

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

COUNCIL ACKNOWLEDGES THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND CUSTODIANS OF THE LANDS IN OUR REGION

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge their ongoing relationship and connection to Country.

To acknowledge and show respect for our traditional owner groups' history, culture and our shared future, the Welcome to Country is conducted at all significant events.

Council will be reviewing its Reconciliation Action Plan over the next 12 months.

Whitsunday Regional Council endorses the vision of a nation which values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, cultures and peoples and

recognises their distinct position as the original custodians of Australia. Council's Mission is to make a sustainable future possible by building stronger relationships, mutual respect and encouraging cultural practices that strengthen and support harmony between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader community within the Whitsunday Region. Council values input and active participation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into decision making.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Lucid Economics Pty Ltd (Lucid Economics) has been engaged to deliver an Economic Development Strategy on behalf of the Whitsunday Regional Council.

CONTEXT

The Whitsunday region is synonymous with the Great Barrier Reef, the Whitsunday Islands and all things of an idyllic Instagram image. Attracting visitors from all around the world, the region is often considered a paradise, and local residents feel the same.

Beyond this image is a large region with a strong, diverse economy, spanning four towns (Airlie Beach/Cannonvale, Bowen, Collinsville, and Proserpine) and four key industries (tourism, agriculture, coal and sugar). The region hosts the Abbot Point Export Terminal and Abbot Point State Development Area (a 16,800 ha specialised industrial precinct), two airports offering regular passenger traffic (RPT) services, direct access to the Bruce Highway, the ports and marinas providing access to 74 islands, multiple island resorts and numerous national parks. More recently, Tassal has invested heavily into the development of Australia's largest prawn farm and Gilmour Space Technologies is planning to launch satellites from Abbot Point SDA next year.

The region is connected through physical infrastructure, history and various other tangible and intangible connections. For example residents in Bowen work in Collinsville, children in Airlie Beach go to school in Proserpine. The Whitsunday region is evolving into a significant region in its own right with numerous opportunities for future growth.

Future economic development will reflect the rich history of the region and its traditional industry sectors while at the same time embracing new emerging sectors and continuing to build on competitive strengths to leverage future growth opportunities. Attracting investment into catalytic infrastructure projects will be an important route to growing the future regional economy.

WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Based on the identified strengths and growth opportunities, the clear goal of the strategy is to deliver more investment and more jobs, as the pathway to securing the economic and environmental sustainability of the Whitsunday region.

Through generating investment outcomes new jobs will be created and delivered. However, without the lifestyle to support new families moving to the region, it will be difficult to fill the new jobs that will be created, which in turn presents challenges to recruiting the investment. While the goal is to deliver more investment and jobs, protecting and enhancing local lifestyle will be important to ensure sustainable growth over time.

The following diagram provides an overview of the strategy and is based on the research, analysis and consultation conducted for this project.

ONE WHITSUNDAY REGION

...FOR INVESTMENT ...FOR JOBS ...FOR LIFESTYLE

OUR GOALS

OUR KEY INDUSTRIES

- Agriculture
- Aquaculture
- Mining
- Tourism
- Space Launch

OUR CATALYTIC PROJECTS

- Abbot Point SDA Development
- Bowen Marine Industry Precinct
- Bowen Orbital Space Port (BOS)/ Gilmore Space Technologies
- Heart of the Reef Discovery Centre
- Shute Harbour Marine Terminal
- Tassal Group Limited – Proserpine Prawn Farm
- Urannah Dam
- Water for Bowen
- Whitsunday Skyway Project

OUR STRATEGIES



1. ADVOCACY & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Promote catalytic projects to Government
- Lobby for education and healthcare facilities
- Develop the Whitsunday Freight Hub and Shute Harbour Marine Terminal



2. MARKETING & PROMOTION

- Promote and market the region for investment
- Facilitate investment into the region
- Promote and market the region for tourism



3. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

- Support local business networks
- Engage with key industries and businesses to develop supply chains and value adding opportunities



4. PLANNING

- Support and encourage development and redevelopment opportunities

OUR PRIORITY ACTIONS

Source: Lucid Economics

An annual action plan provides further details regarding the implementation of this strategy. The action plan should be reviewed annually and adjusted based on the previous year's experiences as well as any new or emerging barriers or opportunities. In such a way, the strategy provides longer-term direct and at the same time allows for flexibility and the ability to adapt over time.

1. INTRODUCTION

Appropriately, the Whitsunday region is referred to as ‘Our Utopia’ given its location right in the heart of the Great Barrier Reef – one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

Located in North Queensland, around 1,100 km north of Brisbane, the Whitsunday region has four bustling towns and 74 tropical islands.

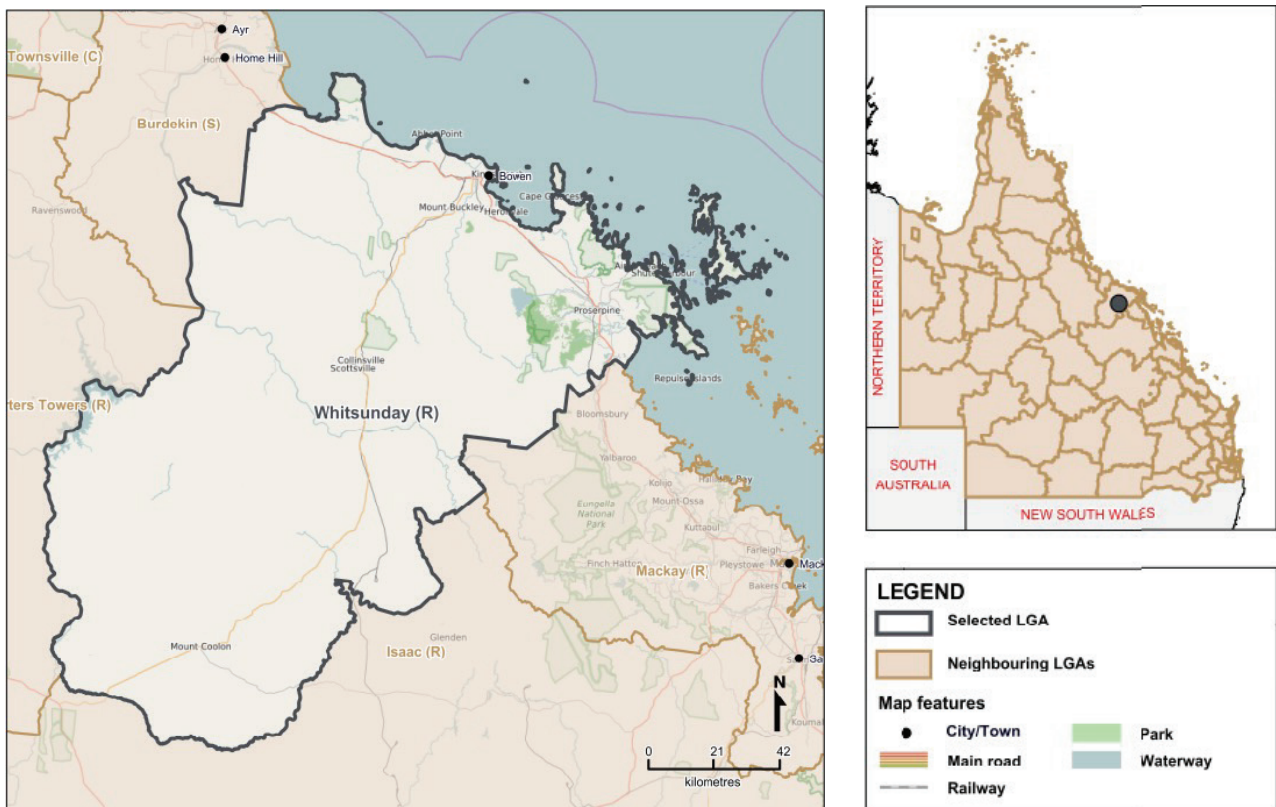
Boasting a strong and diverse economy driven by the agriculture (horticulture and sugar), mining, and tourism; the region is well-connected with the right mix of opportunity and liveability.

The Whitsunday economy is well connected to major trading centres with the Bruce Highway the major transport corridor running from Mackay in the south to Townsville in the north. The region is also home to two major airports (i.e. Whitsunday Coast Airport in Proserpine and the Hamilton Island Airport) with weekly flights to Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

The Port of Abbot Point is located just north of Bowen, which is a key export terminal for coal mined in the Bowen Basin.

The Whitsunday Islands and Airlie Beach are a popular tourism destinations for travellers to Queensland, particularly given the access provided by the Islands to the Great Barrier Reef.

Figure 1.1. Whitsunday Regional Council



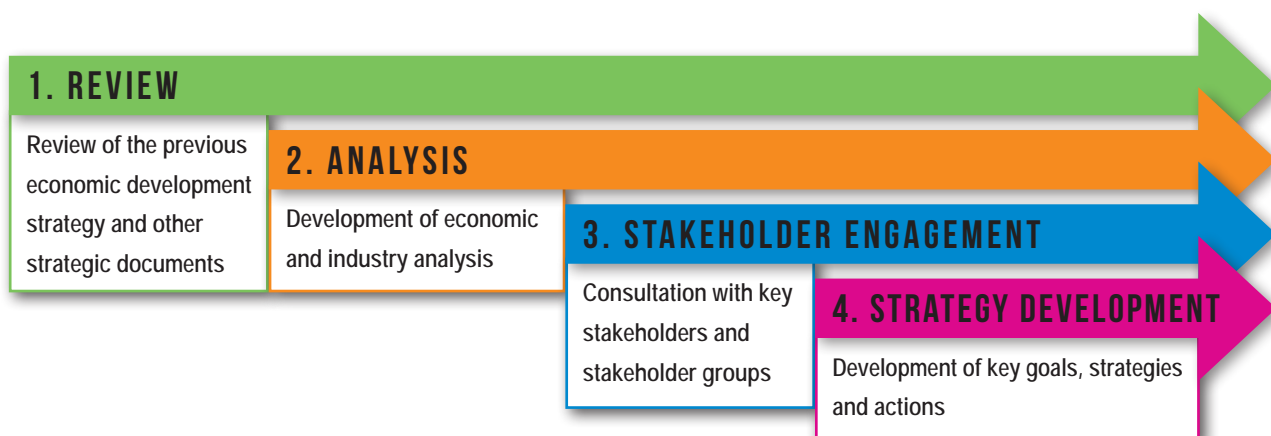
Source: QGSO (2019).

With the previous Economic Development Strategy 2017-2021 is nearing completion and the dramatic changes throughout the world through the COVID-19 pandemic, it is timely that Council formulate a new economic development strategy.

The purpose of the strategy is to guide Council actions in economic development and to inform decisions in relation to the investment of Council resources and priorities for economic development. It also communicates to external stakeholders Council's vision for the economy.

The following diagram highlights the process undertaken to develop this strategy. It has included a review of the previous strategy as well as other important strategic documents including the Whitsundays Region Priorities 2020 as well as regional plans and strategies from the Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3) and the RDA Greater Whitsundays. Detailed analysis of the local economy was also conducted in order to better understand broader economic and industry trends as well as other on-going effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Engagement with key stakeholders and stakeholder groups was also conducted in order to identify the appropriate role of Council in economic development. All of these stages have led to the direction and content of this strategy.

Figure 1.2. Whitsunday Economic Development Strategy Formulation Process



Source: Lucid Economics

Importantly, this strategy is about action and Council taking a proactive approach to advancing the regional economy.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Background Report and the Stakeholder Engagement Summary.

2. CONTEXT

The Whitsunday region is often characterised by the idyllic Whitsunday Islands, beaches, sailing and the Great Barrier Reef. However, the region is so much more than just an ideal Instagram shot. It is a large, vibrant region with a diverse mix of landscapes and industries.

The Whitsunday region has a large agriculture region and produces 50% of Queensland's tomatoes, over 50% of Queensland's capsicums, as well as the famous Bowen mangoes, sugarcane (and sugar) and cattle. The region has a strong tradition in mining as well, being home to Queensland's oldest coal mine (Collinsville). Glencore and QCoal are the major current operators, producing both coking and thermal coal, much of which is exported through the Port of Abbot Point.

In 2019, the Whitsunday region welcomed almost 1.4 million visitors, producing over 4 million visitor nights and an estimated visitor expenditure of \$880 million. Given the idyllic natural environment and range of visitor activities and experiences, tourism is another important industry for the region.

The population of around 36,000 is spread across the four areas of Bowen, Collinsville, Proserpine and Airlie Beach- Cannonvale and is projected to grow to 47,000 people over the next two decades. The population is also very fluid, with a high number of visitors and seasonal workers moving into and out of the region. On an annual basis, these movements see the population change by up to 5,000 people (14% of the population) throughout any given year.

Like much of regional Australia, housing prices and rents have escalated during the course of 2021. Vacancy rates are near 0% in most of the towns, which is putting pressure on numerous businesses and the attraction and retention of staff. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen people leaving Melbourne and Sydney (and other capital cities), often choosing regional destinations like the Whitsundays, where they can enjoy the local lifestyle and working remotely.

While the four main towns of the region have their own unique character and are reflective of the economy surrounding the towns, all towns are joined together as a cohesive region in many ways. Many of the workers in the coal mines in Collinsville live in Bowen, many of the workers in Airlie Beach live in Proserpine, kids in Airlie Beach go to school in Proserpine, all local residents utilise the Whitsunday Coast Airport and Bruce Highway for transport. While the individual towns are often dominated by a single industry, the diversity of the Whitsunday region's economy provides overall stability and economic sustainability.

Beyond the traditional industries of agriculture, sugar, mining and tourism, new industries are emerging. Tassal, the largest producer of salmon in Australia, has recently invested \$85M to create its largest prawn farm in Australia (200 hectares), creating a significant aquaculture industry for the region that will double prawn production in Queensland in five years. Gilmour Space Technologies has announced that it will leverage the Abbott Point State Development Area, a 16,800 ha industrial precinct surrounding the Port of Abbot Point, to develop a small rocket launch pad to launch small satellites into low earth orbits from 2022.

As the heart of the Greater Barrier Reef, sustainability is a central theme throughout the region. From reef restoration and water quality to on-farm practices and recycling, ensuring that the economy can grow in a sustainable manner will also be important for the future.

Based on the strong foundations of its traditional industries and buoyed by its emerging industries, the Whitsunday region is poised for future growth and vibrancy.

Top Industries contributing to GRP (2020)	\$m
Mining	\$1,836
Construction	\$327
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	\$199
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	\$153
Accommodation and Food Services	\$140

Top Employment Sectors (2020)	No.
Construction	3,437
Accommodation and Food Services	2,471
Mining	1,765
Retail Trade	1,568
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,486

Source for both above is Economy ID (2021)

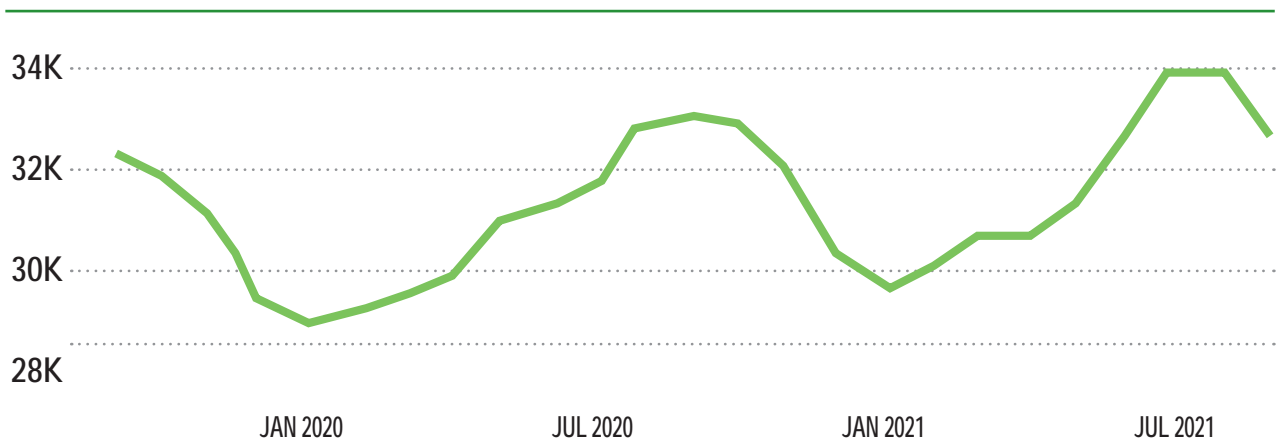
	Population (2020)	Employment (2016)	Top 3 Industries
Bowen	9,488	2,859	Healthcare, Retail, Accommodation
Collinsville	3,295	2,958	Agriculture, Mining, Transport
Airlie - Whitsundays	14,558	6,387	Accommodation, Retail, Transport
Proserpine	8,586	2,899	Education, Healthcare, Agriculture

Source: ABS (2021), ABS (2017)



Source: ABS (2021); QGSO (2021)

RESIDENT POPULATION SEASONALITY



Source: Telco

Housing Vacancy Rates (August 2021)	
4802 (Airlie Beach/Cannonvale)	0.3%
4805 (Bowen)	0.4%
4804 (Collinsville)	13.5%
4800 (Proserpine)	0.7%

Weekly Housing Rental Growth (September 2021)	
4802 (Airlie Beach/Cannonvale)	\$555/week (up 22.5% annually)
4805 (Bowen)	\$323/week (up 0.5% annually)
4804 (Collinsville)	\$307/week (up 20.3% annually)
4800 (Proserpine)	\$396/week (up 3.5% annually)

Source for both above is SQM Research (2021)

INDUSTRY



TOURISM (2019)

1.4 MILLION ANNUAL VISITORS
4.2 MILLION VISITOR NIGHTS
\$880 MILLION IN VISITOR EXPENDITURE
Tourism directly contributes 8.9% to Gross Regional Product and 18.8% of jobs

Source: TRA (2021); TEQ (2021); Lucid Economics



COAL

9 MILLION TONNE OF COAL
(3 MINES)

Source: Company websites



SUGAR

240,000 TONNE OF SUGAR

1.7 MILLION TONNE OF SUGAR CANE

Source: Wilmar Sugar 2021



TOMATOES

50% OF TOMATOES IN QUEENSLAND



CAPSICUMS

53% OF CAPSICUMS IN QUEENSLAND

Source: QLD Dept of Agriculture and Fisheries (2021)

There are numerous other entities engaged in economic development across the broader region. All of these partners will have impact and influence regarding economic development outcomes for the Whitsunday region. The focus of this strategy is the concerted effort and actions that Whitsunday Regional Council will undertake to affect change within the Whitsunday region.

Regional partners will be engaged throughout the process and participate in the future success of the Whitsunday region.

Figure 2.1. Partners in Regional Economic Development



Various State and Commonwealth Government Departments



Broader regional economic development organisations



Our neighboring Local Governments

Source: Lucid Economics

3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

3.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The purpose of this consultation phase was to engage with key stakeholders and stakeholder groups about their views towards the future economic development of the region as well as to understand community and business expectations of Council's role in economic development. This input was considered and guided the development of the focus for the strategy.

3.2 KEY THEMES FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS

There were a range of key themes that emerged from the engagement process as summarised in Figure 3.1.

Stakeholders often highlighted the region's traditional industries (i.e. mining, horticulture, sugar and tourism) as key strengths and areas for future focus and expansion. Equally, many stakeholders highlighted the emerging opportunities surrounding Tassal's prawn farm and opportunities surrounding aquaculture as well as the future potential for the Bowen Orbital Space Port (BOS)/ Gilmore Space Technologies, which could not only develop a local space/rocket industry cluster but create a significant tourist attraction to augment the existing offer in the region. Some stakeholders highlighted other future potential growth opportunities for the Abbot Point SDA including large scale and very specialised industry.

Stakeholders acknowledged the significance of regional assets such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Islands, coal assets, sugar cane and the potential for horticultural expansion through the Urannah Dam and the Water for Bowen project.

All stakeholders highlighted the key issue of a lack of housing. The issue impacts the entire region, including seasonal workers, key service workers (for tourism) and most businesses' ability to recruit staff. The lack of housing was identified as a result of some extenuating circumstances from the COVID-19 pandemic and buyers from Sydney and Melbourne that have been purchasing properties (sight unseen) and paying a considerable premium (based on local market norms) without the intention of living in the properties full time. Equally, there has also been an influx of retirees seeking to sell capital city properties (at current high prices) and purchase a property in the Whitsundays with the intention of living in the property for half of the year, while they explore Australia with their caravan the rest of the year. The influx of these buyers (encouraged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and 'cashed up' given the recent escalation of prices) has meant that the typical level of rental stock has dwindled tremendously. The lack of housing stock has then meant that many businesses cannot attract staff at any skill level. Many stakeholders recounted stories of losing good staff because they could no longer afford to live in the region or (if recruited to the region by the business) could not find a place to live.



Figure 3.1. Whitsunday Economic Development Engagement Feedback



Source: Lucid Economics

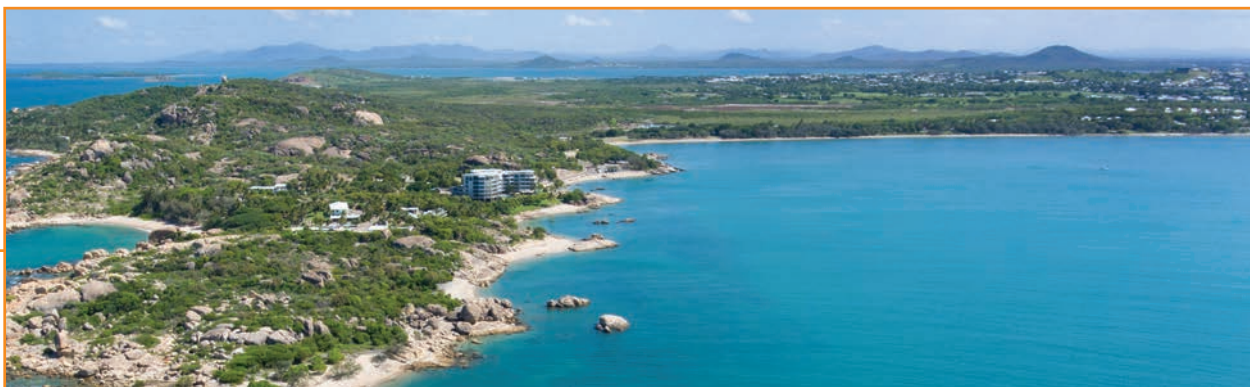
3.3 CATALYTIC PROJECTS

Stakeholders were unanimous regarding the important role that various catalytic project can play in advancing the region's economic development. The following projects were identified as critical in propelling the region forward and form the key economic development opportunities for the region:

- **Abbot Point State Development Area (SDA):** the Abbot Point SDA is a 16,800 ha industrial precinct surrounding the Port of Abbot Point. The area has been designated for a number of large-scale, value-adding industrial development activities.
- **Bowen Marine Industry Precinct:** the Bowen Marine Industry Precinct will establish a world class marina and shipyard to service a range of vessels from the smallest cruisers up to the largest superyachts. The facility will create significant value for the region, including existing operators in Airlie Beach as well as numerous others from Australia and beyond.
- **Bowen Orbital Space Port (BOS)/ Gilmore Space Technologies:** Gilmore Space Technologies intends to establish a rocket launching centre that will launch small satellites into Low Earth orbits from the Abbot Point SDA, creating a significant catalyst for a new industry cluster in the region.
- **Heart of the Reef Discovery Centre:** the Centre would create a significant land-side marine and reef tourism experience that would focus on research and reef restoration/care. The centre would host university
- researchers, provide academic training and citizen science experiences as well as an interactive land-side reef experience to educate and encourage visitors to support conservations and sustainability.
- **Shute Harbour Restoration:** the Shute Harbour Restoration includes a new, modern two-story terminal building (including retail, food and beverage and tourism offering), three new pontoons, various berthing options, a new fuel facility and ancillary areas. It represents a revitalisation of this important asset that can encourage additional economic growth.
- **Tassal Group Limited – Proserpine Prawn Farm:** Tassal Group Limited has acquired 4152 hectares of land north of Proserpine for development of their prawn farm. Since project commencement in 2018 around \$95m has been invested, with further investment of \$574m anticipated over the next 10 years. During this time production is expected to rise to approximately 20,000 tonnes of prawns per year, from over 430 hectares of production area.
- **Urannah Dam:** the Urannah Dam is a \$2.9 billion planned dam on the Broken
- River, including connecting water pipelines and instream distribution and storage of water, an irrigation precinct (of up to 25,000 ha) and a pumped hydro-electric power scheme. The project could create 600 jobs and significantly augment the agricultural sector in the region. (Source: QLD Government- Project EIS)
- **Water for Bowen:** the project consists of a proposed water transport system that will provide up to 60,000 ML of water per annum from water allocations sourced from the Burdekin Falls Dam. The project could provide water security for the region, enhancing productivity and increasing investment security. The project could generate between, 882 and 1,176 jobs (across the entire project area). (Source: QLD Govt EIS - SunWater)
- **Whitsunday Skyway Project:** the project consists of a gondola cableway to connect the centre of Airlie Beach to the summit of an adjacent hilltop in Conway National Park, which would provide magnificent scenic vistas over the Coral Sea and Whitsunday Islands. The project would add a significant, onshore visitor attraction and could be linked to additional activities in the Conway National Park (i.e. walking

trails, mountain biking, etc.).

Each of the projects individually can have a significant impact on the region. Collectively, they have the potential to change the size, scale and shape of the region. As a collective region, these projects can generate significant growth and vitality in the economy.



3.4 ROLE OF COUNCIL IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Stakeholders were specifically asked what they felt the role of Council should be in economic development.

Unanimously, stakeholders felt that Council has a very important role to play and should provide overall leadership for the region in economic development. Specific roles that stakeholders felt were appropriate and important for Council to fill, include:

- Advocacy and lobbying the State and Commonwealth Government to support major projects and increase services and infrastructure
- Marketing and promotion of the area to attract investment and visitors to the region
- Supporting local businesses
- Planning and regulation at the local level, particularly around the property development and planning process

While stakeholders generally did not look to Council to 'fix' the housing shortage, they were generally very supportive of any initiative that Council can undertake to support more housing development.

4. GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Future growth opportunities were identified through the background analysis and stakeholder engagement.

Given the significance of traditional industries such as agriculture, sugar and tourism, these industries need to be supported into the future. Additionally, various opportunities exist to expand these industries into the future, including:

AGRICULTURE:

- o Expanding future export markets for existing products, such as tomatoes, capsicum and mangos would provide new markets for existing producers, allowing them to expand their local activities. The Whitsunday Freight Hub could develop to provide important infrastructure to support greater agricultural exports from the region.
- o Future avenues to value-add existing products (and waste products) could also allow existing producers to expand. Opportunities in nutraceuticals using tomatoes, as well as finding reuse and recycling opportunities for the tomato industry black plastic waste could all add value to existing operations, unlocking avenues for expansion.



TOURISM:

- o As outlined in the Whitsunday Destination Tourism Plan (2019-24), the industry has a variety of opportunities to expand land-side tourism product, disperse visitors more broadly across the region and increase length of stay and visitor yield (i.e. expenditure per visitor/visitor night). As highlighted in the Whitsunday Destination Tourism Plan, the following projects would add value to the existing industry:
 - A high end, branded resort development
 - Recreational fishing and major fishing competitions
 - Development of mountain biking trails
 - Maritime education, training and engineering facilities in Bowen
 - Water park and/or a wave pool in Airlie Beach
 - Full completion of Lake Proserpine Recreation Facilities
 - Mine and heritage tours in Collinsville



At the same, there are emerging growth opportunities that can further diversify and expand the economy, including:

AQUACULTURE:

- o Tassal's new prawn farm represents a large, new industry into the region. Beyond the existing operation, there are opportunities for future expansion that should be supported.
- o In order to support Tassal's operations into the future, the expansion of a local supply chain, including feedstock, transport and specific services, can further expand the local economy and provide opportunities for growth.



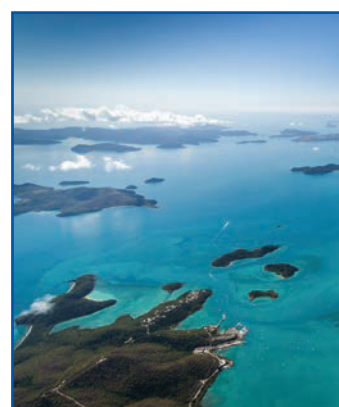
SPACE LAUNCH:

- o Gilmour Space Technologies has plans to establish a rocket launching facility in the Abbot Point SDA, which would represent a new and diversified local industry.
- o Similar to Tassal's prawn farm, opportunities to expand a local supply chain and cluster supporting Gilmour's launch facility would help to expand and diversify the local economy.



RENEWABLE ENERGY:

- o The region has significant opportunities in the renewable energy and recycling sectors. Both State and Federal Governments are looking for ways to reduce carbon emissions and recycle waste.
- o Grant funding is available for activities in the production and use of hydrogen, and innovative activities in recycling.



CATALYTIC PROJECTS:

Stakeholders also felt that the identified catalytic projects were important growth opportunities that should be pursued:

These growth opportunities (individually and collectively) provide the opportunity to expand the regional economy, providing a stimulus for investment and new jobs. In turn, new jobs would attract more families to the region, increasing the population and providing a further stimulus across the economy in terms of new home construction, retail, education and healthcare.

In order to facilitate growth in the identified areas of opportunity, supporting infrastructure will be required, namely housing and other community infrastructure such as education and healthcare services as well as recreation and leisure infrastructure.



THE IMPERATIVE OF HOUSING

The lack of available housing and escalating costs of housing (both to purchase and rent) creates a significant barrier to growth for the Whitsunday region. Without available and affordable housing, it will not be possible to take advantage of the opportunities highlighted in this section.

All businesses (existing and new) need access to an available workforce. Without sufficient housing, access to staff is limited. For many existing businesses, access to seasonal workers and key service workers (namely for tourism oriented businesses) is critical. Stakeholders identified the housing issue as acute and the existing difficulty in finding suitable staff. For some businesses, the lack of workforce accessibility has created a significant opportunity cost and a loss of trade. For tourism, the lack of staff will also impact the visitor experience, with negative comments spreading fast and damaging the brand of the Whitsundays.

Beyond the current negative effects on the economy, a lack of affordable housing will also make it difficult for the opportunities highlighted above to materialise. As new jobs are created, if housing were available, it could entice new residents and families to move to the region, thereby growing the population. As the population grows, there would be increased demand for a number of local goods and services, providing further stimulus to grow the economy. However, without affordable housing available, this future flow-on growth is also at risk.

Given the critical state of the housing shortage and its current detrimental impact on economic development, Council intervention is required. Council can encourage and support the development of housing in a number of ways, through its planning and development process as well as providing incentives to encourage investment in housing.

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

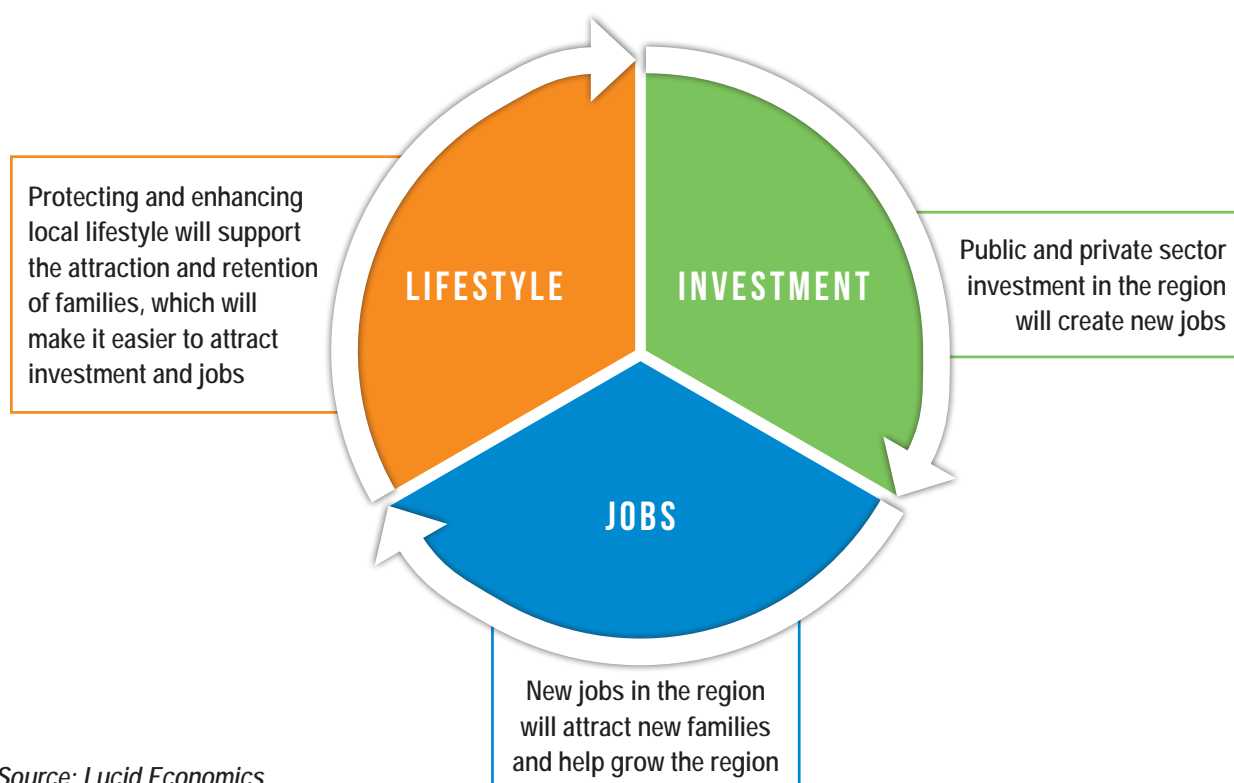
5.1 OBJECTIVES

The four towns of the region are already strongly linked through a multitude of fixed and intangible connections. The strength of each town collectively makes the regional economy diverse and strong. By working together as one cooperative region, the Whitsundays can embolden a new path for economic growth and prosperity – One Whitsunday.

The Whitsunday region is well known and regarded for its enviable lifestyle and the community strongly supports the region’s on-going sustainability to enhance local quality of life, as evidenced in the Community Plan (2011-21).

The Whitsunday Economic Development Strategy 2022-2025 is built on competitiveness. Based on the identified strengths and growth opportunities, the clear goal of the strategy is to deliver more investment and more jobs, as the pathway to securing the economic and environmental sustainability of the Whitsunday region. These factors are all interlinked as highlighted in the below diagram. Generating investment outcomes will deliver new jobs. Ensuring quality lifestyle offerings is imperative to attract new families to region to fill these new jobs, which in turn can influence investor decisions where there is weighting related to recruitment capability.

Figure 5.1. Interrelatedness of Investment, Jobs and Lifestyle



Source: Lucid Economics



While Council has a clear role to play in economic development, it is not the sole player. The business community, industry associations, regional development agencies, and the other spheres of government all play important roles in economic development.

A number of such organisations are already well-established in the Whitsunday region and they stand ready and willing to partner with Council to work towards the common goal of a prosperous and thriving Whitsundays.

Potential partnership opportunities to be established or strengthened exist with at least the following local groups:

- GW3
- RDA-MIW
- Bowen Gumlu Growers Association
- Chambers of Commerce
- Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association
- Bowen Collinsville Enterprises
- Collinsville DIG
- Canegrowers
- Tourism Whitsundays
- Whitsunday Conservation Council



5.2 STRATEGY OVERVIEW

The following diagram provides an overview of the strategy and is based on the research, analysis and consultation conducted for this project.

The strategy will focus on the traditional and emerging industries, including agriculture, aquaculture, sugar, mining, tourism and space launch. Avenues will be pursued to grow, expand and diversify these industries over time. A number of catalytic projects will be pursued that individually and/or collectively have the ability to significantly increase investment and jobs as well as enhancing local quality of life.

There are four key strategies that will guide Council's actions over the next five years, with each one supported by priority actions.

ONE WHITSUNDAY REGION

...FOR INVESTMENT ...FOR JOBS ...FOR LIFESTYLE

Figure 5.2. Whitsunday Regional Economic Development Strategy

OUR GOALS

OUR KEY INDUSTRIES

- Agriculture
- Aquaculture
- Mining
- Tourism
- Space Launch

OUR CATALYTIC PROJECTS

- Abbot Point SDA Development
- Bowen Marine Industry Precinct
- Bowen Orbital Space Port (BOS)/
Gilmore Space Technologies
- Heart of the Reef Discovery Centre
- Shute Harbour Marine Terminal Tassal
Group Limited
– Proserpine Prawn Farm
- Urannah Dam
- Water for Bowen
- Whitsunday Skyway Project

OUR STRATEGIES



1. ADVOCACY & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Promote catalytic projects to Government
- Lobby for education and healthcare facilities
- Develop the Whitsunday Freight Hub and Shute Harbour Marine Terminal



2. MARKETING & PROMOTION

- Promote and market the region for investment
- Facilitate investment into the region
- Promote and market the region for tourism



3. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

- Support local business networks
- Engage with key industries and businesses to develop supply chains and value adding opportunities



4. PLANNING

- Support and encourage development and redevelopment opportunities

OUR PRIORITY ACTIONS

Source: Lucid Economics

An annual action plan provides further details regarding the implementation of this strategy. The action plan should be reviewed annually and adjusted based on the previous year's experiences as well as any new or emerging barriers or opportunities. In such a way, the strategy provides longer-term direct and at the same time allows for flexibility and the ability to adapt over time.



5.2.1 ADVOCACY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Overview and Rationale

A number of catalytic infrastructure projects have been identified that can generate considerable investment and jobs, but most are outside the domain of local government. The funding required for them is well and truly beyond the capacity of Council, so a focus on lobbying (together with regional partners) is required. Stakeholders were strongly supportive of the identified catalytic projects and felt that Council has a role to champion these projects to Government.

At the same time, there are other infrastructure projects that Council can influence and develop that can equally support investment and job outcomes, namely:

- Shute Harbour Restoration (a Council owned asset)
- Whitsunday Freight Hub, a dedicated freight facility at the Whitsunday Coast Airport (a Council owned asset), which can directly support export of local agricultural products, greatly expanding markets for existing producers

Goal

Advocate for the implementation of the catalytic projects and maximise opportunities with Council owned assets to secure investment and create jobs.

Priority Actions

- Promote catalytic projects to government
- Lobby for education and healthcare facilities for towns from government
- Develop the Whitsunday freight hub and maximise opportunities from the Shute Harbour Restoration



5.2.2 MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Overview and Rationale

Council has a role to play in promoting the area, including the catalytic projects as well as other investment and business opportunities in the region. Promotion of these opportunities can take place in a number of ways, including the preparation of business case materials (to support lobbying efforts for catalytic projects), creation of marketing materials (both digital and downloadable PDFs), conducting awareness raising activities as well as working with regional partnerships to build support and further promote these projects. As an extension of marketing and promotional efforts, Council can also assist in facilitating investment from the private sector into the region.

Additionally, this strategy also recognises Council's role to market the region for tourism (through the support it gives Tourism Whitsundays).

Stakeholders felt strongly that Council has a significant role in marketing and promoting the area for business and tourism.

Goal

Raise the profile of the region as a business destination in order to attract investment. Market the visitor destination further to support investment and jobs through attracting more visitors, visitor expenditure and increasing yield.

Priority Actions

- Promote and market the region for investment
- Facilitate investment into the region
- Promote and market the region for tourism



5.2.3 BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

Overview and Rationale

Local businesses often provide not only the basis for existing jobs, but also play a major role in new investment and job growth. Council can support existing businesses in many ways, but first must have an ongoing dialogue with local businesses, particularly large businesses, and business groups. Council can support local businesses through considering its own procurement and promoting local businesses for local procurement. Additionally, through engaging with local businesses and business groups, Council can identify barriers and opportunities quickly, assisting where possible. Finally, through larger businesses, Council can support the development of local supply chains and value-adding opportunities.

Goal

Generate investment and job outcomes through building local supply chains and local businesses expanding.

Actions

- Support local business networks
- Engage with key industries and businesses to develop supply chains and value-adding opportunities
- Focus on local procurement



5.2.4 PLANNING

Overview and Rationale

The planning scheme and the development approval process is likely Council's single largest economic development tool. The provision of a planning environment which encourages investment and jobs will be central to Council's ability to support investment and jobs outcomes. Conducting pre-lodgement meetings, engaging pro-actively with proponents and using various incentives for some projects will all leverage the planning and regulatory role that Council plays.

Goal

Securing investment that produces jobs.

Priority Actions

- Support and encourage development and redevelopment opportunities



6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 ACTION PLAN

The following action plan represents the first year implementation of this strategy and is aligned to the strategic framework (refer Figure 5.2). It includes individual actions, a metric for each as well as a KPI for each action.

Table 6.1. Whitsunday Regional Economic Development Strategy Action Plan

	STRATEGY/PRIORITY ACTION/TASK	METRIC	KPI
1.	Advocacy and Infrastructure		
1.1.	Promote catalytic projects to Government		
1.1.1.	Continue to work with State Government regarding the development of Abbott Point	Meetings with Government	2
1.1.2.	Develop a business case for the Bowen Marine Industry Precinct	Development of business case	1
1.1.3.	Continue to support the development of a local space launching industry (around Gilmour)	Meetings with Gilmour	2
1.1.4.	Develop a scoping study for the Heart of the Reef Discovery Centre	Development of study	1
1.1.5.	Support the Urannah Dam Proposal	Submission to Government	1
1.1.6.	Support the Water for Bowen Project	Submission to Government	1
1.1.7.	Support the Whitsunday Skyway Project	Submission to Government	1
1.2.	Lobby for education and healthcare facilities		
1.2.1.	Lobby the Department of Education for a public high school in Cannonvale	Write letters to the Minister	2
1.2.2.	Support the development of more healthcare facilities and allied health services in the region	Discussions with providers	2
1.3.	Develop local infrastructure to support economic growth		
1.3.1.	Develop the Whitsunday Freight Distribution Centre at the Whitsunday Coast Airport	Functioning freight centre	1
1.3.2.	Maximise benefits of the Shute Harbour Restoration	Leasing activity at new facility	90% fully
1.3.3.	Investigate the Grubby Bay Wharf (barge wharf and boat launching facility)	Study completed	1
1.3.4.	Investigate the revitalisation of Collinsville	Revitalisation plan completed	1
1.3.5.	Expand the of Lake Proserpine camping facilities	New facilities open	1
1.3.6.	Develop an arts district in Proserpine	Arts District Plan completed	1

	STRATEGY/PRIORITY ACTION/TASK	METRIC	KPI
2.	Marketing and Promotion		
2.1.	Promote and market the region for investment		
2.1.1.	Develop an investment prospectus	Investment prospectus completed	1
2.1.2.	Conduct an aggressive social media (Linkedin) campaign	No. of posts	25
2.1.3.	Regularly promote investment stories to the media	No. of stories	12
2.1.4.	Build strong relationships with potential investors and investment networks	No. of meetings	40
2.2.	Facilitate investment into the region		
2.2.1.	Aggressively pursue temporary key workers accommodation options with existing operators	No. of new beds	50
2.2.2.	Develop a concept and feasibility for permanent key worker accommodation complex	Study completed	1
2.2.3.	Support the development of the business case for investment	No. of business cases	10
2.2.4.	Host prospective investors in the region (for site inspections)	No. of investors	10
2.3.	Promote and market the region for tourism		
2.3.1.	Continue to support Tourism Whitsundays for destination marketing and development	Multi-year funding agreement	1
3.	Business Retention and Expansion		
3.1.	Support local business networks		
3.1.1.	Participate actively in local business network meetings (Chambers of Commerce, BCE, DIG)	No. of meetings	24
3.1.2.	Coordinate a regional discussion amongst existing business networks	No. of meetings	2
3.2.	Engage with key industries and businesses to develop supply chains and value-adding opportunities		
3.2.1.	Regularly meet with key industry bodies and major businesses	No. of meetings	24
4.	Planning		
4.1.	Support and encourage development and redevelopment opportunities		
4.1.1.	Develop an infrastructure charge deferment incentive to support (housing) development	Incentive policy	1
4.1.2.	Identify any Council held property suitable for temporary accommodation	No. of sites	5
4.1.3.	Develop a single point of contact and major project facilitation process for large DAs	Process developed	1
4.3.2.	Promote the benefits of local procurement across the region	No. of stories	2

6.2 MONITORING PROGRESS

It will be important to track the progress of this strategy over time. While investment, jobs and lifestyle are the goals of the strategy, Council does not have direct control over these outcomes. For this reason, it will be important to track Council's progress regarding the action plan every year. Actions should be considered against the identified metric and KPI as well as the budget allocation required for each. An evaluation should be conducted regarding the KPIs directly as well as the benefits or resultant outputs. Adjustments can be made based on the effectiveness of the action and changes can be made based on the experience from the previous year as well as changes in the market place, including emerging barriers or new opportunities. In such a way, the strategy provides longer-term direction and still allows for flexibility to adapt to an ever-changing environment.

Because investment, jobs and lifestyle are the main goals of the strategy, it will also be important to track changes in the economy. An annual economic and industry evaluation should be completed to also help inform annual review and planning for the action plan. The results of this economic and industry evaluation should also be shared with stakeholders.

This strategy should be reviewed in 2025 and adjustments made as necessary.

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