



**NORTHERN AREAS
COUNCIL**

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Economic Development Plan

Compiled in September 2021



Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Traditional Owners.....	2
Purpose of the plan.....	2
Development of the plan	2
The Current Economic Environment	3
Location.....	3
People.....	3
Business and Industry	5
Employment and unemployment.....	5
Strategic Objectives	6
1. Attraction, Renewal and Growth of Businesses	6
2. Ensure Key Infrastructure is Fit for Purpose.....	8
3. Build Community Capacity through Activation	10
4. Grow our Population	11
Monitoring and Review.....	11

Executive Summary

The Northern Areas Council Economic Development Plan (the Plan), aligning with the Northern Areas Council Strategic Plan 2020 – 2027, provides a three year strategy to guide and promote economic activity and growth in the region aligning with the vision of:

‘Safe, sustainable, and inclusive communities. A community proud of its heritage and encouraged by a promising future. A Place to enjoy a rural lifestyle, where business is encouraged to grow, and visitors are welcomed’.

The four strategic objectives of the Plan, listed below, are a direct response to the Northern Areas Council Strategic Plan 2021-2027, namely ‘goal 1: A Thriving Local Economy’ and ‘goal 2: A Desirable Place to Live or Visit’. The strategic objectives, and associated strategies and actions within the document reflect the current and emerging priorities and include:

1. Attraction, Renewal and Growth of Businesses
2. Ensure Key Infrastructure is Fit for Purpose
3. Build Community Capacity through Activation
4. Grow our Population

The local economy prospects are positive. With significant renewable energy developments, a healthy agriculture industry and a strong entrepreneurial culture. However, some challenges exist, including slowing retail growth, businesses moving out of the Main Streets, a below trend population growth, an aging population, drought, and COVID-19.

To ensure the document was reflective of the broader views and aspirations of the Council, the business community, and relevant stakeholders the plan was developed following consultation and research.

The plan sets out the vision, objectives and goals for the local economy, businesses, residents, and workforce. It establishes priorities based on the local economic context, identification of strengths and opportunities and the role of local government within economic development.



Introduction

The Northern Areas Council (Council) and Regional Development Australia Yorke and Mid North (RDAYMN) have jointly developed the Northern Areas Council Economic Development Plan to provide strategic direction and purpose to activities over the next three years and ultimately increase gross regional product (GRP).

The local economy prospects are positive. With significant renewable energy developments, a healthy agriculture industry and a strong entrepreneurial culture. However, some challenges exist, including slowing retail growth, businesses moving out of the Main Streets, a below trend population growth, an aging population, drought, and COVID-19.

The plan sets out the vision, objectives and goals for the local economy, businesses, residents, and workforce. It establishes priorities based on the local economic context, identification of strengths and opportunities and the role of local government within economic development.

Traditional Owners

The Council is within the traditional lands of the Ngadjuri and Nukunu people. We acknowledge and respect the Aboriginal peoples as the State's first peoples and nations and recognise their spiritual, social, cultural and economic practices come from their traditional lands and waters; and they maintain their cultural and heritage beliefs, languages and laws which are of ongoing importance.

Purpose of the plan

The purpose of this plan is to communicate Council's focus, intention, and priorities for economic development over the next three years. Specifically, the purpose of the plan is to provide a vision and set a clear strategic direction, provide a snapshot of the local economy, build awareness and understanding of economic development among community, council and RDAYMN, and identify key strategic objectives, areas for action and opportunities to guide future work.

Development of the plan

RDAYMN and Council have developed the plan, the below has been undertaken to ensure it is reflective of the broader views and aspirations of the Council, the business community, and relevant stakeholders.

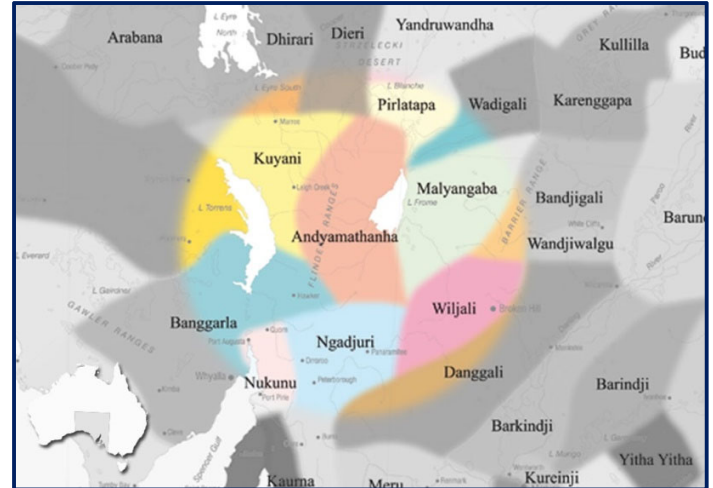
- Review of other Economic Development Plans and strategies
- Review of the Northern Areas Council Strategic Plan
- Review of economic information sourced from economy id.
- Analysis of support documents and existing strategies including, the RDAYMN Regional Roadmap
- Consultation with businesses about trends

The Current Economic Environment

Location

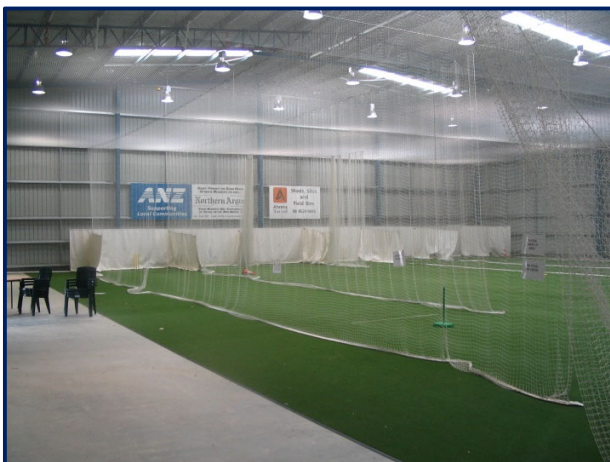
Situated in the heartland of the Southern Flinders Ranges, the Council region is approximately 200 kilometres north of Adelaide and within the traditional lands of the Ngadjuri and Nukunu people.

Jamestown is the main service centre for the district with additional services offered at Gladstone, Laura and Spalding providing for the smaller communities of Caltowie, Georgetown, Gulnare, Stone Hut, Tarcowie and Yacka. Council's close network of towns offers a range of opportunities for shopping, recreation, employment, health, and education.



People

The population of Council has remained relatively consistent with a small growth between 2018 and 2019, the median age in 2016 was 48. The demographics of the community has changed over the last 20 years. There has been an outflow of school aged children, young workforce participants and parent/homebuilders and an inflow of older workers, retirees, seniors and elderly aged, similar to a lot of regional South Australia. There are several educational sites within the region including, the Jamestown Community School (R-12), the Gladstone High School (8-12) and several Primary School's including two parish schools.



Volunteerism is strong within the Northern Areas Council with incorporated organisations managing several Council owned sites, including but not limited to the Gladstone Stadium, the Big Shed in Jamestown as well as organisations running major events such as the Jamestown Fly-In and Air Spectacular, The Laura Fair, Jamestown Show and Jamestown Races as well as the Caltowie Chilled out and Fired Up Music Festival.

Snapshot of the area:

Population
(as at 30 June 2020)
4,625

Northern Areas Council area 2016

Median Age	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population	Couples with Children	Older Couples without Children
48	1.7%	22%	15%
RDAYMN 48	RDAYMN 2.7%	RDAYMN 21%	RDAYMN 15%
Regional SA 45	Regional SA 4.1%	Regional SA 23%	Regional SA 14%
South Australia 40	South Australia 2.0%	South Australia 27%	South Australia 11%

Lone Person Households	Median Weekly Household Income	Median Weekly Mortgage Repayment	Median Weekly Rent
29%	\$1,053	\$195	\$163
RDAYMN 30%	RDAYMN \$925	RDAYMN \$231	RDAYMN \$186
Regional SA 28%	Regional SA \$1,029	Regional SA \$266	Regional SA \$192
South Australia 27%	South Australia \$1,203	South Australia \$334	South Australia \$268

Households Renting	Households with a Mortgage	Overseas Born	Language at home other than English
20%	27%	7%	1%
RDAYMN 23%	RDAYMN 27%	RDAYMN 8%	RDAYMN 3%
Regional SA 26%	Regional SA 29%	Regional SA 11%	Regional SA 5%
South Australia 28%	South Australia 34%	South Australia 23%	South Australia 16%

University Qualification	Trade Qualification	SEIFA Index of Disadvantage	
10%	22%	981	
RDAYMN 8%	RDAYMN 22%	RDAYMN 934	
Regional SA 9%	Regional SA 23%	Regional SA 944	
South Australia 19%	South Australia 20%	South Australia 979	



Business and Industry

The economy remains firmly based in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing making up over half of all registered businesses, with the Jamestown Saleyards one of the few remaining regional livestock sales facilities. Jamestown is the largest town within the Council and has a large business base. Overall, Council has been resilient when faced with the challenge of the COVID-19 Pandemic. There can be no doubt that the pandemic has caused great disruption to life and work in our region, but it has also served to highlight the potential and real benefits of living in a regional area. This can be seen in the rise of remote working combined with the relatively low cost of real estate compared to major cities convincing a new cohort to consider moving to the regions.

Snapshot of the area 2020:

Gross Regional Product	Local Jobs	Local Businesses	Employed Residents	Largest Industry (by Employment)
\$281 Million	1,986	679	2,177	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

Employment and unemployment

Aligning with the above, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the largest employer within the Council region responsible for generating 569 FTE jobs in 2018/19. However, over the last 20 years the demographic patterns have seen a reduced pool of available labour for local business. Employment has declined in the traditional industries of agriculture, manufacturing and retail and increased in several industries such as Health Care, Social Services and Education.

Snapshot of the area:

Unemployment Rate NAC June 2021	Participation Rate NAC 2016 (population in labour force)	Youth Unemployment NAC 2016	Youth Unemployment Barossa – Yorke – Mid North 2021
3.7%	56%	12.2%	14.9%
RDAYMN 6.3%	RDAYMN 50%		
Regional SA 6.3%	Regional SA 54%		
South Australia 6.6%	South Australia 58%		

Strategic Objectives

1. Attraction, Renewal and Growth of Businesses

The negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have reinforced the need to focus efforts and provide support for businesses and community groups to align their priorities and efforts to gain better economic and social outcomes. Innovation and adaption play a large part in keeping communities relevant, as is strong partnerships and connection. The Council is heavily dependent on the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry which has significant barriers when considering environmental opportunity, and access to markets and labour. Value-adding techniques have shown to drive growth and create expanded markets for agricultural inputs and outputs. The Council has several key businesses already value-adding including Golden North and Morgan’s Sawmill trading in the area.

No.	Strategy	Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1.1.	Support and foster retention of key existing businesses.	A Shop Local/ Future is local initiative.	X		
		Support local businesses to work together and build strong business linkages (such as the development of a Local Chamber of Commerce).		X	
		Local procurement is prioritised and Council’s Policies and Procedure’s reflect this priority.		X	
1.2.	Support, encourage and help facilitate new business opportunities and innovation, especially in growth industries of Agriculture, Tourism and Renewable Energy.	Encourage and support the establishment of new businesses.	X	X	X
		Attract investment within the region including leveraging the strong agriculture and established renewable energy industries.	X	X	X

1.3.	Enable agricultural business to thrive and encourage value-adding.	Identify opportunities to increase intensive livestock production, capitalise on the high protein wheat production and improve supply chains.			X
1.4.	Increase tourism visitation and expenditure.	Increase tourism visitation and expenditure through building the Council region and the Southern Flinders Ranges as destinations (using regional strengths including, culture, history, reservoirs, Bundaleer, Remarkable Southern Flinders, Laura, Silver to Seaway, and associated opportunities).	X	X	X
1.5.	Establish the area as a key industrial service centre.	Work with existing businesses to monitor sustainability, increase appeal and find new markets.		X	



2. Ensure Key Infrastructure is Fit for Purpose

Ensuring infrastructure is fit for purpose and keeping up with external trends and innovations is essential. Technology including internet, mobile phones and video conferencing is changing the way we do business, farm, learn and connect with others. Developing and embracing new technologies requires an innovative culture, a supportive business environment and accessible fast and reliable connectivity infrastructure. Access to appropriate water at competitive pricing is essential for the attraction, retention, and success of businesses. Freight and logistics infrastructure support our industry supply chains and is critical to ensuring market access for our products and services. Rail and road infrastructure are key enablers. As well as being essential for transport, the state of our roads is important for tourism, our ability to continue to attract renewable energy projects, productivity gains, agriculture value adding and innovations, and last mile access.

No.	Strategy	Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
2.1.	Fit for purpose telecommunications and technological infrastructure.	Identify Black Spots and lobby for improvements.	X	X	X
		Implement public WIFI in relevant Main Streets including Jamestown, Laura, Gladstone, and Spalding.	X	X	
2.2.	Fit for purpose freight and logistics infrastructure.	Review freight and logistic infrastructure against the long-term asset management plan.	X		
		Through the Special Local Government Roads Program, and other external funding sources, advocate, and where appropriate build business cases for an enhanced local and regional road network.		X	
		Continue to improve Last Mile Access for primary producers at Gladstone and Jamestown aggregation sites.		X	

2.3.	Appropriate access and use of water and power.	Assist with linking major feedlots to water supply and appropriate ancillary infrastructure through advocacy.		X	
		Implement measures within Stormwater Management Plan.	X		



3. Build Community Capacity through Activation

Reimagining ways of doing business in regional areas, and being early adopters is seen as a key vehicle towards growth. Thinking outside the square and fostering community capacity to fill gaps in the market is key. This is particularly important when considering main street buildings, town centres, health and aged care and infrastructure.

No.	Strategy	Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
3.1.	Re-invigorating Main Streets as centres of the rural communities.	Continue to improve amenities and facilities in Main Streets across the region to enhance the attractiveness to do business in the Main Street.	X	X	X
		Activate Main Street's through events and business use of footpaths and public spaces.		X	
		Incentivise people to be located within retail spaces and to use the Main Street's.	X		
3.2.	Residential and Social Infrastructure and community-based models of ownership.	Explore options for community-based businesses to activate community assets. (e.g. Workshop26, social enterprise).			X
		Explore the concept of a Community Foundation for the upgrade of social infrastructure.			X
3.3.	Support and grow existing Health and Education Assets.	Advocate to maintain and support opportunities to grow.			X

4. Grow our Population

In 2019 Council conducted a community survey which identified that 'Supporting economic development to achieve a sustainable population & local economy. Ranked number two for most important Council function. Growing our population is important for our sustainability and an abundant future.

No.	Strategy	Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
4.1.	Population Growth and Attraction.	A 'Come to Northern Areas' Initiative.	X	X	X
4.2.	There are places for people to live, rent, buy, and build a home.	Pursue and encourage housing developments.	X	X	X

Monitoring and Review

The plan will be monitored by the Northern Areas Council on a six monthly basis to ensure that the strategies and actions are progressing, still relevant and responsive to change and new opportunities. This will include the Chief Executive Officer, relevant Council staff, management and Councillors, as well as representatives from Regional Development Australia Yorke and Mid North namely the Chief Executive Officer and the Economic Development Officer – Southern Flinders.

Further Information

Contact Details:

Northern Areas Council

Jamestown Office

94 Ayr Street

Jamestown SA 5491

Tel: 08 8664 1139

Email: admin@nacouncil.sa.gov.au

Website: www.nacouncil.sa.gov.au

Regional Development Australia Yorke and Mid North

Port Pirie Office

85 Ellen Street

Port Pirie SA 5540

Tel: 1300 742 414

Email: info@yorkeandmidnorth.com.au

Website: www.yorkeandmidnorth.com.au