



**COOK SHIRE COUNCIL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

2013 – 2015

Cook Shire is the largest shire in Queensland in terms of land area. From the Bloomfield River in the south to just north of the Jardine River it covers over 100,000 square kilometres and occupies 80% of Cape York Peninsula.

Geographically, Cook Shire is the meeting place of the Great Barrier Reef, the Wet Tropics and the Outback. It is the location of several National Parks including Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park and the mysterious Black Mountains (Kalkajaka), along with other protected areas and conservation zones.

The Shire's major township is Cooktown with smaller population centres at Marton, Laura, Lakeland, Coen, Ayton, Rossville and Portland Roads and offshore islands including Lizard Island with significant numbers of people living throughout the Bloomfield and Endeavour Valleys.

Cook Shire enjoys a mild tropical climate. January to March is the typical wet season period and also hottest time of the year. April to December brings a drier period with cooler weather and temperatures averaging around 27 degrees celsius. In summer, Cooktown is usually 5 degrees cooler than Cairns.

Cooktown is 331 kilometres from Cairns (3 ½ hours by car) and 266 kilometres from Mareeba via the fully-sealed Mulligan Highway.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

Cook Shire Council has a vision to develop a mature and diversified economy based upon competitive business practices, a highly skilled and dynamic workforce and infrastructure which meets the needs of a wide-ranging and growing population.

Consistent with the vision of this Plan is the high priority which Council places on economic development including a focus on existing businesses and new enterprises, a catalyst (or advocate) for new business development, provision of appropriate infrastructure and as a response system to threats or negative impacts on the local economy. This document is a blueprint to ensuring that Cook Shire will be enjoyed by residents, attractive to the many visitors and respected by other regional economies throughout Australia.

Council's Corporate Plan articulates a mission statement which reflects the goals and aspirations for the region to develop and mature into a strong, diverse economy.

To build and improve municipal infrastructure and services which are sustainable and responsive to the needs and aspirations of our community by:

- Establishing and building stronger networks and partnerships;
- Maintaining a healthy and diverse economy whilst respecting our natural environment;
- Supporting all of our unique communities; and
- Enabling quality lifestyle choices within our Shire.

Cook Shire Council plays a lead role in the economic development and promotion of Cook Shire and is charged with making the most of Cook Shire's assets to secure prosperity and jobs for the long-term future of the region.

Council has prepared this Economic Development Plan (EDP) to support the establishment of a strategic action plan for the Cook Shire economy.

The EDP will provide guidance and reference for Council and key stakeholders in relation to economic development activities and projects. Council's operational plan will act as the working arm of the EDP and provide specific detail with regards to activities, projects and budgets. The EDP will also provide a clear and focussed direction to underpin and assist the delivery of the Tropical North Queensland *Regional Economic Plan* in partnership with key economic development bodies as well as the Tablelands, Cairns and Cassowary Coast local government areas.



STRATEGIC AND POLICY CONTEXT

It is important that in developing this document, acknowledgement is given to key partners of Cook Shire Council including the Regional Development Australia Committee for Far North Queensland & Torres Strait, the Queensland and Federal Governments and Advance Cairns.

The Cook Shire Economic Development Plan has been created within the context of and complementary to, the *Tropical North Queensland Regional Economic Plan 2011-2031* (TNQREP) of which Cook Shire is one of the four major council areas. The EDP has also been developed on the basis of existing policy and a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data, including: the Cook Shire Community Plan and TNQREP consultations; statistical profiling of current economic trends and conditions; and local area business research.

Key documents analysed as part of this Plan include:

- **Tropical North Queensland Regional Economic Plan**
< www.advancecairns.com/economic-development >
- **Regional Development Australia Road Map**
< www.rdafnqts.org.au/index.php/rda-initiatives/regional-road-map >
- **Cook Shire Council Community Plan 2011-2021**
< www.cook.qld.gov.au/community-plan >
- **Cook Shire Council Corporate Plan 2012-2017**
< www.cook.qld.gov.au/corporateplan#corp_plan >



The *Cook Shire Council Economic Development Plan* aims to:

- **Lay the foundations** necessary for regional economic success and prosperity;
- **Strengthen the industries** with good growth prospects; and
- **Support new employment opportunities** across a number of key industries and skill levels.

Council's goal is to build a sustainable economy that can compete on a regional, national and international stage, and which is recognised as a strong player against other high-profile local government areas. Economic diversification and development of key industries is critical to providing a resilient economy for our communities.

As part of building an EDP, five goals have been identified as critical for long term sustainability and economic development. Each of these goals carries a number of key actions to achieve a successful outcome. While some of these actions overlap they have been placed in accordance with 'best fit'. Council's Operational Plan will provide the project detail to support these overarching actions.

Activities to support Cook Shire's economic goals across the board will include:

- **Regional collaboration** – creating partnerships with other leading economic development agencies throughout the region as well as industry representatives and local businesses
- **Government partnerships** – building relationships with State and Federal government to resource major initiatives
- **Marketing and branding** – developing a sense of identity and implementing a consistent and inspiring promotional strategy to position the region as a commercial and lifestyle destination
- **Whole-of-Council** – developing a unified approach to economic development through the integration of divisional goals and outcomes.



GOAL 1 : INVESTMENT GROWTH

‘Encouraging and attracting investment opportunities to the region to broaden the economic base; provide job opportunities; and increase the regions competitiveness’

- Develop promotional material to support investment attraction and business development
- Provide a single point of contact to all investment queries
- Identify barriers and opportunities to investment in the region and strategies to address
- Engage with key industry bodies, government officials, stakeholders and developers to facilitate commercial opportunities
- Encourage private investment, including lifestyle relocation
- Ensure land use planning is conducive to investment and infrastructure development
- Investigate incentive schemes to support investment opportunities.

GOAL 2 : LOCAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

‘Strengthening and diversifying our local business environment through the dissemination of economic information and the implementation of local area initiatives’

- Provide a one-stop shop for economic data, information and linkages to deliver the most appropriate development and growth for the region
- Build the capacity of local business organisations to support their members
- Measure business confidence, identify barriers and opportunities for local businesses and develop strategies to address
- Identify and harness the strength of small and home-based businesses in the region

- Support local business initiatives such as events, workshops and digital awareness campaigns to build capacity and knowledge
- Assisting existing businesses and new enterprises as required, through the provision of information and assistance, referral and support.

GOAL 3 : INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

‘Ensuring the sustainability and delivery of appropriate physical infrastructure to facilitate liveability and economic growth’

- Facilitate the provision, uptake and application of high-speed broadband options in Cook Shire to build the capacity of businesses and increase commercial activity and liveability
- Progress the development of key infrastructure such as the waterfront master-plan to increase liveability
- Adopt a whole-of-Council approach to provide public infrastructure to support the development and connectivity of the Shire
- Advocate to state and federal government for improved core community service infrastructure such as health and education services to ensure adequate service delivery to a growing shire
- Investigate opportunities to increase housing supply within the Shire to cater for increased activity
- Provide improved promotional and directional signage to improve and enhance shire wide marketing.

GOAL 4 : TOURISM

'Supporting the tourism industry through marketing and promotion and building business capacity'

- Support Tourism Cape York to build industry capacity and business resilience and deliver the core marketing and development programs throughout Cape York to increase visitors to the region
- Promote Cook Shire as a RV Friendly destination to increase the number and value of drive tourists to the region
- Investigate opportunities to expand the RV Friendly initiative throughout Cook Shire to further position the region as a drive destination
- Monitor and evaluate the contribution of tourism to Cook Shire to support investment and further engage the local business community
- Support the diversification and growth of the tourism industry including culture, adventure, eco-tourism, product development and events.

GOAL 5 : WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

'Supporting workforce, education and training development within Cook Shire to attract new business opportunities and enhance the capability of the region'

- Work with policy makers and providers to address skills shortages and gaps through increased service provision
- Support education and training providers to deliver skills development programs to increase workforce capacity
- Undertake a skills audit to identify the range and level of skills within the economy
- Identify emerging employment opportunities and map to current skills base
- Undertake activities to develop and retain the current workforce to support new activities and investment in the Cook Shire.



MONITORING AND REVIEWING PROGRESS

In order to monitor and review Council's activities and progress against the five identified goals, Council will collect data on a range of indicators. Some of these are already collected externally and are currently used by Cook Shire Council. Others Council may need to collect directly through survey information and subsequently monitor internally. Bearing in mind, given the very small sample population, there may be some reliability issues.

Some of the key indicators include:

QUANTITATIVE

Increased employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number • By industry sector • By age • By gender • By tenure (full time/ part time) • Participation rate
Decreased unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number • By gender
Business growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of businesses
Increased skill levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of qualifications • Number of qualifications
Increased Gross Regional Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional total
Increased tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total visitor numbers • Domestic overnight visitors • Domestic day trips • International visitors • Room occupancy rates • Room nights
Population growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total • Growth rate • Forecast projections

QUALITATIVE (SURVEY DATA)

Improved business confidence and business satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By sector
Improved visitor satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By visitor satisfaction • By international visitors
Improved perception of the Cook Shire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From within the region • From outside the region

By using a robust acquittal process this will help to track key economic trends as well as identify areas which require more support from Local, State and Federal Government and/or regional economic development stakeholders.

For more information on Cook Shire Council's Economic Development Plan, contact Katrina Houghton, Director of Economic Development and Community Services, Cook Shire Council

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