

2020-2025 Mackay Region Economic Development Strategy





Mayor's Foreword



A message from the Mayor

This Economic Development Strategy 2020-2025 reflects the Mackay region – diverse, innovative, forward thinking and full of exciting opportunities.

The previous edition of the strategy, which set out an action plan for 2015-2020, was put in place when the Mackay region was recovering from a downturn in the resources sector. This had placed enormous pressure on our community, both socially and economically.

“

The economic environment of today however, is much different to the one we found ourselves in five years ago. The Mackay region we all know, and love is back, and our future in terms of economic prosperity looks bright.

There is still plenty of work to do as we continue to diversify and evolve to ensure our region is best placed to attract investment and capitalise on economic growth opportunities, but the time is right to build on some great foundations. That's what we are outlining in this document.

Within this strategy, we have set a clear Economic Development Framework designed to support employment and investment outcomes through advocacy and leadership, investment attraction, industry development and workforce and skills.

Council will support the local economy by delivering a range of specific initiatives and actions to demonstrate economic leadership and instil confidence in the local market.

Attracting investment not only provides a significant economic stimulus, it attracts new technology and innovation, as well as stimulates additional investment and job creation through supply chains.

We see the region well placed to move forward and capitalise on new opportunities.

Our strengths are in the METS sector, our underpinning agricultural base, a burgeoning tourism industry and a council focussed on building a liveable community. We will also continue to pursue new opportunities ranging from biofutures to innovative start-ups.

We are confident of a sustainable economic future.

Mayor Greg Williamson - Mackay Regional Council



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1. Introduction

The Mackay Regional Council encompasses 7,600 square kilometres and is located approximately 950 kilometres north of Brisbane.

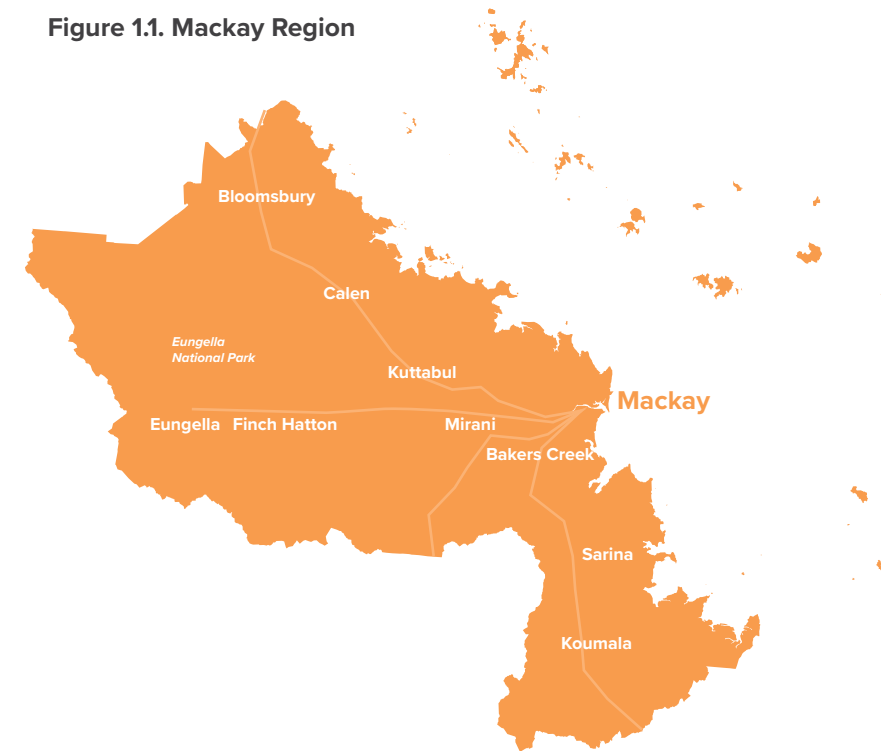
Traditionally, the area developed on the back of a thriving sugar industry that supported the region and its diverse range of towns (usually tied to a local Sugar Mill) for many decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, a variety of coal mines were developed across the Bowen Basin and the export terminals of Hay Point and Abbott Point were developed, which created a mining services sector in Mackay. During the mining investment boom a decade ago, Mackay's capability and capacity in terms of mining equipment, technology and services (METS) expanded greatly, creating a globally significant industry cluster.

The end of the mining investment boom in 2011/12 triggered a downturn in the local economy, given the considerable demand pressures and capacity issues that it had previously created. The Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 (the first of the amalgamated Mackay Regional Council) was created to drive sustainability and diversity through the economy. The Strategy was successful in advancing a number of initiatives that delivered economic outcomes for the Mackay region.

As the existing Strategy comes to a close, there have been a number of changes in the local region and the broader state, national and global economic context. As such, it is timely to review and update the Strategy moving forward in order to continue the region's economic evolution.

This strategy has been developed based on detailed economic research and analysis as well as engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders.

Figure 1.1. Mackay Region



The Mackay region spans
7,600 km²
The Gross Regional Product (GRP) of Mackay is
\$7.1 billion
(2018)



2. We are Mackay

We have Australia's most significant mining equipment, technology and services (METS) clusters.

We have one of the highest rates of Gross Regional Product per capita in the State.

We have one of the largest and most diverse regional industrial estates in Australia.

We have one of the highest levels of average personal weekly income in the State.

We have three ports that combined represent the second largest bulk export terminal in Queensland.

We are the fourth largest local government area in Queensland (outside of South East Queensland).

We have one of the largest biofuel producers in Australia.

We have one of the only regional clinical trial research centres in Australia.

We produce nearly one quarter of sugar manufactured in Australia.

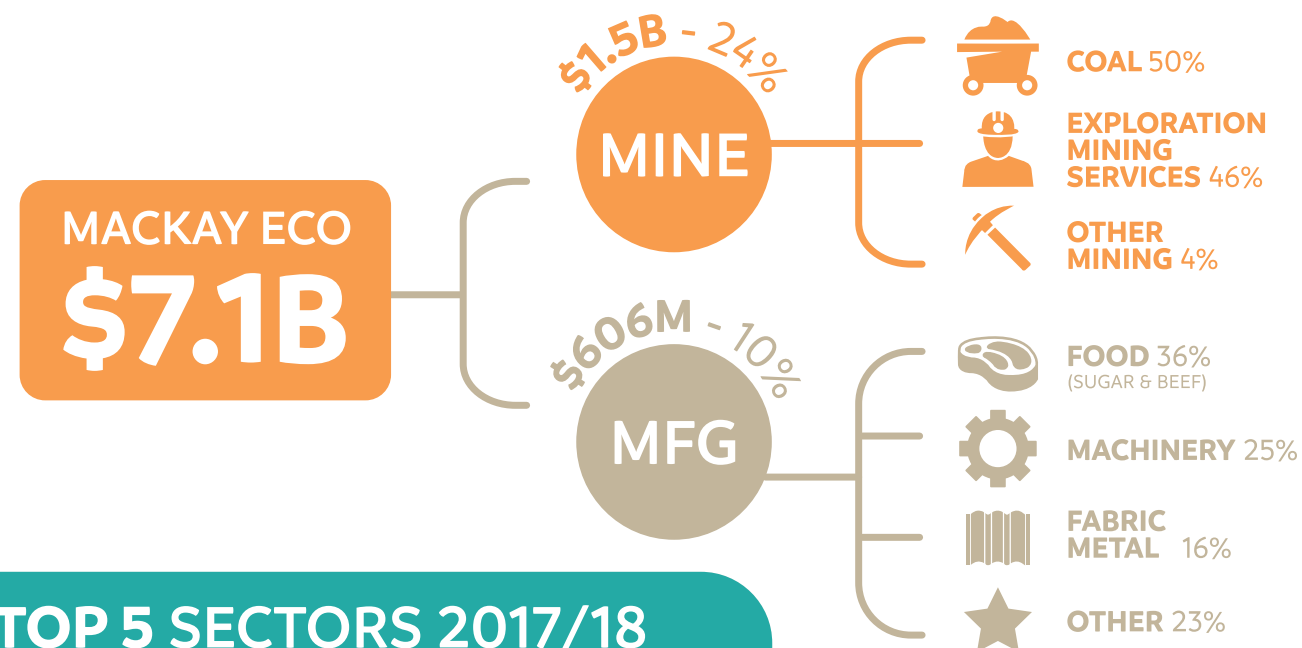
We have a diverse range of pristine beaches, lush rainforests, tropical islands, the Great Barrier Reef and the Eungella National Park.

We have unique companies, producing products that are not available anywhere in the world.

We recently recruited Qantas's second Pilot Academy, a demonstration of our region's ability to work together and its attractiveness for major investments.

**THE MACKAY
REGION IS VIBRANT,
LARGE AND SIGNIFICANT.**

**WE ARE
CONFIDENT IN OUR
ECONOMIC FUTURE.**



2017-18

GRP PER CAPITA

MACKAY ISAAC WHITSUNDAY
\$95,263

QUEENSLAND
\$60,310

Source: NIEIR (2019)



UNEMPLOYMENT March Quarter 2019

MACKAY	4.4%
MACKAY - ISAAC WHITSUNDAY	3.9%
QUEENSLAND	6.1%

Source: DESSFB (2019)

TOP 5 SECTORS 2017/18

INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTION

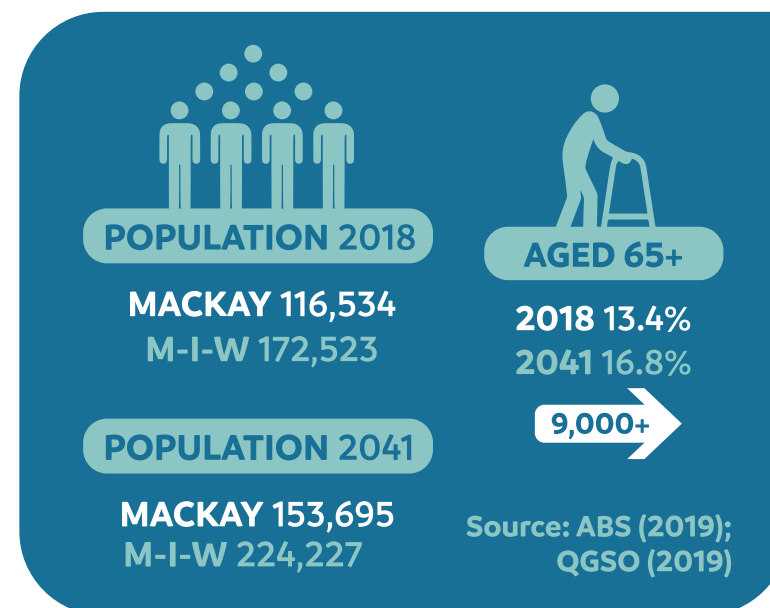
- MINING** \$1.512b - 24%
- MANUFACTURING** \$606M - 10%
- TRANSPORT POSTAL & WAREHOUSING** \$483M - 8%
- CONSTRUCTION** \$472M - 8%
- HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE** \$448M - 7%

JOBS

- HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE** 6,820 - 12.6%
- RETAIL TRADE** 5,841 - 10.8%
- MANUFACTURING** 4,582 - 8.5%
- MINING** 4,576 - 8.5%
- CONSTRUCTION** 4,528 - 8.4%

Source: NIEIR (2019)

Note: Tourism spend and economic contribution for year-ending March. Visitation data is for 2018-19 financial year.



AVERAGE WEEKLY INCOME 2016

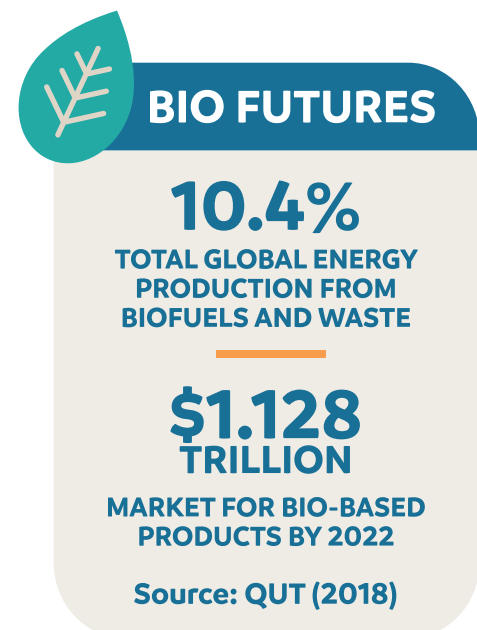
	2006	2011	2016
PERSONAL			
MACKAY	\$511	\$704	\$698
QUEENSLAND	\$476	\$587	\$660
HOUSEHOLD			
MACKAY	\$1,134	\$1,547	\$1,439
QUEENSLAND	\$1,036	\$1,227	\$1,392

Source: ABS (2017)

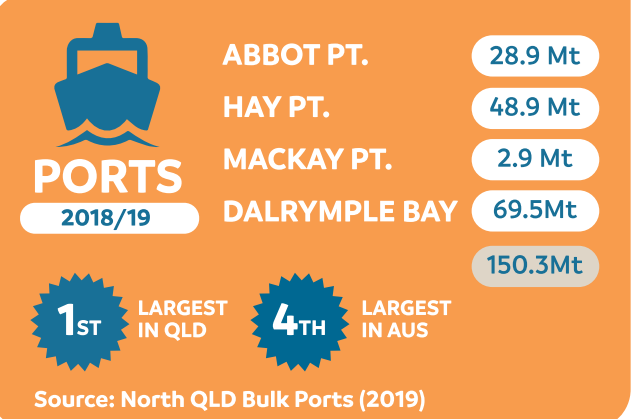
MACKAY TOURISM REGION 2018-19

VISITORS	1.97M
VISITOR SPEND	\$664.3M
ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION	\$420.2M
JOBS	4,089

Source: TRA (2019); Lucid Economics (2019)



Source: BITRE (2019)

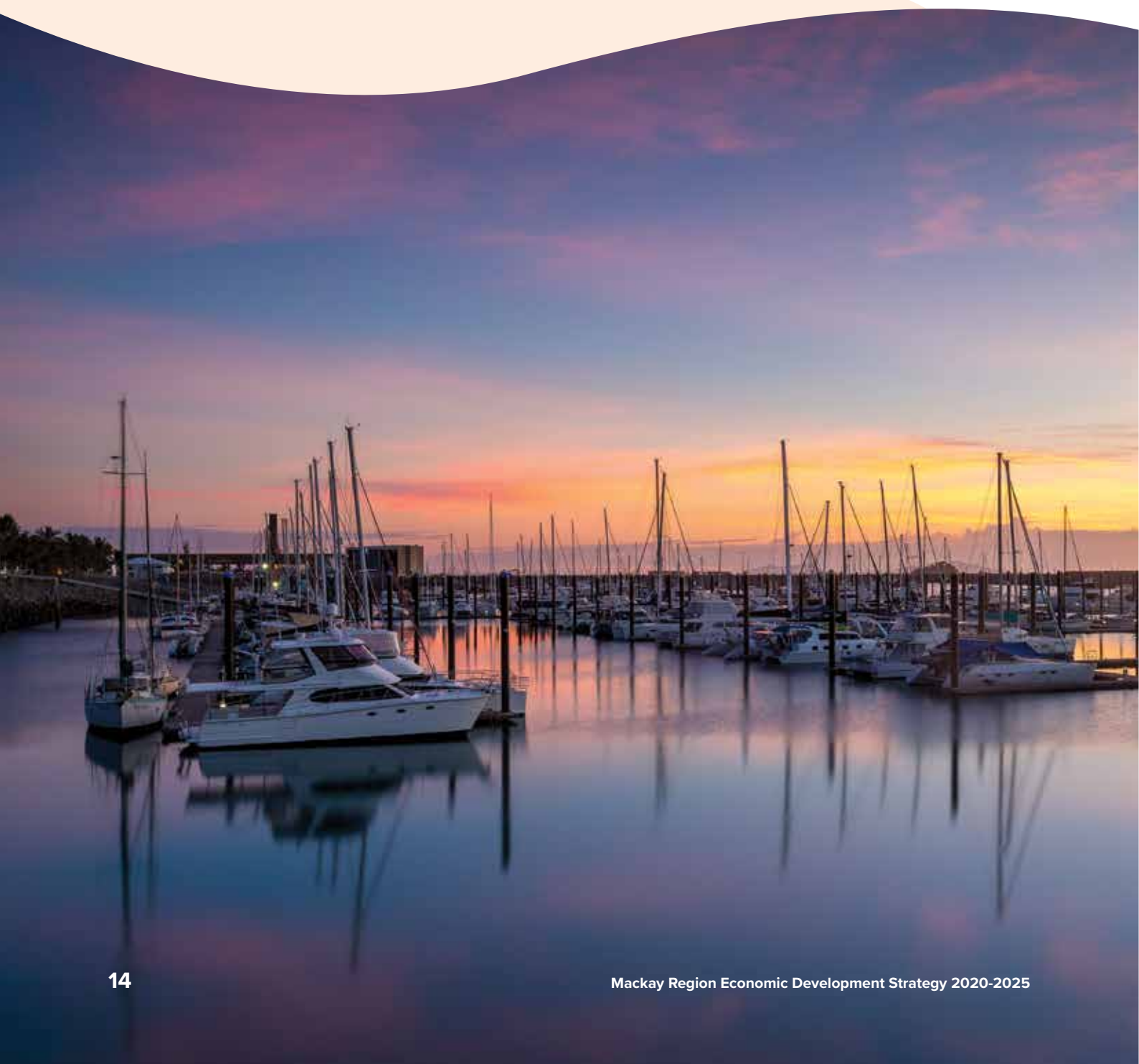


MACKAY-PROSERPINE REGION PRODUCES NEARLY...

1/4 OF AUSTRALIA'S SUGAR

SOURCE: AUSTRALIAN SUGAR MILLING COUNCIL

3. The Backdrop



The Mackay region has a population of 116,539 people making it the fourth most populated local government area outside of South East Queensland.

Combined with the Isaac and Whitsunday Councils, the broader region is the second largest in the State (outside of South East Queensland). Mackay continues to grow and will have almost 160,000 people by 2041. Population growth in Mackay has been volatile, ranging from one of the fastest local government areas in the country to experiencing periods of population decline.

The population volatility is tied to local economy, which is reliant upon coal mining in particular and to a lesser extent agriculture and food production (sugar and beef). The Gross Regional Product (GRP) of Mackay is \$7.1 billion (2018), which is the fifth largest in Regional Queensland. Mining directly contributes 24% to the regional economy and other directly related sectors such as Transport equipment manufacturing, machinery and equipment manufacturing, fabricated metal product manufacturing, heavy and civil engineering, road transport and rail transport, contribute another 11%, combining for over a third of the economy. The Paget Industrial Estate represents one of the largest concentration of mining related companies in the country, and includes Hastings Deering, Cummins, UGL, Komatsu as well as the numerous SMEs specialising in mining products or services.

Many of these companies are exporting and are on the cutting edge of mining technology. At the same time, agriculture and food production also make important contributions through large companies such as Mackay Sugar, Wilmar and Borthwicks as well as smaller producers. Mackay receives 1.8 million visitors annually that contribute \$194 million to the local economy and employ 2,600 people.

Given the strength of the local economy, there are significant job opportunities available across the broader region and across a range of sectors. Businesses have identified that finding suitably skilled workers has become an issue. There is a need for a comprehensive workforce development solution to ensure the region can access the skilled workers it requires for future growth.

During the mining investment boom, there was considerable demand placed across all local infrastructure, particularly residential housing and short-stay accommodation. Since 2011, 4,000 residential dwellings have been added and numerous hotels have been built.

The region is better prepared today for future fluctuations in the economy and is prepared for growth.

Mackay plays an important role in the broader region of Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday, not only as the area with the greatest population, but more importantly, as the main service centre providing a range of core services for the region.

There are a number of local organisations involved in the economic development of Mackay, including the Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3), Regional Development Australia (RDA) Mackay Isaac Whitsunday, State and Federal Government Departments, major industry, North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation, Mackay Airport and various industry associations including the Resource Industry Network (RIN). We have a collaborative spirit and work together to achieve sustainable growth in the region.

Activity in the mining sector has increased recently, but there are large geo-political issues that can challenge this growth. Digital technology, the internet of things, artificial intelligence, climate change, transition to renewable energy, development of biofutures and other mega trends will continue to impact on our economy, as they will across the globe.

It is against this backdrop that we must plan our future economic development to achieve a more sustainable and diversified economy.

We consulted and engaged with our local businesses and stakeholders regarding the future development of our economy. They had considerable input to make.

They treasure our climate, natural environment and lifestyle. For many, these are key assets. Additionally, they felt that our infrastructure (i.e. airport, ports, road network, university and City Centre) provides a very strong foundation for future growth. Stakeholders felt that the local METS sector, mining, agriculture and food processing are key industry clusters that provide a future platform for growth. Stakeholders are optimistic regarding how the recently declared Priority Development Area (PDA) will allow the City Centre to grow and see great opportunities for local start-up businesses.

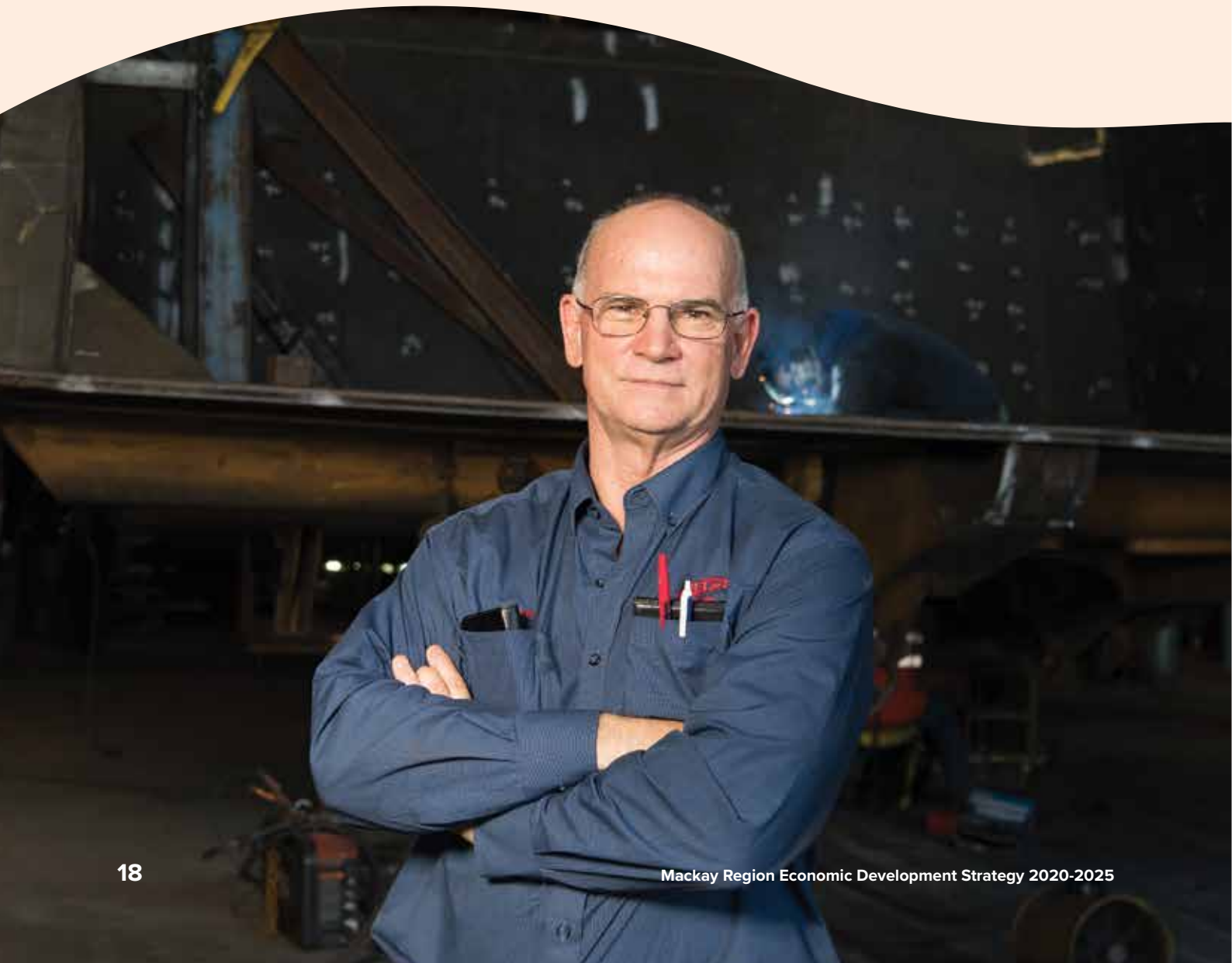
At the same time, stakeholders felt that Mackay suffers from a (undeserved) negative perception as a 'coal' town, despite there being no coal mines in Mackay. Many felt that Mackay also suffers from an inequitable share of State and Commonwealth infrastructure investment relative to the important economic contribution that Mackay makes to the State and Nation. Labour shortages, skills shortages and difficulty in recruiting for positions are other very important issues highlighted by stakeholders. A lack of rental accommodation and a (perceived) lack of investor confidence were also highlighted as issues, as well as a relatively high commercial vacancy rate in the CBD and an inability to attract and retain youth in the area.

Overall, stakeholders were very confident in Mackay's future and felt strongly that now is the time for Mackay to take the next evolution in its economic development.



4. What Sets us Apart

Our region is unique, from mountain peaks and rainforests to kangaroos on beaches, from sugarcane fields to very large industry. We have a variety of unique features that provide our region with competitive advantages, including:



Local METS Capability:

the Mackay region has a globally significant industry cluster and capability in mining equipment, technology and services (METS). Focused in the Paget Industrial Estate, these businesses provide some of the finest mining products and services in the world.



Local Sugar Capability:

we have long been known for the sugarcane grown in our region. This tradition continues today, which not only provides a valuable feedstock for the production of sugar, but can provide raw material for the production of a range of bio-related products.



Strategic Infrastructure and Connectivity:

our region has a large and expanding airport, three ports, a marina, two major university campuses and two major hospitals. We are strategically located on the Bruce Highway approximately halfway between Brisbane and Cairns and have access to the national rail network. This combination of strategic infrastructure is unique and can provide a strong foundation for future growth.



Tourism Assets:

the Mackay region has a wide variety of key tourism assets, including Eungella National Park, the Pioneer River (one of the few 'blue water' rivers in Queensland), pristine beaches such as Cape Hillsborough (famous for its appearance in Qantas advertisements) and other natural features such as great fishing.



Agriculture, Climate and Soils:

the Mackay region has a long tradition in agriculture, which has been focused on sugar production but also includes a number of other crops including a diverse range of fruit, vegetables and nuts as well as cattle production. Our climate, soils and regular rainfall provide a strong natural environment for future agriculture and aquaculture.



Collaborative Environment:

engagement with numerous businesses and stakeholders demonstrates a strong collaborative environment in terms of economic development. Strong local partnerships across businesses, industry associations and various government departments provides a strong basis for future economic growth.



Lifestyle:

our residents love their lifestyle and are proud of the place they call home. Many new residents become just as enamoured with it as well. Our lifestyle supports our community, which in turn, provides support for our economy. We are continuing to invest in new community infrastructure to further improve our liveability.



Mackay City Centre and Mackay Waterfront PDA:

our City Centre is large and provides considerable opportunities for future investment and growth. The Mackay Waterfront PDA development scheme was approved in May 2019, which provides a framework to support further investment in our City Centre and surrounding waterfront localities.

5. Our Future

5.1 Vision for the Future

We envision a future economy that is more diverse and sustainable. Our economic growth will be underpinned by existing industries as well as new ones as our economy continues to evolve. This progression will deliver a diverse range of local jobs and investment into our community from both the public and private sector. Technology and innovation will play an ever-growing and important role in our future economy.

Our future vision is about diversity, sustainability, jobs and investment as well as the vibrancy and liveability that come with economic growth.

Our Goal:
to encourage sustainable and diversified jobs and investment in our region.

5.2 Our Principles for Economic Development

The following principles will guide our activities in economic development to achieve our vision and provide a variety of perspectives from which to evaluate future tasks and initiatives.



Diversification: we seek to grow our economy in a more diversified and resilient manner into the future, embracing new industries, technologies and markets.

Sustainability: we seek to establish a more sustainable economy, which will then contribute to a more sustainable and healthy community.

Climate Change: we acknowledge the risks of climate change and seek to create an economy that lessens its impact on the environment and proactively supports initiatives that encourage renewable power and the production of bio-based products.

Innovation: we seek to embrace innovation and create a local economy that is grounded in technology and innovation, which is constantly adapting and evolving in a digital world.

Collaboration: we believe in collaboration for economic development and will work collaboratively with our partners to generate economic outcomes for our community.

Liveability: we know that through making Mackay a great place to live, we make it easier for local businesses to attract workers and create a destination where people want to live.

Youth Retention: we seek to ensure our youth have the opportunity to stay, learn and work in our region, if they choose to do so.

Local Pride: we will have pride in our community and in everything we do.

Council supports a 'triple bottom line' approach to development where sustainability is measured by our impact on the environment, our community and our economy.

It is important to highlight that strategic community and environmental outcomes for the region are currently pursued through Council's Community Development and Environmental Sustainability Strategies.



5.3 Our Growth Opportunities

The future vision and goal of the economic development strategy will be achieved through growing our traditional industries of strength as well as a variety of new growth opportunities that can add value and continue our evolution to a more sustainable and diversified economy.

Mining Equipment, Technology and Services

(METS): the METS sector is already a key contributor to the regional economy and will likely continue to grow over time. The significant opportunity that remains is the globalisation of the METS sector with a transition from the traditional focus on the Bowen Basin to a more global perspective. This opportunity is supported by the Resources Centre of Excellence and the Mackay Isaac Whitsunday (MIW) Small-Medium Enterprise (SME) METS Export Hub projects which have the potential to catapult the sector forward. The Resources Centre of Excellence could become a specialised centre focused on driving the latest technology, such as autonomous vehicles, while also providing the highest calibre training. The Export Hub can assist local SMEs to access new markets abroad, building diversity and sustainability into their businesses (and at the same time providing for substantial growth locally). Opportunity also exists for our METS sector to develop connections and capabilities with defence contractors and suppliers, given the comparable skills of both sectors.

Biofutures Hub: Sarina is home to one of the country's largest biofuel producers, Wilmar BioEthanol, producing ethanol from molasses. Given the strong demand for bio-based products globally, and the significant sugar cane resources in the region, there is potential for further biofuels and other bio-based products to be produced in the Mackay region.

Agriculture, Aquaculture and Food Production:

beyond sugar cane, the region has the capability to grow additional crops (and other potential feedstocks for bio-based products) as well as expanding the existing aquaculture production to service future demand for Australian seafood products. There is potential for the Mackay region to value add to these products, creating additional food and beverage products for the domestic and international markets. The recent takeover of Mackay Sugar by Nordzucker may present additional future opportunities for the local sugar industry through investments in efficiency and/or product diversification.

Tourism: given the volume of natural beauty and tourism assets in the region, tourism provides a considerable opportunity for the Mackay region, from bespoke visitor experiences and tours in the Pioneer Valley and Sarina, to further tourism investment opportunities in Mackay and elsewhere across the region. The development of commissionable product will be important to growing the local tourism sector. Beyond our natural assets, the Mackay City Centre also provides opportunity to develop as a tourist destination through its growing arts, culture and dining scene. Public arts projects such as the Fifth Lane Art Project will continue to support the City Centre's sense of place, identity and community making it an attractive place to live in, work in and to visit.

Healthcare: Mackay's changing population demographics, consumer practices and existing health related infrastructure provides opportunities for future investments into health care, aged care and retirement living. Considering Mackay's growing and ageing population there is opportunity for the region to attract certain speciality health care services which are currently unavailable or limited in the region. Additionally, non-traditional healthcare and wellness services have been growing in popularity and Mackay's lifestyle and large local population supports growth of this niche sector.

Sport and Recreation: Mackay is fortunate to have a wide range of considerable sporting infrastructure, including the recently completed Mackay Aquatic and Recreation Complex (Mackay ARC) located at Central Queensland University's (CQU) Ooralea Campus. The facility provides the opportunity to host a wide range of national or international sporting events. 'The Mill' masterplan, developed by CQU, outlines additional stages of infrastructure to support the future growth of sport and recreation. Delivery of this masterplan has potential to combine sport and recreation (including professional sports) with research and educational opportunities in the areas of sports medicine, elite performance and various other niche sports related fields.

Aviation: the Mackay Airport has considerable future potential for growth. The recent announcement by Qantas that Mackay is the preferred site for its second Pilot Academy is a testament to the future growth opportunities, which could include additional pilot training, accommodation, ancillary services, air freight export as well as future international flights.

Education: Mackay is fortunate to have three university campuses (the Mackay and Ooralea Campuses of CQU and James Cook University). The region can further develop tertiary and VET offerings to encourage improved education options, youth retention and workforce development. Australia has also been a successful test case in growing international education over the last decade and, as the population of Asia continues to increase

(both in terms of their population as well as their respective middle classes), there will be on-going demand for international education. Mackay offers a range of diverse accommodation options (including on-campus accommodation) and can offer access to a range of specialty training related to its diverse range of local industries. Through Study Greater Whitsunday, opportunities exist to develop fully integrated study packages for select export markets.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship: stakeholders felt that the environment in Mackay is conducive to business start-ups and entrepreneurship. Split Spaces provides a range of co-working and meeting spaces as well as a range of services to support business start-ups and entrepreneurs. Growing and nurturing a local 'start-up scene' which encourages entrepreneurship and a supportive business environment can create new and bespoke economic activity, product development and support young people staying in the region.

Development and Construction: the development and construction industry continues to be one of the strongest contributors to the region's economy in terms of employment and economic output. A growing population, catalytic development opportunities (such as the Mackay Waterfront Priority Development Area) and competitive incentive policies will support ongoing and sustainable construction activity and the delivery of affordable and diversified housing stock.

Small Business: small and family-owned businesses are the back bone of the Mackay region with 97.5% of all businesses having 19 employees or less. Up to 80% of new regional jobs and investment in Mackay will come from these existing businesses which will see our existing small business base mature into a diverse mix of small to large business. Opportunities exist to support our businesses to grow sustainably, to embrace new technologies and establish strong linkages with local and external markets.

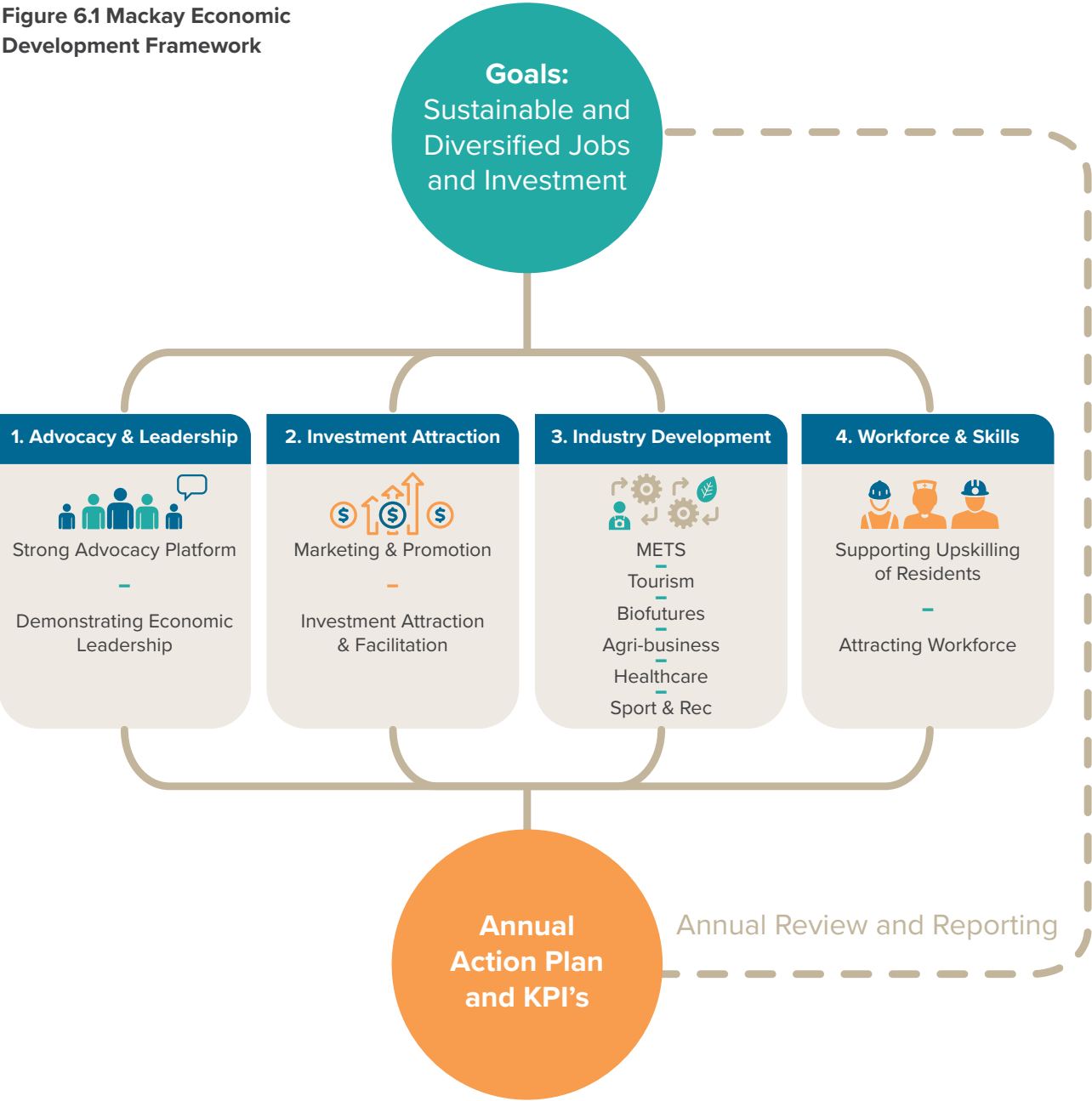


6. Economic Development Strategy

6.1 Economic Development Framework

The Economic Development Framework (Figure 6.1) is designed to support the goal of sustainable and diversified employment and investment outcomes. It has been developed based on research, analysis and engagement with local businesses and stakeholders.

Figure 6.1 Mackay Economic Development Framework



As highlighted above, there are four key avenues that we can influence and encourage economic development:

- Advocacy and Leadership
- Investment Attraction
- Industry Development
- Workforce and Skills Development

Within each pathway, there are specific initiatives that provide clear direction regarding future activities to support economic development, jobs and investment. Overall, the pathways and initiatives

provide a sound basis for detailed tasks which form an annual action plan as well as specific targets for these tasks. The annual action plan (and tracking activities) provides for an annual review process to better understand how the region is evolving over time and allows to refine the action plan as needed in order to best deliver employment and investment outcomes.

This strategic framework is further explained on the following pages.



6.2 Advocacy and Leadership

WHAT IS IT?

Advocacy involves engaging with State and Commonwealth Governments to promote and encourage investment into local infrastructure that will act as a significant catalyst for future economic development. These efforts should include preparing business case materials that support the required investment as well as meeting with various State and Commonwealth ministers and senior officers. Key infrastructure projects should include catalytic investment into the public realm of the Mackay City Centre, the Mackay Waterfront PDA and other townships and centres, infrastructure to support a biofutures hub, as well as other tourism oriented projects such as mountain biking trails and other significant major projects.

Leadership will be demonstrated through Council's commitment to economic development and being a primary catalyst for future economic growth, facilitating employment creation and investment outcomes.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

As the local government authority, Mackay Regional Council has a significant role to play in advocating for the local community, businesses and economy in regard to future infrastructure, which was confirmed through consultation and engagement with stakeholders. Similarly, Mackay Regional Council's funding capacity makes it difficult to undertake major infrastructure projects in its own right without additional funding from the State and/or Commonwealth Government.

Stakeholders felt strongly that both State and Commonwealth Governments should invest more directly into infrastructure in Mackay, given the substantial economic contribution that the region makes to both the State and Nation.

There is no other organisation that represents the entire community in a similar way as Council, so its leadership role is critical. Also, as the largest local government in the region, Mackay Regional Council's leadership role should apply to the broader region as well.

KEY INITIATIVES

Strong Advocacy Platform: develop a comprehensive advocacy agenda that highlights a wide range of required major projects that have the potential to provide a catalytic boost to the local economy and includes the demand, justification and requirement for them. Wherever possible, the projects should be regional in nature. A clear plan then needs to be created in order to allow Council to communicate these projects together with regional partners.

Demonstrating Economic Leadership: provide a strong commitment to economic development through adherence to this strategy. Beyond advocacy, ensuring that Council continues to support the local economy through a strong Buy Local procurement policy, as well as investing directly into the local economy, can demonstrate economic leadership and instil confidence in the local market, thereby encouraging additional investment and job creation.



6.3 Investment Attraction

WHAT IS IT?

The investment attraction process includes a range of activities to promote and market investment opportunities in a broad and/or targeted fashion. This also includes facilitating investment outcomes once a project and/or proponent is identified. The overall process depends on maintaining a wide variety of relationships and working with a range of partners.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Attracting investment provides a significant economic stimulus, as new businesses in the community not only provide new jobs, but can also bring in new technology, spawn innovation, build depth within a cluster as well as stimulate additional investment and job creation through supply chains.

KEY INITIATIVES

Marketing and Promotion: marketing and promoting an area for investment requires marketing materials that highlight the various investment opportunities, provide an overview of the area, and provide a compelling case for the investment. These materials need to be distributed through various networks as well as provided through a digital,

online presence. Marketing can also take place by attending industry specific trade shows, exhibition and meetings, as well as in a more targeted fashion through identifying potential investors in various industry sectors and engaging with them directly regarding their interest. Building healthy business networks with various partners who are in a position to identify and refer investment leads is also important.

Investment Attraction and Facilitation: the investment attraction process includes working with identified businesses or proponents and providing them with information, data and general customer service (in terms of the investment process). Facilitating investment also includes providing introductions to the appropriate agencies, often where approvals are required. The process also involves navigating and making the development approval process as efficient as possible, which often requires 'pre-lodgement' meetings to ensure investors understand the process and required information.



6.4 Industry Development

WHAT IS IT?

Industry development requires engagement with local businesses and business groups. Only through this engagement is it possible to understand the current trends and pressures experienced by businesses across a number of industry sectors. Engagement will also help to better understand what support may be required by any individual business or group of businesses. Supporting individual industries will require a varying degree of support and assistance, with some businesses benefiting from educational and informative workshops, whereas others may benefit more from infrastructure development.

Through the engagement process, the appropriate level of assistance can be identified and actioned. This could include simply referring a business to a partner organisation for further assistance. Activities will vary greatly from one industry to another. In some instances, engagement with a local industry association may be required and in other areas, more thorough and direct engagement may be required.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

In most advanced economies, like Australia, 60%-80% of all new jobs and investment will come from existing businesses. As such, it is important to support local businesses and seek to assist them to grow (which will create jobs and future investment).

KEY INITIATIVES

Industries: As identified through this strategy, the following key existing industries and growth opportunities will be the focus of industry development activities:

- Mining equipment, technology and services (METS)
- Biofutures
- Agriculture, aquaculture and food production
- Tourism
- Healthcare
- Sport and recreation
- Aviation
- International education
- Small business and professional services (City Centre)
- Innovation and entrepreneurship.

Avenues of Business Assistance: there are a number of ways that Council can assist local businesses, including:

- Provision of economic and industry data and information
- Industry or business focused workshops and/or seminars
- Referral to State or Commonwealth business assistance and/or grant program
- Advocacy for policy change and/or infrastructure
- Investment facilitation assistance (with Council planning)
- Other support that may be required and can be provided.



6.5 Workforce and Skills Development

WHAT IS IT?

As a strategy for economic development, workforce and skill development requires Council to work with a variety of partners including local universities, local vocational training providers and other educational providers including high schools. Through engagement with industry and industry associations, Council can start to bridge the gap between the local skills that are required and the local skills that exist in the workforce. Additionally, Council can play a key role in attracting new workers to the region through investments into community infrastructure and other initiatives that support the liveability of the area. Council can also support local businesses that are trying to recruit skilled workers from other areas through provision of information packages, videos and other promotional materials that reinforce the strong sense of lifestyle that local residents enjoy.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Engagement with local businesses has identified challenges in finding suitably qualified and skilled workers and difficulties in recruiting for various positions. Ensuring that local residents have the requisite skills to obtain the available local jobs can be an important avenue to deliver local jobs. At the same time, improving the ability of local employers to attract workers from other locations will help the economy grow and fulfil local jobs that are already created. Bringing new families to the region increases the population and will create additional flow-on economic benefits.

KEY INITIATIVES

Supporting upskilling of residents: ensure that there are strong linkages between business and industry; and local education and training providers. These linkages will assist to identify the training programs required by industry and development of bespoke business programs for local business needs. This role is about facilitating training and employment outcomes and ensuring the best possible relationship between local businesses and local training providers.

Attracting workforce: ensure Mackay has a range of community infrastructure and services that continually increase the region's liveability and ability to attract future workers (and their families) to move to Mackay.

Additionally, the provision of a range of promotional materials focused on showcasing the area's liveability can assist local businesses to recruit workers from other locations. This material should be available in print, digital and other formats (depending on the requirements of local employers). Packages can provide not only information about the community (i.e. housing, schools, healthcare, etc.), but potential relocation assistance services and discount vouchers from local businesses.

7. Action Plan

The following action plan guides the delivery of the strategy. As highlighted in the framework (Figure 6.1), the plan should be monitored and adjusted on an annual basis.



Figure 7.1 Year 1 Action Plan, Mackay Economic Development Strategy

1. Advocacy and Leadership

1.1. STRONG ADVOCACY PLATFORM

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
1.1.1. Engage with partners to deliver a coordinated annual advocacy plan which highlights regional priorities and catalytic infrastructure	Annual	Completed	1
1.1.2. Develop evidence base and supporting data for regional priorities	Annual	Number of projects supported	4
1.1.3. Meet with responsible State and Federal Minister(s)	Annual	Number of meetings	8
1.1.4. Strong advocacy for a Regional Deal including funding for catalytic infrastructure	Short-term	Completed Deal	1

1.2. DEMONSTRATING ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
1.2.1. Support and promote Council's Buy Local policy	Annual	Number and value of local contracts	1% increase
1.2.2. Provide positive economic development media statements (together with partners) associated with key targeted industries and recent success stories (externally focused)	Annual	Number of announcements	24
1.2.3. Invest in the public realm and activation of the City Centre (including the Waterfront PDA)	Annual	Number of projects	1
1.2.4. Invest in the public realm and activation of smaller centres and other parts of the region (i.e. Sarina, Northern Beaches, etc.)	Annual	Number of projects	2
1.2.5. Engage, support and collaborate with regional leaders (surrounding Councils, GW3, RDA, RIN, etc.)	Annual	Number of meetings	20
1.2.6. Demonstrate that Council is 'open for business' through the development of a Council-wide protocol to ensure businesses are provided with an efficient, customer focused experience regarding any necessary approvals or licenses required from Council	Short-term	Development of internal protocol	1
1.2.7. Work with stakeholders to deliver the MIW Digital Infrastructure Study and other initiatives to support the region's digital growth and transformation towards smart technologies	Short-term	Number of actions supported	2

2. Investment Attraction



2.1. MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
2.1.1. Create a suite of marketing material 'Mackay Opportunities' to support specific identified investment opportunities	Annual	Number of marketing/collateral	10
2.1.2. Disseminate marketing material through networks both directly and through online portals such as Invest Mackay	Annual	Number of contacts sent material	50
2.1.3. Attend industry specific trade shows, exhibitions and other events related directly to identified growth opportunities	Annual	Number of events attended	10
2.1.4. Meet with partners (i.e. developers, industry groups, specialty consultants, etc.) in identified growth sectors to discuss opportunities	Annual	Number of meetings	50
2.1.5. Reinvigorate digital Invest Mackay presence to provide more specific information regarding growth opportunities, competitive advantages and support available	Annual	Completed	1
2.1.6. Work with partners to proactively identify and engage with prospective investors/businesses in identified targeted sectors	Annual	Number of businesses	50

2.2. INVESTMENT ATTRACTION AND FACILITATION

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
2.2.1. Continue to implement, monitor and evaluate the Facilitating Development Policy	Annual	Number of priority developments	5
2.2.2. Investigate the development of additional investment attraction incentives	Short-term	Completed	1
2.2.3. Work with partners to host prospective investors in Mackay	Annual	Number of prospective investors visiting Mackay	12
2.2.4. Clearly define and promote Council's First Point of Contact Service	Short-term	Completed	1
2.2.5. Implement Council's First Point of Contact Service to provide a coordinated approach across Council departments for supporting new and expanding business	Annual	Number of pre-lodgement meetings	10
2.2.6. Work with TIQ, GW3, MTL and RIN to expand foreign direct investment activities	Short-Medium Term	Program developed	1



3. Industry Development

3.1. INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

3.1.1. MINING EQUIPMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.1.1.1. Support the operation of the Resources Centre of Excellence	Annual	Successful operation	1
3.1.1.2. Work with RIN to facilitate future stages of the Resources Centre of Excellence	Short-Medium Term	Future stages completed	1
3.1.1.3. Support establishment and operation of the Mackay Isaac Whitsunday Small-Medium Enterprise METS Export Hub	Annual	Number of exporting firms	5
3.1.1.4. Work with RIN and industry to support METS businesses to develop capabilities in the defence sector	Short-Medium Term	Number of programs	2
3.1.1.5. Support other initiatives that can grow and diversify the METS sector (eg. aviation/aerospace, drone, automaton and robotics etc)	Medium-Long Term	Initiatives completed	1

3.1.2. BIOFUTURES

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.1.2.1. Continue participation in MIW Biofutures Steering Committee	Annual	Number of meetings	4
3.1.2.2. Work with industry and Government to investigate the development of a Biofutures Hub	Short-term	Hub concepted created	1

3.1.3. AGRICULTURE, AQUACULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.1.3.1. Work with local industry to identify and remove barriers to developing alternative crops	Medium term	Number of alternative crops	5
3.1.3.2. Together with industry, consider potential to further expand aquaculture production	Medium term	Number of new farms	1
3.1.3.3. Support Greater Whitsunday Food Network, farmers markets and expansion of food-processing	Annual	Number of farmers markets and annual production	26
3.1.3.4. Support Growing Greater Whitsunday Agrifood Committee projects to expand agribusiness in the region	Annual	Number of new businesses	2

3.1.4. TOURISM

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.1.4.1. Work with Mackay Tourism to develop more commissionable tourism product and 'shovel-ready' projects. These could include indigenous experiences, Great Barrier Reef experiences (i.e. sailing and fishing) and other experiences around Mackay, Hibiscus Coast, the Pioneer Valley, Sarina and southern beaches.	Annual	Number of new businesses	2
3.1.4.2. Consider business support and potential grant programs for tourism product development	Short-term	Program identified	1
3.1.4.3. Attract large events through the Mackay Region Events Strategy and Invest Mackay Events and Conference Attraction Program	Annual	Number of events, attendance and economic impact	10
3.1.4.4. Support Greater Whitsunday Food Network and RDA to develop on farm visitor experiences	Short-term	Number of new experiences	5
3.1.4.5. Secure funding and support the development of Pioneer Valley Mountain Bike Park	Short-term	Pioneer Valley Mountain Bike Park developed	1
3.1.4.6. Support the development of Mackay as an RV Friendly Destination and leverage for maximum benefits	Short-Medium Term	RV Friendly Designation attained	1

3.1.5. HEALTHCARE AND ALLIED SERVICES

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.1.5.1. Promote opportunities to expand aged care and retirement living	Annual	Number of new investments	1
3.1.5.2. Explore and support opportunities to expand clinical research	Annual	Number of new initiatives	1
3.1.5.3. Together with industry, identify demand and needs for allied services and promote future development	Annual	Number of new investments	1
3.1.5.4. Support industry (through the Mackay Regional Strategic Health PACT) to better address and manage current shortfall in workforce	Annual	Number of meetings	4

3.1.6. SPORT AND RECREATION

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.1.6.1. Work with CQU and other partners to develop additional infrastructure to support sport and recreation opportunities and event attraction	Annual	Number of meetings	4
3.1.6.2. Implement funded recommendations from Recreational Fishing Strategy	Short-Medium Term	Strategy implemented	1
3.1.6.3. Develop and prepare the Mackay Region Camping and Leisure Review (and implement recommendations)	Short-term	Review conducted	1

3.1.7. AVIATION

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.1.7.1. Support the development of the Qantas Pilot Academy	Short-term	Pilot Academy established	1
3.1.7.2. Support the Mackay Airport to develop international freight services	Annual	Number of meetings	4
3.1.7.3. Support the Mackay Airport to develop aviation support infrastructure and activities	Annual	Number of meetings	4

3.1.8. INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.1.8.1. Support Study Greater Whitsunday to expand international education opportunities	Annual	Number of international students	20% increase
3.1.8.2. Support CQU and James Cook University to attract more international students	Annual	Number of international students	20% increase

3.1.9. INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.1.9.1. Support Split Spaces to provide infrastructure and to encourage business start-ups and innovation through programs and events	Annual	Number of business start-ups	10
3.1.9.2. Support collaborative initiatives between universities and regional businesses to foster innovation and commercialisation of products and services	Short-term	Number of industry university projects	2

3.2. ASSIST LOCAL BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRY

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
3.2.1. Monitor future industrial land needs and support and advocate the State Government to progress the Rosella Industrial Estate	Short-term	Complete investigation	1
3.2.2. Engage with local businesses and business associations (Chamber of Commerce, UDIA, Canegrowers, etc.) to understand and support business needs and priorities	Annual	Number of meetings	50
3.2.3. Provide quarterly economic updates (and maintain up to date database of statistics)	Annual	Number of quarterly updates	4
3.2.4. Support local business workshops and seminars that promote skill and business development outcomes	Annual	Number of workshops (and attendance)	12
3.2.5. Refer local businesses to State/ Commonwealth Government assistance programs (export programs, start-up programs, grant programs, etc.)	Annual	Number of referrals	24
3.2.6. Continue to provide Façade Improvement Program	Annual	Number of projects and investment value	10
3.2.7. Continue placemaking efforts across Mackay and other townships and centres	Annual	Number of projects	4



4. Workforce and Skills Development



4.1. SUPPORTING UPSKILLING OF RESIDENTS

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
4.1.1. Support exchanges between business/industry and training providers to ensure local workforce has local future career pathways and priority industry sectors are supported	Annual	Number of meetings	4
4.1.2. Support GW3 and local educational and training providers to investigate, identify and prepare for the skills required today and into the future	Short-term	Project completed	1
4.1.3. Continue to implement the Regional Skills and Investment Strategy to connect local businesses with local training programs	Short-term	Number of employees in training	100

4.2. ATTRACTING WORKFORCE

Strategy/Action	Delivery Time frame	Measure	Target
4.2.1. Support the creation of promotional materials that demonstrate the benefit of living in Mackay and highlights the available social infrastructure (housing, education, healthcare, etc.)	Annual	Promotional materials completed	1
4.2.2. Work with partners to develop 'Welcome to Mackay' package of local information to support recruitment of workers to the region (in areas of need, i.e. currently healthcare and METS)	Annual	Package completed	1
4.2.3. Promote and distribute 'Welcome to Mackay' packages to local businesses and industry partners	Annual	Number of packages	1000
4.2.4. Create positive media statements regarding the liveability of Mackay	Annual	Number of statements	24
4.2.5. Together with partners, conduct a regional marketing campaign in key interstate workforce markets regarding the benefits of moving to Mackay	Short-term	Campaign conducted (and number of people reached)	1
4.2.6. Continue to invest into community infrastructure and programs that enhance the liveability of Mackay	Annual	Number of projects	6

Source: Lucid Economics

8. Measuring and Tracking Success

In order to monitor progress of this strategy, Council will track a range of economic metrics as well as progress made in regard to its annual action plan.

This dual perspective is required, as Council (nor any other government agency) does not have control of the economy and therefore cannot be responsible for economic outcomes. However, Council wishes to influence the economy and encourage employment creation and investment. As such, it should monitor and track the activities that Council can control (i.e. annual action plan).

Through tracking its annual activities, Council can demonstrate the activities that have taken place that

they have initiated. At the same time, monitoring the economy will help to track the ultimate desired outcome; jobs and investment.

Council will provide a quarterly economic update that tracks relevant economic metrics as well as provide an annual economic update or 'State of the Mackay Region'. Tracking the economy in this manner (as well as on-going engagement with stakeholders) will allow the annual action plan to adapt and change over time (as it should).

The structure of the strategy will provide on-going guidance and direction in terms of overall activity and efforts.



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