

WHITSUNDAY 2030

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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A BOLD VISION FOR THE WHITSUNDAYS





“From tourism to agriculture, mining to emerging industries, we are committed to positioning the Whitsundays as a leading destination to invest, work, live and visit.”

Whitsunday Regional Council acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the lands where we live and work.

We pay respect to Elders past and present, and we recognise their continuing connection to country and the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples play within the Whitsunday region.

## MAYOR'S FOREWORD



The Whitsundays is a region of opportunity, and our future success depends on a clear vision, strong leadership and strategic action.

This is exactly what Whitsunday 2030 delivers—a bold and ambitious roadmap to accelerate economic growth, attract investment and create a thriving, resilient region.

This strategy isn't just about Council—it's about partnerships, collaboration, and unlocking the full potential of our industries, businesses, and workforce.

From tourism to agriculture, mining to emerging industries, we are committed to positioning the Whitsundays as a leading destination to invest, work, live and visit.

Over the next five years, Council will deliver 18 targeted economic development actions, ensuring we seize opportunities, tackle challenges and lay the foundation for long-term prosperity.

Through a strong, whole-of-region approach, we will drive investment, innovation, and sustainable growth.

Whitsunday 2030 isn't just a strategy—it's our commitment to the future. Together with our community and partners, we will shape a region that is globally competitive, locally empowered, and built for success.

Let's make it happen.

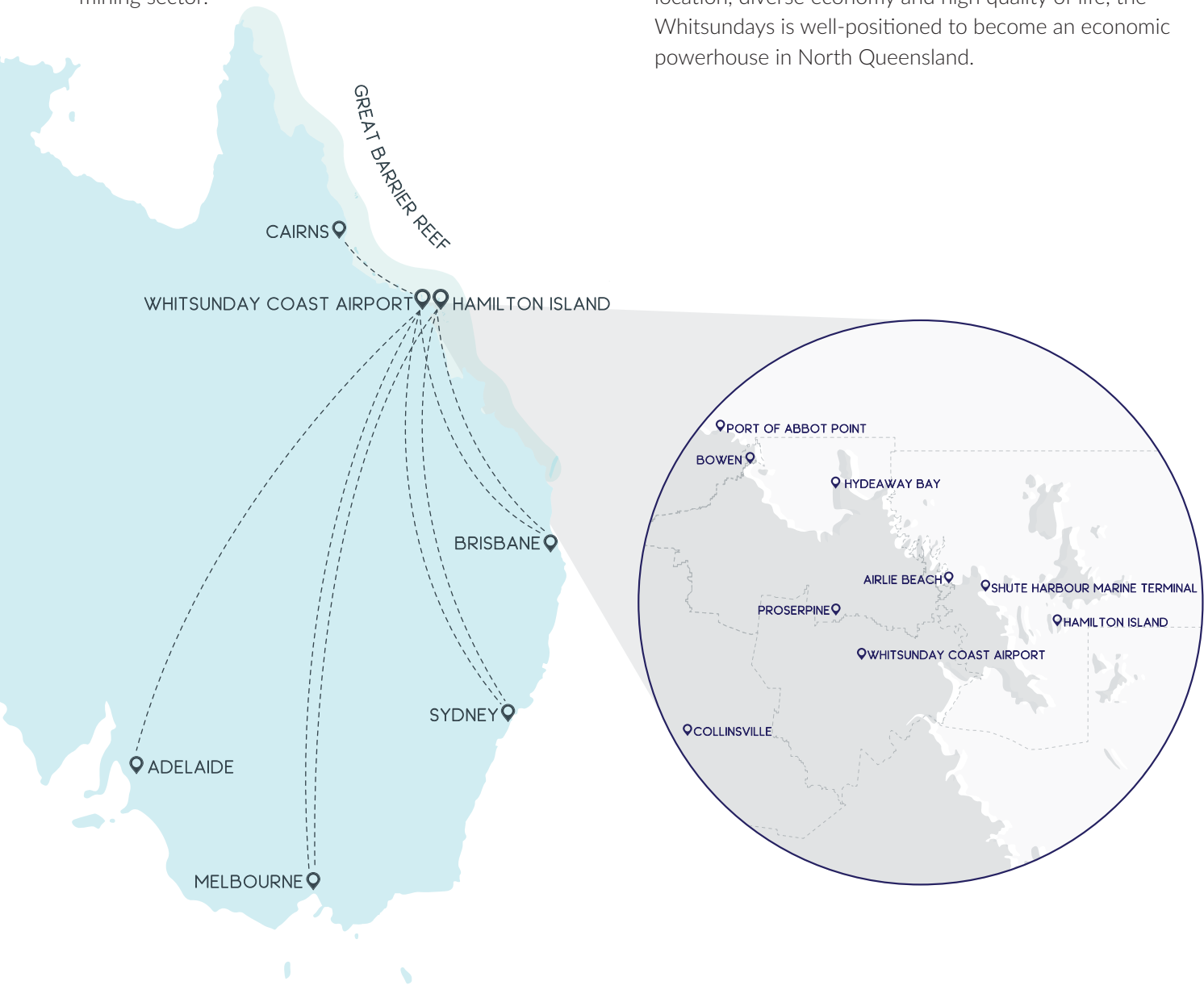
**Ry Collins**  
MAYOR, WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL



# OUR REGION

The Whitsunday Local Government Area (LGA) covers 23,862 square kilometres, encompassing the major townships of Airlie Beach, Bowen, Cannonvale, Collinsville, and Proserpine. The region is also home to world renowned island resorts including Hamilton, Hayman and Daydream. Each township plays a vital role in the region’s economic and social fabric, contributing to its diversity and resilience.

Located 1,100 kilometres north of Brisbane in North Queensland, the Whitsunday region is home to almost 41,000 residents, with a seasonal workforce that fluctuates throughout the year. It serves as a gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and the renowned 74 Whitsunday Island wonders, positioning tourism as a key economic driver. The region is also rich in agriculture and natural resources, with direct access to the coal-rich Bowen Basin and the Port of Abbot Point, a critical deep-water export hub for the mining sector.



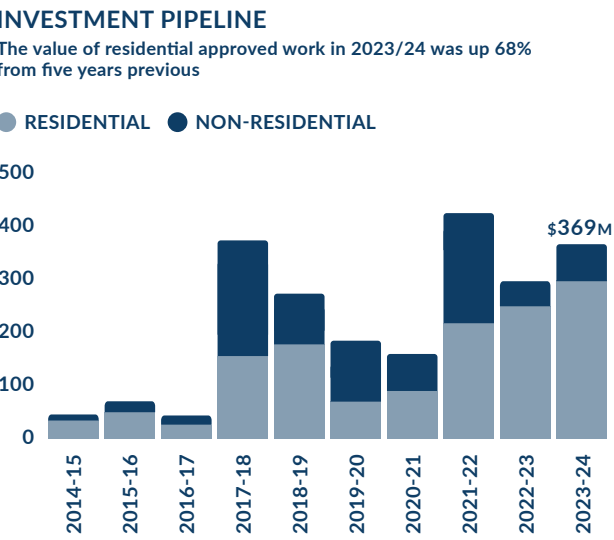
With 4,200 businesses, a labour force of 20,355, and a Gross Regional Product (GRP) of \$4.6 billion, the Whitsunday region is poised for significant investment and economic expansion. Its economy is underpinned by tourism, mining and METS (Mining Equipment, Technology, and Services), construction and agriculture, which includes horticulture, cattle, sugarcane and aquaculture. Emerging sectors such as transport, energy, the bioeconomy, food processing, education and aerospace offer new opportunities for diversification and growth.

Beyond its economic strengths, the Whitsunday region boasts exceptional liveability, attracting both residents and businesses. Strong transport networks, digital infrastructure, affordable commercial and industrial land, quality education and training facilities and a thriving arts and cultural scene make it an appealing destination for investment and long-term growth. With its strategic location, diverse economy and high quality of life, the Whitsundays is well-positioned to become an economic powerhouse in North Queensland.

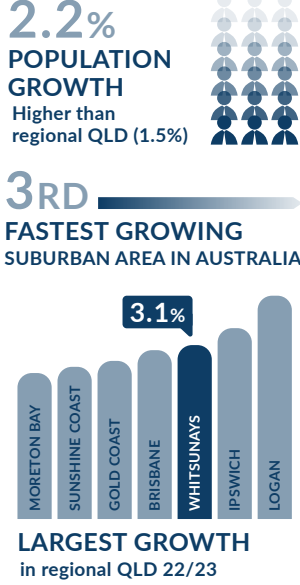
## HEADLINE STATISTICS



## INVESTMENT



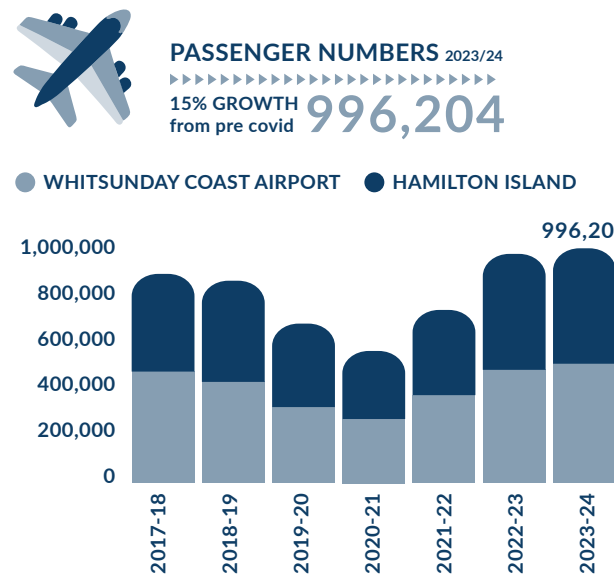
## POPULATION



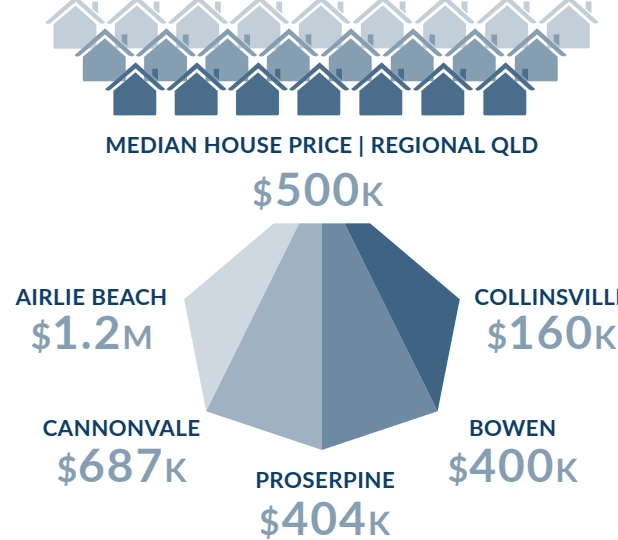
## TOURISM



## AIRPORT CAPACITY



## HOUSE PRICES



Data Sources:  
Economy .id | REMPLAN | Tourism & Events Qld  
Australian Bureau of Statistics | Whitsunday Coast Airport | Direct Industry Data



# OUR DRIVER INDUSTRIES



## A REGION RICH IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

The Whitsundays is a highly productive agricultural region, accounting for 50% of Queensland's tomatoes, over 50% of the State's capsicums, as well as the famous Bowen mangoes, sugarcane and grazing. Food product manufacturing, which is a driver of the region's industry output and exports, is underpinned by the strength of its sugarcane growing and processing sector.

Beyond the region's traditional agricultural activities, new sectors are emerging. Tassal, the largest producer of salmon in Australia, has invested in the region with the largest prawn farm in Australia, creating a sizeable aquaculture industry for the region that is set to double Queensland's prawn production. The Whitsunday region's agricultural and food processing capabilities make it well-placed for diversification into new variants of high-value crops, food processing including bio-manufacturing and packaged produce targeting local, national and international markets.

## A VIBRANT VISITOR ECONOMY

Tourism is the Whitsunday region's largest employer, accounting for one-fifth of all jobs in the region and it is the second-largest contributor to industry value-add, with a visitor spend of \$1.7 billion. The Whitsunday region has a healthy visitor economy serving diverse markets including families, backpackers, overseas visitors and the drive tourism market. The region is attractive to overseas visitors for its safe, clean and nature-based attributes.

The Whitsunday Islands are regarded as the 'jewel in the crown' offering easy access to the Great Barrier Reef. There are opportunities to expand the tourism offer beyond the Whitsunday Islands and Airlie Beach to a broader mix of visitor experiences, including new attractions and events.

With the recent announcement of the Whitsundays set to host sailing events at the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics, the region is well placed to grow its domestic and international brand on the back of this globally significant event

## A RESOURCE-RICH REGION

Mining (predominantly coal mining) is the largest contributor to the Whitsunday region's economy, with an output of \$2.6 billion. For many years the industry has provided the region's businesses and residents with income, employment, investment, infrastructure and services.

Mining remains the anchor of the Whitsunday region economy and will continue to be a significant employer and economic contributor into the future. Mining's linkages through other sectors in the regional economy are strong, providing opportunities to capitalise on this strength and continue to grow local mining industry capabilities, with potential income and employment flow-on benefits to businesses and residents throughout the region. Mining will continue to be a driver of wealth in the Whitsundays with a significant share of industry activity directly or indirectly dependent on the prosperity of the resources sector.





# FUTURE GROWTH INDUSTRIES

## BIO-MANUFACTURING

The region is well-positioned to capitalise on the emerging bio-economy by implementing new industrial technologies in key areas such as food production and food waste management.

## AG TECH

AgTech utilises robotics technology, drones and high tech application equipment to optimise agricultural productivity and efficiencies. The \$988M agricultural industry in the Whitsunday region is primed to capitalise on this future.

## AEROSPACE

Bowen is part of Australia's \$6.4 billion aerospace industry, hosting international military training and Gilmour Space Technologies' satellite launch pad at Abbot Point. With a committed proponent, the region is beginning to recognise its natural advantages in tapping into the potential of the new space race which is expected to generate commercial output of over \$1 trillion by 2040.

## ADVANCED INDUSTRIES

The region's location, infrastructure, industrial and mining capabilities position it for growth in energy production and export, bioeconomy, advanced manufacturing and defence industries.

## AN EMERGING SERVICES ECONOMY

Key industries include personal services, retail, health, education and construction. As the region's population grows and evolves, there will be increased demand for these service industries. Health care, education, the creative industries and professional services also have the potential to serve markets beyond the needs of the immediate community, generating new streams of export income for the Whitsunday region.

## FILM & TELEVISION

The Whitsundays is a tropical paradise and has been the backdrop for many large scale productions including Baz Luhrmann's wartime epic Australia, Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales and the acclaimed Australian series Black Snow to name a few.

The Whitsundays can continue to grow this industry by leveraging its natural backdrop and direct flights from key studios in Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

## ENERGY PRODUCTION

The Whitsunday region was once a major producer of energy in North Queensland through the Collinsville power plant.

There is an opportunity for the Whitsunday region to once again become a powerhouse of North Queensland through the Greater Collinsville Energy Corridor projects. This includes leveraging traditional fuels including gas as well as green energy production and sustainable fuels.





# OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Targeted engagement through the Economic Development Advisory Group has highlighted the need for a strategic shift in Council's Economic Development function. This strategy positions the Whitsundays as a hub for future-focused industries while continuing to support the region's traditional economic pillars—agriculture, mining, and tourism.

As the world evolves rapidly, the Whitsundays must not only keep pace but lead in embracing new opportunities, investment and innovation. The Economic Development team will focus on investment attraction and advocacy, aligning with key priorities in the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan.

### THREE PILLARS OF FOCUS

This strategy will deliver tangible outcomes for the community through three core focus areas:

#### 01 | STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

Attracting new investment and fostering innovation across established and emerging industries.

#### 02 | BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

Empowering our local workforce and businesses to thrive and succeed.

#### 03 | PROSPEROUS PLACES

Enhancing the Whitsundays as the premier destination to visit, live and learn.

Efforts will target inbound investment across agriculture, transport, tourism, infrastructure, energy, mining and industry, working closely with key networks to drive regional benefits. A renewed focus on advocacy will support major projects and whole-of-region policy change. This approach ensures Whitsunday 2030 prioritises growth in strategic export-oriented industries—mining, food and agriculture, advanced manufacturing, defence, aerospace, transport, professional services, and tourism. Strengthening these sectors will stimulate demand in retail, health, education and construction, reinforcing investor confidence and the region's lifestyle appeal.

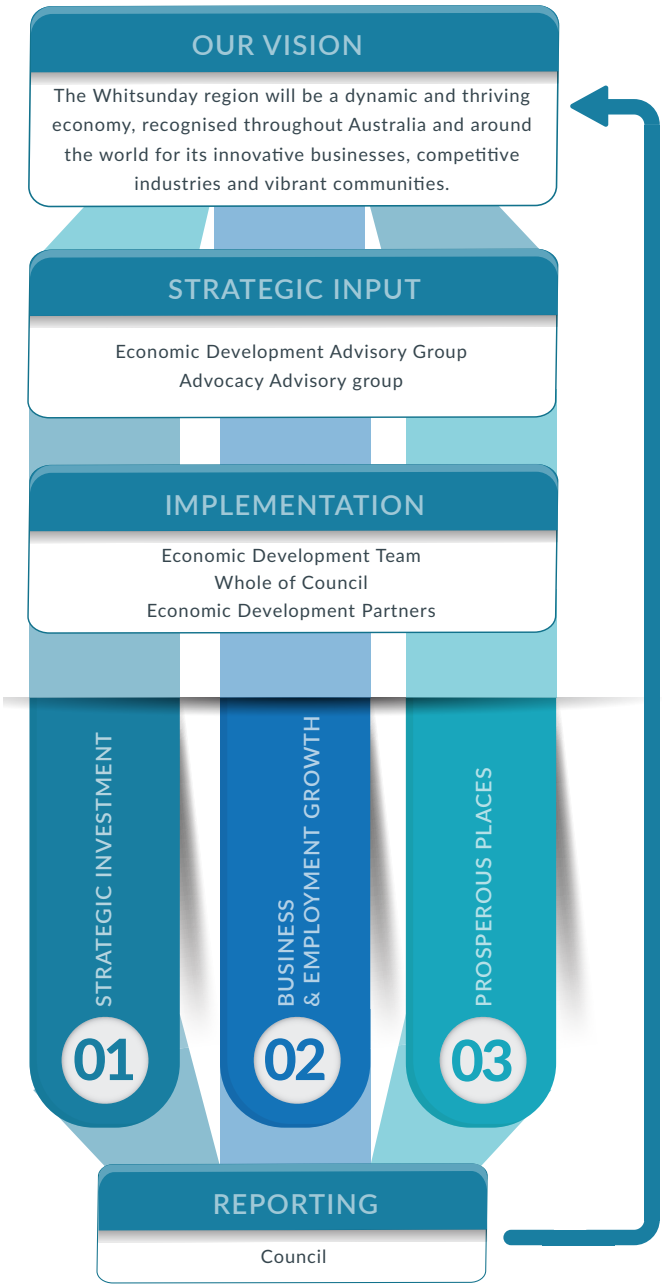
While attracting new investment is crucial, supporting existing businesses and industries is equally important. Pillars 2 and 3 focus on:

- Workforce development, skills training and regional supply chain growth.
- Business expansion support, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

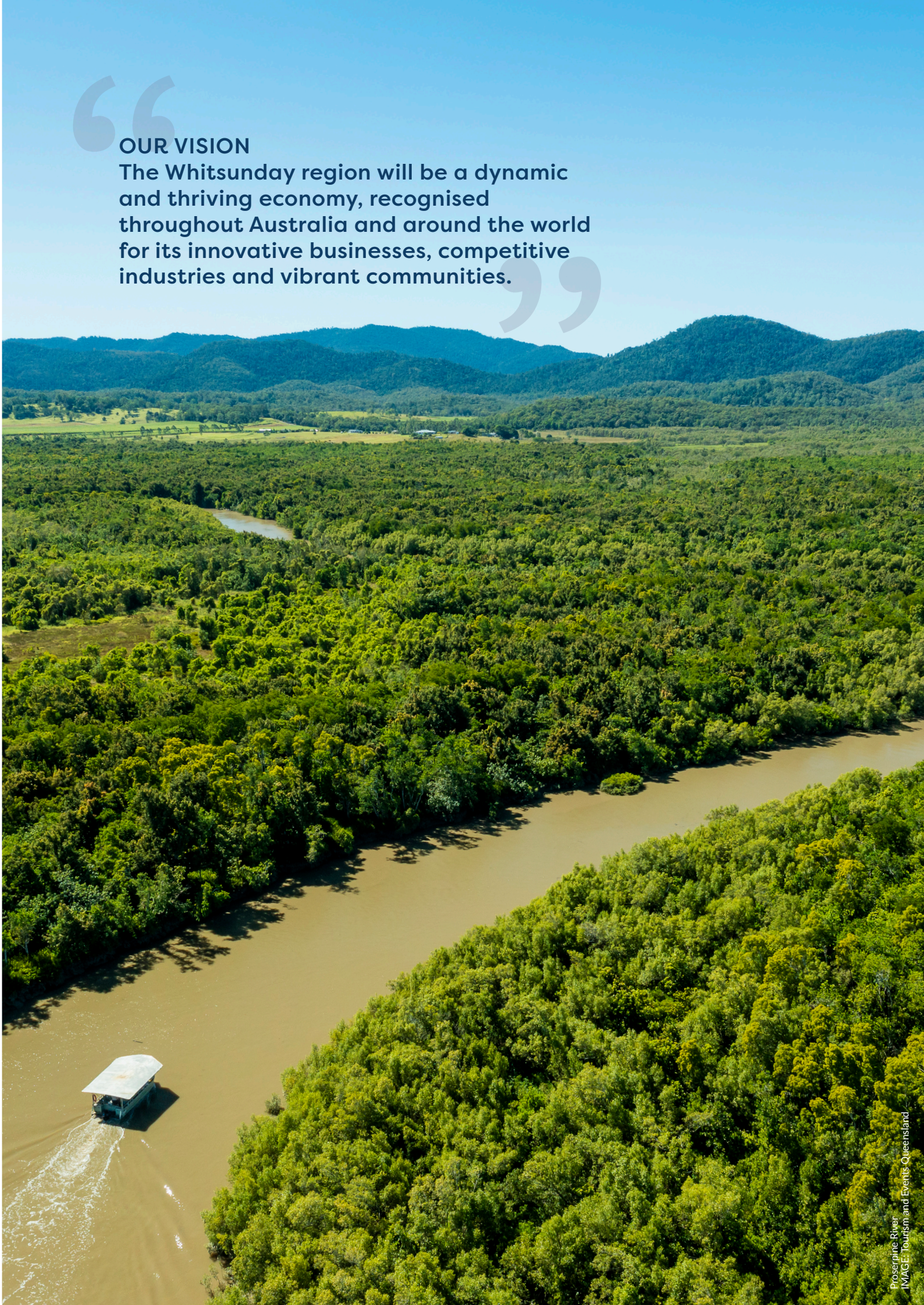
- Placemaking and tourism diversification to attract visitors, residents and skilled workers.

By investing in these areas, the Whitsundays will strengthen its world-class tourism and lifestyle appeal, ensuring sustainable economic and community growth.

With limited resources, this targeted approach will maximise Council's Return on Investment, delivering real benefits to the Whitsunday community.



“**OUR VISION**  
The Whitsunday region will be a dynamic and thriving economy, recognised throughout Australia and around the world for its innovative businesses, competitive industries and vibrant communities.”





# OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

The Economic Development Action Plan will be a dynamic tool, guiding Whitsunday Regional Council's approach to Economic Development. Strategic guidance will be provided by the Economic Development Advisory Group and Advocacy Advisory Group.

The Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan will be reported on through Council's corporate reporting framework.

Informed by extensive research, stakeholder consultation and data analysis, Whitsunday 2030 articulates Whitsunday Regional Council's commitment to take the lead in building a prosperous future for the region, through the realisation of the following outcomes:

- Investment and growth that builds on our strengths in a diversity of existing, new and emerging industries.
- The development of a strong and adaptable regional workforce with a mix of skills required by the Whitsunday region's businesses to grow and prosper, providing employment opportunities throughout the region for a growing population.
- Growth in population and housing throughout the Whitsunday region in line with Council's and the community's vision for a prosperous future.

Embracing a partnership approach to economic development, Whitsunday 2030 will underpin Council's advocacy initiatives and collaborations to secure support from its economic development partners, including peak bodies, business chambers and industry associations, key infrastructure asset owners and managers, regional development bodies and the other levels of government.





01

PILLAR ONE

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

Investment attraction is vital to the Whitsunday region’s prosperity, driving innovation, industry growth and job creation while strengthening supply chains and expanding market access. Whitsunday Regional Council is committed to attracting and facilitating investment in both established industries - mining, agriculture, and tourism - and emerging sectors like modern manufacturing, agribusiness, aerospace and the bioeconomy. As these industries grow, so will demand for health, education, retail and professional services, creating new economic opportunities. To support this a strategic focus on infrastructure, land availability and workforce development is essential. By fostering a strong investment climate, the region can ensure sustainable, long-term growth.

| ACTION |   | IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS   |
|--------|---|---|
| 1.1    | <div>Private Sector Investment Attraction</div> <div><div><div>• Establish an Investment Policy and Governance structure through the Economic Development Advisory Group and Council</div><div>• Develop an investment prospectus</div><div>• Obtain inbound investment in identified priority investment opportunities</div><div>• Prepare an Investment Incentives Scheme and process for engaging with Developers prior to Development Assessment</div></div><div>Efforts will focus on obtaining investment in:</div><div>Priority Precincts</div><div><div>• Airlie Beach Master Plan</div><div>• Cannonvale City Centre Master Plan</div><div>• Bowen Foreshore Master Plan</div><div>• Abbot Point State Development Area</div></div><div>Priority Industry</div><div><div>• Resources</div><div>• Agriculture</div><div>• Tourism</div><div>• Future industry</div></div></div> | Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3);<br>RDA Greater Whitsundays;<br>Department of State Development;<br>Trade & Investment Queensland;<br>Department of Regional & Rural Development;<br>Austrade |
| 1.2    | <div>Establish an Economic Driving Event Policy and Investment Plan.</div> <div>Efforts will focus on investing in events that drive economic growth, deliver a high return on investment for the community and add value to the Whitsunday tourism brand.</div>  | Tourism Whitsundays;<br>Industry Stakeholders;<br>Tourism and Events Queensland   |
| 1.3    | <div>Establish an Incoming Grant Funding Policy and Governance structure for priority investment areas. Attract investment through competitive grant submissions for priority projects and core infrastructure for the community.</div>   | State and Federal Governments;<br>Industry Stakeholders   |
| 1.4    | <div>Establish an Advocacy Policy and Governance structure for priority investment areas through the Advocacy Advisory Group and Council.</div>   | State and Federal Governments;<br>Local Government Partners;<br>Industry Stakeholders   |
| 1.5    | <div>Create and maintain a public Advocacy Platform across digital, print and new media to showcase our Whitsunday Voice to:</div> <div><div>• Attract funding for Council’s Major Infrastructure Projects</div><div>• Drive whole of region policy change on key issues in the community including:<div><div>• Education</div><div>• Health</div><div>• State and Federal Government service delivery and infrastructure investment</div></div></div><div>• Support Private Sector Major Projects that align to regional priorities</div></div>  | State and Federal Governments;<br>Development Industry;<br>GW3;<br>RDA Greater Whitsundays;<br>Greater Whitsunday Council of Mayors   |
| 1.6    | <div>Work with industry stakeholders and the State and Federal Government to drive future industry in:</div> <div><div>• Resources and METS</div><div>• Agriculture</div><div>• Tourism</div><div>• Aviation, Aerospace &amp; Defence</div><div>• Sustainable Industry</div><div>• Bio-Manufacturing</div><div>• Film &amp; Television</div><div>• Energy Production</div></div>  | Industry Stakeholders;<br>AusIndustry;<br>State and Federal Governments;<br>GW3   |



Canefields and Rail  
IMAGET Tourism and Events Queensland





02

PILLAR TWO

BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

Strengthening local businesses and workforce development is key to the Whitsunday region's prosperity. Supporting small and medium enterprises, entrepreneurship and innovation will create jobs and drive economic growth. Whitsunday Regional Council promotes an 'open-for-business' approach, ensuring local enterprises can establish, expand and succeed. A skilled workforce is essential and Council is committed to collaborating with industry and education providers to meet workforce needs. Key priorities include local job creation, workforce training and securing critical infrastructure, such as a university presence and an agricultural innovation centre.

| ACTION |  | IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS  |
|--------|--|--|
| 2.1    | Work with government, industry partners and the education and training sector to address the Whitsunday region's existing and emerging education infrastructure needs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establishing regional university study hubs or university campuses</li><li>Working with TAFE in Cannonvale and Bowen to grow demand</li><li>Partner to establish a Centre of Excellence/Future Industry Hub</li></ul> | State and Federal Governments; Education and Training Providers; Regional Schools; Industry Partners; Business Chambers; Major Employers; GW3  |
| 2.2    | Encourage job creation and training pathways in prospective future industries including manufacturing, aerospace, energy and the bioeconomy.   | State and Federal Governments; Industry Partners   |
| 2.3    | Encourage business excellence, innovation and networking across all sectors of the Whitsunday business community. Work with the Whitsundays Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Bowen Chamber of Commerce to deliver an annual awards ceremony for the business community.  | Business Chambers and Trader Associations  |
| 2.4    | Pro-actively engage with business chambers, trader associations and their members to promote and facilitate access to government and industry-sponsored small business grants and support services   | Business Chambers and Trader Associations; RDA Greater Whitsundays; State Government; Major Project Proponents                                 |
| 2.5    | Support education and skills programs that assist industry growth, workforce skills development and resident retention and attraction.   | TAFE Queensland; Registered Training Organisations; Business Groups; Major Employers; Business Chambers, Education and Training Providers; GW3 |
| 2.6    | Deliver the actions assigned to Economic Development under the Whitsunday Regional Council Local Housing Action Plan. Secure critical housing for the region's essential workers.  | State and Federal Governments; Industry Partners   |



03

PILLAR THREE

PROSPEROUS PLACES

The Whitsunday region’s population is set to grow due to the region’s compelling lifestyle. Cannonvale, at the heart of the urban growth corridor, is developing as the region’s principal centre, while Airlie Beach strengthens its role as a tourism and hospitality hub. Proserpine will remain a key centre for government services and agriculture, while Bowen and Collinsville will grow through new and existing economic opportunities in agriculture, tourism, resources and future industry such as Aerospace technologies.

Recognising that our natural assets are a major competitive advantage, Whitsunday Regional Council drives sustainable growth through land use planning, urban development and infrastructure investment, enhancing liveability for residents and visitors. It also advocates for essential services, ensuring the region remains a premier destination to invest, visit, live and learn.

| ACTION |   | IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS  |
|--------|---|--|
| 3.1    | Support the creation of a Whitsunday region-wide housing and centres growth strategy.   | Industry Partners and Community Stakeholders                     |
| 3.2    | Support the progressive schedule of Whitsunday Regional Council precinct master plans that offer a forward vision for prosperous places that enhance community liveability and unlock new economic opportunities.   | State and Federal Governments                                    |
| 3.3    | Produce an essential guide for new residents, visitors and businesses, providing key information about the region, including orientation, essential services and resources, business and employment opportunities, tourism and recreation and community engagement and support.   | Industry and Community Partners; Tourism Whitsundays             |
| 3.4    | Manage external industry association funding arrangements to deliver required returns for the community, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tourism Whitsundays</li><li>• Bowen Tourism &amp; Business</li><li>• Bowen Gumlu Growers</li><li>• Bowen Collinsville Enterprise</li><li>• Greater Whitsunday Council of Mayors</li></ul> | Industry Partners  |
| 3.5    | Contribute to the review of the Whitsundays' destination promotion and visitor engagement model.<br>Support tourism development by working with the tourism industry to unlock new visitor segments and new project proponents.<br>Encourage land based and sustainable eco-tourism product development.  | Bowen Tourism & Business; Tourism Whitsundays; Tourism Operators |
| 3.6    | Develop a strategic and coordinated approach to destination management planning and promotion to maximise the 2032 Olympic Sailing Events.<br>Develop legacy infrastructure and tourism benefits through the Olympic opportunity.   | Bowen Tourism & Business; Tourism Whitsundays; Tourism Operators |

MEASURING SUCCESS

- The success of this Economic Development Strategy will be measured in the following ways:
- 01 | PERFORMANCE – Delivering on the 18 identified actions
- 02 | EFFECTIVENESS – Realising the vision of the strategy
- 03 | IMPACT – Measured by real-world change in:
  - Resident population
  - Employment growth and diversification
  - Tourism activity
  - Qualitative evidence
  - Regional Investment
  - Household income levels (as measured by change in average household income)



On the Road, Collinsville  
IMAGE: Tourism and Events Queensland



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

The strategy recognises that partners are crucial to success. In addition to the Economic Development Advisory Group, Whitsunday Regional Council is committed to working with, but not limited to:

- Greater Whitsunday Council of Mayors and neighbouring councils
- Key State and Federal Government departments
- Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3)
- RDA Greater Whitsundays
- Bowen Tourism & Business
- Tourism Whitsundays
- Bowen Gumlu Growers Association
- Bowen Collinsville Enterprise
- Canegrowers
- Business chambers and trader associations
- Education and training providers



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