

# Masters of our destiny

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## Cairns hears how it can thrive into the future

WHAT does a mountain city riding the "green rush" and a Middle Eastern military town turned tech hub have in common with Cairns?

They have exploited their strong points and flourished.

A meeting of industry minds in the first Empowering the Regions forum yesterday found that Cairns was well

placed for future growth if it stuck to its guns and focused on what it did best.

"An objective analysis was that the future looks good," Australian Industry Group's Shane Rodgers said.

He said growing the city into the long term depended on "strong civic leadership".

"You make growth around

what you are good at - that is where the action is," Mr Rodgers said.

"That is where you get the clusters of business and talent."

He said the forum, the first in an ongoing series of "conversations with the region", attracted 60 figures from tourism, manufacturing, defence, hospitality and other

sectors and found that Cairns was well placed for the next 10 to 50 years. "It is an emerging tropical economy. The growth in gas, water, telecommunication is above the state average," Mr Rodgers said.

He said Cairns needed to emulate the examples of Israeli tech centre Tel Aviv and start-up hub Boulder in the US can-

nabis boom state of Colorado. "The areas that do predictably well have adaptability, attract talent and they embrace technology," Mr Rodgers said.

"Tel Aviv and Boulder extended their advantage into other things. You can have a city that is strong in tourism and grow a strong industry underneath."

### BRISBANE BONUS

The growth of Brisbane Airport would have promising outcomes for Cairns, the Empowering the Regions forum heard. "The new runway will effectively double the capacity of Brisbane Airport," airport spokesman Cory Heathwood said. "It is a massive gateway to regional centres like Cairns."