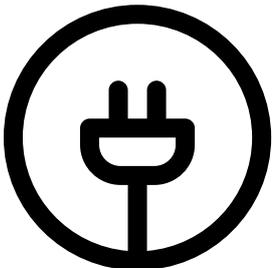
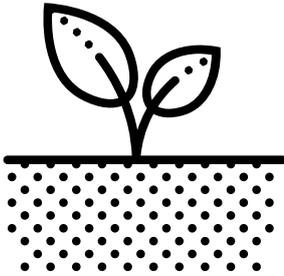
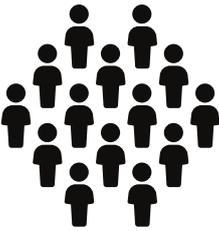
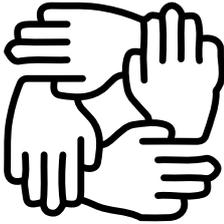


Liverpool Plains Shire Council

Economic Development Strategy

2022 - 2025



**We pay our respects to the Gamilaroi people,
the traditional custodians of the Liverpool Plains.**

**We acknowledge their enduring culture
and continued connection to Country.**

**We extend our respects to the Elders past, present
and future and acknowledge future generations.**



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Council's objectives for Economic Development are to drive job creation, deliver benefits across the shire, partner with existing business, attract new business and work alongside neighbouring councils and state and federal governments to drive public sector support for our shire.

The 2022 – 2025 Economic Development Strategy is built upon **four pillars**

Pillar 1 - Population Growth

Pillar 2 - Commercial Freight Strategy

Pillar 3 - Visitor Economy

Pillar 4 - Resources and Energy



The Draft Economic Development Strategy has been developed through;

- Determining the **major drivers** within our local economy
- A desktop **literature review** of state and federal policies and industry research
- **Conversations and ongoing consultation** with local and external stakeholders
- Identifying initiatives that are within **Council's sphere of influence**
- Selecting initiatives that **do not place additional financial burdens on our residents**

There are two components to the resourcing approach for proposed initiatives;

- enhancing our established core operations to **deliver additional economic benefits**
- **securing external funding** for new infrastructure projects and programs



The proposed actions across the four pillars are built around five themes;

- **Valuing our unique assets and strengths**, promoting and building upon them.
- **Partnerships** with established and new businesses, business networks, community groups, neighbouring councils and state and federal governments.
- **Critical Public infrastructure** that facilitates economic development
- **Building the evidence base** by developing a bank of accurate and shared data to measure our progress and inform our future work.
- **Ensuring Liverpool Plains continues to be a great place to live, work and visit.**



The Economic Development Strategy provides a framework for guiding our work and responding to future opportunities and challenges to achieve **sustainable economic development; To meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.**





Liverpool Plains Shire is home to more than 1,000 businesses representing more than 70 business categories including agriculture, automotive and machinery services, business and finance services, personal and social services, construction, trades and maintenance, gardening and excavation, hospitality, creative arts and transport services.

Of these 1,000 businesses

- **53% are directly involved in agriculture**
- 22% of businesses cover construction, real estate and transport
- 67 % of businesses are non-employing
- 25% employ up to 4 people

Of our residents aged over 15 years, **3,100 are participating in the workforce**, our workforce comprises

- 57% in full time employment
- 29% working part time
- 21% in managerial roles
- 15% working as labourers
- 12% operating machinery
- 11% are professionals
- 6% in sales



With more than half of local business involved in agriculture and a significant number of businesses providing goods and services to our agricultural sector it is evident that **agriculture is the major driver of our local economy**. It is equally evident the agricultural sector is the **cornerstone to our community's future economic prosperity**.

Our local economy is influenced by many factors such as weather, climate, consumer behaviour, international markets and government priorities. These factors are beyond the scope of Council's control. The actions put forward in this document reflect **Council's direct and most effective contribution to economic development**, in particular planning for and facilitating population growth, planning for and facilitating the attraction of new businesses and designing and delivering critical public infrastructure.



Employing more than 120 staff, **Liverpool Plains Shire Council is one of the largest employers within the shire**, with annual expenditure of more than \$9 million on goods and services **Council's day to day operations make a significant contribution to our shire's economic prosperity**. In addition to the proposals specified in the Economic Development Strategy, **we are committed to maintaining and extending our contribution as a good corporate citizen**.





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Pillar 1 - Population Growth



With a population of less than 8,000 Liverpool Plains Shire shares the challenges faced by many small rural councils, a small rates and revenue base and limited demand for the goods and services provided by local businesses.

In 2019 Planning NSW predicted the population of Liverpool Plains will decrease by 1,150 people between 2016 and 2041, from 7,850 to 6,700. Over that same period the working population (aged 15-64) is estimated to decrease by 900, children aged 14 and under are estimated to decrease by 550, the number of people aged 65 and over is estimated to increase by 300. The Australian Bureau of Statistics will release the 2021 Census results between June and October 2022 and Council will view the results with interest.

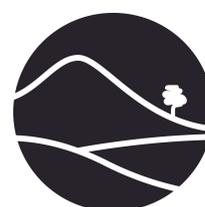
In reviewing population trends across regional Australia, The Regional Australia Institute found moving for work to be the number one motivator. **Increasing the employment opportunities within our shire is essential to growing our population.** Ensuring we have adequate housing and the services and facilities to lead an interesting and comfortable life will encourage new residents to stay long term. It is equally important that what we do encourages and enables our current residents to stay.



1) Attract new businesses and Industry to expand employment opportunities.

Through its membership of the Namoi Unlimited Joint Organisation of Council's Liverpool Plains Shire is one of the NSW Government's designated Job Precincts. Through extensive and intensive research, this project has identified that **protein based industry** and **complementary value adding businesses** located close to the production source offer the greatest growth potential for our shire. In partnership with the NSW Government, the project partners are seeking to **redress the complexity of planning regulations** and to **eliminate the pinch points in the region's transport network**. Liverpool Plains Shire Council will continue its participation in this groundbreaking project. We will leverage this partnership to **attract labour intensive businesses to our shire**.

Namoi Unlimited Joint Organisation of Council has initiated a detailed mapping exercise of the **Namoi region to establish an Industry Database** that can be used to promote and attract investors to the Namoi Region. The database will overlay details such as vulnerability to natural disasters, compatible agriculture zones, soil grades, land use potential, water security and quality, transport networks and power utilities. Through this partnership, **Council will be able to target investors that can leverage our unique conditions, facilities and services** and value add to our local supply chain.





2) Increase the availability of residential land in Quirindi and Werris Creek

Council has identified up to 426 residential lots that may be eligible for subdivision in the townships of Quirindi and Werris Creek. Council has agreed to waive the sewage and water connections for a 12 month period to encourage residents to realise this opportunity. This proposal has the potential to **increase the availability of residential land**, provide additional homes for new residents and enable existing residents to remain living within the shire.



3) Undertake a targeted campaign to attract new residents to the shire.

Declining populations are a challenge for many rural communities and **competition for attracting and retaining residents is fierce**. Many rural communities can offer affordability, safety and an easy way of life, successful population attraction campaigns require clear targets and markets.

The Regional Institute of Australia's research into population trends and population growth found that

- Communities need to highlight their unique qualities to potential residents
- 80% of people living in regional Australia intended to remain in the regions
- 30% of rural young people return to the country after graduation
- Regional communities are likely to recruit new residents from people already based in regional areas.
- People considering a move to the regions may take up to 6 months to find the right job; and communities need to be on the job seeker's radar during while they are considering a move to the regions.

Council will **work with the community to determine agreed goals for population growth** over the coming decade and implement a **targeted marketing campaign** that draws on best practice in **rural population growth strategies**.



Pillar 2 - Commercial Freight Strategy



Liverpool Plains Shire Council manages an internal road network with 835km of unsealed roads, 559 kms of sealed roads and 42 bridges. The **Commercial Freight Strategy** maps the way to enhancing our internal road network to **meet the needs of our agricultural sector and the emerging agritourism sector.**

In September 2021 Council gave in principle support for a Commercial Freight Strategy to guide improvements to the shire's internal road network. The goal of the Strategy is to upgrade the **major internal routes to accommodate high productivity vehicles** (road trains).

At present up to **90,000 trips are undertaken to deliver our grain, cotton, livestock and gravel to market.** Research undertaken by Namoi Unlimited Joint Organisations of Council and consultation with local producers highlighted the benefits to existing producers and potential investors from an upgrade to the internal road network.



Council has identified that the **North – South route encompassing Cattle Lane and Williewarina Road and the East – West route encompassing Coonabarabran, Wallabadah, and Bundella Roads** are the major routes to market for local producers.

Council has undertaken a preliminary audit of the bridges and intersection points along these routes and has begun to plan the necessary upgrades.

While some of this work can be completed through our routine works schedule, a significant proportion will require external funding. Council has lodged an application for \$3.9m for Stage 1 of the upgrade to Cattle Lane.

Council's Commercial Freight Strategy is an **innovation in local government's management of internal road networks.** This innovative approach has been recognised by the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) Roads and Transport Directorate. Council's very own Nathan Skelly (Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Services) chairs the Institute's Roads and Transport Working Group and our Commercial Freight Strategy has been selected as a template for the **Council Based Freight Transport Strategy project** to provide a template to other Councils to undertake their own strategy.

In addition to delivering savings and efficiencies to local producers, the Commercial Freight Strategy **extends the life of our community's most valuable asset** (the internal road network), **provides certainty to potential investors and reduces the number of trips** by commercial vehicles improving safety for all travelers. Agritourism is an emerging sector within our local economy. Overtime the Commercial Freight Strategy will ensure safe travel for visitors to local events, farm gates sales and other agritourism activities.



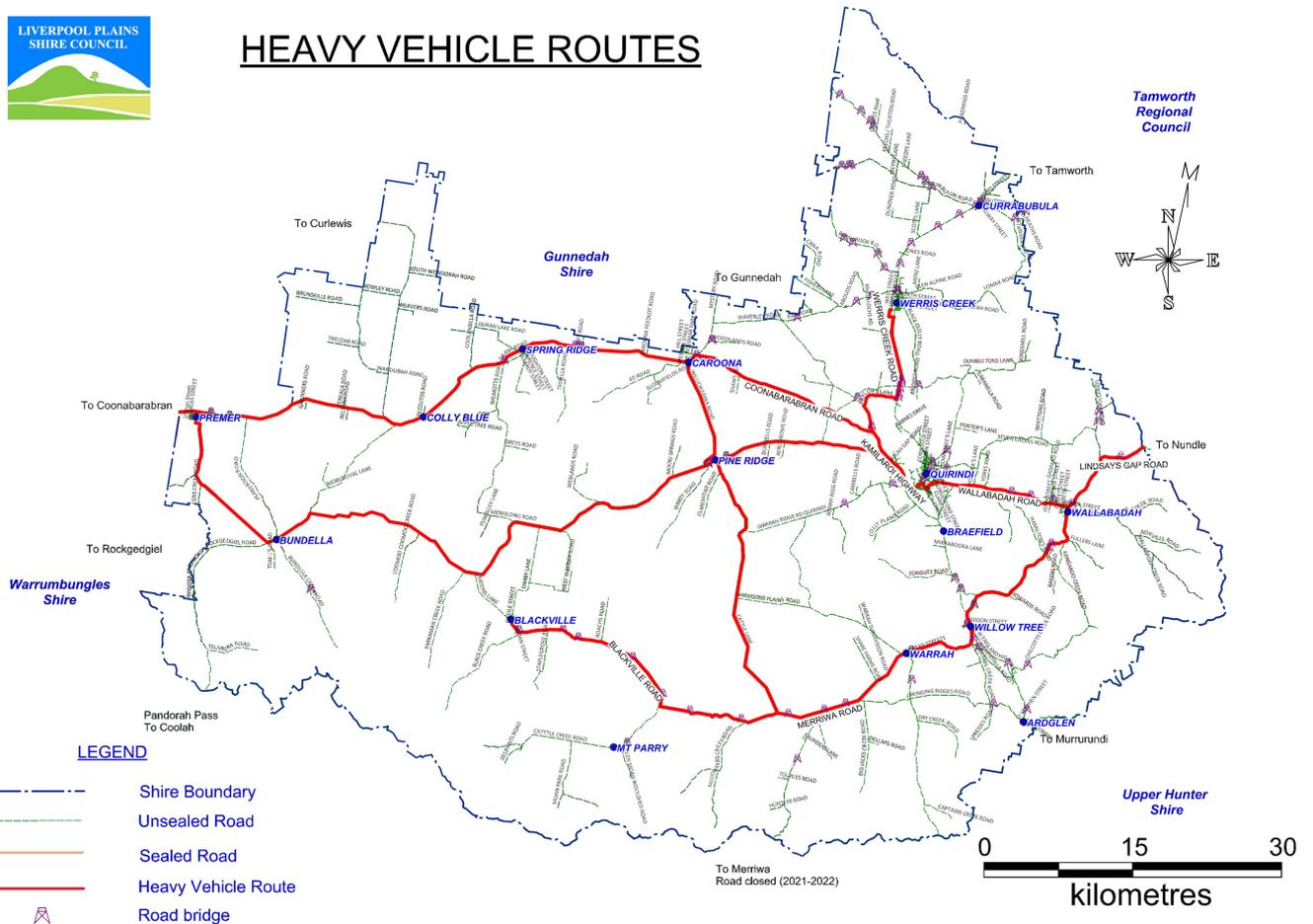
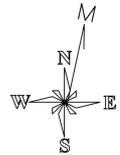
The Kamilaroi Highway is a key linkage between farm gate and market, Council will continue to advocate to the NSW Government the importance of **reclassifying the Kamilaroi Highway to accommodate high productivity vehicles.**





HEAVY VEHICLE ROUTES

Tamworth Regional Council



Pillar 3 - Visitor Economy

In 2020 Liverpool Plains Shire Council engaged Jenny Rand and Associates to prepare a draft Destination Management Plan for 2022 – 2026. Much has changed since the preparation of that original draft. **The Global Pandemic** is in its third year and **continues to impact NSW's Visitor Economy**. In light of this devastating circumstance Council has reviewed and revised the original proposal.



1) Facilitation and Partnerships

More than 60 businesses and 30 community organisations contribute to the local visitor economy by providing services, coordinating and producing events, managing venues, producing goods and supporting local projects and initiatives.

There are external partners with influence over our visitor economy, particularly Destination NSW, Namoi Unlimited, Crown Lands and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Key Partnership projects will include

- Developing an accurate data base on the local visitor economy
- Collaborative marketing campaigns
- Supporting the relaunch of major events

Council works with many community and business groups to progress the visitor economy.

- The partnership with **Quirindi Rotary's Silo Art Committee** illustrates how we will support community managed projects.
- Our **Visitor Database** with more 6,000 contacts is used to promote local events such as the Sunflower Trail and Sunflower on the Plains.
- We will continue to work with **Plains Inc** to support the emerging agritourism sector.



2) Enhancing our works program to improve the visitor experience

Council manages and maintains 12 community halls, 8 ovals, 10 playgrounds, more than 50 sporting facilities and 11 public amenities. The maintenance and **planned improvements to Council owned facilities** support an annual **calendar of public and private events**, sporting competitions, market days, festivals and cultural events. Continued improvements to these facilities will **improve the experience for visitor to our towns and villages**.

Council's support for the Shire's events calendar will include

- Maintaining public facilities at public venues and spaces
- Maintaining a strong online and media presence
- Incorporating public art and place making in Council controlled public spaces and community infrastructure
- Improved interpretive and directional signage at community facilities





3) Develop our visitor infrastructure

The **Willow Tree Visitor Information Services and Centre** is a landmark for visitors to the Shire and plays a critical role in promoting the Shire to new and returning visitors.

The master plan for developing the Visitor Information Services and Centre will consider

- Updating the designing and functionality of the Centre and its façade
- **Greater prominence to the Gamilaroi cultural** display and groove stone installation
- Consider **accessibility in all elements of the design**
- A bespoke **children's playground**
- **Features to attract additional visitors** such as Electric Vehicle charging stations
- Walking and cycling paths and parking to **connect visitors with local and business hubs.**

Nature based experiences are growing in popularity and **Quipolly Dam** has extensive potential to attract day trippers and overnight visitors with an interest in nature based recreation such as bird watching, walking and cycling.

The master plan for **Quipolly Dam** will consider:

- **Accessibility** in pathways, landscaping and parking;
- **Improved habitat** for native birds and animals
- **Inclusion of Gamilaroi culture and history**



4) Capitalise on the growth in camping holidays.

The Liverpool Plains Shire is well positioned to **capitalise on the growth and popularity in Camping Holidays.**

Three major inland highways the Kamilaroi Highway, the New England Highway and Oxley Highways are all potential sources for **attracting additional visitors** to our communities and camping facilities.

Liverpool Plains Shire Council hosts **six freedom camping sites** in Currabubula, Spring Ridge, Premer, Werris Creek, Wallabadah and Willow Tree and operates a commercial caravan park in Quirindi. Improved management and promotion of the Shire's camping facilities has the potential to **deliver benefits to villages and towns across the Shire.**

Improvements will include:

- Streamlining arrival and departure systems
- Introducing a standard low fee for freedom camping
- Identifying improvements for camping facilities and sourcing grants where possible
- Monitoring and increasing occupancy rates



Pillar 4 – Resources and Energy



The Liverpool Plains Community Strategic Plan reflects **our residents' aspirations for a thriving economy and a sustainable environment**, managing our impact on the natural environment, sustainable agriculture and actively fostering and utilizing renewable energy.

The NSW Government is committed to halving the state's emissions by the year 2030. The NSW Government's approach is grounded in science and technology and encourages businesses, governments, households and individuals to make emission reducing choices.

The NSW Government indicates that up to \$11.6 billion will be invested in delivering this target, anticipates two thirds of the investment will be directed to regional NSW and that the emissions intensity of goods and services will increasingly influence their competitiveness within the market.

The NSW Government has adopted the **Circular Economy Policy Statement- Too Good To Waste**. The aim of this policy is to design out waste and pollution and maintain the value of products and materials for as long as possible within the production cycles.



Over the coming decade Council will review its core operations to meet our community's expectations and work with households, businesses and local industries to realise common goals that position the Liverpool Plains to contribute to and benefit from the NSW Government's policies.

The Quipolly Dam Water Treatment project and Council's Waste Management Strategy are evidence of Council's success in reviewing and revising our core operations to position our shire for a prosperous future. These projects have been designed and delivered in partnership with State and Federal Governments.



As New South Wales moves towards its 2030 targets, emerging technologies and funding opportunities will present unseen opportunities. In order to benefit from these opportunities **Liverpool Plains Shire will adopt a Revolving Green Fund**. Council spends around \$400,000 each year on electricity. Council will undertake an audit of its electricity use and in 2022-2023 invest a minimum of \$40,000 towards energy saving equipment and renewable energy sources. An ongoing process of audits and investment will see Council being mostly reliant on renewable energy sources by 2032.





Council's work ranges from maintaining venues, to lighting public spaces, to landscaping parks, to caring for our residents through all stages life. Applying our Revolving Green Fund across all areas of our work, **Council will develop expertise in transitioning to renewable energy**. Council will share this knowledge with businesses, community groups and households on a regular basis to inform them of our progress and to assist them in their own transition to renewable energy sources.

The NSW Government will invest half a billion dollars to support **the uptake of Electric Vehicles in NSW** and has pledged that a minimum of 10% of its new fleet vehicles will be electric. Over time this strategy will see a significant increase in the availability of second hand electric vehicles. Council has registered its interest in hosting electric vehicle charging stations at Willow Tree Visitor Information Centre and Quirindi Railway carpark. Electric Vehicle charging stations will help capture visitors and are an additional asset for our emerging agritourism sector. Council will continue to pursue opportunities to support and capture the growing electric vehicle market.



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