

Evolving city to capitalise on Asia links

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ANALYSIS of the Cairns economy reveals growth beyond tourism and hospitality into an industrial base that's expected to capitalise on the city's proximity to Asian markets.

Australian Industry Group's Shane Rodgers said Cairns was rapidly evolving into a city with a diverse industry base that had the opportunity to become a serious player in the Asia Pacific.

"Ai Group's 10-year analysis shows that, while the total size of the Cairns workforce has grown little over the past decade, percentage growth in some key industries has been well above the national average," he said.

"These industries include mining (8.2 per cent), electricity, gas and water (14.4 per cent), information media and telecommunications (14.3 per

EMPOWERING

The forum is being held from 11am to 1.45pm on Wednesday at the Shangri-La Hotel in Cairns. The forum is free but registration is essential made by contacting vickie.rapkins@aigroup.com.au

cent), and health care and social assistance (5.9 per cent).

Mr Rodgers, in Cairns this week for the Empowering the Regions forum, said all the data pointed to Cairns already evolving from a tourism and lifestyle hub to a deeper and more diverse industrial city with clear areas of expertise.

"On a trend basis, the city's traditional industries remain relatively strong but the Cairns economy is clearly transitioning into a deeper industrial base that will set the city up well for future growth," he said.

"Cairns is far more than a city of reefs, rainforests and

recreation. It has done a great job of taking its natural environment and leveraging that to create a niche industrial and education sector that is consistent with its traditional brand but evolves it into something more powerful."

Mr Rodgers said Cairns was also a natural home for indigenous tourism and an important niche player in defence and aviation industries,

"Internationally the emerging successful cities have great lifestyle, embrace technology, attract the right talent and have the agility to ride changing trends," he said.

"Cairns has the potential to do a lot of things better than anyone else, find a very strong niche in the international cities market and become part of a powerful global peer group of like-minded cities." Cairns also has many of the attributes of the regional cities that are tipped to do well over the next 30 years, Mr Rodgers said.