



INVEST MACKAY

Economic Development Strategy 2025 - 2030

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

Mackay Regional Council (council) thanks all stakeholders involved in the development of this Strategy, including members of the community, government, peak bodies and business owners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Yuwi People and we pay our respects to Elders past and present and to the young emerging leaders.



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The Economic Development Strategy 2025 - 2030 will be supported by a detailed Action Plan that will guide implementation activities over the next five years.

MAYOR'S FOREWORD

A Message from the Mayor

Mackay is a region that is on the move.

The resources and agricultural industries in our region continue to underpin our success, but they are ever evolving. Our communities are growing, our economy is diversifying and we are excited by the opportunities that are emerging. The Mackay Economic Development Strategy 2025 - 2030 builds on this optimism and demonstrates council's commitment to ensuring that this momentum continues – and that it delivers real, lasting benefits for our residents, businesses and future generations.

The Mackay region has a unique and strong story to tell, demonstrating strength and resilience and the ability to capitalise on opportunity. We are home to world-leading industries, dynamic small businesses, a highly skilled workforce and one of the most enviable lifestyles in Australia.

This Strategy sets out a clear roadmap to drive investment, to support existing local businesses and embrace innovation and diversification. With a clear

response to the challenges of today, we want to position the Mackay region as a leader for emerging industries.


Council has developed this Strategy in close consultation with our local businesses, industry leaders, education and training providers, economic development partners and government. It is a collaboration that reflects our shared vision for economic development, which will continue the success our region has always been known for.

Economic development doesn't happen in isolation, and this document will show that by working together we will build a stronger, more connected and more competitive region.




Mayor Greg Williamson
Mackay Regional Council



 CQUniversity and BHP partnership precision welding trainee



MACKAY IS ONE OF THE NATION'S
MOST **DIVERSE REGIONS** AND
HOME TO A GROWING LIST OF
FUTURE-FOCUSED INDUSTRIES.
BUSINESSES VIEW MACKAY AS
AN EXCITING PLACE TO
INVEST AND DO BUSINESS.

 QUT's Mackay Renewable Biocommodities Pilot Plant in Mackay

INTRODUCTION

About this Strategy

Economic development is a transformative process focused on attracting and growing businesses and investment, creating new and diverse employment opportunities and making the community a vibrant and sought after place to live.

This Economic Development Strategy 2025 - 2030 (EDS or the Strategy) is focused on enabling economic development through the delivery of initiatives and priorities that are high value, high impact and capable of creating a 'step-change' in the Mackay economy.

The outcome of effective economic development includes:

- Greater regional economic resilience, which builds on competitive strengths.
- The creation of high value, high paid jobs.
- Attraction of external investment and encouraging reinvestment.
- Wealth creation.
- Improved quality of life and region liveability.
- Investment in 'region-shaping' projects, initiatives and infrastructure.

A staged approach was adopted in the development of the Strategy, which incorporated detailed research, analysis and engagement with a broad range of stakeholders.

1

Situational Analysis

Establishment of the economic baseline for the region and detailed assessment of market trends and prevailing economic opportunities for Mackay.

2

Stakeholder Consultation

Engagement with key stakeholders through consultations, industry workshops and briefing sessions to gain insights important for the economic future of Mackay.

3

Strategy Development

Consolidation of stakeholder insights and research outcomes to determine the key economic principles, strategic priorities, initiatives and projects for the region.

4

Action Plan

Definition of key actions and activities to implement the Strategy and development of targets, measures and responsibilities.

Council's Role in Economic Development

Economic development is a shared responsibility and is not undertaken in isolation by council. It requires the collaborative and collective effort of key stakeholders across all three levels of government, local businesses, peak bodies, asset owners, investors and the community.

Council plays a pivotal role in enabling economic growth by facilitating the delivery of strategic projects and infrastructure and by fostering an environment that attracts and supports investment. While council's

leadership is essential, the contribution of industry is equally critical. The sustained investment and innovation of local businesses operating within the region will be fundamental to driving long-term economic outcomes.

Council, in collaboration with the Economic Development and Growth Strategic Advisory Committee (EDGSAC), will lead the implementation of the Strategy. This partnership will focus on prioritising and advancing the recommendations outlined in the Strategy and associated Action Plan, with the overarching goal of fostering enduring economic growth and enhancing community wellbeing.



Advocate and promote the region and the interests and priorities of industry and the community.



Plan the delivery of precincts with a supportive regulatory environment that encourages investment into projects and initiatives.



Source and allocate funding for enabling infrastructure and services that remove barriers to progress and create growth opportunities.



Plan and deliver fit-for-purpose services, programs and projects that drive economic development.



Promote collaboration and connection within the region by bringing together stakeholders, community members and organisations to pursue common goals.

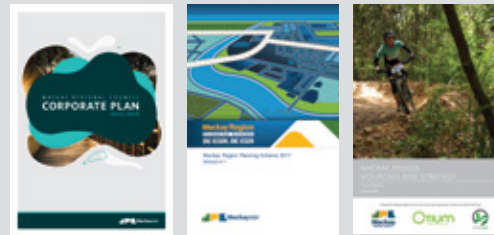
THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Council recognises that effective economic development requires collaboration and coordinated action.

This Strategy has been informed by, and seeks to complement the work that has already been completed by organisations such as Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3), Regional Development Australia Greater Whitsundays (RDAGW) and various Queensland and federal government agencies to inform the future direction for the Mackay region.

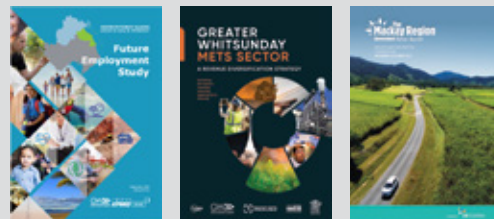
In reviewing the various strategic documents and plans, several key themes have emerged that informed the development of the Strategy, including:

- Targeted diversification of the economy is critical to support future resilience and stability through a larger and stronger economic base.
- Job creation and skill development requires careful planning to support the needs of emerging and traditional industries.
- The transition of the energy industry and growth of renewables presents several key sector opportunities that leverage the existing expertise and capabilities in the region.
- Expanding the existing biomanufacturing and advanced manufacturing capabilities will be important to support traditional industries in the region, such as sugarcane and raw sugar production.
- Enabling infrastructure developments and upgrades, such as water, energy, transport (road, rail, air and sea ports) and digital connectivity, are critical to attract new investment and support economic expansion.
- Liveable communities and enhanced livelihoods will underpin the attraction of people to the region to live, work and play, which in turn will be important to support the workforce needs of the future.



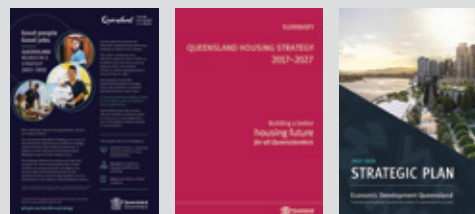
Local government strategies and plans including:

Mackay Regional Council Corporate Plan 2022 - 2027, Mackay Region Planning Scheme, Mackay Region Mountain Bike Strategy.



Regional strategies and frameworks including:

Greater Whitsunday Alliance Future (GW3) Employment Study, Greater Whitsunday METS Sector Revenue Diversification Strategy and Mackay Isaac Destination Tourism Plan.



State Government strategies and frameworks including:

Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022 - 2032, Queensland Housing Strategy 2017 - 2027, Queensland Government Infrastructure Pipeline and Economic Development Queensland Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026.



National strategies and policies including:

Infrastructure Australia's Infrastructure Priority List, Australia's Critical Minerals Strategy 2023 - 2030 and Delivering Ag2030.

Sample of reviewed strategies; a broader analysis was conducted.

THE MACKAY STORY

The Mackay region, located on Queensland's eastern coast, lies approximately halfway between Brisbane and Cairns.

Home to more than 128,000 residents, it features a diverse mix of urban, coastal, rural and industrial communities. The council area extends from Bloomsbury in the north to Eungella in the west and Koumala in the south.

Mackay city functions as the principal service centre for the broader Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday region, providing essential healthcare, government, education, retail and business services. The region plays a vital role in Queensland's economy, supported by its strong agricultural base and strategic support for the resources sector.

Mackay is one of Australia's leading sugar-producing regions and continues to contribute significantly to beef production and other crops. It is also recognised as the Southern Hemisphere's leading industrial hub for mining equipment, technology and services (METS), with a global reputation for developing high quality products

and services that support major mining operations in the Bowen and Galilee Basins.

Building on its traditional strengths, Mackay's economy is evolving in response to changing global demand for energy, critical minerals, food and fuel. Emerging industries such as biomanufacturing, renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and critical mineral processing are gaining momentum and unlocking new opportunities. These sectors are well-aligned with the region's established industrial capabilities and highly skilled workforce.

Strategically located with well-developed transport infrastructure – including major highways, rail networks, Mackay Airport and key seaports such as Mackay Port, Hay Point and Dalrymple Bay – the region is well-positioned to meet rising domestic and international demand for commodities, services and products.

With a stable economic foundation, increasing industry diversification and strong logistics networks, the Mackay region is poised to play an increasingly significant role in Queensland's future economic development.



A REGION OF PROSPERITY

NATURAL ADVANTAGES



TROPICAL COASTAL CLIMATE



LAND AVAILABILITY (INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURAL)



RICH IN RESOURCES



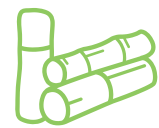
ABUNDANT WATER

POPULATION

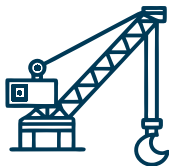
2024	2046
Mackay 128,361	Mackay 159,361
MIW 192,302	MIW 241,429
Source: ABS, 2024	Source: QGS0, 2023

THE MACKAY REGION PROVIDES AROUND

ONE-THIRD OF AUSTRALIA'S SUGAR PRODUCTION



Source: Mackay Sugar



PORT THROUGHPUT IN 2025

The Port of Hay Point is one of the world's largest coal export ports

Source: NQBP, FY25

TONNES
96.2M
100% COAL EXPORTS

MACKAY PORT 3.4M TONNES

Fuel – 1.78M Sugar – 979k Grain – 245k

TOP 3 CARGO



MINING INFLUENCE

75,936 JOBS

in Greater Whitsunday region are directly or indirectly supported by mining

Source: Queensland Resources Council



GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT IN 2024

MACKAY

\$14.75B

Source: Remplan, 2024

COMPARED TO MIW

\$50.2B

Source: Remplan, 2024

TOP 6 INDUSTRIES BY GROSS VALUE ADDED IN 2024

Mining - \$5.8B	41.1%
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services - \$1.3B	9.6%
Health Care & Social Assistance - \$930.1M	6.6%
Construction - \$868.8M	6.2%
Transport, Postal & Warehousing - \$704.3M	5%
Manufacturing - \$667.1M	4.8%

Source: Remplan, 2024

TOP 6 INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT IN 2024

Health Care & Social Assistance - 8,324	15.3%
Retail Trade - 5,662	10.4%
Construction - 5,006	9.2%
Education & Training - 4,471	8.2%
Manufacturing - 3,737	6.8%
Transport, Postal & Warehousing - 3,635	6.7%

Source: Remplan, 2024



GRP PER CAPITA IN 2024

MACKAY

\$121,209

Source: Remplan, 2024

QUEENSLAND

\$99,046

Source: Remplan, 2024

OVERNIGHT TOURISM IN MACKAY IN 2024

EXPENDITURE

\$666.3M

1.2M VISITORS | 55% BUSINESS

Source: Tourism & Events Queensland, 2024



THE ECONOMIC ENGINE

The Mackay economy is powered by a set of foundational industries that serve as its economic engine, namely resources, METS and the agriculture industry. These sectors not only underpin the region's current economic performance but also provide a strong platform for future growth and diversification.

While there are no active mining operations within Mackay's local government borders, the mining sector continues to play a pivotal role in sustaining the regional economy. Mackay stands tall as one of the world's leading export hubs for steel-making metallurgical coal, supporting operations in the nearby Bowen and Galilee Basins.

Interlinked with the mining industry, the region's METS sector has become a globally recognised hub of

engineering, manufacturing, technical and servicing expertise. Mackay is home to highly specialised and skilled METS organisations that design, manufacture, maintain, innovate and export across the mining and industrial value-chain.

Agriculture is another vital pillar of Mackay's economy. The region is responsible for one-third of the nation's sugarcane production, with flow-on activities in sugar refining, ethanol production, renewable energy generation and emerging biomanufacturing operations. The agricultural sector is also supported with contributions from horticulture, beef cattle and aquaculture.

Together, these industries form a strong, yet evolving, economic base for Mackay.

RESOURCES AND MINING

SERVICES THE LARGEST METALLURGICAL COAL DEPOSITS IN AUSTRALIA

37% OF REGION'S TOTAL GROSS VALUE ADDED

60% OF REGIONAL EXPORTS ARE MINING RELATED

While the changing energy industry is reshaping the resources sector, metallurgical coal is expected to remain in high demand globally and will continue to drive Mackay's economy.

MINING EQUIPMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES

MACKAY IS A WORLD LEADER IN RESOURCES TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

46.3% OF GREATER WHITSUNDAY'S ECONOMIC OUTPUT FROM MINING AND METS

19.4% OF GREATER WHITSUNDAY'S WORKFORCE IN MINING AND METS

Mackay's METS sector will continue to help shape the future of the mining industry, facilitating the pathway towards innovation, automation and optimisation.

AGRICULTURE

LARGEST NUMBER OF BUSINESSES BY INDUSTRY IN MACKAY

1/3 OF AUSTRALIA'S TOTAL SUGAR PRODUCTION

30% OF POWER SOURCED FROM BAGASSE COGENERATION SUGAR PLANT

The rise of biomanufacturing, the conversion of biomass resources (such as sugar) into high-value products, presents a transformative opportunity for the Mackay region.

Source: REMPLAN 2024, NQBP Corporation, Invest Mackay, Mackay Regional Council Published Regional Profile, Greater Whitsunday Alliance



Mackay is the Home to Australia's Leading METS Hub

The Paget Industrial Estate isn't just a hub, it's the engine room of Australia's METS sector. From mining technology to advanced engineering, this industrial precinct powers high-value jobs from Mackay to Brisbane and beyond.

Paget is evolving as the region's METS businesses diversify into new markets, such as critical minerals and renewables. This evolution is fuelled by the

Resources Centre of Excellence (RCOE), a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to fostering research, delivering training and collaboration within the resources sector. Looking ahead, Steven Boxall, RCOE CEO, is "excited to implement the RCOE Stage 2: Future Industries Hub, to capture, incubate and grow the industries of the future, putting both our region and Queensland in the box seat to drive low carbon innovation. In the past year, more than 25,000 people have used the RCOE facilities, from more than 500 companies."



 Resources Centre of Excellence in Mackay

THE PATH AHEAD

Growth Opportunities

Mackay's economy is transforming, shaped by evolving global demands and rapid advancements in technology and automation.

New and expanding industries such as biomanufacturing, critical mineral processing, construction and eco-tourism are expected to gain momentum and open up new opportunities for the region. These sectors complement Mackay's traditional industries and leverage existing expertise and capabilities in the region. Supporting these growth areas will pave the way for a more diversified and resilient economy and creation of new employment and investment opportunities.

Biomanufacturing

With a world-leading sugar industry, abundant feedstock, established distribution networks and highly skilled technical workforce, the Mackay region is rapidly emerging as a hub for biomanufacturing in Australia.

Recent analysis by Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3) projects that the biomanufacturing sector is on track to contribute more than \$4 billion to gross state product by 2035, presenting an enormous opportunity for Mackay.

Capitalising on this future growth, the Queensland Government is aiming to establish a Future Foods BioHub in Mackay. Led by industry, the BioHub will focus on advanced biomanufacturing technologies to produce alternative foods, protein products and plant

extractives. Cauldron Ferm's future development in the region further strengthens Mackay's biomanufacturing industry. This new industrial facility will be the first and largest end-to-end contract manufacturer for precision fermented bioproducts in the Asia-Pacific region. It will supply key inputs across diverse sectors including food, nutrition, materials, beauty, personal care, chemicals and biofuels.

These developments complement the region's existing capabilities in bioproducts and biotechnologies, including the Mackay QUT Renewable Biocommodities Pilot Plant, Mackay Sugar's renewable bagasse cogeneration plant and Wilmar's BioEthanol facility.

Critical Minerals and Energy Transition

The Mackay region is strategically positioned to lead Queensland's energy transition and critical minerals development, underpinned by its globally recognised METS sector.

With global demand for critical minerals projected to exceed \$2.5 trillion by 2050, Mackay's capabilities in geological mapping, precision extraction, downstream processing and advanced manufacturing presents significant opportunities across the value chain.

Infrastructure such as RCOE FlexiLab in Paget strengthens Mackay's role in piloting and scaling critical mineral processing technologies.

The rapid growth of the renewable energy sector also presents significant opportunities for Mackay's METS businesses. National commitments to net zero emission by 2050 are driving substantial investment in clean energy infrastructure. Mackay's METS sector offers highly transferable skills in construction, operations and maintenance – well-suited to renewable energy projects.

The region's proximity to the Port of Mackay and access to national logistics networks further enhance its capacity to support Queensland's decarbonisation agenda, while advancing regional economic growth, diversification and long-term workforce resilience.



Mackay's Emerging Biomanufacturing Industry

Mackay, long celebrated as Australia's 'sugar capital', is now at the forefront of a transformative shift towards sustainable biomanufacturing. With its rich agricultural heritage and abundant biomass resources, Mackay is poised to become a leading region in the bioeconomy.

"Mackay is a one-of-a-kind place. It offers amazing feedstock, a skilled and motivated workforce, and a progressive community. These strengths make it the perfect hub for Australia's biomanufacturing industry," stated Michele Stansfield, CEO of Cauldron Ferm.

"We're proud to be working alongside local leaders to establish the infrastructure here in Mackay that will power the global bioeconomy."

Cauldron Ferm, a next-generation biomanufacturer headquartered in Orange, NSW, is advancing plans for a state-of-the-art precision fermentation manufacturing facility in Mackay. Once complete, it will be the largest of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region.

This landmark project is supported by the Queensland Government through its Industry Partnership Program and will be strategically located within Mackay's State Development Area (SDA). The SDA will leverage Mackay's efficient and mature agricultural strengths to support the establishment of industries critical to the global shift to net zero - such as biomanufacturing, renewable energy and sustainable aviation fuel.

Housing, Worker Accommodation and Construction

The shortage of residential housing and short-term accommodation in Mackay is becoming an increasingly critical challenge, especially as the region experiences sustained growth.

This shortage is driven by a combination of factors, including population growth, low rental vacancy rates and rising construction costs, all of which have contributed to the undersupply of available housing.

Future industrial and commercial investment in key growth areas such as Paget, Mackay Waterfront Priority Development Area (PDA) and Mackay SDA, will further increase demand for diverse housing options.

To address this growing demand, a coordinated and strategic uplift in housing infrastructure is essential. This should include a range of housing types – such as detached dwellings, apartments, affordable and social

housing and short-term accommodation – to meet the needs of residents, temporary workers, business travellers and the region's tourism market.

The scale and diversity of required infrastructure presents a significant pipeline of opportunities for construction and development companies to establish or expand operations in the region.

This growth will also drive demand for skilled trades and construction workers, contributing to workforce development and regional job creation. It also opens the door for innovation, encouraging the adoption of modern construction methods such as modular building, prefabrication and sustainable design practices.

Proactively addressing these challenges is critical to unlocking Mackay's economic potential and ensuring the region remains competitive, resilient, and liveable.

Visitor Economy and Tourism

Recreational tourism in the Mackay region is experiencing growth, driven by access to expansive natural assets including national parks, coastal areas and marine environments that support nature-based and low-impact tourism.


Mackay's strong business tourism market creates a clear opportunity to grow recreational tourism by encouraging business travellers to extend their stay, return with family, or explore local attractions.

A key development is Stage 1 of the Finch Hatton mountain bike trails network (Finch Hatton MTB), which includes 14-kilometres of trails, a pump track and amenities at the trailhead. The proposed Stage 2 of the project, will offer world-class mountain bike trails capable of attracting international events and visitors to Mackay.

The Mackay Waterfront PDA also has the potential to significantly boost the region's visitor and tourism economy, particularly along the river and beachfront areas. The vision for these precincts is to create vibrant, activated waterfront destinations attracting investment in short stay accommodation and commercial activities.

The region also continues to offer marine-based experiences such as river cruises, jet boat rides and charter fishing trips. Council is actively implementing strategies to grow tourism in more niche markets such as recreational fishing, recreational vehicle (RV) travel and conferences and events.



 Broken River in Eungella



Mackay's Natural Assets Provide Huge Eco-Tourism Opportunity

Mackay's pristine landscapes are unlocking exciting ecotourism opportunities, with Finch Hatton MTB leading the charge.

The emerging trail network is already attracting domestic and international riders and delivering clear social and economic returns to the region. Since the opening of Stage 1 of Finch Hatton MTB in April 2024, the trails have attracted approximately 29,700 riders (well exceeding expectations), providing a substantial boost to local tourism and benefiting businesses in Finch Hatton and Eungella.

Local operator, Off Camber Mountain Biking, has experienced these impacts firsthand. Managing Director, Leah Stevenson explains, "the growing trail network

is catalysing local development. As the trail network expands and visitor numbers increase, local businesses can grow and new tourism offerings can emerge. We're already seeing new accommodation options, from glamping retreats to premium eco-lodges, being built to meet growing demand."

Stage 2 of the project will add approximately 82-kilometres of trails, unlocking Mackay's potential to deliver unique, authentic experiences and drive a wave of regional adventure tourism. Upon full completion, the trail network is expected to draw an additional 31,000 individual trail users annually, including 5,000 international riders. This influx is projected to generate \$18.1 million in visitor spending and create more than 110 full-time equivalent jobs.



Mountain bike rider at Finch Hatton MTB

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

The Strategy was developed in collaboration with Traditional Owners, key government stakeholders, economic advocacy groups, industry leaders and business owners. Stakeholder consultation formed an important part in developing the vision and identifying the economic priorities for the region.

Several industry workshops were facilitated to validate the strategic framework and to expand upon the priorities and initiatives that will drive the Strategy forward.

The views of stakeholders regarding the priorities for supporting economic expansion in the region were wide and varied. However, several common themes emerged that were seen as critical to driving economic change over the next five years.



OUR FUTURE

Strategic Framework and Priorities

The Strategy sets a clear vision and priorities that will guide the expansion of the economy in the Mackay region. Set over a five-year horizon, the Strategy provides a cohesive plan that will be delivered through a range of tailored initiatives and actions. It is designed to guide economic decision making and policy direction for council, industry, advocacy bodies and government agencies.

The Strategy includes four key economic priorities, that are supported by a range of initiatives to guide the region's future economic transformation. Each initiative has specific actions that are required to deliver tangible outcomes for the community. A detailed Action Plan has been developed to support the Strategy.

The Strategy responds to the key issues identified by stakeholders and leverages the region's many strengths and competitive advantages.



Vision for the Future

Mackay's future prosperity will continue to be anchored in its traditional industries - mining, METS and agriculture. These sectors have long been the backbone of the region's economy and will remain central to its identity and growth.

However, the true potential for transformative economic development lies in how Mackay leverages its existing skills, infrastructure and industry know-how to unlock new opportunities.

Emerging sectors such as biomanufacturing, critical mineral processing and eco-tourism offer exciting avenues for diversification and innovation. The growth of these industries and generation of new projects, will be key to driving step-change economic outcomes for the region.

To realise this vision, Mackay must cultivate a growing, skilled workforce and foster strong leadership across government, industry and the community. Building workforce capability and attracting new talent will be essential to meet the evolving needs of both traditional and emerging sectors.

Equally important is robust regional advocacy. Mackay will need coordinated leadership to secure the investment, infrastructure and policy support required to grow its economy.

Throughout consultation, the Mackay community consistently emphasised that economic development must deliver tangible social benefits. Investment in Mackay should not only drive growth but also improve outcomes for the entire community, ensuring that progress is inclusive, equitable and aligned with regional values.

Economic Principles

The economic principles communicate the key values for the region and reflect those matters that are most important to the community leaders in guiding economic decision making.

These principles were considered when identifying, deciding and agreeing upon economic initiatives, actions and priority projects for the region and must continue to be reflected in future decision making.



Innovation

Innovation and organisational excellence will be important drivers of growth. Supporting new and better ways of doing business, underpinned by first-in-region or first-in-world innovation, will facilitate better economic outcomes across sectors.



Social and Community Prosperity

It is imperative that investment and economic development considers the social impacts and translates into improved community outcomes and enhanced liveability that benefits everyone in the region.



Collaboration and Planning

Knowledge, resource sharing and a holistic approach to economic planning between community members, businesses and industries is critical for achieving economic development.



Sustainability

Sustainability considers not only environmental factors, but also economic ones. Sustainable economic development that protects our natural attributes and pristine environment will enhance the region's prosperity.



Innovation for a Diversified Future

Mackay's world-class METS sector is leading the charge into emerging industries. At the forefront is DGH Engineering, a Mackay-based company, which is playing a central role in the development of a critical minerals pilot processing plant at Mackay's Future Industries Hub.

Through the application of advanced engineering to the processing of minerals essential for renewable energy,

batteries and high-tech manufacturing, DGH is helping to position Mackay as a hub for the next generation of industrial innovation. As Quality Assurance Manager of DGH Engineering, Glen Lamb explains, being involved in the pilot allows DGH to "apply our skills in a high-growth, future-facing industry while supporting regional manufacturing and job creation".

Through diversification, companies like DGH are unlocking new markets, building resilience and helping future-proof Mackay's economy.



 DGH Engineering in Paget, Mackay

ECONOMIC PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

1.0 Advocacy and Leadership

Strong advocacy and leadership are essential to secure the investments, infrastructure and policy support Mackay needs to grow its economy.

As the Australian and Queensland Governments focus increasingly on industry diversification, energy transition and growing the resilience of regional areas, Mackay must have clearly defined priorities that are aligned to government directions and position the region as 'investment-ready'.

The Mackay region has a strong value proposition to support investment attraction from both the public and private sector, such as well-established transport links and infrastructure, proximity to powerhouse resource

basins and agricultural regions, strong traditional sectors and a skilled workforce. However, without a consistent and coordinated approach to advocacy, these advantages can be overlooked by investment decision makers.

The 'Advocacy and Leadership' economic priority establishes a unified and structured framework to guide advocacy in the Mackay region, while aligning with the priorities for the Greater Whitsunday region (including Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday local government authorities). This coordinated approach will help influence policy and investment decisions, enabling Mackay to secure the funding, infrastructure, and support required to deliver priority projects and initiatives that drive regional economic growth.

INITIATIVE 1.1

Implement a coordinated and consistent advocacy framework for the Mackay region that considers existing regional structures and strategies.

To compete for investment and government support, the Mackay region must present a clear and unified voice when advocating for projects and initiatives. The establishment of a council-led advocacy framework, which considers existing regional structures, will help to define and delineate council's role in advocacy. This will be achieved through collaboration and coordination with key stakeholders in the region.

Importantly, the implementation of a coordinated and consistent advocacy framework will ensure that Mackay's key priorities are effectively championed and will build on existing regional planning and advocacy campaigns by organisations such as Greater Whitsunday Council of Mayors, GW3 and RDAGW.



Mackay City Centre

INITIATIVE 1.2

Work in partnership with industry, state and federal governments, Greater Whitsunday leaders, Traditional Owners and Mackay business and community leaders to determine and promote regional priorities.

Council and EDGSAC will work in partnership with industry, state and federal governments, Greater Whitsunday leaders, Traditional Owners, peak body representatives and Mackay businesses to determine the priorities of the region to support future economic expansion. Once set, leaders can ensure clear and consistent messaging is portrayed to influence funding decisions, policy settings and infrastructure investments that unlock economic growth.

INITIATIVE 1.3

Refresh the profile and image of Mackay to clearly demonstrate the competitive advantages and investment opportunities in the region.

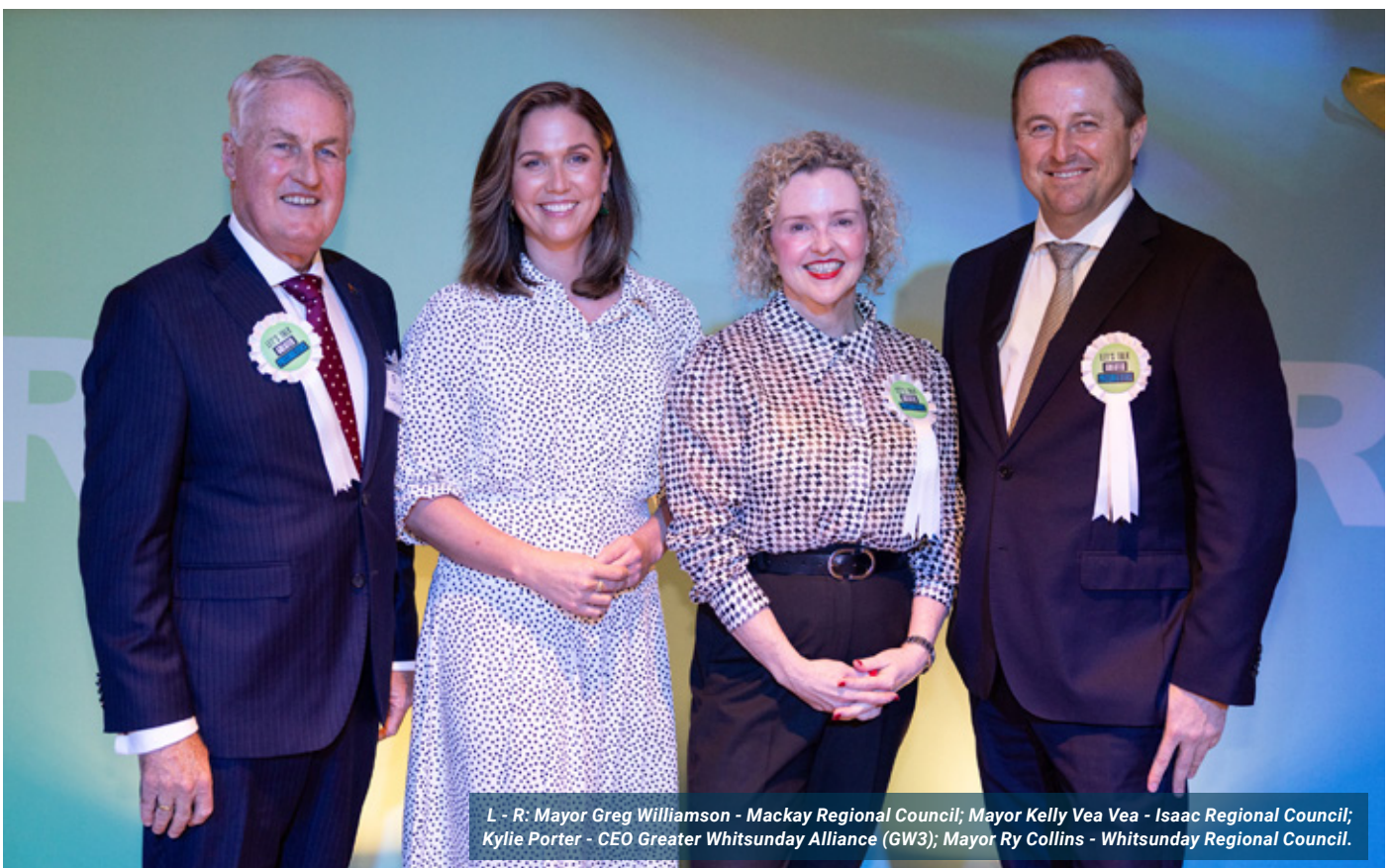
Mackay's economic narrative must evolve to highlight the emerging economic opportunities in biomanufacturing, advanced manufacturing and

ecotourism, while being cognisant and proud of the region's established strengths and competitive advantages. Refreshing and representing the identity of the region by showcasing successful projects and sharing business testimonials, particularly to metropolitan-based decision makers, will be critical to support the promotion of regional priorities. This in turn will help to attract investment and new residents to support the region's vision.

INITIATIVE 1.4

Promote the development opportunities and investment incentives that exist in Mackay.

To attract new businesses and accelerate economic activity, council must actively promote the region's development-ready precincts, such as the Mackay Waterfront PDA, as well as existing and future industrial precincts, including Paget and the Mackay SDA. In addition, investment incentives and council pathways that support development should be clearly communicated. By doing so, Mackay will strengthen its reputation as a business and development-friendly location. This initiative will help unlock private sector investment and support broader economic diversification.



L - R: Mayor Greg Williamson - Mackay Regional Council; Mayor Kelly Vea Vea - Isaac Regional Council; Kylie Porter - CEO Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3); Mayor Ry Collins - Whitsunday Regional Council.

2.0 Enabled Economic Environment

To support long-term economic growth, Mackay must ensure it creates the right environment for businesses to establish, grow and invest.

While METS and agriculture will remain vital to Mackay’s economy, the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of these sectors will be bolstered as they leverage emerging opportunities, such as biomanufacturing. However, having the right environment that enables growth will be important.

Creating an enabled economic environment includes the delivery of enabling infrastructure that supports all industries such as upgraded transport networks, enhanced digital connectivity and greater water and energy security. It also includes developing and communicating planning frameworks that support efficient development and streamlining regulation to support business growth.

At the same time, collaboration and knowledge sharing between government, businesses and industry representatives remains key to driving innovation, encouraging organisational excellence and accelerating sector development. By supporting businesses to access networks, share knowledge and adopt best practice models, council will ensure that local businesses are set up to succeed.

INITIATIVE 2.1
Upgrade and enhance regional transport connectivity and utility infrastructure to support current and future economic expansion.

Efficient and reliable infrastructure in economic precincts will underpin Mackay’s ability to grow and diversify its economy. Businesses in key industries such as METS and agriculture depend on reliable road connectivity and effective energy, digital and water utility services to operate and expand their business. Upgrading this infrastructure will reduce delays, lower business costs, improve access to national and global markets, enable businesses to diversify their offering and improve the attractiveness of the region for businesses to establish and invest.

INITIATIVE 2.2
Support regional industry partnerships to enable priority sector development and growth.

Supporting the development of stronger industry partnerships in Mackay is essential to driving growth in priority sectors such as tourism, METS, agriculture, biomanufacturing, and construction and property. Council plays a key role in facilitating these partnerships by connecting businesses, government, research institutions, and education providers. These collaborations enhance information and knowledge sharing and enable the region to better align efforts across a range of economic initiatives.

Beyond its convening role, council can support development opportunities by working with regional industry partners to expand product and service offerings, improve efficiencies, promote export market development, attract investment, and unlock value-added opportunities. Through these efforts, local industries are able to seize emerging opportunities and strengthen Mackay’s economic resilience and competitiveness.

INITIATIVE 2.3
Support Mackay’s business community to optimise operational and organisational excellence through engagement, collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Small businesses are central to Mackay’s economy. Providing targeted training programs, or taking part in government, industry, and/or specific skilling programs, will help businesses improve how they operate, whether that be through improved financial literacy, digital adoption or succession planning. By building skills and creating opportunities for collaboration and the sharing of practical knowledge across the business community, the region can lift productivity, particularly for small and medium-sized companies. Additionally, targeting support for indigenous business development will facilitate cultural business opportunities and increase economic participation, strengthening outcomes for the whole region.



Unlocking Mackay's Port Potential: A Gateway to Regional Growth

The Port of Mackay plays a critical role in the mining and agricultural supply chains, facilitating \$2.7 billion in international trade value and supporting more than 2,000 jobs in and around Mackay.

Despite the already significant contribution, the port has the potential to develop and attract a broader range of trade like containers to drive down supply chain costs and generate even more wealth for the region.


Investment to enhance wharf capability and laydown areas will attract and grow containerised cargo, Oversize Overmass (OSOM) loads and more break bulk cargo. Container capabilities at the Port of Mackay will

improve inbound mining and agricultural supply chains, while unlocking export opportunities for local and regional businesses.

These investments will strengthen the Port of Mackay's reputation as an attractive entry point for mining, agricultural, construction and energy projects.

Brendan Webb, CEO of North Queensland Bulk Ports, has emphasised the importance of investment in port capabilities. "Mackay is a critical port to enable future economic development of the Greater Whitsunday region. Investment will facilitate competitive port services for the region's existing industries and provide confidence to proponents of new projects," he said.



 Aerial photo of the Port of Mackay

3.0 Workforce Development

Mackay’s economic growth is closely tied to the availability of a skilled, adaptable and locally based workforce.

As the regional economy continues to evolve, it is essential that workforce capabilities and specialisations keep pace with the changing demands of industry, which are influenced by emerging technologies, innovation, policy shifts and global trends.

The ‘Workforce Development’ economic priority emphasises the need for a proactive approach to identifying both current and emerging workforce requirements. It calls for strong collaboration between industry, education and training providers to develop responsive, future-focused skilling programs. This priority also supports targeted workforce attraction and retention strategies, ensuring the region maintains and grows local expertise.

A key component of this priority is strengthening Mackay’s position as a desirable place to live, work and visit. By enhancing lifestyle offerings and supporting tourism development, the region can improve liveability, increasing appeal for residents and visitors alike.

Through these coordinated actions, Mackay will build its workforce capability and capacity, ensuring it is well-positioned to meet future employment opportunities and support long-term economic resilience.

INITIATIVE 3.1

Leverage existing regional workforce strategies to identify and refine the current and future workforce requirements for Mackay.

By building on existing workforce strategies, council and industry partners will identify current skill gaps and anticipate future workforce demand across key sectors like METS, agriculture and tourism. This will ensure workforce planning is targeted and responsive, helping the region prepare for industry transitions, such as the growth of renewables and biomanufacturing.

INITIATIVE 3.2

Establish programs focused on attracting and retaining workers in Mackay to support current and future workforce requirements.

As competition for skilled labour intensifies, Mackay must position itself as a destination of choice for workers and their families. Targeted attraction and retention programs, such as lifestyle and job opportunity campaigns, can help address local skill shortages and support local businesses to grow. Retention efforts and ‘growing your own’ strategies are equally important, ensuring that workers who choose Mackay can continuously upskill, build long-term careers and feel connected to the region.

INITIATIVE 3.3

Support future-focused skilling programs that prepare the regional workforce with skills and capabilities for the future.

A skilled workforce that can adapt to the evolving needs of industry is critical to Mackay’s economic future. By supporting industry and education providers to develop and deliver practical, future-focused training, the region can ensure the workforce is equipped with the right skills for current and emerging opportunities. Education and training programs may range from micro-credentialling to more formal qualifications (e.g. VET Certificate and university qualifications), tailored to meet the needs of growth sectors such as biomanufacturing and critical mineral processing. This approach will help build a resilient talent pipeline, and futureproof Mackay’s workforce through economic transitions.

INITIATIVE 3.4

Implement strategies to enhance liveability in Mackay and attract visitation.

Implementation of council strategies to attract more major events to Mackay, enhance local recreational offerings and introducing new tourism products will strengthen the liveability of Mackay for local residents

and ensure the region is a destination of choice for visitors. Improved liveability is crucial in developing Mackay to be a destination for people to 'live, work and play'.



CQUniversity is Preparing Mackay's Workforce for Tomorrow's Industries


At the heart of Mackay's workforce transformation is CQUniversity (CQU), where education today is evolving to meet tomorrow's challenges.

CQU's partnerships with local industry ensures that students are not only learning in a classroom but also developing work-ready skillsets through hands-on training with the same technologies they'll utilise in the workforce.

The Chair in Automation and Future Work Skills role, delivered in partnership by CQUniversity and BHP

Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA), explores how automation reshapes regional industries from mining to agriculture, METS, and beyond. This initiative is helping to bring people and resources together to unlock and accelerate skills, training and educational outcomes for the future.

CQUniversity Associate Vice-President North Queensland and Chair in Auto and Future Work Skill, Professor Rob Brown describes the partnership as "a gamechanger for Mackay when it comes to developing innovative training that supports future workforce requirements, particularly within the mining industry".

 CQUniversity student undertaking work experience with BMA

4.0 Precincts and Property

Key precincts such as Paget, the Mackay Waterfront PDA and the Mackay SDA are well-positioned to support the expansion of both traditional and emerging industries.

These areas offer significant potential for industrial and residential development, however, unlocking this value will require proactive engagement with industry proponents and coordinated planning to ensure land is brought to market in a way that facilitates investment and drives sustainable economic development.

Realising this potential involves aligning precinct development with regional priorities and delivering the enabling infrastructure – such as transport networks, services and digital connectivity – required to support thriving industries and communities.

The ‘Precincts and Property’ economic priority also underscores the critical role of Mackay’s construction industry in delivering the region’s future residential, commercial and industrial growth. A robust and sustainable construction sector is essential to addressing housing shortages, meeting demand for diverse accommodation options and building the infrastructure needed to support a growing economy. Without adequate residential and short-term accommodation, it will be challenging to attract and retain the skilled workforce needed across Mackay’s traditional and emerging industries.

By investing in precincts and property, Mackay can ensure that the physical infrastructure and vibrant industries are in place to support business growth, attract investment and accommodate a growing population.

INITIATIVE 4.1

Increase the supply of serviced industrial land in Mackay.

Mackay’s existing industrial precincts are a key enabler of economic activity. As demand grows for industrial land to support business expansion and new investment, proactively identifying available industrial land and areas for potential development will be critical.

INITIATIVE 4.2

Continued support of agricultural productivity in the region.

Mackay’s agricultural sector remains a cornerstone of the regional economy with industries such as sugar, beef, horticulture and aquaculture contributing to employment, exports and regional identity. As the region plans for future growth, identifying and supporting initiatives that improve agricultural productivity, cost efficiencies and innovation, will ensure these foundational industries continue to thrive.

The Mackay SDA presents a transformative opportunity to diversify the region’s sugar industry into emerging biomanufacturing and renewable industries. To capitalise on this opportunity, the industry needs to remain productive, vibrant and growing.

INITIATIVE 4.3

Review, refresh and promote the Mackay Waterfront PDA.

The Mackay Waterfront PDA represents one of the region’s most transformative opportunities to unlock high-value, mixed-use development, in turn, enhancing the liveability of the city centre. A more targeted planning approach will help prioritise infrastructure and public realm investments to create vibrant residential, commercial and recreational spaces.

Ongoing engagement with the community and prospective investors through consistent communication will be key to reinforcing the strategic significance of the Waterfront PDA and unlocking its full potential.

INITIATIVE 4.4

Plan for the activation and funding of the Mackay SDA to increase future industrial land supply.

The Mackay SDA is strategically located to support long-term industrial expansion in Mackay. Activation of the Racecourse Mill and Rosella precincts is key to unlocking investment in emerging industries such as biomanufacturing, renewables and sustainable manufacturing, while also supporting the continued growth of traditional industries.

Planning for infrastructure investment and funding pathways is necessary to develop these sites in a staged and coordinated way and ensure that the sites are 'investor-ready'. The allocation of dedicated resources to advance the development and attract businesses will be key to building a more resilient industrial base aligned to the region's competitive advantages.


INITIATIVE 4.5

Accelerate action towards addressing short and medium term residential and accommodation shortages, particularly for workers.

A shortage of housing and accommodation is a growing constraint on Mackay's economic growth. To attract and retain skilled labour, it is vital to expand residential supply, diversify housing options and support short to medium-term worker and leisure accommodation.

A region-wide assessment of current shortfalls – including residential, worker and short-term business and leisure stays – will identify key gaps. Industry engagement will help shape targeted strategies, inform advocacy and guide investment attraction. These efforts will be supported by the Mackay Region Housing Strategy, which aims to boost housing diversity, expand public and social housing, and accelerate delivery to meet workforce and visitor needs.



 Bluewater Lagoon in Mackay



Mackay: Open for Business and Ready to Deliver

Mackay is rapidly gaining a reputation as one of Queensland's most development-friendly regions, and that's no coincidence.

With an agile, outcomes-focused planning team and a commitment to reducing red tape, council is actively enabling growth and attracting investment from a variety of industries.

One such example is the experience of Coulson Operations, the team behind Kool Beanz childcare centres. In 2022, their first Mackay childcare centre, a \$6.5 million, 94-place facility, received development

approval in just four weeks. CEO of Coulson Operations, Bruce Coulson, said "to receive a development approval in four weeks is unheard of. I would challenge any council in Australia to beat that".

Backed by swift approvals, cost efficiencies and a business-friendly culture, Kool Beanz has since committed more than \$16 million across three more sites, delivering 356 new childcare spaces. Bruce Coulson added, "You have a 'can do' council and cost savings you just can't get anywhere else. Why wouldn't you want to be here?"



 Kool Beanz SUNS Harrup Park Childcare in Mackay

GROWTH-ENABLING INDUSTRIES

Four key growth-enabling industries have been identified as the greatest opportunities to drive step-change economic growth and long-term prosperity in Mackay.

The economic priorities, initiatives and priority projects outlined in the Strategy are designed to support these sectors, selected for their potential to create high-value jobs, attract investment and position Mackay competitively in national and global markets.

While these industries are a strategic focus for targeted action, Mackay's broader economic base remains vital. Continued support for healthcare, education, innovation and technology and small business is essential to maintaining regional resilience, community wellbeing and inclusive growth. These sectors contribute significantly to employment, service delivery and liveability, and their integration with emerging industries will help ensure Mackay's economy remains diverse, adaptive and future-ready.



MINING & METS

Mining and METS are foundational to Mackay's economy and will remain central to its future success. The region's competitive advantages - such as a highly skilled workforce, advanced manufacturing capabilities and strategic location - position these industries to unlock emerging opportunities in biomanufacturing, critical minerals and renewables, driving innovation, diversification and long-term economic resilience.



AGRICULTURE & BIOMANUFACTURING

The agricultural sector (primarily sugar and cattle) remains a core pillar of Mackay's economy, contributing to employment, economic output and regional identity. Despite structural challenges, the sector's established strengths - including abundant natural assets, feedstock, industry expertise and access to global markets - provides immense scope for Mackay to capitalise on biomanufacturing opportunities, as well as other value-added industries.



CONSTRUCTION & PROPERTY

Construction is a key enabler across sectors in the Mackay region, underpinning the delivery of essential infrastructure, housing and industrial growth. It plays a critical role in addressing accommodation shortages, supporting workforce attraction and driving regional investment. A strong construction sector is vital to advancing the strategy's economic priorities, unlocking growth opportunities and ensuring Mackay remains competitive and liveable.



TOURISM & EVENTS

Tourism is a priority sector for the Mackay region, driving visitor growth and regional spending. Developing new recreational attractions and events, especially those that showcase the region's natural assets, will improve liveability, extend visitor stays and support workforce attraction. A strong tourism offering strengthens the region's identity, supports emerging industries and contributes to long-term economic resilience, diversification and community wellbeing.

"FEW REGIONS IN THE WORLD CAN BOAST THE **VITAL INPUTS** TO SUPPORT MULTIPLE BILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRIES LIKE MACKAY, AND IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT **OUR REGION ADAPTS TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES** TO ENSURE A PROSPEROUS FUTURE." - GREATER WHITSUNDAY ALLIANCE

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Through engagement with industry, a number of priority projects were identified as having the potential to deliver transformational outcomes for the Mackay region. These projects are strongly aligned with the Strategy’s economic priorities and are recognised as critical enablers of future investment, supporting the growth of existing industries and attracting new business activity to the region.

LEGEND



Precincts and Property



Enabled Economic Environment



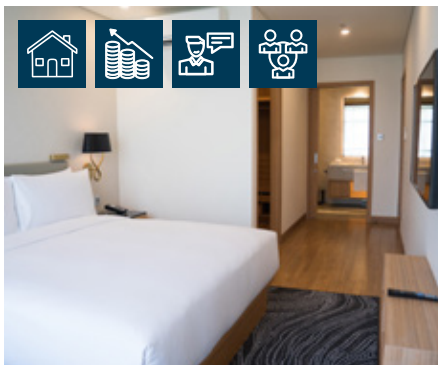
Advocacy and Leadership



Workforce Development



Port of Mackay Capabilities Project



Short-term Worker Accommodation



Mackay SDA Activation



Energy Infrastructure Enhancement



Mackay Waterfront PDA Development



Mackay Airport Intermodal Transport and Logistics Hub



Paget Expansion and Upgrade



RCOE Stage 2 Expansion



Cauldron Biomanufacturing Facility



Great Barrier Reef Arena and Sports Precinct Upgrade



Finch Hatton MTB Network Development



Digital Connectivity



Road and Transport Infrastructure

"BY **ACCELERATING PROJECTS** FROM PLANNING TO CONSTRUCTION, WE ENSURE THAT OUR INFRASTRUCTURE KEEPS PACE WITH OUR **COMMUNITY'S NEEDS** AND ECONOMIC AMBITIONS."
 - GREG WILLIAMSON
 MAYOR OF MACKAY REGIONAL COUNCIL



Great Barrier Reef Arena - Mackay's Premier Venue for Major Sporting Events

The Great Barrier Reef Arena's strategic alignment with the 2032 Brisbane Olympics through Stage 2 developments will enhance its facilities for pre-Games training and stimulate substantial economic growth through both construction and ongoing operations.

The Queensland Government has already committed \$23.5 million to GBRA Stage 2, which will deliver a major regional indoor sports centre, with capacity for a wide range of sports including basketball, netball and all-abilities sports such as wheelchair rugby.

The development will include gym and fitness facilities, as well as recovery and rehabilitation amenities like a hydrotherapy pool, designed to support athletes and community members of all ages and abilities.

Events at the arena, such as AFL and cricket matches,

draw thousands of spectators, contributing to the local economy through accommodation, dining, and other tourism-related activities. The Legends on the Lawn music festival hosted at GBRA in 2023 drew more than 8,000 fans and generated \$2.1 million in visitor spending.

Great Barrier Reef Arena CEO, Adrian Young, said, "the economic value of the precinct was enhanced by key partnerships with peak national sporting organisations, event producers, Mackay Airport and tourism bodies".

"To have been chosen to host the Australian men's team and South Africa for two international one-day cricket matches in 2025 is testament to GBRA's world-class facilities and its growing status as one of the nation's best major events destinations. It reinforces our position on the national map and provides a huge boost for local tourism, generating more employment and more economic opportunities," Adrian Young added.

 **Harrup Park in Mackay**

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

Action Plan

An accompanying Action Plan has been developed that provides specific information to guide the commitment of resources and the level of effort needed to deliver the Strategy over the next five years.

As part of the Action Plan and to support council in appropriately measuring outcomes and managing resource allocations, specific measures and targets for each action have been provided.


Implementation Approach and Governance

Successful implementation of the Strategy is grounded on a coordinated and collaborative approach between council, industry leaders, advocacy bodies, government and business owners. Leadership, advocacy and commitment by council and key stakeholders will be important to support the achievement of the vision, priorities, and outcomes detailed in this Strategy.

Accountability and Responsibilities

Primary accountability for the delivery of the Strategy resides with council. In accordance with council delegations, the Director – Planning, Growth and Sustainability will retain ongoing responsibility for the delivery of the Strategy and the key initiatives outlined within. The Director – Planning, Growth and Sustainability will be supported by council's Economic Development and Tourism team.



 Dunes in Harbour Beach in Mackay

Strategic Advisory Group

EDGSAC was established to enable industry representatives and peak bodies to come together with council to discuss strategic economic matters, projects and initiatives. EDGSAC plays a role in the delivery of the Strategy as a key advisory body to council.

While council will retain accountability and responsibility for delivery of the Strategy, EDGSAC will support through:

- Provision of guidance regarding community and industry considerations for priority projects, initiatives and actions.

- Supporting council in the delivery of actions and activities outlined in the Action Plan.
- Communication of strategic economic priorities for the region through advocacy campaigns.
- Knowledge sharing and highlighting case studies that demonstrate the outcomes of the economic priorities set in this Strategy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are critical elements of the approach to implementation of the Strategy. Tracking activities and monitoring key economic and social metrics enables council to assess and evaluate the outcomes of the Strategy.

Council will provide periodic updates on progress against agreed actions through established council reporting processes. Tracking progress will also enable annual forward plans to adapt and change over time, as needed.

Consultation

Involving relevant government, industry and advocacy body stakeholders in the identification and delivery of actions and initiatives was critical to developing a Strategy that was representative of the desires of the broader region.

The implementation of the Strategy will also be supported by ongoing consultation to enable the delivery of key actions and facilitate ongoing refinement of the Strategy and Action Plan. This consultation is recommended to be undertaken across a range of mediums and forums to ensure maximum exposure and engagement across the key stakeholder groups. A high degree of genuine engagement and transparent communication will have a higher likelihood of success and greater buy-in by stakeholder groups.





For further information, contact council's Economic Development and Tourism team on 1300 MACKAY (622 529) or business@mackay.qld.gov.au



Purple Thunder on the Pioneer River in Mackay