

Cairns Over Time 1860s – now

Our stories reveal a diverse mix of people, cultures and characters – but with one vital shared experience: the tropical environment. ... discover how the people of Cairns created this vibrant city.



Fill the blanks and translate into your best language. Then cover the English and try to repeat each phrase:

1. A diverse mix of p _____ . _____
2. A diverse mix of cu _____ u _____ . _____
3. One v _____ , shared experience _____
4. The t _____ o _____ l _____ a _____ environment _____
5. This v _____ city. _____

Frontier 1870s – 1910

The lure of gold, timber, land and work brought a diverse mixture of people to the tropics. Most were men. This was the time of a secret war between settlers and Aboriginal people. Cairns was a very small, very remote frontier town. The decision to make Cairns the terminus for the railway guaranteed the city's future.

1. Match the words from the text with a synonym. Write the word from the text next to its meaning below.

lure	timber	diverse	tropics	settlers
remote	guaranteed	frontier	Aboriginal	

- 1. wood _____
- 2. a long way from a city _____
- 3. people who come from other places _____
- 4. the first people to live in a place _____
- 5. promised, 100% _____
- 6. attract _____
- 7. a new town next to nature _____
- 8. many different types _____
- 9. a long way from a town _____

2. Tell me 3 reasons why people first started coming to Cairns from other countries?

3. Why do you think the war between settlers and Aboriginal people was a “secret”?

4. How would a train station “guarantee” Cairns’ future?

Discuss:

Imagine foreign people came to your home and told you (in their language) to go and live somewhere else. What would you do?

Consolidation 1910s – 1945

Cairns was a blue-collar town with plenty of work and strong unions.

There were no decent roads linking Cairns with the rest of Australia.

It was a period of stability and relative prosperity for many, but Cairns was a segregated town, shaped by the vision of “white Australia” set down in the Immigration Restriction Act 1901.

Communities of Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Islander people remained, living in distinctive enclaves. Most Aboriginal people had been forced onto missions or into town camps – essentially treated as outsiders in their own country.

1. Look up key words you don't know and try to get the general meaning of this passage.

2. Match the words from the text with a synonym.

segregated	blue collar	stability	union	immigration restriction
distinctive	decent	period	prosperity	forced

- a group to protect workers conditions _____
- controlling who can enter a country _____
- rich, success _____
- staying the same, not changing _____
- not given a choice _____
- working class _____
- separated _____

3. Summarise the passage by drawing a picture or talking with another student.

4. Discuss:

- a. The White Australia Policy was phased out between the 1950s and 1970s.
Do you think Australians have embraced multiculturalism now?
- b. The Aboriginal people were “treated as outsiders in their own country.” Can you think of people in your country who were also “treated as outsiders” by newcomers?

End of Isolation 1945 – 1980s

The Second World War (1939 – 1945) utterly transformed the city. One third of the population left, fearing invasion. Thousands of soldiers, mainly from the USA stayed in Cairns from 1942 – 1945. In the post war period, immigrants and displaced persons from war-torn Europe began to arrive, and as the “white Australia policy” was eroded, the community once again became diversified. The sugar industry was mechanising and new ventures, such as prawn and marlin fishing were developing. Better roads brought more tourists, developers and business people.

1. True or False

1. During World War 2, Japan bombed Cairns. True / False
2. During World War 2, many Australian soldiers were fighting in Europe & Asia. True / False
3. Half way through the war, American soldiers came to protect people in Cairns. True / False
4. After the war, many people left Australia and moved to Europe. True / False
5. After the war, new businesses and better roads helped Cairns to grow. True / False

2. From 1942 – 1945, thousands of American soldiers lived in Cairns. They introduced many aspects of their own culture to Australia. List 3 that you saw/expect to see in the museum.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

3. Discuss or Draw:

One result of World War 2 was that the White Australia policy “was eroded” and “the community once again became diversified.” How do you think this changed life for people living in Cairns after World War 2? How is a diverse culture both good and bad?

International City 1980s – today

Cairns stepped out onto the world stage in 1984 when the city’s international airport opened.

Tourists streamed in, enticed by the tropical offerings of reef and rainforest. These same natural assets fostered a strong, local environmental consciousness and were recognised across the world with the inclusion of the Great Barrier Reef on the World Heritage List in 1981 followed by the Wet Tropics in 1988.

Widespread air conditioning changed the experience of being in the tropics and re-shaped the city.

Cairns is now an international city, with two university campuses and a cosmopolitan population that continues to grow.

1. What factors helped Cairns become an international city? (Circle the 5 biggest factors in your opinion)

International airport	cyclones	cane toads	greenies
Great Barrier Reef	jellyfish	beautiful beaches	Wet Tropics rainforest
air conditioning	tropical fruit	cute animals	2 universities
friendly people	casino	fishing	crocodiles
Tim Tams	shopping	English	working holiday visa

2. Choose 1 of the factors you circled and explain how and why that factor helped Cairns grow.

3. What factors made you decide to come to Cairns?
