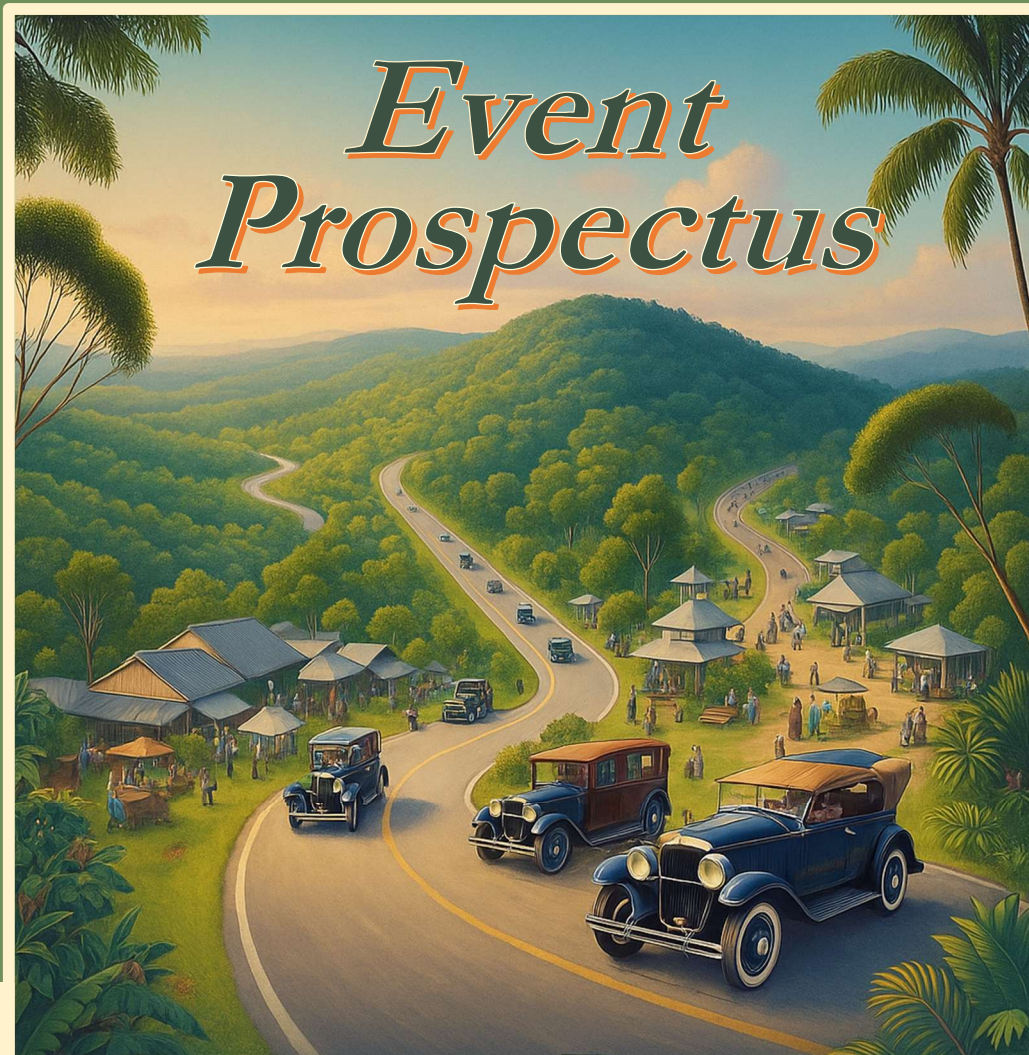


# The *GILLIES* CENTENARY CELEBRATION



*10 - 12 July 2026*

  
*Yungaburra*  
Association Inc.

# The Gillies Centenary Celebration

(The track which became a road which became a highway)

**10 – 12 July 2026**

## Rationale

The Gillies Range Road, originally called the Cairns Range Road, has long stood as a testament to human ingenuity and perseverance, assisting to bond communities and fostering cultural exchange for nearly a century. As a conduit between Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands, its significance transcends mere geography, symbolizing progress and shared heritage.

Celebrations are proposed for the 100-year anniversary since the opening of the Gillies Range Road.

The purpose of this document is to provide a practical conceptual framework for the proposed celebrations planned to take place on 10-12 of July 2026.

2026 is a significant year in Far North Queensland in that it is also the 150th anniversary of the founding of Cairns, with this now designated highway being the first to provide everyday vehicle access to the Atherton Tablelands.



**View from Heales Lookout at 2,000 feet (610 m) on the Gillies Highway, circa 1935**

## **Stakeholders**

The primary stakeholder for this event is the Yungaburra Association Inc. (YAI).

YAI is a vibrant community organisation with members who include representatives of business, clubs and community. YAI proposes to coordinate, plan and implement a variety of activities on the weekend of the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the road's operation.

Other stakeholders have been identified, and it is expected that additional groups will emerge once the concept and planning for this major event becomes better known, varied, and endorsed.

At a government level the Tablelands Regional Council (TRC), likely Cairns Regional Council, State Government through the Department of Main Roads and the Queensland Police Service will have roles in the planning and execution of the event.

There will be involvement from commercial sponsors, community groups, car clubs and motorcycle groups.

This latter involvement will grow as the concept is spread by the planning activity of the YAI.

## **Background**

Nearly one hundred years ago, in 1926, the Gillies Range Road was officially opened to traffic. This ushered in a new era of travel from Cairns to the Atherton Tablelands and was the first of four motor vehicle range crossings which would open up the Cairns Hinterland. The Kuranda Range Road would not be opened until fourteen years later in 1940, a road which provided a strategic link to Hoevet Field, a large and significant World War II bomber base operating from Mareeba.

On the opening of the Gillies Range Road, Cairn's residents were now able to enjoy the wonders of the Atherton Tablelands, including the nearby towns of Yungaburra, Malanda, Atherton, Herberton, Millaa Millaa, Tolga and Ravenshoe. They would be able to visit spectacular places such as Lake Barrine, Lake Eacham, the Curtain Fig Tree and the resplendent William's Lake Eacham Hotel at Yungaburra with its first-class and second-class accommodation and silver service dining.

The road was named after an Atherton Tablelands resident, William Gillies, who served as the Premier of Queensland from February to October 1925. By March 1925, around one hundred and fifty persons were employed building the road. It was officially opened on Saturday 10 July 1926. This now allowed travel between Cairns to the Tablelands in the then astonishing time of 2½ hours. However, as the road was only wide enough for one-way traffic, it required the flow of traffic in opposite directions at particular times of

the day according to a timetable. Drivers and vehicles wishing to travel in the other direction were held at the Top Gate or Bottom Gate.



**Top gate entering Gillies Highway North Queensland outside Cairns circa 1935**

Our community is eagerly anticipating the Centenary Celebrations of the Gillies Range Road, recognising the importance of commemorating milestones that have shaped the region's history.

This event will be much more than a celebration – it will be a vibrant gathering that connects people, honours local heritage, and strengthens community pride.

The weekend festivities will bring together Yungaburra residents and those of the wider Atherton Tablelands community, visitors and local organisations, showcasing the charm of Yungaburra, the beauty of Lake Tinaroo and the pioneering spirit of the Atherton Tablelands. Visitors will have the chance to step back in time to the 1920's, experiencing the sights and sounds of the era while deepening their appreciation of the region's rich history.

## **Event timings**

### **Day 1 - Friday 10 July**

At this stage, no formal events have been planned for Friday 10 July, the actual date of the centenary.

This has yet to be resolved but will likely take the form of a dinner dance at the Yungaburra Community Hall where short plays, music, dancing and other entertainment will be delivered.

## **Day 2 - Saturday 11 July - Theme – “All Things 1920’s”**

### **08.00 am – 5.00 pm – Road Closures - Yungaburra**

The event will feature a spectacular concourse of veteran vintage vehicles, along with classic cars and motorcycles from across Queensland. These will likely make the memorable journey “up the iconic Gillies” with other members of their car club before gathering in Yungaburra for a lively day of entertainment, music, history and local hospitality.

Events planned in the Yungaburra CBD include:

- Veteran and vintage vehicles displayed throughout the Yungaburra CBD.
- An area for a heritage village in Maude Kehoe Park.
- Band presenting the music and songs of the ‘20s.
- Community games for old and young from the 1920s including Tug a War between Atherton Tableland teams with prizes awarded.
- Unveiling of a bronze plaque to mark the event. It is expected that senior State Government dignitaries will be invited and attend in a formal capacity.
- Unveiling of a large storyboard sign to later be installed on the range road, outlining the history of the road.
- Community groups under marquees, such as the Eacham Historical Society with a display.
- Food vans/stalls in Maude Kehoe Park.
- Miniature train ride for the children and young at heart.
- Actors as Hosts, in 1920s costumes, walking the streets welcoming visitors and providing dialogue on the life and times of Yungaburra in the 1920s.



**Travelling one way up the Gillies – Date Unknown**

### **Parking**

There will be selected sites for public parking, possibly including but not limited to:

- Memorial Park Oval
- Private rural properties close to the CBD

Written approval is still to be obtained from the property owners to permit parking on their property.

This will require the provision of volunteers to assist to direct the public where to park.

### **Saturday Evening Activity**

This has yet to be resolved, however, it is likely that there may be community groups or businesses who will wish to hold a centenary celebration function on the Saturday night. For example, management of the Mountain View Hotel (which was first licenced on 7 April 1926) or local Yungaburra Restaurants may want to hold their own celebration functions on Saturday evening.

### **Day 3 - Sunday 13 July**

All participants and the general public will be welcome to an informal Celebration Recovery breakfast which will be held on the Tinaburra Peninsula.

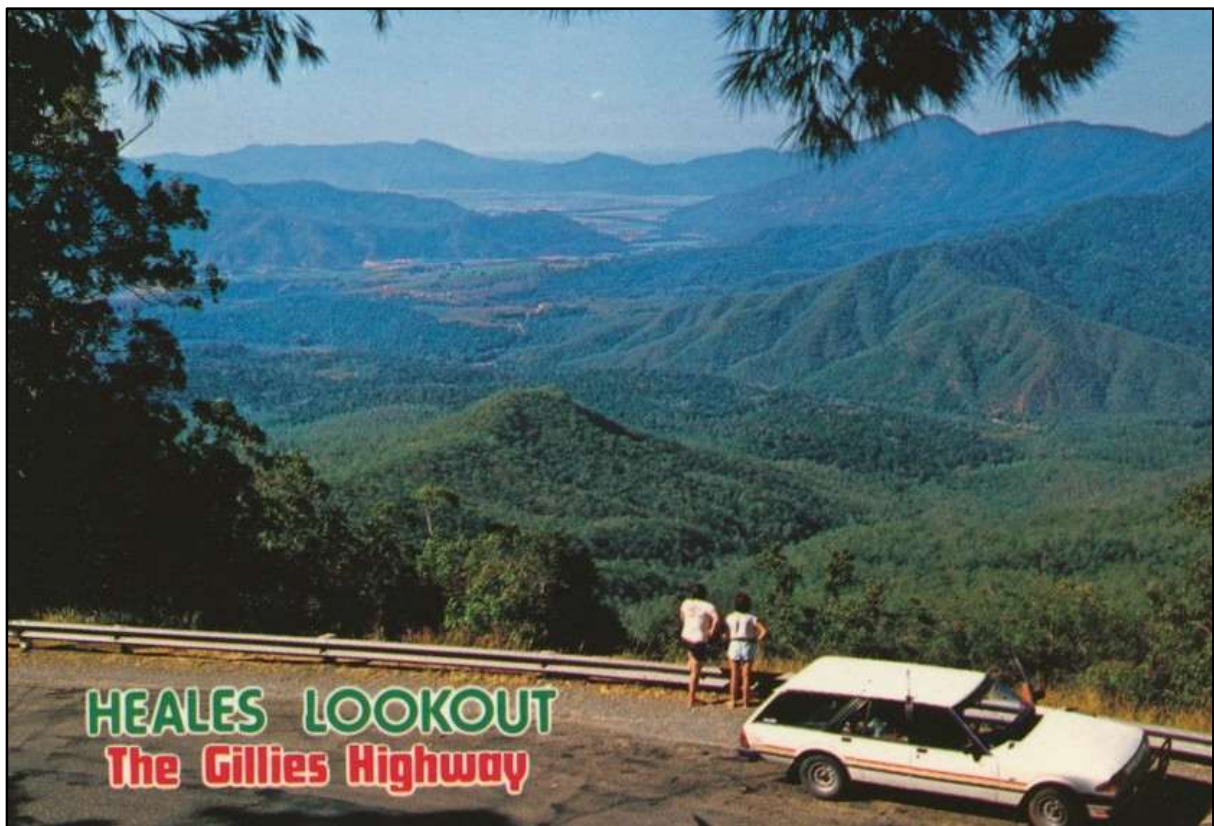
Breakfast timing will commence at 8.00am and be completed by 10.00am

## Ancillary Activities

It is anticipated that a variety of associated activities will take place in and about the Yungaburra Village centre.

These may include:

- Food Stalls
- Live band during the day
- Community games from the 1920s
- Children's World



**Heales Lookout**

(Source - <https://www.queenslandplaces.com.au/node/11181>)

## Budget – Priority Funding

Funding will be required, some of it critical to the success of the event.

Yungaburra Association will provide an initial budget for the event however certain aspects of the Centenary Celebration are seen to be a priority to the success of the event. Projected costs include:

- Funding for traffic control officers for Yungaburra township during the main event.
- Bronze Plaque to celebrate the Centenary
- Permanent storyboard sign 2400 x 1200 telling of the history of the Gillies Range Road to be installed later near the Top Gate or Heales Lookout
- Marketing costs
- Advertising of road closure costs
- Ancillary costs

It is proposed that Yungaburra Association will apply for grant funding to contribute to the expenditure associated with the holding of the event.

## **Key Dates**

1. Preparation and endorsement of concept document - by 30 September 2025.
  - Selection of membership and role of the Steering Committee - appointed by YAI by 30 September 2025:
    - Maximum of 5 members,
    - Frequent meetings,
    - Hands on role
2. Finalisation of initial budget. Approval by YAI Members - 30 September 2025
3. Identification of Stakeholders - Ongoing
  - Department of Transport and Main Roads
  - Local members of parliament
  - Tablelands Regional Council
  - Cairns Regional Council
  - Queensland Police Service
  - Motor Vehicle and Cycle Clubs
  - Mountain View Hotel
  - State Emergency Service
  - Service Groups
  - Local businesses
  - Other clubs and interested parties
4. Commencement of actual planning by selected individuals - Ongoing

For any further information or inquiries, these can be made directly to Yungaburra Association Inc. at the below email address.

Yungaburra Association

Email: [info@yungaburra.com](mailto:info@yungaburra.com)



**Gillies Range Road Today**

*“An ear popping 19km journey to the Atherton Tablelands” – ([Source - Facebook](#))*