



Charters Towers



Our Region Our Future 2035

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Acknowledgments:

This document has been prepared through the cooperative efforts of Councillors, the Community Reference Group, the Community, the Executive Team and staff members of Charters Towers Regional Council. Council thanks the external stakeholders and community members who participated in the discussions and workshops throughout the preparation of this planning framework.

Council commissioned Engagement Plus, a specialist community engagement firm providing community engagement and facilitation services to all levels of government, corporate and community organisations, as consultants to provide professional advice on the development of Council's Community Engagement Policy and to prepare a community planning methodology for Council to implement.

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CONTENTS

Message from the Mayor	1
Background	2
Statutory Requirements	3
Functional Outcomes	3
Community & Stakeholder Engagement	4
Reading & Utilising the Community Plan	7
Our History	9
Traditional Owners	9
Settlement	9
Our People, Our Community	13
Our Economy	13
Our Environment	14
Our River	14
Our Regional Overview	11
Our Local Government Area	12
Where Are We Now?.....	16
Opportunities Within Our Region	17
Major Projects Currently Underway within Our Region	19
Challenges Facing Our Region	21
Our Region, Our Future.....	22
Where Do We Want To Be	22
Our Council – Community Leadership	23
Our Community	26
Our Economy	30
Our Environment	34



Message from the Mayor

In the name of sustainability and a more content and cohesive community, Councils today are required to create a living, meaningful, descriptive document showing the identity, style and aspirations of its people while enhancing its sense of place.

The Community Plan, which is a factual summary of what we are, what we have and where we hope to go, is derived from the people and compiled in consultation.

It generates an air of ownership, an ability to lead off the front foot and a feeling of inclusiveness which in turn brings about a sense of well being.



Charters Towers Regional Council, in conjunction with its people, has put together a comprehensive document which, I think, does what it is meant to do.

I thank all those who gave their time and ideas to the construction of this, our Community Plan.

Ben Callcott

Mayor, Charters Towers Regional Council

background

Charters Towers Regional Council has prepared a Community Plan; **Charters Towers - Our Region, Our Future 2035**.

The reasons for this Plan are:

- to gain a clear appreciation of the needs and priorities of its residents;
- to provide a framework for future development and growth of the region; and
- to comply with its statutory obligations.

Charters Towers - Our Region, Our Future 2035 creates a vision for the Charters Towers Region which is critical in considering population growth and community development and the need to plan for a sustainable future.

Charters Towers - Our Region, Our Future 2035 is Charters Towers Regional Council's primary planning document. It underpins all other planning processes of Council, including strategic land use planning and corporate planning. It will inform priority infrastructure plans and planning scheme development, while helping to better manage the competing pressures of, for example, economic development and environmental protection. It will also ensure that the lifestyle needs and aspirations of a healthy and vibrant community are met.

Community planning involves the creation of integrated short, medium and long range plans to achieve a vision for the future. Community engagement is essential to help develop that vision.

Community Plans acknowledge the long-term implications of many of the decisions of local government today, and ensure the needs of the next generation are recognised.

The Community Plan is a whole of government approach to planning. It addresses all areas of community life which affect the lifestyle of the Charters Towers regional population over time, with sustainability, such as health, economic development, education, safety and security. It identifies the key issues and concerns of the Charters Towers regional community, regardless of which levels of the public, private or community sectors are ultimately responsible for delivering programs and services.

A significant outcome of the Community Plan is identifying changes required in the role of the Charters Towers Regional Council to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for future development to accommodate growth while protecting the region's existing environment, biodiversity, natural resources and long term sustainability.

statutory requirements

The *Local Government Act 2009* requires the Charters Towers Regional Council to create a Community Plan for **the sustainable future** of the local government area. The Community Plan includes a plan for the region and is not restricted to Council services. This Community Plan is the key strategic planning document for Council.

A long term community plan is a document that:

- outlines the local government's goals, strategies and policies for implementing the local government's vision for the future of the local government area, during the period covered by the plan; and
- covers a period of at least 10 years after the commencement of the Plan.

It underpins and informs corporate and operational business planning, asset management decisions, enterprise risk management planning and long term financial planning.

Four key elements must be addressed by Council's Community Plan - "the four pillars of sustainability":

- Economic Development
- Environment
- Social Wellbeing
- Governance

functional outcomes

The legislative requirement is clearly a mandate, but the most important reasons for developing a community plan are:

Community Improvement

The key benefit is to have a consistent vision and strategies to help maintain and enhance the vitality, sustainability and liveability of communities.

A Greater Opportunity to Attract Resources

If, when applying for funding, Council and others can say that an application is part of an overall integrated community plan, it increases the chances of a successful funding application.

Fostering Council's Relationships with the Community

Community planning can strengthen the relationship between councils, community members and organisations.

Better Decision-Making and Investment

Councillors make decisions based on an understanding of the views of constituents. This process can be improved by also having a community plan. Community planning can also create stronger collaboration within Councils.



Fostering Council's Capacity

The process of community planning strengthens the capacity of council staff and councillors and can build councils into more coordinated and capable organisations.

Developing Community Capacity

Community planning can also build skills, confidence and motivation of community members and community organisations.

Mobilise Community Members and Other Stakeholders

If people are genuinely engaged, they can be quite motivated to address issues that are important to them and their community.

Being Proactive and Less Reactive

A community plan allows priorities to be identified and maintained as the focus for effort and investment.

Tailors Services to Communities

Community planning can identify not only an overall community vision, but also specific priorities and values in different communities or sectors.



community & stakeholder engagement



The *Local Government Act 2009* directs all local governments in Queensland to engage with their communities to create Community Plans that capture the communities' visions and strategic directions for the long term future of the region. This Community Plan should represent the views, visions and values of the community for the region's future.

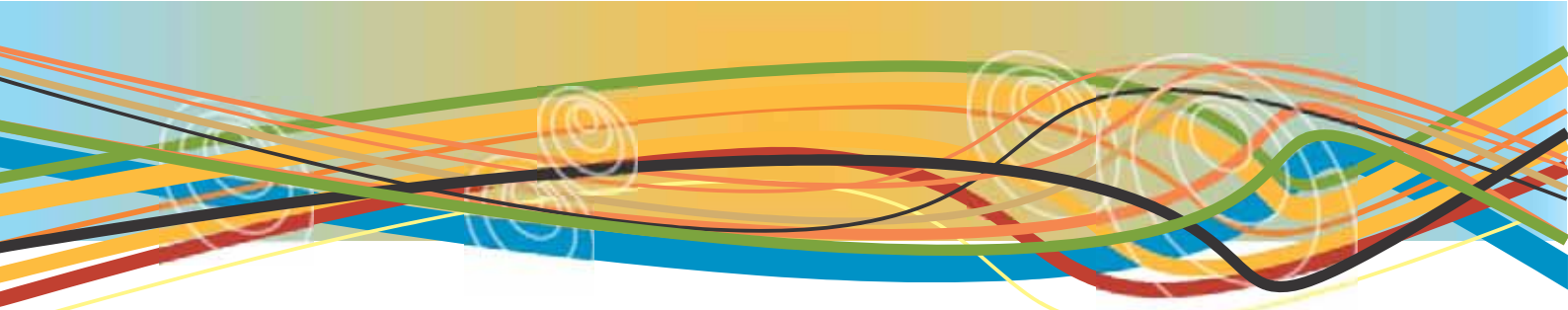
The *Local Government Act 2009* requires that the Community Plan must state how:

- The local government engaged with the community; and
- The extent to which the engagement was consistent with the local government's engagement policy.

Council's Community Engagement Policy encapsulates the core principles of The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation, and identifies how Council will meet its obligations under the *Local Government Act 2009*. It states that "*effective community engagement enhances decision making and supports good governance*".



Charters Towers Regional Council believes community engagement is good business and has committed to the development of this policy within a broader community engagement framework. This framework will include community engagement procedures, templates, toolkits, induction and training, community engagement champions, public relations, media and on-line technology procedures and a community assistance program.



Planned engagement provides the community with opportunities to have a say about:

- what is happening in the community and to share responsibility for developing future plans for the region;
- to explore creative local solutions to local issues and learn more about how local government operates; and
- to build relationships and a sense of community.

Planned engagement assists Council to:

- achieve better results;
- support good project management practice;
- meet legislative requirements;
- meet stakeholder expectations;
- support good governance; and
- facilitate shared understanding with the community while building relationships and strengthening a sense of community.

Community Planning Methodology

Council commissioned Engagement Plus, a specialist community engagement firm, as consultants to provide professional advice on the development of Council's Community Engagement Policy and to prepare a community planning methodology for Council to implement. The methodology is based on the following key concepts:

An Appreciative Inquiry approach – focusing on what people value and see as positive about their community while also addressing what might be issues and problems. This approach maintains the best of the past by taking those elements and applying them to the dream for the future.

It is proposed that the appreciative inquiry framework be the foundation of communications with key stakeholders and community members in planning for the long term future of the Charters Towers Region.

The appreciative inquiry framework enables a community to plan for the future by first considering what they love about their place, what works well and what they appreciate and then considering what they want for their future before then determining how they will achieve that vision.

A common set of questions or discussion topics are used during engagement activities throughout each phase of the community planning process.



Recognition that “community” can be considered from a number of perspectives:

- Geographical perspectives.
- Sector perspectives – business, environmental, ageing etc.
- Issues based perspectives – mobility access, public transport etc.

Balanced input – seeking involvement from traditionally hard to reach groups and the “silent majority”.

Strong internal engagement from the outset.

Capacity building approach – developing skills both within Council and in the community to assist in engagement activities.

Effective communication throughout the community planning process including feedback at key intervals.

Development of the Charters Towers Regional Council “brand” throughout the project.

Underlying principles that were essential in the group community engagement processes were:

- Inclusiveness;
- Mutual respect;
- Affirming diversity of opinion;
- Adding value to the discussion and outcomes;
- Thinking broadly, focusing on the big picture not the detail; and
- The principle that there are no wrong answers.

Fundamental Principles underpinning our ongoing sustainability:

To demonstrate our commitment to **Our Region, Our Future 2035**, we will adhere to the following set of principles in everything we do:

Responsible Representation and Leadership

- Commit to and support responsible and visionary leadership that governs our region with equity, clarity and determination.
- Sustain and enhance the quality of life that we all enjoy for future generations.

Responsible Decisions, Policies and Planning

- Ensure balanced and transparent decisions, shaped by an informed and engaged community.
- Openly monitor, evaluate and improve through adaptive management of our vision.
- Consider whole of life costs to ensure value for money and affordability.

Collaborative Approach

- Empower our community with a shared sense of responsibility to embrace the challenges and opportunities of change.

Environmental Management

- Protect our unique natural and built environment and its intrinsic values.

People and Economy

- Achieve long term economic security, community health and social wellbeing for our region.

Design

- Recognise and celebrate the value of good design and innovation.

reading & utilising the community plan

This Community Plan provides a strategic direction for what the Charters Towers Region should be like in 2035.

It does not explain how to get there in detail as there are other processes to achieve that. It does, however, describe what must be evident for the Charters Towers Region to provide the environment, lifestyle and opportunities needed by its residents, visitors and other stakeholders.

It also describes a range of fundamental guiding principles through which all planning and actions should be viewed and taken.

These ingredients will ensure the features that make the Charters Towers Region so unique and special will still be evident in 2035. They also ensure approaches that will build healthy, strong and resilient people and communities.

The Community Plan encourages people, organisations and governments to use these principles in developing appropriate and responsible implementation strategies.

Importantly, this Plan pre-empts fundamental changes to the ways in which the Charters Towers Regional Council fulfils its role of being the most important influence on the future of the region. Some of these changes will be highly visible, while others will unfold over time.

The Plan also heralds an approach which will see the Council, the community and internal and external stakeholders working together to create a Charters Towers Region that will provide the best possible future for its residents.





our history

Traditional Owners

For tens of thousands of years, the ancestors of the traditional owners the Gudjal people (pronounced Goodjal) lived on country in this region. For the aboriginal community, the land has a spiritual meaning.

Gudjal people lived across the region, especially along the Burdekin and Broughton Rivers, around the basalt country and its lagoons and west to the magnificent White Mountains country.

Whilst Gudjal people have always lived in the region, many other aboriginal people have lived in the area and travelled widely within the region concerned with not only the physical land, but also its spirits throughout history.

Gudjal country shares borders with the Gugu Badhun, Yirandali and Jangga people with whom strong connections still exist. The country throughout the Charters Towers Region historically supported, through its rich country side and permanent waters, a significant indigenous population prior to european settlement.

The shared connection to the land by the traditional owners and the pastoralists from an environmentally sustainable perspective is critical.

The traditional owners of the region believe that the preservation of the land is imperative in protecting the natural and cultural values of their homelands.

Our Region, Our Future 2035 acknowledges and respects these people as the traditional owners of the country on which we walk.

Settlement

The attractiveness and abundant natural resources drew many europeans to the area.

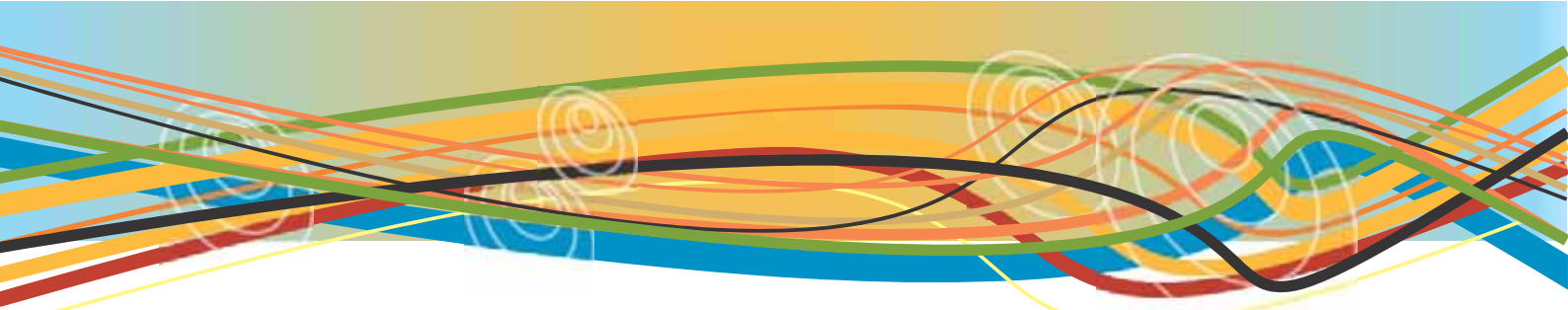
Ludwig Leichardt, in 1845, was the first european to traverse this country, followed quickly by George Elphinstone Dalrymple in 1860 (of which the former rural council was named after) and then followed the first of the pastoralists, whose descendants can still be found within our communities.

The historic Dalrymple local authority was established in 1879 and encompassed approximately 69,000 sq km and comprised mostly large rural holdings and a very sparse and scattered population.

Charters Towers, the town they called 'The World', was born to the sound of thunder and flashes of lightning. Hugh Mosman, George Clarke, John Fraser and horse-boy Jupiter had been prospecting away to the south of what is now Charters Towers when their horses scattered during a fierce thunderstorm. It was while searching for the horses the next morning that the first Towers gold was discovered.

The discovery point was just near the modern day intersection of Mosman Street, Rainbow Road and Black Jack Road and was at the end of the year 1871 or the very beginning of 1872.

The party returned to Ravenswood to register their find which they named Charters Towers. "Charters" for W.S.E.M. Charters, the Gold Commissioner and "Towers" because of the conical shaped hills in the vicinity of the discovery.



A rush of 'fortune seeking men' quickly followed and a small settlement named Millchester formed on the water at Gladstone Creek. By the end of 1872 some 3,000 souls inhabited the new field. The alluvial men left early on for the Palmer River discoveries but the hard rock miners remained, seeking the gold in the deep veins underground.

Charters Towers rather than Millchester soon became the main settlement. The goldfield did not reach its peak of gold production until 1899. During the period 1872-1899 the place changed from a rough settlement with bark and calico buildings to a thriving city of some 25,000 inhabitants. The city, by that time, had properly formed streets, several wonderful houses and many grand public buildings lining the two main streets. A plentiful supply of water for domestic and other purposes was pumped to the town from a Weir in the Burdekin River about nine (9) miles to the north. Underground electricity was also supplied to parts of the main town area.

Hundreds of shafts were sunk during the lifetime of the field and the ore raised was processed through many large treatment batteries. It is estimated that 6,000,000 ounces of gold were won in the first 40 to 50 years of the life of the Towers.

All religions were strongly represented on the field and, in 1890, the miners could quench their thirst in no less than 65 hotels registered on the field. Sports, music and the arts all had fantastic followings. It was said that everything you might desire could be had in the Towers. There was no reason to travel elsewhere for anything. This is why the town became affectionately known as 'The World'.

The decline of mining following World War I saw the population shrink and the town become the supply centre or hub of the Dalrymple Shire as well as the educational centre for students from all over North Queensland.

On 17 March 2008 the Charters City Council and the Dalrymple Shire Council were amalgamated to form the new Charters Towers Regional Council Local Government Area.





our local government area





Our People, Our Community

As at 30 June 2010, the estimated resident population of Charters Towers Regional Council was 12,837 persons, or 0.3 per cent of the State's population.

Charters Towers Regional Council's population in 2031 is projected to be 14,963 persons.

At the time of the 2006 Census:

- 937 persons stated they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, or 8.2 per cent of the total population;
- 46.5 per cent of persons were living (usually residing) at a different address five (5) years earlier;
- 5.7 per cent of persons stated they were born overseas;
- 47.4 per cent of the usual resident population were in the most disadvantaged quintile and 0.0 per cent of the population were in the least disadvantaged quintile;
- 37.6 per cent of persons were aged 15 years and over with a post-school qualification;
- 4.9 per cent of persons were in need of assistance with a profound or severe disability;
- 21.2 per cent of persons aged 15 years and over were volunteers;
- 4,038 persons aged 15 years and over stated their gross individual weekly income was less than \$400 (46.1 per cent of all persons aged 15 years and over).

In 2009:

- 53.6 per cent of students attending a school attended a government school and 46.4 per cent attended a non-government school.
- there were 3 aged-care service providers, with a total of 171 places in operation.

Our Economy

At the time of the 2006 Census:

- Mining was the largest industry of employment for usual residents, with 13.2 per cent of the region's employed labour force.
- 48.8 per cent of all occupied private dwellings had an internet connection.
- The total value of agricultural production was \$127.3 million, 1.5 per cent of the total value of agricultural production in Queensland.

In 2008–09 there were 870 businesses in Charters Towers Regional Council area, 0.2 per cent of all Queensland businesses.

In the 12 months ending 30 June 2011, there were 32 dwelling units in new residential buildings approved in Charters Towers Regional Council, which represented a total of \$7.5 million.

The smoothed unemployment rate for Charters Towers Regional Council in the June quarter 2011 was 5.4 per cent.





Our Environment

The Local Government Area of Charters Towers Regional Council has a total area of 68,571.2 km², or 4.0 per cent of the total area of the State.

It has an average daily temperature range of 16.6°C to 29.4°C and, on average, receives 632mm of rainfall each year.

The natural environment seems to create geological boundaries with:

- the eastern border corresponding closely with the coastal highlands;
- in the west, the lowlands of the Cape River Valley and the Flinders Range, right down to the Lolworth Range;
- to the north, the head waters of the Burdekin River; and
- in the south, the great salt lakes and the early Port Denison road network.

The diversity of region, from:

- bordering the wet tropics and rainforests in the north east;
- ancient volcanic and geological formations to the north west;
- rugged and unexplored wilderness areas;
- diverse flora and fauna;
- salt lakes; and
- sensitive desert uplands

make this region very unique.

It is a very important and functional region, not only because of its economic activity, but because of the economic corridors it has with the Port and City of Townsville and the mineral and agricultural precincts of the north, west and south.

Our River

The Burdekin River provides an abundant and reliable water supply to many of our regional communities and supports the robust grazing and mining sectors, a developing agricultural sector and is the **lifeblood of our region**.

“The Burdekin” rises on the western slope of the Seaview Range and flows into the Pacific Ocean at Upstart Bay, over 200 km to the southeast of the source.

The River was first encountered by Europeans during the expedition led by Ludwig Leichhardt in 1845 and named for Mrs Thomas Burdekin, who had provided assistance to the expedition.

Apart from the Murray River, it is economically the most important river in Australia, and has the fourth-largest watershed of any open drainage system in Australia. It is also the fourth-largest river in Australia by volume of flow.

Annual rainfall at most gauges within the basin can range from 200mm (8 inches) to over 1,600mm (64 inches) depending on the monsoon and the number of cyclones that cross the coast.

Major tributaries feeding the Burdekin River include the Clarke, Suttor, Basalt, Bowen, Belyando and Cape Rivers. The source of the Belyando River in central western Queensland is almost 500 km from the mouth of the Burdekin River, and extends into the typical black-soil grassland of Central Queensland. The Burdekin itself almost reaches the wet tropics in its upper reaches.

The Charters Towers Weir is located only 13 km from the town and provides a dependable water supply and a range of recreational opportunities to local residents.

The Burdekin Falls Dam, the largest dam in Queensland, was constructed west of Ayr and Home Hill and completed in 1987 to form what is also known as Lake Dalrymple.

In the delta around Ayr and Home Hill, groundwater is used extensively to irrigate crops of sugar cane, mangoes and mixed agricultural produce. This groundwater is recharged artificially during the extreme flood events that occasionally occur, usually due to a La Niña event.



where are we now?

What Do People Love About Living in the Charters Towers Region - Our Intrinsic Values, Assets and Resources

Residents have been attracted to the region for many different reasons over a long period of time. As a result, the things that they love about the region are very different and sometimes in apparent conflict with each other. In many ways this has only added to the character of the region as it has grown into an important rural and regional hub in North-West Queensland.

With a combination of climate, geographic position and an abundance of natural resources, the Charters Towers Region has many of the attributes that are attractive to residents, visitors, business and industry.

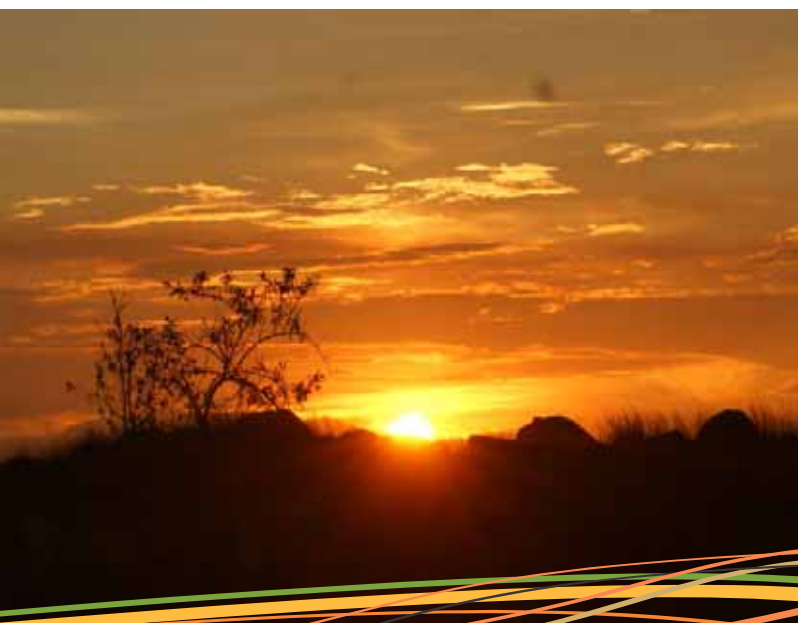
The region is well serviced by accessible road, rail and air transport options (passenger freight and livestock), services and infrastructure. It also boasts a broad range of retail, manufacturing and transport services, and well established cultural, health, educational, sporting, recreation and tourism locations and facilities.

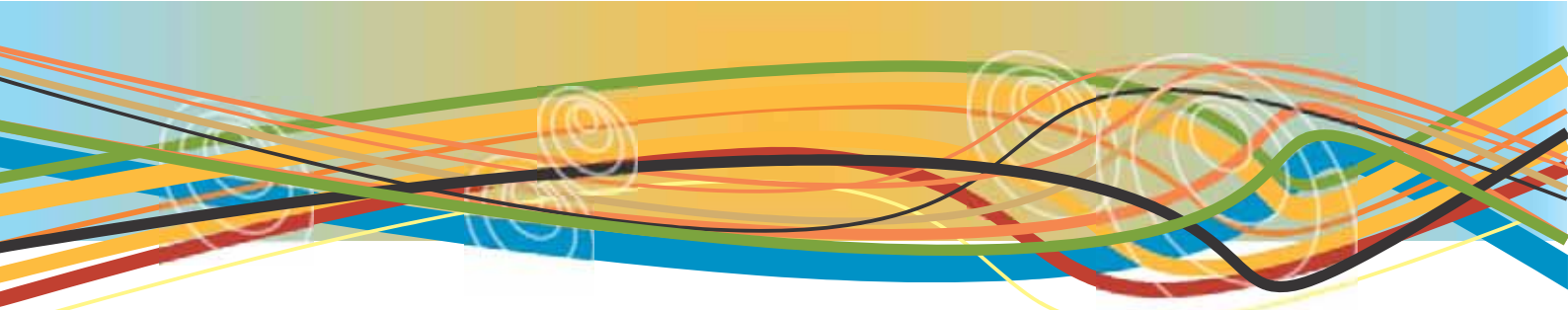
Residents recognise the value of the range of employment opportunities available to them and the potential that the region has from a family, community and economic development perspective. However, there is a constant theme that resonates from the region's residents - lifestyle. Many people say our region's greatest asset is its laid-back and relaxed lifestyle and the unique character of its individual communities and grazing properties. They love that Charters Towers still fundamentally retains its rural or country atmosphere.

Importantly, they enjoy the fact that their communities remain safe, liveable and affordable. They value the strong sense of community pride and caring within their family oriented communities.

Many people say that culture, heritage and an inspiring arts and events sector bring life and the ongoing development of vitality to the region. Indigenous culture and history is seen as an integral component of our Region and within our inclusive communities.

Of great importance is the outdoor lifestyle encouraged by the region's climate and its pastoral, mining, educational, sporting and recreational pursuits. The wide open and green spaces, majestic sunrises and sunsets, natural settings and rural communities provide many varied and unique recreational and lifestyle choices within close proximity of the easily accessible major regional centre and coastal City of Townsville.





All of this is located within a diverse natural environment that offers lush wet tropics, rugged hillsides and gorges, open grasslands and native bush lands, national parks, water catchments, rivers and lakes. Hence, the sustainability passion of residents who believe the Charters Towers Region must remain known for its natural and built environment and resources as key elements of its long term prosperity and future.

Finally, the focus on their individual rural communities and the desire to keep their space unique and special is paramount in the minds of many.

opportunities within our region

Charters Towers is the major population centre (approx 9,000) of the region and has a rich gold mining history and character. Located just 136 km or a 90 minute drive from Townsville, the Charters Towers Region has a strong vision for the future.

Beginning from a chance discovery of gold in 1871, Charters Towers burst into life as a bustling metropolis which, in its heyday, was the second largest city in Queensland. More than 100 years on, Charters Towers is a support centre for the booming mining and grazing sectors. It also boasts a broad range of retail, manufacturing and transport services all within easy access of well established cultural, health, educational, sporting and recreational facilities.

With a combination of climate, geographic position and an abundance of natural resources, the Charters Towers Region has many of the attributes that are attractive to residents, visitors, business and industry. Along with exceptional health services, excellent education and training opportunities and quality employment prospects, the region boasts significant infrastructure with the capacity to expand to cater for new commercial and government projects and initiatives.

There are several factors that are acknowledged as key inherent strengths for future development in the region:

- reliable and abundant water supply;
- abundance of available land; and
- energy supply.

These strengths, whilst “potentially available” have not been developed to the point where they can be capitalised in the immediate short term.







major projects currently underway within our region

There are many opportunities to build on the natural competitive advantages that the Charters Towers Region offers – water, land, sunshine and proximity to the Mount Isa to Townsville Economic Zone (MITEZ) corridor and major North Queensland mining precincts.

The development of the **White Mountains National Park** is a major focus for the region and presents a great opportunity for the advancement of eco and cultural tourism initiatives and is just one of many burgeoning commercial opportunities coming to light in the region.

The project framework is currently being developed by Council in conjunction with Townsville Enterprise Ltd, MITEZ, the State Government and other stakeholders.

Dalrymple Trade Training Centre (DTTC)

Consortium members for the DTTC project include Charters Towers State High School (Lead School), Charters Towers School of Distance Education, Columba Catholic College, All Souls St Gabriels School and Blackheath & Thornburgh College.

Charters Towers Regional Council has approved the allocation of four (4) hectares of land on the Charters Towers Airport Reserve (Lot 5 plan SP113252, Parish - Charters Towers, County - Davenport) for the construction of the Centre, if the consortium's submission for funding to the Federal Government and subsequent development approval under the Council's Integrated Development Assessment Scheme are successful.


Development of the Charters Towers Regional Council's Integrated Planning Scheme

A review of both the former Charters Towers City Council and Dalrymple Shire Council Town Plans is currently underway. A new Planning Scheme is expected to be finalised in July 2012.

Unlocking “Potentially Available” Land within Charters Towers

Residential zoned land dispersed within the heart of Charters Towers urban footprint and the industrial lands (Cunningham Estate) are subject to native title and Council is negotiating not only with the State Government but also with the native title claimants.

State Government approval for the ongoing development of the Cunningham Industrial Estate has now been forthcoming and expressions of interest for potential industrial businesses will be sought in the near future.





Healthy Communities

Council has just completed and opened the new heated swimming pool at the Kennedy Regimental Pool Complex. This facility offers the opportunity for additional aquatic programs, rehabilitation and aged care and sport and recreation activities to be undertaken all year round.

Council has submitted a funding application to the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under the National Partnership Agreement On Preventive Health - Healthy Communities Initiative Phase 3 (October 2011 – June 2013) and is currently waiting for a formal decision on the application. The initiative seeks to employ a full time Healthy Communities Coordinator and to allow scope for the expansion and enhancement of existing community based programs and partnerships throughout the region.

Council has applied to the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management to secure additional land for the purpose of developing the proposed Mosman Street to Towers Hill walking track and recreation corridor and is currently awaiting approval.

Scope of Works documentation for the Mosman Creek / Defiance Mill Park and Mosman Street to Towers Hill recreation corridors has been prepared and quotations will be finalised early in 2012 for the preliminary concept development and estimates.

Showgrounds Redevelopment

Council has submitted a funding application for a \$400,000 project to the Queensland Department of Local Government and Planning – Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program (LGGSP) to upgrade the Charters Towers Showgrounds horse and cattle yard facilities. The project scope of works is currently being finalised in conjunction with the Charters Towers Show Society and other relevant stakeholders. This work will be part of an ongoing facility upgrade and redevelopment program.

Community Initiative – Lake Mosman

In March 2006 a public meeting was held in Charters Towers that led to the formation of the community based Charters Towers and District Recreational Lake Steering Committee. The aim was to develop a recreation lake project, generally referred to as “Lake Mosman” on land partly owned by Council. Council supported the Charters Towers Chamber of Commerce and Mines – Proposal for Recreational Lake Feasibility Study that was prepared by GHD Consulting Engineers in 2008.

Road Restoration Program

Council has commenced work on the most significant road restoration program ever undertaken in this Region. The program will be funded under the joint Commonwealth and Queensland Government Natural Disasters Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) and amounts to approximately \$34m.

Development of additional off street parking in Charters Towers

Council has secured land and development of the infrastructure has commenced.



challenges facing our region

The Region has an extensive road network, of varying standards:

- approximately 4,000 kms of rural and regional road; and
- over 1,000 kms of State controlled main roads and highways.

The lead industries within the region are mining, beef production, agriculture and education, and they are supported by a range of smaller manufacturing and services industries.

Responsiveness to changing environmental and economic conditions, and changing community needs is a constant challenge - "The only constant is change itself."

The specific issues affecting, or which may foreseeably affect, the region have been identified as including:

- climate change, droughts, floods and cyclones;
- employment and population fluctuations associated with local industry variations and instability in commodity prices;
- geography and geology;
- isolation and remoteness of smaller communities;
- cost effective water and energy sources for diversification and industry expansion;
- diminishing gravel supplies;
- native title issues;
- availability of industrial and residential land within the urban footprint of Charters Towers;
- length of roads and accessibility;
- changing expectations of ratepayers;
- residual amalgamation matters;
- static and mobile work camps and caravans – workforce mobilisation;
- widely dispersed and sparse population;
- limited communication network services (television radio, mobile telephones and internet);
- skills shortages and the inability to attract appropriately skilled workers, trades people, and professionals to a rural area;
- industry attraction; and
- the requirement to create additional employment opportunities.

Overall:

- the tyranny of distance;
- the increasing demands being placed upon Local Government from State and Federal Governments;
- the spiralling cost of service provision in rural, remote and isolated communities;
- escalating risk management, regulatory and compliance requirements;
- diminished access to locally available natural resources for public works; and
- competing priorities and pressures of economic development, environmental protection and lifestyle preservation.

are all significant factors dictating that we must all be smarter, strive for improved efficiencies and become more self sufficient if we are to ensure a sustainable future for our region.





our region, our future

The Vision for Our Region is that it is widely recognised and respected:

- *for its strength, resilience and ability to embrace change and overcome challenges to our long term health and well being, prosperity and sustainability;*
- *as a place that our residents and visitors value and safeguard, and have the opportunity to exhibit community pride, responsibility and participation;*
- *for its insightful and astute community, economic and environmental development initiatives and achievements; and*
- *for its contribution and overall value to the Queensland economy and environment.*

where do we want to be?

Taking These Things Forward

We have adopted a “multi-pillared” framework which measures our decisions against key Social, Environment, Economic and Governance factors.

Addressing these factors successfully is essential to our long term regional sustainability.

We will continue assessing our decisions based on these factors and to provide a solid foundation in meeting current community needs without compromising the needs of future generations.

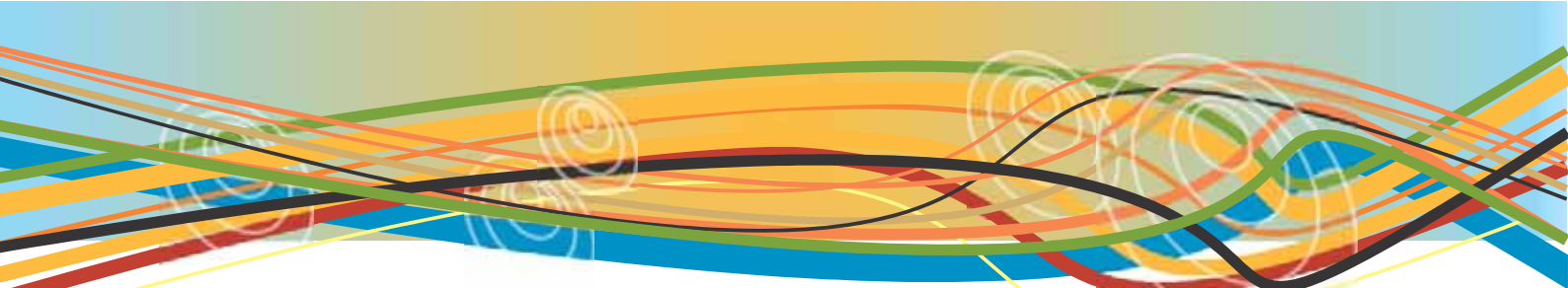
The Charters Towers Region provides significant lifestyle opportunities to its residents. The combination of history and character, a diverse economy, environmental landscape and scenic locations and an abundance of accessible local and regional services and facilities make our region an attractive place to live for a diverse range of people.

Residents want to ensure that:

- the intrinsic values and assets, that are loved by so many, remain the essence of the Charters Towers Region; and
- the key elements of our lifestyle are responsibly managed for the benefit of future generations, rather than being lost in incremental daily decisions made by different decision-makers from time to time.

Charters Towers - Our Region, Our Future 2035 is one way to ensure the features most loved by our communities, regional residents and visitors are part of the region's strategic direction and are considered in every planning process, every implementation plan and every decision.

The **Charters Towers - Our Region, Our Future 2035** initiative is the most significant strategic planning exercise we have ever undertaken. This project considers what future is desirable for the year 2035 and beyond.



This long-term planning is necessary so the Council and the community as a whole can proactively address some of the major challenges and issues.

Over the next 20 years and beyond the Charters Towers regional community will face some significant challenges.

Change is inevitable, whether it be climate change, population growth, increases and/or decreases in economic activity, or major infrastructure upgrades. Any one of these issues could significantly impact on the lifestyle of our region's residents.

Charters Towers Regional Council wants to ensure our organisation and the community are proactive in planning for the future.

our council - community leadership



The Vision for Our Council is that it will:

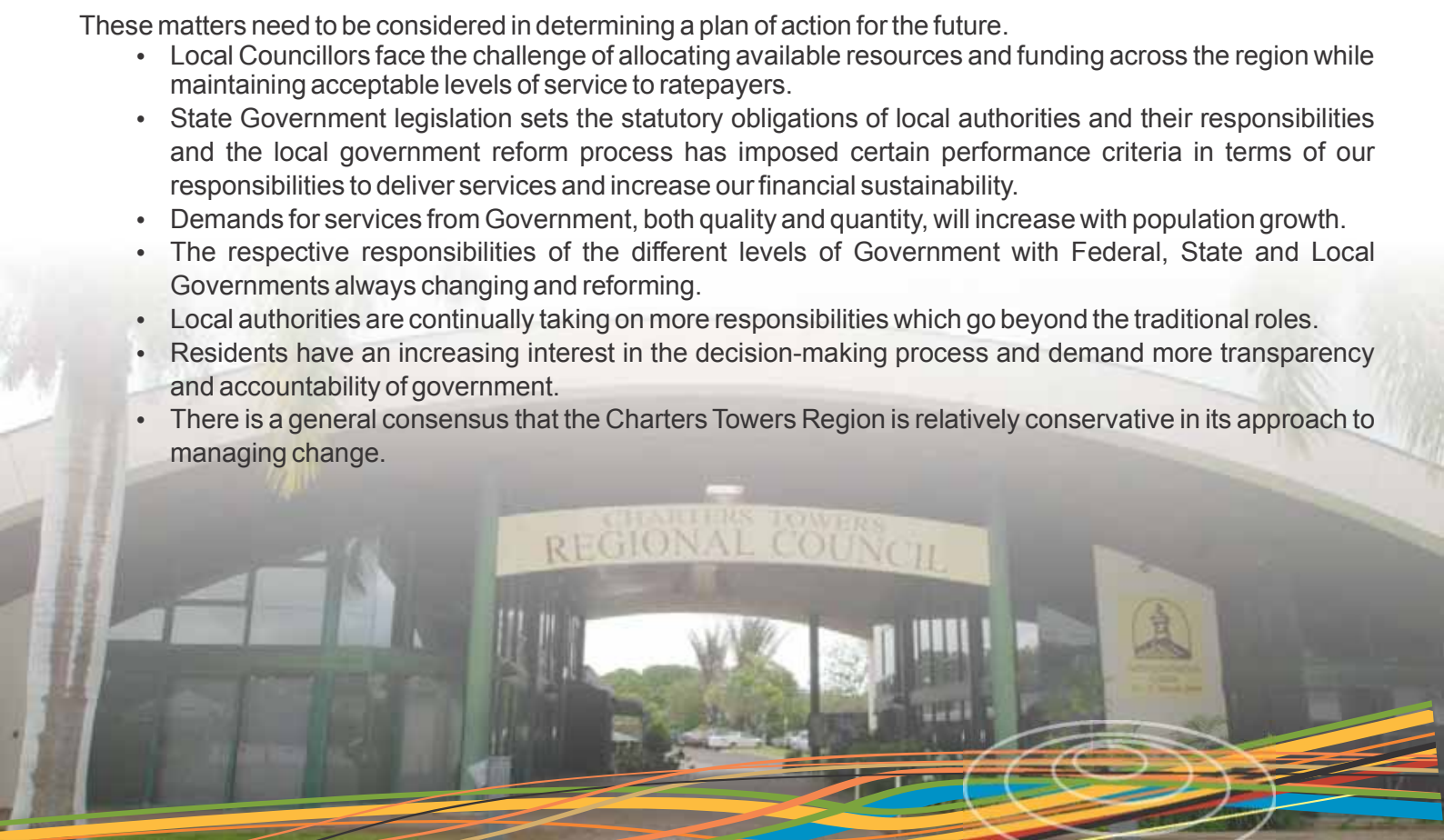
- *provide effective community representation, leadership and management to ensure that the Community Vision is achieved;*
- *deliver informed and responsible decision making and implementation;*
- *provide ethical, accountable and responsive government for the region, in partnership with the community and other stakeholders; and*
- *be an exceptional council which serves, manages and promotes the region using smart business planning and practices.*

Key Challenges

The following issues influence the ability of individuals, organisations and leaders within the community to plan and implement strategies to address change.

These matters need to be considered in determining a plan of action for the future.

- Local Councillors face the challenge of allocating available resources and funding across the region while maintaining acceptable levels of service to ratepayers.
- State Government legislation sets the statutory obligations of local authorities and their responsibilities and the local government reform process has imposed certain performance criteria in terms of our responsibilities to deliver services and increase our financial sustainability.
- Demands for services from Government, both quality and quantity, will increase with population growth.
- The respective responsibilities of the different levels of Government with Federal, State and Local Governments always changing and reforming.
- Local authorities are continually taking on more responsibilities which go beyond the traditional roles.
- Residents have an increasing interest in the decision-making process and demand more transparency and accountability of government.
- There is a general consensus that the Charters Towers Region is relatively conservative in its approach to managing change.



Strengths and Opportunities

- The regional community has a very strong sense of pride about their home which can be used to promote the liveability of the region and inform new residents of the community's values.
- The ageing population in Charters Towers Region will serve as an important source of energy, experience and knowledge in guiding community initiatives and organisations.
- The Charters Towers Region has a contingent of community leaders and representatives who have the energy and skills to identify creative approaches to deliver community inspired projects.
- The current Council consists of Councillors from across the region who can represent the various issues and concerns of residents and not just focus on the needs of the urban ratepayers but also the rural and business sectors.
- Non-government organisations are becoming increasingly important in delivering services and support to public concerns and are growing in stature and power.
- New mechanisms introduced through legislation will improve the strategic planning base of local authorities and require greater transparency and consultation with the community.

The Community Plan will confirm the community's preferred future and provide us with a range of strategies and actions which will challenge how we currently do business.

As we are legally bound to manage local services and initiatives that work towards improving the community's liveability and sustainability, it is fundamental that the outcomes of the region's Community Plan set the context for our business model.

It is widely acknowledged that this common local governance challenge will require transformational change in order to deliver the integrated aspirations of a sustainable region.

The key issue of transformation is the development of an organisational culture that is performance based and customer focused. It is a process that connects customers' values with performance measures.

This initiative acknowledges our fundamental role in the implementation of the region's 2035 vision and how our operations will need to be realigned with the service requirements of an integrated social, environmental and economic vision.

The Regional Council will:

- aim to meet its challenges by identifying the need for action and fully committing itself to addressing that need to the limits of its long term resources; and
- will continually check to make sure that it is working toward the Community's Vision within the Community Plan framework.

The Region's Community Leaders will:

- acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Charters Towers Regional Council and work closely with it as a lead organisation within the community;
- emulate the distinct sense of pride residents hold for the region; and
- be focused and confident in maintaining and enhancing livability, affordability, and community wellbeing for the region as a whole.

Purpose

To ensure we have the appropriate governance and organisational structure and policies to deliver the new outcomes identified by the **Charters Towers - Our Region, Our Future 2035** Community Plan.

This process will assist in identifying critical activities to deliver the 2035 vision and opportunities for improving efficiencies.

Red Tape Reduction

Economic growth is fundamental to the sustainable future of the Charters Towers Region.

To clearly signal to the business community that we embrace the growth aspirations of the Community Plan, we need to identify policy and process changes that:

- simplify the process of permits and approvals for business establishment, expansion and relocation to the region; and
- reduce time required to process business applications and information requests.

Climate Change Leader

To provide confidence and certainty within the region, we need to position ourselves as a leader in the mitigation of and adaptation to impacts of regional climate change. The first steps towards developing this leadership role will be reflected by our efforts to:

- minimise the environmental impact of our own activities;
- undertake a risk assessment of the potential impacts of climate change on the region; and
- complete a disaster risk management study incorporating climate change impacts.

Sustainable Infrastructure

Well considered and integrated infrastructure can guide growth in ways that will strengthen the community's sustainability.

The delivery of strategic infrastructure underpins the vision of the **Charters Towers - Our Region, Our Future 2035** Community Plan and can be a catalyst for more efficient and effective delivery of our servicing obligations.

To increase our organisational capacity to deliver higher levels of integration and growth management we will:

- set new benchmarks through the implementation of the community planning initiatives; and
- identify various stakeholders and potential partners to expedite the delivery of critical infrastructure projects.

Community Engagement

The increasing community expectations and legislation for transparency and accountability of governance requires us to continually review and improve our decision making processes.

For Local Government this is being reflected in the critical need for local communities to be able to actively contribute to the governance processes affecting their local places.

The first step to building a new organisational framework to accommodate these emerging needs drives us to:

- expand our community engagement program;
- move from a 'community consultation' model of decision making to a 'community participation' model; and
- move from a service delivery model to facilitation model through collaboration.

We recognise that our capacity to deliver on all of the liveability aspirations of our region's residents is limited.

We must work closely with other government agencies and the private sector to:

- deliver these outcomes efficiently;
- harness the resources and energy within the region; and
- focus on the establishment of strategic partnerships to deliver sustainable outcomes.

Our key strength in this area will be to seek opportunities and facilitate partnerships with other government businesses, local businesses and non-profit organisations. A key opportunity for us is to foster feasible and cooperative service delivery with other Local Governments in the North Queensland Region.

our community

The Vision for Our Community is that it will:

- *be a progressive and cohesive regional community of choice;*
- *reflect an attractive, secure and affordable lifestyle, with excellent regional facilities, services and resources;*
- *offer opportunities for a diversity of lifestyles, cultures and ages to contribute to the community's character, spirit and vibrancy;*
- *promote lifelong learning, active recreation, arts and cultural activities;*
- *celebrate the essence of the Charters Towers regional community; and*
- *demonstrate a strong sense of community pride and participation within a healthy, caring and inclusive society.*

The Charters Towers Region provides significant lifestyle opportunities to its residents. The combination of the scenic locations and the abundance of services and facilities makes our region an attractive place to live for a range of people.

Key Challenges


- Given the ageing population, the demand on health services and aged care facilities will increase dramatically towards 2035.
- Provision of public and private services to declining and increasingly sparse populations in the rural areas of the region.
- Coordinated health services to supply mental health and preventative health care services.
- Promotion of increased community participation in areas of physical activity, nutrition, immunisation programs and healthy lifestyle choices to ease stress on the health services.
- Safety and security for all residents of the community.
- To reach a population target of 16,000 people, an increasing number of residents in the region will be born overseas and there will be a significant multi-cultural influence on the region.



Weather

**"NO MORE SHARKS
PLAYING HIDE-AND-SEEK!"**

Wim Duck Swims
FLIPPETY-FLAPS

- 
- Retention and growth of a diverse and cohesive community.
 - Accommodating people with varying degrees of employment, housing needs and financial capacity.
 - Providing housing choice, diversity and affordability.
 - Appropriately located housing stock situated throughout the region close to services, open space, recreation and employment opportunities.
 - Maintaining relevance of education and training services in a new 'knowledge era'.

Strengths and Opportunities

- Develop strategies and community programs that span all levels of government, the community and industry sector to provide social infrastructure within diverse communities.
- Develop and capitalise on the existing educational institutes and research and development agencies.
- Maintain and enhance a strong service base in education and health facilities.
- Increase the cultural diversity of the community through industry and employment participation by encouraging residents from overseas and indigenous Australians.

Our Community will:

- comprise a population of more than 16,000 people;
- be represented by a demographic profile of relatively even age group distribution and a range of different cultural backgrounds;
- compare favorably with the State comparisons in terms of health, education, public safety, community care and employment;
- offer a range of choices in terms of cultural, sporting and recreational pursuits;
- demonstrate a strong sense of community pride and inclusiveness; and
- be resilient, vibrant and cohesive.

Strategies

Strategy 1 - Prioritise growth in social capital

Provide programs which residents value, enabling them to contribute to the community spirit of the Region.

Strategy 2 - Support and celebrate diversity

Focus on the delivery of services and programs that cater for all lifestyles and raise the levels of appreciation of the differences and celebration of common values.

Strategy 3 - Smart and healthy community

Focus on facilities and programs that support community wellbeing, acknowledging their contribution to the economic, environmental and social strengths of the community.

Strategy 4 - Support and encourage sustainable population growth

Encourage both natural and migration population growth in the region relative to the rRegion's capacity to service that growth and impact on liveability.





our economy

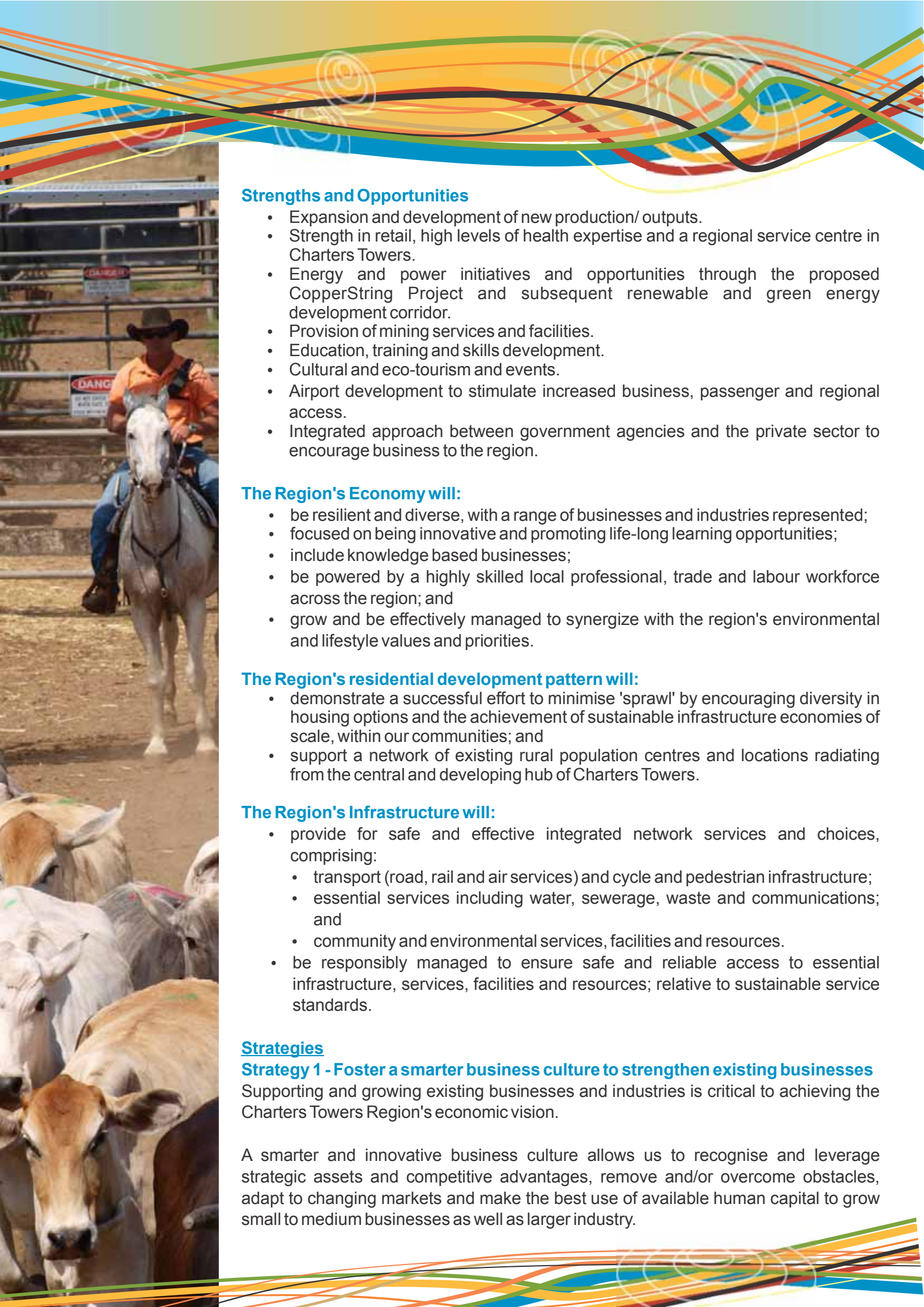
The Vision for Our Economy is that it will:

- *be secure, robust and attractive for people, business and industry to develop and succeed;*
- *utilise available resources efficiently and work to its competitive strengths to aggressively pursue community employment and economic development and opportunities; and*
- *strengthen its position as a significant rural economic centre of opportunity and major contributor to the Queensland Economy.*

The Charters Towers Region has a diverse economy, relative to surrounding local government areas, with a number of strong sectors contributing to regional economic activity, such as grazing, agriculture, retail, education, mining, energy, health and tourism.

Key Challenges

- Growth in the nearby coastal city of Townsville is placing pressure on Charters Towers role as a major regional service point, with this region having grown more strongly in recent years.
- The Charters Towers Region needs to consolidate its niche as a rural, mining, energy, education and tourism service centre which may first include positioning itself as a lifestyle centre.
- The mining sector in the Charters Towers Region includes local operations though is primarily a support centre for mining growth in North West and North East Queensland mining precincts.
- The proposed expansion in the mining sector in the Bowen Basin and Galilee Basin west of Mackay provides competition but opportunity for the Charters Towers Region.
- Economic diversification and transition into a knowledge-based economy will challenge the region's ability to develop and advance technologically in the economy.
- Arresting the rising unemployment rate which is currently above the State average.
- In order to promote economic growth, the Charters Towers Region needs to attract new residents to build the workforce.
- Capacity to attract and retain a highly skilled and competitive labour force.
- Developing the existing education infrastructure in the region and matching it with future industry development needs.
- Adapting and aligning the current local exports to a changing global demand.
- Upgrading and maintenance of the Flinders, Clermont and Lynd Highways, which are the major transport corridors for the grazing, mining and tourism sectors within the region, to ensure efficient and effective business operations.
- Flooding isolates many grazing areas, impacting production and timely service provision.
- Geographic issues are constraining the expansion of urban and industrial areas which are required to support population and economic growth.
- Charters Towers Airport has the potential to increase the region's economic diversity but will require significant investment and development.
- Development of direct rail infrastructure links and services to the Port of Townsville to transport cattle for the live export market.



Strengths and Opportunities

- Expansion and development of new production/ outputs.
- Strength in retail, high levels of health expertise and a regional service centre in Charters Towers.
- Energy and power initiatives and opportunities through the proposed CopperString Project and subsequent renewable and green energy development corridor.
- Provision of mining services and facilities.
- Education, training and skills development.
- Cultural and eco-tourism and events.
- Airport development to stimulate increased business, passenger and regional access.
- Integrated approach between government agencies and the private sector to encourage business to the region.

The Region's Economy will:

- be resilient and diverse, with a range of businesses and industries represented;
- focused on being innovative and promoting life-long learning opportunities;
- include knowledge based businesses;
- be powered by a highly skilled local professional, trade and labour workforce across the region; and
- grow and be effectively managed to synergize with the region's environmental and lifestyle values and priorities.

The Region's residential development pattern will:

- demonstrate a successful effort to minimise 'sprawl' by encouraging diversity in housing options and the achievement of sustainable infrastructure economies of scale, within our communities; and
- support a network of existing rural population centres and locations radiating from the central and developing hub of Charters Towers.

The Region's Infrastructure will:

- provide for safe and effective integrated network services and choices, comprising:
 - transport (road, rail and air services) and cycle and pedestrian infrastructure;
 - essential services including water, sewerage, waste and communications; and
 - community and environmental services, facilities and resources.
- be responsibly managed to ensure safe and reliable access to essential infrastructure, services, facilities and resources; relative to sustainable service standards.

Strategies

Strategy 1 - Foster a smarter business culture to strengthen existing businesses

Supporting and growing existing businesses and industries is critical to achieving the Charters Towers Region's economic vision.

A smarter and innovative business culture allows us to recognise and leverage strategic assets and competitive advantages, remove and/or overcome obstacles, adapt to changing markets and make the best use of available human capital to grow small to medium businesses as well as larger industry.



A smarter and innovative business culture, including maximum use of ecommerce opportunities, will create an environment (local business culture) where all businesses are networked and encouraged/supported to grow.

Strategy 2 - Attract investment in new business and industry

The attraction of new business and industry investment helps spawn economic activity, generate new jobs, encourage innovation and diversify the economy.

Leverage the region's strategic assets and competitive advantages providing opportunities for investment, either by filling gaps in the existing value chain or attracting entirely new industries and associated investment.

In the short term the mining, grazing and education service sectors provide great opportunities.

Strategy 3 - Attract and retain a highly skilled workforce and diverse population

A highly skilled workforce and diverse population base will be integral to the delivery of a truly integrated and sustainable future for the region.

Alongside the aggressive recruitment of professionals from elsewhere in Australia and from overseas, a tailored education and training environment in partnership with industry will produce the highly skilled labour force required to support local and broader regional industry.

With this comes the requirement to provide social and community support infrastructure to ensure the region is able to supply the lifestyle (live, work and play) required to attract and retain the modern worker and their families.

Strategy 4 - Prepare now for a post mining supported economy

Focusing on maximising opportunities from the resource sector in the short-medium term and at the same time planning for continued economic growth beyond the resource boom is critical to delivering a vibrant, resilient and diversified economy.

Planning for resource development includes promoting and supporting business and industry development opportunities in the region.

Promote and develop the region as a leading services and technology solutions provider, supported by a highly skilled and locally trained workforce, dedicated to research, development and innovation.

Planning for continued growth and economic diversity beyond the resources boom includes the implementation of an ongoing business and industry investment attraction program founded on good quality information, communication and networks. This is required now to ensure sufficient development and planning horizons.





our environment

The Vision for Our Environment is that it will be:

- *a valued reflection of our Past, an appreciated expression of our Present and a strong stimulus for our Future;*
- *a secure, healthy and attractive place for nature, people, business and industry to be nurtured and have a range of opportunities to prosper and develop; and*
- *resilient and responsive to changing technologies and the impacts of climate change.*

The Region's environment has an abundance of natural features and assets and the Burdekin River system is the lifeblood of the region. The protection and appropriate management of these features is an essential part of becoming a sustainable region.

The general community perception is that there are unlimited mineral, agricultural and water resources available in the region, however, these resources are finite and must be managed accordingly.

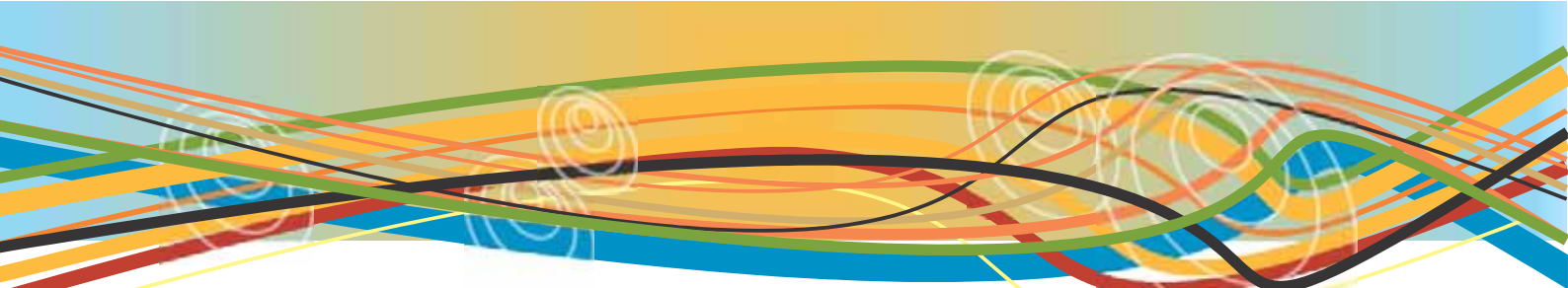
The Charters Towers Region is very diverse in the types of land uses that occur within the region.

Charters Towers and the small townships and localities are where the majority of the population live and work, however, those settlements would not be the same if they were not set within their own individual and unique landscapes.

The future presents some interesting challenges in how to address major issues such as climate change and population growth while protecting our natural, heritage and lifestyle assets.

Key Challenges

- The health of ecosystems and natural assets is threatened by increased depletion due to changes in land use, climatic conditions and loss of critical species and habitats.
- Protection and retention of natural assets, in particular wetlands, river systems and aquatic habitats.
- The lack of regionally specific data on the impact of climate change for the Charters Towers Region.
- In the 129,500 km² Burdekin River catchment, the channel floodplain configuration combines with rapid runoff to create very fast flood-wave speeds. Current climate change predictions indicate that the region is increasingly likely to be subject to more extreme flooding due to more severe cyclones, higher summer rainfall intensity and increased potential for flooding of low lying areas (DIP 2008; OCC 2009).
- Climate change will impact on development potential, liveability, business costs, water storage and risk to public and private infrastructure.
- Quality in an environment of competing industry demands.
- The protection of strategic cropping land, in particular good quality agricultural land is vulnerable to invasive weed species.

- 
- Global oil reserves are set to peak between 2012 and 2030 and continue to deplete exponentially from that point. By 2050 it is predicted the production rate will be 30% what it is today, which will impact on our reliance on the petrol motor vehicle and consumption of other goods made from oil based products.
 - Provision and maintenance of facilities, water, waste management and transport infrastructure for a growing population.
 - Containment of residential expansion within the existing urban footprint to take advantage of infrastructure economic of scale and design.
 - Diversification of housing stock - more duplexes, unit complexes and smaller lots need to be encouraged.
 - Appropriate location of development sites close to transport, services and facilities.
 - Protection of key attributes such as environmental features and open space.
 - Protection of cultural values and heritage character of the Region.
 - New developments are to use materials appropriately, to achieve an appearance which complements the existing heritage buildings within defined precincts.
 - Protection of historical, social and architectural values to ensure this history is still a part of the region's character in 2035.
 - Retention of agricultural land for future employment and economic diversity of the region.
 - Maintain the Region's rural viability as the sector continues to change and become more efficient.

Strengths and Opportunities

- The introduction of a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) is likely to take place at some time within the next 20 years which could see a significant change in not only how we conduct our business, but also how we present opportunities to expand and enhance existing environmental features.
- Increased potential for renewable energy generation, particularly solar and wind due to climate change.
- Opportunity to capitalise on the export of gas reserves as global oil production peaks.
- Offset carbon output by reforestation.
- Opportunity for increased community involvement and funding grants for matters pertaining to the Burdekin River basin (e.g. monitoring and rehabilitation).
- Utilise natural assets through eco-tourism and eco-efficient developments.
- Increased dwelling densities in Charters Towers and smaller townships.
- Retain smaller settlements and, where possible, sensitively revitalise into growing communities.
- Revitalisation of existing and new infill development needs to respect the past while preparing for the future.

Strategies

Strategy 1 - Mitigate the Region's impact on the environment and climate change

Promote sustainable businesses, industries and ethical and environmentally sound practices to operate in the region to ensure that negative impacts on the environment are minimised and these are circumvented by positive initiatives and actions.

Strategy 2 - Protect and enhance the natural and built environment

The keystone values of the region are protected and enhanced. To achieve this, our waterways, vegetation, biodiversity and heritage are protected to maintain the environmental health of the natural and built features of the region.





Strategy 3 - Adapt to the impact of climate change

Ensure that new developments are:

- sensitive and responsive to changing environmental considerations, regulatory requirements and developing technologies; and
- are resilient to higher temperatures and larger storms, flooding and extreme weather.

Encourage work patterns and lifestyle choices that reduce or protect against exposure to higher temperatures and greater sunlight intensity.

Strategy 4 - Build a resilient Region

Plan for a community of 16,000 plus that can sustainably maintain all of the desired services, job opportunities, and lifestyles sought by residents.

Strategy 5 - Prioritise land for industry, environmental services, food, energy and water

Secure these resources through the protection and management of land in the region for environmental food production, catchment management and renewable energy.

Strategy 6 - One Region, many unique places

With a defined limit to sprawl and low density development, a consolidation of existing urban areas, revitalised and active locations, provision of appropriate housing mix and maximum efficient use of infrastructure networks.


Strategy 7 - Promote Integrated Neighbourhoods

Facilitate appropriate new development through an analysis of the long term social, environmental and economic impacts.

Our Environment will be reflected in:

- the proactive approach taken to mitigate and adapt to climate change and sustainability;
- the health of the identified intrinsic values and assets of our unique environment, including our heritage, river catchments, flora and fauna, natural features and recreational opportunities which will be protected and enhanced over time;
- a sustainable population of over 16,000 people living within the region that is well serviced by vibrant centres, productive rural areas and places to work; and
- the local residents have a choice of lifestyles and housing options with the revitalisation of locations and their surrounds, careful design of neighbourhoods.





charters towers our region, our future 2035

The Charters Towers Regional Council has, and will continue to use, a number of broad engagement tools and forums in its community planning process, including:

- Council's Website and Council Offices (including the Excelsior Library) to disseminate information, including:
 - Information on the community planning process and requirements,
 - Information about the region and your Community
 - Community Stakeholder Registration – the opportunity to participate and contribute electronically
 - Information Flyers
 - Community Surveys
 - Ratepayer Information Booklets
- Newspaper Articles and advertising
- The establishment of a Charters Towers Community Reference Group
- Regional Progress and Community Associations
- Community Workshops
- Community Events & Static Displays

The Council acknowledges the commitment and contributions received from all of those that have been directly and indirectly involved in this project.

This Community Plan was made available for community comment and an opportunity was provided for community input and influence into the final Community Plan document prior to being adopted by Council.

Contact Us

Please submit all comments in relation to the Community Plan to:

The Chief Executive Officer, Charters Towers Regional Council:

Email: ourfuture@charterstowers.qld.gov.au

Postal: PO Box 189, Charters Towers Qld 4820

Phone: 07 4761 5541

Additional information is available on our website. Visit: www.charterstowers.qld.gov.au and follow the links to community planning.

Your input is welcome and encouraged.

If you have any enquiries, please feel free to contact us.

