

Community Development Strategy 2018-2021

COMMUNITY





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement of Country and Our Vision for Reconciliation

Mackay Regional Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, and recognises the cultural diversity of our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Council is committed to creating innovative opportunities by building stronger relationships, mutual respect and encourages cultural practices that strengthen and support harmony between Mackay's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader community. Council values the input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into decision-making processes at a local level and encourages their active participation.

Acknowledgement of contribution

We would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the public, businesses, community organisations, agencies, and council staff who contributed to the consultation process and the development of this strategy. We also acknowledge and appreciate the assistance and logistical support of the council Community Development, Community Engagement and Communication teams, which was vital in reaching and engaging stakeholder and community representatives throughout the region.

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Message from the Mayor

This Community Development Strategy has been produced with direct input from the people we are seeking to empower through its adoption. It details our plans for the next four years to break down barriers that prevent people feeling included and valued in our community.

Our strategy is about involving, empowering, uniting, strengthening and guiding our community. From businesses to not-for-profit groups, sporting clubs to service providers - everyone has a part to play.

We already have a vibrant region and our sense of community has never been stronger. We have been through a major flood, economic downturn and cyclones in recent years and emerged as a stronger community, united as a region and looking forward to an exciting future.

The Mackay region is a diverse community. Since 2016 we've welcomed 832 new citizens from 52 countries to our region at our Citizenship Ceremonies. The top four nations to deliver new Aussies to Mackay are the Philippines, United Kingdom, South Africa and India. We have the largest Australian South Sea Islander population in Australia and almost 6000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people call our region home.

A challenge for this strategy is to build on all those strengths to further increase our community capacity, regional identity, and community health and wellbeing. The foundations are in place and we believe that the next four years are set to take our community to new heights.

Mackay Regional Council is extremely pleased to be able to take a leading role in that development.



Mayor Greg Williamson
Mackay Regional Council





About the Mackay region

Renowned for its friendly and relaxed people, picturesque rural and coastal scenery, and sub-tropical climate, the Mackay region is an enviable location to live, work and play.

The region—which covers about 7,600 square kilometres and 200 kilometres of coastline—is located on the northern part of the central Queensland coast next to the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

We are around 115,000 community members strong according to the 2016 census. As residents of the Mackay region we can live the lifestyle we choose—rural or urban—across the main city, townships, rural residential areas and small rural settlements.

Home to many different cultural groups, including Australia's largest population of Australian South Sea Islanders, we are a culturally rich and diverse region. Mackay Regional Council acknowledges the Traditional custodians of the land, recognising the cultural diversity and proud history of our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Mackay's economy has been forged by a well-established, innovative, and world-class agricultural sector. Our major industries include manufacturing, construction, real estate, transport, the resource sector, wholesale trade, and professional and technical services, which all complement our \$300 million tourism industry to bring our gross annual regional product to around \$7.2 billion.¹

The region's economic cycles and transitions bring challenges, but also provide our community with opportunities for innovation and growth. In 2017 more than 10,000 businesses operated in the Mackay region, each one contributing to the social and economic fabric of our community.

While the future prosperity of our region relies on our young people, our older residents' wisdom and life experience provides a critical foundation. We are listening to our youth, learning from our elders, and reconnecting with our history, our culture and our pride in our region.

¹ REMPLAN Data, see <http://www.economyprofile.com.au/mackay/industries/gross-regional-product>

Regional transformation

Our region has transformed over the past five years. While the economy usually gains headlines, closer to home, our communities have also shifted. We have identified some key challenges affecting our region, and while many are outside the scope of council's mandate or resources to address directly, we must recognise and where possible strategically influence the issues and matters of importance to our community.

Economic changes in the region and in local industry



In an economic sense, our region has been affected by both upswings and downturns in local industry, particularly in the resources and agriculture industries on which our economy relies heavily. This has affected job opportunities and workforce capacity in important sectors, such as education and health, as well as broader factors, such as house and rental prices.

There has been a perception that there is a high cost of living in the region, as well as inequalities in wage growth. But house and rental prices have fallen in 2017, and median wages remain above the Queensland average. From a community perspective, people feel a sense that they are hostage to the destabilising economic boom and bust cycles, and many people feel that maintaining a sense of community identity through the highs and lows is difficult. Rural localities have also been affected, and some people feel that their communities have missed out on the periods of economic prosperity.

Concern for our young people



The area of greatest concern raised in the community consultations was around caring for our young people. There is a strong awareness that mental health is a major issue for young people in the region. People are also concerned about young people being able to gain and hold secure work, keeping young people in the region, and the need to understand how best to encourage young people to be involved in their local communities. Many people feel that a lack of activities and opportunities for young people are leading to community issues, and will affect the region's future prosperity.

Increasing volunteering and widening the circle



While the Mackay region is known for coming together in times of crisis, the rate of regular volunteering is just below the Queensland average. We know that increasing volunteering is important to maintaining and building a stronger community. People are also concerned that it is often the same people doing work in the service of community, and see a need to widen the circle and encourage people who have not previously volunteered to do so.

Changing social demographics, trends, and perceptions



While population levels in the Mackay region rose over the past five years, population growth has recently slowed, and there is a shift towards an older demographic, something that is even more prevalent in some regional and rural localities. People are concerned that many bright young people leave the region to pursue education and careers in other places. And there is a perception that people are more time-poor, and stressed with work and financial pressures, while the high level of shift work in our region can lead to unhealthy lifestyles.



Our Community Development Strategy

Communities thrive and grow stronger when people are enabled to bring about change—to have a say in their own future, to develop strong connections to others and to ‘place’, to feel safe, and to be supported to make good choices about their own health and wellbeing.

Our Community Development Strategy outlines Mackay Regional Council's priorities for community development in the Mackay region over the next four years, from 2018 to 2021. This strategy will help to positively shape our region's future, by helping to bring together services and people to look at solutions to local challenges and make the most of the opportunities available in our region.

The Community Development Strategy builds on Mackay Regional Council's Corporate Plan 2016–2021. Of the eight key themes identified in the Corporate Plan, this strategy strongly supports:

- community pride
- regional identity
- health and wellbeing.

It also aligns with other council plans and strategies, including the *Economic Development Strategy 2015–2020*, the *Mackay Regional Council Arts and Cultural Plan 2016–2020*, and the *Accessible Communities Action Plan*.

A number of Council policies underpin the Community Development Strategy, including the *Community Engagement Policy*, *Indigenous Policy*, *Cultural Diversity Policy*, *Youth Policy*, *Equitable Access Policy* and *Age-friendly Communities Policy*.

Our goal is to strengthen and better connect people and communities, to build community unity, and reduce inequality and disadvantage. This includes helping our communities and region to respond and adapt to changes, such as economic or population variances, and harnessing local opportunities in a digital age.

Community development and the role of council

Mackay Regional Council's community development program is a central pillar of council's role in the community and in achieving our strategic priorities.

Community development from a council perspective is about facilitating positive social and economic impact by making sure people can actively participate in the community, and are empowered to create positive changes.

Our community development program supports and leads community initiatives that increase social participation, strengthen connections, address community need, and improve livability in the Mackay region.

Council's goal for community development is to connect people and organisations, and to facilitate or fund community-led initiatives and facilities that better enable our community to work together.



“An ideal community is strength-based and solution focused. It's one that is connected, but not so much that it gets stuck.”
- Cindy Reck, Queensland Department of Child Safety and Disability Services





Vision and guiding principles

Our vision for community development is for a thriving and resilient Mackay region where community pride and participation is improving the health, safety, and overall wellbeing of residents.

This strategy will build on our strengths—recognising the value of our cultural diversity and our natural environments, the importance of sustainable economic growth and the contributions of the community services that support those in need.

Our principles

- ⦿ We acknowledge whole-of-community efforts, and promote community-driven responses.
- ⦿ We recognise and celebrate our region's important history and cultural heritage, and the significant contribution of our cultural diversity.
- ⦿ We value people's connection to place, their land, and their environment.
- ⦿ We promote community unity, inclusion, and equitable access for all.
- ⦿ We are collaborative and value the relationships we have with community groups and residents to share responsibility and resources.
- ⦿ We are innovative and knowledgeable about the way we design and deliver supports and services in the community.
- ⦿ We believe volunteers play a vital role in the community, and should be acknowledged as champions for change.
- ⦿ We value and want to build on the existing strengths of our community.
- ⦿ We strive for a healthy community and economy—one that achieves balance between economic, environmental, and social outcomes.

Our community's vision for the Mackay region

Community development means different things to different people. We asked people throughout the Mackay region what community development meant to them and what their vision of an ideal community is.

“

Community development is working with the community from the ground up.

”

“

A place I am proud to call my home.

”

“

An inclusive, healthy, prosperous community where there is opportunity to work, raise a family and play in a safe, caring and diverse environment.

”

“

Where our young people feel valued, are acknowledged and nurtured... Where our older people feel connected until the day they leave this earth and are tapped as a resource for their experience and wisdom.

”

“

A region that is culturally diverse and diversity is welcome and appreciated.

”



Case Study: Celebrating Mackay with #MackayPride

The #MackayPride campaign was initiated by Mackay Regional Council to promote the positive aspects of the region and encourage a sense of pride in its community members.

A three-minute video showcasing Mackay's natural beauty and the achievements of the community was shared by organisations, businesses and community members on social media, taking out the Best Advertising Campaign across all media in the Queensland Multi-Media Awards in Cairns in 2015. Following this, the Share your Pride campaign encouraged community members to share their own images and messages about the Mackay region that made them proud, using the hashtag #MackayPride.

More than two years later, #MackayPride is one of the most recognised campaigns in the region and continues to have excellent reach and engagement across the community, with more than 27 thousand uses on Instagram and tens of thousands of tagged posts and photos in Facebook. The #MackayPride positive images and messages can be seen in locations as diverse as on the side of the council's new waste trucks to local sports uniforms.



Connecting community and council

Community development is led by Council's dedicated community development team. The team provides an essential role in bringing organisations together and connecting people with council on various issues and opportunities.

Community development officers work closely with all other areas of council, and across the community sector in the Mackay region. They regularly visit each of our region's localities to work directly with people in these communities.

In addition to being present in the localities, Councillors and council staff use digital technologies and social media to connect with residents throughout the Mackay region, making sure people can have their say, using platforms such as *Connecting Mackay* and *#MackayPride*.

We also host events and activities such as the Volunteer Expo and Sports Expo, in consultation with community groups, and fund infrastructure projects that contribute to community development and provide places and services for people to engage and connect.

The community development team's goal is to connect people to services and increase collaboration between service providers, community organisations, local industries and government so that we can work together to build stronger communities and make sure people are looked after.

Jubilee Community Centre

Council's community development team is located in the Jubilee Community Centre. The centre is a place where the community can visit and connect with council staff, with modern facilities for organisations to meet and work together and to display community exhibitions and information.



Community engagement

Engaging with our communities and partners is essential for achieving our community development goals in the Mackay region. We want to empower community members to have a voice and work together to help our region to thrive. To do this, we will continue to improve on existing mechanisms and establish new ways for people to share their ideas and concerns with council, and others, who can enable change.

We heard during our consultations that people value the relationship and connections they have with council and our elected councillors. We know how important it is for people to know about initiatives taking place across our region, and to be involved in decisions that affect them.

Collaborating with community partners

In developing this strategy, council brought together community partners and stakeholders to help prioritise actions for community development in the Mackay region. This engagement will continue by establishing an ongoing reference group, made up from representatives of this group of stakeholders and other interested parties wanting to contribute to the implementation of the strategy. This may include establishing new working groups to assist council in delivering actions under the five priority areas of our community development action plan. This will help us to build community partnerships and leverage existing services and activities that deliver on the priorities for community development.

Understanding community needs

The needs of the region and individual communities change over time, so we want to make sure we understand community attitudes, needs, and people's expectations of council as we deliver the community development strategy. We will look to consult more regularly with the community and local organisations, including through existing forums, and by monitoring and reporting back on how we are tracking to deliver our community development strategy.

Engaging in our localities

Council's Community Development team has experienced officers dedicated to working with each of our localities to better understand their needs, aspirations and challenges.

We acknowledge that communication needs to reach all areas of the region and there's a need to offer targeted and regular engagement that meets the different needs of our residents. We will continue to support programs that help us work directly with individual communities, including by supporting the work of progress associations. We will find and use local community representatives to help inform our strategies, and recognise champions for community development in our localities.

Councillors will continue to visit and hold community meetings in our localities, which many people have told us is an important opportunity for people to ensure their views are being heard.

Working with diverse groups

The Mackay region has a rich diversity of people from different cultural backgrounds, many of whom have contributed greatly in shaping our communities and economy. Our socio-demographics are also diverse, and we recognise that vulnerable people in our communities need additional support to be able to engage, and have their voices heard. We will tailor our engagement to be culturally appropriate, and work closely with community partners to make sure we reach the most vulnerable members of our community. We use a range of techniques to engage the community including attending or hosting events and forums, community meetings and networking opportunities to meet with people face-to-face, as well as leveraging social media and online channels to allow people to have their say or contribute to plans from the comfort of their own home.

Consultation

Our strategy has been built with input from community members and organisations from across our region. We spoke with people of different ages, cultural backgrounds and with long-term and new residents alike to find out their priorities, ideas and insights for their community.

We used a number of different methods to consult and engage with stakeholders and the wider community.

- We conducted internal workshops and discussions with council Community Development, Sport and Recreation and Community Engagement teams, the Mayor and Councillors to target engagement and set a general direction for the strategy.
- A survey on the Connecting Mackay website ran for 12 weeks, encouraging people to contribute their views and ideas about what is important to them in the community, and how they feel about the community supports and services available.
- We conducted in-depth discussions with more than 50 stakeholders, including representatives from government and community services, community organisations, cultural institutions, sports and recreation groups, Central Queensland University, emergency services, local businesses, a youth group, progress associations, and community members across many localities. The interviews sought to understand the challenges and opportunities for community development in the Mackay region.
- Following the consultation period, 24 community stakeholders came together in a co-design workshop to help us develop the key themes, areas for action, and priorities for the Community Development Strategy.

The input and ideas from stakeholders has been collated into the five priority areas of: Place, Participation, Partnerships, Prosperity, and People.



224!

survey responses,



56

indepth interviews,

and workshops with



24!

stakeholders

across each council locality.



PRIORITY AREAS

Our priority areas have been identified in consultations with community representatives and stakeholders.

They set the direction for council's Community Programs team over the next four years. Throughout the implementation of the strategy, we will track our progress against our goals using the measures set out under each priority. At the end of each two-year period, we will review and report on this progress and undertake further community and stakeholder consultation to ensure that the strategy remains relevant and continues to reflect community priorities.



Place:

Creating identity, culture and connection.



Participation:

An engaged and caring community.



Partnerships:

Capacity building and working together.



Prosperity:

Living, working and doing business in the region.



People:

A healthy and safe community.

Place: Creating identity, culture and connection to the region

Mackay Regional Council supports the continued development of a regional identity that is driven by the community, and helps build a deeper sense of belonging in the region.

We are committed to building stronger relationships and mutual respect between cultural communities. Recognising and celebrating the diverse cultural history of the region encourages a more inclusive community. This includes facilitating activities and events that foster harmony between and among cultural groups and develop the social capital of the community.

What people told us

People in the region want more opportunities to connect—with each other, with our history and culture, and to the places we live. Some community members feel that because our region's population has become more transient, we have lost our connection to a regional identity, history, and culture. Many people feel that sharing the diverse culture and history of the region through places, arts, and cultural events can help to build a stronger sense of identity and especially encourage more people to understand and recognise the importance of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian South Sea Islander cultural history.

Many people expressed that the suburbs and localities in which they live have strong individual identities that are celebrated and valued within the local community. But we also heard that residents want a stronger collective sense of identity across the region. People suggested that the Mackay region needed a brand, developed, defined, and 'owned' by local people.

People also said that physical spaces and facilities where community members can come together are very important for building community connections, and for working together. This is particularly important for those who feel marginalised or isolated from their community, and who might need a place and reason to connect. Funding for places and spaces to meet and hold community activities and events was seen as a key area council should continue to support.

Our goals

- People feel a strong sense of identity and pride in the region, and are better connected to their local community.
- We celebrate our unique suburban and rural communities with their individual identities.
- We have an inclusive and harmonious community that recognises, values, and celebrates the diverse cultures and history of the region.

Measuring our progress

To measure our success in achieving the goals of this theme over the next four years, we will track:

- participation at activities and events celebrating culture and regional history
- the number of council run displays, activities, and events celebrating cultural diversity
- the number of place-based activities and events in regional and rural localities.



“Multicultural events are important. They allow us to share ideas and come up with different ways of doing things together.”
- Starret Vea Vea, Chairperson of the Mackay and District Australian South Sea Islander Association (MADASSIA)

Key initiatives

1.1 Recognise and share stories of our region's culture and history

Our region's cultural diversity should be celebrated and shared. We will work with our Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Australian South Sea Islander, and migrant communities to promote our diverse culture and experiences through events, displays, and showcases. We also recognise our unique and important history, and will continue to make sure community members and visitors hear stories about the events and people who have shaped the Mackay region.

1.2 Support a community-driven brand

Campaigns that build community spirit and pride about their region help to reinforce positive feelings in the community. Building on the success of #MackayPride and Mackay Tourism's #mymackay campaign, we will continue to advocate for a community voice, and a strong community focus in developing our regional identity and brand.

1.3 Support place-based activities

People connect in physical places, especially those that are close to their heart. We will support place-based activities across our region that are driven by the needs of our individual communities, whether urban or rural. This might include community gardens, art and craft groups, workshops, and other activities that help to bring people together where they live.

1.4 Support people who feel isolated to create stronger connections

Making sure people know about and have access to support groups and events helps individuals to connect with each other. It can also help to strengthen our communities by reducing marginalisation and isolation. We will support initiatives for home-stay parents and new residents to meet up with others, and take part in local activities. We will also continue to support programs led by local community organisations such as the George Street Neighbourhood Centre to help new migrants develop a sense of belonging.

1.5 Continue to support community events, with a particular focus on inclusion, culture, and events celebrating rural localities

Community events are an opportunity for us to celebrate and share culture, and to connect in our communities and across the region. We will develop tools to help organisations to organise and promote events that are inclusive for everyone. We will continue to promote and support small community festivals in our rural areas, as well as larger events that bring together people from across our region.



Community members admire the mural by artists Margaret Burgess, Susan Gee, May-Britt Mosshammer, Tracey Robb and Andrea Wright. 2015, acrylic paint.

Case Study: Sharing culture and history - Upon the Levee Wall

Upon the Levee Wall tells the story of Mackay's river port settlement, from the original Indigenous inhabitants to early European settlement, the arrival of South Sea Islander indentured labourers, other waves of migration, early industry through to modern-day Mackay.

The mural was created as a community arts project as part of Animating Spaces Mackay UPI, an Artslink Queensland initiative.

Text, images and support for the mural were sourced during community consultations with various community, cultural and business groups.

Participation: An engaged and caring community

Stronger civic participation and volunteering in community initiatives and organisations is critical to developing a community that can work together to face challenges, and to creating opportunities in the region.

We are proud of the way our community comes together to help each other in times of crisis, such as natural disasters. While the regular volunteering rate in our region has increased over the past five years, it remains slightly below the Queensland average. A key priority for council is to increase the number of people regularly participating in community groups, associations, and initiatives in the Mackay region.

What people told us

Many community members and organisations want to see more people involved in volunteering activities, and contributing to local events. They are concerned that it is often the same people who give their time. Urban and rural localities alike find it hard to engage younger people and families in volunteer or community activities. People want to see more incentives and recognition for those who give their time.

Young people aged 10 to 25 years were identified as a key group to encourage to become more involved in their community. There are multiple reasons this benefits community development, including younger people having their voices heard more clearly about what they prioritise for their future, having more people and more diverse skills and ideas (such as digital skills) involved, and increased wellbeing for young people resulting from being involved and connected to community and helping others. A lack of activities tailored to young people, and ways for them to engage is of particular concern for people in rural localities.

Cultural groups and services working with migrants or new arrivals to Australia spoke about the importance of having ways for community members to get involved early on when they settle in Mackay. This can help to connect people with support or with others in a similar situation, and encourages people to seek and participate in community initiatives.

Our goals

- Our community values and supports a culture of regular volunteering by people across demographics.
- Our young people have opportunities to be more involved in the community in ways that are relevant to them.

Measuring our progress

To measure our success in achieving the goals of this theme over the next four years, we will track:

- the rate of volunteering in the region
- the participation of young people aged 10 to 25 years in community-based activities and initiatives.



“We need to nurture what's already here.”
- Adrienne Rourke, Mackay Community Foundation and Resource Industry Network

Key initiatives

2.1 Increase understanding of the value of volunteering and pro bono time

Volunteering is the backbone of our community. We will work with community organisations to find and recognise volunteers, and to make sure people across our region are aware of the volunteer opportunities available to them.

2.2 Increase support and coordination for youth reference groups

Supporting our young people to have a stronger voice in the community will help us build strategies that involve young people more in community initiatives. We will support youth reference groups, encouraging young people to start and lead them. We will support youth leadership programs to help young people become more involved in starting community activities designed specifically for them.

2.3 Support young people to be more involved in their community

Young people will continue to shape our region and communities into the future, and need to have a voice in our work and investments today. We will work with the community to involve more young people in volunteering or community events, and offer more incentives for young people to get involved. We will also look at new programs that can help young people to connect with each other, and seek out the services that are available to support them.



Photo by Wood Pushers & Associates

Case Study: Engaging youth in community - The Slade Point Skatescape Art Deck Workshop and All Wheels Sports Event

A thriving skate culture has made the northern beaches a hub for youth-focused events that have been successful bringing young people together with their community.

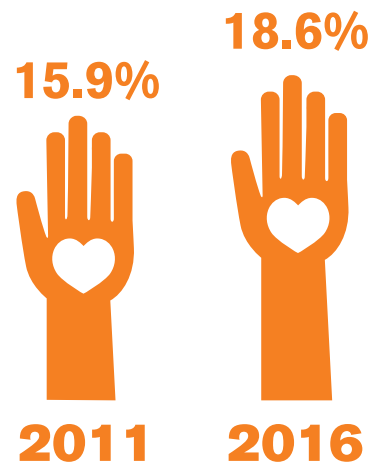
Events like the free Skatescape Art Deck Workshop and All Wheels Sports Event, held over three days of the school holidays in Slade Point in 2017, have been a huge success - combining art, music and sports for young people of all ages (and some big kids too).

The community-driven event was supported by council and funded through a Queensland Government Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) grant. Many local businesses and organisations also sponsored the event, provided supplies or contributed volunteers to help it run smoothly.

The event builds on the success of local young teens, Flynn Bushell and Ethan Laval's #ProjectSk8Park - a campaign for more skateboarding facilities in the northern beaches. It shows how important youth-driven initiatives can be in engaging more young people in their community.

The volunteering rate in the Mackay region increased from 15.9% in 2011 to 18.6% in 2016²

² based on the number of people who did voluntary work through an organisation or group in the past year according to Census data 2011 and 2016



Partnerships: Capacity building and working together

Communities become stronger when they work together to tackle challenges and share ideas that fuel innovation. Building on existing strengths and better coordinating organisations, activities and events will help our community to thrive into the future.

We will continue to support and build the capacity of organisations and individuals to have a positive social impact in their community. This includes enabling organisations to work together in a more holistic way towards shared community-driven goals.

What people told us

Connecting and leveraging what is already working well in the community is a key focus for community organisations, agencies and progress associations. Many stakeholders want council to support better coordination and collaboration across the community sector, especially around major social and health-related issues. This is seen as a key area of need for organisations who are working with vulnerable people, within competitive funding environments, and who have varying capacity levels.

Stakeholders identify leadership as a key ingredient for more effective collaboration in the community sector. They see a strong role for council in creating connections between organisations and individuals with a wider view of the community sector. Many recognise an opportunity to share resources and build community capacity by building relationships and making “unexpected connections” across different sectors, including business and industry.

Local groups in suburbs and localities would like more support to make their ideas for their community happen. Many people identified the opportunity for council to facilitate groups across the region to come together to share ideas and build on strengths and what is already working. They are also looking to council for more support to promote and coordinate community-led events to reduce clashes and increase community engagement.

Our goals

- ⦿ Community groups and individuals feel empowered, and have the skills and resources they need to determine and plan for their future.
- ⦿ Community organisations, services, businesses, and government agencies are working well together to achieve goals that are driven by community aspirations.

Measuring our progress

To measure our success in achieving the goals of this theme over the next four years, we will track:

- ⦿ the number of workshops/events held by council to increase capacity of organisations
- ⦿ whether community organisations are using new ways to plan and coordinate activities and events as a result of participation in council led workshops.



“For council, organisations and community members to work better together we need more and constant communication from council.”
Navio Zeglio, Chairman of the Midge Point Progress Association

Key initiatives

3.1 Support a more coordinated approach to community events and activities

Getting the most out of our events and local activities requires better coordination. We will improve our events and community directories, taking advantage of new technologies, and investigating ways to ensure community groups can work better together to schedule and plan events.

3.2 Engage community groups to determine and plan for the future.

Communities need to be involved in developing the priorities for change in their community. We will identify and help to build the capacity and leadership of “place-based champions” to help us better understand community needs and facilitate community initiatives. Working with local community groups, we will help to develop increased community ownership of facilities and places.

We will continue to hold workshops and events with and for community organisations, clubs and services to strengthen Boards and increase organisations' capacity in planning, governance and innovation.

3.3. Increase opportunities for organisations and individuals to collaborate, and increase capacity of organisations and community

Helping organisations to connect and work together is a priority for council, because it improves the capacity of organisations and services across the region. We will support community–business partnerships, and increased networking among community organisations and progress associations. We will promote the sharing of facilities, and investigate options to more collaboratively plan and allocate council run facilities in local communities.



“Bring ideas and people together. Utilise existing strengths and let the sparks fly when people recognise how they can work together and leverage strengths.”

- Marie Cameron, Regional Social Development Centre.

The Mackay Regional Council Community Development team supports and works with many different organisations, including:

- 12** progress associations 
- more than **300** sporting and recreational groups, 
- more than **250** community and service organisations 
- and **hundreds** of individuals across the region 

Prosperity: Living, working and doing business in the region

Prosperity in our region is not just about the economy; it's about living, working, and doing business in a positive, inclusive, and sustainable way that benefits the entire community.

We will continue to support and create initiatives that help to drive sustainable local economies across our region.

What people told us

Most people are very positive about living in the Mackay region, but want more balance between development and protecting their sense of community, as well as looking after the environment.

Many people said that large economic changes—both booms and busts—have had a negative impact on them. People want to see the region, and in particular its economy, become more sustainable and resilient. Some feel this could be achieved through more diverse job, economic, and business opportunities.

One of the opportunities identified was community-driven tourism. People thought this could help to diversify local economies and enhance the vibrancy of communities, especially in rural localities. This includes involving all kinds of travellers—from backpackers and family caravaners to retirees—in community initiatives and local businesses that promote tourism. Many local sporting and recreation organisations are taking on a stronger role in building their own capacity to participate in sports and events tourism. For example, triathlon and mountain biking events have drawn visitors to the region.

Many people want support for initiatives that keep young people and families in the region, as they are the future of the region. Many thought that encouraging more city living by revitalising the city centre—a key initiative of both the Corporate Plan 2015–2021 and the Economic Development Strategy 2015–2020—is a good way to increase the vibrancy and perception of economic prosperity in Mackay.

People and businesses in rural localities want better facilities to help run successful businesses. There was strong support for initiatives such as 'buy local' and regional networks to help further drive local economies.

Our goals

- ⦿ We are more resilient to economic changes.
- ⦿ We support and encourage social enterprise to develop in the region.
- ⦿ The community supports and uses local businesses and organisations.
- ⦿ We are an attractive location to hold events that bring economic benefits to the local community.
- ⦿ More young people are employed in the region.

Measuring our progress

To measure our success in achieving the goals of this theme over the next four years, we will track:

- ⦿ the number of community driven events
- ⦿ the number of young people (aged less than 25 years) employed in the region.



“We need to prevent falling into old cycles. This strategy should provide key ways to keep our community stable and aligned to its values.”
- Tas Webber, Mackay Tourism



“The social sector is the third largest employer. The community should be recognised in economic development priorities.”
- Dorne Wallace, Mackay Regional Council for Social Development

Key initiatives

4.1 Diversify tourism and become more community-driven

The Mackay region boasts spectacular landscapes, world-class facilities, and idyllic year-round weather that can support a variety of tourism opportunities. We will continue to support tourism growth in priority areas, such as sports tourism and major events. We will also work with Mackay Tourism to create initiatives that promote more local tourism across our region, including supporting local recreation tourism initiatives.

4.2 More community involvement in planning, especially in regional and rural localities

Local people need to have input into the ideas, priorities and be a part of decision-making about the places and facilities their communities most need. We will encourage people to be more involved in decisions about infrastructure and facilities in their communities and support improved facilities that meet local needs.

4.3 Help to activate city space and centres within suburbs and localities

A more vibrant city space can support inner-city businesses, and grow visitor numbers to the city and wider region. We will support pop-up shops, and other uses of empty space in the city. We will also continue to support improved signage, maps, and installations to brighten and revitalise spaces in the city, suburbs, and localities.

4.4 Help to build capacity and support local organisations, social enterprise and small businesses

Local organisations and businesses contribute greatly to our community and economy. We will continue to provide training and support to local organisations, including help with writing grant applications, and identifying opportunities for funding and sustainable social enterprise models. We will continue to support the 'buy local' campaign, and look at new ways for local organisations to showcase their products and services, such as through pop-up stalls and community showcases.

4.5 Promote diversity in industry and jobs

Making sure we have more diversity in our industries and economy can help make our region more sustainable. We will support connections and opportunities to speed up innovative ideas, support new social enterprise to develop and thrive in the region, and support local innovation from existing businesses and individuals, including young people leaving school or university. We will promote more opportunities for community members to have a say in the types of industries and opportunities that might work for the Mackay region, such as through the digital economy, solar technologies and sustainable farming practices and products.



Photo by Vintage Kiss

Case Study: Small businesses driving community development - Vintage Kiss

Along our Pioneer Valley Trail there are a range of unique small businesses serving the local community and tourists alike. One of these is Vintage Kiss, a 1950's replica bondwood caravan that has been converted into a popular café operating from Melba House in Marian on weekday mornings.

The owners, young couple Brodie and Paris, are passionate about ensuring the community has facilities to come together and enjoy the outdoors along the river. For example, they create welcoming spaces for Mums and Bubs get-togethers – offering a place for new parents to connect in their community.

Supporting locally-owned small businesses and initiatives in our localities will help our region to prosper and become more vibrant.

People: A healthy and safe community

We know that the overall wellbeing of our community improves when we provide opportunities for all to live healthier lifestyles in a safe and accessible environment.

We will support existing programs and create new initiatives that seek to improve the overall wellness and resilience of our community.

What people told us

Most residents of our region are happy with their overall quality of life and many see Mackay as their ideal community. But some people are still concerned about the impact of economic changes, such as the cost of living and inequalities in wage growth, which they feel have caused their quality of life to deteriorate over recent years.

The majority of people also feel that the region provides a healthy and safe environment to live in. They feel that free community events, and good quality walking and cycling paths that are accessible to all are highly important in encouraging healthier and more active lifestyles.

People are generally happy with the amount of walking and cycling infrastructure in the city area, but many from rural localities see poor access to appropriate infrastructure—especially for older people and children—as a barrier to becoming more physically active.

There is strong concern about mental health, high suicide rates, and a rise in drug and alcohol use and drug-related crime, especially opportunistic crime. Many people are worried that these issues affect the younger population in particular, and that not enough is being done to help young people be more involved and supported in their community.



“ Kids are the next generation and it is important they have good experiences to build strong communities.”
- Palmina Rae, local parent

Photo by Liz Andrews
Photography & Design

Our goals

- ⦿ Community wellness is improving, particularly when it comes to mental health.
- ⦿ We have excellent walking and cycling facilities across the region.
- ⦿ Violence and crime is reduced and we have a vibrant and safe nightlife.
- ⦿ Our young people feel valued, and are supported to be healthier.
- ⦿ Our older people are connected, and their experience and wisdom is a valued resource.
- ⦿ Our most vulnerable have the services they need available to them.

Measuring our progress

To measure our success in achieving the goals of this theme over the next four years, we will track:

- ⦿ the number of council led programs using walking and cycling infrastructure
- ⦿ the number of community members participating in council run sport and recreation programs and events
- ⦿ the number of local service providers reporting an increase of new clients accessing services
- ⦿ the number of people accessing council sport and recreation facilities

Key initiatives

5.1 Continue to improve walking and cycling infrastructure to promote healthy, active travel

Active people lead to healthier communities. We will continue to invest in priority infrastructure that supports access for walking, cycling, and other recreational activities, especially around our local rivers and beaches. We will review any gaps in our rural localities for opportunities to create better connections between neighbourhoods and local facilities, shops and schools.

5.2 Support a vibrant and safe nightlife

Nightlife in our city and town centres can help to improve the vibrancy of our region, and create connections for people and businesses. We will support initiatives that help to ensure people can safely visit and enjoy our local nightlife, including continued support and recognition of City Safe and other programs.

5.3 Community wellness

A healthy community includes making sure people have access to local support and activities, especially those that help improve their mental health and wellbeing. Suicide has been a concern for the community, and we are committed to continuing to connect people with experts and community health organisations and services, to design prevention strategies that help reduce suicide rates.

5.4 Community-wide strategy to combat social issues

Council is committed to a violence-free community. A whole-of-community approach to tackling some of our biggest social issues is very important. We will support organisations to come together to develop community-led strategies that help prevent issues like family violence, drug-related crime and addiction, to help make our communities safe.

5.5 Support and improve health services

Council can support health services by creating partnerships and networks that encourage local services to come together to tackle the most essential health issues. We will work with hospitals and health services to support more accessible and culturally-appropriate services. This will include participating in activities led by the North Queensland Primary Health Network and other services to connect models of health care. Where possible, we will also help to promote essential services to all residents.

5.6 Continue to support and improve our disaster management

Making sure we are equipped to respond in the face of a natural or other disaster, as well as support the community afterward, is important for our community's safety and resilience. The events of Cyclone Debbie in early 2017 helped establish the strengths and gaps in our disaster management processes. We will continue to improve the role of council's Community Development team in our disaster management and recovery responses, and focus on better communication and support to rural and remote regions, particularly in the aftermath of a destructive event.



Photo by The Mackay Street Chaplaincy

Case Study: Caring and supporting a safe and healthy community – The Mackay Street Chaplaincy

Staffed by Chaplains and volunteers of all ages from across the community, in cooperation with Police, Ambulance, security personnel and taxi marshals, the Mackay Street Chaplaincy is dedicated to providing a caring and confidential presence in the Mackay nightclub district on Friday and Saturday nights.

The Mackay Street Chaplaincy takes an approach linking to the parable of The Good Samaritan—that of helping people in need without any judgement or prejudice, and without any expectation for gain or requirement for anything in return. They offer a caring presence, a listening ear and practical acts of service to help people stay safe and enjoy their night out.



ACTION PLAN

Implementation

An Action Plan will guide the practical implementation of the Community Development Strategy for the Mackay region.

It will identify how specific actions relate to broader initiatives, the council department responsible for implementation, stakeholders and partners that may be involved, and expected timeframes for the actions to be completed.

The Action pan is currently under development by Mackay Regional Council.



Community Development Strategy

2018-2021

A downloadable copy of the Community Development Strategy can be found at www.mackay.qld.gov.au/community

For more information contact council's Community Development Team on 1300 MACKAY (1300 622 529) or info@mackay.qld.gov.au

