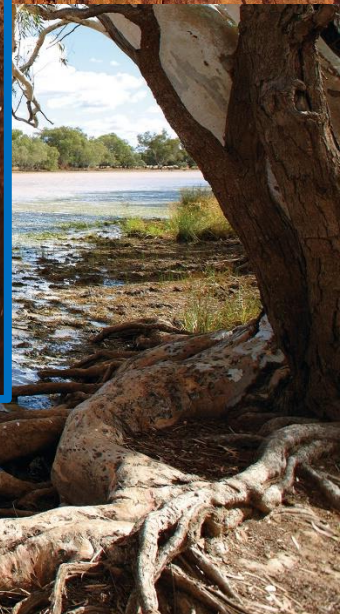
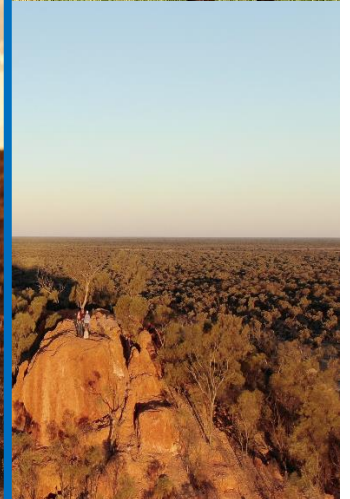




# ***Outback Horizon 2024: Quilpie Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy***

***A Roadmap for Promoting Prosperity***



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Executive Summary

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Strategy Context and Purpose.....	1
1.2 Strategy Objective .....	4
<b>2. Challenges and Opportunities to Promote Prosperity .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 A Consultative Approach to Strategy Development.....	6
2.2 Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities Analysis.....	7
2.3 Leveraging Collaborative Pathways to Prosperity .....	10
2.4 Council's 'Core' Economic Development and Tourism Support Activities.....	11
<b>3. A Roadmap to Prosperity .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 Quilpie Shire's Economic Development and Tourism Vision and Charter .....	13
3.2 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Themes.....	13
3.3 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Action Plan .....	15
<i>Theme 1: Support the Development of a Strong and Sustainable Outback Visitor Economy.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Theme 2: Support the Sustainable Development of Mining and Agriculture .....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Theme 3: Promote Quilpie as a Location for Investment, Employment and Outback Living.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<b>4. Strategy Implementation Framework .....</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1 Informing Prioritisation of Opportunities for Action.....	22
4.2 Priority Actions .....	23
4.3 Cultivating Collaborative Partnerships for Effective Implementation .....	24
4.4 Monitoring Strategy Progress.....	24

## References



## List of Figures

Figure 1. Quilpie Shire and Surrounding Region .....	1
Figure 2. Population, Quilpie Shire, 2008 - 2018.....	2
Figure 3. Employment by Industry (Local Jobs), Quilpie Shire, 2018/19.....	3
Figure 4. Value-Added by Industry, Quilpie Shire, 2018/19 .....	3
Figure 5. Quilpie Shire's Current and Emerging Economic Pillars .....	4
Figure 6. 'Economic Development' .....	5
Figure 7. Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Consultation Components.....	6
Figure 8. Quilpie Shire's Economic Development and Tourism Partners .....	10
Figure 9. Quilpie Shire Council's 'Core' Economic Development and Tourism Support Activities ....	11
Figure 10. Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Themes.....	14
Figure 11. Economic Opportunity Assessment Matrix.....	22

## Executive Summary

### A Roadmap for Promoting Prosperity

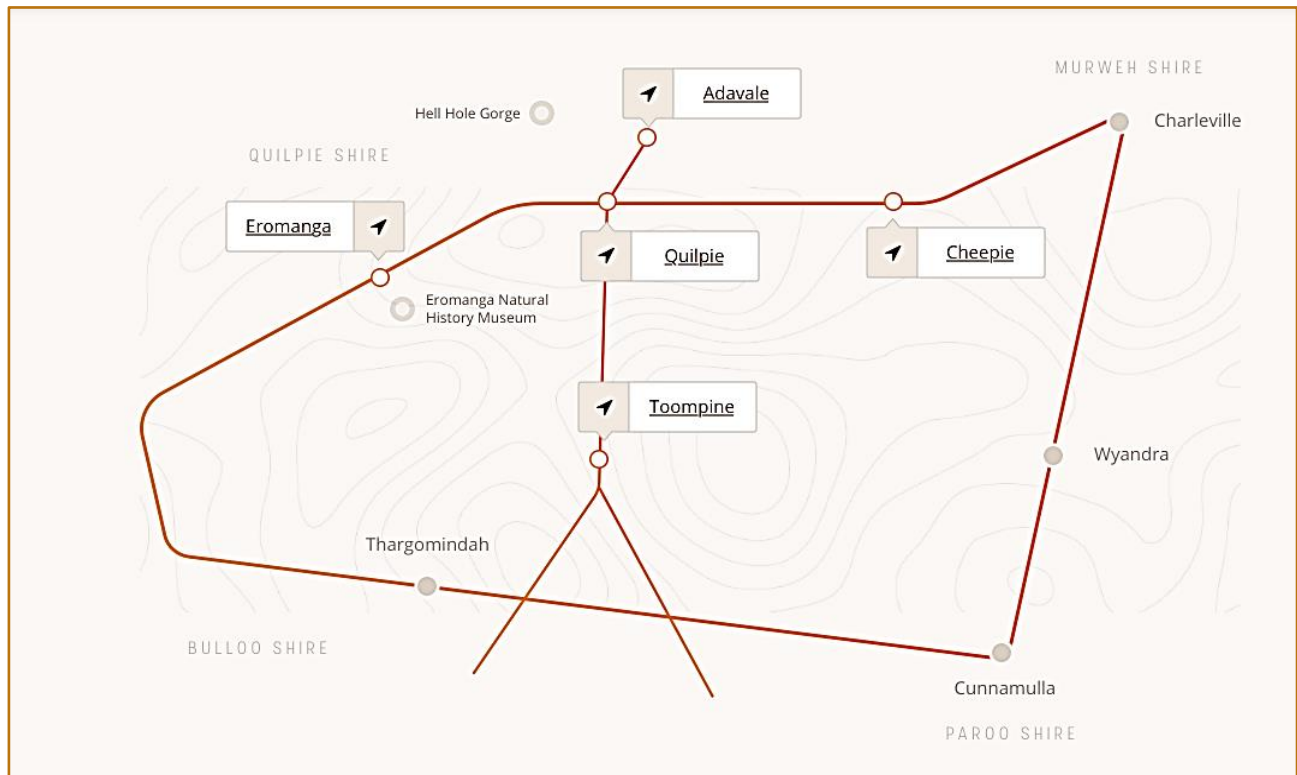
This document, *Outback Horizon 2024: Quilpie Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy*, provides a five-year planning framework to support the vibrancy, diversity and sustainability of the communities of Quilpie Shire - Adavale, Cheepie, Eromanga, Quilpie and Toompine - to the year 2024 and beyond.

Informed by a well-developed understanding of the Shire's economic development structure, dynamics and potential, it presents a plan of action, which builds on partnerships and alliances between Quilpie Shire Council, State and Federal government agencies, South West RED, the Council of Mayors for Darling Downs and South West Queensland, tourism bodies, regional development agencies, local businesses and the communities of Quilpie Shire.

In preparing this strategy, Council engaged with a diversity of government, industry and community stakeholders via a series of targeted consultations. These consultations have been instrumental in helping to establish a vision for the economy of the future and to guide Council's efforts in promoting and facilitating tourism and economic development.

Recognising that Council can help create the conditions for more effective economic partnerships in an environment that encourages and enables local entrepreneurship, particularly through promotion, facilitation, information sharing and advocacy, this strategy provides Quilpie Shire with a roadmap to prosperity.

### Quilpie Shire and the Surrounding Region



Source: <https://www.visitquilpieshire.com/>

Designed to influence positive change, the opportunities for action presented in this strategy, when implemented, will help facilitate the resilience, competitiveness and success of local businesses and the capacity of the Quilpie Shire and its constituent communities to attract investment, diversify the economy and provide the foundations for the jobs of the future.

Strategic, informed and targeted, the themes and actions presented in this strategy are framed to help realise the vision for a Shire that is defined by its vibrant and connected communities and which is a location of choice in which to live, work, visit and invest.

## Quilpie Shire's Economic Development and Tourism Objective

**'Economic development'** is about the continuous improvement in an area's level of income and capital (wealth) and the distribution of that wealth (through local expenditure and jobs) to the community.

Typically measured in terms of income and employment, economic development is also measured by improvements in education, skills, health, culture, community wellbeing, a sense of place and the environment. Ultimately, it is about improving quality of life or, to capture the concept in a single word, it is about 'prosperity'.

*Outback Horizon 2024* is a whole-of-Shire economic development and tourism strategy. Ultimately, through the delivery of the opportunities for action presented in this strategy, desired outcomes include:

- Industry growth and development;
- Growth and retention of the Shire's existing businesses and residents;
- Visitor attraction; and
- Increased employment opportunities for all communities of the Quilpie Shire.

For Council, which has a role to play in promoting, encouraging and enabling economic activity, supporting tourism and economic development requires a strategic, informed and targeted approach.

To this end, this Economic Development and Tourism Strategy:

- Establishes a detailed understanding of Quilpie Shire's current economic status and performance, as well as relevant regional policy settings informing local economic opportunities;
- Articulates key issues, challenges and opportunities for Quilpie Shire Council to consider in its role as a facilitator and promoter of economic development and tourism;
- Identifies potential collaborative partnerships, where Quilpie Shire Council can engage with other stakeholders on matters concerning local and regional economic development and tourism; and
- Provides Quilpie Shire Council with guidance to develop an informed, clear, actionable and achievable 'road map' for economic development and tourism to 2024.

## Capitalising on Our Strengths

Council recognises that it has a vital role to play in the leadership, organisation, delivery and promotion of local economic development and tourism. Guided by this strategy, Council is committed to creating the conditions for more effective economic partnerships and enabling innovation and entrepreneurship.

The three pillars of the Quilpie Shire economy are **sheep and cattle**, **mining** and **tourism**. Other industries, like government administration, retail trade, transport and construction, or service industries like health and education, rely on these pillars for their own sustainability and growth.

*Outback Horizon 2024* guides Council's efforts on its role as an enabler of economic development and tourism. The opportunities for action focus on the ways in which Council can use its planning and regulatory functions, its resources and its

collaborative relationships with other organisations to help stimulate investment, attract new residents, support the growth of existing businesses and grow the local visitor economy through effective promotion and destination management.

## A Vision and Charter for Economic Development and Tourism

Having regard for the region's broader policy and planning framework, Quilpie Shire Council recognises and promotes its role in supporting economic development and tourism. This is reflected in the vision for the future and Council's

accompanying charter to promote and support tourism and economic development in Quilpie Shire. The vision, which encapsulates a desired economic future for Quilpie Shire, is articulated as follows.

### *Economic Development and Tourism Vision for Quilpie Shire*

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*Building on its strategic outback setting, Quilpie Shire will be widely known for its vibrant and connected communities and as a location of choice in which to live, work, visit and invest.*

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### *Quilpie Shire Council's Economic Development Charter*

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*Quilpie Shire Council supports economic development and tourism through strategic planning, information-sharing, advocacy, infrastructure provision and service delivery. In doing so, Council is committed to supporting local businesses, facilitating investment, attracting visitors and cultivating the Shire's appeal as a place to live, work and play.*

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## Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Themes

*Outback Horizon 2024* documents opportunities for action that Council and its partners can address collaboratively across three strategy themes:

- **Theme 1:** *Support the Development of a Strong and Sustainable Outback Visitor Economy*
- **Theme 2:** *Support the Sustainable Development of Mining and Agriculture*
- **Theme 3:** *Promote Quilpie as a Location for Investment, Employment and Outback Living*

The opportunities for action are informed by the economic development and tourism vision and Council's economic development and tourism charter.

Prioritising where Council's resources can best be directed for the purpose of facilitating and promoting prosperity is a key consideration of *Outback Horizon 2024*.

## Priority Opportunities for Action

Priorities for implementation are identified based on the application of a broad set of assessment criteria which consider both the anticipated benefits and Council's capacity to implement the opportunity in question, either as the lead, or in a support role in partnership with other stakeholders.

Some opportunities are focused on *catalyst project planning and development initiatives* while others are focussed on *strategic program implementation* and are initiatives that can be addressed as part of Council's day-to-day economic development and tourism support functions. In a number of cases, these actions seek to build on or continue initiatives already in place. The following are the priorities to be progressed over the first 24 months of this strategy.

### Catalyst Project Planning and Development:

- Commission the preparation of a Quilpie Township Masterplan as a catalyst for town centre place activation, incorporating the Visitor Information Centre, John Waugh Park, the Quilpie Memorial Swimming Pool and the old Council depot site (Action 3.1).
- Prepare a business case for a catalyst tourism experience in the Quilpie town centre as part of a wider Quilpie master planning exercise (see Action 3.1), which embraces the district's opal heritage as a key component of a Quilpie Visitor Precinct / Cultural Heritage Precinct (Action 1.1).
- Explore the concept of a Quilpie town centre heritage trail (as part of the proposed master plan), commencing at the Visitor Information Centre (Action 1.3).
- Explore the concept of an industrial heritage trail in Eromanga as part of the town's master planning process (Action 1.5).
- Prepare a concept plan for the Baldy Top Lookout area (incorporating Tabletop) to address needs and opportunities for formal walking tracks and visitor information points and other facilities (Action 1.7).
- Develop a revitalised tourism brand and Destination Management Plan for Quilpie Shire which ties into the "Queensland Southern Outback" branding and destination management framework (Action 1.18).
- Continue to design and deliver programs, in collaboration with government and industry, to deliver wild dog exclusion fencing throughout Quilpie Shire (Action 2.1).

### Strategic Program Implementation:

- Continue to engage with the State and Federal Governments to explore opportunities for signage, amenities and formalised walking trails for visitors to Hell Hole Gorge (Action 1.8).
- Prepare and distribute a series of new maps highlighting key tourist route connections (Action 1.10).
- Facilitate access to information on Queensland Government small business support programs (Action 3.2).
- In collaboration with SWRED, produce a *Quilpie Shire Business Investment Insights Prospectus* targeting businesses and occupations in professional services to agriculture and mining, tourism, health and education (Action 3.5).
- Investigate and prioritise mobile phone blackspot areas throughout Quilpie Shire and lobby for improvements (Action 3.8).
- Investigate and prioritise Wi-Fi connectivity links to rural properties and throughout the communities of Quilpie Shire and lobby for improvements (Action 3.9).

*Outback Horizon 2024* has been prepared in the context of the role of economic development in Quilpie Shire Council's broader program of work and strategic objectives, and wider regional priorities. Implementation progress will be reviewed annually, with an update anticipated in five years.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Strategy Context and Purpose

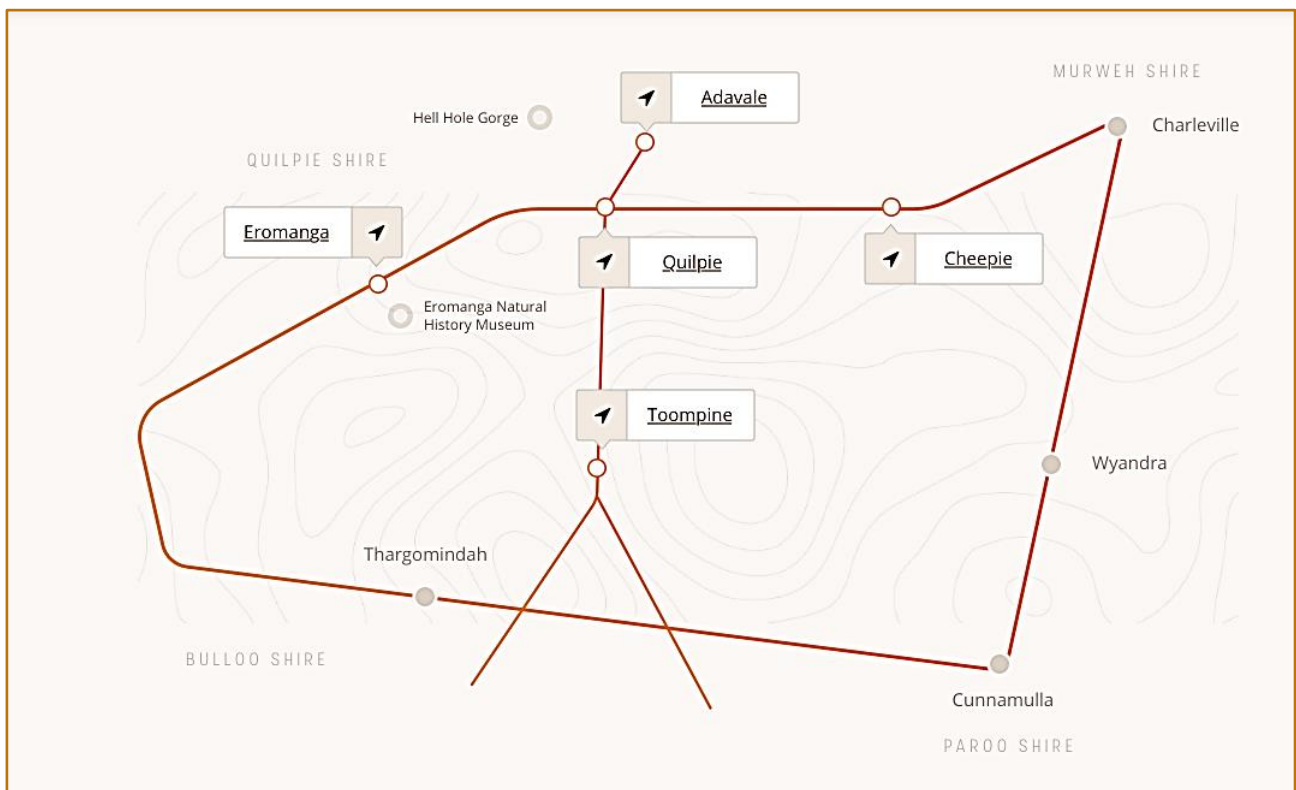
This document, *Outback Horizon 2024: Quilpie Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy*, is a five-year plan to support the vibrancy, diversity and sustainability of the communities of Quilpie Shire.

Informed by a well-developed understanding of the district's economic development structure, dynamics and potential, it provides a framework to build on and strengthen partnerships and alliances between Council, government, industry and the community.

A predominantly rural area covering approximately 68,000 square kilometres, Quilpie Shire is located in south-west Queensland, approximately 1,000 kilometres west of Brisbane.

Comprising the townships of Quilpie, Eromanga and Adavale, and the communities of Toompine and Cheepie, Quilpie Shire's resident population is estimated at 790. Since 2013 the Shire's population has fallen at an average annual rate of 3.5%.

**Figure 1. Quilpie Shire and Surrounding Region**



Source: <https://www.visitquilpieshire.com/>

Compounding its 'population challenge', Quilpie Shire has a relatively high rate of unemployment. In December 2019, Quilpie Shire had a reported unemployment rate of 9.0% compared to the State average of 6.1%.

The district's population profile coupled with its relatively high rate of unemployment presents some challenges for economic development with regard to generating investment, business development and job creation.

Recognising Quilpie Shire's potential to capitalise on its key economic attributes, *Outback Horizon 2024* seeks to address these challenges while also articulating and addressing opportunities for growth. With a Gross Regional Product estimated at \$80 million, Quilpie Shire is home to approximately 160 businesses, 570 local jobs and 540 employed residents.

The Shire's primary industry is agriculture, predominantly sheep and cattle grazing. As well as being the area's largest provider of jobs, Quilpie Shire's agricultural sector accounts for approximately

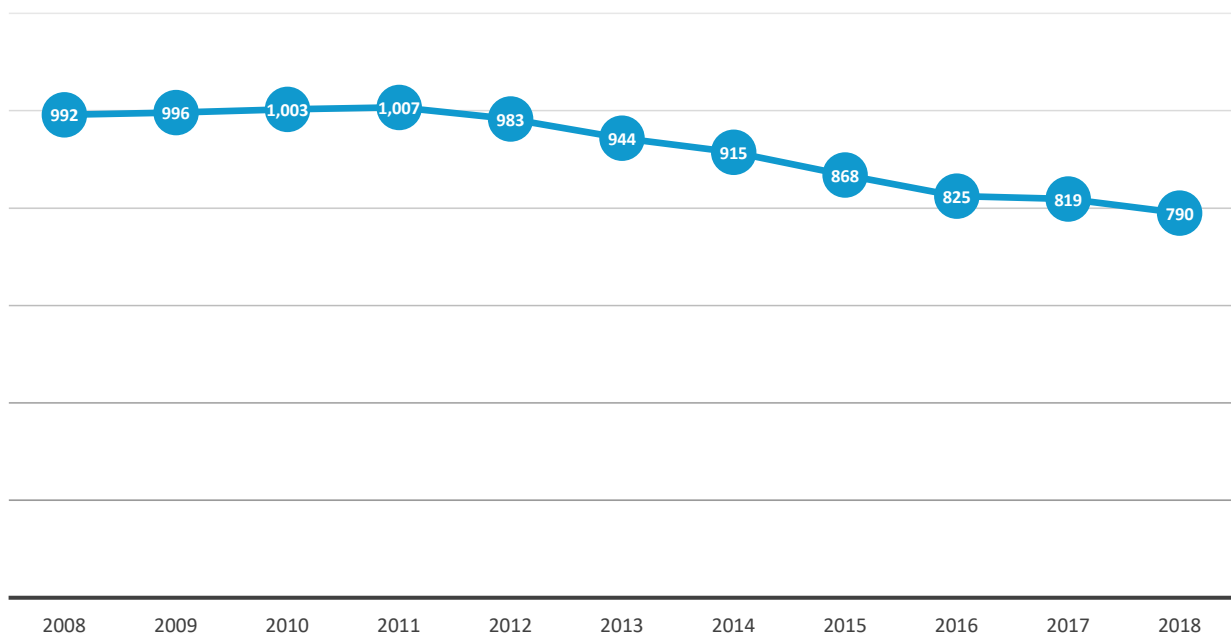
one-fifth (20%) of total industry value-added.

Mining is also an important contributor to the local economy. Quilpie Shire and the surrounding region is blessed with a wealth of mineral resources including opals (with the Boulder opal considered to be the best in the world), oil and gas and reportedly, some rare-earth metals

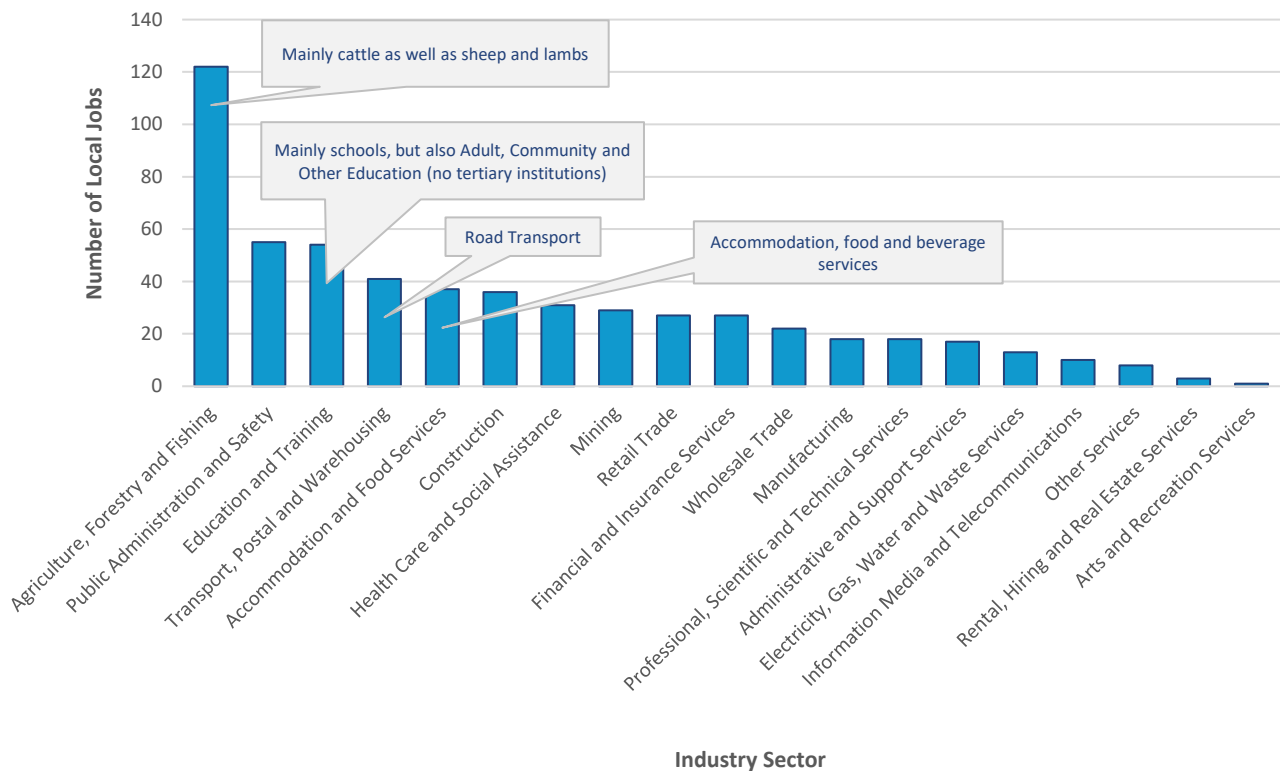
While Quilpie Shire's primary employment and wealth-generating industries are in agriculture, mining and associated construction activities, the public administration and safety, education and training, transport, postal and warehousing and accommodation and food services sectors are other significant industries of employment and economic activity, the latter providing an indicator of the importance of the area's visitor economy.

Tourism, on the back of the district's picturesque outback landscape and unique natural features, such as the Baldy Top Lookout and Hell Hole Gorge, as well as attractions including the Eromanga Natural History Museum, is an emerging pillar of the Quilpie Shire economy.

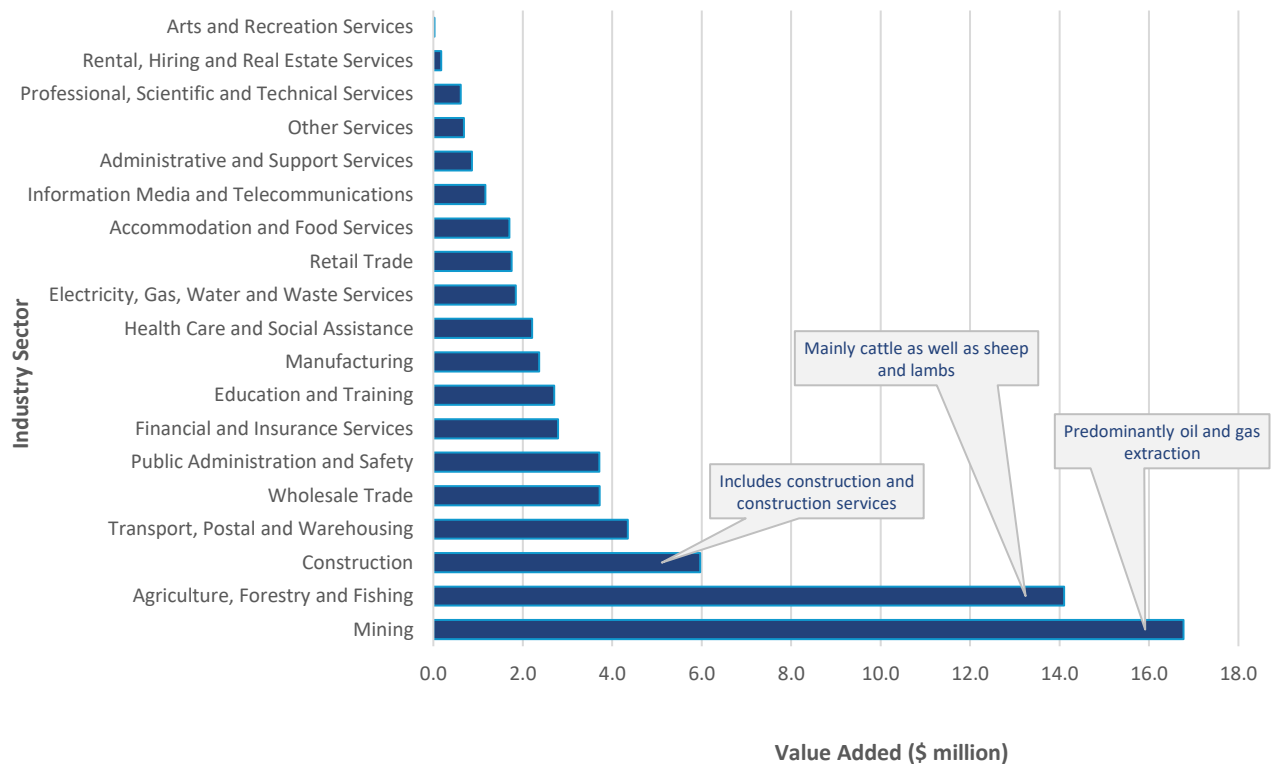
**Figure 2. Population, Quilpie Shire, 2008 - 2018**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2017-18 (3218.0) with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

**Figure 3. Employment by Industry (Local Jobs), Quilpie Shire, 2018/19**

Source: economy.id and NIEIR with interpretations by SC Lennon &amp; Associates

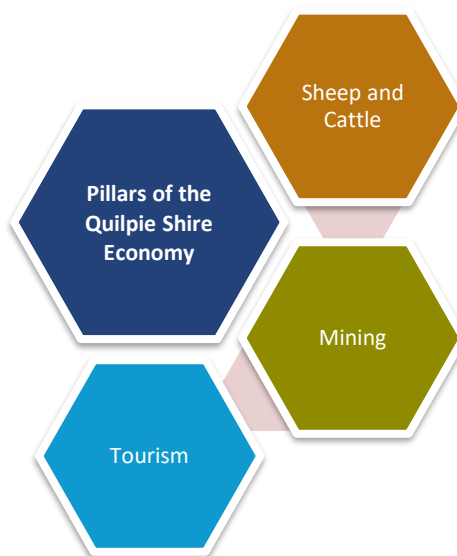
**Figure 4. Value-Added by Industry, Quilpie Shire, 2018/19**

Source: economy.id and NIEIR with interpretations by SC Lennon &amp; Associates

Sheep and cattle, mining and tourism together represent what are the current and emerging pillars of the Quilpie Shire economy. Other industries, like government administration, retail trade, transport

and construction, or service industries like health and education, rely on these pillars for their own sustainability and growth.

**Figure 5. Quilpie Shire's Current and Emerging Economic Pillars**



Source: SC Lennon & Associates

## 1.2 Strategy Objective

The underlying objective of Outback Horizon 2024 is to guide Council in its role as a promoter and enabler of local economic development. **‘Economic development’** refers to the continuous improvement in an area’s level of income and capital (wealth) and the distribution of that wealth (through local expenditure and jobs) to the community. While business and industry drives economic activity and employment creation, Quilpie Shire Council recognises that it has a vital role to play in the leadership, organisation, delivery and promotion of local tourism and economic development.

Economic development is measured by the strength and depth of Quilpie Shire’s education and skills base, its workforce capacity and levels of employment, the productive capacity of its local business community, the strength of its institutions to manage change (including Council), its natural environment and the community’s overall health and well-being.

In preparing this strategy, Council has engaged with a diversity of the district’s key stakeholders to

establish a vision and framework for promoting and facilitating economic development and tourism activity into the future. In doing so, it recognises that economic development is about the connections and interrelationships between community, culture, the environment and the economy. Ultimately, economic development is about improving living standards and quality of life, or in other words, it is about prosperity.

*Outback Horizon 2024* is a whole-of-Shire economic development and tourism strategy. Through the delivery of the opportunities for action presented in this strategy, desired outcomes include:

- Industry growth and development;
- Growth and retention of Quilpie Shire’s existing businesses and residents;
- Visitor attraction; and
- Increased employment opportunities for all communities of the Quilpie Shire.



Figure 6. 'Economic Development'



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For Quilpie Shire Council, supporting tourism and economic development requires a strategic, informed and targeted approach.

To this end, *Outback Horizon 2024*:

- Establishes a detailed understanding of Quilpie Shire's current economic status and performance, as well as relevant regional policy settings informing local economic opportunities;
- Articulates key issues, challenges and opportunities for Quilpie Shire Council to

consider in its role as a facilitator and promoter of economic development and tourism;

- Identifies potential collaborative partnerships, where Quilpie Shire Council can engage with other stakeholders on matters concerning local and regional economic development and tourism; and
- Provides Quilpie Shire Council with guidance to develop an informed, clear, actionable and achievable 'road map' for economic development and tourism to 2024.



Image: Royal Hotel, Eromanga (source: Quilpie Shire Council)

## 2. Challenges and Opportunities to Promote Prosperity

### 2.1 A Consultative Approach to Strategy Development

To inform *Outback Horizon 2024*, Council consulted with a diversity of government, industry and community stakeholders via a series of meetings and

forums. The consultant also facilitated a number of workshops with members of Council's Executive Leadership Team and Councillors.

**Figure 7. Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Consultation Components**



The consultations have been instrumental in helping to establish a vision for the economy of the future and to guide Council's efforts in promoting and facilitating economic development and tourism. The consultations highlighted Quilpie Shire's strengths and attributes as well as pertinent challenges and opportunities for economic development and tourism, which this strategy seeks to address.

The consultations highlighted Quilpie Shire's many strengths and attributes, as well as key challenges and opportunities for promoting and facilitating economic development and tourism.

A relaxed outback lifestyle and a strong sense of community, natural environmental attributes, affordable land and quality schools and health care services were highlighted as just some of the Shire's key attributes. With respect to tourism, key strengths include Quilpie Shire's natural environmental attributes, its opal heritage, pioneering history, paleo history (dinosaurs) and its largely untapped Indigenous cultural heritage.

The Shire's most pressing challenges concern its declining population and infrastructure constraints

including digital connectivity, mobile phone blackspots and some transport infrastructure shortfalls.

Other noted challenges concern the developing nature of the Shire's tourism sector and a need for investments in a catalyst visitor attraction and critical tourism support infrastructure such as signage and amenities. Customer service standards and clear and consistent tourism branding were also noted as matters requiring attention.

Other concerns focus on the district's agricultural and mining sectors, notably the impact that environmental legislation, carbon farming, weeds and feral pests pose for the viability and productivity of land for grazing and small-scale mining.

Agriculture, built on sheep and cattle, is recognised as the district's traditional economic mainstay, and together with mining and a developing tourism industry (as well as Quilpie Shire's lifestyle attributes), is considered a pillar of the local economy underpinning opportunities for economic development and tourism in Quilpie Shire.

## 2.2 Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities Analysis

The following points provide a summary of key messages received through the course of the research, consultation and analysis undertaken to inform this strategy:

### Quilpie Shire's Strengths and Attributes

Quilpie Shire has a wealth of built, natural and human attributes that the Shire can capitalise upon in order to support economic development and tourism, including:

- Quilpie Shire offers a relaxed outback lifestyle and a strong sense of community.
- The towns and communities of Quilpie Shire - Quilpie, Eromanga, Adavale, Toompine and Cheepie – have a strong sense of individual identity.
- Quilpie Shire also has a reputation as a stable and progressive community.
- Quilpie Shire's business community is innovative.
- There is a strong sense of collaboration and healthy competition amongst the business communities of Quilpie Shire.
- Quilpie Shire has an abundant supply of bore water and affordable residential and commercial / industrial land.
- The Shire also has a good supply of serviced industrial land.
- Quality schools and health care services and facilities.
- The Shire has a good range of community services and facilities.
- Agriculture, built on sheep and cattle, is a pillar of the Quilpie Shire economy.
- The region's mineral resource base is another economic pillar. Quilpie Shire and the surrounding region is blessed with a wealth of mineral resources including opals (considered the best in the world), oil and gas and some rare-earth metals.
- Tourism attributes / attractions define the third pillar of Quilpie Shire's future economic development.
- The area's natural attributes and prominent features such as Baldy Top, The Lake and Hell Hole Gorge, its outback landscapes, its European history (including agriculture and mining) and Indigenous cultural heritage, as well as its paleolithic history (dinosaurs and megafauna) provides the basis for the development of a vibrant visitor economy in Quilpie Shire.
- The Shire has a good mix of visitor accommodation including hotels and motels, caravan parks and camping grounds.
- A closed river system means no carp, presenting a competitive advantage for recreational fishing.
- Quilpie Shire has a strong Indigenous cultural heritage.
- The Eromanga Natural History Museum (which is undergoing a phase of expansion) is a major tourism asset connected to the region's unique paleolithic history.
- Quilpie Shire has highly regarded visitor information services.
- There is a strong local arts scene (e.g. Quilpie Cultural Society, local artists and musicians).
- The Quilpie Museum Precinct provides visitors with an opportunity to stop and spend time in Quilpie.
- The Big Red Bash event in Birdsville generates spin-offs for Quilpie Shire with travellers passing through.
- The Shire has quality road connections to other parts of the outback and beyond.
- Quilpie has good air transport connections to Brisbane and beyond via Quilpie Airport.

## Challenges for Economic Development and Tourism in Quilpie Shire

Identified issues and challenges concerning Quilpie Shire's future economic development include:

- Quilpie Shire's relatively small population (of 790), which is ageing, has been in gradual decline over the past ten years, posing challenges for viable economic development opportunities.
- While housing in Quilpie Shire is relatively affordable, Quilpie and Eromanga's 4480 postcode has a high risk profile with banks and insurance companies placing a constraint on the capacity of local businesses to borrow and invest.
- Some community facilities shortfalls have been identified, such as the standard of swimming pools and childcare facilities, and the need for a full-time doctor have been highlighted. A high standard of community services and facilities is a recognised investment attractor.
- For Quilpie Shire's youth (and employers needing skilled staff), access to tertiary education opportunities (e.g. TAFE) are limited.
- The Shire has some Internet connectivity shortfalls in certain locations and mobile phone coverage blackspots.
- The local opal industry is in a period of relative stagnation.
- While opportunities for the development of alternative energy production (solar power) have been considered, Quilpie Shire's relative isolation from population centres constrains the viability of solar-generated power transmission.
- The State Government's Wild Rivers legislation, designed to preserve the natural values of rivers that have all or almost all of their natural values intact, is considered by some in the community to pose a threat to the future of small-scale mining and agriculture because of the impact it could have on the capacity to utilise productive land.
- Some people believe that carbon farming is having an adverse impact on the Shire's productive agricultural land (land management issues – weeds, pests, wild dogs). This issue needs to be explored and resolved.
- It is considered by some that new opportunities for mining (e.g. rare earth minerals) are not being fully explored; these opportunities need to be explored through direct engagement with industry and the State Government.
- Tourism branding (the Quilpie brand) is under-developed.
- Quilpie could better leverage its proximity to the Natural Sciences Loop.
- Council's free camping area in Quilpie has been raised as a contentious issue considering its proximity to the town's paid camping facilities. There is no paid camping facility in Adavale.
- A number of the Shire's roads require upgrading (sealing) to facilitate the movement of residents, freight and tourists (e.g. Quilpie to Eromanga road widening; Quilpie to Adavale road sealing completion).
- There is a need for improved road connections from the south along the Warry Gate Road, to facilitate drive tourism traffic and interstate freight movements.
- Other roads are of a high standard but under-utilised (by tourists). This is in part because visitors are unaware of the high standard of (sealed) road connections between Quilpie Shire and other outback locations such as Charleville to the east, Birdsville to the west and Longreach and Winton to the north.
- Tourists need to be better informed of the high standard of roads linking Charleville to Quilpie and beyond.
- Some natural attractions are under-serviced (e.g. signage and amenities at Hell Hole Gorge; walking track at Baldy Top).
- Streetscaping and shop front presentation requires ongoing attention (e.g. Eromanga town entrance, western entrance to Quilpie town centre).
- Some tourist information is lacking (e.g. why the bore water smells).
- Directional signage and town entry signage could be improved with a more consistent approach to aesthetics.
- There is a perceived need for improvements in customer service culture / consistency.



## Opportunities for Economic Development and Tourism in Quilpie Shire

A selection of opportunities have been identified, including:

- Revitalise (and promote the economic benefits of) sheep and wool to Quilpie Shire.
- Maintain the cattle yards in Quilpie (under private ownership) to accommodate the spelling and sale of cattle direct by agents or loading on to cattle trains heading east for processing.
- Continue to invest in the agricultural sector's support infrastructure (e.g. wild dog exclusion fencing, a heavy vehicle public weighbridge to facilitate the transportation of livestock and other materials through Quilpie).
- Promote business and employment opportunities associated with mining in the region.
- Digital connectivity shortfalls present an opportunity to lobby for improvements.
- Improved road connections from Broken Hill in NSW into Queensland via Thargomindah to Eromanga presents an opportunity for drive tourism and interstate freight movements.
- Quilpie Shire's suitability as the location for an interstate power grid interconnector linking South Australia and NSW could be explored.
- Resource recovery – there is an opportunity to explore a regional approach to waste management.
- Quilpie Shire could be promoted to footloose professional services workers (and their families) as an attractive place to live and work.
- Capitalise on natural assets including Baldy Top and Hell Hole Gorge, through infrastructure investment (road upgrades/connections, wayfinding/signage, walking trails, amenities).
- Secondary roads which can service 4WD enthusiasts could be enhanced with, for example, directional signage and minor upgrades.
- Formalise visitor attractions (e.g. bore head at Adavale).
- Leverage the regional tourism brand (the dinosaur trail).
- The Eromanga Natural History Museum (ENHM), which is currently undergoing redevelopment / expansion, is a key asset due to its significant scientific collection. The ENHM can be leveraged to develop the local (and regional) visitor economy and Quilpie Shire Council is committed to supporting and promoting the Museum as a 'hero' attraction.
- Quilpie Shire needs to leverage the regional tourism brand and assets if it is to grow its visitor economy. For example, the road connecting Quilpie with Adavale to the north and on to Blackall could be branded 'The Opal Track'. Eromanga could be promoted as part of 'The Dinosaur Way' north to Winton.
- Tourism branding must be simple to be effective. Consistently branded interpretive signage would enhance Quilpie Shire's visitor experience.
- Quilpie can re-embrace the Boulder Opal as a key component of its tourism brand. For example, there is an opportunity to explore the potential for a catalyst tourism experience in Quilpie which embraces Quilpie's opal heritage.
- Explore ways to progress Indigenous cultural tourism opportunities in consultation with Traditional Owners.
- Existing facilities around the Visitor Information Centre present an opportunity to develop a town centre cultural heritage precinct in Quilpie.
- Design and establish a consistently-branded heritage trail along the main streets of each town in the Shire.
- Explore options for new conferences and events that to attract people and extend the tourist season.
- Investigate and develop packaged tours of the Quilpie Shire.
- The potential for a truck stop in Quilpie to encourage more spend in town could be explored.
- Continue to explore redevelopment potential of the old depot site in Quilpie (Quilpie Wellspring business case).
- Explore opportunities for conferencing facilities in Quilpie Shire.
- The district's iconic outback landscape presents an opportunity to pro-actively promote Quilpie Shire to film and TV industry stakeholders as a film-friendly location.

## 2.3 Leveraging Collaborative Pathways to Prosperity

Local in scope with a broader regional frame of reference, *Outback Horizon 2024* articulates and promotes a partnership approach between Quilpie Shire Council and other stakeholders in government, the non-government sector, the community and industry.

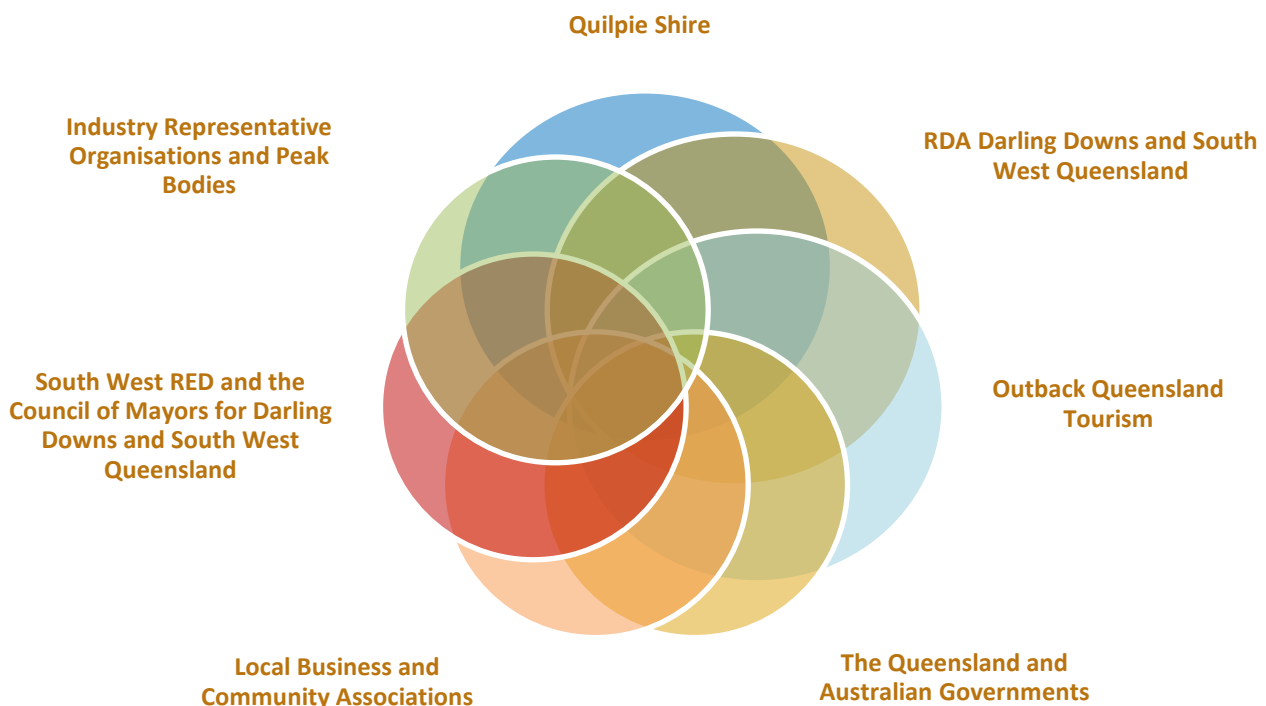
Council acknowledges and embraces the district's broader policy and planning framework and the region's priorities as articulated in key policy and planning documents.

Through the implementation of this strategy, Quilpie Shire Council embraces a partnership approach to tourism development.

It seeks to work in collaboration with regional tourism agencies and the tourism industry to enhance branding, marketing, product development, visitor servicing and support infrastructure.

Council recognises and promotes its role in economic development and tourism as being one in which it constructively works with the other tiers of government, non-government bodies, industry stakeholders and the community to help promote the area as an attractive destination for people to live, work and play.

**Figure 8. Quilpie Shire's Economic Development and Tourism Partners**



## 2.4 Council's 'Core' Economic Development and Tourism Support Activities

Having regard for Council's collaborative partnerships with other agents of change and its commitment to help the businesses and communities of the Shire reach their full potential, there are six 'core' areas of economic development and tourism activity which underpin Quilpie Shire Council's role in the implementation of this Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. These are:

- **Research and Information Brokerage** - Quilpie Shire Council will continue to play an enabling role in its support for local innovation and entrepreneurship through brokering, facilitation and information sharing. Council's role as a 'solutions broker' will be defined by a rigorous approach to research, data collation and analysis; engagement with State and Federal governments; collaboration with its regional partners such as South West RED, RDA Darling Downs and South West Queensland and Outback Queensland

Tourism; knowledge-sharing with businesses and the communities of the Shire; and strategic project identification and prioritisation.

- **Strategic Planning and Place Management** - Council will, in concert with State and regional regulatory and land use planning frameworks, through the agency of its planning scheme, structure plans, master plans, concept plans and associated planning and building regulations, will continue to guide the location, form and extent of investment in both the Shire's urban and rural environment. Council's strategic land use planning policies, strategies and activities will continue to respond to economic needs and opportunities by undertaking the studies and research necessary to support the Shire's sustainable economic development.

**Figure 9. Quilpie Shire Council's 'Core' Economic Development and Tourism Support Activities**



Source: SC Lennon & Associates

- **Investment in Local Infrastructure and Services** - Council is committed to nurturing the foundations for prosperity – strategic infrastructure, community services and facilities necessary to ensure the liveability of the district's

towns and settlements, services and facilities for visitors (through destination management), access to employment and places where industry can invest and do business. In its role as a facilitator of business activity, Quilpie Shire

Council will continue to plan for and provide those critical infrastructure items that fall under its remit and advocate for those items that fall outside of its direct control.

- **Local Business Support** - Council understands that economic development requires the support of local businesses to encourage continued investment and employment creation from business and industry already located in the district. Council will continue to liaise directly with business and industry as well as representative organisations and peak industry bodies to understand local needs and priorities and respond accordingly with the planning, program and project delivery required to address those priorities.
- **Marketing, Promotion and Investment Attraction** - Investment is fundamental to economic development, and access to international, national and regional markets, including visitor markets, is a key determinant of sustainable economic growth. Council will continue to help facilitate private sector investment by promoting what Quilpie Shire has to offer prospective investors, including potential new residents.

It will also pro-actively promote the district as a key visitor destination. Importantly, it will continue to work hard to attract government investment in the Shire's critical strategic infrastructure needs, by identifying local priorities and preparing business cases to inform both Council and other government funding support for key projects.

- **Economic Development and Tourism Advocacy and Partnerships** - Underpinning Quilpie Shire's economic development and tourism agenda, Council provides a unifying voice for local communities and for local businesses across all sectors of the economy when lobbying State and Federal Governments on key industry or infrastructure issues.

The six core areas of economic development activity described above are interrelated and the initiatives of Council and its partners will often cut across more than one of these. The strategic themes and actions presented in this strategy reflect these key roles and functions in the context of identified challenges and opportunities to progress economic development and tourism in Quilpie Shire, and Council's collaborative partnerships with other key stakeholders in addressing positive economic change with an outlook to 2024 and beyond.



Image: Quilpie Shire Military History Museum (source: SC Lennon & Associates)



### 3. A Roadmap to Prosperity

#### 3.1 Quilpie Shire's Economic Development and Tourism Vision and Charter

*Outback Horizon 2024* is informed by socio-economic research and analysis, targeted stakeholder consultation and broader community consultation undertaken throughout the communities of Quilpie Shire. The strategy themes and directions reflect stakeholder views regarding the Shire's issues, challenges and opportunities for growth, which

combined, inform the vision for economic development. The vision is supported by the economic development and tourism charter. The charter describes Council's commitment to promoting, facilitating and co-ordinating economic development and tourism activities in Quilpie Shire.

#### *Economic Development and Tourism Vision for Quilpie Shire*

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*Building on its strategic outback setting, Quilpie Shire will be widely known for its vibrant-and connected communities and as a location of choice in which to live, work, visit and invest.*

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#### *Quilpie Shire Council's Economic Development Charter*

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*Quilpie Shire Council supports economic development and tourism through strategic planning, information-sharing, advocacy, infrastructure provision and service delivery. In doing so, Council is committed to supporting local businesses, facilitating investment, attracting visitors and cultivating the Shire's appeal as a place to live, work and play.*

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Guided by its economic development charter and the action plan presented in this strategy, Council provides the enabling environment to help facilitate the competitiveness and success of businesses

across all sectors of the local economy. To focus Council's efforts in this regard, opportunities for action have been identified across three strategic themes.

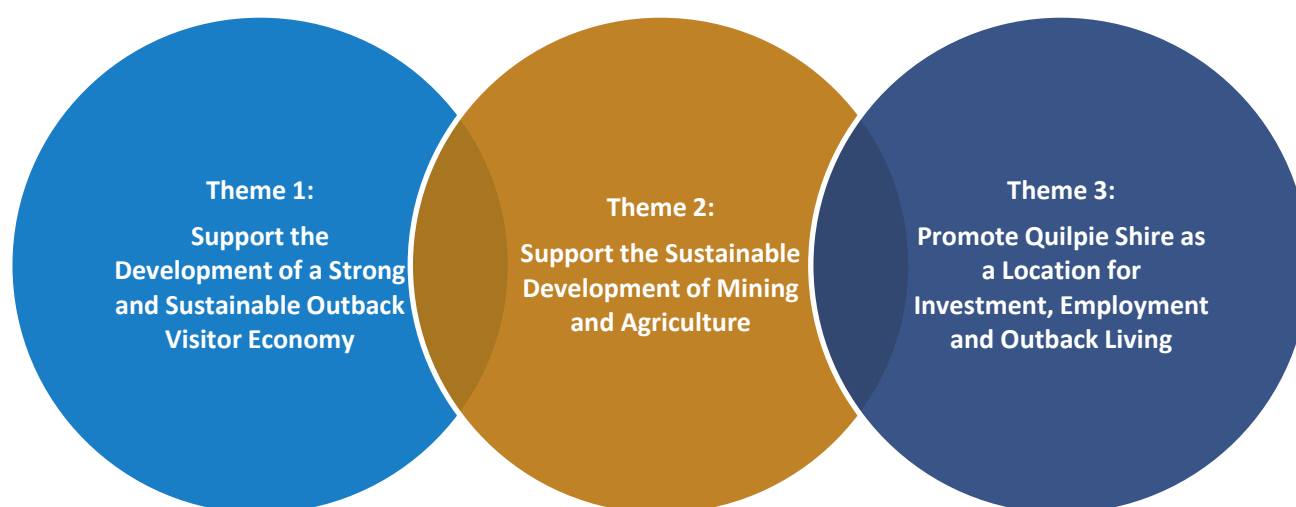
#### 3.2 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Themes

The preceding sections of this strategy document challenges and opportunities for Quilpie Shire Council and its partners in government, the non-government sector, industry and the community to address collaboratively, to help facilitate change towards a prosperous future.

These are challenges and opportunities that Council and its partners can focus on to help activate and

grow the local economy. They are informed by the economic development and tourism vision and Council's economic development and tourism charter.

Prioritising where Council's resources can best be directed for the purpose of facilitating and promoting prosperity is a key consideration of *Outback Horizon 2024*.

**Figure 10. Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Themes**

Opportunities for action have been identified and categorised under the three strategic themes. These are opportunities that Council and its partners can focus on to help activate and grow the local economy. Each theme includes:

- **Strategic Objective** – this is a statement setting out what the target outcome is for that theme.
- **Rationale** – this is a statement providing a set of reasons and a logical basis for opportunities identified.
- **Opportunities for Action** – these are the actions to be pursued in order to realise the stated objective.

Some opportunities for action are focused on *catalyst project planning and development initiatives* which require action combined with a well-planned course of project implementation for the desired

outcomes to be realised. Others are focussed on *strategic program implementation*. These are initiatives that can be addressed as part of Council's day-to-day economic development planning and facilitation functions in a strategic and informed manner. In a number of cases, these actions seek to build on or continue initiatives already in place.

The majority of the opportunities for action will be 'Council-led' in that they involve specific tasks for Quilpie Shire Council and an allocation of human, physical and financial resources.

Other opportunities for action refer to 'Council-supported' activities and these are advocacy or support initiatives where the implementation of the actions is to be led by agencies other than Council.

Each strategy theme is addressed in turn as follows.

### 3.3 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Action Plan

#### *Theme 1: Support the Development of a Strong and Sustainable Outback Visitor Economy*

##### Strategic Objective

Position Quilpie Shire as a destination of choice for a diversity of visitors seeking natural, cultural and leisure-based experiences in a unique outback setting, with continued investment supporting quality jobs and visitation growth equivalent to at least the State average.

##### Rationale

Quilpie Shire's tourism sector is an emerging area of economic activity with the potential to be a driver of business investment and employment, serving to diversify and grow the Quilpie Shire economy. With a strategic, informed and targeted approach to tourism promotion and destination management, tourism has the potential to be a pillar of Quilpie Shire's future prosperity.

The area's natural attributes and prominent features such as Baldy Top, The Lake and Hell Hole Gorge, its outback landscapes, its European history (including agriculture and mining) and Indigenous cultural heritage, as well as the district's paleolithic history (dinosaurs and megafauna) provides the basis for the development of a vibrant visitor economy in Quilpie Shire.

Quilpie Shire's Indigenous cultural heritage, its European pioneer settlement history (Kings in Grass Castles) and its opal heritage are other authentic features defining the local tourism offer which are yet to be fully capitalised upon.

Part of the Natural Sciences Loop, Quilpie Shire can continue to build on its place in this popular regional drive tourism network providing visitors with easy access to the natural wonders of Queensland's south west. Quality road and air transport connections means Quilpie Shire is accessible to a wide catchment of visitors from all over Australia.

The Quilpie Museum Precinct and the Eromanga Natural History Museum provide key anchor points. With continued investment in signage, transport connections, support information and a co-

ordinated approach to tourism branding, these assets enhance the Shire's capacity to attract visitors and encourage them to stop and stay in the district for longer.

Investment in the Eromanga Natural History Museum expansion project bodes well for efforts to build on the area's local comparative and competitive advantage to develop a true 'hero' attraction, something Council is committed to. Opportunities to explore other catalyst projects which focus on what is unique to Quilpie Shire (for example, an attraction which celebrates Quilpie's opal heritage) has the potential to position the district as a destination, drawing more tourists into the Shire for longer.

In order to build on its many assets and opportunities for growth, Quilpie Shire must first work in collaboration with other stakeholders to address some key challenges in the areas of tourism product development and supporting infrastructure, marketing and destination awareness.

This requires a focus on the 'enablers of a vibrant visitor economy'. These enablers refer to the things that Council, in concert with tourism organisations and other key stakeholders such as South West RED, can address in partnership to influence positive economic development outcomes. They include:

- A conducive natural, built and social/cultural environment;
- Quality infrastructure and services (including transport and communications, hospitality services, accommodation, entertainment and events and cultural attractions);
- Effective information management (including research, marketing, visitor information and wayfinding); and
- Business support (e.g. customer service training, digital learning, marketing and branding).

The development of a strong and sustainable outback visitor economy also requires Quilpie Shire

to embrace its connections with the wider region. This means leveraging the marketing and promotional power of the Shire's location within Queensland's southern outback and its proximity to major attractions and events in the wider region.

Tourism and events is one of Queensland's and Australia's growth industries. Nationally, Australia's tourism industry has been performing strongly, with recent revenue growth at 3.5% per annum and forecast growth of 3.3% per annum over the five years to 2024-25. This is dependent on the outbreak of COVID-19 not becoming a long-term factor and continuing to restrict tourism activity over the period.

It is expected that the recovery from the outbreak of COVID-19 and an associated increase in tourism activity are projected to boost both the number of tourism industry establishments and employees over the next five years (IBISWorld, March 2020).

Regional Australia's visitor economy is on an upward trajectory and if opportunities for tourism product development, destination management, promotion and resourcing are addressed, Quilpie Shire is well-placed to develop its profile as a premier outback visitor destination.



Image: Baldy Top Lookout (source: Quilpie Shire Council)

## Opportunities for Action

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1.1 Prepare a business case for a catalyst tourism experience in the Quilpie town centre as part of a wider Quilpie master planning exercise (see Action 3.1), which embraces the district's opal heritage as a key component of a Quilpie Visitor Precinct / Cultural Heritage Precinct.</p> <p>1.2 Investigate the business case for establishing commercially-operated formal guided tours at Quilpie's opal fossicking site, either in the existing location or adjacent to the proposed Quilpie Visitor Precinct.</p> | <p>1.3 Explore the concept of a Quilpie town centre heritage trail (as part of the proposed master plan), commencing at the Visitor Information Centre.</p> <p>1.4 Explore the concept of a mining and opal visitor trail in Quilpie Shire.</p> <p>1.5 Explore the concept of an industrial heritage trail in Eromanga as part of the town's master planning process.</p> |
|---|---|



- 1.6 Establish a program of museum and curatorial development training in support of current and planned project and program initiatives.
- 1.7 Prepare a concept plan for the Baldy Top Lookout area (incorporating Tabletop) to address needs and opportunities for formal walking tracks and visitor information points and other facilities.
- 1.8 Continue to engage with the State and Federal Governments to explore opportunities for signage, amenities and formalised walking trails for visitors to Hell Hole Gorge.
- 1.9 Prepare a wayfinding strategy for Quilpie Shire, with an emphasis on consistent, branded signage.
- 1.10 Prepare and distribute a series of new maps highlighting key tourist route connections.
- 1.11 Undertake a stock route audit and tourism signage strategy.
- 1.12 Explore opportunities for new and iconic conferences and events aimed at extending the visitor season such as a national rally car event or a Baldy Top rock concert.
- 1.13 Commission a training package and develop a guideline for Quilpie Shire's hospitality businesses to improve levels of service, addressing issues such as shopfront presentation, visual merchandising, customer service training for staff, digital marketing and hours of operation.
- 1.14 Explore the concept of a digital itinerary planner to connect people with information on Quilpie Shire's visitor attractions and events.
- 1.15 In collaboration with Traditional Owners, explore opportunities for Indigenous cultural tourism in Quilpie Shire.
- 1.16 Undertake a Shire-wide free camping economic impact analysis and management plan.
- 1.17 Undertake an audit of RV dumps and plan for upgrades or additions as appropriate.
- 1.18 Develop a revitalised tourism brand and Destination Management Plan for Quilpie Shire which ties into the "Queensland Southern Outback" branding and destination management framework.



Image: Eromanga dinosaur sculpture (source: Quilpie Shire Council)

## Theme 2: Support the Sustainable Development of Mining and Agriculture

### Strategic Objective

Provide for a sustainable future for Quilpie Shire through measures which support and promote mining and agriculture as the district's economic foundations and the pillars of future prosperity.

### Rationale

Agriculture, which is Quilpie Shire's traditional economic mainstay, is the principal driver of the district's economic activity. As well as being the area's largest provider of jobs, Quilpie Shire's agricultural sector, dominated by sheep and cattle grazing, accounts for approximately one-fifth (20%) of total industry value-added.

Quilpie Shire's other economic pillar is its mineral resource base. Quilpie Shire and the surrounding region is blessed with a wealth of mineral resources including opals (considered the best in the world), oil and gas and reportedly, some rare-earth metals.

While providing for only around 5% of local jobs, the mining sector is the largest contributor to Quilpie Shire's economic activity, worth approximately \$17 million or one-quarter of the Shire's total industry value-added, resulting in positive income and expenditure flow-ons through other sectors in the local economy. According to IBISWorld (March 2020), over the past few years the oil and gas extraction industry has adopted new technologies and systems to increase productivity and develop operational efficiencies.

Worldwide demand for LNG has grown rapidly over the past decade and this growth is anticipated to continue over the next five years. New techniques for locating oil and gas are also continuing to emerge, which will also benefit the industry over the next five years.

Opal mining is typically labour-intensive, though substantial capital is still required to establish operations. Most opal mines are small, where individuals and small-scale firms use basic extraction techniques. The industry's prospects for growth are positive, not only through opportunities generated

by opal mining's relationship with the local visitor economy but also for the opportunities it offers new entrants to establish opal mining and related operations in the district.

Driven by the impacts of drought, Quilpie Shire's sheep and wool and cattle industries have been subject to a prolonged period of economic dislocation. For sheep and wool-growers, adverse weather impacts have been compounded by the impacts of pests and wild predators on stock. Nevertheless, Council, in partnership with graziers and governments have had some success in countering these impacts through investments in wild dog exclusion fencing programs.

The stakeholder consultations undertaken to help inform this strategy highlighted the importance of regenerating the cattle industry, and the sheep industry as farmers and their workers (e.g. shearers) are the lifeblood of the outback community.

The sheep industry must be encouraged on the grounds that it is labour intensive, it has good prospects in terms of future markets, the community has the land management expertise and the land is suitable for sheep grazing. If and when the sheep and wool sector is revitalised and on a strong footing, the necessary skills will be in high demand, something that requires preparation and planning today.

While local commitment to the sheep and cattle sectors is strong and prospects are positive, there are a number of challenges and constraints which must also be addressed to support a viable future for the agricultural economy.

The State Government's Wild Rivers legislation, designed to preserve the natural values of rivers that have all or almost all of their natural values intact, is considered by many in the community to pose a threat to the future of small-scale mining and agriculture in the district because of the perceived restrictions it might place on productive land use.

Carbon farming is arguably having an adverse impact on the Shire's productive agricultural land, with tracts of land laying idle creating land management issues associated with the impacts of weeds, pests and wild dogs. Wild dog exclusion fencing alone will not be enough to revitalise the sector if collaborative and co-ordinated approaches to land management are not pursued.

### Opportunities for Action

- 2.1 Continue to design and deliver programs, in collaboration with government and industry, to deliver wild dog exclusion fencing throughout Quilpie Shire.
- 2.2 Prepare a business case and seek government funding support for the design and installation of a heavy vehicle public weighbridge to facilitate the transportation of livestock and other materials through Quilpie.
- 2.3 Prepare a business case for improved road connections from NSW into Queensland via Thargomindah to Eromanga (Warry Gate Road) to facilitate interstate freight movements.
- 2.4 Work with mining companies regarding current expansion and development projects to gain an understanding of workforce requirements; map skills requirements and identify potential training programs to support local employment opportunities.
- 2.5 Work with graziers and education and training providers to determine future workforce training needs for a revitalised sheep and wool industry.
- 2.6 Undertake an investigations study and prepare a business case for the establishment of a rail freight hub in Quilpie connected to the inland rail network.
- 2.7 Pro-actively engage with the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy to establish opportunities for rare-earth minerals mining in Quilpie Shire and the surrounding region.
- 2.8 Undertake a study of the economic impacts of carbon farming, to better understand the long-term implications for agriculture in Quilpie Shire and the surrounding region.
- 2.9 Engage with the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy on the impacts of the Wild Rivers legislation on small-scale mining in Quilpie Shire.



*Image: Sheep flock being prepared for shearing (source: Shutterstock)*



### Theme 3: Promote Quilpie as a Location for Investment, Employment and Outback Living

#### Strategic Objective

Consolidate Quilpie Shire's appeal as a location of choice for businesses and for residents who value a friendly and relaxed outback lifestyle underpinned by a vibrant retail sector, arts and culture, sport and recreation, health care and education and access to quality employment and a diversity of housing.

#### Rationale

A region's population is one of its most important assets and population change is a significant factor underpinning the long-term economic and social viability of the communities of Quilpie Shire. One of Quilpie Shire's most pressing challenges concerns its declining population and infrastructure constraints, including digital connectivity, mobile phone blackspots and some transport infrastructure shortfalls.

Infrastructure underpins economic activity and is fundamental to a prosperous community. It includes transport infrastructure, power and water, serviced industrial land and communications. Digital communications is a fundamental enabler of business innovation and economic development, and the emergence of the digital economy has increased the propensity for individuals and businesses to interact and trade with suppliers, partners and customers from anywhere in the world.

Together with quality physical infrastructure, community infrastructure is another fundamental enabler of economic development for the role it plays in facilitating social and economic interaction and exchange. This includes cultural, recreational, leisure and entertainment facilities and services including libraries, galleries, parks and gardens.

Quilpie Shire Council is committed to maintaining a standard of infrastructure and services that supports and enhances the liveability of the communities of the Shire. This includes its recreation, leisure and entertainment facilities, its cultural facilities, the quality of its parks and streetscapes and its community services and facilities.

To retain and attract residents, businesses and investment, Quilpie Shire needs to articulate its value proposition. One of Quilpie Shire's greatest strengths is its friendly and relaxed outback lifestyle and the strong sense of identity held by the communities of Adavale, Cheepie, Eromanga, Quilpie and Toompine. Quilpie Shire's business community is innovative and there is a strong sense of collaboration and healthy competition amongst the business communities of Quilpie Shire.

Investment attraction requires a strategic and targeted approach to attract business owners and, perhaps more importantly, their families to want to live and work in the district. Housing diversity and affordability are crucial elements in regional migration decisions, especially for family migration but also for all household types. Quilpie Shire's affordability is a key attribute that can be promoted as a crucial component of its lifestyle offer.

Quilpie Shire Council promotes a 'can-do' attitude to support local business and industry, consistent with the community's values and a collective desire for balanced and sustainable development. To this end, it will continue to work in collaboration with South West RED and other key agents of change, to promote what the Shire has to offer as a lifestyle location and, importantly, it will back this up with investment in projects and programs which help to deliver quality infrastructure and support services to local businesses and residents.

As stated in Council's Corporate Plan 2017-2022, the vision for Quilpie Shire is for *"a growing and sustainable community with a strong positive culture... [and] a safe, secure and inclusive lifestyle for our families, now and into the future"*.

As Quilpie Shire's Council's roadmap, which guides Council in its capacity to help support local businesses, attract visitors, facilitate investment and promote the Shire's appeal as a place to live, work and play, *Outback Horizon 2024* is designed to help realise this vision.

## Opportunities for Action

- 3.1 Commission the preparation of a Quilpie Township Masterplan as a catalyst for town centre place activation, incorporating the Visitor Information Centre, John Waugh Park, the Quilpie Memorial Swimming Pool and the old Council depot site.
- 3.2 Facilitate access to information on Queensland Government small business support programs.
- 3.3 Establish and deliver a regular *Quilpie Shire Business Breakfast* with a program of speakers addressing topical business interests and local priorities.
- 3.4 Investigate interest in 'retail inspiration' workshops for local traders.
- 3.5 In collaboration with SWRED, produce a *Quilpie Shire Business Investment Insights Prospectus* targeting businesses and occupations in professional services to agriculture and mining, tourism, health and education.
- 3.6 Prepare a 'State of the State Roads in Quilpie Shire' report and lobby for priority improvements.
- 3.7 Undertake a survey to identify and prioritise Council-controlled roads in Quilpie Shire requiring upgrades on the basis of safety, conflicting uses (e.g. trucks vs. residents and tourists) and efficiency.
- 3.8 Investigate and prioritise mobile phone blackspot areas throughout Quilpie Shire and lobby for improvements.
- 3.9 Investigate and prioritise Wi-Fi connectivity links to rural properties and throughout the communities of Quilpie Shire and lobby for improvements.
- 3.10 Investigate the business case for Quilpie Shire's suitability as the location for an interstate power grid interconnector.
- 3.11 Promote Quilpie Airport as a key asset for attracting visitors and investment; explore opportunities for additional flights to Quilpie.
- 3.12 Promote and support the opportunity to establish a truck stop / roadhouse in Quilpie (planning approvals, regulations, design support).



Image: Quilpie Golf Club (source: Quilpie Shire Council)



## 4. Strategy Implementation Framework

### 4.1 Informing Prioritisation of Opportunities for Action

Effective implementation must be cognisant of available resources and the capabilities of Council to progress the opportunities identified. To allow for effective implementation over time, the opportunities presented in this strategy have been prioritised.

The prioritisation of actions to support economic development and tourism is guided by two broad sets of assessment criteria – **benefits realisation** and **capacity to implement**.

#### **Benefits Realisation:**

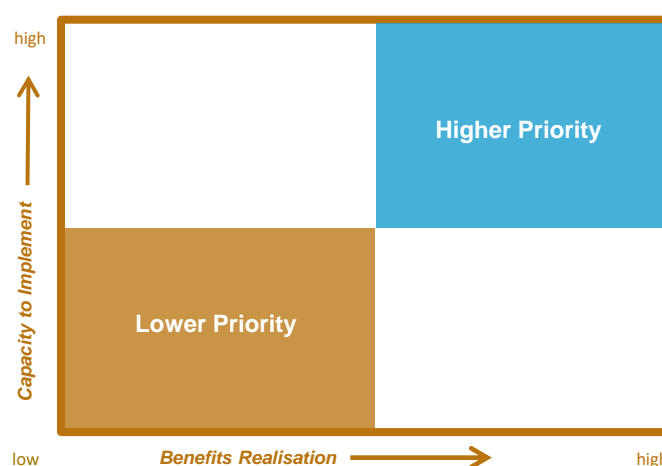
- What **benefits** will the opportunity deliver to Quilpie Shire's residents and businesses if realised?
  - Will it bring more business investment to Quilpie Shire and is it the sort of investment we want?
  - Does it build on the district's existing industry profile, capabilities and competitive advantages?
  - Will it help to create more jobs in key and emerging industry sectors such as agriculture, health, education and the visitor economy?
  - Will it help to reduce leakages and retain and re-circulate more income in the Shire?
  - Are there other potential impacts (e.g. social, environmental, cultural) to consider?

#### **Capacity to Implement:**

- What is Quilpie Shire Council's **capacity to implement** the project or activity?
  - Is it consistent with the community's vision and values?
  - Is it consistent with Council's land use planning and policy objectives?
  - Does Council have the organisational capacity to implement the project?

- Does Council have the financial resources and the human resources?
- Is the necessary support infrastructure available (or can it be realistically built/accessed?)
- Implementation - who is best placed to drive the opportunity? Is it Quilpie Shire Council as the lead, as a partner or is it the responsibility of other organisations with support from Council?

**Figure 11. Economic Opportunity Assessment Matrix**



Source: SC Lennon & Associates

Strategy implementation priorities are identified through the application of these broad set of assessment criteria, determining to what extent the opportunity in question concerned is a higher, medium or lower priority.

Applying the assessment criteria and effectively 'rating' and 'ranking' each action determines those that are considered the highest priority and which, as a result, are short-term actions.

## 4.2 Priority Actions

Priority projects and activities for implementation are identified based on the application of the broad set of assessment criteria described above.

Some are focused on *catalyst project planning and development initiatives* which require action combined with a well-planned course of project implementation for the desired outcomes to be realised over time. Others are focussed on *strategic program implementation* and are initiatives that can be addressed as part of Council's day-to-day economic development planning and facilitation functions. In a number of cases, these actions seek to build on or continue initiatives already in place.

From the long-list of 39 individual opportunities for action presented in this strategy, the following thirteen are the priorities to be progressed over the first 24 months of implementation.

### Catalyst Project Planning and Development:

- Commission the preparation of a Quilpie Township Masterplan as a catalyst for town centre place activation, incorporating the Visitor Information Centre, John Waugh Park, the Quilpie Memorial Swimming Pool and the old Council depot site (Action 3.1).
- Prepare a business case for a catalyst tourism experience in the Quilpie town centre as part of a wider Quilpie master planning exercise (see Action 3.1), which embraces the district's opal heritage as a key component of a Quilpie Visitor Precinct / Cultural Heritage Precinct (Action 1.1).
- Explore the concept of a Quilpie town centre heritage trail (as part of the proposed master plan), commencing at the Visitor Information Centre (Action 1.3).
- Explore the concept of an industrial heritage trail in Eromanga as part of the town's master planning process (Action 1.5).
- Prepare a concept plan for the Baldy Top Lookout area (incorporating Tabletop) to address needs and opportunities for formal walking tracks and visitor information points and other facilities (Action 1.7).
- Develop a revitalised tourism brand and Destination Management Plan for Quilpie Shire which ties into the "Queensland Southern Outback" branding and destination management framework (Action 1.18).
- Continue to design and deliver programs, in collaboration with government and industry, to deliver wild dog exclusion fencing throughout Quilpie Shire (Action 2.1).

### Strategic Program Implementation:

- Continue to engage with the State and Federal Governments to explore opportunities for signage, amenities and formalised walking trails for visitors to Hell Hole Gorge (Action 1.8).
- Prepare and distribute a series of new maps highlighting key tourist route connections (Action 1.10).
- Facilitate access to information on Queensland Government small business support programs (Action 3.2).
- In collaboration with SWRED, produce a *Quilpie Shire Business Investment Insights Prospectus* targeting businesses and occupations in professional services to agriculture and mining, tourism, health and education (Action 3.5).
- Investigate and prioritise mobile phone blackspot areas throughout Quilpie Shire and lobby for improvements (Action 3.8).
- Investigate and prioritise Wi-Fi connectivity links to rural properties and throughout the communities of Quilpie Shire and lobby for improvements (Action 3.9).

### 4.3 Cultivating Collaborative Partnerships for Effective Implementation

*Outback Horizon 2024* will be implemented by Quilpie Shire Council in partnership with the Queensland Government, the Australian Government, South West RED, regional development bodies, peak industry bodies, RDA Darling Downs and South West Queensland, the district's business and community groups and other supporting partners across the south-west Queensland region.

Council will organise a dedicated annual *Quilpie Shire Economic Development Futures Forum* to re-affirm and build on the district's economic development directions and priorities as articulated in this strategy.

This will include the review, update and prioritisation of strategies and actions and will involve Councillors, Executive Leadership Team members and invited external stakeholders.

The Shire's businesses and residents of Quilpie, Eromanga, Adavale, Toompine and Cheepie will continue to be engaged at a partnership level to ensure effective communication on the progress of strategy implementation and commitment to realising Council's and the community's economic development agenda.

### 4.4 Monitoring Strategy Progress

This strategy has been prepared in the context of the role of economic development and tourism in Quilpie Shire Council's broader program of work and strategic objectives, and wider regional priorities.

Council will monitor the progress of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy in order to achieve the actions set out. Set performance measures have been established using a range of indicators, including both 'output' indicators and 'outcome' measures.

Targets set out in this strategy will be monitored through the following methods and sources:

- Regular (annual) business confidence surveys;
- Customer / visitor satisfaction surveys;
- Subscription to regularly updated and tailored data sources such as profile.id and economy.id;
- Department of Education, Skills and Employment data on unemployment and labour force trends;
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data; and
- ABS Business Register data.

The set performance measures will be reported annually. *Outback Horizon 2024: Quilpie Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy* will be reviewed annually and updated in five years.

## References

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