

Economic Development & Innovation Strategy



Table of Contents

Mayor’s Message _____	1	Objectives and Measuring Progress _____	12
Introduction _____	2	Priority Action Areas _____	13
North Burnett Economic and Innovation Profile _____	4	1. Building on Our Natural Strengths _____	14
Key Stats _____	4	2. Developing our Innovation Eco-System _____	15
Data Overview _____	6	3. Growing our Tourism Sector _____	16
Economic Strengths and Challenges _____	8	North Burnett - the Adventure Destination _____	17
Economic Strengths _____	8	4. Improving Infrastructure and Connectivity _____	18
Economic Challenges _____	8	5. Empowering Community _____	19
Community Engagement _____	9	6. Taking a Global Perspective _____	20
Vision _____	11	7. Leveraging Smart Technology _____	21
Our Economic Values _____	11	Partnership and Collaboration _____	22
		Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils (WBBROC) _____	22
		Wide Bay Burnett Economic Development Strategy _____	23
		Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation (BIEDO) _____	23
		Queensland State Government _____	23
		Case Study: Seven Horses Australia _____	24
		Case Study: Biggenden Meatworks _____	25
		Case Study: Smart Berries _____	26
		Implementation and Next Steps _____	27

Mayor’s Message



Rachel Chambers
North Burnett Mayor

North Burnett is a region of great economic success, and even greater potential.

New frontiers of prosperity, opportunity and innovation are before us. This plan, the *North Burnett Economic Development & Innovation Strategy*, charts our way forward.

We will build on our traditional strengths – agriculture, mining, tourism, and natural resources – to drive economic growth and employment.

We will leverage new trends and technology to diversify and expand our economy.

We will engage head-on with economic challenges and disruptions to ensure North Burnett’s economic strength and resilience.

The people and communities of North Burnett are our greatest economic assets. This Strategy was shaped by and for our local communities. And we are committed to new methods of collaborating with our citizens, to enhance opportunity, participation and innovation.

The future is partnership and collaboration, and North Burnett welcomes economic and innovation partners from the world over. We have immense economic capacity and are open to new modes and models of development and growth.

Already a region of exceptional opportunity, I look forward to new economic and innovation achievements for North Burnett.

Mayor Rachel Chambers
North Burnett Regional Council



Introduction

North Burnett is rich with natural resources, economic opportunity, and community strength.

Our region covers 19,700 kilometers of diverse Australian countryside, shared amongst six main townships: Biggenden, Eidsvold, Gayndah, Monto, Mt Perry, Mundubbera, and an additional 25 villages and farming catchments.

We have a long and proud history of development, prosperity and resilience. With readiness we also face challenges including distance, drought, flood and connectivity.

Always receptive to new technology and new ideas, as the digital revolution continues to disrupt and expand economies around the world, North Burnett is gearing up to make the most of emerging opportunities.

This Strategy is our commitment and our roadmap to drive ongoing economic growth and innovation in North Burnett.

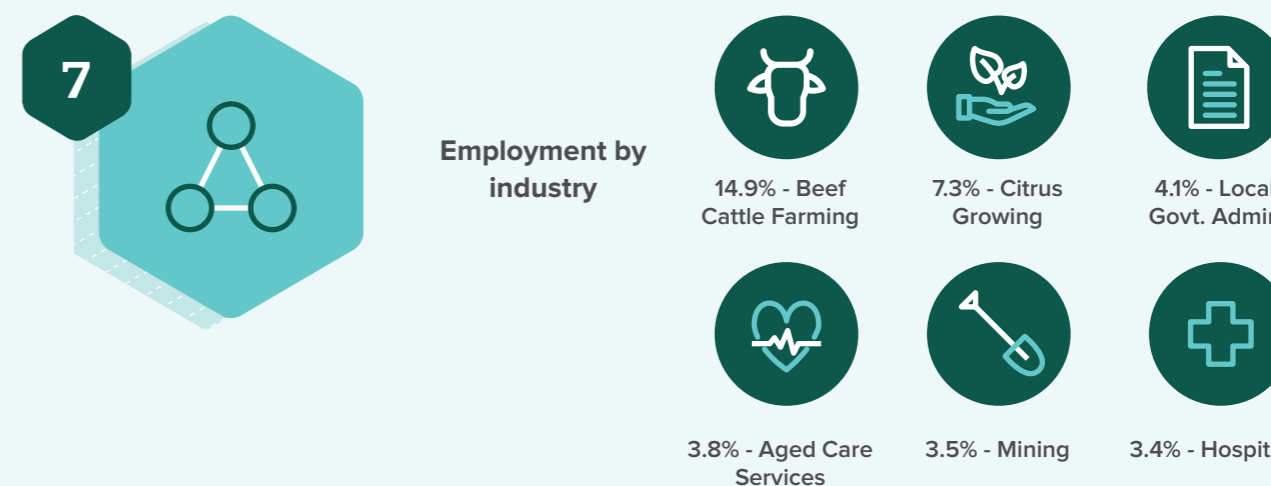
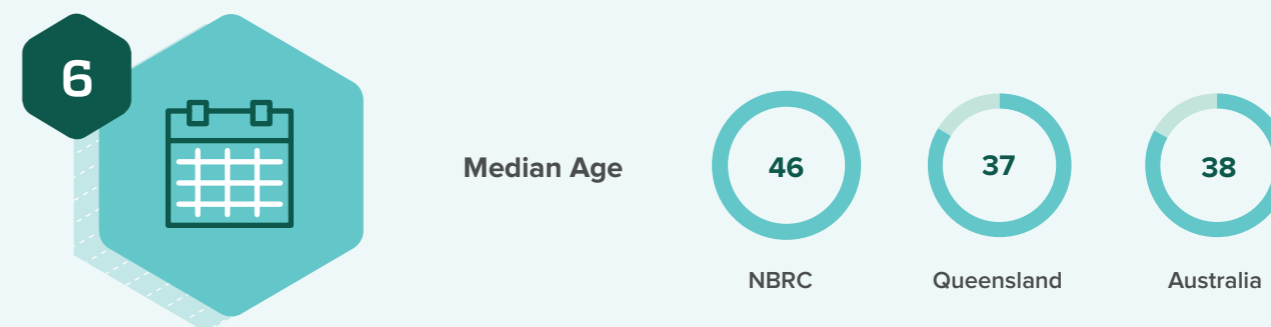
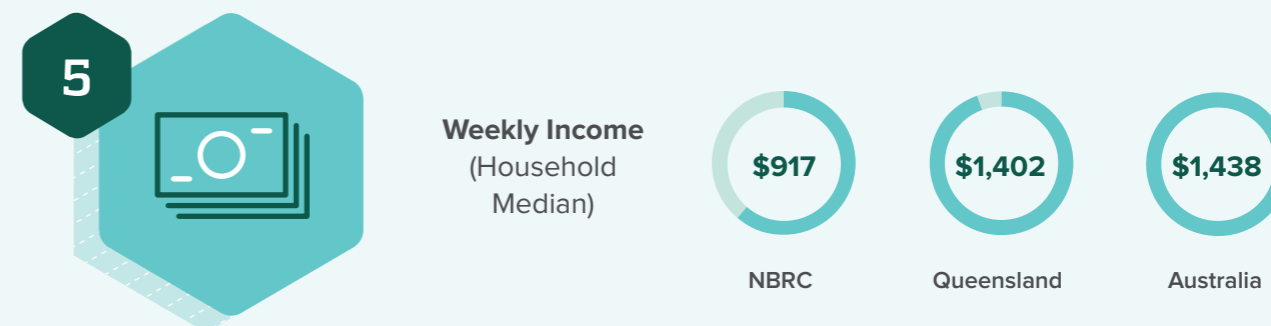
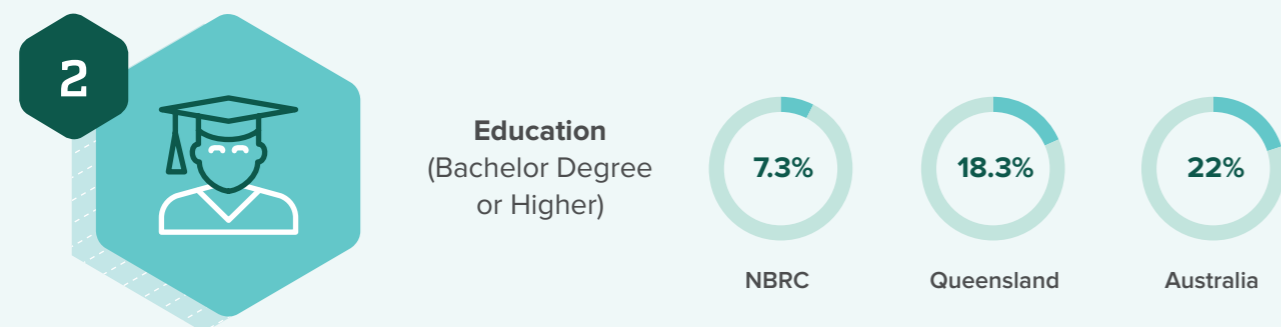
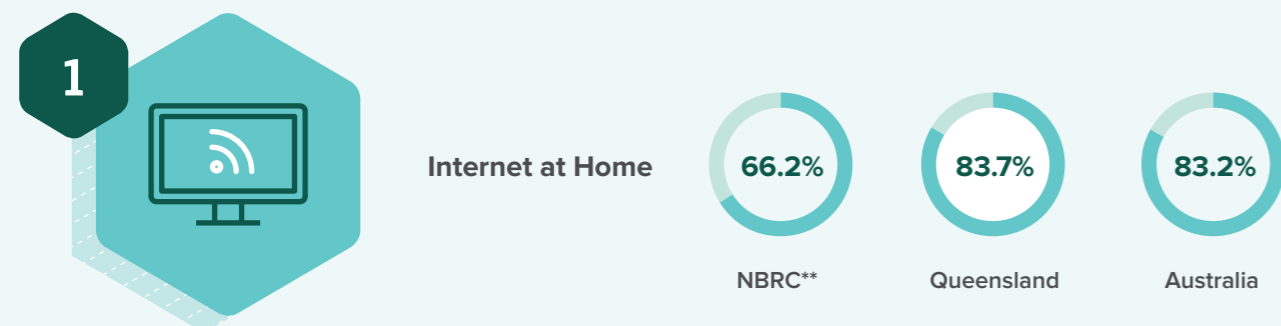
Developed based on engagement with our local community, and detailed analysis of economic/technology/demographic trends, this Strategy will position North Burnett as an innovation leader – a destination for business, investment and skills.

“North Burnett is gearing up to make the most of emerging opportunities.”



North Burnett Economic and Innovation Profile¹

This Economic Snapshot indicates a number of strengths and opportunities for North Burnett. For example, our natural resources and low unemployment rate are clear strengths. There are also opportunities to improve household internet access and our innovation capacity as a region.



1. ABS 2016 Census Quick-stats; and Regional Australia Institute, [In]Sight: Australia's Regional Competitiveness Index, 2016.

DATA OVERVIEW

1 Internet at Home

This data is collected by the ABS and refers to any member of a household accessing the internet from home using any type of connection including wireless, cable and mobile broadband.

While home internet access in North Burnett is low compared to Australia and Queensland, this statistic is perhaps better compared to other regional areas, where access rates between 65-75% are common.

Nonetheless, this is an area of improvement for North Burnett. Increasing access to technology and internet connectivity are a proven catalyst for economic growth, social inclusion and innovation.

2 Education (Bachelor Degree or Higher)

The education statistic measures the proportion of the population that holds a Bachelor Degree or higher. In general, this is a key indicator of economic capacity and outcomes.

As above, while North Burnett's percentages are below the average for Queensland and Australia, the local figures are comparable to other regional areas. Moreover, these figures do not account for a range of other vocational attainments and skills not dependent on Tertiary education.

Improving this indicator is a long-term opportunity for North Burnett. Increasing access to technology/internet and other innovative programs can help play a part.

3 National Ranking (Regional Australia Institute)

The RAI is a not-for-profit think tank devoted to understanding and developing regional Australia. The [In]Sights project is one of their major initiatives which uses a range of metrics and ABS data to compare councils across Australia and rank them from 1 to 10, with 1 being the top 10% and 10 being the lowest 10%.

The [In]Sights project shows that 'Natural Resources' are a clear strength for North Burnett with a ranking of 1 – the top 10% of all local government areas! This ranking is based on a range of metrics including employment in agriculture, minerals and energy.

On the other hand, for 'Technological Readiness' North Burnett was ranked 8, which is towards the lower end of achievement compared to all local government areas. This ranking is based on metrics related to mobile/internet connectivity and employment in technology related industries.

4 Unemployment

The unemployment rate in North Burnett is below that of Queensland and Australia. This is a good result demonstrating the broad economic strength of the region.

However, these figures can often mask various employment challenges, as it does not reflect underemployment or people who might have moved from the region to seek employment elsewhere.

5 Weekly Income (Household Median)

While employment levels are generally high in North Burnett, average weekly incomes are below the average levels for Queensland and Australia.

These figures need to be considered in context. Average incomes are generally lower in regional areas, reflecting the nature of employment and also the much lower cost of living (in comparison to the large urban centers).

6 Median Age

The median age for North Burnett is well above the media age for Queensland and Australia. This differential is due to many factors, including the movement of younger generations to larger urban centers.

An aging population is a significant challenge for North Burnett, with any change dependent on long-term focus and effort. Enhancing the local business and innovation eco-system and increasing access to technology/education will play an important role.

7 Employment by industry

The ABS statistics about local employment by industry highlight North Burnett's strengths in natural resources, government administration and health/aged care services.

Like most regional areas, North Burnett faces the challenge of maintaining these strengths while diversifying industry and employment opportunities. Education, innovation, technology, industry and business programs will all play a part in developing the employment profile of North Burnett.





Economic Strengths and Challenges



ECONOMIC STRENGTHS

- 1 Strength, resilience and positivity of our community
- 2 Unique regional tourist destination
- 3 Geographical proximity to major cities and coast
- 4 Healthy environment
- 5 Diversity and strength of agricultural sector
- 6 Successful mining region
- 7 Destination for international workforce
- 8 Diverse range of natural resources
- 9 Affordable cost of living
- 10 Freight corridor



ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

- 1 Infrastructure coverage
- 2 Retaining people and skills
- 3 Building the local innovation ecosystem
- 4 Red tape
- 5 Digital connectivity and literacy
- 6 Strengthening the region's brand
- 7 Ageing population
- 8 Local access to education and training
- 9 Limited economic levers for Council
- 10 Managing technology change

Community Engagement

This Strategy was developed based on broad community consultation. Face-to-face community engagement sessions were held in Monto, Mt Perry, Biggenden, Eidsvold and Binjour (combined Gayndah-Mundubbera session). Many community members also participated in an online survey. Key results are presented below.

WHAT OUR COMMUNITY SAID

We'd like this Strategy to help deliver:

- 1 Business and industry growth
- 2 Growth in total economic activity
- 3 Liveability
- 4 Sustainability
- 5 Employment

Economic challenges we've faced in the region:

- 1 Red tape
- 2 Nothing out of the ordinary
- 3 Employment opportunities
- 4 Access to technology and digital connectivity
- 5 Business support

Top economic initiatives we'd like to see in North Burnett:

- 1 Tourism
- 2 Labour market programs
- 3 Business development programs
- 4 Collaboration and partnership initiatives
- 5 Infrastructure investment

Innovation barriers we've faced in North Burnett:

- 1 Distance
- 2 Skills and capability
- 3 Availability of time to innovate
- 4 Regulation
- 5 Confidence

Innovation initiatives we'd like to see in North Burnett:

- 1 Agricultural innovation
- 2 Roads and transport innovation
- 3 Innovation partnerships
- 4 Innovation in health and social services
- 5 Innovation in community engagement

We can support innovation in North Burnett by:

- 1 Showcasing and promoting local innovation
- 2 Increasing our innovation awareness and capacity
- 3 Enhancing community participation and co-design
- 4 Cooperating with other governments
- 5 Connecting with innovation networks





Vision

North Burnett as a region of innovation, prosperity and opportunity. Our economic strength and resilience will attract people, investment, ideas and new business.

OUR ECONOMIC VALUES

As time and circumstance change, so too will North Burnett’s economic policies and programs.

To guide North Burnett through future possibility and uncertainty, and keep us focused on local benefit, this Strategy is founded on six core values.



INNOVATION

We will promote and encourage innovation as a driver of new economic activity, jobs, and wealth creation.

PARTICIPATION

We are committed to building an economy that supports participation, and delivers benefit, for the entire community.

COLLABORATION

We will collaborate and partner to create new value, new industry, and new jobs.

OPENNESS

We welcome ideas, investment, people, technology and skills – local, national and global.

PURPOSE

We are committed to action that delivers economic results, and will work with resolution, persistence and efficiency to achieve our economic objectives.

SUSTAINABILITY

We value our environment and natural resources, and are committed to a sustainable economy.

Objectives and Measuring Progress

North Burnett has adopted a balanced scorecard to measure our economic and innovation progress over time, as summarised in the table below.

This approach recognises that no single indicator can adequately measure the complexity and diversity of economic activity and outcomes.

In addition, the scorecard focuses on longer-term outcomes, which are influenced by a range of macro and micro factors, not just Council action. Other indicators relating to inputs, services, investment and impacts will be considered when reviewing our progress.

Key Objectives	Rationale	Progress Indicators	Data Source
Economic growth and community welfare	Increasing general prosperity and wellbeing	Community wellbeing GDP increase GDP per Capita	Economic growth and community welfare Census Data Census Data
Economic inclusion	Equality of opportunity and outcomes for all members of society to participate in the economic life of their country as employers, entrepreneurs, consumers, and citizens.	Engagement in local decision making	Participation levels and representation of groups at Economic forums, business and employment workshops and community consultation events
Economic diversity	Improving economic resilience and dynamism	Sectoral growth	Capturing Industry Growth – Census Data and other relevant statistics when made available from partner agencies, state and federal and private sector
Enhanced digital connectivity	Setting a platform for future innovation and growth	Mobile and internet coverage Internet at home Average Internet speeds Delete User Satisfaction Delete Other network coverage	Surveys feedback, consultation via network meetings, community consultations whenever available
Sustainability	Sustaining our natural assets for present and future benefit	Bio-diversity Pollution and emissions Water Supply and quality	Monitoring our eco-systems Understanding industry outputs and monitoring levels Understanding what is available now and planning for what is required for future growth
Growth in Tourism	Building North Burnett's reputation as place to visit, live, invest and work	Annual visitors and visitor nights	Collating information/statistics from VIC's, caravan and campgrounds, tourism businesses
		Regional income from tourism	Collating local information/statistics from VIC's and Visitor Spending Information (from RV campsite receipt boxes)
		Tourist experience Regional reputation	Visitors comments obtained from VIC feedback surveys/Facebook comments Face-to-face communications with visitors and potential visitors whilst promoting the Naturally Beautiful North Burnett at Tourism Trade Shows
Increased innovation capacity	Developing new economic pathways	Innovation awareness Training and skills Professional connections Strategic partnerships	Workshop Participations Number of professional introductions, connections and Strategic partnerships facilitated by Councils Economic Team
Increased innovation outcomes	Realising new economic possibilities	Business start-ups Trademarks and patents Venture capital investment	Number of Engagements with local entrepreneurs and innovators to measure and monitor their progress throughout business life cycle
Improved global engagement	Expanding our marketplace	Export growth International investment International reputation Trade partner relationships	Capturing, monitoring and measuring relevant data when it becomes available through local, regional, state and federal networks, agencies, partners and private investors.

Priority Action Areas

To achieve our economic and innovation objectives, this Strategy focuses on seven priority action areas



1. Building on our Natural Strengths

North Burnett is endowed with rich natural resources that have been the foundation of our economy for generations.

We are committed to sustaining this natural competitive advantage into the future, leveraging innovation, investment and technology to create new economic opportunities. Priority action areas are presented in the table below:

Title	Action	Outcome
1.1 Industry Innovation	Supporting and promoting innovation within our primary industries	Industry growth, diversification and resilience
1.2 Mineral Wealth	Advocating for new projects that leverage our mineral resources	New regional employment and investment New business opportunities Growth of existing businesses Business attraction
1.3 Global Trade	Showcasing our primary production to national and global marketplaces	Increased awareness of NB and marketplace expansion. Expanded global partnerships and trade relationships
1.4 Natural Beauty and our Environment	Promoting and protecting our environment – it's beauty, economic value, and diversity	Enhanced tourism, liveability and sustainability
1.5 Industry Collaboration	Encouraging new collaborative partnerships within and outside the sector	Investment and business creation



2. Developing our Innovation Eco-System

On a micro scale, innovation is the process of doing things differently, to learn new things and get better outcomes. On a macro scale, it is the process of transforming our economy and community to be more productive, sustainable and liveable.

North Burnett is committed to both micro and macro innovation – to solving old community challenges using new techniques, and to building our future economy, increasing opportunity for all. Priority action areas are presented in the table below:

Title	Action	Outcome
2.1 Innovation Training	Supporting innovation training programs for our local businesses and community	Innovation Environment creation
2.1 Innovation Connection	Building local, national and international innovation connections and partnerships	Enhanced opportunity for innovation
2.3 Innovation Hubs	Creating local innovation platforms (virtual and physical)	Establishment of Innovation Hub/s (physical and virtual) to support Innovators
2.4 Start-Ups	Supporting local start-ups (e.g. via incentives, incubation, acceleration or other programs)	Business dynamism and diversity is encouraged and supported



3. Growing our Tourism Sector

North Burnett is a region of natural beauty, history, local produce, friendly communities, recreation, events, and unforgettable experiences. We are a great place to visit, and tourism is an increasingly important part of our local economy and our regional identity.

We are committed to growing this sector of our economy, as a source of local prosperity, and a platform for broader regional promotion. Priority action areas are presented in the table below:

Title	Action	Outcome
3.1 Digital Marketing	Leveraging digital media to enhance tourism marketing, improve the tourist experience, and attract young families/generations.	Increased Tourism Enhanced Tourism reputation
3.2 Local Events	Improving the coordination and promotion of local events to broaden our domestic market.	Visitation and tourist activity across the region and throughout the year are maximised
3.3 Tourism Brand	Enhancing our 'tourist brand' as part of broader North Burnett branding refresh Showcasing our brand at relevant Tourism Trade Shows	Increasing awareness of the region as a destination To be known and recognised as our own identity – the North Burnett Region
3.4 Tourism Partnerships	Developing new tourist initiatives in partnership with other governments, organisations and innovators Reviewing and improving our partnerships Tourism Awards submissions	Leveraging effort, experience and investment to deliver outcomes Partnership efficiency and effectiveness Increased awareness and promotional opportunities of North Burnett as a destination



North Burnett - The Adventure Destination

Art and culture

The region is home to a selection of multi-genre artisans, whose talent is inspired by its Natural Beauty. You can quite often find a buzz surrounding North Burnett's Regional Art Galleries and 'Destination Art' locations where both locals and tourists connect through mutual appreciation of the talent on display.

Experiences

Whether it be a cruisy drive through the Region exploring its Natural Beauty or an Adventure packed holiday, the North Burnett Region accommodates for every type of traveller. Travellers marvel at the space and scenery whilst enjoying our Natural Assets; pristine waterways, signature rock formations and walkways, abundant wildlife, recreational areas and tales of yesteryear through authentic bush experiences. Those with an appetite for cultural experiences will appreciate the yarns, stories and areas of significance of the most ancient civilisation on Earth.

History

Steeped in history, every Town tells its own story through unique landmarks, 'treasure troves' and Regional Museums. From its first inhabitants the Wakka Wakka people to the culturally diverse early settlers of the area, locals are proud of their Region's history whilst travellers marvel at the experience and education that is happily shared with them.

National Parks

Visitors can pull on their hiking shoes, lather on the sunscreen and hit the dirt path. The North Burnett has an abundance of National Parks and Mountain Ranges. Walking tracks to suit everyone's taste are never far away. Visitors are able to hike the sandstone wilderness at Cania Gorge National Park and Dam, discover the beauty of the view whilst barbecuing at Schuhs Lookout, explore the the contrasting landscape of river against the jagged steep-sided magnificent water sculpted granite at

Auburn Falls, before setting up camp in the picturesque bush setting next to Auburn River for a spot of bird watching. This is what we mean by stating the North Burnett Region is rich in 'Natural Assets'.

Recreation

The North Burnett Region plays host to a number of Recreational fishing competitions throughout the year. The wide variety of easy to access waterways in the Region makes it an inviting place for locals neighbouring communities, and interstate and international visitors to explore and enjoy with their families.

Events

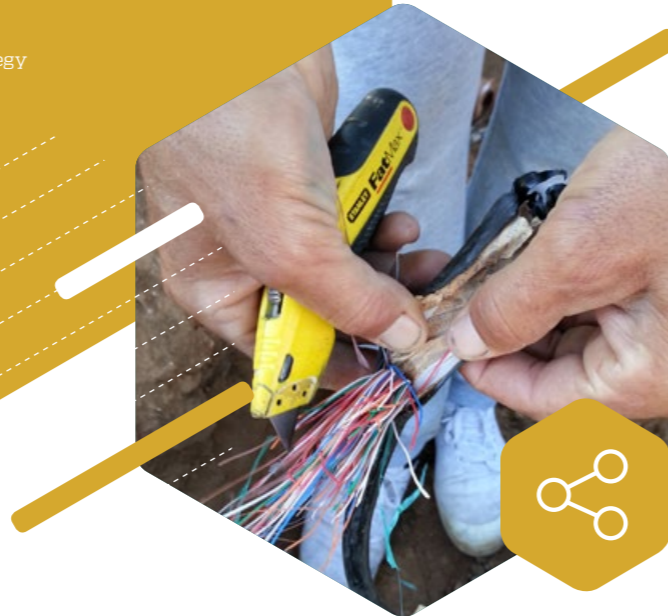
The Region hosts a number of 'Signature Events' which celebrate our individual community strengths and values. These include; The Monto Dairy Festival, The Eidsvold Cattle Drive, The Mundubbera 7-a-side Cricket Annual Bash, The Gayndah Orange Festival, The Biggenden Rose Festival and The Mount Perry Annual Axemen and Sayers Woodchop Competition. Visitors come from near and far to enjoy and participate in the local festivities of the Region.

The Regional event calendar displays local horse race meetings, camp drafts, polocrosse competitions and Annual Shows held in each of its six Towns.

Food and wine

As a major food producer and supplier (nationally and internationally), the North Burnett understands the importance of celebrating the part it plays 'from paddock to plate'. The Heartland Festival encompasses the flavours of the region and its surrounds.

As a region we offer a memorable tourism experience. North Burnett Regional Council is committed to showcasing our region wherever opportunity exists, enhancing our tourist profile, diversifying the age and origin of our visitors, and increasing our tourism numbers.



4. Improving Infrastructure and Connectivity

For North Burnett, infrastructure remains one of the most critical accelerators (and potential constraints) of our economic development.

We recognise the need for ongoing investment in traditional infrastructure for roads, transport, education, health, freight, tourism, utilities, and social services.

Our community also requires better digital infrastructure (i.e. our mobile and internet connectivity) to retain competitiveness and build our economic future.

North Burnett is committed to both increasing our stock of infrastructure, and to improving the utilisation and management of existing assets. Priority action areas are presented in the table below:

Title	Action	Outcome
4.1 Infrastructure Development	Working with other governments (local, State and Federal) to enhance regional infrastructure	Better assets and services for our local community Improved accessibility for supply chain partners Business investment and attraction Business start-ups, and growth of existing business
4.2 Digital Connectivity	Advocating for improved digital connectivity, and investigating innovative solutions	The foundation for future innovation and economic activity is laid
4.3 Smart Assets	Improving the functionality and management of our infrastructure by leveraging digital tech	More productive assets with longer life spans
4.4 Budget Reform	Modernising Council budget processes to promote innovative/digital enhancements to local infrastructure/services	Smart, sustainable financing of infrastructure and assets

5. Empowering Community

The North Burnett community is strong, resilient, and positive. Innovative by nature and environment, our community has successfully charted economic challenge and opportunity through a myriad of conditions and cycles.

Our people, our community, are North Burnett's greatest economic asset, and they are the ultimate creators and beneficiaries of this Strategy.

We are committed to unlocking the full potential of our community, providing them with new opportunities, and increasing overall prosperity for everyone. Priority action areas are presented in the table below:

Title	Action	Outcome
5.1 Digital Democracy	Using digital technology to improve community engagement and participation	Better assets and services for our local community Improved accessibility for supply chain partners Business investment and attraction Business start-ups, and growth of existing business
5.2 Community Innovation	Building community innovation skills (via training and programs, face-to-face or online)	The foundation for future innovation and economic activity is laid.
5.3 Community Solutions	Developing pathways for community to help solve local problems	More productive assets with longer life spans
5.4 Live in North Burnett	Promoting North Burnett as destination to live and work (as part of broader Brand refresh) Partnering with like minded businesses to market North Burnett Showcasing the Region at relevant Trade Shows	Attraction of new people and new skills to the region



6. Taking a Global Perspective

North Burnett is a diverse region, balancing local identity with international trade and tourism. We have always mixed local resources and know-how with national/global investment and exchange to create employment and opportunity.

As the digital world increases global interconnection, North Burnett is ready to expand our engagement with new markets, new technologies, new ideas and new commercial partners.

We are committed to taking advantage of a growing international economy, delivering jobs, investment and wealth for North Burnett. Priority action areas are presented in the table below:

Title	Action	Outcome
6.1 Brand North Burnett	Refreshing the North Burnett 'Brand' to promote our region internationally	Increased global awareness of North Burnett
6.2 Digital Promotion	Use digital media to broadcast the stories of international visitors/investors/worker, targeting strategic markets	Expanded reach of positive stories about our region
6.3 Trade Delegations	Working with State and Federal Governments to target outbound and inbound trade and investment delegations	Effective targeting of potential investors and trade partners
6.4 Events 4 The World	Programming local event content that also appeals to an international audience Helping to build the capacity of existing events	Increased market for regional events



7. Leveraging Smart Technology

Smart technology and smart services – enabled by digital networks, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, sensors, and artificial intelligence – are helping to make communities around the world more liveable, sustainable and productive.

North Burnett is committed to leveraging smart technology to improve local services and drive economic growth and innovation. Priority action areas are presented in the table below:

Title	Action	Outcome
7.1 Online Services	Increasing the range and convenience of online Council services for the community	Empowered and engaged communities
7.2 Digital Skills	Supporting programs and training to increase digital literacy and skills	New economic capacity
7.3 Big Data	Improving the collection and analysis of data using digital technology and the Internet of Things	Improved planning, decision making and innovation
7.4 Smart Services	Expanding the roll-out of smart public services, e.g. lighting, irrigation, Wi-Fi, CCTV, water management	Better local services
7.5 Smart Energy and Sustainability	Promoting and progressing innovative energy and sustainability projects	Improved energy efficiency, reliability and sustainability across the region

Partnership and Collaboration

Collaboration is central to our Economic Development and Innovation Strategy. To drive economic growth, vibrancy and opportunity, we must work together – leveraging the power of our community, local business, regional partners and other governments.

Council is already partnering with a range of organisations to improve prosperity, services and innovation for our region. Key partnerships, which will help Council implement this Strategy include:



WIDE BAY BURNETT REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS (WBBROC)

North Burnett works together with the Regional Organisation of Councils to fulfil the needs of our wider region, delivering on projects to improve economic opportunities, drive development and investment, facilitate planning with collaborative guidance and leadership. North Burnett, in partnership with the WBBROC, are directly involved in the exploration of *Wide Bay Burnett Minerals Province, Water for Economic Development* and improvements to telecommunications reliability and freight/ logistics efficiency.

WIDE BAY BURNETT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A key priority of the WBBROC is to ensure the broad variety of economic challenges and opportunities of the wider region. The Regional Economic Advisory Committee (REDAC), of which North Burnett is a member, has developed a collaborative Economic Development Strategy to tackle key economic challenges. Focal points include unemployment, participation, an aging population, skilled and youth migration, geographic challenges, tourism, agricultural production, asset management/infrastructure and water availability. Many of these issues have been directly addressed by North Burnett in our current Economic and Innovation Strategy.

BURNETT INLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (BIEDO)

BIEDO encompasses the North and South Burnett regions, collaborating with the councils to improve economic outcomes for all communities in this area. BIEDO focus particularly on collaboration, connection and capacity, working with the community to drive economic change, assisting with strategies to fill gaps in services and skills.

QUEENSLAND STATE GOVERNMENT

The Queensland State Government are financially committed to driving innovation, job creation and economic growth within the Wide Bay Burnett region.

WIDE BAY BURNETT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA (RDA)

As part of a broader Australia Government initiative, the Wide Bay Burnett RDA works across the region to enhance growth and development.

FOUNDATION FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL RENEWAL (FRRR)

The FRRR supports communities to build social and economic wealth in rural and regional Australia. Based on partnership between four sectors (philanthropic, community, government and business), FRRR is a charitable entity that uses innovative funding and management to achieve its objectives.

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Australian Government are financially committed to supporting Regional Queensland. The Government priority is to build stronger regional communities, by creating jobs, driving economic growth and innovation, and supporting sustainable cultural development.

UNIVERSITIES

North Burnett Regional Council acknowledges the importance and welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with Universities and other research institutions. We're a region that's open to advancing research, testing and trialing new technologies and policies and designing projects that promote economic growth and diversification.





Case Study: Seven Horses Australia

Monto based company Seven Horses Australia uses smart business strategies and innovation to excel in the production of chaff fodder for horses. The company uses specialized machinery to compress and vacuum pack the chaff to maximise space and better facilitate exportation.

North Burnett residents Kevin and Naomi Purcell are the faces behind this local success story. The company began under the name of Sno_Vac Pty Ltd which used a self-designed machine to create and sell enhanced haybales. When Kevin and Naomi purchased the company in 2011 they continued to pursue innovation and achieve the status of Australia's leading fodder manufacturer.

Seven Horses uses the premium grains grown in the fertile and productive soil of Central Queensland. From this strong foundation, the company has adapted the pacing and processing methodology to optimise efficiency and quality.

The vacuum-packed technology has revolutionised traditional chaff processes. Whilst 20-25 metric tonnes of standard hay and chaff products are shipped in a forty (40) foot container, Compact Chaff ships at almost 19 metric tonnes per twenty (20) foot container, making shipping costs per metric tonne much more economical. The shelf life and weight of the product also make it more manageable for the consumer to engage with.

This company draws upon the owner's personal rural experience that was nurtured in Central Queensland and adds a smart and modern dimension to deliver continued business successes.



Case Study: Biggenden Livestock & Realty

Burnett Livestock & Realty is a family owned and operated livestock and real estate agency based in Biggenden. The business holds regular cattle sales at their Biggenden Saleyards complex.

Clients come from across the Wide Bay Burnett area including Miriam Vale, Monto, Wandoan, Chinchilla and down to Widgee and all along the Wide Bay coast. The Whittakers purchased the business in 2007 and have substantially grown their cattle yardings from 26000 head/annum to over 44000 head/annum. The business owners are proud of the reputation they hold for being flexible and responsive to clients' needs, whilst proving reliable and accurate in communicating industry changes. The Whittakers provide feedback to industry and government (through participation on boards and reference groups) in relation to primary production and saleyards to help better shape government policy and industry strategy.

In 2017 Burnett Livestock & Realty applied for a grant through the federal government's Regional Jobs and Investment Package (RJIP) to assist in the rebuilding of the Biggenden Saleyards. Previously the yards were mostly timber construction, added to on a needs basis, and in need of redevelopment. In 2018 the business was awarded \$1.2 million from

the RJIP funding to contribute to their investment of \$2.5 million to rebuild the saleyards – a \$3.7 million project. Economic modelling shows the project has the capacity to create 5.1 Full Time Employment (FTE) positions over the construction period with a total employment impact across Australia estimated at 34.5 FTEs.

The new yards are purpose built and 'industry ready' for the future. The design has incorporated the latest animal behaviour knowledge; anticipated animal welfare changes; and safety and fatigue management strategies. The business has established a Wi-Fi zone across the site to improve communication with the main office and to allow anticipated future requirement, e.g. buyers logging on to the sale system for prices and weights. The Whittakers feel that there is a bright and certain future for the Biggenden Saleyards and in turn for the Wide Bay Burnett cattle industry. The cattle sales bring many visitors to Biggenden, with economic activity flowing on to local businesses.



Case Study: Smart Berries

Smart Berries is a fruit company that produces berries across Australia and New Zealand. One of their larger blueberry farms is located in Mundubbera which is proving to be highly successful for growing winter varieties.

Smart Berries is a joint venture by Pascoes and the Fresh Produce Group and in July 2013 they saw potential in the North Burnett region and decided to convert an old orchard into a property with almost 500,000 trees. The farm continues to provide increasing job opportunities for the region with 300 staff employed during the picking season in 2016 and approximately 500 being employed in 2017.

The growth of the business has been fuelled by a strong commitment to smart and innovative technologies and processes. The farm grows 14 different blueberry varieties to enhance productivity throughout the seasons and uses netting to provide a protective shaded micro-climate that supports growth.

The business also cross-pollinates by hand and has a stated agenda to utilise digital technologies in their production and quality assurance measures. On the Mundubbera farm water is stored in two lined holding ponds where quality is carefully monitored for alkalinity and salt content. Crop quality is evaluated via monthly leaf analysis while soil is analysed four times a year. These mechanisms enabled Smart Berries to maximise the potential of the land to produce high quality fruit.

Recent horticulture negotiations in late 2017 between China and Australia has provided another economic opportunity for the business and the region to enable exports of blueberries to the Chinese market.

The combination of a strong local agriculture foundation coupled with smart trade and technology will ensure that the berry growing industry will thrive in North Burnett.

Implementation and Next Steps

Council has developed this Strategy on behalf of the North Burnett community, and will coordinate implementation efforts.

The North Burnett economy is much bigger than Council alone and many of the policy levers are not directly available to Council, but rather are controlled by the Queensland and Australian Governments.

Accordingly, while in many instances Council will lead implementation activity, in other instances Council will act as *collaborator, advocate or supporter*.

The 30 action areas identified in this Strategy have been grouped into 7 Programs, as summarised in the implementation schedule below.

Program	Priority Outcomes	Role of Council	Milestone
Economic Advocacy	1,4,6	Advocate	Advocacy strategy in place
Brand North Burnett	5,6,3,2,1	Leader and Collaborator	Brand refreshed, and communication plan in place
Digital and Innovation Skills Development	3,7,2	Collaborator and Supporter	Training programs designed and promoted
Digital Council	5,7,4	Leader	Digital council priorities identified and communicated
Economic and Innovation Partnerships	6,5,3,1	Collaborator and Supporter	Partnership framework in place
North Burnett Tourism	6,3,1	Leader and Collaborator	Tourism action plan in place
Innovation, Trade and Business Development	7,6,2,1	Leader, Collaborator and Supporter	Release ITBD action plan



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