JAMES Cook University expects to start construction by July on its biggest-ever building project.

Contractor tenders for the $83 million Science Place have been advertised with the announcement of a builder weeks away.

JCU Capital Projects Manager Geoff Murray said the development would create about 133 construction jobs with another 160 teaching, maintenance and retail positions coming on board in the centre over the next decade.

“It’s the biggest-ever construction project at JCU,” he said.

“It’s a complete modern way of teaching.

“We’ve also got three retail food outlets going into the building so it’ll be a central spot for the whole university.”

Once complete, by the first semester of 2017, the Science Place will house up to 520 students and around 100 staff.

Mr Murray said the former 1970’s-era biological sciences building had already been demolished and the site cleared in preparation for the builders.

“We’re out to tender at the moment and it closes in a cou-
ple of weeks,” Mr Murray said. It is one of a series of major developments that will transform the Townsville campus in coming years, with the $45 million Clinical Practices Building paving the way in 2013. Work on the university’s $30 million Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine is underway and tenders are currently being considered for the keystone mixed-use Cornerstone Building on Mount Stuart St.

Mr Murray said that this was a time of renewal for the university.

“It’s been a time when the government’s realised what’s needed in North Queensland. We’ve been fortunate enough to get some grants from both the Federal and State governments,” he said.

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GEOFF MURRAY