



Original hangar, Cloncurry Airport
Image courtesy of Jacqueline Kurley

LOCATION: Concurry
1,800 kms north west of Brisbane

POPULATION: 5,500

INDUSTRIES: Mining, cattle, government services

CLIMATE: Tropical.
Summer 24.5C – 37.3C.
Winter 10.3C – 24.7C.
Annual rainfall 471.5mm.

Cloncurry is outback Queensland's land of opportunity. Home to cattle barons and mining empires, it is playing a major role in the current resources boom.

Just an hour's drive from Mt Isa and three hours from the Gulf of Carpentaria, Cloncurry is located in one of the world's most highly mineralised provinces. The northwest region has a \$6.7 billion annual output from copper, gold, silver, lead and zinc.

The largest silver mine in the world is here as are major gold, copper and phosphate operations.

The resources sector employs 13,000 people or 60 percent of the region's workforce and has driven unprecedented economic growth.

An influx of miners has doubled Cloncurry's population in a decade. Land values have soared and a housing shortage has sparked a steady trade in transportable homes.

But, there's more to Cloncurry than mining. This area of Queensland is prized beef country, highly valued for its reliability. Families and large pastoral companies tightly hold vast stations.

Five of Australia's biggest beef producers are based in Cloncurry and the district is the breeding ground for the nation's feedlots. Landmark's Chris Phillips says it is almost impossible to buy into the region.

"Four properties have come onto the market in the past 15 years, and they were bought by one family."

Recently a "small" block of 25,000 acres changed hands within a family for \$130 an acre.

Getting a sense of market value is even harder for rural lifestyle blocks. In the last sale three years ago, 70 acres fetched \$500,000.

There is adequate supply of residential land but demand has driven up prices. Blocks that were selling for \$2,000 15 years ago are now fetching \$57,000.

"There's been a lot of development but the biggest impediment to growth is lack of water," says Chris.

The shortage became so acute when the town's main dam ran dry that water is now delivered by freight train from Mt Isa.

"The water crisis is a major problem. A lot of people have private bores but the quality's not great."

The town sits on the banks of the flood prone Cloncurry River but lack of rain and high water demands have drained the supply. Cloncurry is famous for having Australia's highest recorded temperature of 53.1C in 1889.

Burke and Wills were the first Europeans into the area in 1861 during their ill-fated expedition to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The early settlers soon discovered copper and the cycle of mining booms

and busts began. Cloncurry was the main source of Australian copper during WWI when 7,000 people worked the mines and smelters.

The town is on the main Sydney to Darwin air route. It was the destination of the first Qantas flight in 1922 and the original hangar is still in use. In 1928, John Flynn started the Australian flying doctor's service from Cloncurry and, during WWII, the town was a base for U.S. bombers. It is still the most important transportation centre in western Queensland with a combination railhead, container depot and road train terminus.

"We're less isolated than many places closer to the coast because we have such good transport infrastructure," says Chris.

"But Cloncurry hasn't lost its charm. It's still an outback town at heart."

Contact:
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PROPERTY GUIDE:

Residential: Three-bedroom home \$300,000 – \$400,000.

Larger acreage: \$100 – \$150 per acre for 30,000 – 50,000 acres.

No large properties sold in recent times.