

DOUGLAS SHIRE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2021-2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Douglas Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners and acknowledge and pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge the important role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to have within the Douglas Shire community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Council thanks all contributors and stakeholders involved in the development of the Douglas Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2021-2024. This includes (but not limited to):

- Douglas Chamber of Commerce and the Management Committee
- Economic Strategic Review Committee members
- Ecotourism Australia
- Far Northern Milling
- Federal Government
- Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC)
- Great Barrier Reef Legacy
- .id the Population Experts
- Jabalbina Aboriginal Corporation
- James Cook University
- Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)
- Mossman Botanic Gardens
- Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network (QAWN)
- Queensland Government
- Regional Development Australia Tropical North
- Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree (TPDD) and the Board
- YEP Entrepreneurship Facilitators Cairns

Council also recognises and acknowledges the members of the community, government, peak bodies, business and academic sectors for their participation in the stakeholder and industry engagement process, which underpinned this document.

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Despite the ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus continuing to effect Australia and the world, I'm proud to say that the Douglas Shire is on the road to recovery – starting with the adoption of our 2021-2024 Economic Development Strategy.

Our tourism and agricultural industries have been and will continue to be major contributors to Douglas Shire's gross regional product, creating job opportunities for the 12,000 residents who call the region home and supporting the hundreds of thousands of people who visit each year.



It's the intention of this Strategy to recognise the contribution of these established industries, while building resilience and broadening the economic structure of the Douglas Shire.

"It's the intention of this Strategy to recognise the contribution of these established industries, while building resilience and broadening the economic structure of the Douglas Shire."

Our new strategic vision prioritizes three drivers that provide the overarching strategic direction for attracting exciting new industries, creating jobs and achieving sustainable economic growth in a post-COVID world.

This strategy will not only grow the economy, but it also lays the platform for us to continue

to look for solutions to the new economic constraints that COVID has brought upon us.

As a community, we will address vital issues that continue to block economic growth such as the low availability of affordable housing, a shortage of local workers and the limited opportunity for higher paying jobs.

We all know tourism is the bed rock of our economy but we need to target new markets with fresh experiences, grow the health and well-being sector and capitalise on our appeal to the lucrative sports tourism and adventure markets.

In agriculture, Mossman Mill continues to work towards a more resilient industry by diversifying its sugarcane products through the Daintree Bio Precinct, while we've recognised the unique export potential of our tropical fruits, seafood and indigenous foods and the rich paddock-to-plate experiences available to visitors.

The key is to embrace our endlessly diverse and unique producers.

To become a thriving economy, Douglas Shire needs smart, targeted and sustainable development to attract a modest increase in its population and capitalise on the deep affinity the southern pre-retirement and retirement demographic has with our destination.

I believe we're uniquely positioned to adapt to the new economic environment brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has taught us that working remotely is not only possible but desirable for many who could bring their office to our tropical paradise.

Council will explore new clean energy markets and technologies, such as the hydrogen power market, and position ourselves as cutting-edge players in this space. The strategy also identifies key projects such as the Daintree Bio Precinct, Mossman Botanic Gardens and Great Barrier Reef Legacy Living Coral Bank, as important drivers in developing the environmental science sector and attracting a skilled workforce and new residents to the region.

In these uncertain times, we have a strategy that seeks to inspire our region to innovate and become a stronger, broader-based and more resilient economy. Through collaboration, we will transform Douglas Shire's economy, ensuring regional and economic success.

MICHAEL KERR
Mayor Douglas Shire Council



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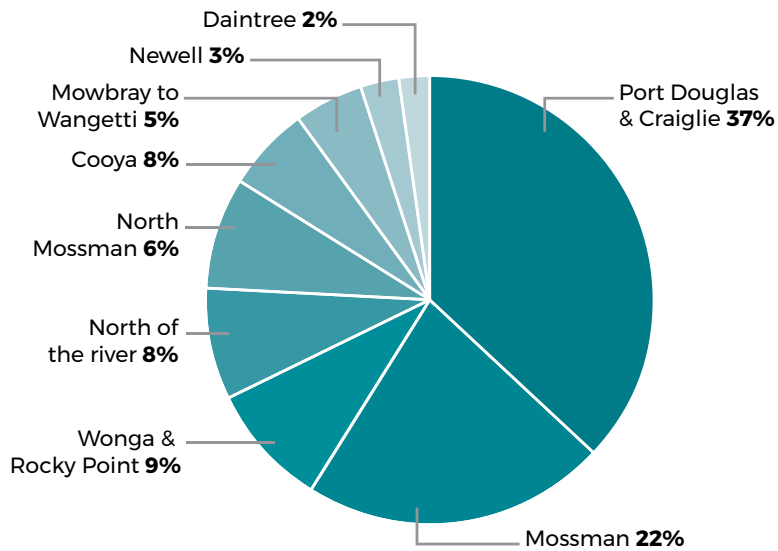
DOUGLAS ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

The economy of the shire depends mainly on tourism, with over 700,000 people visiting the region annually to explore the World Heritage Listed Wet Tropics Rainforest and Great Barrier Reef.

Douglas is home to over 12,000 residents, with almost 60% living in the two main population centres of Port Douglas and Mossman. Port Douglas is the tourist gateway to the region, while Mossman is the administrative, health, industrial and agricultural hub.

Other principal urban centres include the beachside communities of Wonga Beach, Newell Beach and Cooya Beach. The remaining residents live in small, decentralised communities scattered along the 100km stretch of coast road; tucked into the rainforest or in small rural townships in the valleys of the Shire's hinterland.

DOUGLAS SHIRE POPULATION BY SUBURB



AGE STRUCTURE - SERVICE AGE GROUPS

Douglas (S) - Total persons (usual residence)	2016		
	Number	%	Qld %
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	619	5.3	6.3
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	951	8.1	9.4
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	720	6.1	7.5
Tertiary education and independence (18 to 24)	685	5.8	9.2
Young workforce (25 to 34)	1,520	13.0	13.8
Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49)	2,422	20.6	20.2
Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59)	1,945	16.6	12.8
Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69)	1,660	14.2	10.7
Seniors (70 to 84)	1,048	8.9	8.3
Elderly aged (85 and over)	159	1.4	1.8
Total	11,729	100.0	100.0



Population
12,426²



Ratepayers
9,500⁵



443K overnight
visitors &
264K day visitors⁷



Visitor nights
2.478M⁷

1377 locally-owned businesses⁴

97% are small businesses (20 employees or less)⁴

60% operate within these industries:⁴

1. Construction & trades
2. Agriculture, Forestry (includes horticulture & landscaping) & Fishing
3. Rental, Hiring (includes property management) & Real Estate Services
4. Accommodation & Food Services
5. Professional, Scientific & Technical Services



GRP **\$751M**
representing just 0.2%
of the state's GSP¹



Tourism generates
more than
\$611M per year⁷



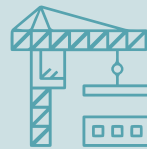
6,727 jobs located
in the Douglas Shire¹



Largest employing
industry: **Accommodation
& Food Services**¹



Tourism supports
2,546 jobs¹



Unemployment
6.3%³



70% of residents live
in Port Douglas &
Mossman⁶



Aboriginal & Torres
Strait Islander
population **7.7%**²



Median age **44**²

Source

1. NIEIR as at 30 June, 2020
2. ABS, Regional Population Growth, Australia (3218.0) as at 30 June, 2020
3. ABS, Labour force survey (6202.0) as at 31 Dec, 2020
4. ABS, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exit as at 30 June, 2020
5. Approximate Douglas Shire Council ratepayer count as at 30 April, 2021

6. 2016 Census Community Profiles
7. Data is based on a four-year average from 2016-2019. Douglas LGA Profile, Tourism Research Australia

DOUGLAS SHIRE REGION

The Douglas Shire covers an area of 2,445km² from Wangetti in the south to the Bloomfield River in the north.



BRIEF HISTORY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN DOUGLAS

Douglas Shire's unique positioning between the World Heritage Listed Wet Tropics Rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef transformed the region into a world-class tourism destination in the 1980s with the arrival of visitors at the new Cairns International Airport.

The region was perfectly positioned to benefit from the influx of travellers with the region's first mooring platform anchoring at Agincourt Reef and the construction of the Sheraton Mirage Resort nearing completion.

An ideal tropical climate and rich fertile soils has positioned the Douglas Shire as a major contributor to the region's Agricultural industry, producing sugarcane and other tropical crops since the late 1800s. While rural land in the Shire is predominantly used for growing these crops, the presence of cattle grazing, and a healthy aquaculture industry has grown.

While economic downturns and disruptions have continued to influence the business landscape of the Douglas Shire, Tourism and Agriculture remain as the main economic drivers of the region today.

In 2017, Council acknowledged the importance of establishing long-term economic goals for the Shire by adopting an Economic Development Strategy, which is set to expire in 2021. While many of the actions in the Strategy were complete or on track, a review commenced in late 2019 to ensure it remained relevant.

To facilitate the review, Council established the Economic Strategic Review Committee; a group comprising twenty local business people from various industries across the Shire.

Over a series of workshops in early 2020, the committee assessed the existing Strategy alongside the region's strengths and weakness to identify new opportunities to build resilience and broaden the economic structure of the Douglas Shire.

This Strategy formalises the findings of the Economic Strategic Review Committee, market trends, feedback received from public consultation and considers the impact of COVID-19 on the Douglas economy.



COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting domestic and international border closures has had a substantial negative impact on economic activity in the Douglas Shire.

The region has emerged as one of the most affected regions in Queensland, with a loss of almost 1,000 jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars lost from the local economy. With international borders remaining closed until at least mid-2022, the path to a recovered state will be drawn out over years to come.

Throughout the pandemic, Council has continued to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 and investigate ways to provide relief to businesses and residents in Douglas Shire.

Local recovery planning commenced in the early stages of the pandemic with the formation of an Economy Recovery Group, bringing together people from government agencies, tourism, small business, agriculture, events and Council's Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG).



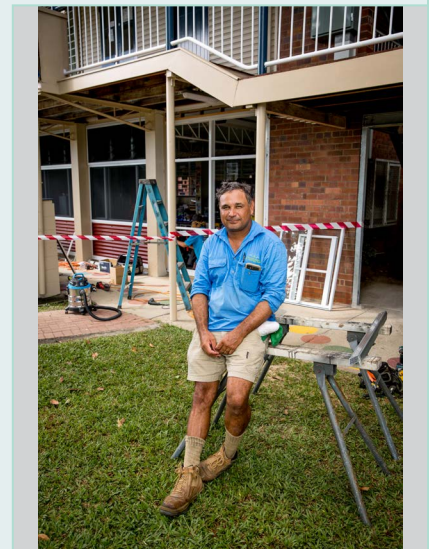
A range of financial relief measures were provided and a buy local campaign called "Buy Douglas: Build Douglas" was launched to encourage people to spend their money in Douglas Shire and build the economy in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To establish a snapshot of event impacts and recovery actions, the Economic Recovery Group followed the Queensland Reconstruction Authority's (QRA) methodology for recovery planning. A workshop was held with key stakeholders from the group who identified, the following impacts (negative and positive) on the Douglas Shire Community:

- Pro-longed border closures and restricted aviation access has contributed to the loss of high-volume visitation from key domestic markets in Sydney and Melbourne, which is having the largest impact on the Douglas economy.
- Overall reef visits and rainforest-based tour numbers are down by 90%.
- 80% of tourism dependant businesses in the Douglas Shire were closed between March and July.
- In the months that followed the initial nationwide lockdown, visitation in the region has been bolstered by the intrastate drive market and high-value travellers accessing the destination via limited direct domestic routes. However, the volume and consistency from these markets is not sustainable.
- Loss or displacement of major events is limiting the Shire's appeal to regional visitation.
- Loss or postponement of weddings is having a major impact on creative industry professionals, who are unable to repurpose their skills into other industries.
- High levels of uncertainty around the viability of businesses in the Shire is acting as a deterrent to potential workers required for essential, service-based jobs in the tourism industry. Business models are subsequently shifting to outsourcing instead of employing.



- Late 2020 easing of restrictions and border re-openings coincides with harvesting across Regional Queensland's agricultural sector, placing further strain on the shared workforce.
- Caravan parks across Douglas have enjoyed high-occupancy rates as self-drive intrastate visitors want to explore the region.
- Distance from Brisbane, in comparison to other tropical destinations in Queensland, is limiting the region's market share for high-volume visitation out of South East Queensland.
- Social distancing compliance at the Port Douglas Markets requires Council to limit the number of stall holders, which in turn limited the potential economic impact of the market, which is an important point of sale for many small businesses. Buskers are also prohibited, impacting ambience and appeal of the markets.
- Agricultural industry has experienced minimal disruption throughout the year.
- Sugar price has dropped as a result of global pressures experienced during the pandemic.
- Value-adding projects within the Daintree Bio Precinct have been delayed due to international border closures.



Whilst a number of these impacts require direct action, in the short term, Council will continue to work with our key stakeholders and the tourism industry to facilitate solutions to the region's unstable workforce by:

- Facilitating discussions around the Shire's requirements to fill workforce gaps
- Identifying key sources of skilled and unskilled workforce
- Liaising with TPDD and the Douglas Chamber of Commerce to meet market needs
- Working closely with Jobs Queensland to develop initiatives to get more local residents working and attract suitable workforce candidates to the region.
- Identify and promote workforce development programs to support the up-skilling or/and re-skilling of the Shire's workforce to support ongoing recovery.

Council recognises that uncertainty around future domestic border closures will remain for the immediate future but that a recovered state can only be achieved when access to the region from key domestic markets in Sydney and Melbourne, is consistently achieved.

Douglas Shire Council's path to recovery focuses on addressing these impacts through the implementation of this Economic Development Strategy to achieve resilience against future disasters through a diversified economy.

PURPOSE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

At its core, economic development supports the sustainable increase in living standards, delivering higher incomes, better education, health and wellbeing, as well as environmental protection resulting from conscious and applied effort.

Economic development in the Douglas Shire is about improving the quality of life experienced in our community through:

- 1. Job creation** – Providing important support and advice for attracting job-creating industries and businesses.
- 2. Job security** – Ensuring the right mix of businesses builds stronger economies that are more resilient to changes in industry and economic downturns.
- 3. Prosperous businesses** – Delivering initiatives that support the local business community to connect, succeed and prosper.
- 4. Better business environment** – Increasing the number of locally based, rate-paying companies supports Council's ability to deliver community projects and facilities.
- 5. Improved quality of life** – Safeguarding a strong economy, securing more jobs, better infrastructure development and a higher standard of living for residents.

Supporting Council's focus on economic development is the *Corporate Plan 2019-2024*, which is built around five strategic themes that work together to deliver on Council's Vision Statement:

“A unique, beautiful & sustainable Shire with a connected and inclusive community, thriving economy & deep commitment to protecting the environment for future generations, while honouring our past.”

At the heart of the themes are the three pillars of community, economy, and environment. These three themes are interrelated and cannot be considered in isolation from one another. For example, a strong economy supports a healthy community while an engaged community helps to foster a strong economy. Similarly, our communities are essential in helping to protect our cherished environment, while our beautiful and thriving environment drives economic opportunity and supports healthy communities.

This Economic Development Strategy (the Strategy) provides the overarching strategic direction for economic development in the Douglas Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA).

Achieving the desired outcomes outlined in the Strategy will require a commitment of financial resources and specialist skills from several groups and organisations within the community. Although Council will implement and monitor the strategy, delivery will be the result of a collaborative approach implemented over four years. The strategy:

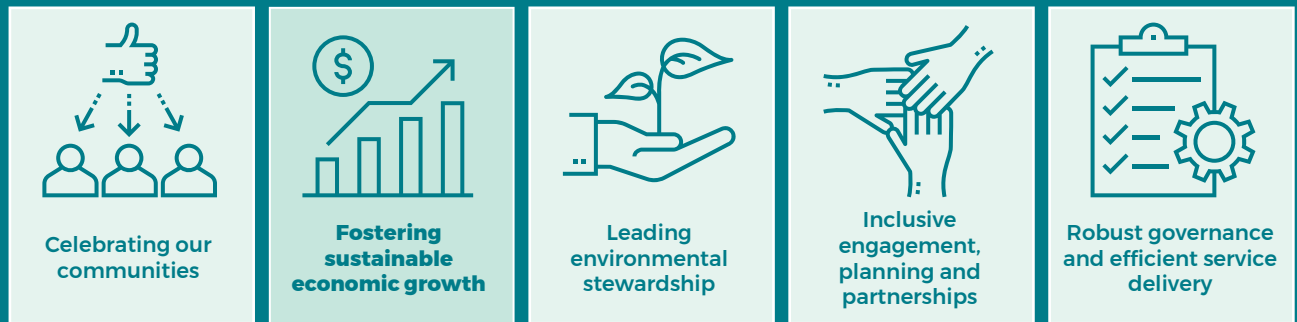
- Will be an important part of Council's decision-making framework
- Recognises a whole of Council approach to economic development
- Sets a clear and measurable action plan to monitor Council's efforts and progress towards economic diversification and prosperity.

LOCAL CONTEXT & ALIGNMENT

DOUGLAS SHIRE COUNCIL'S VISION

A unique, beautiful and sustainable Shire with a connected and inclusive community, **thriving economy** and deep commitment to protecting the environment for future generations, while honouring our past.

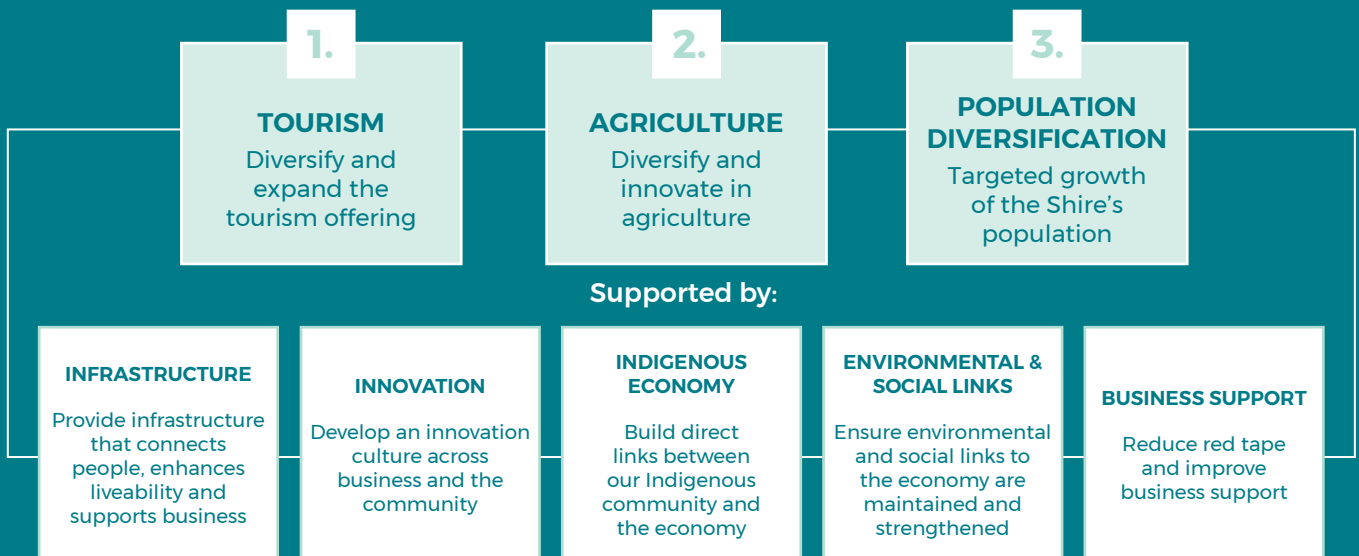
STRATEGIC THEMES



ECONOMIC STRATEGIC GOALS



Seeking an economy that is thriving, growing and diverse the following **three priority drivers** provide the overarching strategic direction for economic growth in the Douglas Shire:



PRIORITY DRIVERS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Economic Recovery Group will continue to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 and provide findings to the LDMG.

The tourism and agricultural sectors have been and will continue to be major contributors to Douglas Shire's gross regional product, creating job opportunities for the 12,000 residents who call the region home and supporting the hundreds of thousands of people who visit each year.

It's the intention of this Strategy to recognise the contribution of these established industries, while building resilience and broadening the economic structure of the Douglas Shire.

Seeking an economy that is thriving, growing and diverse the following three priority areas provide the overarching strategic direction for economic growth in the region:

1. TOURISM - DIVERSIFY & EXPAND OUR TOURISM OFFERING

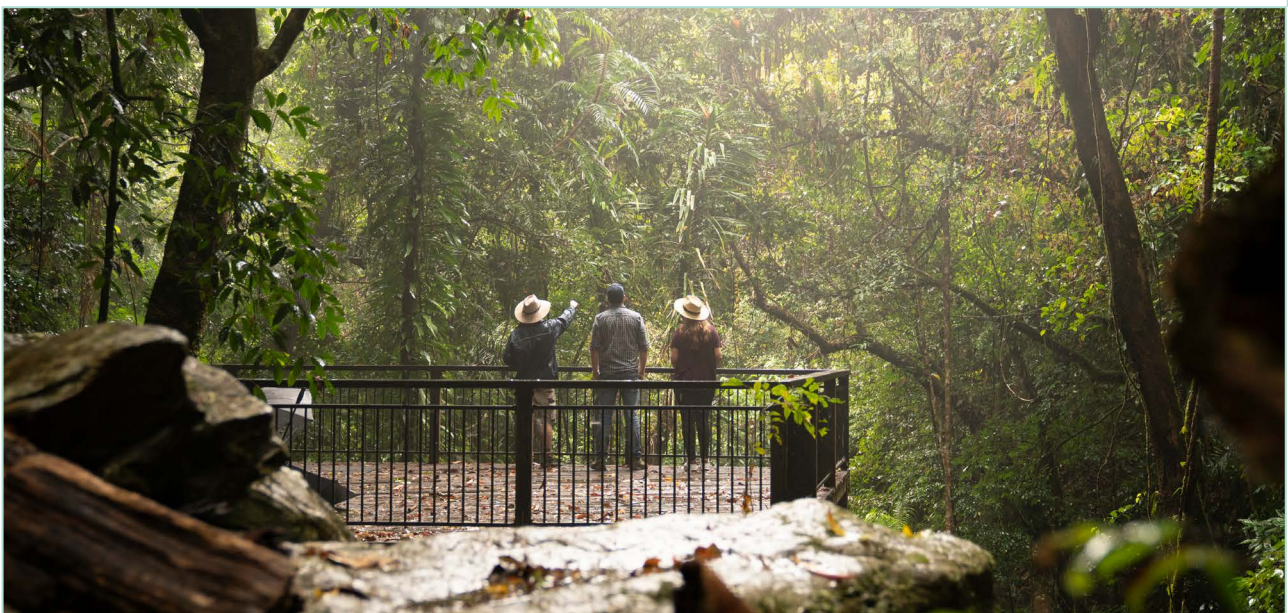
The Douglas Shire is an important part of a visitor's experience in Tropical North Queensland and on average welcomes 426,000 overnight visitors and 262,000 day visitors each year, generating \$611 million while supporting over 2,500 jobs.

Prolonged border closures and restricted aviation access, as a result of COVID-19, decimated visitation numbers to the destination causing the Shire's GRP to shrink by more than 5%, in the quarter ending 30 September, 2020.

Emerging from the pandemic the destination will continue to appeal to a more conscious traveller who values sustainable experiences and considers the wider social and economic impact of their travels. Council is committed to preserving the unique appeal of the Douglas Shire by strengthening the Shire's ECO Destination Certification with Ecotourism Australia and providing a business environment that supports nature-based and sustainable enterprise.

Additionally, Douglas is well-positioned to attract new markets with fresh experiences, grow the health and well-being sector and capitalise on our appeal to the lucrative sports tourism and adventure markets.

In the wake of COVID-19, this Strategy aims to build resilience within the industry, ensuring long-term employment for residents and financial security for local businesses.



What we'll do:

- Through Council's Resource and Performance agreement with Tourism Port Douglas Daintree (TPDD), provide financial and in-kind support towards destination marketing activities to grow and support the tourism sector within the Shire.
- Collaborate with TPDD to produce and implement a Destination Tourism Plan, a business plan for building and managing the region's visitor economy.
- Collaborate with TPDD to develop and deliver an Events Strategy focusing on the attraction and development of events that encourage off-peak visitation, cross-shire dispersal, and contribute to the economy and livability of the Douglas Shire.
- Grow the region's profile for hosting sporting events, as identified in the Sport and Recreation Strategy.
- Increase demand for the region's uniquely exotic fresh produce by establishing a Food Tourism Working Group. The group will be responsible for refining Douglas Shire's food story, designing a value proposition and providing recommendations to Council and TPDD to enhance the food and wine experience in the region.
- Leverage the development of the State-delivered Wangetti Trail and explore opportunities to expand the region's offering in adventure tourism, including mountain-biking, hiking, and cycling experiences.
- Build stronger partnerships with key industry bodies (TEQ, TTNQ, QTIC, WTMA, etc) to deliver economic outcomes that support diversification within tourism.
- Identify and apply for grant funding that will enable the delivery of an expanded tourism offering in the Douglas Shire.

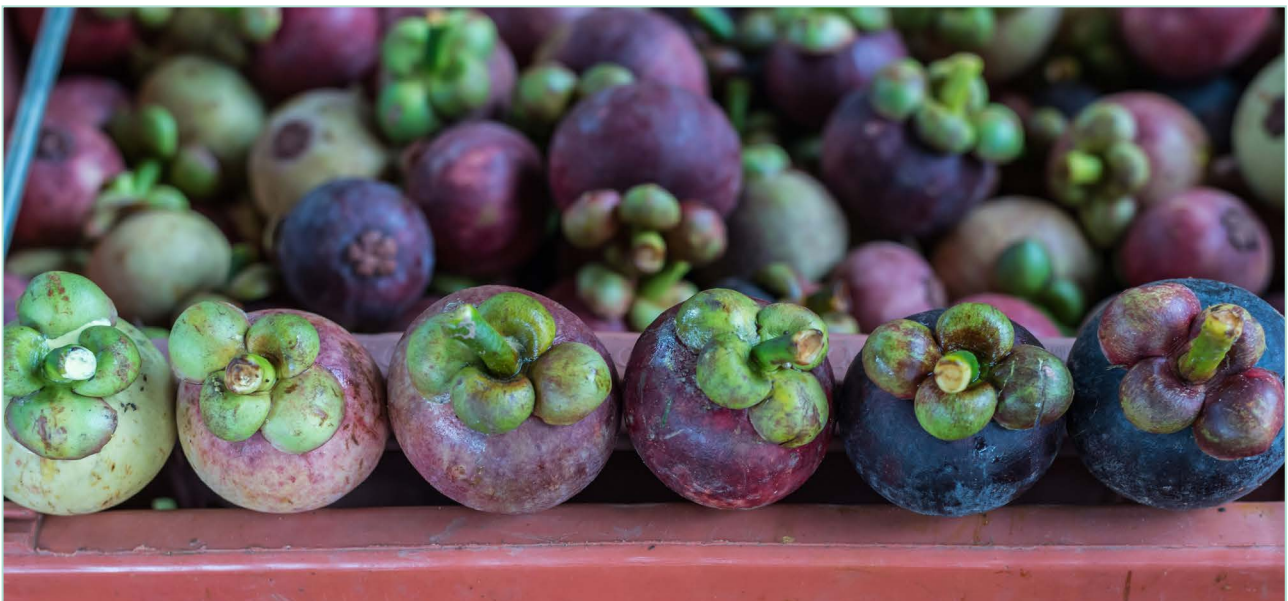
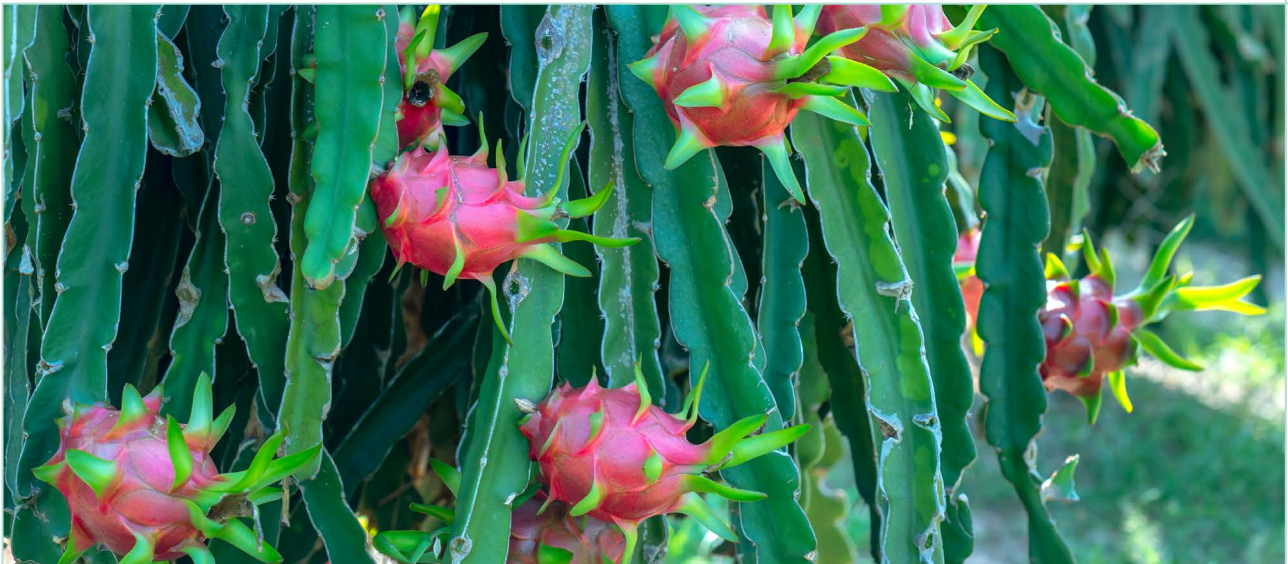


2. AGRICULTURE - DIVERSIFY & INNOVATE IN AGRICULTURE

With an output of more than \$26.5 million a year¹, sugar cane production accounts for 87% of the total Agricultural output in Douglas. In addition to cane, tropical fruits, cattle grazing and aquaculture also make significant contributions to the local economy.

In 2019, Douglas Shire growers became the first grower group in the country to buy back a sugar mill, securing 150 factory jobs, 450 indirect jobs and the future prosperity of Mossman. Far Northern Milling continues to work towards a more resilient and profitable industry by diversifying its sugarcane products through the Daintree Bio Precinct, strengthening its relationship with local farming families and their businesses.

This Strategy recognises the unique export potential of our tropical fruits, seafood and indigenous foods and the rich paddock-to-plate experiences available to visitors. Using a strong framework of proven and performing local farming businesses, this Strategy aims to increase investment in the Shire's agricultural and aquacultural industries.



Source
1. NIEIR as at 30 June, 2020



What we'll do:

- Support Far Northern Milling to establish projects within the Daintree Bio Precinct, ensuring the long-term viability of the Mossman Mill.
- Lead, coordinate and participate in the development of an Agriculture Diversification Plan, a shared vision and clear pathway to support sustainable agricultural diversification and value-adding within the Shire.
- Work with peak industry bodies to identify the tools needed to support local farmers interested diversifying and value-adding in the sector.
- Facilitate informed discussions between Council's Food Tourism Working Group and the local Agriculture industry around the supply of paddock to plate experiences to cater to the increased demand from travellers.
- Increase economic development opportunities, resilience and value in the Shire's agricultural sector by working with local farming businesses and traditional owners to encourage new businesses in niche and/or new agricultural activities, such as bush tucker, traditional medicine crops, tropical and exotic fruits.
- Use the Buy Douglas: Build Douglas brand to promote the Shire's agriculture industry and local produce and drive a collective buying model.

3. POPULATION DIVERSIFICATION - TARGETED GROWTH OF THE SHIRE'S POPULATION

While the economy of the Douglas Shire will continue to rely on tourism and agriculture, additional sources that contribute to the gross regional product must be developed. Furthermore, the Shire has a small rates base that supports a very large tourist population.

Demographic statistics indicate that the population of the Shire exceeds the Australian average in the several age categories including older workers, pre-retirees, empty nesters and retirees. The Shire has traditionally attracted this cohort because of the lifestyle that it offers.

This segment is characterised by highly skilled, professional, and affluent individuals. Many are not job dependent as they work remotely and may also travel. They want the lifestyle that the Shire offers, and they seek environmentally sensitive outcomes, specifically, regarding development. Additionally, COVID-19 has demonstrated to the World that working remotely is not only possible, but also desirable and achievable.

The Shire is ideally positioned to attract an increase in this demographic. Many individuals in this target market are already regular visitors who may be looking to leave the larger cities and who have the means to do so.

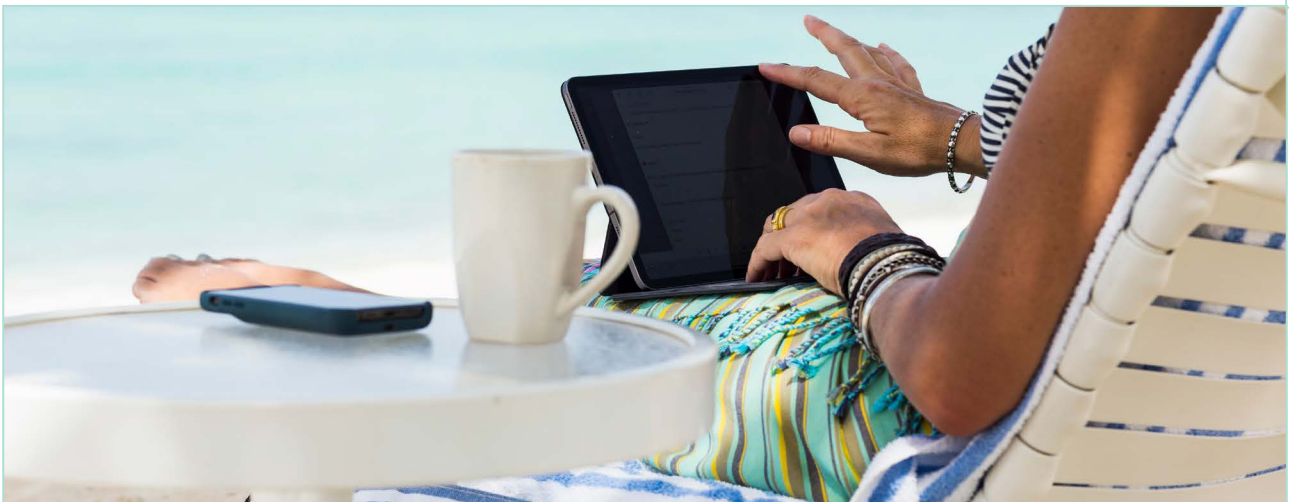
Key challenges in this segment are ensuring robust internet connectivity, a high-standard of infrastructure to support a healthy lifestyle and access to activities and programs to help people feel better and live longer.

Residents in this demographic provide several economic stimuli:

- They provide a consistent year-round spend that helps to counteract the cyclicity of tourism.
- They do not require jobs to already exist in the Shire as individuals bring their own work and tend to work remotely.
- As individuals in these categories age, they increase the demand for ancillary services in the health and wellbeing. In the longer term, these services bring higher paying jobs which can eventually attract more families.

Whilst this strategic driver is based on population growth, it is important to note that it does not foresee a large population increase. A relatively small increase in the rate base through affluent job independent residents is the objective.

Within this Strategy, the health and wellbeing sector refers to health care and social assistance and includes (among other things) hospitals, medical services, residential care, allied health services, pathology and diagnostic services, plus child care services.



What we'll do:

- Encourage population growth and diversification within key target markets through a coordinated domestic marketing campaign, highlighting the regions environmental values and ECO Destination Certification.
- Identify new and emerging knowledge-based opportunities in the health and wellbeing sector and relevant skilled workforce needed to accommodate current supply and anticipated future demand.
- Analyse the planning scheme to identify potential sites and business development opportunities within the Douglas Shire to support lifestyle developments and actively promote these opportunities.
- Through the development of an investment prospectus, encourage investment in the health and wellbeing sector to support current supply and anticipated future demand.
- To attract high-yield visitors from key domestic markets, identify and actively pursue tourism investment opportunities with a strong focus on health and wellbeing.
- Leverage events that enhance a positive brand image and livability of the Douglas Shire and attribute positively to the health and wellbeing of residents.
- Consider options to improve our offering as an RV Friendly Shire and provide findings to Council.



SUPPORTING PRIORITIES

Underpinning Council's priority drivers are five interconnected areas of focus, each playing an essential role in establishing a supported and thriving business environment.

PROVIDE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE, ENHANCES LIVABILITY & SUPPORTS BUSINESS

Council plays an essential role in providing and advocating for infrastructure that contributes to a healthy economic base from which the community and businesses can grow and prosper.

Provision of long-term water security for the Douglas Shire is critical in establishing private sector investment and social infrastructure, directly linked to new jobs and economic growth. Delivering a second water intake for the Mossman and Port Douglas catchment and progressing a feasibility study for long-term water storage options with a capacity of at least one billion litres (1GL) will be a significant driver of regional growth.

Increased livability through better health and wellbeing, public art, activated open spaces and improved internet connectivity will ensure the destination remains competitive and attractive to new markets, ultimately supporting business prosperity.

Supporting crucial infrastructure projects will provide the stimulus needed to future proof the Douglas economy, following the devastating impacts of COVID-19.



What we'll do:

- Deliver a second water intake and progress a feasibility study for long-term water storage options with a capacity of at least one billion litres (1GL).
- Review current wastewater infrastructure, ensuring long-term requirements are considered in line with projected population and tourism numbers.
- Engage with partners to deliver a coordinated infrastructure advocacy plan, which highlights priority capital works projects and external projects shaping the region.
- Increase the Shire's tourism offering and improve the health and wellbeing of the community by supporting the development of high-quality sport and recreation facilities through the implementation of the Port Douglas Sports Complex & Coronation Park Master Plan, redevelopment of the Mossman Pool & Caravan Park and the delivery of a pool and splash park in Port Douglas.
- Continue to advocate for the development of new cycle routes to connect our communities and link the region's two main economic hubs of Mossman and Port Douglas.
- Investigate an inter-urban transport solution by identifying the community's transport needs and conducting a review of current and emerging environmentally friendly transport solutions.
- Work with the Douglas Access and Inclusion Group to improve accessibility within the Shire, especially within business centres, recreational areas and venues.
- Actively pursue opportunities to increase the amount of public art across our Shire, giving it a competitive economic edge and creating a place worth caring about.
- Conduct a pre-feasibility study to consider options for a dedicated convention centre in Port Douglas and provide findings to Council.
- Build and maintain relationships with key State and Federal Government representatives with a view to securing commitment for Council's priority projects and accessing appropriate grant funding opportunities.

DEVELOP A CULTURE OF INNOVATION ACROSS BUSINESS & THE COMMUNITY

Like many regional towns, the Douglas Shire has historically been heavily skewed toward resources, agriculture, tourism and population servicing businesses. Economic diversification strategies are needed to encourage growth in companies that can create high-value jobs and over time become the large employers of the future.



Douglas has a strong entrepreneurial spirit, with 1 in every 10 people recognised as a small business owner and a track record of producing high performing not-for-profit organisations that tackle global issues, like climate change.

Developing a culture of innovation to harness this passion and entrepreneurial pride in Douglas builds an encouraging foundation for a startup community that focuses on raising awareness of startups as a career path, up-skilling the community of emerging startup founders, and achieving a critical mass of startup activity.

Startups are capable of delivering significant economic and societal impact through rapid growth in global markets, creation of high-value jobs, generation of export income and through economic diversification away from low-value and commodity-based industries.

These jobs are generally not susceptible to displacement by automation or offshoring to lower cost-of-labour locations.

Formation of startups is not an end-point in itself, but a necessary step in creating globally significant and sustaining companies that drive economic growth and prosperity, and create large numbers of jobs.

Leading a culture of innovation within the community starts by supporting projects that look to the future like the Living Coral Biobank, Mossman Botanic Gardens, Daintree Microgrid, State-delivered Wangetti Trail and the Daintree Bio Precinct.



What we'll do:

- Foster a culture of innovation in the community by identifying additional economic development opportunities within projects shaping the Douglas Shire including GBR Legacy's Living Coral Biobank, Mossman Botanic Gardens, Daintree Microgrid, State-delivered Wangetti Trail and the Daintree Bio Precinct
- Conduct a feasibility study to investigate demand for a Douglas-based incubator hub, business support services, accelerator programs and co-working space and deliver findings to Council.
- In collaboration with business, industry, and the Chamber, establish a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports and encourages Douglas Shire residents with ideas to become entrepreneurs or self-employed.
- Actively participate in regional entrepreneurship ecosystems in North Queensland.
- Work closely with Cairns-based and State entrepreneurship programs to build participation from Douglas Shire in regionally available courses, mentoring programs, and workshops.
- Support local entrepreneurs, start-up's, and small businesses across in the Douglas Shire by connecting them with the right opportunities, people, places, and spaces to help them grow, scale, and create jobs.
- Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce to develop and deliver a program of events that supports a culture of innovation within the business community of the Douglas Shire.
- Establish a Digital Economy Reference group to provide expert advice to Councillors on the critical infrastructure needed in the Shire to support high-tech industries and events, so that they can advocate for improved services and infrastructure.
- Actively contribute to Local Government Association Queensland (LGAQ) reference groups and networks for emerging industries.

BUILD DIRECT LINKS BETWEEN OUR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY & THE ECONOMY

In honouring its past, Council values the contributions all groups have made and we recognise our traditional owners as the original custodians of the land.

Douglas Shire Council embraces the diversity of our communities and we recognise that as a core strength of the region. Of the 12,426 residents of Douglas, 7.7% identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, with most residents living in Mossman and surrounding suburbs.

Creating an empowered community requires Douglas Shire Council to adopt a strong supporting role in building economic prosperity with our Indigenous community, increasing education opportunities and stimulating meaningful employment.



What we'll do:

- Actively participate in the development and implementation of Douglas Shire Council's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).
- Work closely with Jabalbina and other Aboriginal corporations and organisations, the Community Agency Network and relevant State and Federal Departments to develop and implement an Indigenous Employment Strategy – investigating a clear pathway that identifies and expands Indigenous employment opportunities in the Shire.
- In partnership with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) and relevant State Departments, conduct workshops aimed at supporting the needs of existing, new, and emerging Indigenous-owned businesses in the Shire by building knowledge, capacity, resilience, purpose, corporate governance and identity.
- With the goal of creating a deeper connection between tourists, residents and the Douglas Shire, conduct a pre-feasibility study to consider options for a First Nations Cultural Centre in Mossman town, offering local Eastern Kuku Yalanji artists and craftspeople a market-place to create, display and sell their art, crafts and cultural artefacts. The Cultural Centre can be adapted to include a museum, gallery, visitor information, destination marketing and a place for emerging indigenous-owned tourism businesses to base their tours from.
- Through the development of an investment prospectus, create opportunities for Douglas Shire's local Indigenous arts community to learn, collaborate and up-skill by pursuing a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to conduct accredited training in Culture Arts.
- Through Council's business network, encourage local businesses to participate in locally led, cultural awareness training.
- Actively work to increase participation at workshops from local, indigenous-owned businesses interested in working with Douglas Shire Council to learn more about grants, bidding for work, contracts, and tenders.



ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL LINKS TO THE ECONOMY ARE STRENGTHENED & MAINTAINED

With eighty-two per cent of the Shire included in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and its coastline bordered by the Great Barrier Reef, Council is deeply committed to the notion that we must confront the environmental challenges that we face to ensure that future generations can benefit from and enjoy the World as we do today.

Achieving ECO Destination Certification in 2019 demonstrates the region's leadership in implementing responsible environmental practices. As Australia's first ECO Destination, the Douglas Shire has a competitive advantage, which comes with increased opportunities to attract and stimulate private investment to support economic growth, create jobs and deliver real economic diversification and resilience.

Our communities play an essential in helping to maintain and protect this cherished environment, which contributes to the economic and social framework of the Shire. COVID-19 has reinforced the importance of the social framework of our community and its ability inspire innovation, create change and provide a sense of purpose while complementing government action.

Through proactive strategies and strong partnerships, this Strategy aims to stimulate private sector investment, while advocating for the environment and increasing the livability of the Shire:



What we'll do:

- Progress the region's commitment to its ECO Destination Certification by exploring new, clean energy markets and technologies, such as the hydrogen power market, and position ourselves as cutting-edge players in this space while also supporting the preservation and conservation of the natural environment.
- Work in partnership with GBR Legacy to progress the development of the World's Largest Living Coral Biobank, expanding employment opportunities
- Advocate for a renewable energy solution that will bring economic confidence to communities North of the Daintree River.
- Advocate for the Mossman Botanic Gardens and assist the Board in long-term planning and advocacy for grant funding.
- Develop and implement a marketing plan to increase collaboration and understanding of the importance of the Douglas Shire's ECO Destination Certification within the Douglas Shire community and to investors and visitors, reinforcing Council's commitment to the environment.
- Increase the number of local businesses participating in carbon reduction initiatives and programs by providing them with the tools and information needed to implement more sustainable solutions in their day-to-day business.
- Promote ways to conserve energy and reduce household carbon emissions to the local community by promoting local energy advocates and their stories of success through Buy Douglas, Build Douglas.
- Through the Douglas Arts and Culture Map, we will actively promote local artists, organisations, public art displays and historical places in the Shire, while working to increase the opportunities to use local artists and craftsmen in the design and construction of new art for the region.
- Establish a long-term vision for Buy Douglas: Build Douglas, a local brand created to encourage people to spend their money in Douglas Shire and build the economy in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Promote and encourage innovative projects and development that can demonstrate a 6-Star (Green) certification.

REDUCE RED TAPE & IMPROVE BUSINESS SUPPORT

Actively supporting businesses in the Douglas Shire means investing in the business community and providing the tools required to enable prosperity.

With 97% of locally owned businesses in the Douglas Shire identifying as a small business, they truly are at the heart of the Queensland economy and our own regional community.

Small businesses create local jobs, grow the local economy, and provide essential goods and services. But just as importantly, small businesses help create attractive, liveable communities. They also foster civic pride and help attract people and investment into the area.

Now more than ever, in the face of unprecedented natural disasters and the economic ripple effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic, it is vital that Douglas Shire Council supports small businesses to survive and thrive.

To become a thriving economy, Douglas Shire needs smart, targeted and sustainable development and this Strategy recognises a commitment by Douglas Shire Council to be mindful of small businesses, their issues and priorities when making decisions for the local community.





What we'll do:

- Provide financial and in-kind support to the Chamber of Commerce, via Council's Resource and Performance agreement, to build the capacity of small businesses in the Shire while addressing skill shortages and knowledge gaps within the local workforce.
- Adopt the Queensland Small Business Friendly Charter within Council, an initiative of the Queensland Small Business Commissioner.
- Collaborate with the Douglas Chamber of Commerce to improve the resources, information, and data available on Council's website for businesses and investors.
- Act as a one-stop-shop for new business enquiries within Council, monitoring the progress of the enquiry and providing support where possible.
- Facilitate a unified approach between Council, TPDD and Douglas Chamber of Commerce for advocacy of priority infrastructure projects and investment opportunities through the development of an investment prospectus.
- In partnership with the Douglas Chamber of Commerce, deliver the Douglas Business Expo to connect key government and industry representatives with the local business community, promote knowledge sharing and generate ideas for regional business plans.
- Provide the community with key economic data and information via Council's economy.id resource and facilitate internal training of the program and information sessions for the public. Respond to requests for economic data, as required.
- Work closely with Council's Grants Officer to publish communication on Council's website relating to local, state and government grant opportunities, assisting local applicants as required.
- Understand the limitations and opportunities that exist for potential investors and small businesses in Douglas and consider Council's ability to influence and take corrective action.
- Conduct regular sessions for local businesses, individuals and contractors interested in working with Douglas Shire Council to learn more about bidding for work, contracts, grants and tenders.
- Create a platform on Council's website that actively promotes the Douglas Shire as a film-friendly destination and provide support to the film industry by working with necessary Council departments to streamline the permitting process.

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & REPORTING

In adopting the Douglas Shire Economic Development Strategy, Council recognises that achieving the desired outcomes will require a commitment of financial resources and specialist skills from several groups and organisations within the community.

Although Council will implement and monitor the strategy, delivery will be the result of a collaborative approach, implemented over four years.

As part of Council's operational planning and budgeting process, an Implementation Plan will be developed annually and reviewed at the end of each financial year with a report to Council. It will be adjusted based on past successes and changes in the marketplace.

The following plan provides further detail regarding implementation of the Douglas Shire Economic Development Strategy in its first 12 months to 30 June 2022.

Each action aligns to the Strategy's priorities and has a specific target to measure its completion.

Table 1. Douglas Shire Council Economic Development Strategy Initial Implementation Plan

PRIORITY	MEASURE	TARGET
1. TOURISM – DIVERSIFY & EXPAND OUR TOURISM OFFERING		
1.1 Through Council's Resource and Performance agreement with Tourism Port Douglas Daintree (TPDD), provide financial and in-kind support towards destination marketing activities to grow and support the tourism sector within the Shire.	Multi-year R&P agreement adopted	3-5 years
1.2 Collaborate with TPDD to produce and implement a Destination Tourism Plan, a business plan for building and managing the region's visitor economy.	Successful implementation of DTP locally & receiving regional & state recognition	Advanced tourism infrastructure & planning
1.3 Collaborate with TPDD to develop and deliver an Events Strategy focusing on the attraction and development of events that encourage off-peak visitation, cross-shire dispersal, and contribute to the economy and liveability of the Douglas Shire.	No. of new events confirmed in Douglas Shire	2 events
1.4 Grow the region's profile for hosting sporting events, as identified in the Sport and Recreation Strategy.	No. of new sporting events leads	2 events
1.5 Increase demand for the region's uniquely exotic fresh produce by establishing a Food Tourism Working Group. The group will be responsible for refining Douglas Shire's food story, designing a value proposition and providing recommendations to Council and TPDD to enhance the food and wine experience in the region.	No. of meetings and actions delivered	3 meetings & 50% of actions delivered
1.6 Build stronger partnerships with key industry bodies (TEQ, TTNQ, QTIC, WTMA, etc) to deliver economic outcomes that support diversification within tourism.	No. of meetings & opportunities created	6 meetings & 2 opportunities recorded
1.7 Identify and apply for grant funding that will enable the delivery of an expanded tourism offering in the Douglas Shire.	No. of grant applications submitted	5 grant applications

PRIORITY	MEASURE	TARGET	
2. AGRICULTURE – DIVERSIFY & INNOVATE IN AGRICULTURE			
2.1	Support Far Northern Milling to establish projects within the Daintree Bio Precinct, ensuring the long-term viability of the Mossman Mill.	No unnecessary project delays attributed to Council administration	Progression of projects
2.2	Lead, coordinate and participate in the development of an Agriculture Diversification Plan, a shared vision and clear pathway to support sustainable agricultural diversification and value-adding within the Shire.	Development of plan & industry participation	Plan completed & 10 businesses included in planning group
2.3	Facilitate informed discussions between Council's Food Tourism Working Group and the local Agriculture industry around the supply of paddock to plate experiences to cater to the increased demand from travellers.	No. of meetings & actions delivered	3 meetings & 90% of actions delivered
2.4	Use the Buy Douglas: Build Douglas brand to promote the Shire's agriculture industry and local produce and drive a collective buying model.	Content produced, reach achieved & positive sentiment recorded	2 x pieces of content, 10,000 people reached & 100% positive sentiment

3. POPULATION DIVERSIFICATION - TARGETED GROWTH OF THE SHIRE'S POPULATION

3.1	Encourage population growth and diversification within key target markets through a coordinated domestic marketing campaign, highlighting the regions environmental values and ECO Destination Certification.	Reach	50,000 reach
3.2	Analyse the planning scheme to identify potential sites and business development opportunities within the Douglas Shire to support lifestyle developments and actively promote these opportunities.	Review completed & opportunities included in investment prospectus	Investment prospectus developed within 6 months of Strategy adoption
3.3	Through the development of an investment prospectus, encourage investment in the health and wellbeing sector to support current supply and anticipated future demand.	Development of investment prospectus	Investment prospectus developed within 6 months of Strategy adoption
3.4	Leverage events that enhance a positive brand image and liveability of the Douglas Shire and attribute positively to the health and wellbeing of residents.	Events identified & opportunities progressed	2 events progressed
3.5	Consider options to improve our offering as an RV Friendly Shire and provide findings to Council.	Options report completed	Report to Council

PRIORITY	MEASURE	TARGET	
4. PROVIDE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE, ENHANCES LIVEABILITY & SUPPORTS BUSINESS			
4.1	Deliver a second water intake and progress a feasibility study for long-term water storage options with a capacity of at least one billion litres (1GL).	Project timeframes met	Reach shovel-ready status with intake & complete feasibility study for 1GL water reservoir
4.2	Review current wastewater infrastructure, ensuring long-term requirements are considered in line with projected population and tourism numbers.	Review completed & considered as part of Council's capital works program	Inclusion in capital works program
4.3	Engage with partners to deliver a coordinated infrastructure advocacy plan, which highlights priority capital works projects and external projects shaping the region.	Successful advocacy to Queensland and Australian Governments	Region-building projects & other strategic projects progressed
4.4	Increase the Shire's tourism offering and improve the health and wellbeing of the community by supporting the development of high-quality sport and recreation facilities through the implementation of the Port Douglas Sports Complex & Coronation Park Master Plan, redevelopment of the Mossman Pool & Caravan Park and the delivery of a pool and splash park in Port Douglas.	Progression of projects	Projects progressed
4.5	Continue to advocate for the development of new cycle routes to connect our communities and link the region's two main economic hubs of Mossman and Port Douglas.	Successful advocacy to Queensland & Australian Governments	Projects progressed
4.6	Investigate an inter-urban transport solution by identifying the community's transport needs and conducting a review of current and emerging environmentally friendly transport solutions.	Review completed & opportunities included in investment prospectus	Investment prospectus developed within 6 months of Strategy adoption
4.7	Actively pursue opportunities to increase the amount of public art across our Shire, giving it a competitive economic edge and creating a place worth caring about.	Number of public art installations	2 art installations
4.8	Conduct a pre-feasibility study to consider options for a dedicated convention centre in Port Douglas and provide findings to Council.	Options report completed & opportunities included in investment prospectus	Investment prospectus developed within 6 months of Strategy adoption
4.9	Build and maintain relationships with key State and Federal Government representatives with a view to securing commitment for Council's priority projects and accessing appropriate grant funding opportunities.	Progression of projects	Projects progressed

PRIORITY	MEASURE	TARGET
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5. DEVELOP A CULTURE OF INNOVATION ACROSS BUSINESS & THE COMMUNITY

5.1	Foster a culture of innovation in the community by identifying additional economic development opportunities within projects shaping the Douglas Shire including GBR Legacy's Living Coral Biobank, Mossman Botanic Gardens, Daintree Microgrid, State-delivered Wangetti Trail and the Daintree Bio Precinct	Opportunities identified & progressed	2 opportunities progressed
5.2	Conduct a feasibility study to investigate demand for a Douglas-based incubator hub, business support services, accelerator programs and co-working space and deliver findings to Council.	Options report completed. Confirm support of Advance Queensland & partners	Hub operating within 24 months of Strategy adoption
5.3	In collaboration with business, industry, and the Chamber, establish a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports and encourages Douglas Shire residents with ideas to become entrepreneurs or self-employed.	No. of start ups identified & engaged	5 start ups in ecosystem
5.4	Actively participate in regional entrepreneurship ecosystems in North Queensland.	No. of meetings, attendance	6 meetings & 80% attendance
5.5	Work closely with Cairns-based and State entrepreneurship programs to build participation from Douglas Shire in regionally available courses, mentoring programs, and workshops.	No. of people accessing programs	At least one Douglas-based attendee at all programs
5.6	Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce to develop and deliver a program of events that supports a culture of innovation within the business community of the Douglas Shire.	Number of events held	6 events
5.7	Actively contribute to Local Government Association Queensland (LGAQ) reference groups and networks for emerging industries.	No. of meetings, attendance	3 meetings & 80% attendance

6. BUILD DIRECT LINKS BETWEEN OUR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY & THE ECONOMY

6.1	Actively participate in the development and implementation of Douglas Shire Council's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).	No. of meetings & actions delivered	3 meetings & EDS considered in development of RAP
6.2	In partnership with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) and relevant State Departments, conduct workshops aimed at supporting the needs of existing, new, and emerging Indigenous-owned businesses in the Shire by building knowledge, capacity, resilience, purpose, corporate governance and identity.	Number of events held	1 workshop
6.3	Through the development of an investment prospectus, create opportunities for Douglas Shire's local Indigenous arts community to learn, collaborate and up-skill by pursuing a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to conduct accredited training in Culture Arts.	Opportunities reviewed & included in investment prospectus	Investment prospectus developed within 6 months of Strategy adoption

PRIORITY	MEASURE	TARGET
6.4 Through Council's business network, encourage local businesses to participate in locally led, cultural awareness training.	No. of businesses accessing programs	10 businesses
6.5 Actively work to increase participation at workshops from local, indigenous-owned businesses interested in working with Douglas Shire Council to learn more about grants, bidding for work, contracts, and tenders.	Attendance & satisfaction rates	5 businesses & 80%+ satisfaction

7. ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL LINKS TO THE ECONOMY ARE STRENGTHENED AND MAINTAINED

7.1 Progress the region's commitment to its ECO Destination Certification by exploring new, clean energy markets and technologies, such as the hydrogen power market, and position ourselves as cutting-edge players in this space while also supporting the preservation and conservation of the natural environment.	Options report completed	Report to Council
7.2 Work in partnership with GBR Legacy to progress the development of the World's Largest Living Coral Biobank, expanding employment opportunities	Progression of project	Project progressed
7.3 Advocate for a renewable energy solution that will bring economic confidence to communities North of the Daintree River.	Progression of project	Project progressed
7.4 Advocate for the Mossman Botanic Gardens and assist the Board in long-term planning and advocacy for grant funding.	Progression of project	Project progressed
7.5 Develop and implement marketing plan to increase collaboration and understanding of the importance of the Douglas Shire's ECO Destination Certification within the Douglas Shire community and to investors and visitors, reinforcing Council's commitment to the environment.	Development of campaign content, reach and engagement	Content developed within 6 months of Strategy adoption & 30,000 reach
7.6 Increase the number of local businesses participating in carbon reduction initiatives and programs by providing them with the tools and information needed to implement more sustainable solutions in their day-to-day business.	Development of resource kit & engagement	Resource kit completed & 50 downloads
7.7 Promote ways to conserve energy and reduce household carbon emissions to the local community by promoting local energy advocates and their stories of success through Buy Douglas, Build Douglas.	Content produced, reach achieved & positive sentiment recorded	2 x pieces of content, 10,000 people reached & 100% positive sentiment
7.8 Establish a long-term vision for Buy Douglas: Build Douglas, a local brand created to encourage people to spend their money in Douglas Shire and build the economy in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Vision designed & implemented	15% increase in new businesses

PRIORITY	MEASURE	TARGET
8. REDUCE RED TAPE & IMPROVE BUSINESS SUPPORT		
8.1 Provide financial and in-kind support to the Chamber of Commerce, via Council's Resource and Performance agreement, to build the capacity of small businesses in the Shire while addressing skill shortages and knowledge gaps within the local workforce.	R&P agreement adopted	1 year
8.2 Adopt the Queensland Small Business Friendly Charter within Council, an initiative of the Queensland Small Business Commissioner.	Adoption of SBFC Charter	Charter signed within 3 months of Strategy adoption
8.3 Collaborate with the Douglas Chamber of Commerce to improve the resources, information, and data available on Council's website for businesses and investors.	Resources developed & added to website	Improved access to information
8.4 Act as a one-stop-shop for new business enquiries within Council, monitoring the progress of the enquiry and providing support where possible.	No. of leads or enquiries for assistance recorded	10 enquiries
8.5 Facilitate a unified approach between Council, TPDD and Douglas Chamber of Commerce for advocacy of priority infrastructure projects and investment opportunities through the development of an investment prospectus.	Development of investment prospectus	Investment prospectus developed within 6 months of Strategy adoption
8.6 In partnership with the Douglas Chamber of Commerce, deliver the Douglas Business Expo to connect key government and industry representatives with the local business community, promote knowledge sharing and generate ideas for regional business plans.	Attendance & satisfaction	100 attendees & 80% satisfaction
8.7 Provide the community with key economic data and information via Council's economy.id resource and facilitate internal training of the program and information sessions for the public. Respond to requests for economic data, as required.	Provision of data & no. of sessions held	1 session
8.8 Work closely with Council's Grants Officer to publish communication on Council's website relating to local, state and government grant opportunities, assisting local applicants as required.	Grant information published to website	10 grant opportunities
8.9 Conduct regular sessions for local businesses, individuals and contractors interested in working with Douglas Shire Council to learn more about bidding for work, contracts, grants and tenders.	No. of workshops & attendance	2 workshops & 40 attendees



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