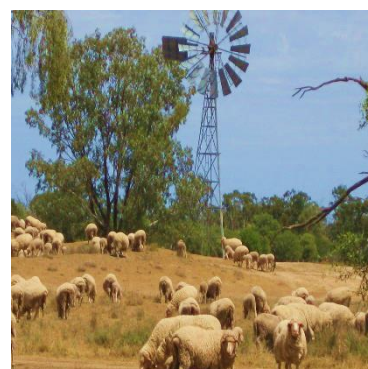


Balonne Shire Council

Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022

A Blueprint for Prosperity





Acknowledgements

Balonne Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land within the Balonne Shire Council local government area. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future and value the traditions, cultures and aspirations of the First Australians of this land. We acknowledge and hold in great significance the valuable contribution that Traditional Owners have made and continue to make to the communities of the Balonne Shire and remind people that we live and work on Aboriginal land.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may inadvertently contain images of people who have since passed away.

Balonne Shire Council thanks and acknowledges all members of the Economic Development Advisory Committee for their valuable contributions to the development of the *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022*.

Council also acknowledges consultancy firm SC Lennon & Associates for its role in preparing this Economic Development Plan.



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Executive Summary

A Blueprint for Prosperity

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* is a blueprint for enhancing the vibrancy, liveability and economic sustainability of the communities of the Balonne Shire. It provides a strategic framework for Balonne Shire Council - working in partnership with others - to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities, to explore new sustainable directions for the Shire's future and to commit to creating a prosperous and resilient local economy.

The Economic Development Plan aligns with the broader economic development objectives of Regional Development Australia's Darling Downs and South West Regional Roadmap, the Queensland Government's *Advancing Our Cities and Regions* Strategy and the activities of South West RED.

A Plan Built on the Pillars of Prosperity

The focus of the *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* is on the Shire's key industries in cotton and grain, horticulture, sheep and cattle and the visitor economy, with a focus on opportunities to value-add to and diversify the Shire's existing economic base. These are the industry sectors which drive the Balonne Shire's economy in terms of inter-regional exports, employment and industry value-added and they represent the four 'pillars' of the Balonne Shire economy.

Balonne Shire's Economic 'Pillars'



Source: SC Lennon & Associates

A Vision of Prosperity

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* articulates the vision for the Shire's economic development, to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities, to pursue sustainable directions for the Shire's economic future and create a prosperous and resilient local economy.

Balonne Shire Economic Development Vision 2022

Capitalising on its strategic location, its agricultural heritage and its outback setting, Balonne Shire will be a location of choice in which to work, live, visit and invest, supported by innovation in a diversity of traditional and emerging new industries.

The vision is supported by Balonne Shire Council's economic development charter.

Balonne Shire Council's Economic Development Charter

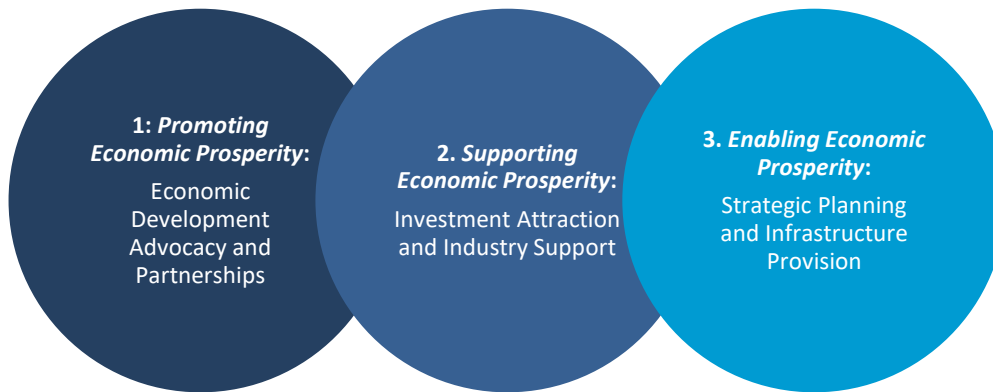
The economic development charter articulates Balonne Shire Council's commitment to promoting, facilitating and co-ordinating economic development activities. Council's economic development objective, as stated in its Corporate Plan, is to foster a vibrant economic environment to facilitate the development of sustainable opportunities and business development. To realise this objective, Balonne Shire Council will:

1. Prioritise initiatives that support the development of the Shire's **economic 'pillars' and key sectors in sheep, cattle and other grazing, horticulture, grain and cotton, transport and logistics and tourism and events**, with an emphasis on value-adding to diversify the Shire's economic base.
2. Prioritise activities that support **the growth of new 'knowledge-based' industries** in education, health care, agri-business and other business services.
3. Proactively promote **a partnership approach to tourism promotion and development**, working in collaboration with other local and regional tourism organisations and the industry to enhance regional branding, marketing, product development, visitor servicing and support infrastructure.
4. Pro-actively support the Balonne Shire's **micro, small to medium-sized and larger businesses** to address shared challenges and opportunities for business investment, growth and development.
5. **Promote Balonne Shire to prospective investors**, using a strategic, informed and targeted approach consistent with the Shire's vision for economic development.

A Plan of Action to Promote Economic Development

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* is a plan of action to facilitate change towards a prosperous future. The Economic Development Action Plan addresses the enablers of economic development with a focus on the Shire's existing and emerging drivers in agriculture, tourism and related industries. It identifies projects and programs in Council's three 'core' economic development action areas. These activities, which translate into the Economic Development Strategy themes.

Balonne Shire Council's Economic Development Action Areas



Source: SC Lennon & Associates

Balonne Shire Council **Economic Development Themes and Strategic Objectives**

Theme 1. Promoting Economic Prosperity: Economic Development Advocacy and Partnerships

Pro-actively engage with the region's industry stakeholders, key institutions, South West RED and other tiers of government to deliver a collaborative approach to economic development program planning and implementation. Take a strategic, informed and targeted approach to advocating for Balonne Shire's priority projects on behalf of industry and the seven communities of the Shire.

Theme 2. Supporting Economic Prosperity: Investment Attraction and Industry Support

Establish Balonne Shire as a location of choice for business investment in traditional industry drivers like cotton, grain, sheep and cattle, new meat harvesting activities, horticulture and tourism. Complement this with activities to support the growth and sustainability of Balonne Shire's existing retail, tourism and other service sector businesses.

Theme 3. Enabling Economic Prosperity: Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Provision

Create an 'enabling' environment for economic development in Balonne Shire by: providing and promoting local information services for prospective and existing businesses; delivering clear planning policies and a streamlined development approval process; and providing or advocating for the infrastructure needed to encourage industry to invest and do business, to generate new jobs.

A suite of 28 individual actions has been prepared, categorised under the three strategic themes accordingly. The majority of actions will be 'Council-led', in that they involve specific tasks for Balonne Shire Council and an allocation of human, physical and financial resources.

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* informs priority projects and activities for implementation as part of a Year 1 economic development work plan. This will be developed as part of Council's annual operational planning. These will represent the projects and programs that Balonne Shire Council will advance as short-term priorities.

The region's government and institutional stakeholders and the Shire's business and resident communities will continue to be engaged at a partnership level to ensure effective collaboration for the Plan's implementation and commitment to the delivery of Council's economic development agenda going forward.

1. Introduction

1.1 A Blueprint for Prosperity

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* is a blueprint for enhancing the vibrancy, liveability and economic sustainability of the communities of the Balonne Shire.

Balonne Shire Council recognises 'economic development' as the complementary relationship between improvements in economic activity, community wellbeing, cultural diversity, a sense of 'place' and the environment. Ultimately, it is about improving the quality of life experienced in all of the communities of the Shire.

The Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan provides a vision, a charter and a plan of action for Council to promote, facilitate and co-ordinate economic development programs and projects to the year 2022.

An aspirational, informed and action-oriented strategic plan, the Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan:

- Provides a strategic framework to address the Balonne Shire's economic development issues, challenges and opportunities for growth and to inform Council's year on year operational planning and budgeting processes;
- Identifies collaborative partnerships between Balonne Shire Council, the Queensland Government, Regional Development Australia Darling Downs and South West, South West Regional Economic Development (South West RED), business and industry and the communities of the Shire on matters concerning regional economic development; and
- Provides an informed, clear, actionable and achievable 'blueprint' to facilitate and promote economic development in the Balonne Shire over the five-year period to 2022.

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* addresses the Shire's recent and longer term challenges, while embracing opportunities to build on local comparative and competitive advantages.

The focus of the Plan is on the Shire's key industries in cotton and grain, horticulture, sheep and cattle and the visitor economy, with a focus on opportunities to value-add to and diversify the Shire's existing economic base.

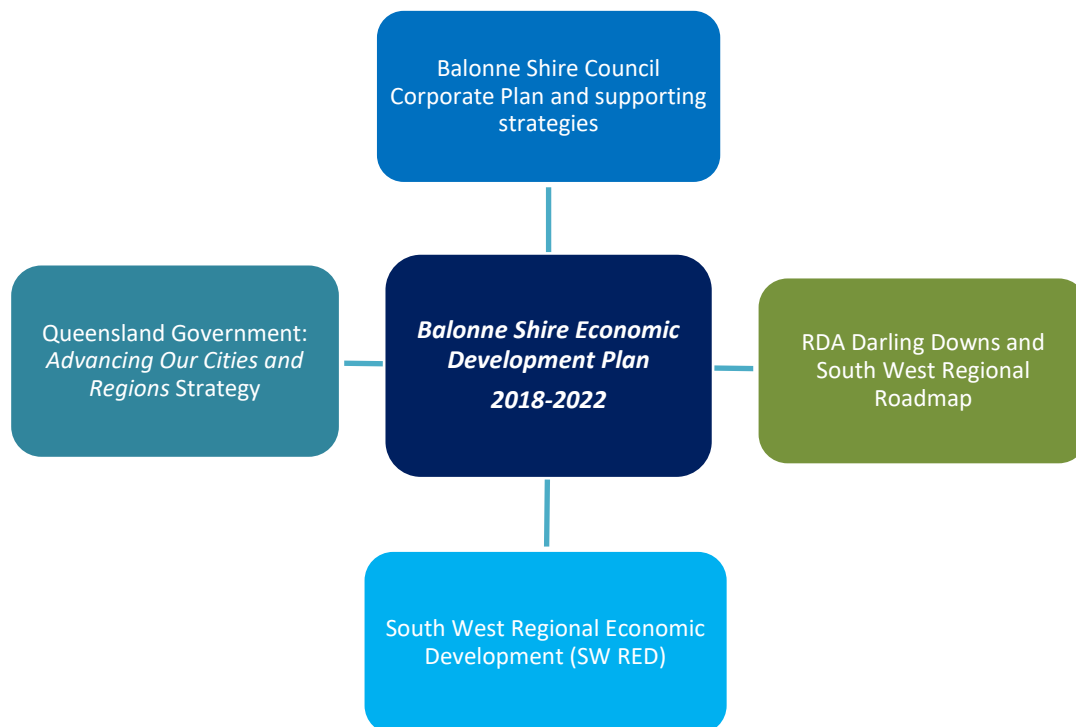
1.2 A Strategic Framework

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* provides a strategic framework for Balonne Shire Council to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities, to explore new sustainable directions for the Shire's future and to commit to creating a prosperous and resilient local economy.

The Economic Development Plan aligns with the broader economic development objectives of Regional Development Australia's Darling Downs and South West Regional Roadmap, the Queensland Government's *Advancing Our Cities and Regions* Strategy and the activities of South West RED.

Informed by consultation and engagement with a diversity of stakeholders, it is based on a solid understanding of Balonne Shire's socio-economic trends and characteristics, and the influences and impacts of broader economic trends taking place nationally and globally.

Figure 1 – Balonne Shire’s Economic Development Planning Framework



1.3 A Plan to Enable and Promote Economic Development

With a population of around 4,377 (ABS Census 2016) and an estimated 2,475 jobs (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, 2016), Balonne Shire’s future prosperity will be underpinned by innovation in traditional sectors of agricultural employment, new business investments and opportunities to develop the region’s visitor economy.

Recognising that the private sector (industry) drives economic development, the *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* is a plan of action to help nurture the foundations for prosperity. This includes the Shire’s (and the wider region’s) strategic infrastructure, community services and facilities, access to employment and places where industry can invest and do business.

The enablers that this Economic Development Plan addresses include local infrastructure, such as transport networks, appropriately zoned land, energy and water security, the form and function of Balonne Shire’s towns and activity centres, as well as community services and facilities such as local libraries and aged care services.

They also include the Shire’s ‘lifestyle’ attributes - including its parks and gardens, heritage buildings, arts and cultural services and facilities and its recreation, leisure and entertainment facilities.

Another important enabler of economic development is Balonne Shire Council’s town planning policies and its regulatory framework, that is supportive of business innovation, investment and industry growth.

Enablers which Balonne Shire Council is not directly responsible for, but which it can influence to varying degrees through its advocacy functions and collaborative partnerships with other tiers of government or institutions

include regional transport and communications infrastructure, health and community services, education infrastructure, research and innovation infrastructure and a supportive regional planning framework.

Figure 2 – The Driver and Enablers of Balonne Shire’s Economic Development



Source: SC Lennon & Associates

As those industries which will drive the future growth and development of the Balonne Shire economy rely heavily on new technologies and new ways of doing things to aid access to national and international markets, research and innovation infrastructure is particularly important for enabling local and regional economic development.

Research and innovation infrastructure is a broad term which refers to facilities, resources and services used by researchers, educators, the science community and industry to conduct research and foster innovation. In the context of Balonne Shire, it is defined by spaces where research, knowledge and data can be connected with entrepreneurial ideas to grow high-value and innovative agri-businesses.

Broadband communications technology has become a fundamental enabler of business innovation and regional economic development, and the emergence of the digital economy has increased the propensity for individuals and businesses to interact and trade with suppliers, partners and customers through information and communications technologies.

Communications technologies are also an essential enabler of growth in emerging industries such as tourism, not only for business reasons, but also for the safety of visitors moving through the Balonne Shire and the wider region. There is a general expectation of visitors to have continuous connectivity, coverage by all providers and, increasingly, free Wi-Fi on town stopovers. This means telecommunications shortfalls such as mobile phone

blackspots and unreliable internet services in more remote locations, need to be addressed if the local tourism sector is to compete on a level playing field. Communications technology shortfalls also hinder the ability of industries like agriculture to adopt the latest technologies such as remote sensing and other technologies to help improve productivity, environmental sustainability, workflow and safety.

Hence, the *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* recognises that local engagement with the digital economy will be essential for Balonne Shire's businesses to transact with customers and suppliers, locally and with the global economy.

1.4 A Plan Built on Collaboration for Economic Growth and Prosperity

Prepared in the context of Balonne Shire Council's corporate plan and its broader program of work and strategic objectives, the *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* articulates and promotes a partnership approach between Council and other stakeholders in government, the community and industry.

This includes Federal Government agencies such as Regional Development Australia (RDA) Darling Downs and South West and State Government agencies including the Department of State Development, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Tourism and Events Queensland and the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning.

It also involves other important contributors to economic development including South West RED and local business chambers and progress associations as well as Regional Tourism Organisations including Southern Queensland Country Tourism and Outback Queensland Tourism.



2. Informing a Strategic Approach to Economic Development

2.1 Balonne Shire's Industry and Employment Profile

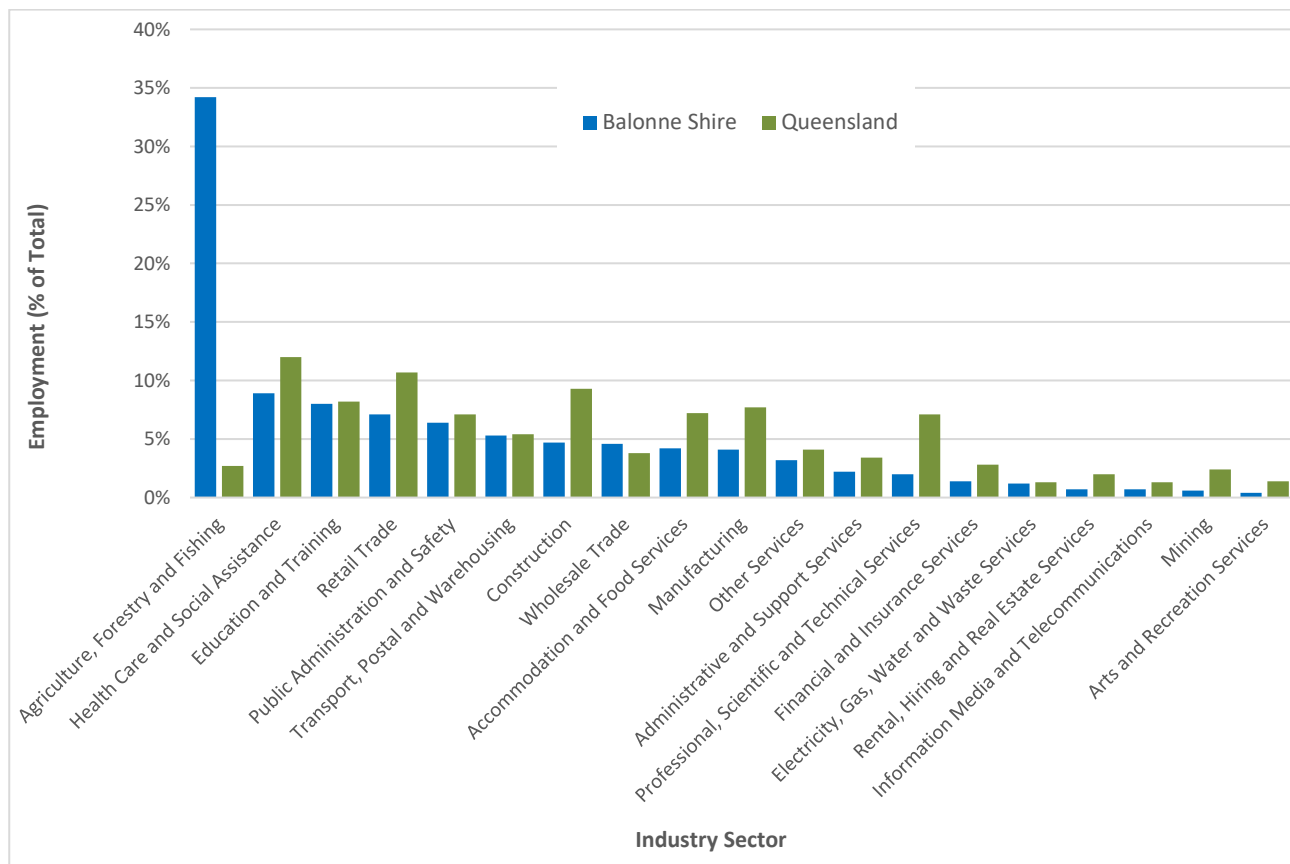
Building Balonne Shire's Key Sectors of Employment

With a resident population of approximately 4,380 (ABS Census 2016), Balonne Shire comprises the seven towns of Bollon, Dirranbandi, Hebel, Mungindi, Nindigully, St George and Thallon.

The base for a thriving agricultural sector and a growing service and transport hub for South West Queensland and North West New South Wales, Balonne Shire is also a potential service base for expanding resource projects in the Cooper Basin, and plays an important role in providing services to smaller south western communities. In 2016, Balonne Shire's Gross Regional Product (GRP) was estimated at \$342 million, which is 0.11% of Queensland's Gross State Product (GSP).

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, worth \$130 million to the local economy, is by far the biggest industry by value in Balonne Shire. Accounting for Almost half the local economy's industry value-added, it is also the largest employer, generating 847 local jobs in 2015/16, or approximately one-third (34%) of total employment by industry.

Figure 3 – Employment by Industry (%), Balonne Shire and Queensland, 2015/16



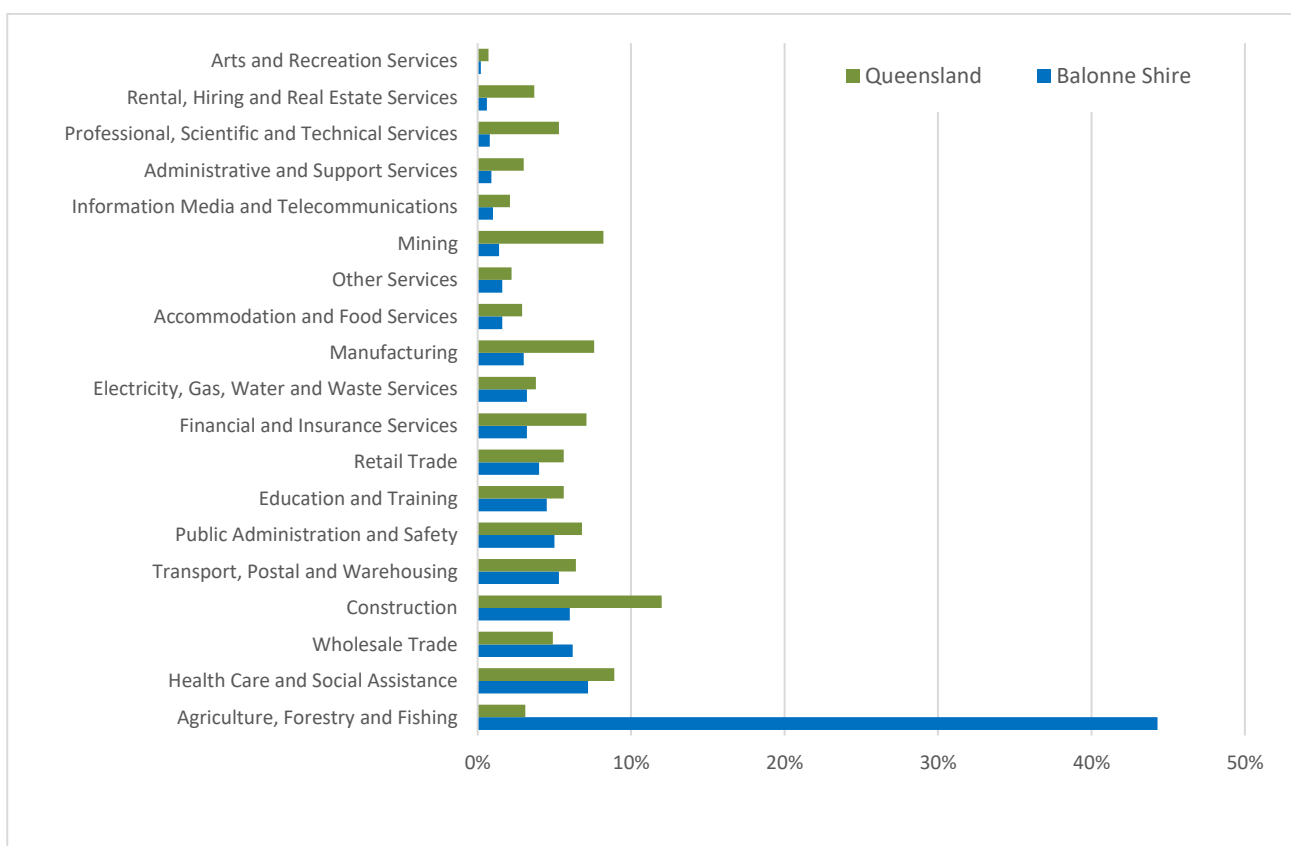
Source: economy.id and NIEIR (2016) with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Building on Balonne Shire's Comparative and Competitive Advantage

Agriculture is a pillar of the regional economy, and other sectors like transport and manufacturing rely heavily on agricultural industry activity for their own sustainability. Cotton, grain, sheep and cattle farming are drivers of the local economy along with a growing horticultural sector. For the sheep industry to have a sustainable future in Balonne Shire and the wider south-west region, efforts to control wild dogs and other pests through fencing are required.

Balonne Shire's comparative advantage stems from its geographic location, availability of natural resources, access to strategic infrastructure and its industry capabilities. Businesses can use Balonne Shire's comparative advantage to build a competitive advantage, which is developed through the combination of factors such as knowledge, resources, skills and the ability to innovate.

Figure 4 – Value-Added (%) by Industry, Balonne Shire and Queensland, 2015/16



Source: economy.id and NIEIR (2016) with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Balonne Shire's expanding industry sectors include the Wholesale Trade and Transport, Postal and Warehousing sectors. The Manufacturing sector has also experienced positive employment growth over the five-year period to 2015/16 and this is in large part due to increases in transport equipment manufacturing employment.

Another industry which has displayed a positive rate of employment growth in Balonne Shire over the five years to 2015/16, and which could be considered an 'emerging' industry, is Health Care and Social Assistance. This is also the Shire's second-largest industry in terms of value-added and is worth \$21 million to the local economy. Growth in this sector could be expected to continue as demographic changes will see demand for a diversity of health care needs increase over time.

Balonne Shire's Accommodation and Food Services sector serves the local population and the region's visitor economy. Although only small in employment terms, with the continued growth and diversification of the tourism industry nationally, given efforts in the wider region to develop the sector, this could be considered a 'seed' industry with prospects for growth and development.

The significance of Balonne Shire's agricultural sector is illustrated by its size compared to other industries and its very high level of specialisation compared to Regional Queensland. However, in recent times the industry has experienced some job losses as it adjusts to structural changes as agriculture in Australia trends towards higher-value products with evolving workforce needs.



Historically, Balonne Shire is highly exposed to an over-reliance on agriculture and there have been few, if any, viable alternative economic activity opportunities in the region. While there is significant value adding for cotton (i.e. processing at the three gins in the region), the remainder of primary production in Balonne Shire does not involve significant product transformation within the region.

While the industry drivers and pillars of the economy underpin prospects for future prosperity, Balonne Shire also faces challenges that must be addressed. Mechanisation has had a major impact on employment and the local economy is effectively "running out of jobs" for the unskilled.

Another source of structural change has been the ongoing government program to buy-back water from irrigators for environmental purposes. The sell-off of water licences has led to a reduction in irrigation hectares in the Balonne Shire and, coupled with extended periods of drought, has particularly impacted on the town of Dirranbandi but also the towns of St George and Hebel.

Cotton is the region's dominant broadacre irrigation crop (although some irrigated sorghum, wheat and barley is produced), while a relatively smaller area is under irrigated horticulture (grapes, melons and some vegetables). Although cotton still dominates, the horticultural industry is on the rise and opportunities exist for high-value horticultural production through co-investment in water efficient infrastructure.

Some sectors, such as sheep farming have been adversely impacted by wild dogs and other pests. Water buy-backs have had a significant impact on the economies of some local communities within the Balonne Shire and to address its impacts, community capacity-building is required. The Shire (and region) also has pockets of socio-economic dislocation and disadvantage, including high rates of youth unemployment and Indigenous disadvantage.

According to the 2016 Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people account for 16% of Balonne Shire's population compared to the Queensland average of 4%. Only 7% of Balonne Shire's population has a tertiary (technical or university) education degree compared to the Queensland average of 20%. The median weekly household income in Balonne Shire is \$1,230 compared to \$1,402 for Queensland.

Despite a number of challenges, the unemployment rate in Balonne Shire, at 3.6%, sits below the comparable rates for Regional Queensland (6.7%), Queensland (6.2%) and Australia (5.7%) (Department of Employment, March 2017).

2.2 Capitalising on Balonne Shire's Economic 'Pillars'

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* responds to and builds on local industry attributes, trends and prospects, as well as challenges for economic development. The Plan's focus is on opportunities to value-add and diversify the existing industrial base, recognising that the Shire's and the region's strongest prospects for economic development lie in the local industry drivers and 'pillars' of the Balonne Shire economy.

The industry sectors which drive the Balonne Shire's economy in terms of inter-regional exports, employment and industry value-added include: **sheep and cattle**; **grain and cotton**; **horticulture**; and **tourism and events**. These are the four 'pillars' of the Balonne Shire economy.

The Shire's other key and emerging industries like transport and logistics and professional, scientific and technical services to agriculture, are closely integrated with the four pillars through local and regional supply chain links. Other population-driven sectors of the economy like health care, education, retail trade, construction and personal services are directly and indirectly reliant on the pillars of the local (and wider regional) economy for their own sustainability and growth.

Figure 5 – Balonne Shire's Economic 'Pillars'



Source: SC Lennon & Associates

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* is about capitalising on comparative and competitive advantages, and leveraging local strengths and attributes to help realise opportunities for prosperity. For example, in agriculture, there are opportunities to expand existing or explore new horticultural activities that value-add to the Shire's agricultural industry base, such as berries, grapes, melons and garlic, as well as other agricultural activities that capitalise on existing pastoral expertise, climatic conditions and available resources, such as hemp, macropods, namely kangaroos, and goats, both of which have adverse impacts on pastures.

Sheep and Cattle

South West Regional Economic Development (South West RED) recognises agriculture as a cornerstone of the region's economy. Sheep and cattle farming are economic pillars of the Balonne Shire, providing a foundation for future growth and prosperity. The country south of St George and between the Moonie and Balonne and Narran Rivers is widely regarded as the best natural sheep breeding areas in Queensland. Although the south-west region has seen a transition to beef over time, sheep remains an important contributor to the local and regional economies.



Over the years, the region has seen a transition from wool to beef and the area has also seen an increase in feedlot production of beef cattle to capitalise on local grain supplies. According to IBISWorld (November 2016), over the past five years, Australia's sheep-beef cattle farming industry has been affected by significant volatility, having to contend with changing weather patterns, which have influenced farmer decisions regarding turn-off rates and production mixes. While the industry has endured subdued demand in domestic markets, strong demand in export markets has assisted sheep and beef cattle farmers.

Forecast revenue growth is expected to slow over the five years to 2022 as demand growth in export markets ease. Nevertheless, there is scope to tap into growing markets such as organic production. Farm gate sales of organically raised beef cattle have grown strongly over the past five years due to high demand both domestically and in overseas markets. Potential growth opportunities for organic beef exports include Asian nations, the United States and the United Arab Emirates. As such, organic beef has the potential to create another modest growth cycle for the industry.

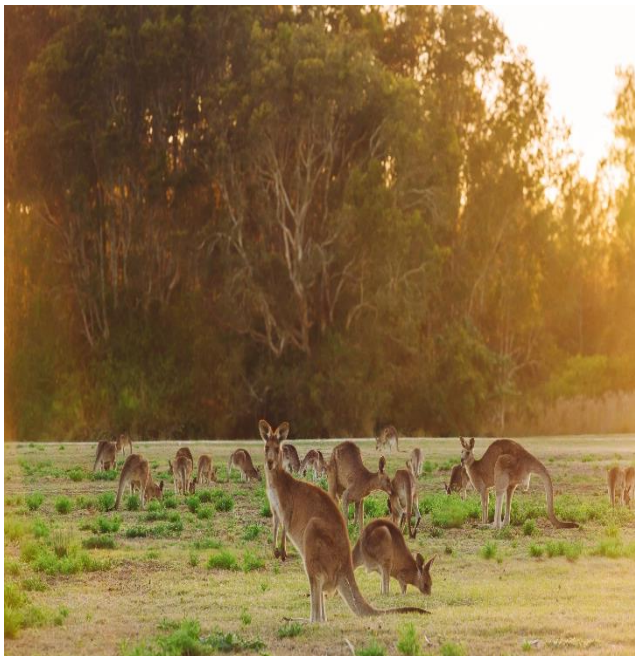
There is also potential for the sheep farming industry to grow. The sheep industry throughout Queensland been adversely impacted by wild dogs and other pests. More cluster fencing will help to address this issue. Research has identified that the introduction of cluster fencing to exclude pest animals from properties in the Balonne region will improve profitability from sheep from \$80 per hectare to \$118 per hectare.

Cluster fencing costs approximately \$7,000 per km. Funding to producers in Balonne Shire has been made available through the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative, with funds being distributed as grants via the South West NRM and Balonne Shire Council.

Other Potential Economic Drivers

To help diversify Balonne Shire's agricultural production and provide new opportunities for employment, the region's kangaroo population presents an opportunity to capitalise on local pastoral expertise, climatic conditions and available resources. Balonne has one of the largest kangaroo populations in Queensland with high densities causing damage to pastures and crops. In Queensland the species currently harvested for commercial export include red and eastern grey kangaroos.

Nationally, the gross value of production for the kangaroo industry in 2014 was \$174 million. Once ancillary benefits such as reduced agricultural damage, reduced road accidents and broader benefits to the community are added, the industry contributes an estimated \$200 million per year Australia's economy (Kangaroo Industries Association of Australia, 2017).



Products derived from kangaroos include meat for human consumption and skins for leather products. Some skin and meat is used domestically, with the remainder exported to more than 55 countries. There have been efforts to grow the kangaroo products export market over the years with significant potential identified in Russia, China and South-East Asia.

There is a disused game processing plant located approximately 6 km from St George which previously had European Union (EU) accreditation. The abattoir has been closed since early 2009, when kangaroo meat processing operations ended after the closing of the Russian market reduced demand for kangaroo meat and market options elsewhere were limited. Any opportunity to re-open the St George game processing plant depends first and foremost on developing new international markets for kangaroo meat and associated supply chains. Peru has been flagged as one potential opportunity as part of the current Australia-Peru FTA (free trade agreement) negotiations.

Horticulture

Horticulture is an industry on the rise and is Australia's third-largest agricultural sector after livestock and broadacre farming (University of New England Centre for Agribusiness, June 2017). The industry is evolving with a growing trend towards the construction of large-scale, technologically complex, high-yielding and resource-efficient greenhouses. Outdoor fruit and vegetable growing is also evolving with the use of higher-yielding farming techniques. Balonne Shire has high-quality soil that is suited to growing a diversity of crops.

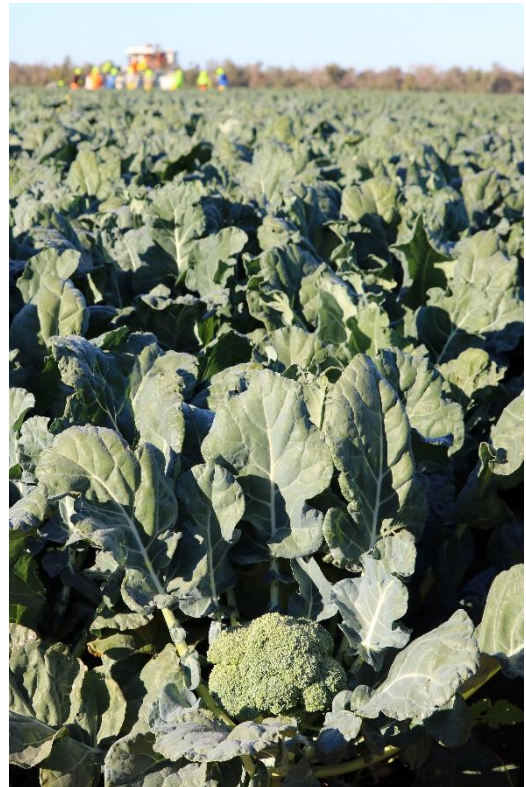
In Balonne Shire, existing crops with potential for further growth and development include grapes, onions, sweet onions, garlic, broccoli, rockmelons and pumpkins, with potential to develop emerging and new crops such as berries, carrots and citrus. According to IBISWorld (November 2016), Australia's outdoor vegetable growing

industry will continue to expand over the five-year period to 2022, boosted by increased vegetable consumption, consumers' health consciousness and vegetable prices.

While rainfall is difficult to predict, water availability in the Murray-Darling Basin is currently high. This means water storage is unlikely to constrain industry production in the short term. Intensifying competition from cheap processed imports will continue to challenge industry operators, while opportunities in emerging export markets will boost demand for fresh Australian produce.

The primary horticultural opportunity for Balonne Shire and the south-west region lies in existing growers diversifying into vegetables and fruits. For existing growers of, for example, cotton and grain, there is an opportunity to diversify into horticulture on a cyclical basis as production windows permit and dependent upon the time of year, water availability and the market outlook for existing crops

The development of the Brisbane West Wellcamp Airport in Toowoomba and growing demand from markets in Asia and Europe for fresh and packaged produce have created export market development opportunities for producers in the region and opportunities to diversify and spread the risk of agricultural production, particularly in high-value horticulture.



Although horticulture is heavily IP driven in order to maximise returns per gigalitre of water, consultation with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries indicates that existing production knowledge and skills in the region are largely transferable to horticultural production systems. However, supply chain development and market development is a challenge for the sector. To overcome this, local growers can collaborate with other producers in the broader region to develop market opportunities.

Balonne Shire's existing horticultural industry profile also presents an opportunity to attract new investment to the region. For example, Balonne Shire's soils are well-suited to growing carrots because of their higher sand content which makes washing carrots more efficient.

The development of horticulture in the region will need to be supported by a strong transport and freight sector with cold chain logistics (refrigerated production, storage and distribution) capabilities. Although there is interest and emphasis at this time on maximising utilisation rates of the South Western Rail Line, particularly for agricultural products, there is already a regionally-significant road transport industry reliant on primary production, and both road and rail transportation are required to effectively and efficiently service the region's agricultural sector. For the foreseeable future, the horticultural sector will continue to rely on road transport.

Grain and Cotton

Cotton and grain growing are two of the largest agricultural sub-sectors in the Balonne Shire. Queensland produces 40% of Australia's cotton with the other 60% grown in New South Wales. Over 85% of processed cotton (ginned cotton) is sold abroad. Consequently, Australia is the world's third-largest cotton exporter. The grain industry is export-oriented and includes crops such as wheat, barley, canola, and other grains, oilseeds and pulses. The industry has exhibited high revenue volatility over the past five years, largely influenced by adverse weather conditions that have affected local supply.

The world price of cotton, and weather conditions dictate whether farmers grow solely cotton or additional crops in particular years. Cotton crops are the second-largest users (after rice) of water for irrigation. This has meant water availability issues have been a major challenge for the industry.

According to IBISWorld (October 2016), Australia's cotton industry revenue has declined over the past five years, although production and revenue are expected to have increased over the past two years, in line with improved growing conditions. On a global scale, grain production is forecast to rise while world wheat, barley and grain prices increase over the next five years. Global demand from developing countries is expected to support demand for Australian cotton abroad.



Grain production in the Balonne Shire has benefited from the growth in cattle feedlots in the broader region, with more feedlots under construction or planned. Construction of new feedlots will have implications for demand on the Shire's road network with maintenance of freight routes a priority consideration.

Opportunities also exist for an increase in the volume of containerised grain being exported from the region.

Containerised grain allows for the identity of the grain to be maintained for multiple purposes including overseas assurances to do with origin, biosecurity, quality, and genetic identity. Containerisation of freight has grown

rapidly in recent years, particularly in Australia where there has been a conversion of grain from bulk shipping to containerisation.

A rail transport hub has been proposed at Thallon and improvements to the South Western Railway Line, to enhance the capacity of the line to carry more containerised agricultural product, are being progressed through the Toowoomba Range Capacity and Clearance Rail project. The South West Train Alliance, representing Balonne Shire, Goondiwindi Regional Council, Toowoomba Regional Council and Southern Downs Council, has also been formed to encourage and effect increased appropriate utilisation of rail to the Port of Brisbane.

While water availability issues are expected to put pressure on farmers, positive trading conditions are anticipated to support the industry over the next five years. This, combined with the projected increase in the world price of cotton, is expected to support an increase in cotton industry revenue and profitability over the five-year period to 2022.

Locally, the cotton-growing industry, like sheep farming, is susceptible to the impacts of feral pests. Efforts to address this issue through the installation of feral pest fencing would support the industry's sustainability.

Looking ahead at further diversification opportunities in the region, potential exists for other broadacre crops, including medicinal herbs (including medicinal cannabis), hemp for livestock feed and biofuel crops. As an example of the latter, Balonne Shire Council has been working with the company Australian Agave Pty Ltd (AusAgave) to investigate large-scale commercial agave plantations for the purposes of processing biomass to support the development of bio-industries (for example, an ethanol plant) and other value-adding opportunities. Early trials indicate commercial viability of the crop within the region.

Tourism and Events

In Balonne Shire, tourism is an emerging industry with potential for growth. Balonne Shire's (and the wider region's) drive tourism market can be further developed, particularly in regard to length of stay and visitor spending.

Balonne Shire Council has prepared a Tourism Strategy (May 2017) to enhance regional tourism and increase the number of duration of stays in the region. The strategic objective is to grow the industry and deliver the resulting economic benefits to the communities of Balonne Shire. Building the 'Queensland Southern Outback' brand and developing new quality visitor experiences will be key to the Balonne Shire's success as a tourism destination.

According to IBISWorld (January 2017), tourism in Australia is performing well and has strong prospects. The industry has benefited from a rise in inbound tourist numbers over the past five years, with visitor numbers surging as the Australian dollar has depreciated. The weaker dollar has made it relatively cheaper for overseas visitors to travel to Australia.



Drive tourism presents an opportunity to diversify and grow the local tourism industry. In Balonne Shire and surrounding areas, two major highway groups promote the region's tourism sector, in the Adventure Way and the Great Inland Way. Balonne Shire has a rich outback heritage and is home to two National Parks – Thrushton National Park and Culgoa Floodplain National Park.

The *Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy 2013-2015* highlights the opportunities for regional and remote communities that can benefit from the income generated from drive tourists (on stopovers), where they can buy local tourism products and services, and basic travel necessities like fuel, food and other supplies.

Drive tourism provides a number of benefits to businesses, including: opportunities for new business start-ups; increased demand for new products and services; opportunities for business collaboration; and additional income and employment. Key measures of success for Queensland's drive tourism market include the number of tourists embarking on self-drive journeys, the length of their journeys, the time they spend in particular places and the amount of money they spend. This market is expected to experience significant growth due to Australia's ageing population and a corresponding increase in retirees who travel around Australia.

Events-based tourism presents another area of opportunity for Balonne Shire. Council, working in collaboration with Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) will focus on supporting and creating festivals, events or tourism products with a point of difference, with distinguishing characteristics that will attract visitors to the region. In Balonne Shire every town is situated beside a river and each is known for rich history, friendly locals, bird life, wide open spaces and their relaxed country lifestyle, providing the basis for tourism promotion and product development.

Australia's tourism industry revenue is projected to rise by an annualised 2.7% over the five years through 2021-22, to total \$136.2 billion (IBISWorld, January 2017). Expected increases in the number of international visitor arrivals, particularly from Asia, are anticipated to drive this revenue growth.

Industry revenue growth will also be assisted by the ongoing Tourism 2020 program, which is a government program that aims to improve tourism infrastructure and allow industry players to capitalise on rising demand for Australian tourism.



Rising domestic tourism is also expected to support local tourism operators. In Balonne Shire, opportunities include: events; making greater use of the Balonne River; Indigenous tourism; and agri-tourism.

Priorities for tourism are market research, product development and coordinated branding and promotion. New (high-end) visitor markets can also be explored to diversify and grow the tourism industry, particularly in light of opportunities stemming from the growth of the Brisbane West Wellcamp Airport.

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* recognises and responds to the Shire's potential to develop into a premium regional destination for tourism and events and to capitalise on the strength and profile of its agricultural sector through opportunities to develop agri-tourism.

With an emphasis on the identification of new industry opportunities and activities to attract investment, it also highlights the potential for higher-end tourism markets, including both domestic travellers (such as the families market) and overseas visitors. This requires a commitment from the industry and Balonne Shire's other tourism stakeholders to excellence in customer service and to quality infrastructure to support visitors upon arrival, encouraging a greater length of stay and increased visitor spend.

This includes quality visitor information and interpretation, ample parking bays for recreational vehicles (RVs), directional signage linked into the broader regional tourism network of attractions (such as the dinosaur trail), providing packaged tours, the establishment of a keynote festival or event, the development of cultural facilities and attractions (e.g. art galleries and interpretive centres), a diversity of quality accommodation and facilities such as free Wi-Fi in the Shire's town centres.

From Balonne Shire Council's perspective, efforts to facilitate the development of the region's tourism industry and other key sectors requires an 'open for business' attitude and approach to industry engagement. This is reflected in the vision for economic development, Council's economic development charter and the economic development action plan.



3. Balonne Shire's Economic Development Vision 2022

3.1 The Vision

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* articulates the vision for the Shire's economic development, to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities, to pursue sustainable directions for the Shire's economic future and create a prosperous and resilient local economy.

Balonne Shire Economic Development Vision 2022

Capitalising on its strategic location, its agricultural heritage and its outback setting, Balonne Shire will be a location of choice in which to work, live, visit and invest, supported by innovation in a diversity of traditional and emerging new industries.

The vision is supported by Balonne Shire Council's economic development charter.

3.2 Balonne Shire Council's Economic Development Charter

The economic development charter articulates Balonne Shire Council's commitment to promoting, facilitating and co-ordinating economic development activities. Council's economic development objective, as stated in its Corporate Plan, is to foster a vibrant economic environment to facilitate the development of sustainable opportunities and business development. To realise this objective, Balonne Shire Council will:

1. Prioritise initiatives that support the development of the Shire's **economic 'pillars' and key sectors in sheep, cattle and other grazing, horticulture, grain and cotton, transport and logistics and tourism and events**, with an emphasis on value-adding to diversify the Shire's economic base.
2. Prioritise activities that support **the growth of new 'knowledge-based' industries** in education, health care, agri-business and other business services.
3. Proactively promote **a partnership approach to tourism promotion and development**, working in collaboration with other local and regional tourism organisations and the industry to enhance regional branding, marketing, product development, visitor servicing and support infrastructure.
4. Pro-actively support the Balonne Shire's **micro, small to medium-sized and larger businesses** to address shared challenges and opportunities for business investment, growth and development.
5. **Promote Balonne Shire to prospective investors**, using a strategic, informed and targeted approach consistent with the Shire's vision for economic development.

Guided by the economic development charter and the action plan presented in this Plan, Balonne Shire Council, working in collaboration with other key stakeholders, will support the enablers of economic development, to facilitate the competitiveness and success of the Shire's businesses across all sectors of the economy.

4. Economic Development Action Plan

4.1 Economic Development Action Areas

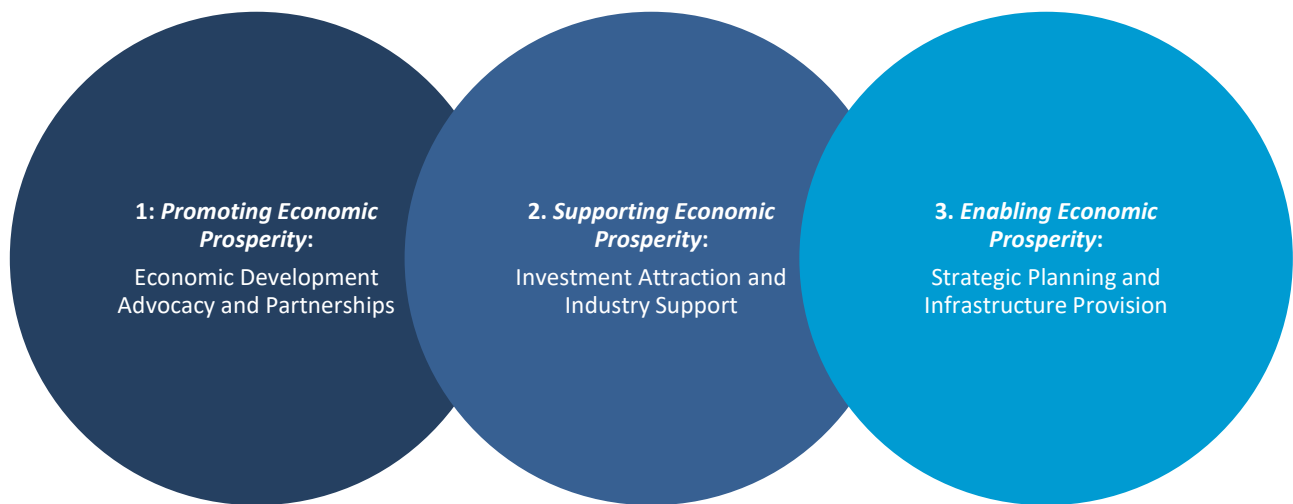


The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* is a plan of action to facilitate change towards a prosperous future. The actions are informed by the vision and Balonne Shire Council's economic development charter.

The Economic Development Action Plan addresses the enablers of economic development with a focus on the Shire's existing and emerging drivers in agriculture, tourism and related industries. It identifies projects and programs in Council's three 'core' economic development action areas. These activities, which translate into the Economic Development Strategy themes, are:

1. **Promoting Economic Prosperity: Economic Development Advocacy and Partnerships** – Balonne Shire Council and its local partners including progress associations, chambers of commerce and other representative bodies provide a unifying voice for communities and for local businesses when lobbying State and Federal Governments on key economic or infrastructure issues. By undertaking the necessary investigations and preparing informed business cases, Balonne Shire Council provides a conduit for government funding for bigger infrastructure projects like sporting, community and cultural facilities and health, education and transport infrastructure.
2. **Supporting Economic Prosperity: Investment Attraction and Industry Support** - Investment drives economic development, and access to international, national and regional markets is a key determinant of long-term economic growth. Balonne Shire Council helps facilitate inward investment by promoting what the Shire has to offer prospective investors. Balonne Shire's (and the wider region's) existing industrial base presents the greatest potential to take advantage of new investment opportunities. Council recognises that a successful investment enhancement strategy will be one that encourages additional investment from business and industry already located in the local area.
3. **Enabling Economic Prosperity: Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Provision** - Balonne Shire Council delivers strategic planning that is responsive to the community's economic needs and opportunities. Guided by the Economic Development Plan, it investigates, plans for and delivers information on the Shire's retail, commercial and industrial land capabilities, identifying what the Shire can accommodate and planning for future requirements. In its role as a co-ordinator of economic development activities, Council works to ensure that the critical infrastructure and services necessary to support investment and economic development are addressed. This includes providing those infrastructure items that fall under Council's direct control.

Figure 6 – Balonne Shire Council’s Economic Development Action Areas

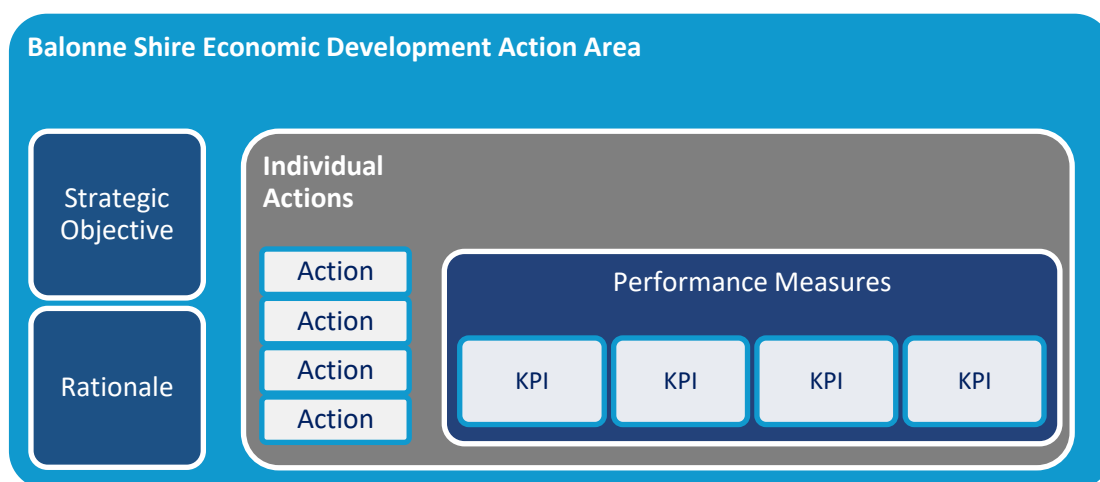


Source: SC Lennon & Associates

A suite of 28 individual actions has been prepared and these are categorised under the three strategic themes accordingly. Each action area includes:

- **Strategic Objective** – this is a statement setting out what the target outcome is for that action area.
- **Rationale** – this is a statement providing a set of reasons and a logical basis for the course of action proposed.
- **Actions** – these are the tasks to be carried out to realise the stated objective.
- **Performance Measures** – these are suggested measures or key performance indicators (KPIs) particular to each action area that will be applied to monitor implementation progress over time.

Figure 7 – Economic Development Action Planning Framework



Source: SC Lennon & Associates

Actions are categorised according to whether they represent:

- ***‘Catalyst project planning & development’*** which requires priority action combined with a well-planned course of project implementation for the desired outcomes to be realised; and
- ***‘Strategic program implementation’*** that can be addressed as part of Balonne Shire Council’s day-to-day economic development planning and facilitation functions in a strategic and informed manner.



The majority of actions will be ‘Council-led’, in that they involve specific tasks for Balonne Shire Council and an allocation of human, physical and financial resources. Some actions will be ‘Council-supported’ activities and these are advocacy or support initiatives where the implementation of the actions is to be led by agencies other than Council.

An implementable and effective economic development plan must be cognisant of:

- Current projects and opportunities for economic development in Balonne Shire and the south-west region;
- The industries and projects that will be key to the region’s future economic development; and
- The challenges and issues surrounding Balonne Shire’s capacity to effectively move forward and actions to address these.

Having regard for these, the following economic development action plan will be pursued by Balonne Shire Council in partnership with the region’s other key stakeholders.

4.2 Economic Development Action Plan

Theme 1 - Promoting Economic Prosperity:

Economic Development Advocacy and Partnerships

Strategic Objective

Pro-actively engage with the region's industry stakeholders, key institutions, South West RED and other tiers of government to deliver a collaborative approach to economic development program planning and implementation.

Take a strategic, informed and targeted approach to advocating for Balonne Shire's priority projects on behalf of industry and the seven communities of the Shire.



Rationale

As well as being directly responsible for local infrastructure provision and the delivery of quality community services, Balonne Shire Council can influence the fundamentals for investment by actively lobbying the other spheres of government and private providers on infrastructure matters of regional significance.

Partnerships are essential to the successful implementation of both local and regional economic development initiatives. The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* identifies and prioritises Balonne Shire's key infrastructure needs to support sustainable economic development, providing a unified voice for the Shire's and the wider south-west region's resident and business communities when engaging with State and Federal Governments on key economic and infrastructure issues.

Through its direct links to the other spheres of government, and in partnership with key stakeholders such as South West RED, local chambers of commerce and major infrastructure providers, Balonne Shire Council provides a conduit for funding and/or the delivery of strategic physical and community infrastructure projects like sporting, community and cultural facilities, health, education infrastructure and transport and communications infrastructure.

Actions

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

- 1.1 Advocate for projects aimed at enhancing the capacity of the South Western Railway Line and increasing utilisation rates of rail to the Port of Brisbane. This includes: progression of the business case for a proposed intermodal facility in the region (the "Uplands Warehouse" concept); and progression of the Graincorp Regional Regeneration Project.

Strategic Programming

- 1.2 Pro-actively advocate for the interests of Balonne Shire's agricultural sectors, including progressing the development of the horticultural sector.
- 1.3 Collaborate with key agencies to hold a regional forum with horticultural producers to understand industry support needs, particularly with respect to integrated network planning to support improved linkages to Brisbane West Wellcamp Airport.
- 1.4 Collaborate with other key agencies including the Department of State Development, RDA Darling Downs and South West, South West RED and neighbouring Councils to develop an investment enquiry protocol for Balonne and the wider south-west region.
- 1.5 Collaborate with Southern Queensland Country Tourism, Outback Queensland Tourism, South West RED and neighbouring Councils to prepare a south-west region tourism signage strategy to encourage visitors to stop and explore the region's towns and many other attractions as they travel to and from other locations and visitor destinations.

Performance Measures

- Increased utilisation rates of rail to the Port of Brisbane, particularly for agricultural product out of Balonne Shire.
- Development of a business case for an intermodal facility in the region with a shortlist of potential sites.
- Further investment in and expansion of Balonne Shire's agricultural sectors, including diversification of existing producers and establishment of new producers in the region.
- Improved road freight linkages between the region and Brisbane West Wellcamp Airport.
- Establishment of an investment enquiry protocol for Balonne Shire and the broader south-west region.
- Development of a signage strategy and business case in preparation for government funding opportunities.

Theme 2 - Supporting Economic Prosperity: Investment Attraction and Industry Support

Strategic Objective

Establish Balonne Shire as a location of choice for business investment in traditional industry drivers like cotton, grain, sheep and cattle, new meat harvesting activities, horticulture and tourism.

Complement this with activities to support the growth and sustainability of Balonne Shire's existing retail, tourism and other service sector businesses.

Rationale

Investment is essential to economic development, and access to international, national and regional markets is a key determinant of long-term economic growth. This includes access to trading partners, clients and labour.



Investment promotion (attraction) is a key component of the *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022*. Strategically targeted new businesses (that can meet a particular market need and link in with the region's existing industrial make-up) can contribute substantially to Balonne Shire's economic growth and development.

To attract new investment, Balonne Shire needs to articulate its value proposition. It will require a strategic and targeted approach to attract business owners and their families to want to live and work in the Shire. It will also require Balonne Shire Council to pro-actively seek out new investment opportunities and to facilitate change through its town planning functions and the delivery of critical infrastructure, including, for example, telecommunications infrastructure and industrial land.

Local enterprise also presents opportunities for new investment, and a successful investment enhancement strategy will be one that encourages additional investment from business and industry already located in Balonne Shire and surrounding areas.

Businesses need access to workers with appropriate skills, and access to skilled labour is influenced by the availability of education and training, levels of workforce participation and the mobility and flexibility of labour. An appropriately skilled and educated workforce can help Balonne Shire's industries take advantage of new opportunities, overcome challenges and make the Shire and the region more attractive to investment.

Support through programs such as the Queensland Government's *Advancing Regional Innovation Program* provide opportunities to establish hubs for innovation and enterprise in key sectors, enabling local industry stakeholders to collaborate to harness innovation and unlock business potential, strengthen existing industries and prepare the local workforce for the jobs of the future. Access to programs like this can be effectively facilitated through the appointment of a dedicated grants officer.

Actions

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

- 2.1 Undertake a two-stage study into the potential for re-establishing a kangaroo processing facility in St George. This would involve: (1) a broader economic evaluation (including market research) of the potential for serving national and international markets for kangaroo products; and (2) development of a business case for re-establishing a kangaroo processing facility in St George.
- 2.2 Assess Balonne Shire Council's funding commitment to the eradication of predators on stock. This would involve a review of current funding for Council's cluster fencing program and determination of the need for additional funding through both grants and other funding models.

Strategic Programming

- 2.3 Support the St George Chamber of Commerce to deliver business support services to the Shire's businesses and coordinate these activities with other chambers and Progress Associations in the Shire and broader south-west region. Investigate the potential benefits of a 'hub and spoke' model as a mechanism of coordination across all towns in the Shire.
- 2.4 Prepare a Balonne Shire investment attraction strategy focussed on horticulture and related industries.
- 2.5 In partnership with the south-west region's program delivery agencies, keep abreast of and promote services available to small business to assist them to establish, develop and grow.
- 2.6 Advocate to the South West RED to develop and implement a program to support business start-ups across the South West Region.
- 2.7 Provide local businesses with information and access to technology as part of a Balonne Shire Digital Economy Strategy, as well as advocating for improved high-speed internet access throughout the Shire and the region.
- 2.8 Undertake an audit of Balonne Shire's and the region's visitor attractions to inform infrastructure investment needs and priorities and the development of marketing material under a regional tourism brand as the basis of future promotional campaigns.
- 2.9 Work with South West RED to encourage a coordinated approach to regional events, including marketing and coordination of events calendars.
- 2.10 Collaborate with local service providers to review and assess initiatives to address youth and Indigenous youth unemployment and disengagement. In light of the review, prepare a strategy to renew and extend key initiatives using information acquired from the latest 'best practice' case studies.
- 2.11 Develop community capacity building plans for the Balonne Shire's smaller townships, prioritising Dirranbandi as a town highly impacted by water buy-backs.
- 2.12 Undertake a regular (annual) 'Balonne Shire Business Needs and Issues Survey' and prepare a report for Council and relevant stakeholders, that summarises concerns and needs identified by local business; report back to business on Council's response and undertake supplementary investigations on verified priority issues.

Performance Measures

- Completion of an economic evaluation and business case for re-establishing a kangaroo processing facility in St George.
- Establishment of a clear funding model for effective implementation of the cluster fencing program.
- The Chamber of Commerce and Progress Associations throughout the Shire are properly resourced and supported.
- Preparation of a Balonne Shire investment attraction strategy.
- An increase in the number of successful home-based and micro-businesses in Balonne Shire.
- An increase in businesses accessing support available through program delivery agencies.
- An increase in digital take-up and engagement by businesses in Balonne Shire.
- Identification of priority visitor infrastructure projects and associated business cases in preparation for funding opportunities.
- Development of a regional calendar of events.
- The successful delivery of effective programs and services to assist Balonne Shire's and the broader region's unemployed, dis-engaged youth and Indigenous youth in accessing gainful employment.
- Preparation of a community capacity building plan for Dirranbandi with an appropriate budget allocation for priority projects.
- Implementation of a business needs and issues survey and ongoing response to priority issues.

Theme 3 - Enabling Economic Prosperity:

Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Provision

Strategic Objective

Create an 'enabling' environment for economic development in Balonne Shire by: providing and promoting local information services for prospective and existing businesses; delivering clear planning policies and a streamlined development approval process; and providing or advocating for the infrastructure needed to encourage industry to invest and do business, to generate new jobs.



Rationale

When considering a new location to start-up or expand, business owners and their staff will consider, first and foremost, the quality of the local schools and community services (especially health care), recreational services and facilities, local retail offerings and the area's cultural facilities and attractions. Other considerations include the availability of serviced commercial and industrial land and the quality of infrastructure that supports production (like energy and water) and access to suppliers and markets (namely transport and communications).

Apart from its role in providing support for new and existing businesses, and preparing information and material to help promote and attract business investment, a lot of what Balonne Shire Council does to facilitate economic development outcomes is place-based, with a focus on the physical enablers of growth (i.e. infrastructure) and the land use planning frameworks and regulations which guide business development.

As well as ensuring that adequate land is available for development, land use planning reinforces existing and emerging industry clusters by providing appropriate signals relevant to the performance and locational requirements of the key industries.

Balonne Shire Council delivers a range of town planning and place activation strategies to enhance the urban form and function of the Shire's seven towns. Informed by the actions in this Plan, Council takes a 'place making' approach to investigating and prioritising projects that deliver economic development outcomes through local land use planning and place management activities.

Strategic infrastructure delivery underpins the capacity of industry to operate. For Balonne Shire's (and the wider region's) agricultural sectors, rural innovation will be the key to future prosperity. There is an opportunity for co-investment in water-efficient infrastructure to allow the conversion of, for example cotton country, to high-value arid horticulture crops.

The development of the Brisbane to Melbourne Inland Rail Project and the Brisbane West Wellcamp Airport in Toowoomba, coupled with growing demand from markets in Asia and Europe for fresh high-value quality produce, have created supply chain and market development opportunities for producers in Balonne and the wider south-west region. One area which offers a diversity of opportunity in this regard is the horticultural sector.

Actions

Catalyst Project Planning & Development

- 3.1 Progress development of industrial land around the St George Aerodrome. This would include: (1) preparation of an industrial land use study; (2) business case development; and (3) preparation of a funding application to State/Federal Government for the necessary infrastructure.
- 3.2 Undertake a study to identify opportunities to expand the St George Aerodrome and develop an Airport Masterplan.
- 3.3 Support development of the Brisbane-Melbourne Inland Rail Link.
- 3.4 Investigate the establishment of introducing free (ratepayer-funded) public Wi-Fi in one of the Shire's smaller towns of either Bollon, Dirranbandi, Hebel, Mungindi, Nindigully or Thallon as a pilot project.
- 3.5 Implement the Regional Cultural Gallery project.
- 3.6 Advocate to Queensland Government and Federal Government agencies to ensure high-quality mobile phone and internet coverage is provided in all communities of Balonne Shire.

Strategic Programming

- 3.7 Work with the State Government and other regional stakeholders to prepare and implement a strategy to provide water security for the expansion of horticulture in Balonne Shire and the wider south west region.
- 3.8 Establish and maintain a published register of commercial / industrial land for the information of prospective investors including details of all commercial / industrial land in Balonne Shire.
- 3.9 Ensure Balonne Shire Council's land use planning framework aligns strategic land with opportunities for the attraction and development of new industries in the Shire. Continue to facilitate access to information regarding Council's development approvals process for existing and new businesses looking to establish or expand in Balonne Shire.
- 3.10 Establish a whole-of-Council policy and planning position on renewable energy in the Balonne Shire including the concept of an alternative energy code in the new planning scheme.
- 3.11 Progress implementation of the Landscape & CBD Masterplan.

Performance Measures

- Preparation of an industrial land use study for land around the St George Aerodrome.
- Development of a masterplan for development of the St George Aerodrome.
- Development and evaluation of a public Wi-Fi pilot project in either Bollon, Dirranbandi, Hebel, Mungindi, Nindigully or Thallon.
- Finalisation of a business model for the Regional Cultural Gallery project.

- Continuous improvements to mobile phone and internet coverage over time.
- Development of a plan for long-term water security in Balonne Shire and broader region.
- Development of a commercial / industrial land register.
- Increased investment in renewable energy projects in Balonne Shire.
- Successful funding applications and budgeting for progressive capital works programs for the Landscape and CBD Masterplan.

5. Implementing the Economic Development Plan

5.1 A Collaborative Approach to Implementation

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* informs priority projects and activities for implementation as part of a Year 1 economic development work plan, which will be developed as part of Council's annual operational planning. These will represent the projects and programs that Balonne Shire Council will advance (in association with identified partners where relevant) as short-term priorities.

The region's government and institutional stakeholders and the Shire's business and resident communities will continue to be engaged at a partnership level to ensure effective collaboration for the Plan's implementation and commitment to the delivery of Council's economic development agenda going forward.

5.2 Monitoring Progress and Success

In progressing priorities and longer term economic development activities, monitoring progress will be key. Performance measures have been established within each of the Plan's four action areas, focusing on process and output measures. Individual actions will be assessed against these performance measures.

The overall effectiveness of the Economic Development Plan's implementation will be assessed in terms of action milestones (reflected in year on year operational planning) and project progress and completion.

The *Balonne Shire Economic Development Plan, 2018-2022* will be reviewed annually with an update in five years.

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