendices in the web version of this annual report.

Income

For the 2022 financial year, an overall decrease in income of \$34,667 (-6.16%) from the previous year was recorded. Despite increases in Museum Income and Memberships, Sponsors and Donations revenue, this decrease is primarily due to the Covid-19 assistance received in the 2021 financial year, but not in the 2022 financial year.

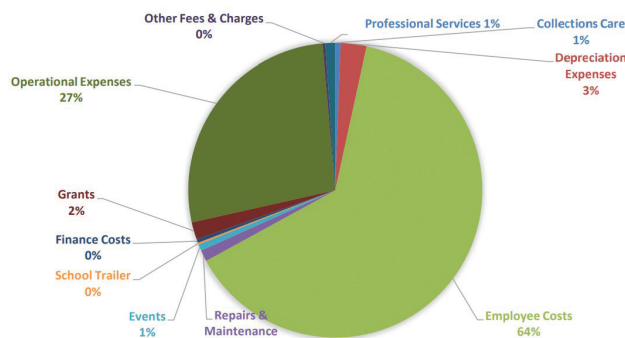
Income



Expenses

For the 2022 financial year, an increase in expenses of \$28,932 (+4.45%) from the previous year was recorded. This increase is due to increases in both employee and operational costs.

Expenses



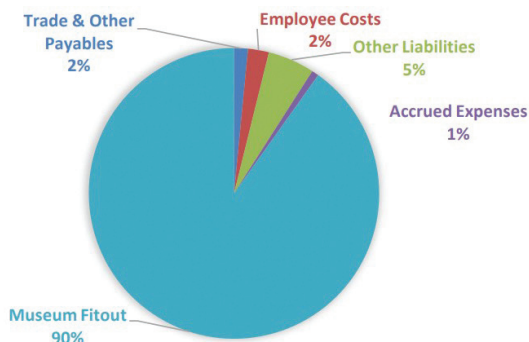
Assets

As at 30 June 2022, total assets were valued at \$2.15 million, which amounted to a decrease of approximately \$154,000 (-6.69%) from the previous year. This movement was primarily due to an increase in current assets (cash) held.

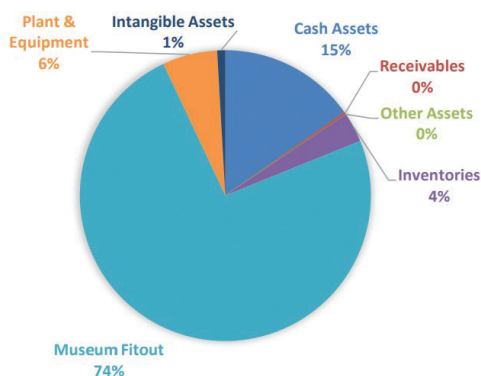
Liabilities

As at 30 June 2022, total liabilities were valued at \$1.78 million, a decrease of approximately \$3,000 (-0.17%) from the previous year. This movement is primarily due to liability accounts remaining in a similar position to last year.

Liabilities



Assets





THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

The Cairns Historical Society could not exist
without their generous support.



cairnsmuseum.org.au