



FLINDERS SHIRE COUNCIL

**Economic  
Development  
Strategy**

**SHIRE OF**



**FLINDERS**



## Acknowledgement of Country

Flinders Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Flinders Shire – the Yirendali Aboriginal people. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

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## From the Mayor



**Jane McNamara**

The Flinders Shire is a place of enormous opportunity. Recent changes around the globe and in Australia provide our community with a new growth horizon, where both our traditional industries (such as cattle and tourism) and new industries (such as renewable energy, health and irrigated horticulture) have strong growth prospects.

To realise these opportunities, we have prepared this Economic Development Strategy to ensure we are not only leveraging our competitive advantages, but also focusing on overcoming our weaknesses, to support future growth in our shire.

This Economic Development Strategy represents an exciting new vision for Flinders Shire, focusing on realising potential growth in:

- Irrigated agriculture – with both short and long-term aspirations
- Freight and logistics – servicing East-West and North-South freight
- Healthcare – becoming a regional healthcare hub for the Mid-North West
- Construction – ensuring local benefits from major projects in our region
- Tourism – unlocking our real eco-tourism potential

Thank you to all who contributed to the development of this strategy. Together, we can improve the lives and livelihoods of our people and create long-lasting economic opportunities for future generations.

I am proud to endorse this strategy for Flinders Shire, and I am excited to see the continued growth of our community.



## From the CEO



**Hari Boppudi**

Local government plays an important role in economic development. We are uniquely placed to build, own and operate infrastructure that can facilitate new growth, identify and attract investors (both local and external) and advocate for state and federal government investment and policy change.

The new Flinders Shire Economic Development Strategy sets a clear direction for our council to confirm that economic development is at the core of everything we do. We want to continue to grow and become a more vibrant, diverse and progressive place to live, visit and invest.

This Economic Development Strategy includes a comprehensive Action Plan that ensures we are doing the full range of activities needed to ensure success.

To ensure the success of this strategy, Council is committed to action in the following areas:

- Engaging with local businesses and supporting business growth
- De-risking major infrastructure and investment initiatives
- Updating our planning scheme to support growth
- Developing new and implementing our existing masterplans
- Advocating for the investment in infrastructure and services
- Identifying investment opportunities and attracting investors
- Promoting our region and encouraging more visitation
- Supporting major events in the Flinders Shire

I look forward to implementing this strategy and seeing the Flinders Shire become home to a more diverse economic base that supports business and jobs growth, a larger population and more local services.

**OUR COMMUNITIES  
ARE PLACES WHERE  
PEOPLE ARE CHOOSING  
TO LIVE IN AND  
ESTABLISH BUSINESSES  
AND GROW THEIR  
FAMILIES.**



## The Economy

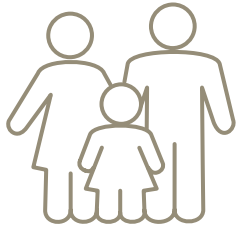
The Flinders Shire is situated approximately half way between the mining region of Cloncurry and the port city of Townsville. The shire is home to 1,521 residents, with our population increasing through positive regional migration. Our communities are places where people are choosing to live in and establish businesses and grow their families.

Logistically, the shire is positioned as a major hub for both transport and travellers via the Flinders Highway, which is known as the popular tourist drive “The Overlander’s Way”.

We have a \$155.4 million economy (2020-21), primarily driven by agriculture, forestry and fishing followed by public administration and safety. Similarly, our workforce is generally concentrated in agriculture, accounting for 46.6% of total employment in 2020-21.



# ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT



2021 POPULATION  
**1,521**

1,499 population in 2018

## EMPLOYMENT



**860**

Local Jobs

## UNEMPLOYMENT



**3.1%**

(4.9% in Queensland)



## GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT

2022 2041

**\$155.4 M** **\$166.2 M**

2021 to 2041 GRP Growth: 0.3%

## PROPERTY MARKET



### HOUSE PRICE

**\$113,750**

Median House Price



### RENTAL

**\$206**

Median Weekly Rental



### RESIDENTIAL BUILDS

**\$254,000**

Residential Building Approvals, 2021



### COMMERCIAL BUILDS

**\$3.9 M**

Non-Residential Building Approvals, 2021

## KEY REGIONAL EXPORTS

### TOTAL EXPORTS



**\$194.9 M**

### TOP 3 EXPORTS



**\$97.6 M**

Sheep, Grains, Beef and Dairy Cattle



**\$18.2 M**

Rail Transport



**\$14.4 M**

Public Administration and Regulatory Services

## KEY REGIONAL IMPORTS

### TOTAL IMPORTS



**\$108.3 M**

### TOP 3 IMPORTS



**\$11.2M**

Financial and Insurance Services



**\$9.8 M**

Construction



**\$9.1 M**

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services



**THE FLINDERS SHIRE HAS A NUMBER OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES WHICH CAN BE LEVERAGED TO SUPPORT FUTURE GROWTH.**





## Regional Strengths



### Agricultural Production

The Flinders Shire has a strong agricultural background and is predominately based on grazing, primarily cattle and small numbers of sheep for wool. There are emerging agricultural enterprises pursuing irrigated agriculture, with Marciano Grapes developing production for table grapes. The Shire's experience in the agricultural sector is a competitive advantage and the skills and knowledge in the sector can be used to support an expansion into higher value agricultural practices.



### Transport Routes

The town of Hughenden is situated along the shortest route from the Far North (i.e., Cairns) to the South (i.e., Melbourne) and vice versa and is, therefore, a key freight route for produce and other goods. The route also offers an alternative, inland North-South route to the Bruce Highway (A1). The Lynd to Hughenden Road will be fully sealed by the end of 2023, opening up opportunities for the Shire through an increase in traffic volumes.



### Renewable Energy

The Flinders Shire is home to nationally significant renewable energy resources, with a competitive advantage in wind generation on a sufficient scale to power a renewable hydrogen export industry in Townsville. The potential connection of Flinders Shire to the National Electricity Grid (through CopperString 2.0) could see the attraction of multiple large-scale renewable energy developments, which would have a significant employment benefit to the Flinders Shire during construction.

Although renewable energy employment for operations is marginal, there is a considerable economic benefit during the construction phase of wind energy projects.



### Natural Tourism Assets

The Flinders Shire is home to four National Parks, including Porcupine Gorge National Park, White Mountains National Park, Moorrinya National Park, Blackbraes National Park and Kooroorinya Reserve. Porcupine Gorge is located approximately 64 km (40 minute drive) from the Shire's major town centre, Hughenden, and is a significant tourist attraction for the Shire.

Another natural asset to support tourism growth is Mount Walker. Mount Walker is located closer to the town centre of Hughenden and provides great views of the town and surrounds.

The Flinders Shire has a rich prehistoric past, with the Muttaborrasaurus, the Hughenden Sauropod and the Queensland Pterosaur being found in the area.



### Hughenden Recreational Lake

The Hughenden Recreational Lake was constructed in 2019 and today is shared by boaters, water skiers, kayakers, rowers and swimmers. The lake is multi-use and provides opportunities to support liveability and additional tourism nights in the Shire.

# Growth Opportunities

## Irrigated Agriculture

- Leveraging the water resource opportunity in the Flinders River, the Flinders Shire has the potential to expand current irrigated agriculture by supporting water infrastructure projects. The Hughenden Flinders River Water Strategy includes two major water infrastructure projects, including HIPCo and the Hughenden Offstream Storage (Waterbank).

## Freight and Logistics

- The town of Hughenden is situated along the shortest route from the Far North (i.e., Cairns) to the South (i.e., Melbourne) and vice versa and is, therefore, a key freight route for produce and other goods. The route also offers an alternative, inland North-South route to the Bruce Highway (A1). The Lynd to Hughenden Road will be fully sealed by the end of 2023, opening up opportunities for the Shire through an increase in traffic volumes.

## Health Services

- Centrally located, Hughenden has the capacity to become a regional health services hub. With the right support, Hughenden can host additional general health and aged care services and provide facilities for visiting specialists / allied health services.

Developing a health hub in Hughenden will significantly reduce the distance to access health care for communities in the Flinders, Richmond and Winton Shires.

## Tourism

- Dinosaur tourism in outback Queensland is relatively strong. Flinders Shire is home to a rich history of dinosaurs, with the Muttaborrasaurus, the Hughenden Sauropod and the Queensland Pterosaur. To create a tourism experience, Flinders Shire can leverage its dinosaur tourism and create an experience that builds upon the prehistoric past of the Shire.

Additionally, there are significant opportunities to capitalise on eco-tourism and adventure tourism at the Shire's National Parks, particularly Porcupine Gorge. The establishment of dinosaur tourism and adventure tourism will provide a dual tourism opportunity and will support additional visitation and length of stay within the Shire. An increase in visitation in the Shire would drive additional economic activity, through increased demand for accommodation and expenditure on food and beverage.



## Construction

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With opportunities for development in the Flinders Shire, there are opportunities to enhance the region's capability and capacity for construction services:

### **Renewable Energy Construction (including Mount James and Windlab stage 2)**

With the competitive advantages of high quality and consistent wind resources within the Shire, there is an opportunity for the development of additional wind farms. Renewable energy developments, provide most of their economic benefit during the construction phase. Flinders Shire can capitalise on the construction phase for wind turbines by supporting project scheduling.

### **Water storage**

The irrigated agricultural developments enabled through the Hughenden Flinders River Water Strategy, including HIPCo and the Hughenden Offstream Storage (Water Bank) will require a significant construction workforce, growing the local construction labour force and increasing employment opportunities.

### **Transport infrastructure**

The expected increase in North-South freight traffic through Hughenden provides an opportunity to develop a new bridge over the Flinders River and a heavy vehicle bypass, which will provide opportunities for employment in construction.

### **CopperString 2.0**

Hughenden is a key construction hub for the project and a substation location

### **Residential construction**

The Flinders Shire, is currently facing a housing shortage. The housing shortage and future employment and population growth will require the development of new dwellings. This will be enabled through the construction of new residential dwellings throughout Hughenden.



# Economic Development Strategy

Flinders Shire Council's mission is to support growth in the Flinders Shire to ensure it continues to grow and becomes a more vibrant, diverse and progressive place to live, visit and invest.

In growing the regional economy, Flinders Shire Council will build economic resilience through continued diversification of the local economy.

## Key Outcomes sought

### Infrastructure Investment

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That supports and enables private industry growth, such as in:

- › Transport and freight infrastructure to support the efficient movement of goods to market
- › Urban infrastructure to improve the visual amenity of the communities within the Flinders Shire, improving their liveability and capacity to attract new residents and tourists
- › Health and education infrastructure to provide a higher standard of living and improving retention of residents through all stages of their life.
- › Bulk water and distribution infrastructure to support continued growth in high value agriculture
- › Tourism infrastructure that unlocks the Shire's natural assets and enables strong visitation to the region

### Regional Promotion

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Resources are used to highlight the region's offering for:

- › The visitor economy (tourism) by promoting the region's tourism product and unique natural features to encourage additional visitor spend
- › Investment by promoting the business opportunities that exist in the region's growing economy



## Policy Change

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### Federal Policy

- › Northern Australia Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemptions to encourage residential workforces (current FBT rules favour Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) workforces)
- › Zonal Tax Rebate changes to account for higher cost of living in remote communities

### State Policy

- › Removal of barriers to investment in more private eco-tourism operators and establish masterplans for the Shire's National Parks
- › Increase in permanent health services in the Flinders Shire
- › Legislative approvals for CopperString 2.0
- › Release of water entitlements from the Flinders River to support continued irrigation developments

## Investment Opportunity Identification and Attraction

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- › Renewable energy: wind and solar generation
- › Property development: housing and industrial land development
- › Electricity transmission: CopperString 2.0
- › Health: aged care, primary health and allied health services
- › Tourism: hotel accommodation, eco-tourism, glamping, farm stays and traditional owner tour operators
- › FSC Operations: local private sector supply of services and materials to FSC operations
- › Agriculture: irrigated agricultural opportunities and dryland cropping in support of local feed lotting opportunities

## Town Shaping Events

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Are held to provide unique, high-quality lifestyle offerings to locals and to support additional visitation to the Flinders Shire.

### Current Events in the Flinders Shire:

- › Major Festival - Hughenden Festival of the Outback Skies
- › Campdrafts, Horse Sports and Roping Events
- › Bush Horse Racing
- › Rugby 7's Annual Carnival
- › Annual Country Music Event
- › School holiday activities

### Opportunities to create events include:

- › Specialised Dinosaur and Paleo Tourism Events
- › Rodeo Events
- › Additional Sports Carnivals Events (e.g. beach (river) volleyball carnival, cricket carnival)
- › Lake-based recreational events and activities (e.g. water skiing, sail boats etc)
- › Additional School holiday activities (including youth based programs)
- › Value-add events complimenting regional event calendar (e.g. Julia Creek Dirt n Dust, Winton Way Out West, Mount Isa Rodeo etc)



## Infrastructure Pipeline

### Bulk water infrastructure

(Hughenden Flinders River Water Strategy)



- › The development of the HIPCo Saego Dam and distribution network
- › The development of the Hughenden Offstream Water Storage project (Waterbank)

### Transport and Freight Infrastructure



- › Second Flinders River Bridge and heavy vehicle detour around Hughenden
- › Sealing Hughenden-Muttaburra Road
- › Sealing Prairie-Muttaburra Road
- › Development of Masterplans for the Hughenden Saleyards and Hughenden Aerodrome

### Urban Infrastructure/ Liveability



- › Beautification of the town centres through the construction of a footpath network, more greenery (i.e., trees, flowers, etc.) and lighting in the streetscape to brighten and cool the town. Addition of greenery/shade around the Hughenden Recreational Lake.
- › Trunk water and sewerage infrastructure to support a larger urban footprint in Hughenden, Prairie, Stamford and Torrens Creek, including subdivision and sale of Council owned-land for residential development
- › Implementation of the Brodie Street Revitalisation Plan
- › Implementation of the Hughenden Memorial Swimming Pool Masterplan
- › Implementation of the Hughenden Showgrounds Masterplan
- › Development of a waste recycling facility in Hughenden
- › Establishment of Country University Centres



## Tourism Infrastructure

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- › Hughenden Power Station redevelopment (Hughenden Energy Museum)
- › Redevelopment of the Flinders Discovery Centre
- › Implementation of the Porcupine Gorge Masterplan, including additional walking tracks, camping areas and adventure tourism opportunities
- › Development of a masterplan for the Hughenden Recreational Lake
- › Development of a masterplan for the Hughenden Allen Terry Caravan Park
- › Development of masterplans for the White Mountains, Moorinya and Blackbraes National Parks and Mount Walker to identify opportunities for commercial (glamping/ food and beverage) and community (walking and mountain bike trails) infrastructure
- › Build upon the prehistoric history of the Shire and style public infrastructure in the Muttaborrasaurus style



## Investment Opportunities

### Property Development

○ .....

- › Housing
- › Industrial land development

### Agriculture

○ .....

- › Irrigated agricultural opportunities
- › Dryland cropping
- › Local feedlotting

### Tourism

○ .....

- › Accommodation
- › Glamping and farm stays
- › Tour operators
- › Major events

### FSC Operations

○ .....

- › Local private sector supply of services and materials to FSC operations

### Manufacturing

○ .....

- › Food manufacturing (abattoir)
- › Transport (repair and maintenance)

### Renewable energy/ Electricity transmission

○ .....

- › Wind generation
- › Solar
- › CopperString 2.0

### Health & Education

○ .....

- › Aged and palliative care services
- › Primary health services
- › Allied health services
- › Child care





Achieving the  
growth opportunities  
will require concerted  
action from Flinders  
Shire Council





## Key Action Areas

1 LOCAL BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

2 INITIATIVE DE-RISKING

3 PLANNING FOR GROWTH

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING PLANS

5 ADVOCACY

6 INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

7 REGIONAL PROMOTION AND MAJOR EVENTS

# 1

## LOCAL BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Engage with local businesses and identify opportunities for local procurement

### Council will

- › Host quarterly business-council networking events with Hughenden Chamber of Commerce
- › Formulate and run campaign/facilitate workshops for council and major projects pre-procurement, as required



# 2

## INITIATIVE DE-RISKING

De-risk projects to support private investment attraction

### Council will

- › Invest in project de-risking (business cases) to ensure projects are investment ready



# 3

## IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING PLANS

Realise current opportunities to support growth in the short to medium term

### Council will

- › Implement the Brodie Street Revitalisation Plan
- › Implement the Porcupine Gorge Masterplan
- › Develop a Hughenden Memorial Swimming Pool Masterplan
- › Develop a Hughenden Showgrounds Masterplan
- › Construct and establish the Hughenden Offstream Water Storage Project (Waterbank)



# 4

## INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

Private sector investment across a range of industries is needed to realise the growth opportunities in the Shire

### Council will

- › Develop investment proformas for specific opportunities
- › Formulate and implement policy
- › Host delegations for investors/investor groups (either outbound or in-bound)



## 5 ADVOCACY

Advocate for the opportunities at Flinders and keep the shire on the map for government agencies and industry associations

### Council will

- › Set regional de-risking and advocacy priorities with Councillors
- › Present Council priorities for endorsement by regional economic development agencies
- › Host regular strategic engagements with state and federal government agencies and industry associations
- › Host biennial delegation to Brisbane/ Canberra to meet with ministers and agency leaders (either outbound or in-bound)



## 6 PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Planning for future growth is needed to support future opportunities

### Council will

- › Update the planning scheme to expand general residential area in Hughenden and allocate land for high impact industry
- › Develop a masterplan for the Hughenden Saleyards
- › Develop a masterplan for the Hughenden Aerodrome
- › Develop a masterplan for the Hughenden Allen Terry Caravan Park
- › Develop a masterplan for the Hughenden Recreational Lake
- › Review and update Council's Local Government Infrastructure Plan (LGIP) and infrastructure charges to enable future growth



## 7 REGIONAL PROMOTION AND MAJOR EVENTS

The Flinders Shire is a great place to live, work and invest

### Council will

- › Develop investment proformas for specific opportunities
- › Formulate and implement policy
- › Host delegations for investors/investor groups (either outbound or inbound)
- › Formulate and implement an event attraction policy and a tourism campaign
- › Support a major event in Flinders Shire



# Measuring success

Success will be measured by:



## Performance

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Measured by delivery of specified tasks



## Effectiveness

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Measured by the achievement of regional outcomes sought:

- › Infrastructure Investment
- › Regional Promotion
- › Policy Change
- › Investment Opportunity Identification and Attraction
- › Town Shaping Events



## Impact

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Measured by a change in the Flinders Shire:

- › Employment - Total FTE jobs
- › Gross Regional Product - GRP
- › Value of construction - residential
- › Value of construction -non-residential
- › Total overnight visitation
- › Economic diversity index
- › Regional population
- › Regional migration
- › Business counts





**SHIRE OF**



**FLINDERS**

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