

Towns on mission to grow

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MISSION Beach and Port Douglas are leading the charge in population growth of 16 provincial towns across the Far North.

The latest *Cairns Watch* report by Herron Todd White found Mission Beach was the top growth spot with 4.6 per cent a year followed by Port Douglas with 4 per cent.

Herron Todd White's Rick Carr said the growth in southern towns from Innisfail to Mission Beach would likely have been higher if not for Cyclone Larry.

"Of the provincial towns Mission Beach and Port Douglas are the ones that are most tied into the tourism industry, which is a growth driver for the region, and those towns have grown accordingly," Mr Carr said.

"In that southern area the population dropped as a result of the cyclone, so if we didn't have the cyclone Mission Beach's growth would have been higher.

"At the other end of the scale the sugar towns have been static or declining for quite some time."

Mr Carr said the sustained growth of provincial towns bolstered the region's vibrant economy.

But Cairns must be able to maintain its position as a

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— Herron Todd White's Rick Carr

service hub for the entire region.

"I think the main message from these figures is that Cairns can't be too introspective," he said.

"This is a growing region with towns that have their own needs, so we can't become Cairns-centric."

Mr Carr said the figures did not contain vital statistics from the Aboriginal population because the Australian Bureau of Statistics had not updated growth figures on Aboriginal communities since 2002.

The *Cairns Watch* report also revealed the Far North's unemployment rate trend continues to drop sharply and is now below the state average.

The latest trend unemployment reading for the Far North is 3.9 per cent, compared with the statewide figure of 4 per cent.



Global team: WHK Greenwoods chief executive Graham Caldwell and principal business development officer Elmarie Gebler are pleased to be part of the global merger between WHK and Horwaths groups.

Merger numbers add

THE international merger of WHK Greenwoods and Horwaths will boost services and expertise in the Cairns branch, WHK chief executive Graham Caldwell said yesterday.

With a combined annual revenue of more than \$3 billion and more than 500 offices internationally, the merger is being hailed as one of the biggest so far this year.

Mr Caldwell said the WHK Group was the fifth largest accounting and business advisory company in Australasia and the largest in North Queensland.

"We are very excited about the synergy we have now established with both brands as it means we have even more experts at our fingertips from all over the world," Mr Caldwell said.

"This means a more comprehensive service for our customers and also access

to cutting-edge information."

"It will be business as usual for everyone in our local office. The partnering of the two companies just mean more skills and expertise of service being brought to the region, especially in the fields of business and leisure."

Mr Caldwell said the team at WHK Greenwoods had been operating in the Far North for nearly 40 years under previous brands such as Buck and Hall Chadwick.

"We have been through a lot during our history as we have expanded," principal business development officer Elmarie Gebler said.

"The expansion of the WHK network to take in Horwaths is a natural progression for our firm into the global arena."

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