

Operational Framework

This document is the second of four documents provided as pre-reading material to stakeholders prior to Phase 2 consultation.

Geographical Boundaries of the Designated Regional Area

Phase 2 consultation is seeking feedback on the geographical areas that could be included in a state-led Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) to form the Designated Regional Area.

The Australian Government uses two categories to designate areas as regional for migration purposes, enabling them to access regional migration incentives. Category 1 locations such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane areas are excluded by default. In Queensland, the locations that can currently access regional migration incentives are:

- **Category 2 Cities and Major Regional Centres**, including postcodes in the Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay-South, Moreton Bay-North, Ipswich, Logan-Beaudesert, Gold Coast and Brisbane-South areas.¹
- **Category 3 Regional Centres and Other Regional Areas**, including some postcodes in the Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay-North, Ipswich, Logan-Beaudesert, Toowoomba, and Brisbane-East areas.²

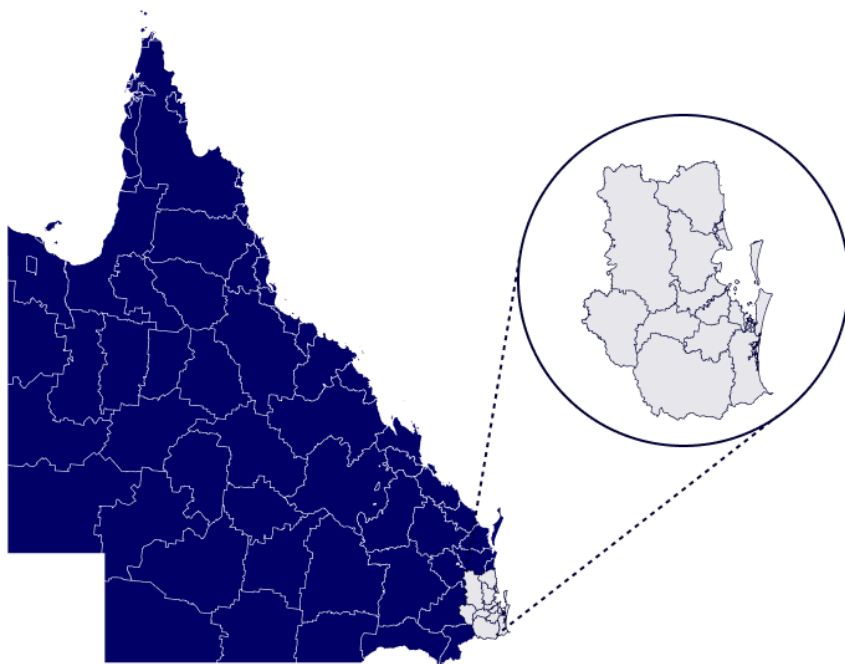
However, these categories are currently under review by the Australian Government, with the Commonwealth acknowledging that they do not always reflect the unique circumstances of regions and can contribute to inter-regional competition for migrant workers.

This creates an opportunity for Queensland to propose a separate, state-specific definition that better aligns with the economic conditions and workforce shortages experienced across regional Queensland.

Feedback is requested on the regions that should be excluded. This could include the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Brisbane, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Logan, Moreton Bay, Noosa, Redland, Scenic Rim, Somerset, Sunshine Coast (see Figure 1).

It could also exclude Norfolk Island as the Queensland Government continues to engage with the Australian Government on appropriate migration arrangements for Norfolk Island.

Figure 1. Proposed Designated Regional Area (blue) and LGAs that feedback is sought for inclusion or exclusion (grey)



¹ Postcodes 4019 to 4022, 4025, 4037, 4074, 4076 to 4078, 4207 to 4275, 4300 to 4301, 4303 to 4305, 4500 to 4506, 4508 to 4512, 4514 to 4516, 4517 to 4519, 4521, 4550 to 4551, 4553 to 4562, 4564 to 4569 and 4571 to 4575.

² Postcodes 4124, 4125, 4133, 4183 to 4184, 4280 to 4287, 4306 to 4498, 4507, 4552, 4563, 4570 and 4580 to 4895.

Service delivery models

DAMAs are administered by a Designated Area Representative (DAR), whose responsibilities are set out in the Head Agreement. These include:

- working collaboratively with the Australian Government
- monitoring the labour market
- managing the endorsement process
- supporting employers and visa holders
- reporting and evaluation.

There are various delivery models that could be implemented to administer a state-led DAMA. These have been summarised in three options as outlined below. Each option allows for the opportunity to provide targeted engagement with different regions within the DAMA. Examples of potential regional breakdowns are provided in the next section. These options have been developed for the purposes of consultation to gather views and information only. They do not reflect Queensland Government policy and do not indicate a Queensland Government position.

Option 1 – State-led with regional partners

Under this approach, regional organisations could be contracted to deliver an extensive range of services, supported by a central administrative hub, operated by the Queensland Government.

This model relies on a local organisation's existing, regular, and incidental local engagement activity and knowledge to expedite employer vetting. Local relationships underpin the facilitation of settlement services and employer and worker support.

Regional bodies would be contracted to:

- promote the DAMA across their region
- educate local government, businesses and industry about using the skilled migration system to fill workforce shortages
- liaise and educate the local community about sponsored migration
- advise and support employers through the DAMA endorsement and labour agreement request process
- coordinate local settlement services
- provide ongoing "pastoral" support of employers and sponsored workers
- monitor local labour market and provide intelligence to DAR
- recommend employers for endorsement to DAR.

Considerations for such an arrangement may include whether the organisation should be:

- not-for-profit or for-profit
- membership based or not
- a single organisation or consortia
- currently providing services across the preferred subregion (or have the capacity to upscale).

The central administrative hub would be responsible for:

- liaising and negotiating with the Australian Government
- reporting and evaluation
- managing contracts and capacity building of regional agents
- establishing and overseeing governance and compliance
- developing and implementing processes and systems
- supporting regional attraction strategies
- conducting skills assessment
- endorsing employers.

Option 2 – State-led and regionally delivered

This option maintains central oversight, but regional services are delivered through Queensland Government employed engagement officers based in existing state government regional facilities. State engagement officers would be responsible for:

- promoting the DAMA across their region
- educating local government, businesses and industry about using the skilled migration system to fill workforce shortages
- liaising with the local community
- advising employers about the DAMA endorsement and labour agreement request process
- coordinating local settlement services and providing basic support to employers and sponsored workers
- monitoring the local labour market
- endorsing employers.

The central administrative hub, operated by the Queensland Government, would have similar responsibilities as those in Option 1 (except for contract management) but would provide additional administrative and endorsement support, particularly to those state engagement officers overseeing larger regions.

Considerations for this model include:

- appropriate location of state engagement officers
- engagement methods and schedules.

Option 3 – State-led and centrally delivered

This option centralises all functions, most likely in Brisbane, and delivers only core DAMA services without a permanent regional presence. A team of Brisbane-based Queensland Government officers would be responsible for:

- liaising and negotiating with the Australian Government
- reporting and evaluation
- developing and implementing processes and systems
- promoting DAMA across the Designated Regional Area
- educating and advising employers about sponsored migration and the DAMA
- basic settlement services, leveraging existing regional and state resources
- skills assessment
- employer endorsement.

Regional engagement would occur through scheduled visits of a minimum two trips per region annually, supplemented by insights from existing state engagement mechanisms.

Sub-regional breakdown of the Designated Regional Area

Queensland is characterised by a large metropolitan labour market in the south-east, alongside a network of coastal and inland city-scale hubs that support surrounding rural and remote communities. Workforce needs differ across these areas, reflecting local industries, population, and access to services.

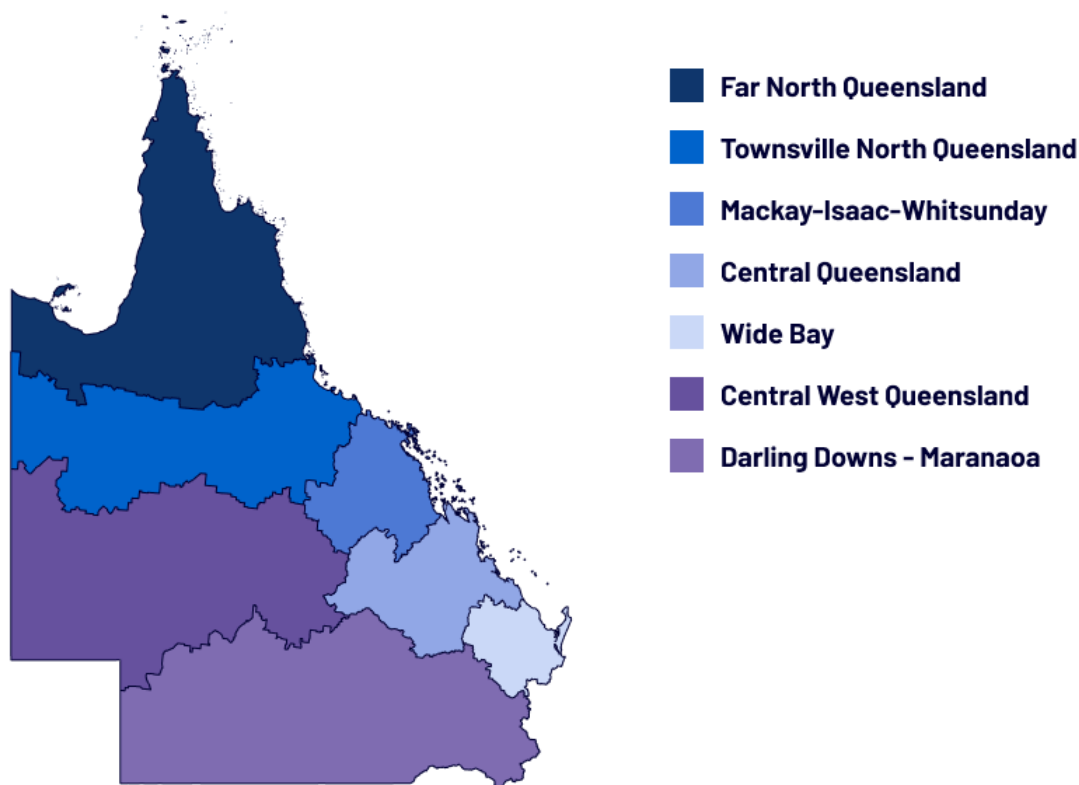
During Phase 1 consultation, stakeholders emphasised the importance of a state-led DAMA responding to these differences. Stakeholders also noted that regions are competing with major cities and each other for the same workers, which can make attraction and retention more challenging. Breaking the Designated Regional Area into subregions enables stakeholders to propose occupations and concessions for the Designated Regional Area as a whole, or to meet the needs of discrete areas.

Ideally, approaches to breaking the Designated Regional Area into subregions should align with how people live and work, including existing economic, social, and service connections. At the same time, areas should be sufficiently broad to avoid unnecessary administrative complexity, while still enabling the DAMA to respond effectively and equitably to local and regional workforce pressures.

Based on the Designated Regional Area described earlier, example maps and descriptions of possible regional breakdowns are provided to gather views and information only. These are not Queensland Government policy and do not indicate a Queensland Government position. Feedback from stakeholders is sought to develop effective subregions for a state-led DAMA.

Example 1 – Seven subregions

This example retains the regions covered by the current regionally led DAMAs (with some additions to Far North Queensland). In this example, the seven subregions have a median of 20,018 registered businesses, with a difference of 32,081 between the largest and smallest subregions.

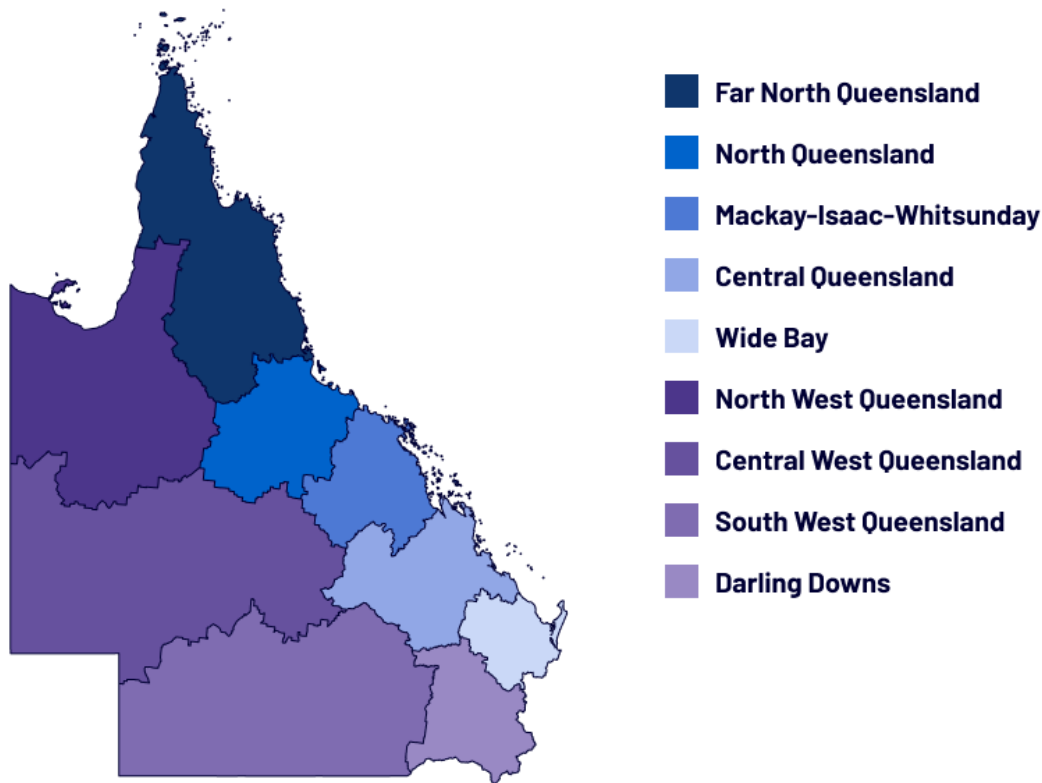


Region	Local Government Areas	Size	Registered businesses (June 2025)
Far North Queensland DAMA region extended	Burke, Carpentaria, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook, Croydon, Doomadgee, Douglas, Etheridge, Mareeba, Mornington, Northern Peninsula Area, Tablelands, Torres, Weipa + Aurukun, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Napranum, Pormpuraaw, Torres Strait Island, Wujal Wujal, Yarrabah	379,093.1 km ²	26,625
Townsville North Queensland DAMA region	Burdekin, Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Flinders, Hinchinbrook, McKinlay, Mount Isa, Richmond, Townsville + Palm Island	280,240.0 km ²	20,018
Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday	Mackay, Isaac, Whitsunday	90,140.2 km ²	17,547
Central Queensland	Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Boulia, Diamantina, Longreach, Winton	117,588.0 km ²	19,616
Wide Bay	Bundaberg, Cherbourg, Fraser Coast, Gympie, North Burnett, South Burnett	48,502.7 km ²	25,098
Central West Queensland	Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Boulia, Diamantina, Longreach, Winton	386,296.6 km ²	2,412

Darling-Downs Maranoa	Balonne, Bulloo, Goondiwindi, Maranoa, Murweh, Paroo, Quilpie, Southern Downs, Toowoomba, Western Downs	396,526.6 km ²	34,493
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Example 2 – Nine subregions

This example reduces the size of some of the larger regions in Example 1. In this example, the nine subregions have a median of 18,103 registered businesses, with a difference of 27,521 between the largest and smallest subregions.

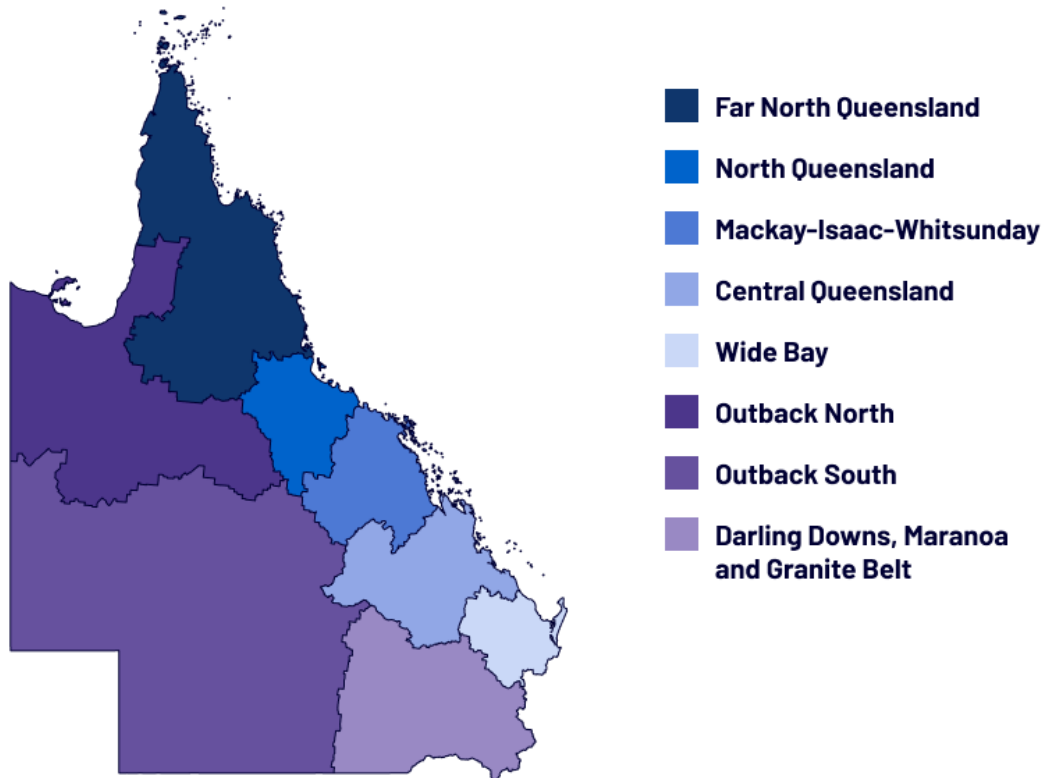


Region	Local Government Areas	Size	Registered businesses (June 2025)
Far North Queensland	Aurukun, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook, Douglas, Etheridge, Hopevale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Mareeba, Napranum, Northern Peninsula Area, Pormpuraaw, Tablelands, Torres, Torres Strait Island, Weipa Town Authority, Wujal Wujal, Yarrabah	242,717.6 km ²	26,328
North Queensland	Burdekin, Charters Towers, Flinders, Hinchinbrook, Palm Island, Townsville	121,236.0 km ²	18,103
Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday	Mackay, Isaac, Whitsunday	90,140.2 km ²	17,547
Central Queensland	Banana, Central Highlands, Gladstone, Livingstone, Rockhampton, Woorabinda	117,588.0 km ²	19,616
Wide Bay	Bundaberg, Cherbourg, Fraser Coast, Gympie, North Burnett, South Burnett	48,502.7 km ²	25,098
North West Queensland	Burke, Carpentaria, Cloncurry, Croydon, Doomadgee, McKinlay, Mornington, Mount Isa, Richmond	295,379.5 km ²	2,212
Central West Queensland	Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Boulia, Diamantina, Longreach, Winton	386,296.6 km ²	2,412

South West Queensland	Balonne, Bulloo, Maranoa, Murweh, Paroo, Quilpie	319,274.8 km ²	11,689
Darling Downs	Goondiwindi, Southern Downs, Toowoomba, Western Downs	77,251.9 km ²	29,733

Example 3 – Eight subregions

This example is based on Australian Bureau of Statistics SA3 regions. In this example, the eight subregions have a median of 18,670 registered businesses, with a difference of 30,759 between the largest and smallest subregions.

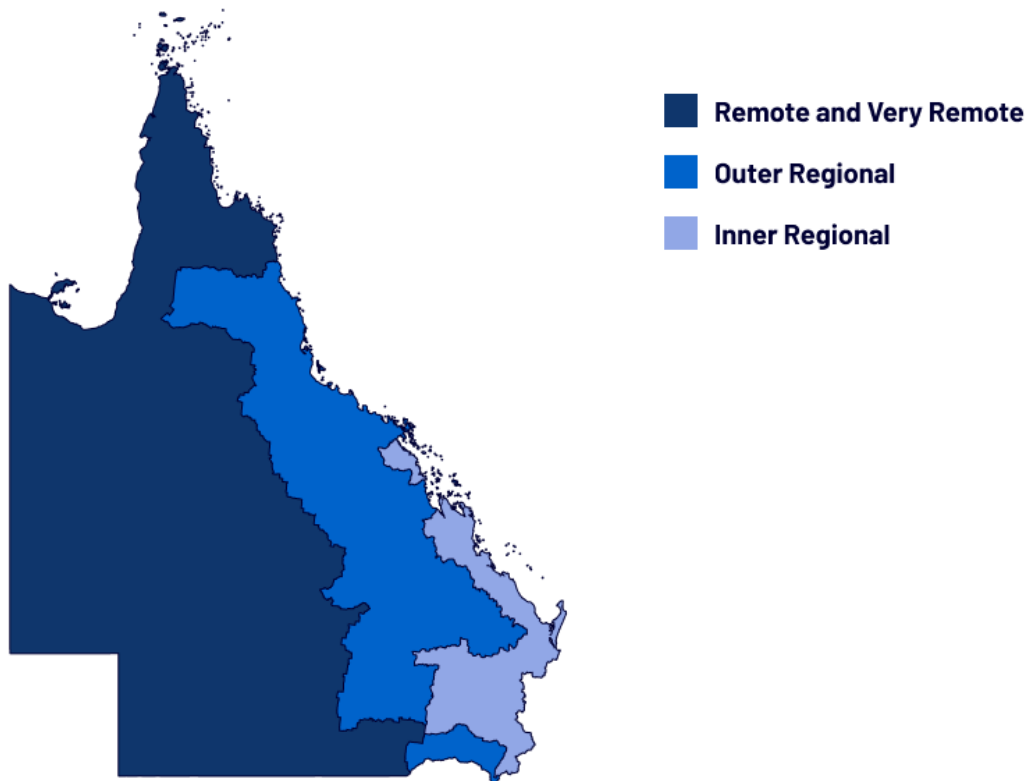


Region	Local Government Areas	Size	Registered businesses (June 2025)
Far North Queensland	Aurukun, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook, Croydon, Douglas, Etheridge, Hopevale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Mareeba, Napranum, Northern Peninsula Area, Pormpuraaw, Tablelands, Torres, Torres Strait Island, Weipa Town Authority, Wujal Wujal, Yarrabah	272,215.5 km ²	26,366
North Queensland	Burdekin, Charters Towers, Hinchinbrook, Palm Island, Townsville	80,036.1 km ²	17,723
Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday	Mackay, Isaac, Whitsunday	90,140.2 km ²	17,547
Central Queensland	Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Boulia, Diamantina, Longreach, Winton	117,588.0 km ²	19,616
Wide Bay	Bundaberg, Cherbourg, Fraser Coast, Gympie, North Burnett, South Burnett	48,502.7 km ²	25,098
Outback North	Burke, Carpentaria, Cloncurry, Doomadgee, Flinders, McKinlay, Mount Isa, Mornington, Richmond	307,081.5 km ²	2,554

Outback South	Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Boulia, Bulloo, Diamantina, Longreach, Murweh, Paroo, Quilpie, Winton	625,216.1 km ²	3,284
Darling Downs, Maranoa, and Granite Belt	Balonne, Goondiwindi, Maranoa, Southern Downs, Toowoomba, Western Downs	167,075.3 km ²	33,313

Example 4 – Three subregions

This example is based on Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness classifications. In this example, the number of registered businesses in each region falls as the size of the region increases, somewhat counterbalancing the discrepancies between each region in terms of area.



Region	Local Government Areas	Size	Registered businesses (June 2025)
Inner Regional	Bundaberg, Cherbourg, Fraser Coast, Gympie, Gladstone, Gympie, Livingstone, Mackay, Rockhampton, South Burnett, Southern Downs, Toowoomba, Western Downs	123,244.7 km ²	75,694
Outer Regional	Banana, Burdekin, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Central Highlands, Charters Towers, Douglas, Goondiwindi, Hinchinbrook, Isaac, Maranoa, Mareeba, North Burnett, Tablelands, Townsville, Whitsunday, Woorabinda, Yarrabah	422,669.2 km ²	61,47
Remote and Very Remote	Balonne, Barcaldine, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Boulia, Bulloo, Burke, Carpentaria, Cloncurry, Cook, Croydon, Diamantina, Doomadgee, Etheridge, Flinders, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Longreach, Mapoon, McKinlay, Mornington, Mount Isa, Murweh, Napranum, Northern Peninsula Area, Palm island, Paroo, Pormpuraaw, Quilpie, Richmond, Torres, Torres	1,161,941.4 km ²	8,059

	Strait Island, Weipa Town Authority, Winton, Wujal Wujal		
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CONSIDERATIONS:

Geographical coverage of a state-led DAMA

Effective service delivery model

Subregional breakdown of the Designated Regional Area