

Byron Shire Business, Industry and Visitor Economy Strategy to 2035

DRAFT



In Business for Good

A resilient and diverse economy providing
for our community and environment in a
balanced and sustainable manner



BYRON
SHIRE
COUNCIL



Jingi Walla - Welcome

Acknowledgement

Byron Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Aboriginal Custodians and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and country.

We recognise and respect the Bundjalung of Byron Bay – Arakwal and the Widjabul Wia-bal Peoples native title rights and interests within the Shire.

Byron Shire Council also acknowledges the Tweed Byron, Jali and Ngulingah Local Aboriginal Land Councils under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act NSW 1983.

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Executive Summary

The Byron Shire has always been a meeting place, a place of innovation and creativity.

The region's natural landscapes, diverse towns and villages, and its overall vibe is its greatest competitive advantage and will continue to attract innovative and creative people as well as visitors from around the country and the world.

This Strategy seeks to be in business for good. Being in business for good acknowledges the important role that the economy has to provide resources for the community and that in order to have a vibrant community, a strong economy is required. At the same time, it is important to protect and support the environment. Being in business for good is about striking a balance between the community, environment, and the economy.

This Strategy seeks to provide Council with specific guidance and direction to manage future economic growth in a sustainable and ethical manner. It seeks to help Council support business for good.

The Strategy recognises Council has a specific role to play in terms of business, industry, and the visitor economy, including:

- **Support:** to support important projects that can act as a catalyst and unlock future opportunities.
- **Collaborate:** to partner with a range of organisations to facilitate positive outcomes in the region.
- **Plan:** to provide a planning and regulatory environment that is conducive to positive economic outcomes.
- **Advocate:** to advocate for State and Commonwealth investment into the region to address a variety of needs and issues.
- **Promote:** to promote key messages and narratives about the future direction of the region's economy as well as providing information to local business to build future capacity.
- **Deliver:** to deliver a variety of services that will support local business retention and expansion.

Figure E.1 provides a framework for the economy to support the community and environment in a balanced and sustainable manner. This framework provides long-term direction to Council that is supported by a staged implementation plan.

In such a way, long-term direction to maintain the balance across the community, environment and economy can be sustained and at the same time, activities and tasks can remain flexible and adaptable to change over time. This is how we will stay in business for good.

Figure E.1. Byron Shire Business, Industry and Visitor Economy Strategy Framework

Goal: the economy to support the community and environment in a balanced and sustainable manner.



Foster Business Engagement

- Bring businesses together
- Engage with businesses
- Encourage innovation and sustainability
- Support regional engagement



Celebrate Our Business and Brand Identity

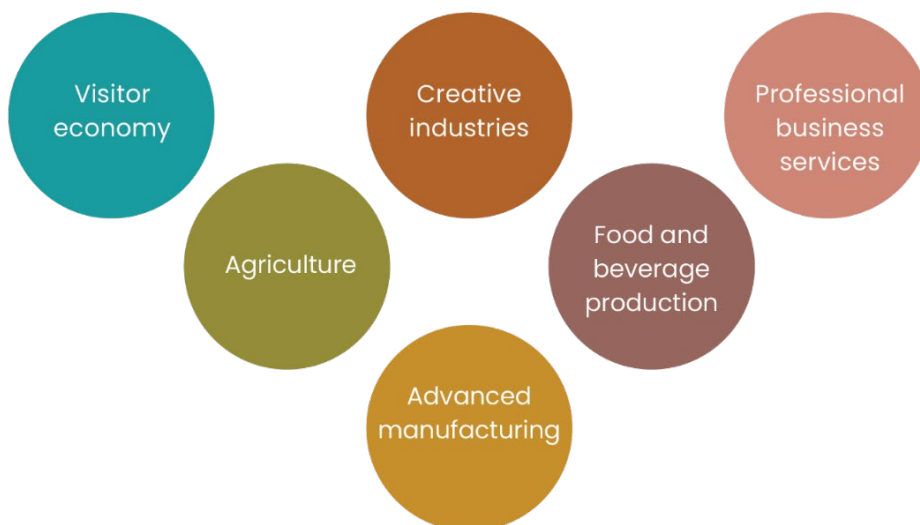
- Define our visitor economy identity
- Promote our innovative and circular business environment
- Celebrate our towns and villages



Plan for a Sustainable Economy

- Ensure spaces for businesses and residents
- Streamline regulatory processes
- Leverage major redevelopment sites
- Augment infrastructure

Key Industries



Source: Lucid Economics

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The Byron Shire is famous for its beaches, hinterland, and villages, and regarded for creativity, innovation, sustainability, and its relaxed lifestyle.

The Byron Shire encompasses the traditional home of the Arakwal, Minjungbal and Widjabul Wia-bal Peoples of the Bundjalung Nation on the far north coast of NSW. The Shire is made up of major centres (including Mullumbimby, Bangalow, Ocean Shores, Brunswick Heads and Byron Bay) and a variety of smaller towns and villages (including Main Arm, Federal, Billinudgel, New Brighton, South Golden Beach, Suffolk Park, Sunrise and Ewingsdale). These areas have their own distinctive look and feel, hosting a diverse and colourful mix of people.

The Byron Shire has always been a meeting place and a place of commerce. First Nations People gather and meet on this land, with different language groups travelling to the area for ceremonial purposes and the seasonal food stocks. They would naturally trade, meaning that the Byron Shire has also always been a place of interaction and exchange.

European settlement saw the development of the timber and dairy industries that quickly spawned an early industrialisation of the area with timber mills and butter factories. Additional factories followed and during the first half of the early 20th century the Byron Shire became an industrial centre featuring timber mills, mineral sand mining and processing, butter factories and various meatworks. Industrial activities peaked in the middle of the 20th century and even included a whaling operation. The second half of the 20th century saw these industries shut down and or relocate elsewhere. During this period, the visitor economy as well as the art and culture sector emerged. The new millennium saw the rise of local food and beverage businesses, some have gone on to become household names. Many more food and beverage businesses followed attracted by Byron's location and branding.

Over time, creativity and innovation has shaped the Byron economy. These are not new features of the economy; they are simply driving a new evolution across the economy, anchored by a dedication to sustainability and equity.

This Strategy seeks to embrace the Byron Shire's unique features and guide Council activities to support the economy through the current evolution in a balanced and equitable manner. It is about being in business for good.

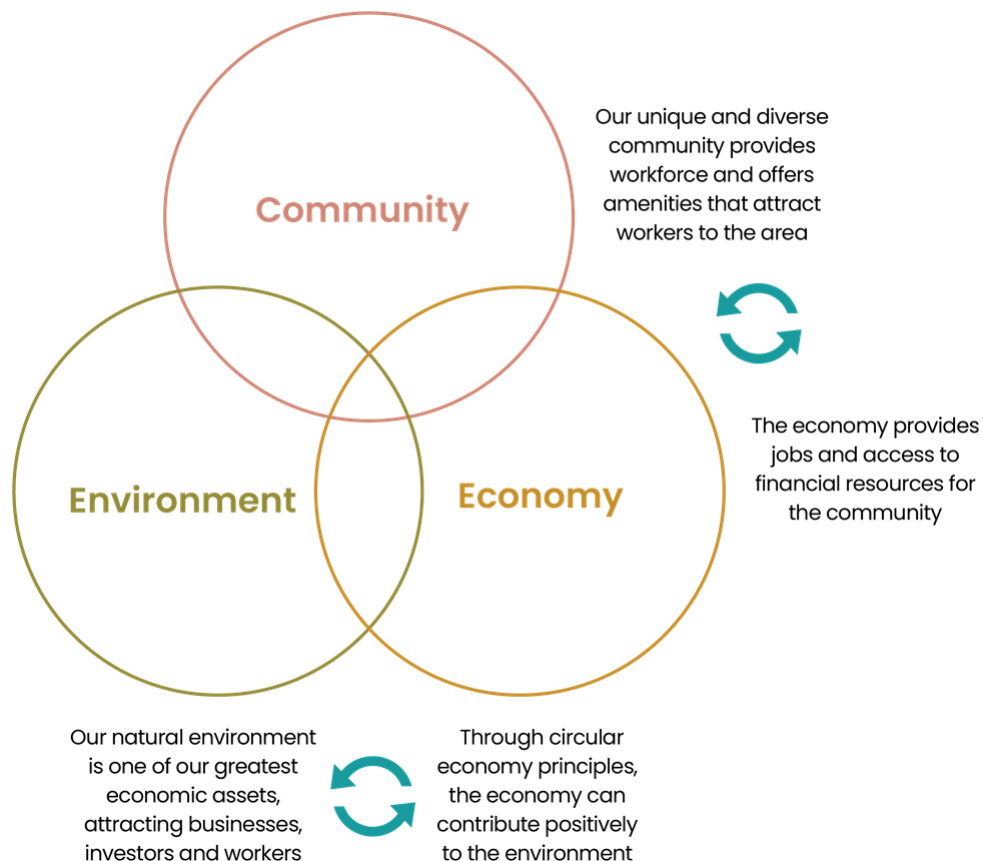
1.2 In Business For Good

What does it mean to be in business for good?

In business for good is not just about profits. It is an acknowledgement that the economy exists to support the community and the environment, Figure 1.1.

By maintaining a balance across the economy, community, and the environment we are setting the foundation for future sustainability. We need our economy to grow and continue its evolution (as it always has). But we need to ensure that as the economy grows, it supports our community and our environment. Change is inevitable. Ensuring any future change is one that we direct and that delivers for our economy, our community and our environment is what it means to be in business for good.

Figure 1.1. Triple Bottom Line for Economic Development



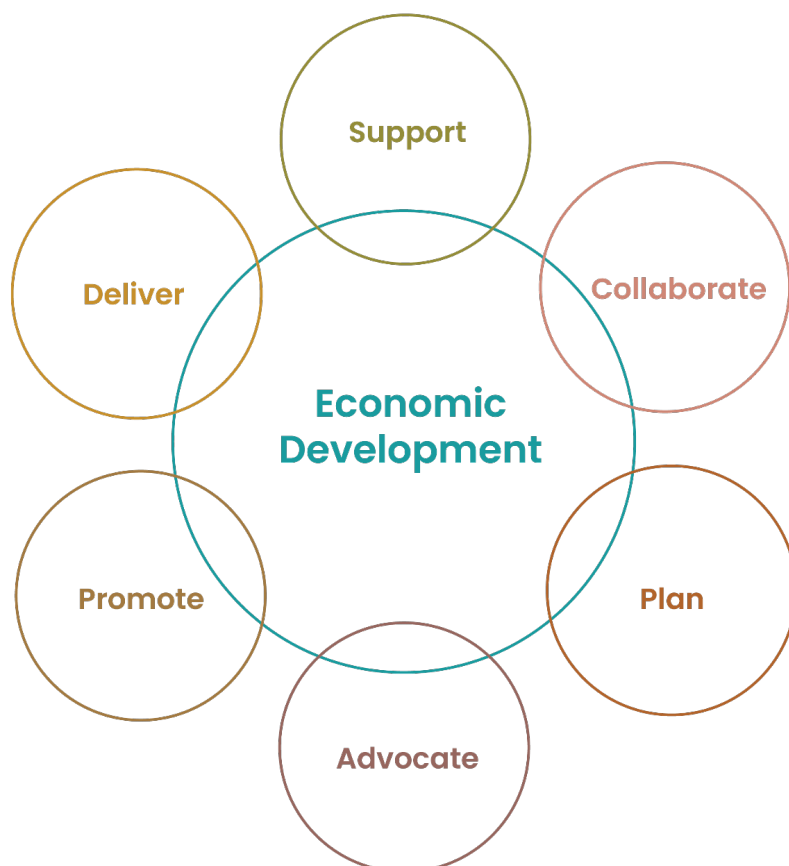
Source: Lucid Economics

1.3 Role of Council in the Development of the Economy

As we heard during engagement with many local businesses in preparing this Strategy, Council has an important role to play in economic development. The role is multi-faceted, multi-purposed and often involves a wide range of partners and stakeholders. This engagement identified the following important roles that Council has to play:

- **Support:** to support important projects that can act as a catalyst and unlock future opportunities
- **Collaborate:** to partner with a range of organisations to facilitate positive outcomes in the region.
- **Plan:** to provide a planning and regulatory environment that is conducive to positive economic outcomes.
- **Advocate:** to advocate for State and Commonwealth investment into the region to address a variety of needs and issues.
- **Promote:** to promote key messages and narratives about the future direction of the region's economy as well as providing information to local business to build future capacity.
- **Deliver:** to deliver a variety of services that will support local business retention and expansion.

Figure 1.2. Role of Council in Business, Industry and Visitor Economy



2. Strategic Alignment

2.1 Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework in NSW requires all local governments to adopt a suite of strategic plans. These long-term plans provide transparency and make it possible for Council to plan in a manner which ensures that community needs and priorities are responded to well into the future.

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) is central to this framework and articulates the Community's goals and aspirations, which are based on extensive community engagement. The vision articulated in the CSP 2032 is: Byron Shire is a 'meeting place' - where people can come together to connect, share, grow, inspire, and create positive change. This Business, Industry and Visitor Economy Strategy specifically supports Objective 4: Ethical Growth: We manage growth and change responsibly.

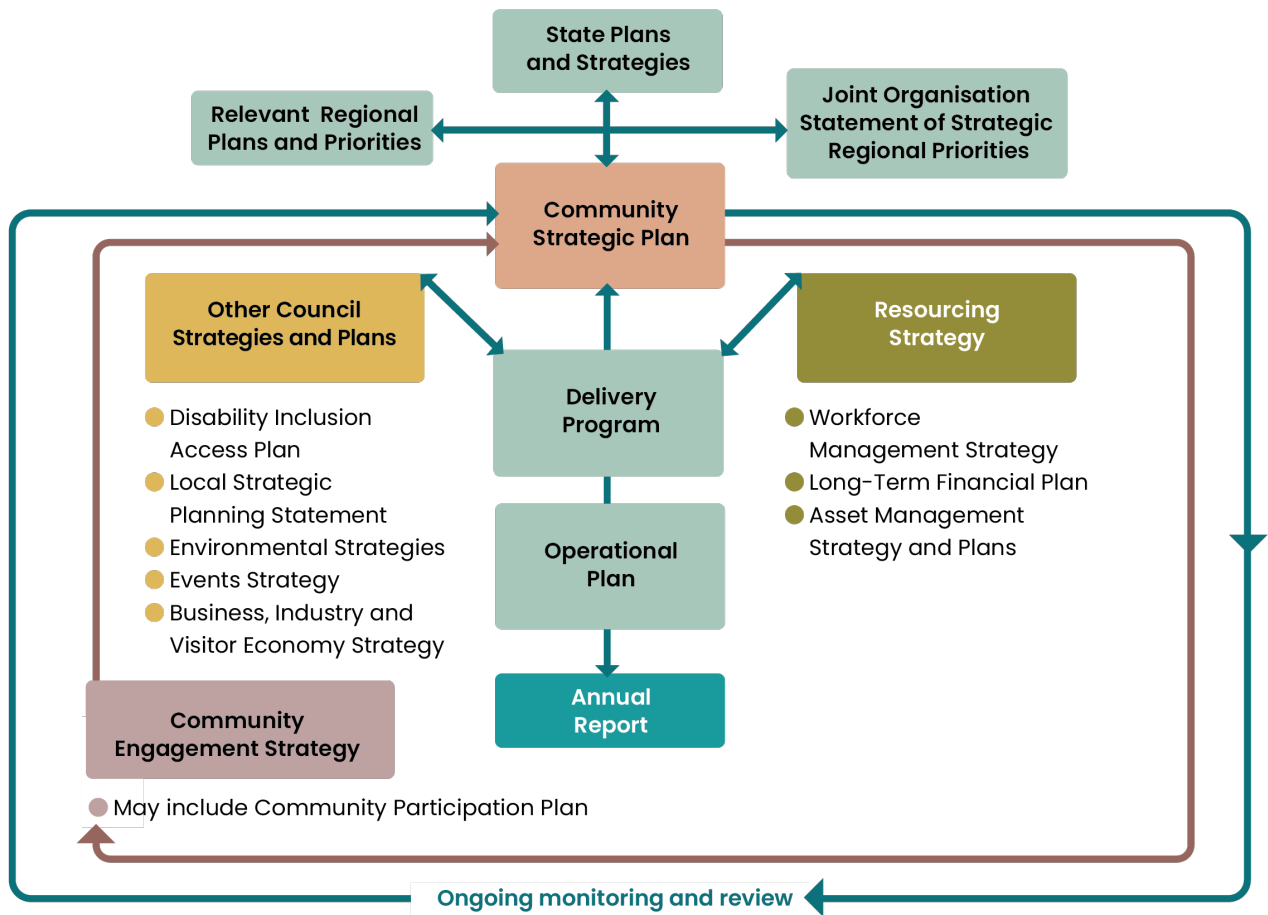
Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan are aligned to delivering the goals and aspirations highlighted in the CSP. The Operational Plan outlines the proposed activities to support the CSP and Delivery Plan commitments for the financial year.

Council resourcing as well as additional strategies and plans provide further support and direction for how Council will deliver on community aspirations.

This Business, Industry and Visitor Economy Strategy aligns with the CSP and Delivery Plan and is intended to inform proposed activities in the yearly Operational Plan.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. This Business, Industry and Visitor Economy Strategy sits within the box titled, 'Other Council Strategies and Plans' and works in parallel with these documents.

Figure 2.1. Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework



2.2 State and Local Plans and Strategies

This Strategy does not exist in isolation and aligns with other strategic documents at the local and state level, Figure 2.2.

This Strategy is informed by other strategic documents at the Regional and State level (eg. North Coast NSW Destination Management Plan, Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Strategy). At the same time, there are other local strategies and plans that are relevant (eg. Events Strategy, Arts and Culture Action Plan, Towards Zero Integrated Waste Strategy 2019 to 2029.). These plans provide a natural system of complementary overlap that allows for a comprehensive, whole of Council approach.

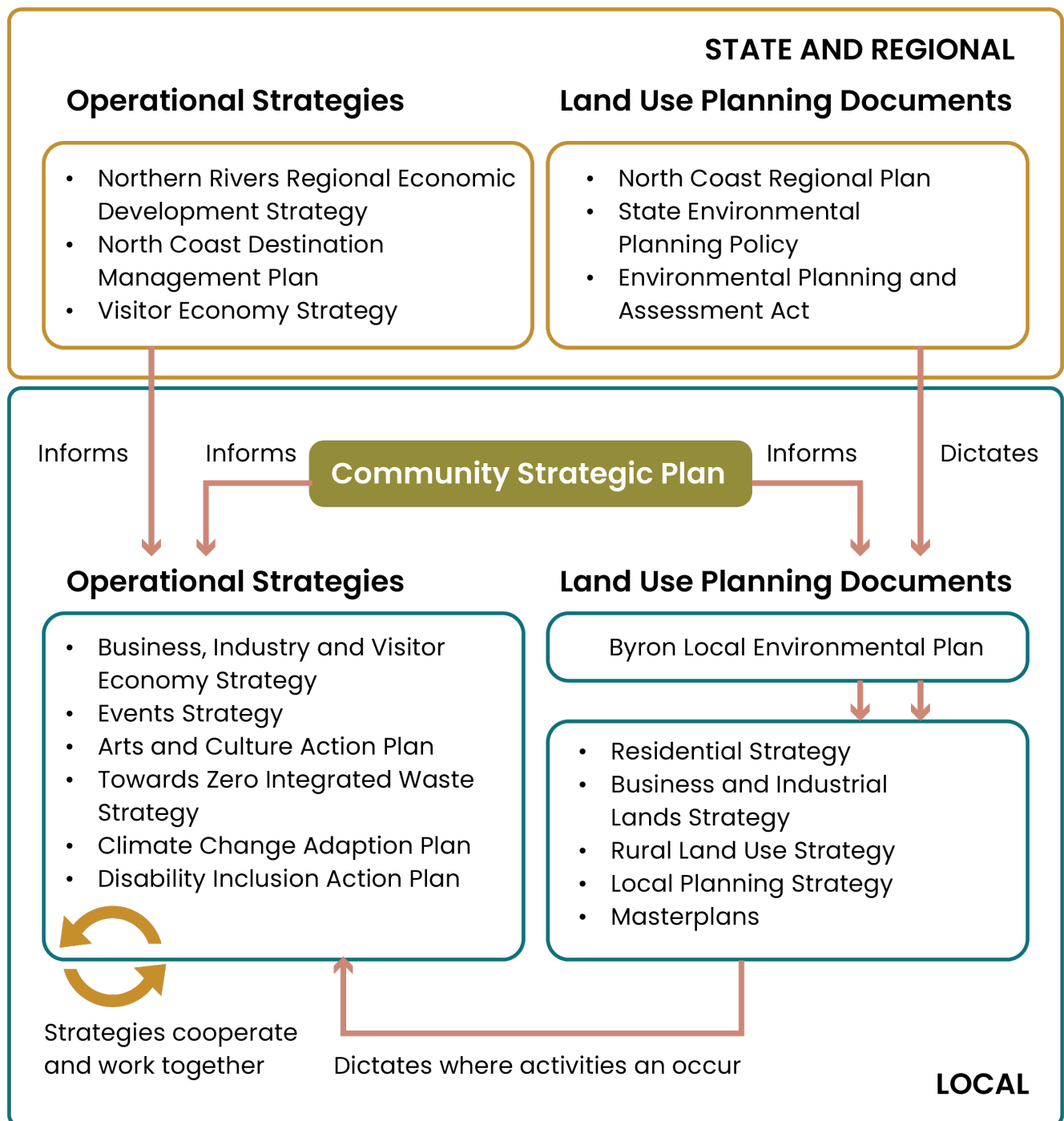
Additionally, there are a series of land use planning documents. Most notably the Byron Local Environmental Plan 2014 (Byron LEP), is the main planning tool for shaping the future of communities and ensuring local development is carried out appropriately. The Byron LEP is NSW Government legislation and is informed by the North Coast Regional Plan and various State Government Planning

Policies. The State Government can often implement policy that greatly impacts local land use planning. For example, the recent capping of non-hosted short-term rental accommodation (STRA) to 60 days for some parts of the Byron Shire.

Furthermore, there are local land use strategies that provide further detail for site specific zoning and planning changes, such as the Business and Industrial Lands Strategy and Residential Strategy.

The Community Strategic Plan provides overarching direction to both the operational plans as well as the land-use planning documents.

Figure 2.2. Strategic Alignment



3. Our Unique and Diverse Economy

The Byron Shire economy is unique. While it may share some common traits with other regional destinations across Australia, its uniqueness is based on its high degree of innovation, creativity, and diversity, with a variety of sectors that complement each other to build a strong and diverse economy. The following key industries have been defined by their current and future potential economic contribution, high value adding nature, export orientation and high levels of innovation. These key industries will help us be in business for good and include:

- Visitor economy
- Creative industries
- Professional business services
- Agriculture
- Advanced manufacturing



Byron Shire Economic Snapshot

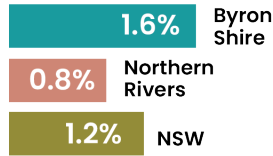
Population (2023)



37,126

Source: ABS (2023)

Average Annual Population Growth (2013-2023)



Source: ABS (2023)

Future Population (2041)



44,000+

Source: ABS (2023); NSW department of Planning and Environment (2022)

14%

of the population lived elsewhere 1 year ago. Over 1,400 residents moved to adjoining local government areas in 2021.

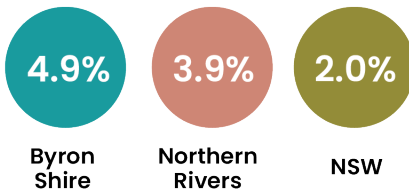
Source: ABS (2022)

Gross Regional Product (2022-2023)

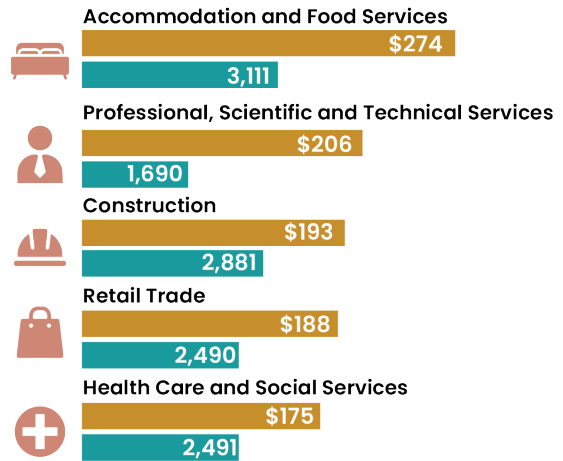


\$2.7 Billion

Average Annual Growth (last 5 years)



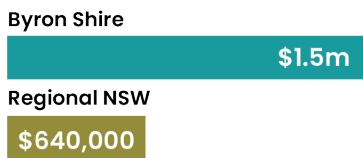
Economic Contribution (\$m) Employment Number (2022-2023)



Source: Economy ID (2024)

Housing Prices (December 2023)

Median House Price



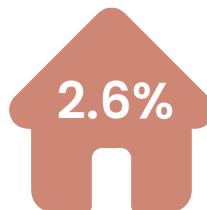
Median Rent (\$/week) (March 2023)



Source: NSW Communities and Justice (2024)

Residential Vacancy Rate (May 2024)

Byron Median Vacancy Rate



Source: SQM Research (2024); Lucid Economics

Median Household Income (\$/week)

Byron Shire

2011	\$885
2016	\$1,149
2021	\$1,602

New South Wales

2011	\$1,237
2016	\$1,486
2021	\$1,829

Source: ABS (2022)

3.1 Visitor Economy

Current levels of visitation to the Shire are well below the pre-COVID peaks, with visitors to the Shire down 33% and visitor nights down 32%. Despite the downturn in visitation, the visitor economy remains important, contributing an estimated 9.6% to the economy and 9.2% of local employment in 2022-23.

At its peak before the COVID-19 pandemic¹, 2.4 million visitors came to the Byron Shire, generating 5.4 million visitor nights. Annually, the surge in visitors corresponds to a population increase equivalent to 16,400 residents (a 45% rise). Yet, due to uneven visitation patterns, the actual influx during peak periods exceeds this 45% estimate. Additionally, the geographic distribution of visitors is unevenly dispersed throughout towns in our Shire, with Byron Bay receiving a significant portion of total visitors.

This influx of visitors puts considerable pressure on existing infrastructure beyond what the local residential population can afford, which has resulted in roads and other public infrastructure not being maintained to a high standard.

The visitor economy makes an important contribution to the local community and at its peak provided over \$1 billion in visitor expenditure. This expenditure provides a stimulus to local businesses as visitors purchase accommodation, food, beverages, and a wide range of visitor services. The majority of this expenditure flows to small, often locally owned businesses and increases the range of services that local residents can enjoy.

The Byron Shire Sustainable Visitation Strategy identified that the visitor economy makes an important contribution to the economy, however growth in the visitor economy brings challenges,

In 2023

- Visitors: 1.6 million (Tourism Solutions, 2024)
- Visitor Nights: 3.7 million (Tourism Solutions, 2024)
- Visitor Expenditure: \$966 million (Economy ID, 2024)
- Jobs: 1,966 (Economy ID, 2024)

The visitor economy is the largest export sector in the Shire (Economy ID, 2024).

The visitor economy is not considered a stand-alone industry by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) but rather a sector that generates expenditure for various industries, most notably accommodation and food services, retail trade and transport. Two-thirds of visitor expenditure is spent on these three industries.

¹ Year ending December 2019.

including traffic congestion, parking, reduction in available and affordable residential housing, impacts on infrastructure and the environment and instances of behaviour not aligned with the community's values. Deliberate and intentional actions are required to address these challenges and to ensure the visitor economy can make a sustainable contribution to the local economy and community into the future.

3.2 Festivals and Events²

Festivals and events are an important facet of the local visitor economy. There is a range of small to medium sized events that represent 60% of attendance, 50% of visitors and 44% of visitor nights. Local residents make up an average of 30% of attendance at all festivals and events. For many smaller to medium sized events, the proportion of local residents is much higher, demonstrating the important role that local festivals and events have in supporting the local community, providing access to a variety of arts and cultural experiences. Many local festivals and events are not only part of the visitor economy but are also a part of the local creative industries, given many artists are local residents as well.

The very active festival and events calendar is also a demonstration of the significant creative industries that exist in the region.

The festival and event sector are facing a number of challenges coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. High cost of living and rising interest rates have reduced disposable income, particularly for lower income earners. This environment has made it difficult for many festivals, which was demonstrated most notably by the cancellation of the 2024 Splendour in the Grass festival.

In 2023

- Annual Attendance: 200,000+
- Visitors: 170,000
- Visitor Nights: 350,000
- Visitor Expenditure: \$84.3 million
- Jobs: 385

Festivals and events are an important cultural export that supports the local creative industries.

(Lucid Economics, 2023)

² Festivals and events is a sub-sector of the visitor economy and figures attributed to festivals and events are included in the total visitor economy figures.

3.3 Creative Industries

The creative industries are defined as a number of industry subdivisions within the broader cultural and creative sectors, including traditional arts and culture activities (i.e., visual arts, music, performing arts, etc.) as well as a number of areas that require a range of creative thinking and innovation, such as the film industry and numerous professional business services such as architects, graphic designers and photographers.³

If the creative industries were a stand-alone industry (as opposed to a mix of subsectors of different industries) it would be one of the largest industries in the Shire, representing around 9% of the economy and jobs.

The Byron Shire has one of the largest concentrations of the creative industries in the country.

The strength of the creative industries demonstrates the attractiveness of the Shire for innovative and creative people.

In 2023

- Contribution to Gross Regional Product: \$191 million
- Jobs: 1,965

Creative industries are an important export sector for the Shire.

(Lucid Economics, 2024)

3.4 Professional Business Services

Professional business services⁴ is the largest component of the Byron Shire economy, representing 15.8% of the economy and contributing 10.9% of total jobs. This sector represents architects, engineers, accountants, consultants as well as finance, insurance and IT professionals. The sector is the second largest exporting industry in the Shire, indicating that many local businesses and professionals are servicing a client or customer base across the broader region, State and further afield. Many professional business services are included in the creative industries, and this industry further acknowledges the Byron Shire's ability to foster and attract creative and innovative people.

In 2023

- Contribution to Gross Regional Product: \$326 million
- Jobs: 2,324

Professional business services is the second largest export sector in the

Shire. (Economy ID, 2024)

³ *Australia's Cultural and Creative Economy – a 21st Century Guide*, A New Approach, October 2020

⁴ Professional business services includes the ANZSIC industry classifications of professional, technical and scientific services, finance and insurance and information, media and telecommunications.

3.5 Agriculture

Lands used for agricultural production make up 20% of the Byron Shire and produce a wide range of products. Agriculture was once the foundation of the local economy from timber to dairy and poultry. Agriculture has always been an important part of the local economy and it remains important today.

The agricultural production within the Shire is very diverse and while many product groups such as fruits and vegetables are relatively small, they provide a lot of value. Many local residents prefer locally produced food and support local growers through purchasing their products. The various local markets that exist across the Shire not only provide an opportunity for locals to purchase locally grown food, but for visitors to enjoy these products as well. The local agricultural sector benefits from the diverse range of micro-climates available in the Shire as well as relatively high annual rainfall, which produces high quality agricultural products.

Agricultural production can also play an important role in managing the environment and the effects of climate change. Regenerative agriculture can increase water and carbon absorption in the soil, allowing the land to absorb a greater amount of the rainfall (reducing the incidence or severity of flooding events). Regenerative agriculture can also reduce toxicity in our environment through minimising or eliminating the use of chemicals, which we are seeing as more important for the health of our ecology, humans and the quality of our food. Growth in agriculture would also help match up the perceived image of the Byron Shire as clean and green, which is a growing market demand.

This sector has the potential for further growth and development into the future, not only to increase agricultural production but also as a basis for further processing or value-adding of local agricultural products as well as creating new visitor experiences.

In 2023

- Contribution to Gross Regional Product: \$88 million
- Jobs: 669

(Economy ID, 2024)

Key agricultural products: nursery products, macadamia nuts and cattle.

3.6 Advanced Manufacturing

Manufacturing, while small by comparison to other leading sectors, represents the third largest export sector. More than 60% of the manufacturing industry is based on food and beverage products, representing a wide range of bespoke products that are often sold across the region, nationally and internationally. Many of these products leverage the strong brand awareness of the Byron Shire and Byron Bay.

Food and beverage manufacturing is an important growth industry and has the potential to grow.

However, local advanced manufacturing goes beyond just food and beverage production. It includes a wide range of manufacturing or production processes that all include a high degree of technology and innovation. Local businesses in this sector are all small businesses. They often produce an artisan product or are highly innovative businesses (usually leaders in their field) providing a product or service that is exported across the region, state or internationally. Many of these businesses are supporting the circular economy and producing goods that are environmentally friendly.

This sector adds further to the diversity of the economic landscape and provides further evidence of the Byron Shire's ability to attract and retain innovative and creative people.

In 2023

- Contribution to Gross Regional Product: \$100 million
- Jobs: 1,091

(Economy ID, 2024)

Manufacturing is the third largest export sector in the Shire.

4. What Businesses Told Us

Our local businesses are the lifeblood of our economy, just as our residents are the lifeblood of the community. And of course, many local residents own local businesses. Local businesses are our economic heroes. Our business community is what makes our economy so unique and special.

Business Engagement Process in 2023

In 2023, extensive engagement was conducted to support the development of this strategy. We engaged with our business community to gain insights into the local economy, where we have competitive strengths and opportunities but also where we have challenges or barriers.

We researched, workshopped, and interviewed:

- Local businesses from various industry sectors
- Chambers of Commerce and Industry as well as networking groups
- Agency stakeholders
- Our Business and Industry Advisory Committee (including workshops with a number of invited businesses, stakeholders, elected members and the executive of Council)

We asked for their thoughts on:

- The background research findings
- Economic advantages, challenges and opportunities
- Council's role in economic development

Engagement was undertaken in a number of formats, including:

- Nine industry focused workshops
- Two virtual workshops
- Internal and external stakeholder interviews
- Survey on Council's Your Say page

Finally, informal engagement with local businesses also took place throughout the project, including attending events held by Destination Byron and local Chambers of Commerce.

We have listened to what the business community said and will continue to seek input.

Empowering Indigenous Business and Tourism

Many stakeholders emphasised the need to support Indigenous culture and businesses in the area. To achieve this, ongoing and meaningful collaboration with local Indigenous stakeholders is crucial. Additionally, enhancing local Indigenous business capacity and promoting procurement from Indigenous businesses are important steps. Stakeholders also identified various opportunities for Indigenous business and tourism, including cultural experiences. It is well known an Aboriginal Cultural Centre is an aspiration of Arakwal people of Byron Bay.

4.1 What Have We Learned?

Key summary findings from the research and engagement with local businesses:

- The Byron Shire remains a meeting place and a place of innovation and creativity, as it has always been.
- That our business community greatly cares about the community at large and the environment.
- While the visitor economy is important, it is not our only industry. Our economy is quite diverse. We have retained significant areas of agricultural land which could support further local agricultural innovation. We have a strong, innovative advanced manufacturing sector (and not just producing food and beverage products). We have a very strong, knowledge-based professional business services sector and one of the largest concentrations of creative industries in the country. This diversity is a good thing and contributes to our economic sustainability and resilience.
- Sustainability (including responding to climate change) are key issues for our business community, which makes the continued evolution of the circular economy really important.
- Our lifestyle, our environment, our diverse towns and villages, our natural landscapes, they all combine to produce a very unique place, a place that continues to attract creative and innovative people that are seeking a spiritual place to call home. This place is our greatest asset.

We understand the importance of balance. We cannot have our economy thrive at the expense of the environment or community. Equally, our community cannot flourish without a vibrant economy. No one element is more important than the other. Being in business for good is about managing the balance across the community, economy and environment.

Achieving this balance is the goal for this Strategy.

4.2 Business and Industry SWOT

Based on the research and engagement conducted for this project, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) have been identified.

Strengths

- Attractive and enviable lifestyle
- Strong existing destination brand and awareness
- Innovative culture
- Skilled workforce
- Natural amenity and landscapes
- Entrepreneurial culture
- Access to the Pacific Motorway
- Local agricultural production and artisan producers
- Unique culture
- Progressive and inclusive community
- Established visitor destination
- Unique towns and villages
- Vibrant arts and culture scene

Weaknesses

- Lack of affordable and available housing
- Worker shortages
- Permitting and planning regulations
- Lack of industrial land
- High cost of living
- Poor condition of local roads
- Lack of public transport and effective inter-regional transport networks
- Poor internet and mobile coverage
- Lack of arts and culture infrastructure
- Aging population
- Lack of event venues
- Too much reliance on the visitor economy

Opportunities

- Visitor economy
- Creative industries
- Professional business services
- Agriculture
- Advanced manufacturing
- Circular economy
- Food and beverage production
- Film industry
- Arts and culture
- Regional collaboration
- Renewable energy
- Indigenous business
- Start-ups and scale-ups

Threats

- Climate change and natural disasters
- Retaining local culture in the face of significant growth and change
- Over tourism (too many visitors that lead to congestion, crowding and activities that do not align with community values)
- Protecting the integrity of the brand
- Continued reliance upon the visitor economy
- Rising prices and lack of housing could drive many residents out of the community
- Gentrification impacts that may not align with community values

4.3 Visitor Economy SWOT

Based on the research and engagement conducted for this project, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis has been developed for the visitor economy.

Strengths

- Pristine and diverse natural environment
- Relaxed and laid-back feel
- Well-known and popular beaches and surfing
- Community markets
- Diverse towns and villages
- A well-established visitor destination
- Food and beverage offering
- Health and wellbeing offering
- Events and festivals
- Destination is accessible

Weaknesses

- Lack of transportation network within the region
- Congestion and too many people
- Staff shortages
- Lack of housing for staff
- Seasonality of tourism
- Lack of a clear brand and destination identity
- Lack of commercial accommodation
- Parking limitations in many areas
- Too much red tape
- Reliance on events and festivals

Opportunities

- Festivals and events
- Health and wellbeing tourism
- Indigenous cultural tourism
- Rail trail development
- More food experiences
- More events and festivals that celebrate Byron's identity
- Branded, commercial visitor accommodation
- Regenerative, ecotourism and travel for good
- Family friendly experiences
- Nature-based experiences
- Business events
- Maximising visitor yield
- Greater dispersion of visitors throughout the region
- Inclusive and accessible tourism

Threats

- Falling behind other destinations and losing market share
- Becoming too expensive/luxury market focused
- Over tourism (too many visitors that lead to congestion, crowding and activities that do not align with community values)
- Climate change and natural disasters
- In the absence of clear destination identity, the market will dictate future visitation which may not align with community values

5. Our Plan for The Future

This Strategy is based on three key themes:

- Foster Business Engagement
- Celebrate Our Business and Brand Identity
- Plan for a Sustainable Economy

Under each of these themes are a series of key initiatives describing how each theme will be pursued. These key initiatives will provide longer term direction for the Implementation Plan which supports this Strategy, Figure 5.1.

The Strategy provides long-term direction and guidance to achieve its goal, while at the same time offering flexibility and adaptation to the future changing economic circumstances through the Implementation Plan. This is our Strategy to be in business for good.

Figure 5.1. Byron Shire Business, Industry and Visitor Economy Strategy Framework

Goal: the economy to support the community and environment in a balanced and sustainable manner.



Foster Business Engagement

- Bring businesses together
- Engage with businesses
- Encourage innovation and sustainability
- Support regional engagement



Celebrate Our Business and Brand Identity

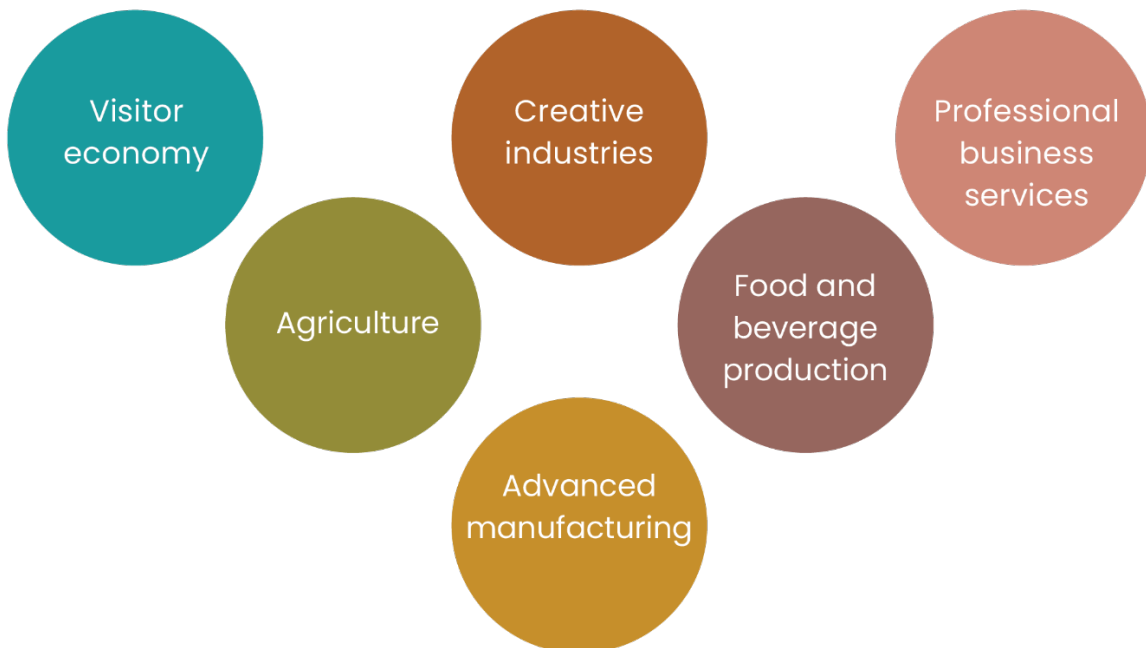
- Define our visitor economy identity
- Promote our innovative and circular business environment
- Celebrate our towns and villages



Plan for a Sustainable Economy

- Ensure spaces for businesses and residents
- Streamline regulatory processes
- Leverage major redevelopment sites
- Augment infrastructure

Key Industries



Source: Lucid Economics

5.1 Foster Business Engagement

Fostering business engagement is about embracing the Byron Shire as a meeting place bringing businesses together to network, innovate and share information as well as providing information to businesses to build capacity and support ongoing viability. It is about encouraging innovation, waste reduction, energy efficiency and other sustainability or circular initiatives.

Businesses in the Byron Shire are naturally collaborative, which often leads to new innovations, services and products. By fostering engagement with businesses, Council can play a direct role in facilitating connections and supporting local businesses.

Our Actions:

- Partner with industry and stakeholders to host industry round table discussions to advance key industries and address issues.
- Partner with industry to deliver an annual economic forum or workshop to review past year in the economy and to evolve the action plan over time.
- Partner with local high schools, businesses and stakeholders to hold School-Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship event.
- Engage with local businesses on an individual basis to provide support and encourage dialogue.
- Engage local landowners to support agricultural production of their land.
- Educate local businesses on Council's procurement policy and tendering processes.
- Review and promote Council's procurement policy to further encourage local economic development, social outcomes and sustainability.
- Empower local Indigenous businesses and tourism by engaging with local Indigenous stakeholders, building business capacity and supporting local Indigenous businesses through procurement.
- Promote opportunities for businesses to improve access and inclusion in operations and employment (Aligned to actions ME1 and ME3 of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan).
- Work with local Chambers of Commerce to support local businesses.
- Partner with Chambers of Commerce to conduct a bi-annual business survey of local businesses.
- Continue to deliver quarterly business e-newsletter.

- Work with partners to hold events that showcase local innovation and promote further innovation.
- Promote circular economy principles and initiatives to support local businesses to reduce waste and carbon emissions (Aligned to Objective C of the Towards Zero Strategy).
- Continue to conduct pilot programs to reduce waste and increase circularity (Aligned to Objective C of the Towards Zero Strategy).
- Continue to promote local and regional circular economy and sustainability initiatives. (Aligned to Objective C of the Towards Zero Strategy).
- Attend in-region forums and industry events.
- Collaborate with regional partners (RDA, Destination North Coast, etc.).
- Collaborate with neighbouring Councils to discuss regional issues and potential initiatives.

5.2 Celebrate Our Business and Brand Identity

Celebrating our identity is about embracing what makes our region so special. It is about promoting the innovative businesses in our region and celebrating their successes. It is also about celebrating all our unique and diverse places that make up the Byron Shire and the unique people that live here. For the visitor economy, it is about projecting the key visitor experiences that we want to share with people which align with our community's values.

For the visitor economy, it is important to project key visitor experiences to the types of visitors that the destination seeks to embrace. By doing so visitors that align with the community's principles will be attracted to the region. At the same time by celebrating the innovative and sustainable businesses in the Shire, the profile of the region as an innovation and creative hub will grow. Celebrating the towns and villages across the Shire is important to retain the local, unique character that each place offers and by default that our region offers. Through embracing these features, the character can be retained, protecting the unique Byron culture. This is being in business for good.

Our Actions:

- Partner with industry and stakeholders to host a forum or round table discussions about the visitor economy and to refine the destination's identity, encourage dispersal and address key issues.
- Together with event organisers, community groups and industry, coordinate an events calendar of all small, medium, and large events (aligned to Priority 1 of Events Strategy).
- Encourage greater levels of inclusive and accessible tourism throughout the Shire.
- Work with the Arakwal Corporation to support the development of a local Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Aligned to action 1.07 of the Arts and Culture Action Plan)).
- Partner with industry stakeholders to create and promote case studies of local businesses across key industries for investment attraction and learnings.
- Service enquiries from businesses interested in doing business in the Shire.
- Continue to promote and deliver In Business for Good Award as part of Council's Community Awards.
- Promote use of local halls for local artists and exhibitions (Aligned to Priority 3 of Events Strategy, Aligned to action 1.06 of the Arts and Culture Action Plan).
- Work with partners to promote local events that bring visitors to the area and encourage economic activity (Aligned to Priority 1 of the Draft Events Strategy).
- Create a Byron Shire Content Library showcasing destinations, businesses and experiences across the Shire.

5.3 Plan for a Sustainable Economy

Planning for a sustainable economy ensures the community has the required infrastructure, land and buildings for the economy to continue its evolution and fulfill its responsibilities to deliver for the community and the environment. It is about ensuring there are sufficient land and premises for businesses as well as sufficient land to support increased housing outcomes. Streamlining processes to increase efficiency and outcomes, leveraging major redevelopment sites to maximise future economic, community and environmental outcomes and advocating and working with partners to address current infrastructure deficiencies in terms of mobile and internet coverage, roads and other public infrastructure support a sustainable economy.

Given the relatively small population base and large visitor markets, funding infrastructure is a challenge for the Byron Shire Council. Increasing revenue streams will be required in order to support future infrastructure.

This theme highlights the important interaction between business, industry and the visitor economy with our land-use planning roles and responsibilities. To ensure that there is sufficient future land for business and residents, there are three important planning strategies that provide specific guidance regarding future housing as well as the settlement pattern of business and industry, including:

- **Residential Strategy:** The Residential Strategy provides a vision and framework for how future housing in our towns and villages is delivered over the next 20 years. It includes provisions to use the planning system to deliver not only more homes but a diversity of housing to support the community. As required, the Strategy is currently being reviewed by State Government before its final adoption. The Strategy contains a number of actions to address the current housing shortage and housing affordability in the Shire.
- **Business and Industrial Lands Strategy:** The Business and Industrial Lands Strategy guides Council's decision-making and key actions to manage future growth of retail, commercial and industrial land in the Shire. Through this Strategy, Council is currently working with various landowners to increase industrial land in the Shire and facilitate "Work-live: mixed-use" opportunities, as well as to address retail and commercial needs.
- **Rural Land Use Strategy:** The Byron Shire Rural Land Use Strategy guides future zoning and use of rural land as well as protection and/or development of rural environment, community, economy and infrastructure. The Strategy includes a number of planning actions to support a range of economic activities on rural lands.

Council is currently undertaking specific planning

to support individual projects, including:

- **Station Street, Mullumbimby Housing Project:** Council is currently working with Landcom to redevelop a car park between McGoughans Lane and Station Street in Mullumbimby to deliver 32 apartments for low to medium income earners.
- **Northern Rivers Rail Trail:** Council is progressing with planning and approvals to support the rail trail from Mullumbimby to Crabbes Creek, and the old Byron Bay station through Bangalow to Booyong.
- **Mullumbimby Hospital Redevelopment:** Council is progressing a Planning Proposal to rezone 3.5 hectares of land for housing and community facilities in Mullumbimby. Initial design options are for over 150 residences, with a target of at least 20% to be affordable.

Our Actions:

- Continue to work with landowners to deliver more industrial land and facilitate "Work-live: mixed-use" opportunities to support a local workforce.
- Continue to implement actions in Council's Residential Strategy to increase housing availability and affordability.
- Promote Co-working spaces via Council's website and business e-newsletter.
- Continue to offer development advisory services and encourage investors to leverage this process.
- Continue to offer development advisory services and encourage investors to leverage this process.
- Advocate to State government to further streamline event and film permitting (Aligned to action 4.06 of the Arts and Culture Action Plan).
- Continue to support the redevelopment of the Old Byron Hospital site .
- Continue to progress the redevelopment of the Old Mullumbimby Hospital Site.
- Explore opportunities and advocate for housing solutions for key workers.
- Investigate voluntary and involuntary mechanisms to generate additional funding to support infrastructure and the visitor economy.
- Advocate for more investment into mobile phone and internet coverage.
- Advocate for new technologies to solve mobile phone blackspots.
- Advocate and seek funding for community infrastructure projects.
- Foster new modes of collaboration with industry, government and philanthropic partners to progress new cultural infrastructure, flexible spaces and creative precincts in Byron Shire (Aligned to action 1.08 of the Arts and Culture Action Plan).

Funding the Future

The Byron Shire had a population of over 36,500 residents in 2022, with around 15,000 rate payers. Visitors to the area greatly increase the demand on local infrastructure such as roads, parks, and other public spaces. At the peak before the COVID-19 pandemic, the volume of visitors to the area was the equivalent of another 16,400 residents living in the community, which demonstrates the significant amount of visitors coming to the area. While these visitors certainly bring economic benefits to many local businesses, their financial contribution to the maintenance of the infrastructure they enjoy is very limited. Relative to residents, there is a significant discrepancy in terms of the financial contribution to maintaining infrastructure (used by both residents and visitors).

Based on the existing local government funding mechanisms, the Byron Shire would need an additional 5,000-7,000 properties that pay rates, to make up for the financial shortfall caused by non-resident visitors utilising infrastructure without providing a financial contribution.

Adding this number of properties immediately is not possible. In most parts of regional NSW, the influx of visitors is not as significant, and it is easier for residents (via Council) to subsidise visitor usage of local infrastructure based on the economic return from tourism. However, given the significance of visitation to the Byron Shire, residents are unfairly subsidising infrastructure costs for visitors. While the region receives economic benefits from visitors, travellers in the region don't always share the same values as the community and are generating environmental costs such as carbon emissions and waste to landfill.

The visitor economy is and will continue to be important to the local economy in the Byron Shire, so the future should not be about placing limits on the number of visitors, but rather a more equal and fair funding of public infrastructure (and other avenues that support a sustainable visitor economy).

Council already collects revenue through parking meters in Byron Bay (and commencing in Brunswick Heads in September 2024). In order to more equitably fund the future visitor economy, a number of voluntary and involuntary funding mechanisms should be investigated and considered.

6. Implementation Plan

The following implementation plan outlines a series of actions to implement the Business, Industry and Visitor Economy Strategy. Individual activities will be evaluated yearly and adjusted accordingly based on the success of the action. All actions listed here are subject to funding and recognition in Council's Operational Plan.

Timeframe	Council's Role
Ongoing: As required, Annual, Bi-annual	Support: to support important projects that can act as a catalyst and unlock future opportunities. Collaborate: to partner with a range of organisations to facilitate positive outcomes in the region.
Short term: 2025-2027	Plan: to provide a planning and regulatory environment that is conducive to positive economic outcomes.
Medium term: 2027-2030	Advocate: to advocate for State and Commonwealth investment into the region to address a variety of needs and issues. Promote: to promote key messages and narratives about the future direction of the region's economy as well as providing information to local business to build future capacity.
Long term: 2030-2035.	Deliver: to deliver a variety of services that will support local business retention and expansion.

Theme 1: Foster Business Engagement

Bring Businesses Together			
No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
1.1	Partner with industry and stakeholders to host industry round table discussions to advance key industries and address issues.	Bi-annual	Collaborate
1.2	Partner with industry to deliver an annual economic forum or workshop to review past year in the economy and to evolve the action plan over time.	Annual	Collaborate/ Deliver
1.3	Partner with local high schools, businesses and stakeholders to hold School-Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship event.	Annual	Collaborate/ Deliver
Engage with Businesses			
No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
1.4	Engage with local businesses on an individual basis to provide support and encourage dialogue.	Ongoing	Collaborate/ Deliver
1.5	Engage local landowners to support agricultural production of their land.	Ongoing	Collaborate/ Promote
1.6	Educate local businesses on Council's procurement policy and tendering processes.	Ongoing	Support/ Promote
1.7	Review and promote Council's procurement policy to further encourage local economic development, social outcomes and sustainability.	Short term	Deliver/ Promote

1.8	Empower local Indigenous businesses and tourism by engaging with local Indigenous stakeholders, building business capacity and supporting local Indigenous businesses through procurement.	Ongoing	Support/ Collaborate
1.9	Promote opportunities for businesses to improve access and inclusion in operations and employment (Aligned to actions ME1 and ME3 of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan).	Ongoing	Promote
1.10	Work with local Chambers of Commerce to support local businesses.	Ongoing	Collaborate
1.11	Partner with Chambers of Commerce to conduct a bi-annual business survey of local businesses.	Bi-annual	Collaborate
1.12	Continue to deliver quarterly business e-newsletter.	Ongoing	Deliver

Encourage Sustainability and Innovation

No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
1.13	Work with partners to hold events that showcase local innovation and promote further innovation.	Ongoing	Collaborate
1.14	Promote circular economy principles and initiatives to support local businesses to reduce waste and carbon emissions (Aligned to Objective C of the Towards Zero Strategy).	Ongoing	Promote
1.15	Continue to conduct pilot programs to reduce waste and increase circularity (Aligned to Objective C of the Towards Zero Strategy).	Ongoing	Deliver

1.16	Continue to promote local and regional circular economy and sustainability initiatives (Aligned to Objective C of the Towards Zero Strategy).	Ongoing	Promote
Support Regional Engagement			
No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
1.17	Attend in-region forums and industry events.	As required	Support
1.18	Collaborate with regional partners (RDA, Destination North Coast, etc.).	Ongoing	Collaborate
1.19	Collaborate with neighbouring Councils to discuss regional issues and potential initiatives.	Ongoing	Collaborate

Theme 2: Celebrate our Business and Brand Identity

Define Our Visitor Economy Identity			
No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
2.1	Partner with industry and stakeholders to host a forum or round table discussions about the visitor economy and to refine the destination's identity, encourage dispersal and address key issues.	Bi-annual	Collaborate
2.2	Together with event organisers, community groups and industry, coordinate an events calendar of all small, medium, and large events (aligned to Priority 1 of Events Strategy).	Ongoing	Collaborate/ Promote
2.3	Encourage greater levels of inclusive and accessible tourism throughout the Shire.	Ongoing	Promote

2.4	Work with the Arakwal Corporation to support the development of a local Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Aligned to action 1.07 of the Arts and Culture Action Plan).	Short term	Collaborate
Promote Our Innovative and Circular Business Environment			
No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
2.5	Partner with industry stakeholders to create and promote case studies of local businesses across key industries for investment attraction and learnings.	Short term	Collaborate/ Promote
2.6	Service enquiries from businesses interested in doing business in the Shire.	Ongoing	Support
2.7	Continue to promote and deliver In Business for Good Award as part of Council's Community Awards.	Annual	Promote/ Deliver
Celebrate Our Towns and Villages			
No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
2.8	Promote use of local halls for local artists and exhibitions (Aligned to Priority 3 of Events Strategy, Aligned to action 1.06 of the Arts and Culture Action Plan).	Ongoing	Promote
2.9	Work with partners to promote local events that bring visitors to the area and encourage economic activity (Aligned to Priority 1 of the Draft Events Strategy).	Ongoing	Promote/ Support
2.10	Create a Byron Shire Content Library showcasing destinations, businesses and experiences across the Shire.	Long term	Deliver/ Collaborate

Theme 3: Plan for a Sustainable Economy

Ensure spaces for businesses and residents

No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
3.1	Continue to work with landowners to deliver more industrial land and facilitate "Work-live: mixed-use" opportunities to support a local workforce.	Ongoing	Plan
3.2	Continue to implement actions in Council's Residential Strategy to increase housing availability and affordability.	Ongoing	Deliver
3.3	Promote co-working spaces via Council's website and business e-newsletter.	Ongoing	Promote

Streamline Regulatory Processes

No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
3.4	Continue to offer development advisory services and encourage investors to leverage this process.	Ongoing	Plan
3.5	Continue to offer development advisory services and encourage investors to leverage this process.	Short term	Plan
3.6	Advocate to State government to further streamline event and film permitting (Aligned to action 4.06 of the Arts and Culture Action Plan).	Ongoing	Advocate

Leverage Major Redevelopment Sites

No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
3.7	Continue to support the redevelopment of the Old Byron Hospital site.	Ongoing	Support

3.8	Continue to progress the redevelopment of the Old Mullumbimby Hospital Site.	Ongoing	Support
3.9	Explore opportunities and advocate for housing solutions for key workers.	Short term	Advocate
Augment Infrastructure			
No.	Actions	Timeframe	Council's Role
3.10	Investigate voluntary and involuntary mechanisms to generate additional funding to support infrastructure and the visitor economy.	Short term	Support; Advocate
3.11	Advocate for more investment into mobile phone and internet coverage.	Short term	Advocate
3.12	Advocate for new technologies to solve mobile phone blackspots.	Short term	Advocate
3.13	Advocate and seek funding for community infrastructure projects.	Ongoing	Advocate
3.14	Foster new modes of collaboration with industry, government and philanthropic partners to progress new cultural infrastructure, flexible spaces and creative precincts in Byron Shire (Aligned to action 1.08 of the Arts and Culture Action Plan).	Short term	Support

7. Monitoring Progress

Monitoring progress on the Business, Industry and Visitor Economy Strategy will be important to ensure the region is progressing towards its goal. As the goal of the strategy involves broader economic benefits, monitoring needs to take place in two, separate, but related ways:

- Monitoring of the Implementation Plan.
- Monitoring of the economy (on an annual basis).

The implementation plan can be monitored and reviewed, recognising the benefits or outcomes from each activity. Adjustments can then be made based on the effectiveness (or not) of the identified task.

The broader changes in the economy are also important to monitor, as they are the ultimate outcome being sought. However, Council does not directly control economic outcomes such as jobs, housing, visitors, etc. Nonetheless these economic features should be monitored to ensure that the economy is delivering broad support to the community and environment.

The strategy can provide longer-term direction with actions adapted and flexible to the changes in market conditions and the environment of the day.

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BYRON
SHIRE
COUNCIL

For more information

PO Box 219 Mullumbimby NSW 2482 (70 Station Street)

E: council@byron.nsw.gov.au

P: 02 6626 7000 | F: 02 6684 3018

www.byron.nsw.gov.au