SCHOOL OF ARTS



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Vision Statement

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



Our Mission

- To collect, preserve and share archival documents, images and objects which are significant to the history of Cairns and far north Queensland.
- To curate and manage a leading museum and cultural tourism experience in far north Queensland.
- To recruit, train and enhance the skills and wellbeing of all staff (paid and volunteers).
- To enable far north Queensland history, heritage educational and creative projects with locals and visitors from around the world by providing expertise and a quality and accessible collection.

Cairns Historical Society

The Cairns Historical Society is a community memberbased organisation, created in 1958 by volunteers who shared a vision to collect, protect and make available the north's history to locals and visitors alike.

Since then it has grown into a respected actively collecting repository, which includes the world-class Cairns Museum and Research Centre. The Society and Museum have three main areas of operation which underpin our activities: Cairns Museum, Research Centre including Collection management, and an active Learning Program.

The Cairns Museum offers an opportunity to learn and understand about the region's unique social history which is available through engaging stories, displays, and audio visual installations. Our stories span from pre contact First Nation narratives, to the present times, taking in themes of early settlement, regional growth, the environment and rise of tourism.

The Research Centre meets international standards for scope, quality of records, and collection management practices. Our facility provides accessible and discoverable records over a vast range of archival and image material which is available to members and non-members alike.

The Society prides itself on the quality of experience offered to visitors young and old. Through our guide-assisted Learning Program, and through our popular History on the Move School trailer experience, we have continued to grow and share Cairns' local history with school children around our region.

Three excellent reasons to be proud as an organisation!

President's Report



It has been an exciting as well as inspiring year for the Cairns Historical Society Inc. (the Society) and Cairns Museum thanks to excellent visitor numbers, dedicated staff, volunteer passion and prudent financial management.

It is clear from our figures that the Society has stepped up to meet the challenges of post pandemic traveller expectations. People across the globe are on the move more than ever while national trends show southern visitors travelling north to make new memories. Our figures reflect these trends with 23,506 guests visiting the Cairns Museum last financial year, of which 35% were international, and 32% were national visitors.

Cyclone and flood weather days aside, the Cairns Museum was open 305 days of the year and welcomed a number of passengers from 83 cruise ships. One of the highlights of the cruise ship market was on 16 March 2024, when the Society welcomed 289 passengers from the luxury Italian cruise ship, Costa Delizoisa. It was all hands on deck for staff, volunteers and Board members to ensure a memorable occasion!

One of our strengths for the organisation this year has been a strong focus by the Board, on reflecting on the present and planning for the future. We aim to remain relevant in this digital age, and to attract a contemporary audience to our spaces which promote diversity and inclusivity.

"The Board is committed to grow our Society into the future by providing opportunity for divergent historical narratives to be told no matter how challenging the truth may be."

With the Cairns Sesquicentennial celebration on our doorstep in 2026, and a major gallery renewal in 2028, now is the time for our Society to show leadership in the community. We continue to meet the challenges of Reconciliation and Truth Telling, and I am proud to say one third of our exhibitions in the Ground Floor Gallery highlighted First Nation history.

Membership remains the backbone of our organisation, and we continue to provide benefits to connect our members across our community. New benefits include Members Morning Teas, free school holiday activities and organised outings. I want to thank every member for remaining committed to our great organisation.

I would like to acknowledge and thank every member of the Board, who provide excellent governance to the Cairns Historical Society. I would also like to thank the Cairns Regional Council who financially support the Society through our shared Resource and Performance Agreement and with whom we share custodianship of the past for our future.

A heartfelt thankyou goes to our platinum sponsor MacDonnell's Law for their support, as well as Parisi Foley Law, Cairns Discovery Tours, and the many other patrons, individuals and local businesses who continue to support us.

My utmost appreciation goes to our volunteer members who turn up each and every shift to help keep our doors open, our visitors happy, our donations processed and our collection safe. Without your help, we would not be able to do it!

A final word of thanks goes to Executive Officer Dr Sandi Robb, Accounts Manager Debra Ferguson, and their team of dedicated staff. Through hard work, drive and passion throughout the year, the team has achieved tremendous results. Well done!

Dr Clive Skarott AM, HonDUniv President

Meet the Board



Left to Right: Standing is Debra Fergeson, David Goodman, Dr Nicky Horsfall, Megan Lilly, Dr Sandi Robb. Sitting is Clive Skarott, Dr Jan Wegner, Lyn Warwick.

As the Society moves forward to meet its organisational challenges in the digital century, it remains strong, focused and committed to good organisational governance.

The Historical Society Cairns North Queensland Inc and Cairns Museum is supported by a professional, engaged and dynamic Board of eight members headed up by experienced and well-known President, Dr Clive Skarott. Dr Skarott brings decades of professional knowledge and governance to his position as President as well as in his role as Chair of the Cairns Historical Society's Sesquicentennial C150 Sub Committee 2026.

He is supported by a professional and multi – disciplinary team making the total skills level of the Board extremely high. The current Board member profile includes Chartered Accountant, Archaeologist, Historian, Small Business owner, Industrial Relations, Museum professional, Retired Politician and CEO of Indigenous Partnerships organisation.

The organisation is in safe hands! The Board gratefully acknowledges the support and dedication of the volunteers who contribute to its operations. There were 9 meetings held in the financial year 2023-2024 and one Annual General Meeting.

POSITION	NAME	MEETINGS ATTENDED
President	Dr Clive Skarott	9
Vice-President	Dr Jan Wegner	7
Secretary	Lyn Warwick	5
Treasurer	David Goodman	8
Board Member	Dr Nicky Horsfall	8
Board Member	Megan Lilly	7
Board Member	Fiona Jose	4
Board Member	Ralph Peters (Resignation 16 Jan 2024)	4
Board Member	Karen Oakes	5
Board Member	Dr Jo Wills (Temporary appointment 26 Feb 2024)	3
Executive Officer	Dr Sandi Robb	9
Account Manager	Debra Ferguson	8



Board Member in Profile

Dr Jo Wills

At the ordinary meeting on 26 February 2024, the Society welcomed Dr Jo Wills as temporary Board Member when a vacancy unexpectedly arose in January. Dr Jo Wills is an experienced museum, cultural heritage and community engagement professional based in Cairns. With expertise in governance, collection management, museum best practice, and collection protocols, Dr Wills is a valued addition to the Cairns Historical Society Board.

Our Members

Since 1958, the Cairns Historical Society has been a member based community organisation. Total Membership for the Cairns Historical Society for the year 2023-2024 is **372 members**.

2023-2024 has been a busy year as well as a reflective one, as we consider what our members want from their membership, where we can improve our benefits, and how to attract new members to remain resilient and sustainable well into the future. We recognise that the Society needs to pivot and flex to meet the needs of the 21st Century, and to remain relevant in a time when everything is at our fingertips.

To continue to meet community needs and member expectations our benefits are constantly being improved. Throughout 2023-2024 initiatives have included: free school holiday programs for local families, Meet and Memories Morning Tea for older members, field trips to places of interest around Cairns, and a review of corporate memberships.

Corporate Memberships provides an opportunity for local businesses to engage with a local not-for-profit organisation and meet their corporate social responsibility policies, while taking advantage of the skills in our Research Centre for information, photographs or advice relating to the business's history.

"We thank all of our members for their continued and unwavering support throughout the year."





Membership Benefits

Ordinary Member Benefits

- 1. Twelve-month free entry to the Cairns Museum
- 2. Twelve-month free access to the Research Centre
- **3.** VIP invitations to all CHS&M exhibitions, talks and functions
- 4. Exclusive invitation to CHS Social Group
- **5.** Early-bird reservations for events and workshops
- 6. Access to Public Lecture Series, 10 annually
- 7. Monthly Bulletins of local history
- 8. Bi-monthly newsletters
- 9. Members only excursions
- 10. Free children's activities

Corporate Membership Benefit

- 1. All ordinary member benefits, plus
- **2.** Fee waiver for Research Centre fees (to the value of \$99
- 3. Priority research by agreement
- 4. Free entry to the Cairns Museum for four (identified)
- **5.** Free access to the Research Centre and assisted research
- 6. Annual Report

Our Working Environment

The Cairns Historical Society operates with a small but dynamic team of staff who are highly committed to the goals of the organisation: to provide a first rate museum experience for visitors; offer exciting exhibitions; provide curriculum aligned learning opportunities for children, as well as provide a safe and convivial workplace for employees and volunteers alike.

With an eye firmly on future projects, far reaching strategic planning is created through the vision of Executive Officer and Collections Manager, Dr Sandi Robb. She is supported through prudent fiscal management by Debra Ferguson (Accounts Manager, and Marketing and Sales) and together they are assisted by Shelley Cai (Front of House Coordinator), Dr Sabine Mercer (Volunteer and WHS Co-ordinator), Gabrielle North (Collections Officer), and Dr Daniela Vavrova (Curator).

The Society is lucky to have a dedicated group of 47 volunteers who provide their time and skills across the Cairns Historical Society and Museum to assist staff in the delivery of several operational areas. As we reflect on the year's achievements and look for ways the organisation can support its volunteers better, we have introduced increased flexibility for better work life balance, broadened intake to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, honoured our volunteers during Volunteer Week, as well as nominated two volunteers for FNQ Volunteer of the Year Award 2024.

"Just a quick email to thank M. for being our guide yesterday. We visited as part of the Cairns Discovery Tour...M. really brought the story to life for us. So knowledgeable and passionate about the history. We loved our visit, the volunteers are all so friendly and welcoming."

Volunteer Contributions

2907 shifts

14,535 volunteer hours

5 hours average shift length

\$337, 648 saved in wages at the minimum wage

Sharing the Past

Historical Societies and Museums across Australia share archives, objects and images with other repositories which do not meet their Collection Policy or are duplicate items in their collection. In continuing this well-established practice, the Society has donated material from our collection to the following organisations.

- · Australian War Memorial, Canberra
- Geelong Historical Society, Victoria
- Royal Historical Society of Queensland
- Townsville City Libraries
- · Far north Queensland Aviation Museum
- · Mulgrave Settler Museum
- · Cardwell and District Historical Society
- · Innisfail Historical Society

"I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of the silk concert program for the NSW Flood Relief Fund, held at the Mechanics' Institute, Geelong, in 1867. Silk concert/theatre programs were published in Geelong from the 1840s but so few survive! We will very happily add this artefact to our collection.

Thank you for thinking of us."

Hon. Sec. Geelong Historical Society



Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers!

Our Operating Environment

Historical Societies and Museums around the world understand the importance of collecting and preserving social memory. The Cairns Historical Society is no different. We have grown from humble beginnings into a world class organisation, and have spent 2023-2024 celebrating 65 years of achievements.

Our Research Centre has been busy answering queries and helping visitors. Four volunteer teams have spent the year collecting, cataloguing and managing our expanding collection, while the team at Edmonton have worked hard to provide accessibility for our larger items.

We have provided a dynamic exhibition program with three first class exhibitions, and met our strategic objectives to partner with community groups, host travelling exhibitions, and support First Nations. Exhibitions have been accompanied by several curatorial talks, as part of the Public Lecture Series organised by the Research Centre.

The Cairns Museum has enjoyed strong overseas and local visitation numbers and we have welcomed the return of the Japanese and European market.

We have experienced an increase in group bookings for English Learning students, and have introduced a new booking platform to assist us to manage this area of growth. Our retail space has received a fresh new look as we have realigned our focus to support locally made products and sustainable gifts unique to the Cairns Museum.

We excel at stimulating the imagination and telling local stories. Our guides have welcomed a number of large group bookings of local and interstate students into the Museum, while the History on the Move team have enthralled children at the region's primary schools.

The Society is committed to encouraging the next generation into museum, archive and tourism careers. Five local Year 10 students have undertaken our work experience program over the year.

Community and membership is the core of our values. We are midway through creating a new space, the Discovery Centre. We aim to partner with diverse cultural groups, to enable growth in our product such as Memory Boxes for Dementia sufferers, and to develop Hands on History, a secondary school program.

As one door closes another one opens. We are excited to announce 2024-2025 as the beginning of another yearlong celebration to celebrate 45 years of the official opening of the Cairns Museum. We hope to see you there!



Our Collection & Research Centre

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.their family past, as well as enquire about general regional history relating to their history.

YEAR	VISITORS	REQUESTS
2023-2024	226	222
2023-2024	217	393
2021-2022	214	381
2020-2021	258	397
2019-2020	240	357
2018-2019	306	397

The Collection

40,968

47,062

Archival items

Photographs

23,908

6322

Archival items digitised

Objects

As custodian of far north Queensland's social history for future generations, the Society is fully cognisant of the great need to protect our community assets for now and the future. Collection and Museum Management around Australia are adapting to meet an increase in extreme weather events.

Here in far north Queensland we have experienced a long - wet season, cyclone and flooding throughout 2023-2024. The Society is committed to working with all cultural stakeholders and Cairns Regional Council (CRC) for the safe protection of our shared community assets.

The Research Centre has four volunteer teams with 22 volunteers who work across the Research Centre: Archives, Images and Collection Care. 3855 requests for information were serviced in an eight-year period since 2016-2017. That is 1.3 requests answered every week for the last eight years!

The Research Centre is a leading facility dedicated to the collection, preservation, conservation, cataloguing and care of all of the Society's archival, photographic and object collection. It has two areas: a well-equipped public Research Room and the Centre itself, where expert collection management takes place to international standards. All enquiries are answered in an expert and timely manner with researchers able to access assistance and records via our online portal, in person, via email or by telephone.



Testimonials

Thank you so much for your wonderful help.

From W. Green via email 14 July 2023

Thank you so much to you and your colleague for your valuable help with my research on dugongs. I very much enjoyed my visit to the Cairns Historical Society Archives and to the Cairns Museum.

Dr Mark Jonathan Beech, Natural History Museum Abu Dhabi (NHMAD) and Archaeology Unit Head (Al Dhafra & Abu Dhabi) via email 10 August 2023

Just writing to let you know the Pat O'Shane REBEL WITH A CAUSE doco series starts 9pm this Sunday night on NITV and SBS. ... Thank-you for your collaboration!!

C., J., and the team at SBS via email 29 Sep 2023

Thank you once again for all your trouble in helping me to find such important family history.

L. Keirle via email 8 February 2024

Our Museum

23,506 visitors! We are thrilled to say we have enjoyed another busy year at the Cairns Museum. With 2.6 % increase in visitor numbers to the Cairns Museum, our guides and hosts have been busy providing a warm reception to all who have entered our door.

Our five museum galleries offer the visitor a range of options for all visitors. Each level and all displays in the Museum are accessible by an internal lift; display labels are placed to be accessible for reading, and audio equipment is intuitive to handle, while a tactile writing system indicates doors and amenities.

YEAR	MUSEUM VISITORS
2023-2024	23,506
2022-2023	22,579
2021-2022	23,733
2020-2021	10,792
2019-2020	12,578
2018-2019	17,856

Testimonials

"Activity sheets are wonderful for my children!! Thank you" – Coleen and Rick from Nevada, USA.

"Very nice Museum. It exhibits the transformation of Cairns in last 200 years. Ultimate place to preserve Cultural Heritage of Cairns Queensland." – Gangar – Delhi, India.

"Liked the colorings the most – espeshaly the stamps ♥"

- Jade - a kid.

"Loved the exhibits about locals!!" - Tasmania, Australia

"A wonderful experience. Been to museums in Europe, Southeast Asia but this was one of the best. Spent nearly 5 hours – thank you" Vernon – Goa, India

Ground Floor Gallery Program

The Ground Floor Gallery at the Cairns Museum offers an intimate yet dynamic exhibition space in the heart of Cairns.

July - October

JCU 50 Treasures Revisited — North Queensland's rare treasures from James Cook University's Special Collection.

November - February

Still Life Comes Alive — A partnership project between Cairns Historical Society and Cairns Art Society.

March - June

Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country — The intersection for Aboriginal and colonial settlement. Reimagining the deep history of country and connections within of the Channel Country.





Outreach Partnership

The Cairns Historical Society has remained committed to taking our region's rich history and stories to audiences who otherwise may not be able to visit the city gallery location.

By partnering with the Cairns Regional Council Libraries at Earlville and Manunda the Society has extended our exhibition program into the community.

- Growing up in the Tropics
- Manunda Street Names
- · Besties or Beasties

We value add our offerings in the Cairns Museum through activities such as : Audio Guides; Colouring-In Competitions; Super Sleuths; and child-focused Ground Floor Gallery activities.



Our Engagement & Learning

The Cairns Historical Society and Cairns Museum prides itself on providing quality engagement and learning opportunities for young and old. Student product is aligned to current curriculum V.9 which assists educators to connect with local content.

The Society aims to foster knowledge of the past, stimulate intergenerational conversation in the present, and promote reflectivity on historical settlement events for the future: crucial elements for reconciliation and truth telling.

School Holiday Program

Spring

Gift of Spring

Children crafted paper flowers while learning about local flora.

Make your Mark

Children created personal stamps with wax and special carving tools! Aligned to the Ground Floor Gallery exhibition.

Festive Season

A Very Vintage Christmas

Creative dioramas to colour in with Santa Claus and Mrs Claus paper dolls. (Cancelled due to Cyclone Jasper and Regional Flooding).

Happy Sustainable New Year

Recycled materials from events to create a NYE countdown.

Easter

Have you heard of Snail Mail?

Hand drawn postcards to send to family and friends. Aligned to the Ground Floor Gallery exhibition.

Mini Museum Explorers

An exploration of the Museum before playtime with toys from yesteryear.

Winter

Joyful Structures

Children constructing Chickpea Creations as Joyful Structures.

Clickety Clack

Never too old to learn how to Knit!

3,446 students reached

31

school visits reaching 2,059 children **24**

trunk hire programs

40

museum visits by schools, welcoming 1,258 children 23

school holiday programs entertaining 109 children

Public Lectures Series

The community was able to enjoy 11 public lectures held in the meeting room of the CHS&M, covering a broad range local history.

- Women botanical artists in North Queensland By Janine Evans.
- A Stitch in Time: The 1900 Signature Cloth By Sandi Robb in conjunction with Michael Brumby, Glenis Lonie, Michael Creecy and Fran Secombe.
- Parachuting into Love: 503 War Brides
 By Sallyanne Powell.
- Biographies of WWII Queenslanders
 By Lyn Anderson.
- Down through the Ages: the Vallely and Ennis Families By Betty Veivers.
- The Creative Life of Mary Ludlow By Sandi Robb.
- The Girl Who Left: From Croatia to the canefields By Debra Gavranich.
- An Unusual gold chaser: Carl Axel Egerström By Janice Wegner.
- Lost Rails of Cairns: Speaker Marjorie Earl and Anthony Roth.
- Chinaman's Wall or Chinese Whispers?:
 Overshot Dams of Western Queensland
 By Sandi Robb.

Our Visitor Satisfaction

Our Digital Presence

The CHS&M have made improvements to our online offerings and enjoyed strong online performance throughout the year 2023-2024. We have seen an increase in digital engagement across all social media platforms.

The Society is proud to say it has stepped up this year to meet National Accessibility Standards for Webpage content ensuring language is appropriate, easy to navigate, and inclusive in tone.

The CHS&M website now also includes an accessibility plugin for online visitors.



Testimonials

Great little museum in the middle of Cairns. Full of interesting bits and pieces, beautifully presented. The Gift Shop has a good variety of options

- Gypsy Pause

Great range of exhibits all well laid out in a cool and clean environment. Elevator access and ramps throughout for access. A great museum that's well worth a visit

- Simon Neely

A good stop in Cairns to learn a little bit about the local aboriginal tribes, notable people from Cairns, as well as the history of Cairns as a whole. There is a lot to see and learn about

- Kyle Bloom

Our digital presence includes the organisation website, as well as active and engaging social media accounts for both CHS&M, across Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

- · Accessibility Conformance Review completed
- Web Content Accessibility guidelines met
- Installed booking platform for group bookings
- 76,151 total website views
- 99,548 Google My Business profile views
- 1+ million impressions and reach across social media

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS	1070	
Impressions	1,243,491	0
Reach	1,199,705	0
Engagements	19,524	0
Total followers	6,612	•
Link clicks/referrals	310	

WEBSITE VISITORS	55,694	
Page views	76,151	0
Visit	8,723	0
Exhibitions	4,268	0
School holiday	1,994	0
Kids and family	1,864	0
Book now	1,981	

1 Improvement on previous financial year

Our Financial Capability

The Cairns Historical Society remains committed to providing a world class museum and best practice collection repository for far north Queensland.

Our activities are underpinned by measured financial management maintained throughout the year to provide fiscal stability across the Society's objectives, as well as provide a plan for future capital expenditure by agreement with the Cairns Regional Council.

Our Priorities 2024-2025

- Deliver new strategic plan 2025-2030
- Plan, programme and partner for strategic events:
 Cairns Sesquicentennial Celebration 2026
- Commence Gallery Renewal planning in consultation with CRC: est delivery 2028
- Maintain core budget expectations to meet CRC Resource and Performance Agreement
- Select Collection Management System and develop strategy for implementation
- · Grow member benefits for Society members



Grants & Patron Membership

Grants

Over the 2023-2024 year, five grant applications were prepared and applied for, taking in local, State and national Grant opportunities to supplement the operational budget and assist the delivery of organisational objectives.

All Community groups and not-for-profit organisations find it increasingly difficult in these times of austerity, to secure external funds in what is a competitive grant environment.

\$99,747.80 total grant funding applied for

- \$39,805 Gambling Community Benefit, 2023
- \$48,607.20 Creative Australia Grant: Exhibition assistance, 2023
- \$5,000 Smarty Grant: Accessibility Review and upgrade to Website, 2023 – Awarded
- \$1154.60 AMaGA Conference, 2024-2025 FY – Awarded
- \$5183 Ports North Community Investment Fund: Protection for Trailer, 2024-2025 FY – Awarded

The Society is pleased to say it secured a modest grant of \$5,000 assist the organisation to meet Australian Standards for Accessibility resulting in improved messaging and conformity on our website.

Additional Funds:

- \$3,717 Fundraising
- \$7,676Private financial donations

All fundraising goes towards future strategic goals set out in the Strategic Plan 2021-2024.



Patron Membership

The Society has a strategically targeted Patron Membership Program to meet the expectations of our philanthropic community. For their assistance, Patron members enjoy marketing exposure on our website, in our newsletter and in our Annual Report.

Three levels of participation

Gold for amounts \$3,000 plus Silver for amounts \$1,500 - \$2999 Bronze for amount \$750 - \$1,499

Five Strategic Areas Identified

History on the Move – Trailer educational program.

Collection Management System – Saving for new online database to enable global reach.

Discovery Centre – Help develop resource kits for Secondary Students or Dementia affected community members.

C150 Celebration Events Program – Assist the Society to celebrate 2026

Adopt a Shelf – Help the upkeep of our significant collection, one shelf at a time.

Patron Membership Benefit

- 1. All ordinary member benefits, plus
- 2. Business or private logo exposure
- 3. Private tour of areas not accessible to public (Gold Patron)
- 4. Annual Report
- 5. Free entry to the Cairns Museum for four (identified)

"The Society acknowledges and thanks the community, those who have provided in- kind support, and the many anonymous benefactors for their kind generosity throughout the year."

Financials

This is an overview of the Society's financial performance and position for 2023-2024. A more detailed analysis is provided in the audited financial statements included in the appendices in the webavailable version of this Annual Report.

Income

The 2024 financial year saw an increase in an overall income of \$41,434 (5.86%) from the previous year. This increase was primarily due to higher visitor numbers and an increase in CRC Resource and Performance Agreement funding.

Assets

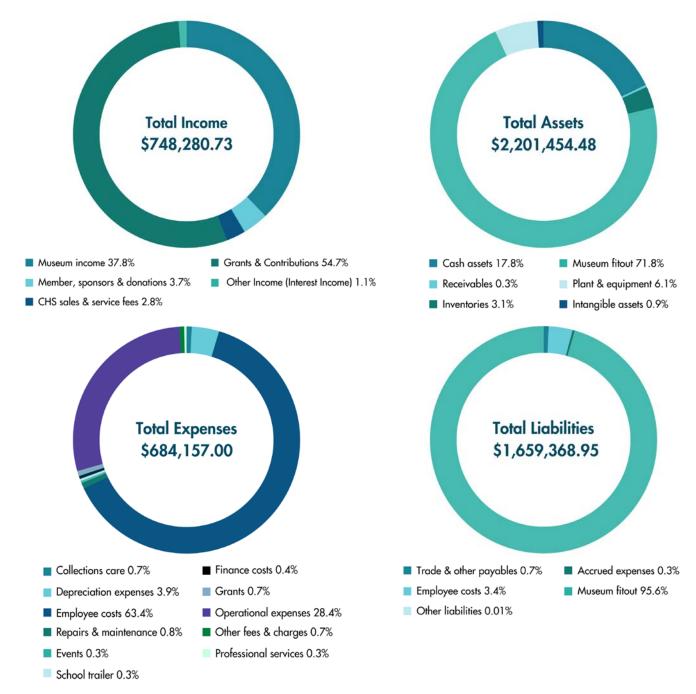
As of 30 June 2024, total assets were valued at \$2.53 million, which amounted to a significant increase of approximately \$395k (18.44%) from the previous year.

Expenses

For the 2024 financial year, an increase in expenses of \$59,280 (9.12%) from the previous year was recorded. This increase is largely due to computer expenses and employee costs.

Liabilities

As of 30 June 2024, total liabilities were valued at \$1.64 million, a small increase of approximately \$9k (0.55%) from the previous year. This movement is due to an increase in employee costs and creditors.





THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

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

MACDONNELLS LAW









cairnsmuseum.org.au