

LANDMARK POSTCODE

# 4720

Fairbairn Dam.  
Image courtesy of Tourism Queensland.

Story: Sheryl Allen

**LOCATION:** Emerald  
9 hours northwest of Brisbane

**POPULATION:** 10,630

**INDUSTRIES:** Agriculture, mining,  
horticulture

**CLIMATE:** Sub-tropical  
Summer: 22.3°C – 34.5°C  
Winter: 9.0°C – 23.2°C  
Avg annual rainfall: 533mm

Emerald is the hub of Queensland's Central Highlands and gateway to the southern hemisphere's largest sapphire fields. It's a thriving, welcoming regional centre with coal mining, cattle and cropping its lifeblood.

Established as a base for building the western railway, Emerald has evolved to meet regional needs, especially during its mini 1970s "renaissance".

"The Fairbairn Dam was constructed in 1972 allowing for development of the Emerald Irrigation Scheme," explains Landmark's Terry Ray. "This signalled considerable development of regional agricultural use. Now it's quite diverse with the traditional cattle-grazing booming alongside cropping (including cotton, wheat, soybean and sorghum) and horticulture (citrus fruit, table grapes and wine grapes)."

Fairbairn Dam, which each year supplies 200,000 megalitres of water for irrigation, industrial and urban use, is a holiday destination in its own right, luring caravanners, campers and day-trippers with water-side relaxation and

renowned fishing for barramundi and red claw crays.

Its delivery of a secure water supply also opened the way for spectacular growth of coal mining.

Emerald is central to the Bowen Basin, Australia's largest coal reserve, spanning around 60,000 square kilometres. Each year more than 30 operational coal mines extract a total of 100 million tonnes of coal representing over eighty per cent of Queensland's coal production.

"There are always new mines coming on stream," says Terry, "and plenty of mining personnel live or stay in Emerald. That's meant big growth of accommodation facilities in the town, despite some general contraction of the resources sector."

"There is still good demand and plenty of input into all levels of the economy here. Although property prices have come off the peak values of about eighteen months ago, there is life in the market yet," says Terry. "We're fortunate that our rural market is exposed to influences outside the normal agricultural fluctuations. The resources money certainly keeps the property market buoyant and having lots of younger people coming and going ensures Emerald is vibrant and alive."

The government has a strong regional presence in Emerald with the Department of Natural Resources, the Lands Department and Sun Water amongst many government tenants providing not just services, but also job opportunities.

Education is also well-catered for with several government and independent primary and

secondary schools, the Australian Agricultural College and a campus of the Central Queensland University. Terry estimates that Emerald's education sector employs anywhere up to 600 people.

Having two major shopping centres with national grocery tenants, an array of specialty retailers plus cafes, restaurants, hotels and service businesses, Emerald is a gem of a place to visit, live and work.

For the culturally minded there's the historic railway station, art gallery, botanic gardens, mosaic pathway and pioneer cottage.

Sportier types will make a beeline to the swimming pool, golf course or bowls club.

Emerald was once a major sunflower producing region. Although there are fewer sunflower fields these days, the town still hosts the annual Easter Sunflower Festival and boasts the world's biggest Van Gogh sunflower painting.

Whatever your tastes, you'll find Emerald to be the jewel in the crown of the Central Highlands.

#### CONTACT:

Landmark Emerald (07) 4982 2055

Terry Ray 0427 821 177

#### PROPERTY GUIDE:

Residential: Quality 3-bedroom home  
\$370,000 – \$390,000

Improved buffel grass fattening country,  
well-located with sound improvements:  
\$600 – \$750 per acre

Developed irrigation country: \$1,700 – \$2,100  
per acre