

Lower Eyre Council

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2034

Strategic Directions & Priority Actions



LOWER EYRE  
COUNCIL

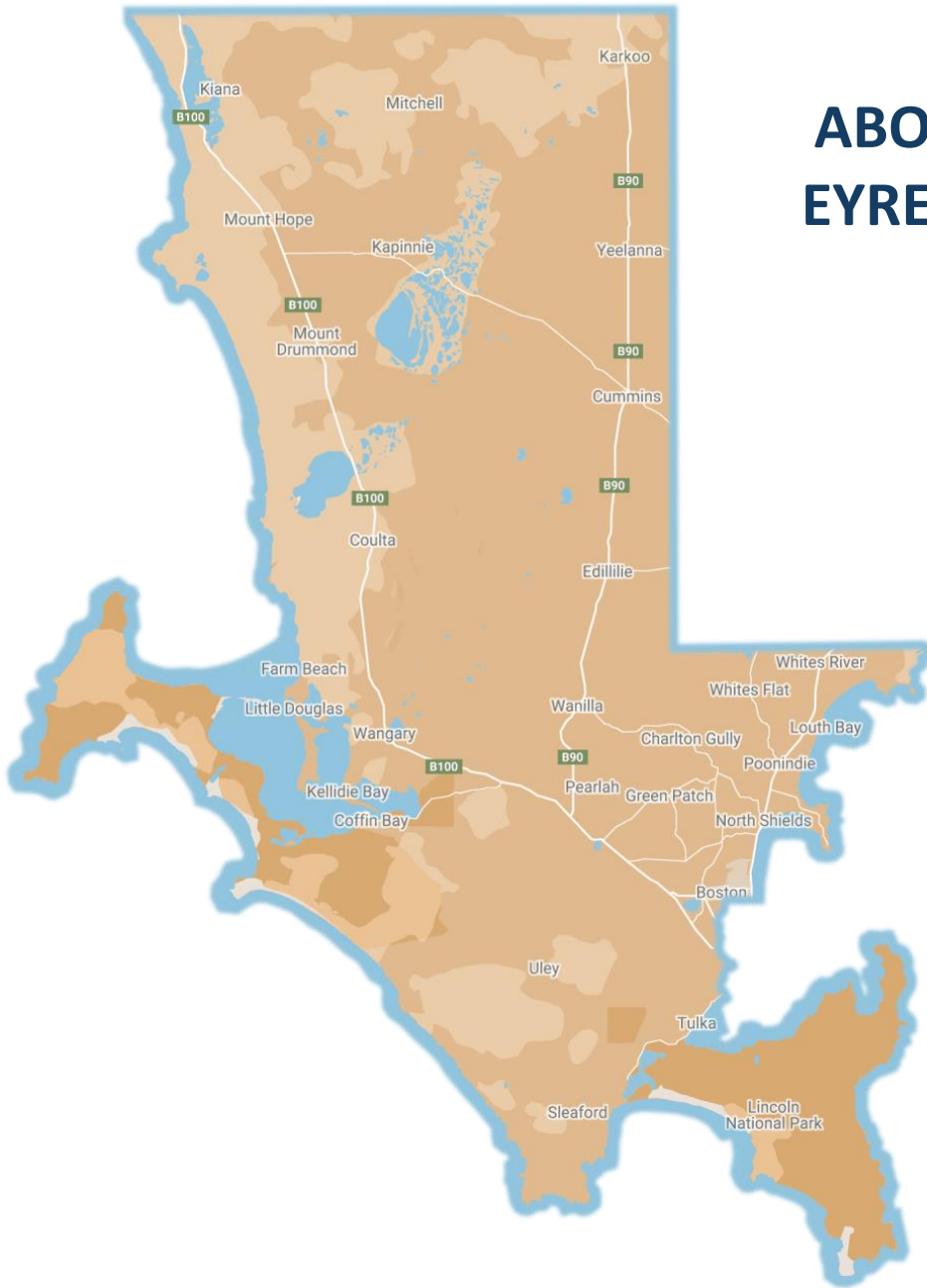


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## ABOUT THE LOWER EYRE COUNCIL AREA



The Lower Eyre Council area encompasses 4,754 km<sup>2</sup> and had an Estimated Resident Population in 2022 of 6,099 people, most of whom live within the townships of Cummins, Coffin Bay, Boston and Tiatukia. The median age of the resident population is 44 years and of interest is the relatively high proportion of young families and pre-retirees when compared with South Australia as a whole.

The Lower Eyre Peninsula is predominately agricultural in nature, supported by a number of small townships and settlements. Main industries include agriculture, aquaculture, fishing and tourism, all considered significant contributors to the State's economy. A significant portion of the area is dedicated to national and conservation parks, which protect the coastal and near-coastal environments of the tip of the southern Eyre Peninsula.



4,721km<sup>2</sup>



2,801

Total Private Dwellings

\$1,300

Median Monthly Mortgage Repayment

29.4% Residents volunteer

26.0%

Unoccupied Private Dwellings

\$1,557

Median Household Weekly Income

ABS, NIER, DC LEC

709km coast



5,910

Population 2021

2,845

Residents in labour force

21.9%

Agriculture, forestry, fishing

12.1%

Health care, social assistance

8.1%

Education and training

7.8%

Construction

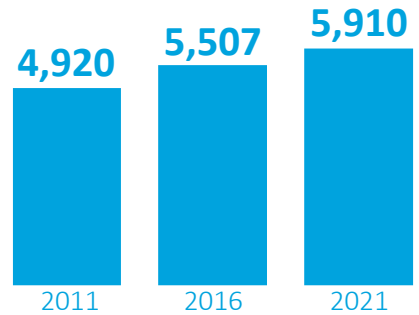
7.5%

Retail Trade



\$308.6M

Generated by agriculture, forestry and fishing exports 2021/22



20.1%

Population Increase 2011-2021



14,084

Aircraft movements 2022

44

Median Age

180,000

Passengers 2023

26,000kg

Seafood air-freight 2022

19.2%

Aged 65+y

20.0%

Aged <15y







## COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

The communities of Lower Eyre Council aspire to:

Continuing to enjoy a country lifestyle, while not being disadvantaged by living in a regional area

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Protection of the natural beauty of the landscape

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Maintaining an attractive and functional built environment

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Building on a strong sense of community, self-sufficiency, and innovation across the Council area

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Sustaining an inclusive and diverse economy

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## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Lower Eyre Council area had significant population growth over the ten years between 2011 and 2021, increasing its population by 20% (12.1% from 2011 to 2016 and a further 7.3% from 2016 to 2021). A particular challenge, in common with other parts of regional South Australia, is housing supply and housing affordability. Being close to the significant population centre of Port Lincoln provides access to a range of quality services. However, there is a shortage of childcare facilities and places for residents of the Council area and increasing pressure on health services as the population ages. The percentage of the population volunteering through an organisation declined from 34.7% in 2016, to 29.4% in 2021. However, the rate of volunteering remained much higher than South Australia (17%) and Australia (14.1%).

The industry sectors of agriculture, aquaculture and tourism within the Lower Eyre Council are strong and inter-related, with high dependencies on land, sea and climatic conditions and thus vulnerability to change. Projections of changes in climate provide challenges and opportunities for those sectors. The shortage of housing is also challenging as it limits the ability to attract workers.

The Council area has 709km of coastline, which presents significant opportunities associated with tourism, recreation and primary industry, together with major challenges associated with visitor numbers, coastal hazards, and asset management in a changing environment. Experiences in the wake of Covid-19 highlighted the importance of managing coastal assets and infrastructure.

More recently the State Government, together with private investors, has announced a number of proposals to invest in renewable energy, hydrogen, port infrastructure, railway infrastructure, water supply, mineral resources and fishing and aquaculture infrastructure on the Eyre Peninsula. This presents additional challenges and opportunities for Local Government in managing its vast road network, airport, housing, tourism facilities, and community services required to service future residents, workers and visitors.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE CLARITY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

For Councils, services and other activities can be broadly categorised as:

- mandatory, where there is a specific requirement for them to do something, and
- non-mandatory where a service or activity is undertaken for community benefit although there is no legal requirement for that to happen.

With mandatory services and activities there is often some discretion about the level to which they are undertaken and the method of delivery. For non-mandated services and activities there is greater scope to determine whether the Council will play a role and, if so, what that role is.

Council carefully considers its role in non-mandated services and activities to ensure the best use of resources and funding. This Strategic Plan also includes our role/s, described in the table below, for each Priority Action.

## Local Council Roles

### BROAD ROLE



### SPECIFIC ROLE



Council chooses not to have a role in relation to a particular service or activity	Council provides information about another organisation's services or activities	Council advocates to another organisation for certain things to happen	Council brings parties together to work out a solution to an issue and/or uses its regulatory functions to facilitate an outcome	Council delivers a service funded by another agency, that is not usually Council's responsibility	Council partially funds another body to provide a service OR receives funding to meet part of the cost of Council delivering it	Council is required by legislation to manage a particular regulatory activity using its own funds	Council has responsibility for capital, operating and maintenance costs as the owner or custodian of an asset	Council meets the full cost of providing a service
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# OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2024-2034 & PRIORITY ACTIONS 2024-2027

Having considered the aspirations of our communities and the external environmental challenges and opportunities, we plan to pursue five Strategic Directions over the next decade.

Priority actions are those for which the Council holds itself responsible to undertake over the next four years in line with our stated Strategic Directions.

## Strategic Direction 1

Build on the strengths of our communities

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## Strategic Direction 2

Address our built and social infrastructure challenges

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## Strategic Direction 3

Activate opportunities for economic growth

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## Strategic Direction 4

Implement township and location improvements

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## Strategic Direction 5

Align organisational planning and processes with our Strategic Directions

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# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1 – BUILD ON THE STRENGTHS OF OUR COMMUNITIES

As the level of government closest to communities, it is important for councils to build connections and work closely with their communities to achieve their aspirations. This is especially the case in regional areas where greater community self-reliance is required.

The communities of Lower Eyre Council have shown themselves to be resilient and self-sufficient in the face of economic, environmental and social challenges such as those caused by the Covid19 pandemic and bushfires. Nationally, there is an increasing focus on avoiding or reducing natural disasters as well as recovery from them when they do occur. From that change in focus is an evolving interest in governments working with communities to help build and support community strength.

## **Priority action 1.1 – Increase the Council’s role as a community resource for public information and data about the Council area.**

**Why:** The Council already has access to a lot of information and data from various sources, such as demographic and economic data, that it uses in its own decision making. Making that data and information more readily available to the community (where it doesn’t breach any confidentiality, privacy, or copyright issues) will allow others to access it to assist community groups with their planning, grant applications etc and to build greater community knowledge. Consideration can also be given to including information and data from relevant government bodies such as emergency services.

An associated benefit of aggregating data and information in one place on the website is that it would make it easier for Elected Members and staff to access also.

**Our role/s:** Our role in sharing information and data about the council area is as an Information Channel.

**Performance measure:** Relevant information is shared with the community.

**Priority action 1.2 – To effectively respond to changing circumstances, design and implement a fit for purpose community wellbeing monitoring program with two parts:**

- **a forward looking component to identify changes that are likely to impact on the Council and Council area, and**
- **a suite of Community Wellbeing Indicators to identify trends over time.**

The program is to also include a reporting cycle that identifies any actions the Council may determine in relation to projected changes or trends in the wellbeing indicators.

**Why:** As the Covid 19 pandemic showed, events elsewhere in the world can impact on local communities in areas such as supply chains. A suitable monitoring program to identify future changes will allow the Council to be prepared in advance to take timely action. Planning for actions in response to changing conditions will ensure that decisions are evidence based and timely.

Community Wellbeing Indicators provide the Council and community with high level data and information about economic, environmental, and social matters affecting our council area. They can assist in decision making, advocacy to other bodies (such as in relation to increased demand for community services from a growing population, health, childcare, education, aged care services), funding applications by the Council and community groups, and general community information.

**Our role/s:** The forward-looking component of a monitoring program is outside the roles table as an activity. Our role in reporting on community wellbeing indicators is as an Information Channel. For both components the Council's responses to identified changes may reflect any of the roles.

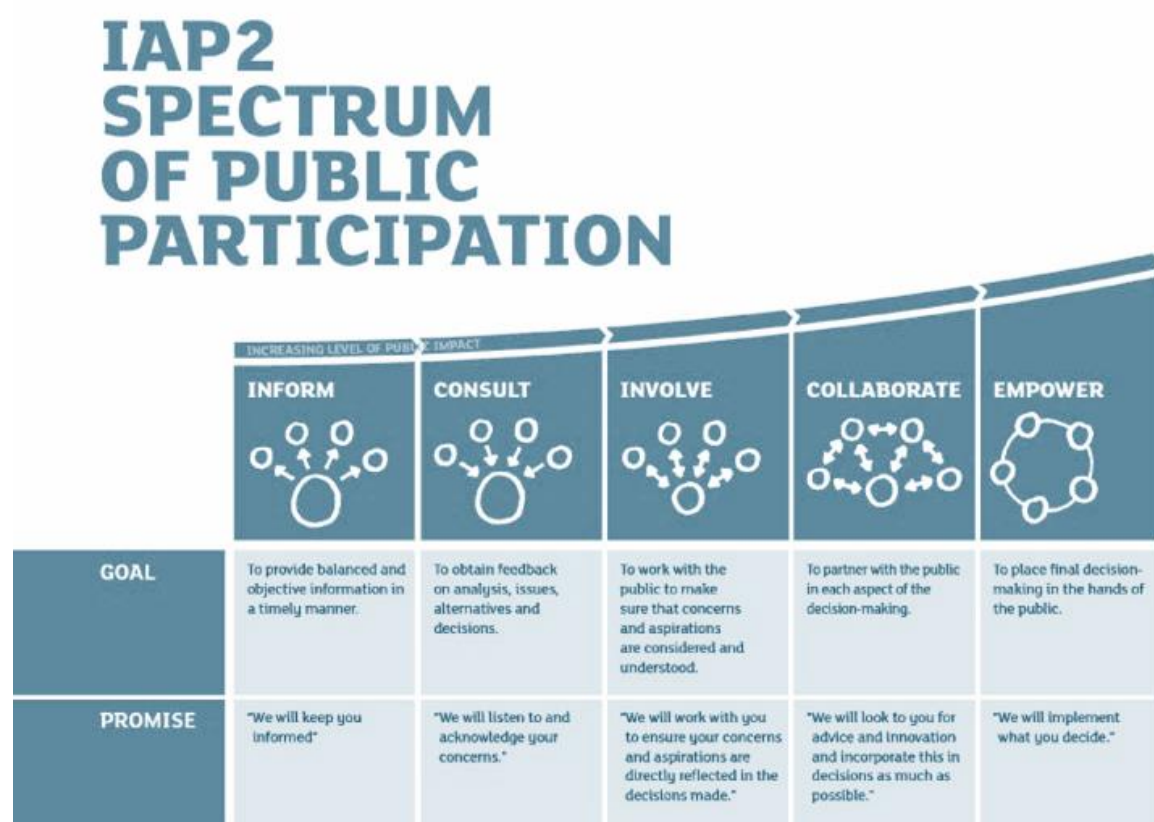
**Performance measure:** A monitoring program is implemented, reported on, and used to identify any actions the Council determines to take in relation to issues arising from monitoring.





## Priority action 1.3 – To further build engagement with our communities, develop and implement revised Community Engagement and Communication arrangements

**Why:** Community engagement and communication expectations and arrangements are constantly evolving, and it is important for councils to keep pace with the changes. The State Government is currently designing a broad community engagement charter for local government (as a sector). In response, it will be useful for the Council to implement revised Community Engagement and Communication arrangements. A framework used by many organisations, including councils, is the IAP2 spectrum:



IAP2 is an international network that aims to build skills in community engagement. An advantage of following an established framework such as IAP2 is that there is an existing body of knowledge and resources such as training and certification.

**Our role/s:** Implementing revised arrangements for Community Engagement and Communication sits outside the roles table.

**Performance measure:** Revised contemporary arrangements for community engagement and communication are successfully implemented and meet the needs of the communities of Lower Eyre and the Council.

**Priority action 1.4 – Identify opportunities to further build community leadership skills.**

**Why:** The Council has supported numerous community leadership programs and there may be opportunities to build leadership at the local level as these skills are important in building community resilience.

**Our role/s:** Our role in building community leadership skills most closely aligns with being a Facilitator.

**Performance measure:** Opportunities to further build community leadership skills are identified and pursued.





## **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2 – ADDRESS OUR BUILT AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES**

The communities of Lower Eyre Council enjoy an enviable rural lifestyle and natural environments however face multiple challenges due to distances from major population centres that offer a full range of services. Whilst communities can access some services in the urban centres of Port Lincoln and Whyalla, there is a high dependency on the road network and Port Lincoln Airport to get there. Road quality and safety is critical for community wellbeing, especially given the increasing use of the road network for agricultural freight and construction activities.

Local health and community services are generally of good quality but there is increasing pressure due to population changes and access to services may become a major barrier to growth in the future if not monitored and managed. Currently, childcare is already a barrier to participation in the workforce, and whilst health services are generally adequate, specialist services are not always easy to access.

**Priority action 2.1 – Develop and implement a Council Advocacy Plan to ensure a structured approach to advocating for assistance or actions by other levels of government.**

**Why:** Advocacy is an important role for a council in seeking access for their communities to services and infrastructure of other governments. An advocacy plan would assist in ensuring the most suitable approach is taken when advocating for particular outcomes.

**Our role/s:** This matter relates to the conduct of the business of the Council and is therefore outside the roles table.

**Performance measure:** An Advocacy Plan is developed and implemented and subject to review at specified periods of time.

## **Priority action 2.2 – Monitor available data and advocate for improved access to health care and social assistance within the Council area.**

**Why:** Whilst general health services in Cummins, Coffin Bay and Port Lincoln are adequate, there is increasing pressure on them due to ongoing population changes. Monitoring the adequacy of health care and social assistance and advocating for change is an important role for the Council.

**Our role/s:** Our roles in ensuring access to quality health services are Information Channel and Advocacy.

**Performance measure:** Community need and access to health and mental health services are periodically monitored, and gaps in provision are identified and advocated for.

## **Priority action 2.3 – Provide, maintain and plan for quality assets and infrastructure.**

**Why:** Management of physical assets and infrastructure, valued at over \$90m, is an important function of the Council. The timely upgrade or replacement of infrastructure assets ensures they remain fit for purpose and the Council has a policy of spending 90 to 110% on replacement over a five year rolling period to achieve that. Asset planning has evolved over recent decades and continues to evolve. Regular, formal reviews of the approach to asset planning and management will further inform decision making about the Council's assets and assist in setting realistic and sustainable budgets.

**Our role/s:** Asset owner.

**Performance measure:** Council considers the data from the asset management plans when designing budgets and long term financial plans.





**Priority action 2.4 – Advocate for a more sustainable approach to freight transport, which may include a return to rail transport, additional investment in government roads, and increased funding for Council roads impacted by freight movements.**

**Why:** Changes in freight transport arrangements have evolved progressively over time. One impact of those changes is in relation to the Council's Road network is increased movement of heavy vehicles, especially as a result of the 2019 decision to no longer use rail to transport grain across the Eyre Peninsula due to the condition of the rail network. This has resulted in significantly increased use and pressure on both the arterial and local road networks, and increased community concerns about road safety and road conditions. Monitoring and understanding these impacts, together with having a strategic plan of priorities will inform decision making and resourcing.

**Our role/s:** Asset owner, advocate

**Performance measure:** Increased support from State and Federal governments for freight route management within the Council area and wider region.



## **Priority action 2.5 – Proactively seek solutions to digital infrastructure gaps**

**Why:** Rural Australia faces significant challenges in relation to digital infrastructure, including availability, affordability, quality, and reliability, creating a digital divide between rural and urban areas and limiting opportunities for growth. According to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), in 2019, only 49% of rural households had access to broadband internet with speeds of at least 25 Mbps download and 5 Mbps upload, compared to 83% of urban households. Similarly, according to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), in 2019, only 23% of rural households had access to 4G mobile broadband, compared to 77% of urban households.

Digital infrastructure in rural areas is also more vulnerable to natural disasters and disruption, causing loss of connectivity and communications, data, productivity, and revenue. According to the ACMA, in 2019, 32% of rural households experienced at least one outage of broadband internet, compared to 21% of urban households. Similarly, according to the ACCC, in 2019, 19% of rural households experienced at least one outage of mobile broadband, compared to 12% of urban households.

Understanding where the gaps and vulnerabilities are will inform the Council's role as an advocate.

**Our role/s:** Advocate

**Performance measure:** A monitoring program is established and implemented to inform advocacy.





## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3 – ACTIVATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

The broader Eyre Peninsula economy generates nearly \$4 billion in Gross Regional Product annually, with a strong export component worth \$3.2 billion.

Economic drivers include traditional sectors like agriculture, aquaculture, and mining, with emerging sectors such as renewable energy and tourism also gaining importance. The State Government's focus on the Upper Spencer Gulf and commitment to develop a green hydrogen industry presents new opportunities for Lower Eyre being only a 3-hour commute away. The region boasts competitive advantages such as premium products, vibrant communities, and a high-quality lifestyle, presenting significant growth opportunities.

A key challenge for immediate economic growth is the lack of housing availability for the community, new residents and meeting the requirements of a growing workforce. Council plays an important role to address these issues and can accelerate opportunities by focusing on the following key priority actions to ensure efforts are maximised and developing a Lower Eyre economic growth plan as an informing document with the detail outlining how economic growth can be achieved.





**Priority Action 3.1 – Develop and implement an economic development plan (Lower Eyre Economic Growth Plan) specific to Lower Eyre that outlines the economic growth opportunities and actions required to realise them and Council’s roles in achieving the opportunities.**

**Why:** As the economic profile of the region transitions, new challenges will arise, and opportunities present. It is important that Council has a plan clearly articulating how it will respond. The local plan will consider broader Regional Plans and Council’s role in delivering relevant objectives and specific actions and the role other agencies can play in assisting in the delivery of Council’s plans.

The plan will aim to ensure the community has a diverse range of goods and services to access, employment opportunities are available locally, and community prosperity and wellbeing are advanced, and an enviable lifestyle is maintained.

**Our role/s:** As a planning document, development of an economic development plan is outside the roles table. Implementation of the Plan would see the Council playing numerous roles, in particular, Information channel, Advocate, Facilitator, Regulator, Asset Owner and possibly Service provider.

**Performance measure:** An economic development plan is developed and implemented.





## Priority Action 3.2 – Develop and implement a Strategic Management Plan for Port Lincoln Airport.

**Why:** The Council's ownership and control of the airport as the gateway to the Southern Eyre Peninsula for local industries and their economic growth potential for South Australia, provide important community opportunities and a sense of regional responsibility.

The Council has been investigating alternative governance and management models that will meet the following key objectives for the Airport:

- Increase the return on investment for Lower Eyre Council ratepayers and community.
- Ensure it is independently financially viable.
- Assist cost effective and reliable travel for locals and an emerging tourism industry.
- Strengthen connectivity and accessibility of the broader region to increase investment and economic growth.
- Operate under a governance model that enables a greater level of commercial focus by allowing flexibility in decision making to ensure financial sustainability.

A Strategic Management Plan will bring those aspects and others together in one document.

**Our role/s:** Asset Owner, Regulator, Facilitator.

**Performance measure:** The Plan is developed and implemented.



### **Priority Action 3.3-- Progress investigation of the Coffin Bay Business Precinct Regeneration project.**

**Why:** The Coffin Bay Oyster industry produces a world renowned quality product and this iconic brand, underpinned by the pristine environment, is a strong competitive advantage for the Council area. The industry currently faces growth challenges associated with competing interests and land use/infrastructure tensions and pressures between industry, the residential community, and tourists within Coffin Bay.

In response, the Council is investigating the establishment of a best-practice aquaculture precinct in recognition of the need to strategically plan for long-term industry growth and better manage environmental sustainability.

The Coffin Bay Oyster Industry Growth Initiative (CBOI) involves assessing various options for the relocation of, or reconfiguration of, land-based oyster processing activities in the Coffin Bay industrial zone to advance the industry by increasing productivity, environmental benefits and outcomes. The aim is to also reinforce the Coffin Bay provenance brand further on an international level and maintain the region's reputation as the national industry leader. The project is expected to increase production capacity, export, and employment opportunities whilst improving natural resource management practices.

**Our role/s:** Asset Owner, Regulator, Facilitator, Enabler.

**Performance measure:** A program of investigations is developed, updated as required, and implemented as funding becomes available.

### **Priority action 3.4 – Activate the Cummins land residential development in line with the Cummins masterplan and monitor and consider other Council land holdings for release and development.**

**Why:** The Cummins Master Plan recognises the importance of additional housing in Cummins for both social and economic reasons and includes an action regarding a feasibility and risk analysis of the Cummins East Residential Project to develop Council owned land for housing.

**Our role/s:** In this matter the Council may have roles of Regulator (as the Planning authority for the Council area), Facilitator, and Asset Owner (in relation to land owned by the Council).

**Performance measure:** Land identified as being suitable for residential development is progressed.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4 – IMPLEMENT TOWNSHIP AND LOCATION IMPROVEMENTS

The main population centres are at Boston/Tiatukia (1,169 people at the time of the 2021 Census) Cummins (748), and Coffin Bay (664). Council recognises 18 other locations throughout the Council area, ranging in size from a grouping of 10 houses to up to 80 allotments.

Each town and location has its own characteristics that set them apart and much in common that brings them together.

The Council has a master plan for Coffin Bay (Coffin Bay Master Plan adopted in October 2021) and Cummins (Cummins Township Master Plan adopted in November 2023). Both documents serve as a very sound base for actions to assist the ongoing sustainability of those townships.

## Priority action 4.1 – Regularly review and report on the ongoing implementation of the township Master Plans.

**Why:** Implementing the Township Master Plans is likely to stretch over a number of years due to scheduling requirements for actions that follow others and aligning with budgets and resourcing. Having formal governance arrangements in place will assist in ensuring the Master Plans are implemented.

**Our role/s:** Implementing the Township Master Plans sits outside the roles table. Actions under the Plans will likely sit across the whole spectrum of roles.

**Performance measure:** Annual reports are provided to Council and the community to provide oversight on the implementation of the Township Master Plans.



## **Priority action 4.2 – Work with the communities of Boston/Tiatukia to identify, document, and address their priorities in infrastructure and services.**

**Why:** Boston and Tiatukia were developed later than the townships of Cummins and Coffin Bay under contemporary development requirements. While a traditional master plan may not be required for Boston/Tiatukia, identifying and documenting community priorities in relation to infrastructure and services will assist the Council with forward planning for the area.

**Our role/s:** Identifying and documenting priorities sits outside the roles table. Actions related to the priorities may sit across the whole spectrum of roles.

**Performance measure:** Annual reports are provided to Council and the community to provide oversight on actions in relation to the priorities.

## **Priority action 4.3 – Develop, adopt and implement a formal process of engaging with communities of the smaller locations in the Council area to identify issues for them, ways in which the Council can assist, and areas for improvement in service provision.**

**Why:** A formal process will provide greater certainty about engaging with the smaller communities and ensuring that actions flow from the engagement processes. The engagement methodology and frequency can be finalised after engaging with the communities.

**Our role/s:** Formal engagement arrangements with the smaller communities sit outside the roles table. Actions arising from the engagement processes will likely sit across several of the roles.

**Performance measure:** A formal process is put in place that meets the needs of the communities and Council.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5: ALIGN OUR ORGANISATIONAL PLANNING AND OPERATIONS WITH OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

This Strategic Plan sets some new directions for the Council, and it is essential that the organisation's processes and systems are aligned with, and set a solid foundation to achieve, those directions.

**Priority action 5.1 – Develop a review schedule of the service standards for Council assets, services, customer service (and other Council activities). Include within the Annual report, performance against the service standards for the information of Council and the community.**

**Why:** Transparency around service standards and performance against them is important for clarity about what communities and customers can expect to receive from the Council. Reporting against the service standards is an accountability measure as well as an indication of where additional attention and possibly resourcing might be required.

**Our role/s:** This matter relates to the conduct of the business of the Council and is therefore outside the roles table.

**Performance measure:** Service standards are regularly reviewed, new standards required are successfully implemented, and reported against.



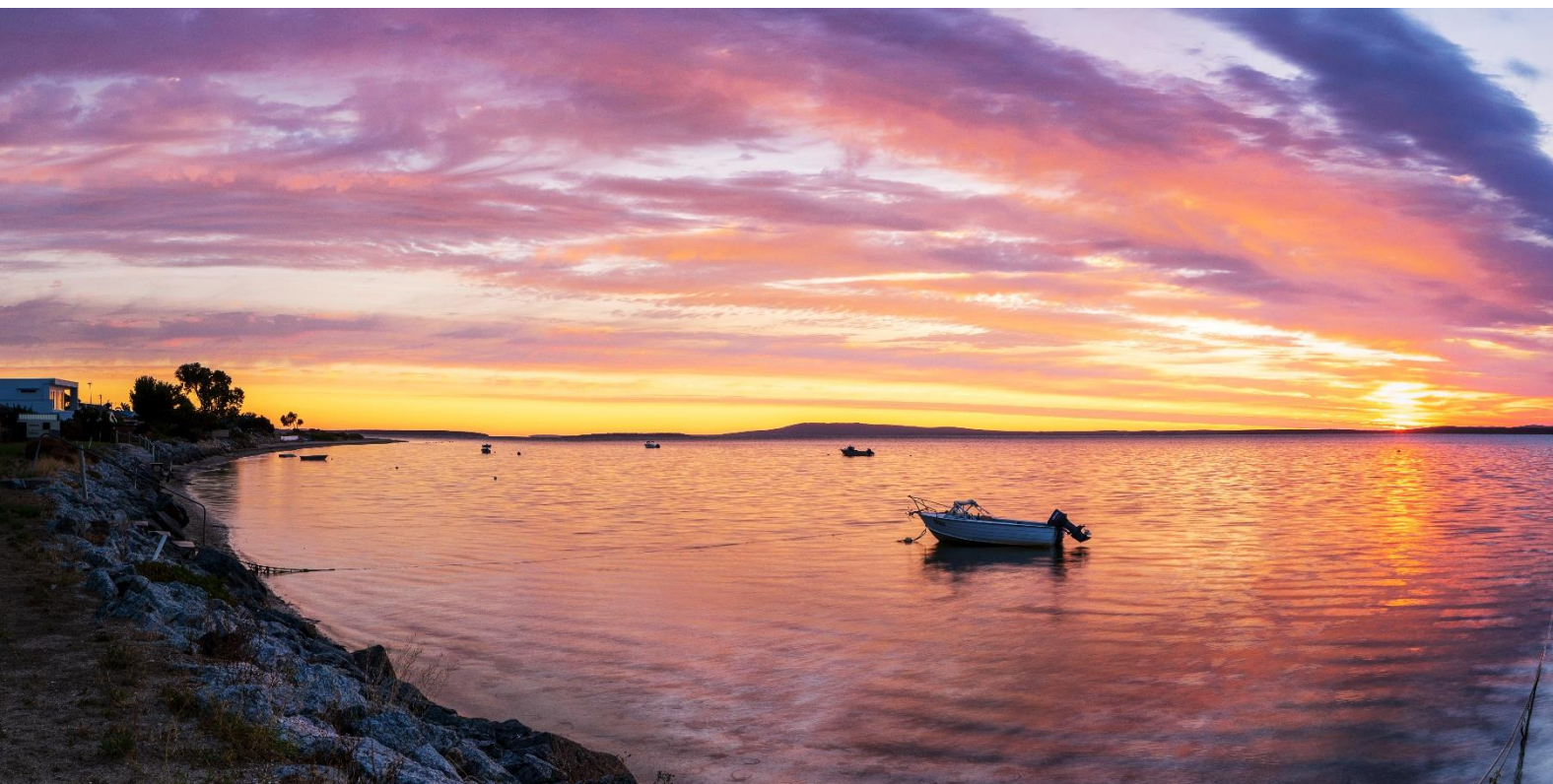
**Priority action 5.2 – Develop and implement an organisational Sustainability Plan to give direction to decision making, project planning, and day to day operations. Include in the Plan:**

- **an energy and water efficiency program to build on previous initiatives to reduce energy and potable water consumption at Council owned sites**
- **adaptation plans based on scientific evidence for coastal management**
- **other sustainability matters as identified from time to time.**
- **Report annually on progress in implementing the Plan.**

**Why:** Councils are significant users of resources, and their activities can have environmental impacts. Developing an organisational Sustainability Plan could be a learning experience and an opportunity for staff, Elected Members, and people in the community to also share their knowledge. A structured program of improving energy and water efficiency, as one component of a broader Plan, would build on previous investments at several Council owned sites and provide environmental and financial benefits. A reciprocal information exchange with others would also provide opportunities to learn about different experiences from each other.

**Our role/s:** A Sustainability Plan potentially involves a number of roles for the Council. The Council's role in relation to an energy and water efficiency program for Council properties is Asset Owner.

**Performance measure:** An organisational Sustainability Plan is successfully implemented and against.





**Priority action 5.3 – Develop and implement an internal accountability model to support Departments to align performance to the strategic plan and effectively manage the functions they are responsible for.**

**Why:** Implementing aspects of this Strategic Plan will increase complexity as some new approaches will be required to deliver on it. A contemporary approach to align daily functions of employees to the delivery of the Strategic Plan will ensure that the plan can be enacted, and Directors can ensure the plan is delivered most effectively.

**Our role/s:** This matter relates to the conduct of the business of the Council and is therefore outside the roles table.

**Performance measure:** An internal delivery and key performance indicator program is successfully implemented to support the Directors and staff to achieve the outcomes set out within this plan.

**Priority action 5.4 – Develop and implement revised arrangements for achieving greater visibility in relation to the Council’s activities as part of an enhanced customer experience program.**

**Why:** Recognising the importance of consistently high levels of customer service Council is committed to a program of service improvements. Increasing the Council’s visibility in the community in relation to its activities is an important part of customer service.

**Our role/s:** This matter relates to the conduct of the business of the Council and is therefore outside the roles table.

**Performance measure:** Revised arrangements for visibility are implemented and continued over time.

**Priority action 5.5 – Implement revised reporting arrangements to Council and the community in relation to the status of programs, projects and council resolutions to achieve greater visibility in relation to the Council’s activities.**

**Why:** Recognising the importance of accountability and transparency, Council has purchased software programs to provide more timely and accurate financial data to facilitate more responsive program management and software to track and provide accountabilities and measures across the organisation for the delivery of projects

**Our role/s:** This matter relates to the conduct of the business of the Council and is therefore outside the roles table.

**Performance measure:** Revised arrangements for visibility are implemented and continued over time.







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