

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION STRATEGY

JULY 2020



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Acknowledgement of Country

Charters Towers Regional Council is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to our society.

We acknowledge the people of the Gudjala, Gugu Badhun, Birriah and Jangga first nation lands on which Charters Towers and its greater region are located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging.

We are committed to a positive future for all.



Mayor's Message



“The economic future of Charters Towers is very bright. I look forward to working with you to **increase the economic strength and prosperity of this great region.**”

Charters Towers is a region of economic strength and economic opportunity. Our future holds the promise of growth, prosperity, and resilience. This Strategy aims to realise these possibilities, building economic strength, diversity and productivity.

Our region is blessed with economic assets. Rich agricultural land, mineral wealth, plentiful water, proximity to international ports, and, above all, our community.

It is our community that transforms economic potential into economic value. As workers, entrepreneurs, business-owners, volunteers, students, and leaders, our people make Charters Towers an economic destination.

Here in Charters Towers we welcome all those who wish to help build our future economy. Our region is a great place to live, to work, to invest, and to do business. New ideas, new residents, new investment, new ventures will drive future economic growth. We are open for business, and ready to work together.

Our economic pillars – agriculture, mining, education and tourism – will continue to buttress the Charters Towers economy. And we stand ready to build and expand, to diversify and grow, to create and nurture new industries and jobs.

Innovation is a critical element of this Strategy. To build our capacity to innovate and commercialise will open up new economic pathways for growth, resilience and employment.

The economic future of Charters Towers is very bright. I look forward to working with you to increase the economic strength and prosperity of this great region.

Frank Beveridge
Mayor



Introduction

Covering over 68,000 km² in the heart of North Queensland, Charters Towers is a productive agricultural and mining region with a rich gold mining history, beautiful heritage buildings, natural attractions and a strong community.

Located 90 minutes southwest of Townsville, Charters Towers is at the heart of the North-South and East-West rail and road corridors. The Burdekin River provides the region with a strong supply of water, and the region has a wealth of mineral deposits, fertile soils, and solar energy opportunity.

This Economic Development & Innovation Strategy reflects Council's commitment to delivering sustainable economic growth, increasing living standards, broadening personal opportunity attracting new talent and providing greater amenity to the region.

Charters Towers has a proud history of growth, hard-work, prosperity and community. It is a regional centre for mining, beef cattle and education industries, renowned destination for outback tourists and more. Like all regions, we also face economic challenges, including attracting new residents, digital connectivity and employment diversification.

We must leverage our strengths to face these challenges head-on, to build a dynamic and vibrant economy and community.

This Strategy is the product of community and industry collaboration, engagement and input. It will ensure that Charters Towers remains a region of unique potential and exciting economic opportunity.

Charters Towers is intent on seizing its economic opportunities through smart planning, innovation and local resourcefulness.



Our Economy & COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of challenges for the global economy. This Strategy will help manage the short-term impacts of COVID-19, and also create a more resilient local economy over the longer-term, so we are better prepared for future challenges.



Top Economic & Innovation Opportunities

This Strategy highlights the immense economic and innovation potential of the Charters Towers region.

Here's ten of the top opportunities, which this Strategy aims to realise.

1 Local Skills

Becoming a regional education powerhouse and promoting local skills development

2 Tourism

Growing our tourism economy

3 'Economic Destination'

Establishing Charters Towers as a top-tier 'economic destination'

4 Irrigation Projects

Delivering the Hells Gates development/Big Rocks Weir irrigation scheme

5 Innovation

Creating a Charters Towers 'Innovation Network'





6 Attracting & Retaining

Attracting and retaining residents to the region

7 Unlocking Land

Unlocking land for development, construction and commerce

8 Defence Industry

Promoting the region as a defence industry hub

9 Airport Expansion

Developing a long-term airport expansion plan

10 Renewable Energy

Maximising the economic benefits of local renewable energy generation



Economic & Innovation Profile

The Charters Towers community and economy has remained relatively stable for many years and in 2019 it supported nearly 6,000 jobs.

Mining and beef cattle farming have been critical elements of our economy for many years, and these sectors will continue as local strengths. Charters Towers has also seen growth in healthcare and social assistance, and education and training. These sectors will continue to grow, making Charters Towers a regional hub for health, education, transport, and social services.

Charters Towers' strategic geographic location, esteemed schools, rich culture and high quality of life, along with emerging sectors such as light industry and low impact agriculture present new opportunities for expansion.

Compared to Queensland, Charters Towers has higher unemployment rates, lower average incomes, and lower educational attainment.

Offsetting these challenges are an abundance of natural resources, good climate, strength of local community, and a strategic location (at the intersection of major North-South and East-West road transport links, and a critical rail link connecting Mount Isa with Townsville and the coast). The region also boasts increasing international trade connections, especially with South East Asia, China and the Middle East.

POPULATION

11,968

Regional

10,101

Residential

29%

Aged 0-19

27.4%

Aged 55-79

8.7%

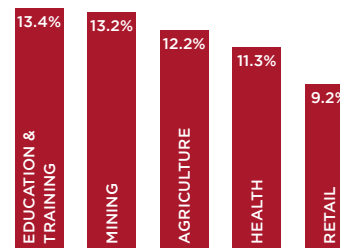
of population identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

6.4%

of population require assistance with core activities due to disability

Charters Towers services a regional population of **over 14,000**. This includes the western townships of **Julia Creek (500)**, **Richmond (522)** and **Hughenden (1,132)**.

KEY INDUSTRIES



\$25.9 million

average tourism spend per year

98.3%

of agricultural production is livestock

INCOME

\$675

Median weekly household income

\$43,194

Median total income

22.1%

of residents undertake unpaid volunteer work

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

9.7%

Unemployment rate [QLD 6%]

90.2%

of local workers also live in the area

33.2%

of population over 15yo completed Year 12 or equiv.

Data sourced from .ID Profile, Regional Australia Institute and ABS LGA (32310)



Strategic Context

Charters Towers is a unique region, located inland from Townsville in Northern Queensland, with a rich history as a mining and agricultural centre.

And with the recently approved Australia-Singapore Military Training Initiative at Greenvale, the community is now diversifying and evolving to take advantage of new economic opportunities in the region.

A number of key regional, State and Federal policies and programs will influence and support the economic development of Charters Towers. A selection of key policies are noted here. This Strategy will align with and leverage off relevant Government policies and programs at both State and Federal level to maximise outcomes for Charters Towers.



REGIONAL

Charters Towers Regional Council 5 Year Corporate Plan 2020-2025 commits Council to providing a strong economy, healthy environment and effective, sustainable infrastructure.



STATE

- > North Queensland Regional Economic Development Plan 2020
- > Queensland Government: A Strategic Blueprint for Queensland's North West Minerals Province
- > Queensland Government: Townsville North Queensland Regional Tourism Workforce Plan 2018-2020
- > Queensland Government: currently updating the State Infrastructure Plan Part B: Program - 2019
- > Communities in Transition Projects (Making Water Work and Charters Towers Dynamic Business Case)



NATIONAL

- > The Australian Government: "Our North, Our Future", a White Paper designed to develop, inform, guide and lead the future economy and industry of Northern Australia
- > CSIRO: Charters Towers: A Living Transitions Roadmap

Economic Strengths

To leverage local strengths and overcome local challenges is a central principle of this Strategy.

Key strengths, challenges and forward directions are summarised on the following pages. Council will regularly review local circumstances, and emerging opportunities and threats to fine-tune these economic policies and actions.

STRENGTHS

Stable Economic Base

The region's economy is built on strong foundations, including mining, agriculture, education and health. These sectors will act as a sustainable economic backbone for the region, while also presenting opportunities for further growth. This is already being demonstrated with the development of new mining operations and the Communities in Transition CiT: Making Water Work and Dynamic Business Case Initiatives.

STRATEGIES

- > Council will work with local industry to promote innovation, create new products and access new markets.
- > We will take steps to be a premier regional service centre offering a range of opportunities to work, live, play and invest.

Natural Assets

The town of Charters Towers was founded upon the discovery of gold in the 1870s; the region's rich natural assets continue to drive economic activity today. The natural environment promises to deliver growth in the sectors of agriculture, mining and clean sustainable energy. The Big Rocks Weir Irrigation scheme highlights this immense potential.

- > Explore opportunities to increase access to and value provided by natural assets. To be achieved through advocacy, investment attraction and innovation support. For example, supporting investment into high-value, low-impact agriculture to capitalise on fertile soil resources.
- > Encourage diversification of agriculture to meet future national and international demand.

Strategic Location

The movement of minerals and agricultural products requires the use of key regional hubs during transit. The region offers access to vital transport infrastructure including road, rail and air and is a critical link in Queensland's supply chains. For local enterprise this supply chain proximity provides a competitive advantage over other regions.

- > Continue to strengthen Charters Towers' position as a major regional transport, supply and services hub and advertise the region's promise as a base for industry and logistics.
- > Continue to market the region's resilience to natural disasters as a selling point to attract residents and investors.
- > Capitalise on the region's relatively good mobile and internet connectivity through regional improvements. Particularly focusing on Gregory Development Road North and South. A special priority area is Big Rocks Weir.



Unique Visitor Experience

The region offers visitors a unique experience filled with history, Aboriginal culture and natural beauty. The local Traditional Owners have invaluable knowledge about the region, which has the potential to unlock economic opportunities while forging a greater understanding of country and culture.

- > Increase accessibility through infrastructure maintenance and upgrades.
- > Increase visitor numbers through promotion and a targeted tourism and branding campaign.
- > Increase visitor spending and community gains through tourism collaboration, innovation, and product development.
- > Investigate opportunities to enhance event offerings.
- > Become a tourism destination of choice.

Innovation opportunities

Charters Towers offers significant investment opportunities, for existing local businesses and for companies new to the region. Innovation is providing new sources of employment in sectors such as renewable energy. Greater digital connectivity is also facilitating remote working opportunities that were previously impossible. This dynamic economic landscape presents exciting prospects for the region.

- > Increase local innovation opportunity through education, increased digital connectivity and collaboration.
- > Promote local entrepreneurs and innovation groups to drive new economic activity.
- > Facilitate and support diversification/innovation of existing industries – agriculture, education, mining, tourism
- > Continue to advocate for Charters Towers to be the location of new, innovative or high investment projects – such as the Hells Gates Dam Irrigation Project or the Copperstring 2.0 Project (a transmission line connecting the North West Minerals Province to the coastal grid).

Community Engagement

Charters Towers consistently demonstrates strong community spirit, and a willingness to improve regional outcomes through new ideas and collaboration. This drive for ongoing improvement is also embedded in Council's strategic planning system. Together Council and community can create opportunities to develop our future economy.

- > Encourage and facilitate improved community engagement, participation and collaboration.
- > Draw on community expertise and energy through consultation and collaboration process.
- > Leverage digital democracy and greater connectivity to foster fruitful community dialogue, which improve local services and outcomes.

Climate Adaptability

In recent years Queensland summers have brought an increase in severe storms and floods, droughts, heatwaves and bushfires. Charters Towers, however, has fared better than the cities and regions along Queensland's East Coast and Southern border. Charters Towers' altitude and location have protected it from the devastating affects felt in other areas.

- > Promote the region's position as a secure hub for industry and logistics, well insulated from the impacts of climate change and extreme weather.
- > Leverage local wind and solar resources to generate renewable energy, create local jobs, and address rising energy costs.

Economic Challenges

CHALLENGES

Planning linkages and alignment

As with all regions across Australia, local economic outcomes depend on planning by three levels of government. Ensuring coordinated, effective planning will be an ongoing challenge for Charters Towers.

STRATEGIES

- > The Regional Development Team will continue their effective approach to problem-solving issues and streamlining processes with other governments.
- > Elected Members and Council Executives will collaborate with relevant Ministers and officials, and advocate for local economic reform and investment.

Physical Distance

While the region does represent an important supply chain hub, it is still faced with large geographic distances. Charters Towers can often be excluded from Townsville services and faces competition when attracting investment.

- > Reduce the impacts of large geographic distance with investment in physical and digital infrastructure, remote working facilities and programs to attract new people to the region.

Demographic challenges

Charters Towers has a range of demographic challenges including, a relatively low working age population (20-65 years), a high dependence on transient labour, and an unemployment rate above the Queensland average.

- > Collaborate with employment organisations and governments to promote local employment opportunities, job matching and skills development.
- > There is potential to assist in the facilitation of the creation of a local 'Job Activation Network' linking industry, providers and participants.
- > Attract people to the region with new programs and campaigns.
- > Support digital and innovation training to create jobs for the future.

Regulatory Barriers

There is always opportunity to improve local regulations/processes and remove 'red tape', making it easier to do business in the region.

- > Continue to reform regulatory process whilst encouraging the 'Can Do!' mindset within Council and across the broader community.
- > Advocate for high priority red-tape reduction and regulatory reform to relevant ministers, authorities and organisations

Branding and Promotion

Charters Towers has a lot to offer investors employers, residents and visitors. However, the benefits of the region as an economic destination are not as widely recognised as they deserve to be.

- > Develop an economic attraction package to promote the region.
- > Initiate an innovative marketing and promotions campaign to ensure Charters Towers has a strong 'economic destination' profile.
- > Market our 'economic destination' profile to attract new residents and investors with the skills to facilitate regional industry diversification and innovation.

Training and Skills

Charters Towers has lower average educational attainment outcomes compared to Queensland as a whole.

- > Work with the education and training sector to encourage 'Jobs for the Future' approach.
- > Host a 'Youth Council' to support training and innovation outcomes for young people.
- > Collaborate with employment organisations and governments to promote local employment opportunities, job matching and skills development.
- > Support digital and innovation training to create jobs for the future.

Stakeholder Engagement

This Strategy was informed by broad consultation with the community, local businesses, and economic stakeholders.

The engagement process included digital surveys of community and Council staff, general public workshops, Councillor and staff roundtable discussions, and interviews with key industry stakeholders.



Key Engagement Themes

Tourism

- > Building an even stronger tourism and visitor economy
- > Developing our tourism 'brand' and promoting the region as a destination

Training & Skills

- > Increasing local skills development and educational opportunities
- > Leveraging our educational assets and competitive advantages

Economic Resilience

- > Supporting economic diversification
- > Developing local innovation capability and confidence

Local Business Development

- > Supporting local businesses, start-ups and new investment
- > Strengthening local business collaboration and networks

Natural Resource Management

- > Enhancing resource management for local economic and environmental benefit
- > Improving sustainability

Policy & Governance

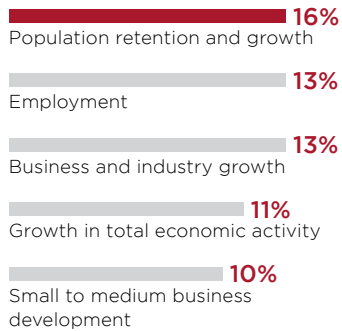
- > Enhancing economic development communication and engagement
- > Delivering high-priority economic development plans, projects, reforms and advocacy campaigns

Survey Responses

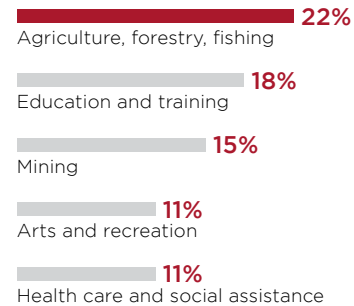
Community and staff alike responded to surveys to help guide the development of this Strategy. This page presents a snapshot of key perspectives.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

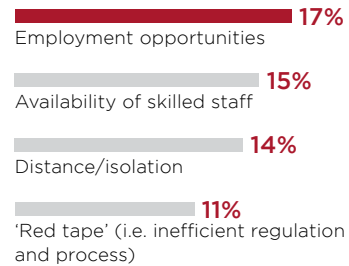
Priority economic development objectives for the region



Sectors that offer the greatest economic opportunity

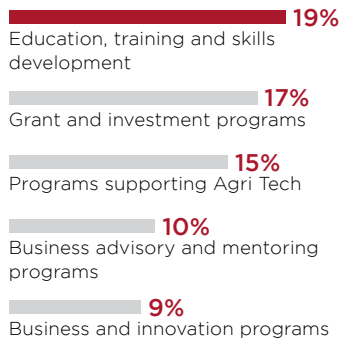


Challenges to economic development

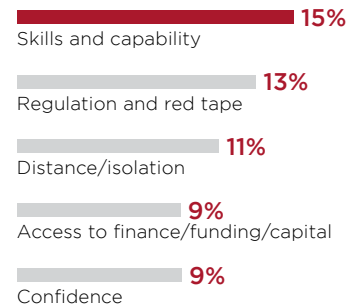


INNOVATION

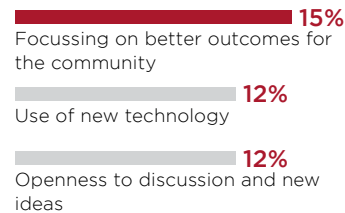
Innovation programs that offer the greatest value for the region



Most significant challenges to local innovation



When it comes to economic development and innovation Council is good at



What Our Community Said

"We need to research and develop improved supply chains in the region."

"We have a big opportunity to value-add in the areas we already excel in, like capitalising on beef as our major industry with a meatworks or processing plant."

"This Strategy is exactly what we need. With many challenges to traditional economic models, we need to innovate and create jobs and industry for the future."

"The Charters Towers economy is full of potential - we have capable people, good education and strong services. We have the opportunity to scale up."

"I'm looking forward to seeing our community work together to create new economic opportunities."

"There are a lot of opportunities for economic collaboration and innovation. Agriculture, beef, and cooperative research efforts are all possibilities."

Our Shared Vision

Charters Towers will be a prosperous, innovative and forward-looking region, where our community benefits from ...



A diverse and vibrant economy



A great place to live and work



A growing population



New employment opportunities



New knowledge and skills



Innovative way of doing business



Robust traditional industries



An innovative Council



A strong visitor economy



A safe sustainable and resilient environment





“Thinking innovatively about the way we do business will drive economic development.”

Our Economic Values

Globalisation, new technology, and scientific advancement are creating immense economic opportunities. However, such possibility also brings rapid change, economic disruption, and new risks.

This Strategy has been grounded in a set of core local values so we can make the most of new economic opportunities and respond to emerging economic changes and challenges.

Communication

We are committed to ongoing economic conversation with our community. We will share opportunities and challenges, report progress, and welcome new ideas.

Opportunity

We value an economy that provides economic opportunity for everyone. We are committed to ensuring economic equity, inclusion, and fairness.

Natural Resources

Charters Towers boasts a wealth of natural resources. We are committed to the sustainable use of these resources, ensuring local prosperity now and into the future.

Direction

Economic success depends on clarity of direction and committed action. With this Strategy, and supporting action plans, we commit to such economic leadership, direction, and focus.

Collaboration

A strong economy is built by many. We are committed to collaborating with all parties (community, business, other governments, etc.) to advance our economy.

Innovation

To innovate is to create future jobs and industry. We are committed to supporting local innovation, aiming to build economic strength, diversification, and new employment.

Empowerment

Knowledge and skills are power, both for individuals and the economy. We are committed to economic empowerment, through education, skills-development, training, and participation in decision-making.

“

Industry diversity is a major economic strength for the Charters Towers Region.



Objectives & Measuring Progress

Charters Towers is taking a holistic approach to economic development in the region, setting a number of key objectives and indicators to ensure we are progressing towards our economic vision.

Increase the size of our economy

- > Gross Regional Product (GRP) and Gross Regional Income (GRI)
- > GRP and GRI per capita

Increase the diversity and resilience of our economy

- > Growth in new (and non-traditional) sectors
- > Relative impact of economic shocks

Improve economic equity and opportunity

- > Gini coefficient (measuring the distribution of income)
- > Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)

Increase regional innovation capacity and outcomes

- > Participation in innovation programs/training
- > Patents, trademarks and new products

Increase educational attainment and skills

- > Year 12 completion rates
- > Post-school qualifications

Improve local employment outcomes

- > Number of jobs
- > Employment rates

Improve community wellbeing

- > Health and social outcome indicators
- > Community liveability

Increase visitation and the tourist economy

- > Visitors and visitor nights
- > Tourist spending

Strengthen local business, industry and trade

- > Growth in local business sector
- > Growth in exports

Increase regional population and participation

- > Total regional population
- > Labour force participation rates

Improve economic partnerships and collaboration

- > Community engagement/participation in economic planning processes
- > Outcomes of collaboration with other governments

Develop our education sector

- > Student numbers
- > Growth in the education sector

Enhance our reputation as an 'economic destination'

- > Awareness of the region amongst target audiences
- > Rates of inward investment



Strategic Themes & Priority Action Areas

To deliver this Strategy, Charters Towers Regional Council has identified seven strategic themes to guide forward policy, projects and investment.

STRATEGIC THEMES

- 1 **Strengthening Local Business & Industry**
- 2 **Investing in People**
- 3 **Building Infrastructure for the Future**
- 4 **Expanding Our Visitor Economy**
- 5 **Creating a Vibrant 'Economic Destination'**
- 6 **Promoting Local Innovation**
- 7 **Developing Our Education Sector**



Strengthening Local Business & Industry

Charters Towers is a great place for business and industry. Endowed with abundant natural assets; mining, agriculture, and tourism are key economic strengths. Our strategic location is ideal for industries, including defence, education, regional services, transport and logistics. And, our people – as entrepreneurs and business-owners – are constant drivers of economic innovation and diversification.

Building on our strong foundations, is a central objective of this Strategy. We are committed to establishing new businesses and industries, and supporting growth in our traditional sectors. We will work to attract new business and investment to the region, build new markets for our local businesses, and create new jobs. For businesses large or small, emerging or established, Charters Towers will be a preferred location.

Actions

Our priority action areas include:

- > Leveraging regional defence industry investment to create investment and employment growth across high tech, transport, food and accommodation sectors.
- > Continuing to unlock new development zones
- > Promoting programs to build local business skills and capacity (e.g. digital tech and e-commerce)
- > Developing a policy framework to increase international trade and exports
- > Working with local industry/business associations to explore new modes of governance, operations and collaboration
- > Exploring opportunities to catalyse regional economic development via the Australian Government's program of city/regional deals (e.g. the existing Townsville City Deal)
- > Examining policies, programs and incentives to support local start-ups and attract new businesses to the region
- > Working with local industry to identify and advance high-value options for expansion, diversification, and innovation



Investing in People

Investing in people increases the capacity, resilience and productivity of our economy. And a stronger economy means more opportunity and prosperity for people to share. By investing in people, we create a virtuous cycle of economic growth, skills development and community wellbeing.

The Charters Towers economy is already supported by great people. People with skills, experience, resilience, and resolution. We are committed to building and leveraging this strength. We will work to increase skills and education levels, harness local knowledge, and design economic policies with our community.

Actions

Our priority action areas include:

- > Collaborating with the local education sector to promote the economic value of education and training
- > Increasing awareness of local (and online) training and development opportunities
- > Promoting enrolment and participation in education, training and skills development programs, including in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
- > Promoting local digital literacy/skills and innovation training programs
- > Developing enhanced training programs for Council staff
- > Enhancing community participation in economic planning and program/project design
- > Working with other governments and service providers to ensure our community has access to high-quality health, social, wellbeing, aged care, and other associated support services
- > Investigating the causes of critical local employment/economic challenges for our community, and identifying programs to overcome these issues



Building Infrastructure for the Future

For Charters Towers to grow and prosper, we must build and maintain infrastructure for the future. This includes assets and networks for transport, education, health, digital connectivity, energy, water, logistics, trade, industry, social services, sport, recreation, defence, waste, and many more.

This Strategy commits to identifying and securing high-value infrastructure for Charters Towers - infrastructure that will drive economic growth and diversification, create local jobs, and increase regional prosperity. Council will work closely with the Queensland and Australian Governments to advance our infrastructure priorities.

Actions

Our priority action areas include:

- > Identifying, advocating and advancing major infrastructure projects, such as Hells Gates development / Big Rocks Weir irrigation scheme to grow and support agriculture, light industry and energy industries
- > Expanding renewable energy generation for homes, progressing Copper String and connecting to the national energy grid (and potentially the North-West Minerals Province)
- > Improving road and rail infrastructure to establish Charters Towers as a transport hub and critical link in national supply chains. This will include ongoing work with the Queensland and Australian Governments, RDA and the Inland Queensland Roads Action Project (IQ-RAP)
- > Enhancing regional digital/internet/mobile connectivity, building on the expansion of the NBN, to take advantage of opportunities in e-commerce, Agri-tech, professional services, information and communication technology, innovation, etc.
- > Developing a long-term airport expansion plan, to create new jobs, support local industry, and enhance trade opportunities
- > Leveraging smart technology and 'big data' to improve the functionality, effectiveness and resilience of regional infrastructure (e.g. digital sensors to monitor the condition of roads and bridges)
- > Working with industry and other governments (especially the Queensland and Australian Governments) to identify and assess future infrastructure requirements for the region
- > Identifying and advocating for enhanced health and aged care facilities and infrastructure



Expanding Our Visitor Economy

Tourism is a central part of the Charters Towers economy and a key focus for future economic development. To complement this Strategy, Council has also released a dedicated Charters Towers Tourism Strategy 2020-2025.

The goals of the Tourism Strategy are to:

- > Grow overnight holiday visitation by ten per cent
- > Increase spend in the region from overnight and day trip holiday visitors from \$312 and \$75 to over \$770 and \$140 respectively to match Townsville
- > Extend the shoulder seasons, increasing visitor bookings in April/May and September/October

Increase destination awareness in target markets, measured by website traffic, social media engagement and online reviews.

This new Tourism Strategy has four pillars, as summarised below:

Products, Experiences & Events

- > Work with tourism operators to create themed and coordinated experiences
- > Develop EduTourism product and experiences
- > Develop new signature event for the region - Charters Towers Gold Rush
- > Develop a seasonal events calendar across the year.

Brand & Marketing

- > Bring together different industries and communities to develop a holistic, master brand for Charters Towers that tells the region's story
- > Develop an annual digital marketing program that effectively connects the region with target markets in all stages of their travel planning
- > Undertake innovative marketing and promotion practices, such as real time and video infomercials to enable CT to be competitively placed with other regional tourism products

Visitor Servicing & Infrastructure

- > Develop an efficient visitor servicing model (online and face-face) to optimise engagement with visitors at key hotspots and maximise stay and spend in region
- > Undertake a place-making project for the region

Governance, Industry & Community Development

- > Develop an annual capability building, pathway to growth program
- > Coordinate tourism resources to improve efficiencies and enable the effective activation of the Destination Management Plan
- > Work collaboratively with Tourism Organisations and Peak Bodies, such as Regional Advisory Groups and Townsville Enterprise Limited (TEL)
- > Facilitate the establishment of a Charters Towers Regional Tourism Advisory Board

Creating a Vibrant 'Economic Destination'

Charters Towers is an ideal destination for economic investment, activity and prosperity. The region boasts excellent lifestyle, location and overall liveability, making it a great place to live. We have natural assets, infrastructure, and proximity to markets, making Charters Towers a great place for business and industry. And we have beauty, attractions, and amenity, making the region a great place to visit.

This Strategy commits to showcasing Charters Towers as a vibrant 'economic destination' – a preferred choice for residents, investors, innovators, businesses, and tourists. We aim to develop and promote the economic advantages of Charters Towers. Increased population, visitation and business activity will be markers of our success.

Actions

Our priority action areas include:

- > Creating a distinct economic 'brand' and promotion campaign for Charters Towers, aiming to attract new residents, investment, business, students, innovation, skills, and other economic assets
- > Designing a program of renewal and revitalisation for the Charters Towers main street and CBD
- > Leveraging brand/promotion synergies for tourism/visitation and economic development
- > Working with the Queensland Government to define, strengthen and promote our economic advantages
- > Exploring policies and programs to attract residents, business and investment to the region
- > Identifying champions/advocates, and empowering businesses/community to promote Charters Towers as an 'economic destination'
- > Improving Council's communication/engagement mechanisms to empower residents, share economic opportunities and identify high-priority economic development projects





Promoting Local Innovation

To innovate is to create new economic opportunities. Jobs for the future. Economic productivity. Competitive advantages. Economic diversity and resilience. New products and new marketplaces.

This Strategy commits to building local innovation capacity and increasing the economic benefits of innovation for Charters Towers. We will welcome new ideas and new technology. We will harness local creativity and intelligence. We will encourage innovative partnerships. We will leverage innovation to create local employment and industry. Innovation will make our economy stronger, more resilient and prosperous.

Actions

Our priority action areas include:

- > Supporting and promoting local innovation training, programs and events
- > Establishing a formal Charters Towers Innovation Network
- > Developing an internal Innovation Framework to increase Council's innovation capacity and activities
- > Showcasing local innovators and their innovative projects/products/services
- > Advancing innovation within our traditional areas of strength - agriculture, mining, tourism, education, etc.
- > Leveraging the experience and expertise of our community to design innovative solutions to local challenges
- > Partnering with other governments, education institutions, businesses etc. to attract innovative projects and investment to the region
- > Identifying and addressing local barriers to innovation (e.g. red tape, skills, communication challenges)
- > Building connections with other innovation networks across Queensland, Australia and overseas





Developing Our Education Sector

Charters Towers has a thriving education and training sector. We have a long history of providing exceptional education services and outcomes. Our education institutions and teachers are widely renowned. Students come to our local schools from across Queensland, Australia and from overseas.

Building on this strong foundation, there are a range of exciting opportunities to expand and develop our education sector. We are committed to attracting new students, increasing education exports, making the most of new technology, diversifying our education services, hosting new institutions, and creating new jobs.

Actions

In collaboration with the education and training sector, our priority action areas include:

- > Promoting Charters Towers as an 'education destination'
- > Identifying high-value target markets and developing campaigns to increase market share
- > Assessing changes in demand for educational/training services and refining local services to capture this demand
- > Exploring options to increase the local presence of tertiary education institutions
- > Strengthening collaboration between the education sector and the local business, industry and innovation sectors
- > Examining opportunities to make better use of existing educational assets (e.g. Dalrymple Trade Training Centre)
- > Increasing the use of technology to enhance local education services and outcomes
- > Expanding the role of the local sector in meeting the education and training needs of the Charters Towers community
- > Leveraging the local education sector to provide regional specific training and education needs
- > Promoting excellence in teaching and learning of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)



Charters Towers Education Sector

Education serves as a major contributor to the economic growth and progression of the Charters Towers Region.

As a region founded on its mineral rich mining fields, the historic significance of education to the Charters Towers district began in 1899, with the establishment of the School of Mines by the Local Mining Institute.

The region boasts an outstanding selection of reputable Private Boarding Schools, all of which were established in the late 1800s to early 1900s. With such deep seeded origins in the region, these schools share a common history of driving the development of Charters Towers into an esteemed Regional Education Centre. The local Boarding Schools capture significant student enrolments from across broader Queensland and neighbouring states. International enrolments are proving to be an emerging growth market for our local Boarding Schools.

Established in 1987, the Charters Towers School of Distance Education remains an innovative education centre. It provides opportunities for local, regional and international students to use a wide range of proven and emerging technologies that support flexible learning and distance education - "Preparing people for the future".

Complementing the Region's Primary and Secondary School opportunities is the Dalrymple Trade and Training Centre, which offers a selection of courses to meet the local and regional needs of students and industries.

There are vast opportunities to continue to holistically grow and develop the Charters Towers education sector.



Partnerships & Collaboration

Council is committed to actively championing and coordinating economic development and innovation for Charters Towers. However, Council is only one player. We all play a part in shaping and building our economy. And by working together, our economy will grow even stronger.

We are committed to constructive partnerships and collaboration that drives regional economic growth and innovation. To create and realise these new economic opportunities, we will work with community, local businesses, other governments, investors, innovators, trading partners, and others.

Our commitment to economic collaboration is exemplified by these current partners:

- > The Queensland and Australian Governments
- > Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland Inc.
- > North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils
- > Townsville Enterprise Limited (TEL)
- > James Cook University
- > Charters Towers Chamber of Commerce and Mines Inc.
- > Pentland Progress Association Inc
- > Local Education Sector
- > Agricultural industry
- > Mining Industry
- > The Mt Isa To Townsville Economic Development Zone Organisation (MITEZ)
- > Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
- > Advancing Regional Innovation
- > Dalrymple Trade and Training Centre
- > Central Queensland University
- > Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia
- > Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund (NAIF)
- > NQ Dry Tropics
- > Agforce North Queensland Branch
- > Greenvale Progress Association Inc
- > Hervey Range Community Association Inc
- > Ravenswood Restoration and Preservation Association Inc





Economic & Innovation Case Studies



Aussie Powersports | aussiepowersports.com.au

Aussie Powersports (APS) is a Charters Towers based company that supplies accessories for Quad Bikes and Side by Sides to customers across Australia. The Company is one of the largest in market, with over 450 national stockists, in addition to their own website and eBay store.

Identifying a gap in the quad bike market after owning a local motorbike dealership for many years, the Miller family commenced operations of APS in 2008. The business started small and expanded substantially, establishing a partnership with the Price family in 2018. APS now stock over 1000 different parts, which are both made locally and imported. The business continues to expand, now employing 9 team members based in Charters Towers.

The growth of the business has been fuelled by a strong commitment to the industry, hard work and a team that strives for excellence. APS employ a fulltime Product Development team, who work with design engineers within Australia and internationally to develop products that meet the Australian market and consumer needs.

APS has developed partnerships with some of Australia's largest all-terrain and utility task vehicle suppliers, shipping original equipment manufacturer products from Charters Towers to partners around the country.

APS has grown and developed in Charters Towers by leveraging local knowledge, competitive overheads and a strong team. APS will continue to diversify in Charters Towers to ensure the company remains competitive and successful within the industry.





W. Titley & Co | titleys.com.au

The Titley family are renowned in the Charters Towers region, and across Australia as quality clothing suppliers. The initial store, W. Titley & Co, was established in 1926 by bootmaker William Titley. W. Titley & Co has withstood the test of time, expanding to five specialty retail stores, W. Titley & Co, Titley's Department Store, Titley's Footwear, Intersport Charters Towers and the latest edition Worklocker Charters Towers. The company provides employment opportunities for 35 local people and over 80% of their merchandise is now available for purchase online.

Owner and Managing Director Tony Titley is the fourth-generation owner and operator of Titley's and believes the success of his business is due to an ability and desire to change with the times, and a continued commitment to customer satisfaction.

Titley's is an innovative business leader that continues to offer customers what they want. The family understands the importance of being entrepreneurial and acquiring the requisite skills to run a business. Tony studied Accounting and Business Finance before taking the reins of the family business in 1994.

A hard work ethic supported by a smart business plan has been critical for the Titley's success. The business plan ensures the Titley's team is able to innovate, adapt and make informed decisions. It sets out processes that guarantee Titley's not only researching and adjusting to its competitors, but also maintaining a comprehensive understanding of the marketplace and the businesses finances.

Marketing and promotion are key drivers of their business success. Advertising across a wide variety of media; television, radio, print, social media, search engines and digital mail ensures the business reaches its target audience across Australia.

Tony and Rosie are true entrepreneurs. They assess future opportunities, whilst engaging with their customers and exploring gaps in the market.



Goldtower

The Goldtower commercial and industrial development is another example of the exciting and innovative work being undertaken in Charters Towers. Goldtower is the largest mixed-use commercial development of its kind in North Queensland and will be open for new businesses in 2020 following the completion of civil works.

Goldtower provides a low cost, high exposure option for businesses to establish a physical storefront, and approach that is unique for Charters Towers and North Queensland.

The development is an example of forward thinking and adaptability – once completed it will attract mining business, support on-site construction, AgTech among others.

GoldTower is an initiative by Goldtower Construction Pty Ltd, which has been operating in Charters Towers since 2007. During this time Goldtower Construction have prioritised local labour, suppliers, contractors and trades wherever possible, injecting more than \$10 million into the local economy.

Goldtower Construction will continue to develop multiple purpose-built buildings and tenancies on the site, with the intent of attracting and supporting new short- and long-term tenants who wish to establish business in Charters Towers.

Goldtower Construction have been successful in attracting new business and tenants to Charters Towers. utilising an innovative business model. Goldtower construct and own their buildings and services and subsequently leased to tenants, providing flexibility and ease for businesses.

The development is strategically located along the Highway and includes road train access. Additionally, Goldtower was constructed with full access to power, water, sewage and communications networks, allowing for business expansion.

Goldtower Constructions has received Council approval to construct new buildings, and so provide more tenancies at Goldtower to encourage new and diverse businesses within Charters Towers.



Pandanus Station Marble Quarry

In just three short years, Queensland Granite and Marble, took over the operations of the marble quarry on Pandanus Station, setting up camp quarters, buying machinery and establishing global supply lines.

The Australian family-owned company have been in mining and the marketing of precious and semi-precious stones since 1958. They have a history of business innovation and ambitious global thinking – they were one of the earliest Australian companies to have an office in Hong Kong.

“Within two weeks of commencing operations in 2017 we brought over our first customer from Italy to inspect our marble and quarry”

– Director Larry Ilario

Ilario notes that Australia is not known for its marble or granite quarries, despite all Australian States having a range of coloured marble and granite areas.

The Pandanus Station marble is coloured similarly to the sought-after Italian and Greece marble, and is the only quarry outside these areas to produce this particular colour. However, Pandanus Station marble is stronger and about half the price of the Italian marble.

Queensland Granite and Marble had to work hard to capitalise on the uniqueness of their product, and to overcome Australia’s relative obscurity in the marble market. From 2017 to December 2019, the business achieved sales to customers in Italy, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan and India.

To do so they had to fly customers to Australia and prove their business and mining quality.

“Customers want to satisfy themselves that there is an established quarry and it has the capacity to fill orders for now and the future”

– Director Larry Ilario

Queensland Granite and Marble already has a business plan to continue this process for several years. They will continue to investigate new and innovative ways to reach national and new international markets.



Implementation & Next Steps

To deliver on the objectives and aspirations of this Strategy, Council has also developed a targeted Action Plan. These documents complement each other and should be read in conjunction.

The Action Plan identifies priority actions, milestones and accountabilities. It will be reviewed and updated annually to fine-tune activity and respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Council does not control all the economic levers which impact and influence economic activity in Charters Towers. Sometimes Council will act as a leader, directly delivering economic policies and programs. In other cases, Council may act as an economic facilitator, collaborator, advocate, or supporter.

Progress against this Strategy will be regularly reported on Council's website and through quarterly updates in the Charters Towers Regional Council Operational Plan.







CHARTERS TOWERS
REGIONAL COUNCIL

PO Box 189
Charters Towers Qld 4820

12 Mosman Street
Charters Towers Qld 4820 Australia

P (07) 4761 5300

F (07) 4761 5344

E mail@charterstowers.qld.gov.au

ABN 67 731 313 583

www.charterstowers.qld.gov.au