

Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2025-2030



Background Volume: Research, Consultation and Analysis



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Contents of this Background Report

This background report encapsulates the findings of research, consultation and analysis, which has been undertaken to inform the preparation of the **Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2025-2030** (EDTS). It contains three parts:



Purpose

An introduction to the Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy purpose and objectives and intended outcomes.

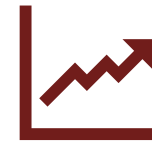
(Pages 1 to 6)



Profile

An overview of Warrumbungle Shire's economic structure and dynamics in a wider regional and national / global context.

(Pages 7 to 15)



Prospects

A summary of key attributes, issues, challenges and opportunities for economic development, as identified through research, stakeholder consultation and analysis.

(Pages 16 to 51)

Part 1: Purpose



1. Project Purpose and Intended Outcomes

Project Purpose

Warrumbungle Shire Council has commissioned [SC Lennon & Associates](#) to prepare a new economic development and tourism strategy for the Shire and its constituent communities.

Building on Warrumbungle Shire Council's continuing commitment to promoting prosperity, the project objective is to produce an evidence-based, visionary strategy for sustainable economic development and tourism, which identifies priorities and recommends actions to support a strong economy into the future.

A whole-of-Council initiative, the **Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2025-2030** will be delivered in collaboration with the community, industry, government and non-government partners.

The new Economic Development and Tourism Strategy will align with local, regional, and state objectives, addressing both immediate needs and future opportunities within the Warrumbungle Shire. Key objectives include attracting investment, supporting local businesses and creating new job opportunities to bolster the local economy.

Intended Project Outcomes

It is intended that, when complete, the new Economic Development and Tourism Strategy will guide Warrumbungle Shire Council in the delivery of its economic development and tourism support roles and functions. Specifically, it will:

- Articulate the Shire's economic attributes, comparative advantages and opportunities;
- Identify the key enablers of economic development and tourism, and how they can be nurtured to support prosperity;
- Articulate a vision for Warrumbungle Shire's future prosperity and supporting principles to guide Council's economic development and tourism support and promotion activities;
- Provide a blueprint for inclusive and sustainable economic development, to improve socio-economic outcomes for all six communities of the Shire; and
- Provide a framework for action, with identified priorities and measures of success.

At an operational level, the Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2025-2030 will inform Council's Business Plans, operational plans and budgetary plans.

2. 'Economic Development' Defined

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

Typically measured in terms of investment, income flows, population growth and employment, economic development is also measured by improvements in education, skills, health, culture, community wellbeing, 'place' and the environment. Ultimately, economic development is about improving quality of life or to capture the concept more succinctly, it is about **prosperity**.

To ensure we realise desired levels of prosperity, it is important to articulate and focus on key objectives that will have meaningful and measurable outcomes for the communities of Warrumbungle Shire.

Retaining and growing Warrumbungle Shire's population is a desired outcome because it will serve to make the communities of the Shire more **resilient**. An increase in population will support local service delivery, serve to retain existing businesses and attract new investment. This will generate more opportunities for employment, creating a multiplier effect of **more people, more investment and more jobs**.

'Economic Development' Broadly Defined



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3. A Focus on the Enablers of Economic Development

While **business and industry drives economic growth and development**, the role of Councils and other key agents of change (including State and Federal Government agencies, regional development organisations, tourism bodies and infrastructure and service providers) is to influence the **'enabling environment'** for economic activity, that is, the services, infrastructure and support mechanisms required to facilitate positive change. At the local level, the **enablers** include:

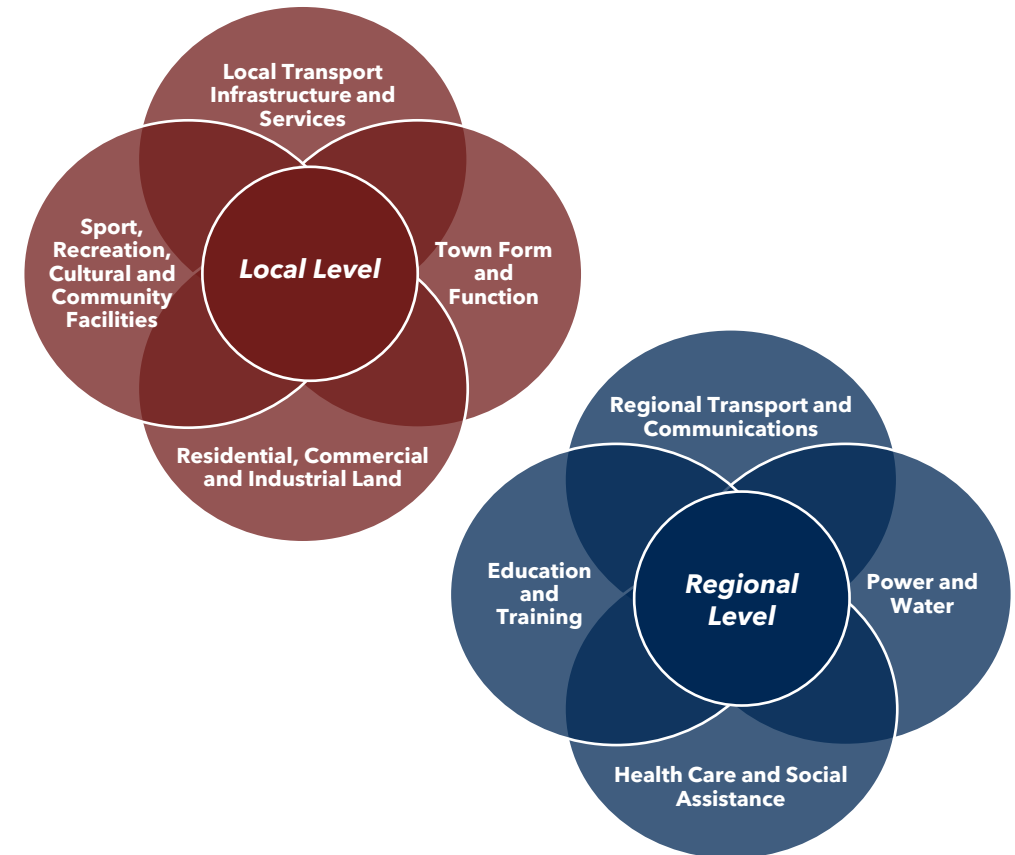
- Local roads.
- Developable residential, commercial and industrial land.
- The form and function of Warrumbungle Shire's town centres other settlements throughout the local government area.
- Community infrastructure including sporting, cultural and recreational facilities.

At the regional level, the enablers of economic development include those attributes which Warrumbungle Shire Council is not directly responsible for, but which it can help influence through its regional economic partnerships and its positive advocacy and lobbying efforts including, for example:

- Regional transport and communications infrastructure.
- Power and water.
- Health care and social assistance services.
- Education infrastructure and workforce skills / human capital.

Collectively, these enablers help define Warrumbungle Shire's economic development potential and its appeal as a place to visit, work, live and invest in.

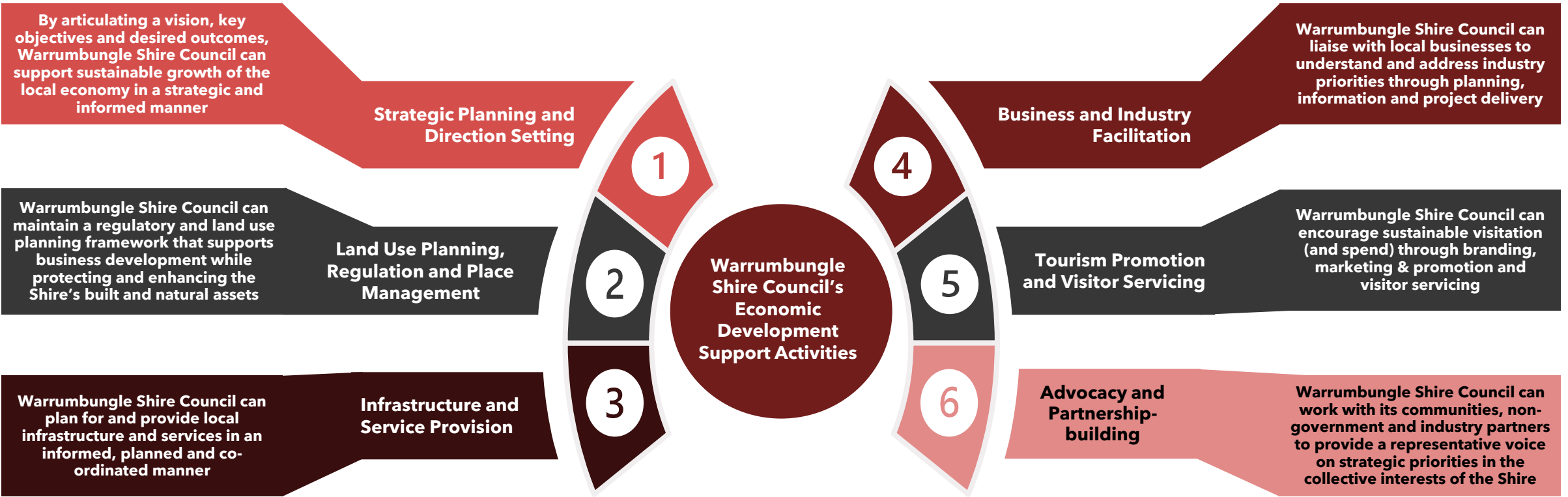
Economic Development Enablers Broadly Defined



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4. Warrumbungle Shire Council's Economic Development Support Roles

Having regard for the enablers of economic development, the **economic development support activities of Warrumbungle Shire Council**, which can typically be employed to encourage sustainable economic growth, will cut across the following six broad themes:

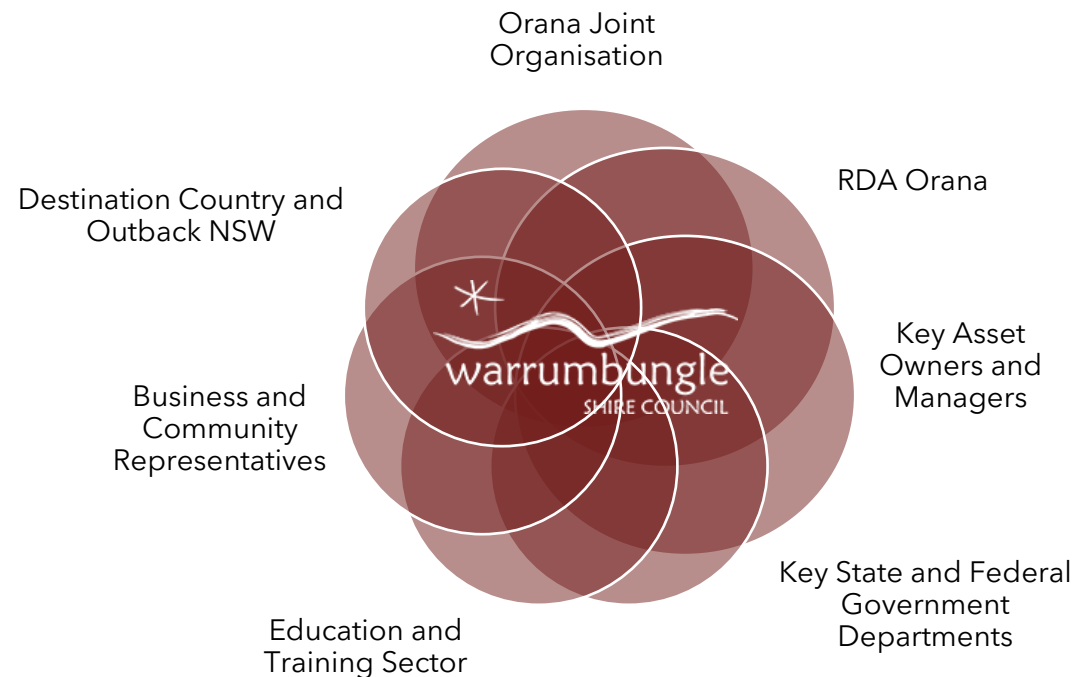


Source: SC Lennon & Associates Pty Ltd

5. Warrumbungle Shire Council's Economic Development Partnerships

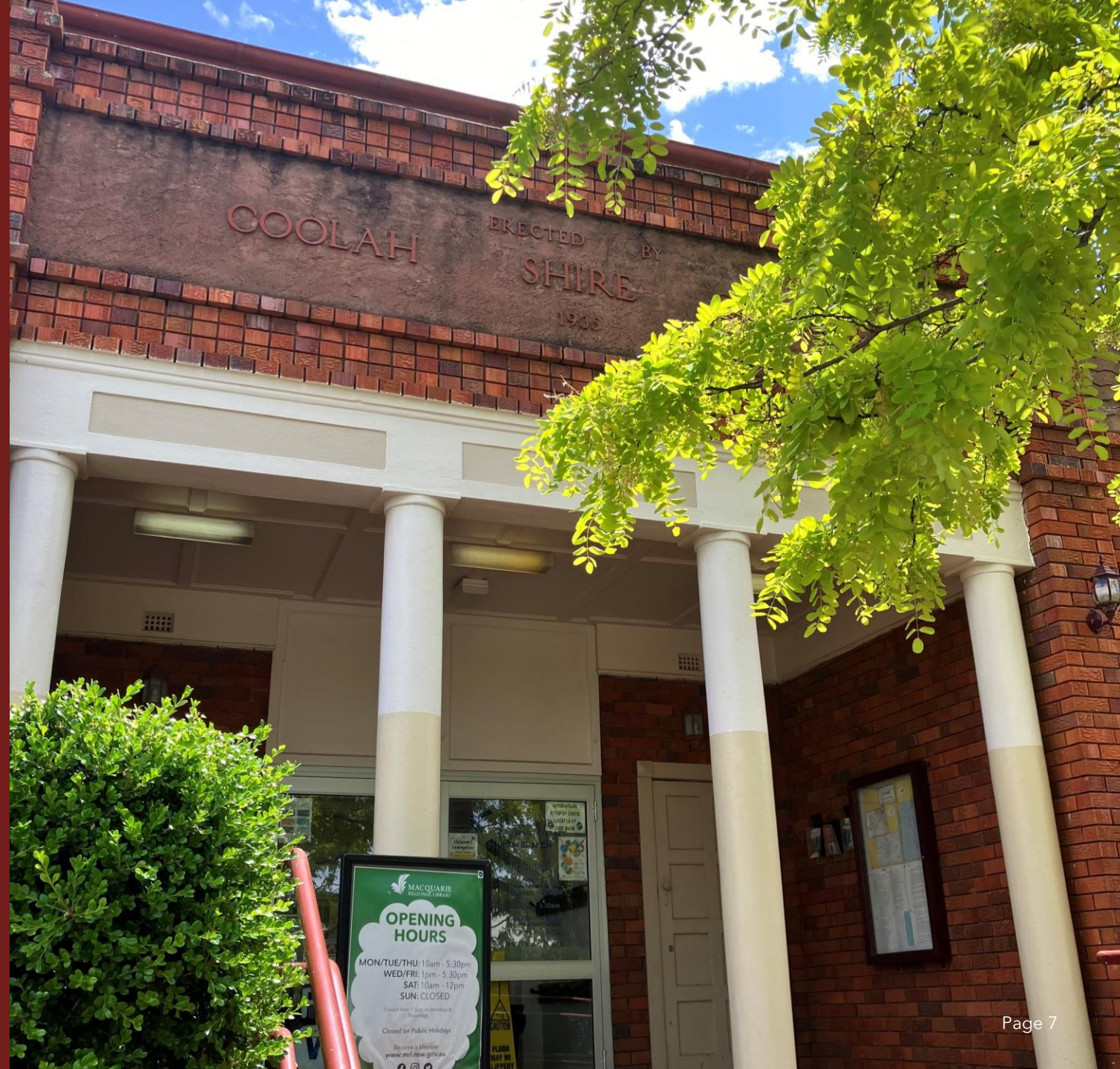
Effective economic development outcomes will be best served by **collaborative partnerships** between Warrumbungle Shire Council and its key partner stakeholders.

Warrumbungle Shire's Economic Development Partners



Source: SC Lennon & Associates Pty Ltd

Part 2: Profile



6. The Warrumbungle Shire Economy in Brief



The Warrumbungle Shire (Local Government Area) has 9,269 residents (2024 estimate), projected to remain stable, reaching 9,353 by 2041.



There are 3,123 jobs located in Warrumbungle Shire and 3,226 employed residents.



The Warrumbungle LGA has an unemployment rate of 2.8% (September 2024) compared to 3.4% for Regional NSW and 3.8% for NSW.



There are approximately 1,220 businesses in the Warrumbungle Shire LGA (two-thirds of which are non-employing).

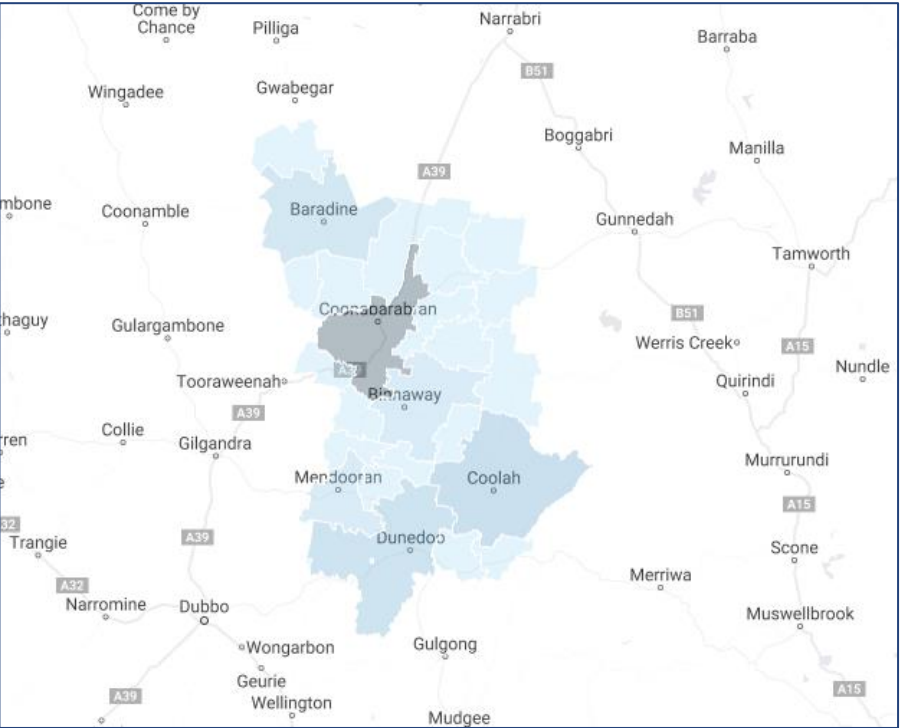


Key industries (in value and employment terms) include agriculture, tourism, health, education, transport, construction, public administration and retail trade.



In 2024, the Warrumbungle Shire LGA's Gross Regional Product (GRP) was \$703.5 million. GRP per worker was \$201,214 compared to GRP per worker of \$199,637 for NSW.

Warrumbungle Shire

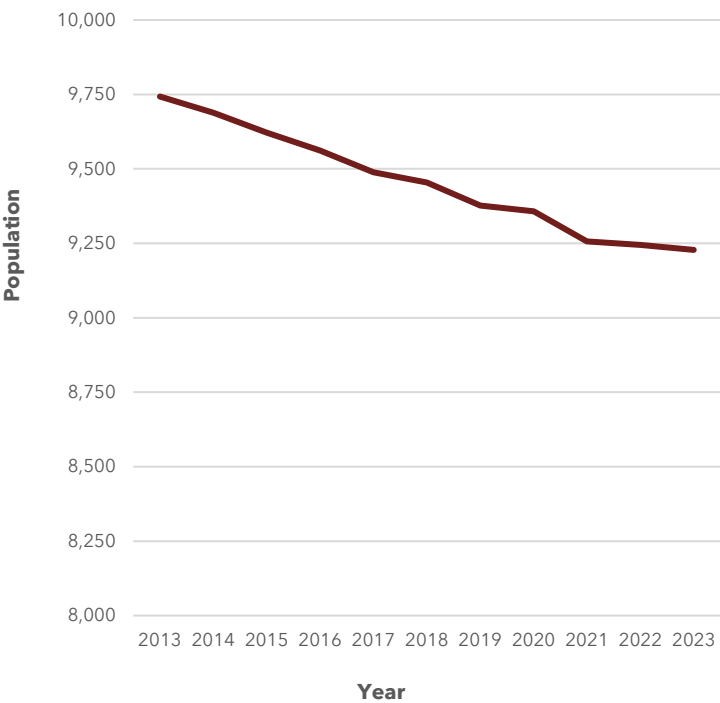


Source: REMPLAN

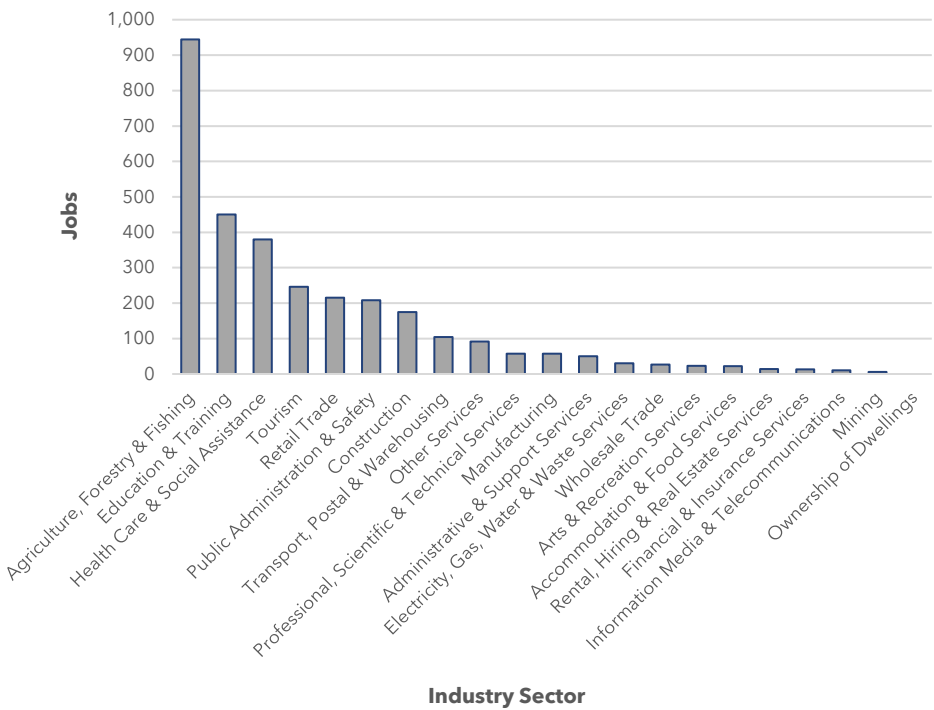
Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Planning NSW, Jobs and Skills Australia (Small Area Labour Markets Data) and REMPLAN

7. Warrumbungle Shire Socio-Economic Snapshot

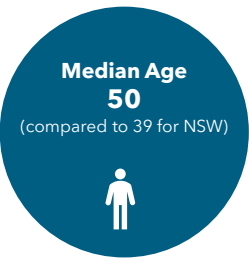
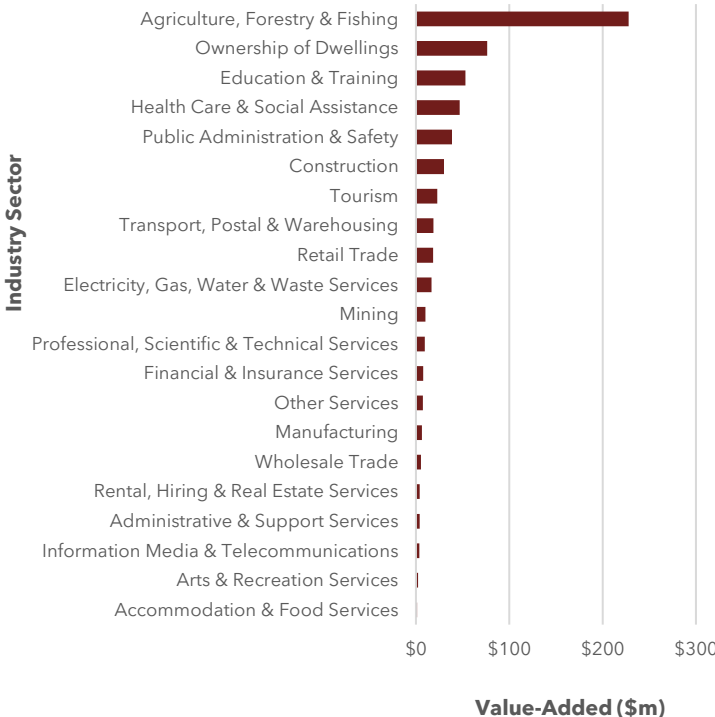
Population, Warrumbungle Shire, 2013-2023



Local Jobs by Industry, Warrumbungle Shire, 2023



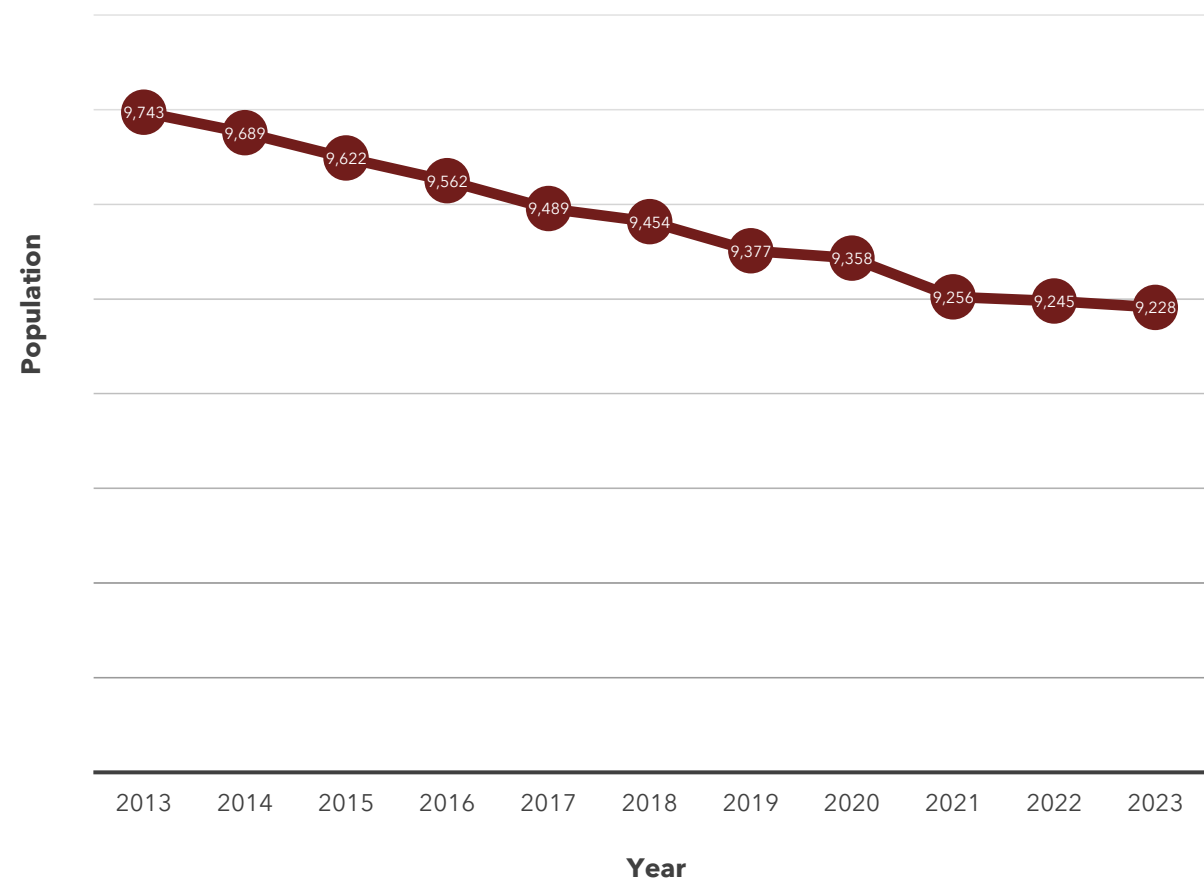
Value-Added by Industry, Warrumbungle Shire, 2023



Sources: ABS Census (2021), ABS Counts of Australian Businesses (June 2023), Jobs and Skills Australia (September 2024), REMPLAN (2024) and Tourism Research Australia (2019)

8. Selected Socio-Economic Metrics

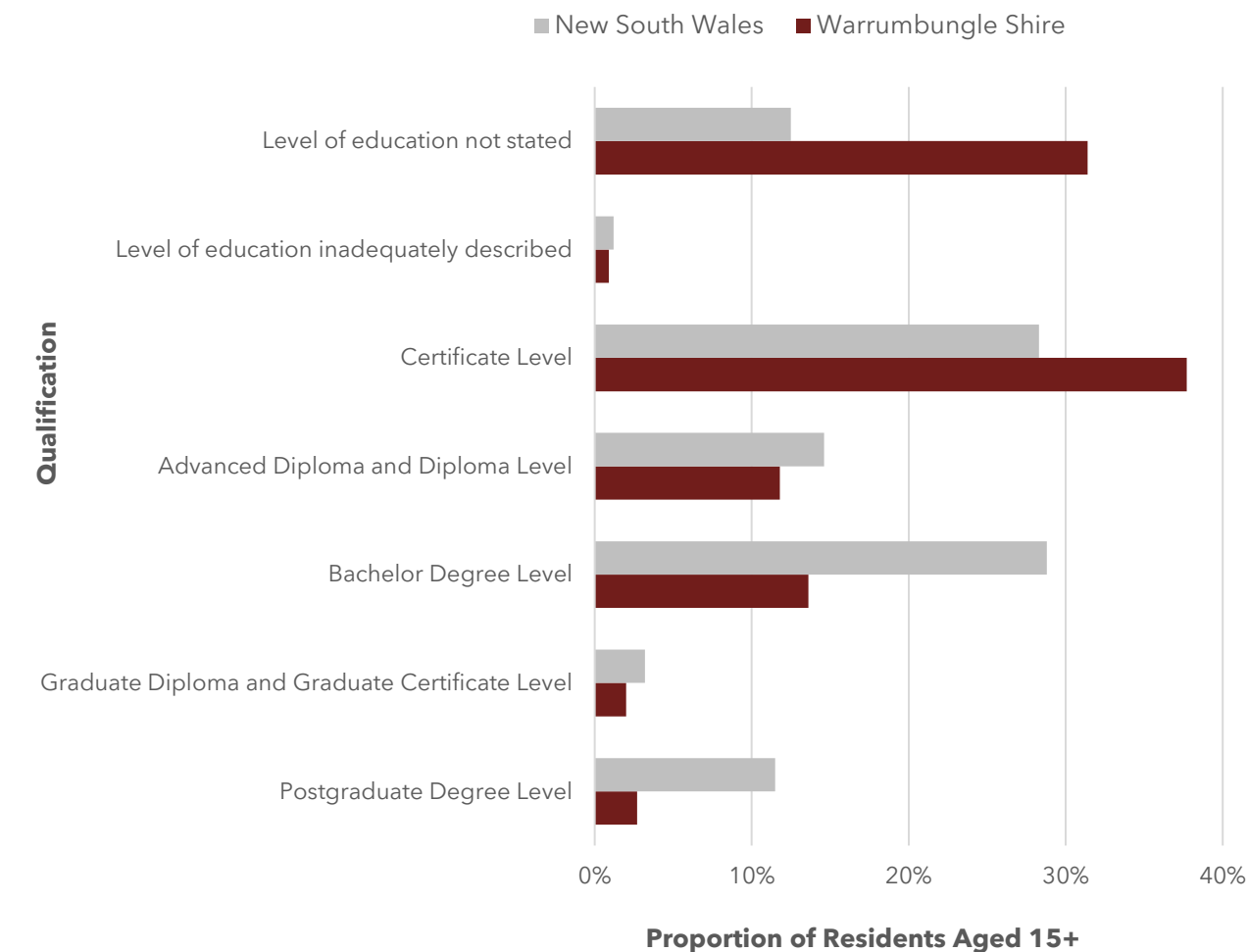
Population, Warrumbungle Shire, 2013-2023



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

- Warrumbungle Shire has an estimated resident population of 9,228 (in 2023).
- The Shire’s population has declined steadily over the ten years to 2023, at an average annual rate of 0.5%. By comparison, the population of New South Wales increased at an average annual rate of 1.2% during the same period.
- The median age of Warrumbungle Shire’s population (according to the 2021 ABS Census) is 50, compared to 39 for NSW and 38 for Australia as a whole.
- Warrumbungle Shire has an average household size of 2.3 persons compared to 2.6 persons per household in NSW and 2.5 Australia-wide.
- The large majority of the Shire’s resident population (75%) were born in Australia compared to 48% of the population of NSW and 51% Australia-wide.
- In Warrumbungle Shire, 11% of the population identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders compared to 3% of the State’s population and 3% Australia-wide.
- In Warrumbungle Shire, the median weekly household income is \$1,068 compared to \$1,829 for NSW and \$1,746 for Australia as a whole.
- The unemployment rate in Warrumbungle Shire (as of March 2024) is 2.1% compared to 3.1% for regional NSW, 3.5% for NSW and 3.8% for Australia.

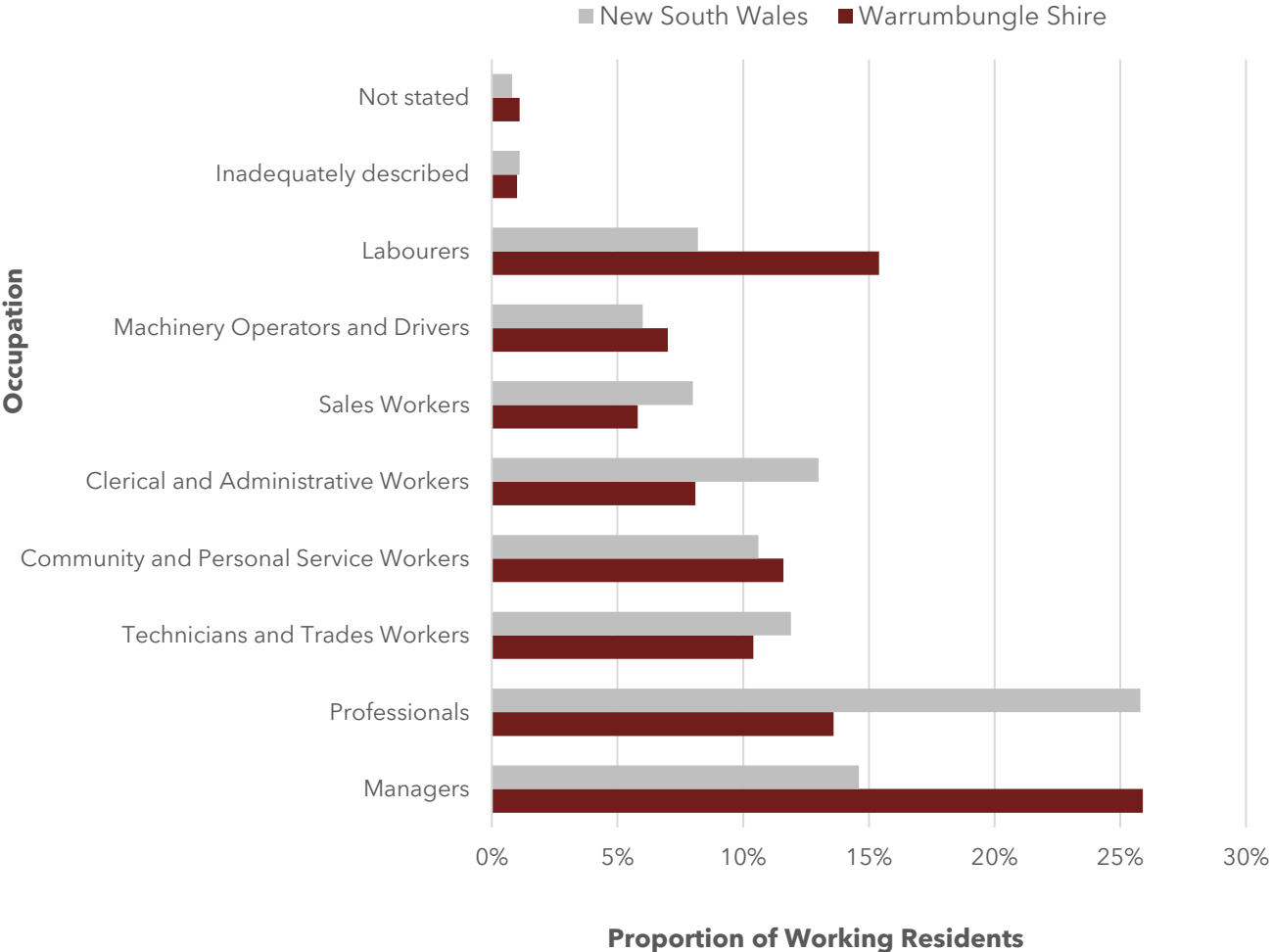
Education Qualifications, Warrumbungle Shire and NSW, 2021



Source: REMPLAN and Australian Bureau of Statistics with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

- In Warrumbungle Shire, 16% of residents aged 15 years and over hold a Bachelor degree or higher qualification compared to 40% of residents of NSW aged 15 years and over.
- The 2021 Census shows that only 4% of Warrumbungle Shire’s residents aged 15 years and over are attending a University or other higher education institution compared to 15% of the population of NSW aged 15+.
- Compared to the State average, Warrumbungle Shire has a higher proportional representation of residents who hold a certificate level qualification (38% compared to 28% for NSW).
- According to the latest Census data, in Warrumbungle Shire, 5% of residents aged 15 years and over are undertaking vocational education (TAFE and private training) compared to 9% for NSW.
- Compared to the NSW average, Warrumbungle Shire has a much higher proportional representation of residents whose level of education is not stated.
- Census data on high school completion rates shows that, in Warrumbungle Shire, 32% of residents completed Year 12 or equivalent compared to 57% of NSW residents who have Year 12 qualifications or equivalent.

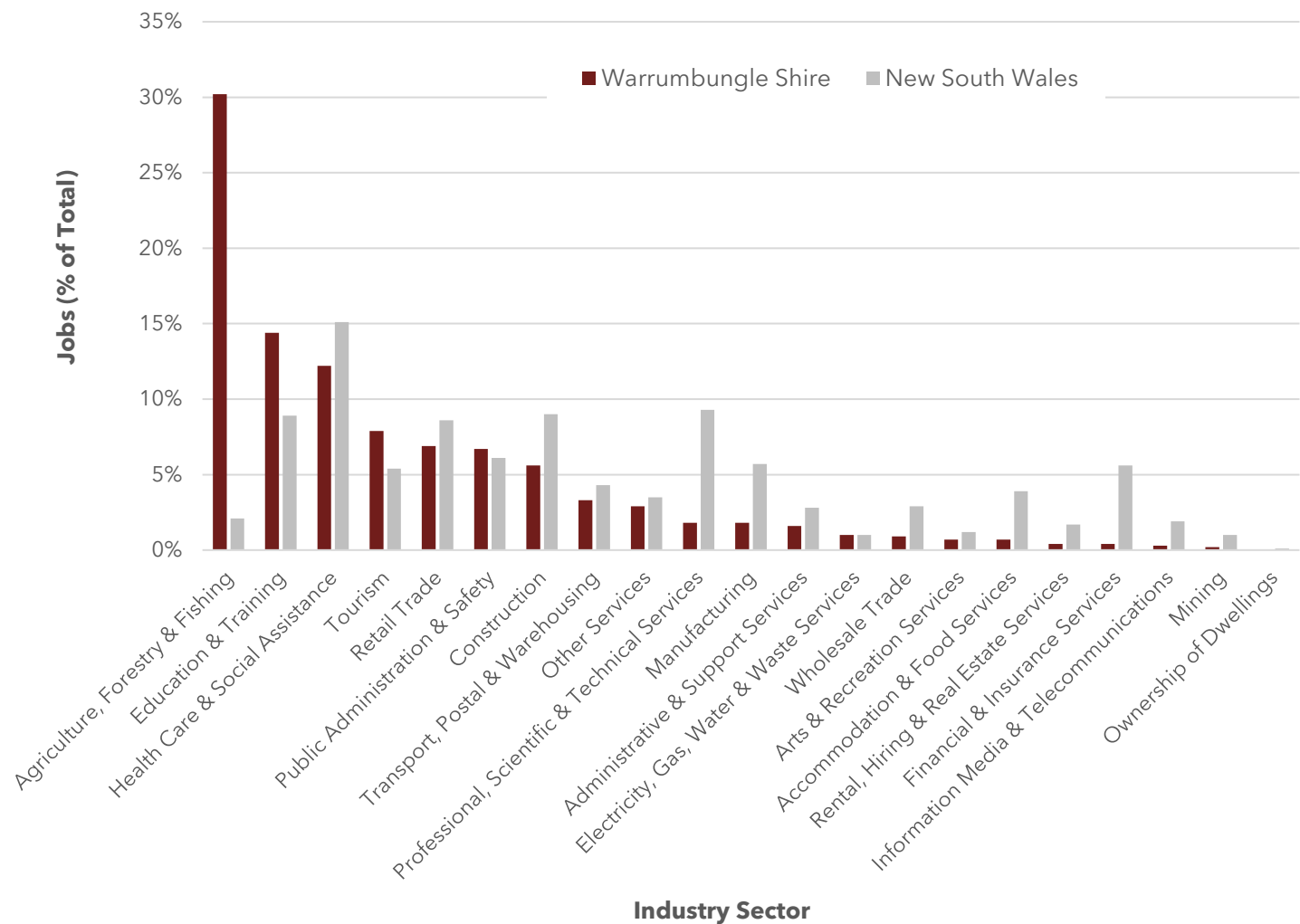
Occupational Profile, Warrumbungle Shire and NSW, 2021



- Warrumbungle Shire has a proportionally higher 'blue collar' working population than the NSW average, with a higher proportional representation of resident workers who are 'labourers' and 'machinery operators and drivers' compared to the NSW average.
- Warrumbungle Shire has a slightly lower proportional representation of skilled 'technicians and trade workers', with this occupational classification accounting for 11% of resident workers compared to the State average of 12%.
- A much lower share of Warrumbungle Shire's working population is classed as 'professionals' (14%) compared to the NSW average (26%). This suggests a shortage of professionals and an opportunity to attract more workers in this field to the Shire.
- Warrumbungle Shire has a notably higher proportion of resident workers who are classed as 'managers' (26%) compared to the NSW average of 15%. This reflects the Shire's strong agricultural industry profile with farmers included in this occupational category.

Source: REMPLAN and Australian Bureau of Statistics with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

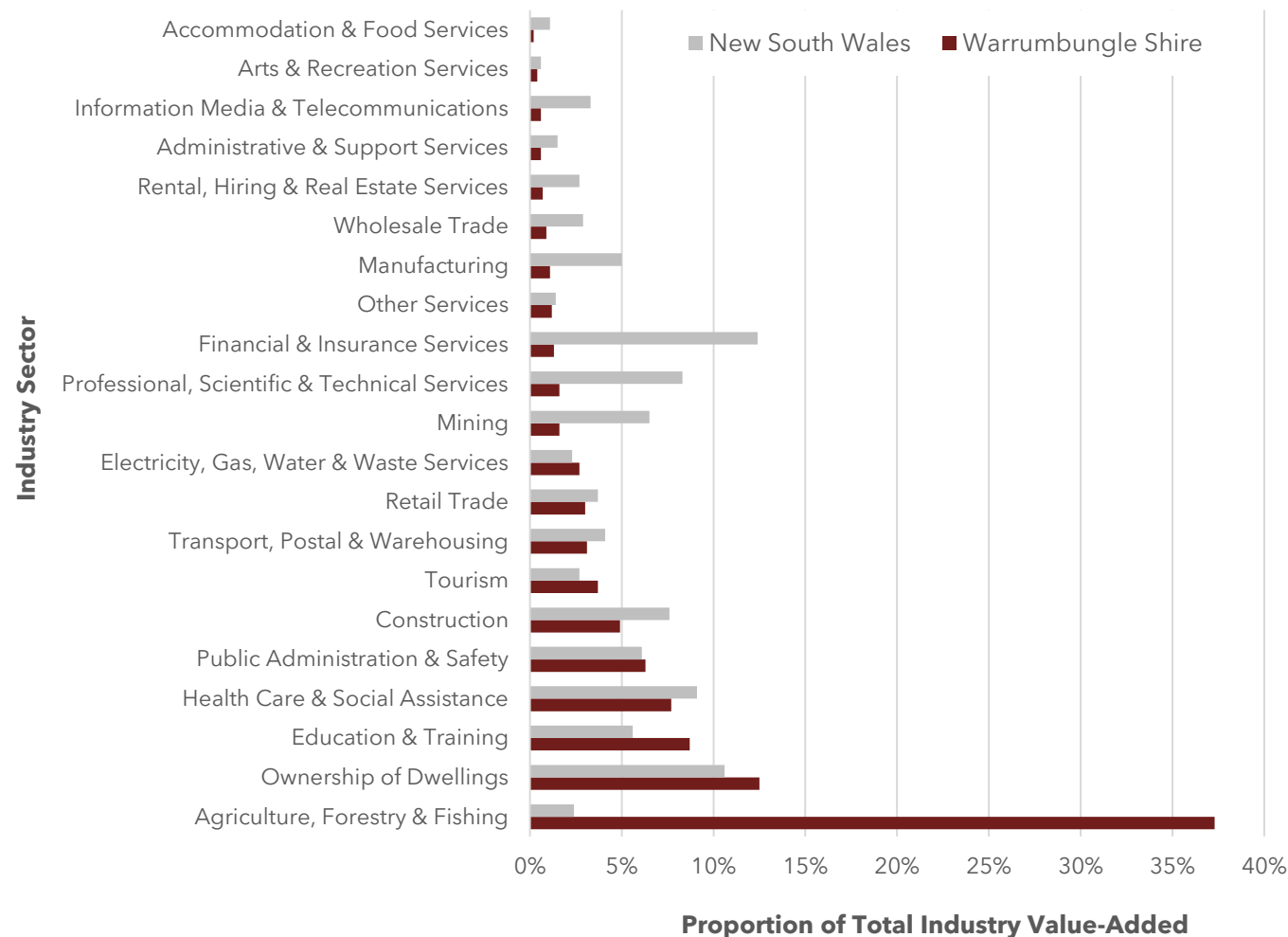
Employment by Industry (%), Warrumbungle Shire and NSW, 2023



- The Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing sector accounts for the largest share of employment in Warrumbungle Shire (that is, jobs located in the Shire), with over 900 local jobs or 30% of the total (compared to the State average of 2%).
- This is followed by Education & Training, which accounts for 14% of all jobs in Warrumbungle Shire (450 jobs) compared to the NSW average of 9%.
- Other notable industries of employment in Warrumbungle Shire include Health Care & Social Assistance, Tourism, Retail Trade, Public Administration & Safety and Construction.
- The latest ABS Census data shows that the top five industries of employment for the Shire’s working residents are Beef Cattle Farming (Specialised), Local Government Administration, Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming, Combined Primary and Secondary Education and Hospitals.
- Those industries which have a notably lower proportional representation of local jobs in Warrumbungle Shire compared to the State-wide average include Professional, Scientific & Technical Services, Financial and Insurance Services and Manufacturing.

Source: REMPLAN and Australian Bureau of Statistics with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Value-Added by Industry (%), Warrumbungle Shire and NSW, 2023

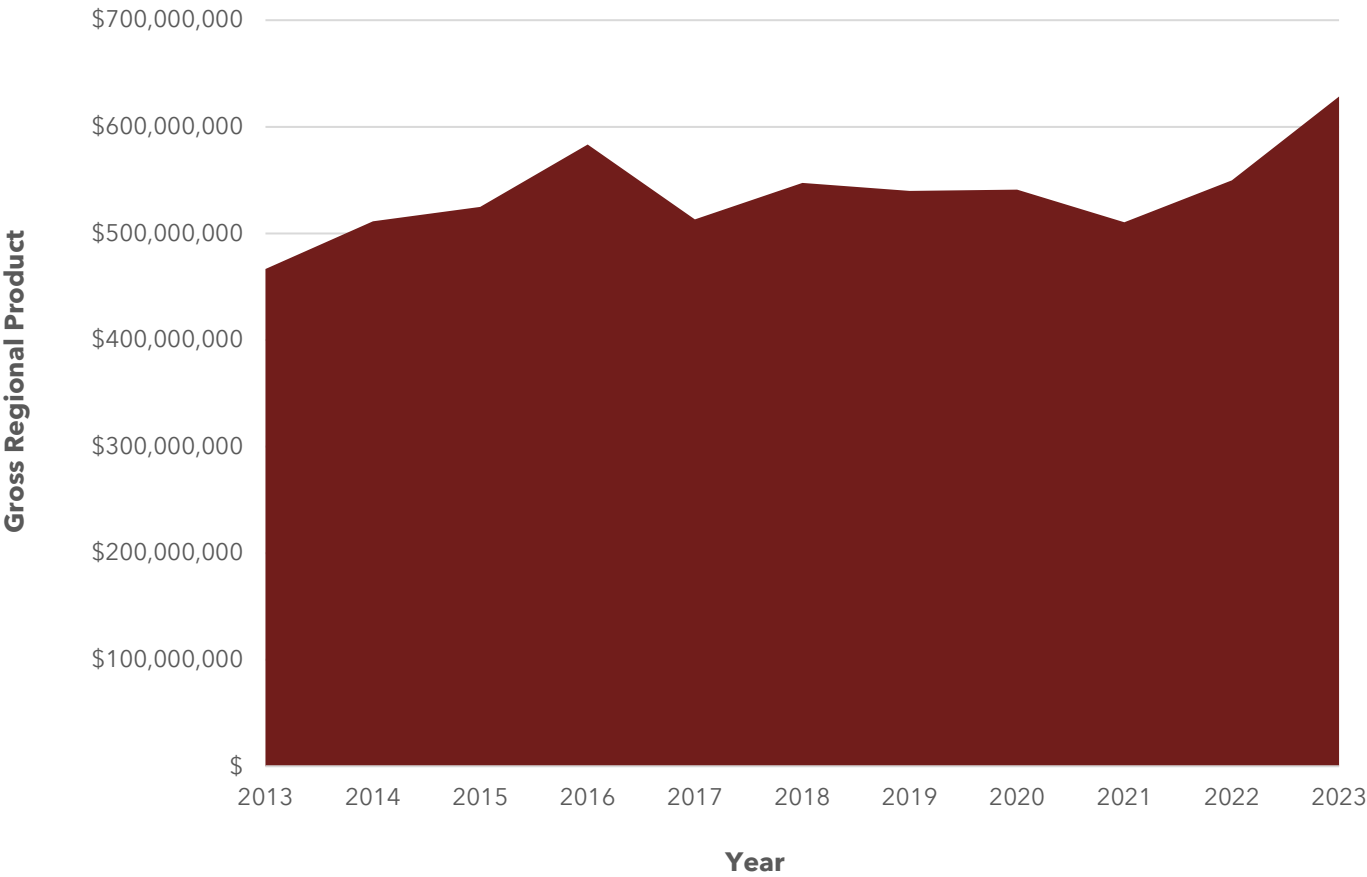


Source: REMPLAN and Australian Bureau of Statistics with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

- Value-added (or industry’s contribution to Gross Regional Product) is in an indicator of business productivity. It is the value of goods and services produced by an industry less the cost of production inputs.
- In Warrumbungle Shire, Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing accounts for by far the largest share of local industry value-added, with \$228 million or 37% of the total compared to 2% for the State as a whole.
- Ownership of Dwellings* is the second-largest contributor to the Shire’s industry value-added, contributing 13% of the total (\$76.5 million).
- Other notable contributors to Warrumbungle Shire’s industry value-added include Education & Training (9%), Health Care & Social Assistance (8%), Public Administration & Safety (6%) and Construction (5% of industry value-added).
- Tourism accounts for 4% of Warrumbungle Shire’s industry value-added compared to the State average of 3%.

* Ownership of dwellings consists of landlords and owner-occupiers of dwellings. It includes actual rents received by landlords, and imputed rents (i.e. the rental price an individual would pay for an asset they own) representing the ongoing value of owner-occupied housing.

Gross Regional Product (\$m)*, Warrumbungle Shire, 2013-2023



* Refers to real GRP (June 2022 prices)

Source: REMPLAN and Australian Bureau of Statistics with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

- Gross Regional Product (GRP) is a measure of the size or net wealth generated by the local / regional economy. It refers to the total dollar value of all goods and services produced in the economy over a one-year period.
- Warrumbungle Shire’s Gross Regional Product was \$628.3 million in the year ending June 2023, up 14% on the previous year.
- This followed a fall in between 2020-2021 - in part explained by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy - then a recovery the following year.
- Over the ten-years to 2023 Warrumbungle Shire’s GRP displayed an upward trend with occasional downswings, increasing on average over the period by 3% per annum.
- GRP per capita in Warrumbungle Shire is approximately \$68,000 compared to the NSW average of \$87,800.

Part 3: Prospects



9. Broader Trends and Considerations

Key Mega-Trends and Considerations for Economic Development

As stated in the introduction to this report, the Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2025-2030 will be an evidence-based, visionary strategy for sustainable economic development and tourism, which identifies priorities and recommends actions to support a strong economy into the future. The new strategy will **enhance the focus on tourism** and develop key tourism and economic development initiatives as part of an overall economic development plan.

Addressing Warrumbungle Shire's strategic objectives for a prosperous economy requires a consideration of broader national and global economic trends and influences. There are many technological, socio-demographic and environmental changes taking place now and in the future which impact how people live and how businesses operate.

The Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy will need to respond to current and emerging trends with a range of initiatives which are designed to help support a more diverse and sustainable economy.

With this in mind, some key considerations are documented in summary form overleaf.



Broader Trends and Considerations

A Strategic Approach to Economic Development in a Broader Context

Recognising that there are many technological, socio-demographic and environmental changes taking place which impact how people live and how businesses operate, the Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy will need to consider a range of initiatives that are designed to help:

- **Maximise agricultural innovation and the value of agricultural output** - By encouraging and supporting the agricultural sector to adopt new technologies and agribusiness practices to drive productivity, Warrumbungle Shire will be better positioned to tap into opportunities in a world where the demand for food and fibre is ever-increasing.
- **Seek investments in new and emerging industries** - By embracing the industries of the future now, such as renewable energy, Warrumbungle Shire will be better-placed to grow a diverse and robust economy.
- **Support the role of education as a driver of economic development** - As the economy evolves and the skill requirements of industry change, more workers will have to switch from routine, unskilled jobs to non-routine, skilled jobs to stay ahead of automation and AI. Adaptive and flexible education and training is more important than ever before.
- **Capitalise on evolving tourism trends and prospects** - Nature-based and cultural tourism are growth industries, with more travellers searching for immersive, authentic, educational experiences that are unique to the places they visit. Warrumbungle Shire can leverage its assets through targeted promotion and destination management to encourage more visitors, increase average spend per visitor and foster a sustainable visitor economy.

As one key objective of the Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is to enhance the focus on tourism and develop key tourism and economic development projects, some **key visitor economy trends and considerations** are documented as follows.

Broader Trends and Considerations

Some Key Visitation Drivers

There are a number of broader trends influencing prospects for tourism and the ways in which Warrumbungle Shire, as a destination, can respond. They include:

- **Experiential travel** - travellers are seeking immersive, authentic, educational experiences that are unique to the places they visit. The desire for authentic experiences is driving demand for exploring destinations that offer something unique.
- **Sustainable travel** - sustainable and conscious travel will continue to gain momentum, and the concept of excessive visitor arrivals known as 'over tourism' will remain topical, and destinations need to find ways to prevent this.
- **Holidays with a purpose** - volunteering, understanding and caring for the environment and authentic engagement with communities, including First Nations, are playing a bigger part in travel and destination choice.
- **Wellness travel** - travel for the purpose of wellness, both spiritual and physical, to activate the mind and body, will continue to grow in popularity.
- **Accessible tourism** - this fast-growing sector accounts for around 17 per cent of total tourism revenue in Australia. An increasing number of people aged 65 and over who are also keen travellers may have accessibility needs.
- **Multi-generational travel** - the trend in multi-generational travel will continue, as families use their holiday time to bond and create memories together, and this will influence the type of customer experience they are looking for.
- **Food and beverage tourism** - local produce and food and drink experiences will continue to play a role in destination choice, as a central part of the travel experience, and this space will become crowded (and competitive).
- **Business events tourism** - conventions, corporate meetings, AGMs, corporate retreats, workshops, seminars and sales incentive rewards trips all hold promise for growth in Australia's visitor destinations.

(Sources: Destination NSW, travel.earth and SC Lennon & Associates)



Broader Trends and Considerations

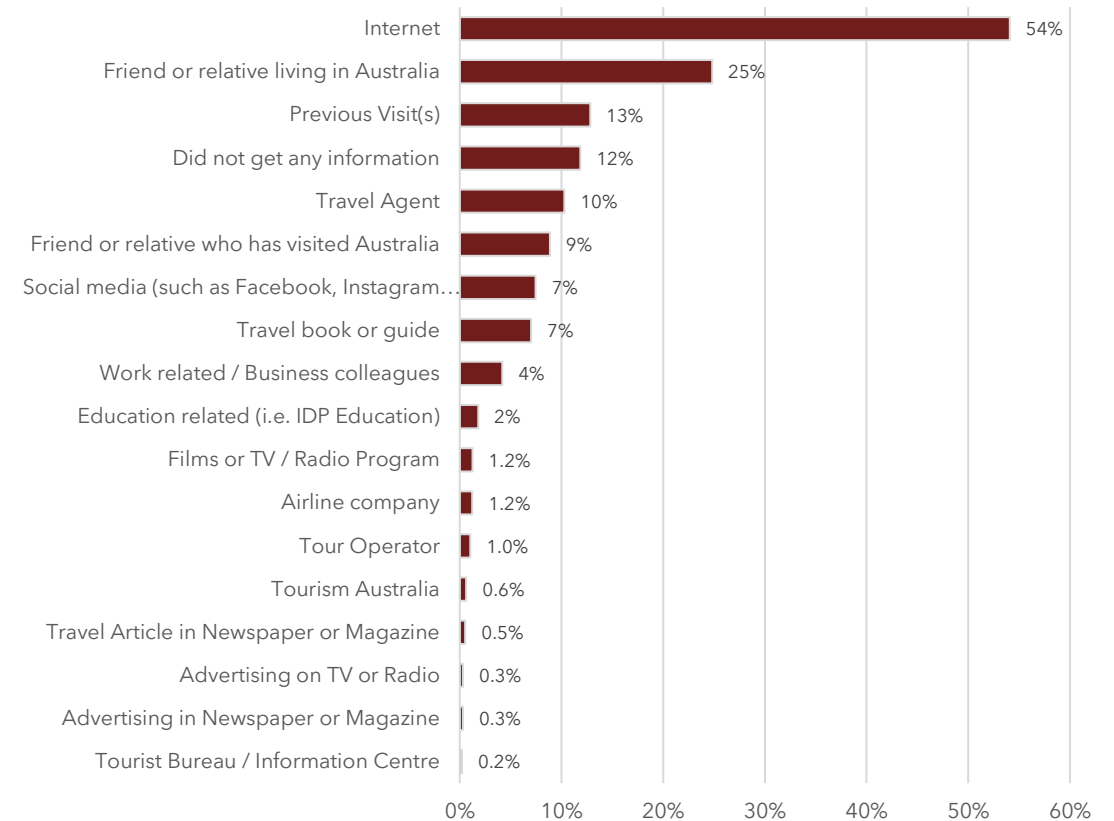
Tourism Technology and Visitor Information in the 2020s

Recognising the evolving nature of what travellers seek and how they engage with their destinations in rapidly changing environment, Warrumbungle Shire can ensure that its visitor servicing responds to how visitors prefer to source their information. Key trends influencing how visitors engage with their destination include:

- **Technology and the digital economy** - digital technology will continue to advance, facilitating all stages of the traveller's journey and experience, e.g. search, booking, payments, augmented reality, real time translations, destination information, itineraries and customer reviews.
- **Social media and user-generated content** - will continue to be key, with more travellers seeking out places to stop and stay that are compatible with the technologies they use, including new modes of travel such as electric vehicles.
- **Personalisation of experiences** - digital and mobile technology have empowered visitors to take more control of their travel experiences and have also increased their expectations. As a result, the expectation of personalised and tailor-made experiences will continue to grow.
- **The sharing economy** - The sharing economy (e.g. Airbnb) will continue to transform travel experiences, giving the customer more choice and greater flexibility and providing opportunities for those tourism operators and destinations that adapt well (e.g. use of customer reviews and star ratings).

These are some important considerations for Warrumbungle Shire as it looks to grow its visitor economy in a constantly evolving world.

Information Sources, International Visitors to NSW, 2019



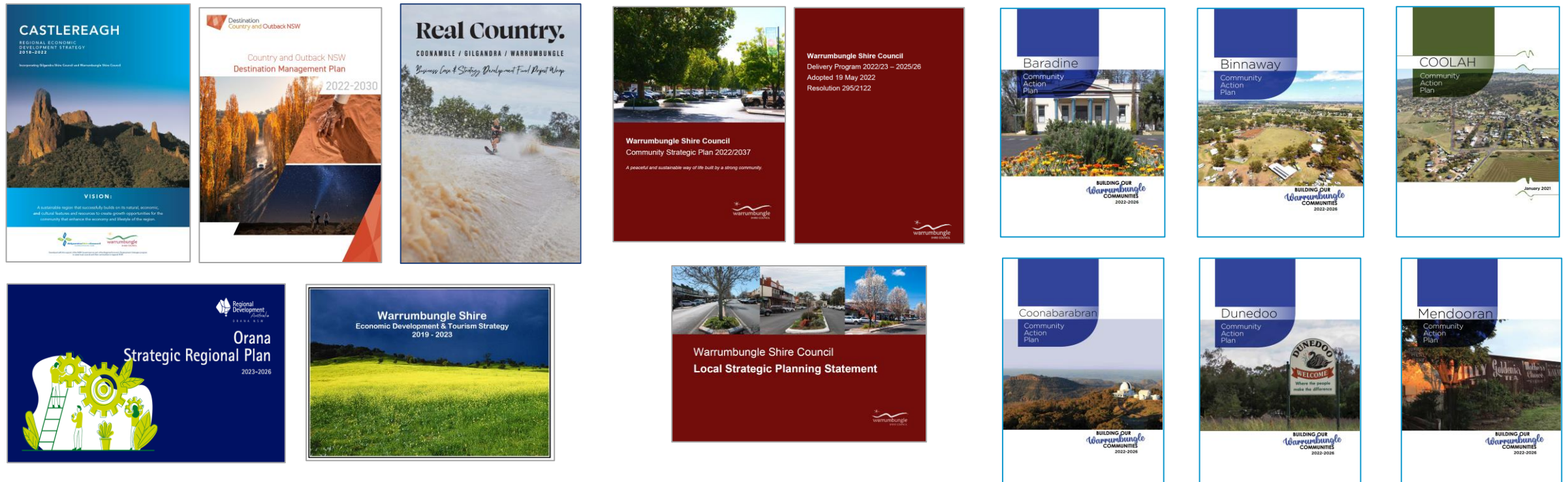
Source: Tourism Research Australia with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

10. Informing Directions – Key Strategies Review

To help inform strategy consultation, key strategic documents are being considered and reviewed, including:

- Warrumbungle Shire Community Plan 2022-2037
- Warrumbungle Shire Delivery Program 2022/23-2025/26
- Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2019-2023
- Warrumbungle Shire's six Community Action Plans

... as well as key regional strategies. Some messages from the review of selected strategic documents are captured in the following pages.



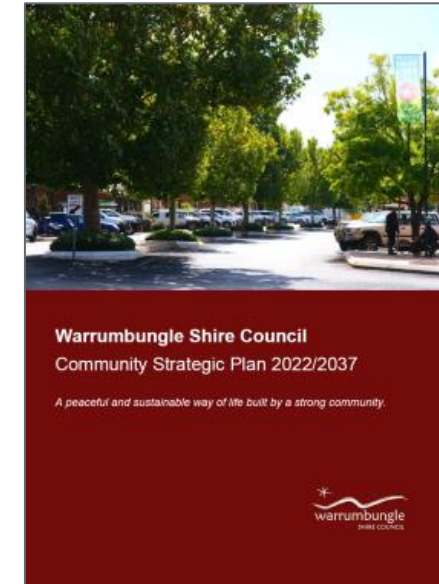
Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Warrumbungle Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2022/2037

The Warrumbungle Shire Community Strategic Plan 2022/2037 outlines the needs and aspirations of the community. The highest level of strategic planning undertaken by the Council, it sets goals for the short and long-term future and the strategic framework to reach these goals. All other plans developed by the Council must reflect and support the implementation of the Community Strategic Plan.

The Plan provides four key themes to guide the growth and development of the Warrumbungle Shire over the next 10 years. These are, **Caring for the Environment**; **Civic Leadership**; **Strengthening the Local Economy**; and **Supporting Community Life**. The following key strategies are presented under the theme of Strengthening the Local Economy:

- Promote and support business and employment growth.
- Ensure all stakeholders work together to ensure the long-term viability of the farming and agriculture sector.
- Develop and promote tourism investment.
- Encourage business networks to take advantage of local supply chains.
- Ensure the efficient operation of commercial facilities.
- Provide dynamic and responsive visitor information services.
- Actively seek new events and activities (e.g. festivals).
- Support education providers to ensure appropriate skills development for the region.
- Advocate for a broader range of courses offered by the TAFE institutes.
- Encourage a 'buy local' and 'sell local' approach to business activity.
- Identify and develop opportunities to realise the local government area's potential as a location for the production of renewable energies.
- Identify opportunities to expand the availability of a range of housing options based on lifestyle choices and affordability.



Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

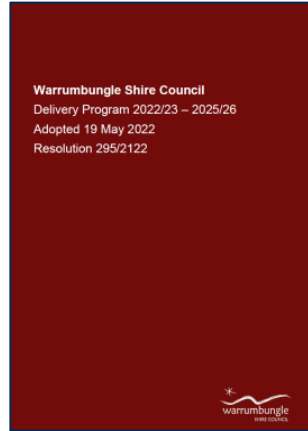
Warrumbungle Shire Delivery Program 2022/23 - 2025/26

Council's Delivery Program 2022/23-2025/26 is a 4-year plan which identifies and prioritises a series of activities that are guided and organised under, and linked to, the four overarching goals of the Community Strategic Plan. The program sets the framework and strategic direction to achieve the objectives, strategies, and tasks of the Community Plan.

The document provides details of each of the Council's activities, what the community can expect from these activities, and how much each activity will cost the community over the four years of the Delivery Program.

The Delivery Program's goals for supporting Economic Development and Tourism include ensuring that support is provided to outlying information service sites and that promotional activities are effective and attract visitors to the region (target of 5,800 visitors monthly). Specific activities designed to realise these goals include:

- Maintenance of an effective visitor information service.
- Well-presented building and grounds, meeting workplace health and safety standards.
- Provision of a comprehensive range of competitively priced retail products.
- Recording and analysis of statistics on tourism.
- Effective distribution of tourism information.



The Delivery Program's goals for supporting Economic Development and Tourism Promotion include ensuring that tourism promotion is effective, leading to a real increase in visitor numbers (5% annual increase) and opportunities for hosting conferences and special events within the Shire are actively pursued (4 per annum.)

Specific promotion activities presented in the Delivery Program include:

- Actively promote the development and investment in Council-owned land.
- Promotion of business needs to stakeholders and Council.
- Encourage key organisations to facilitate community economic development.
- Implementation of cost-effective marketing campaigns aligned to market research.
- Establishment of a network of government and business agencies to facilitate business development.

Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Warrumbungle Shire Council Local Strategic Planning Statement

The Warrumbungle Shire Council Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) sets the framework for Warrumbungle Shire's economic, social, and environmental land use needs over the next 20 years. It outlines planning priorities under the themes of:

- **A Spirited and Connected Community;**
- **A Supportive Future with Growth and Resilience;**
and
- **A Healthy Environment and Community.**

The LSPS vision for Warrumbungle Shire in 2040 is stated as follows:

Over the next 20 years the Warrumbungle Shire will be an interconnected string of settlements, each with a unique lifestyle and good connections to Dubbo and other locations. The population decline will be arrested and there will be higher educational opportunities for young people in the Shire. There will be more economic diversity in each of the large towns with agriculture and tourism playing key roles in the economy. There will also be improved infrastructure, health, and community services. We will have improved biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and we will be more responsive to natural hazards such as bushfires and floods.



The LSPS identifies a number of priorities relevant to economic development and tourism as follows:

- Encourage economic growth by supporting agriculture and other emerging industries such as value-add manufacturing and freight related opportunities.
- Investigate opportunities for the expansion of existing and new industrial precincts in our townships that do not impact on residents.
- Protect and recognise existing industrial precincts and uses to avoid land use conflicts from future residential development.
- Encourage the co-location of complementary industry alongside agricultural enterprises that enhance the efficiency of the agricultural land use.
- Seek to better understand local business needs.
- Review policies that impact on local businesses.
- Investigate opportunities for employment land.
- Investigate management strategies for declining populations.
- Consider the linkages between cultural, heritage and tourism, and the opportunities culture and heritage bring for economic growth.
- Investigate the potential impact of the Coonabarabran Bypass on the CBD.
- Continue to promote the natural resources of the Warrumbungle Shire.
- Continue to support the Siding Spring Observatory and Dark Sky initiatives through education and implementing lighting controls on future developments.
- Support tourism opportunities, specifically for nature-based tourism, in the Warrumbungle and Coolah Tops National Parks.

Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

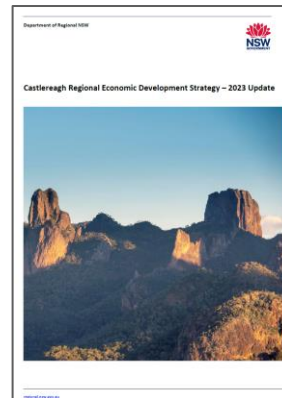
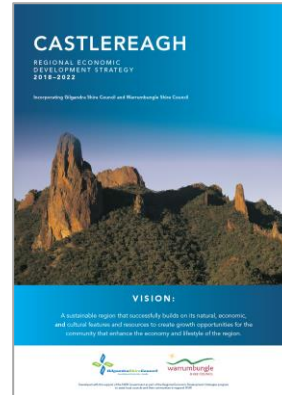
Castlereagh Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022 (and 2023 Update)

In 2018, the NSW Government and local councils developed a series of Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) for 38 Functional Economic Regions (FERs) across regional NSW. Warrumbungle Shire is part of the Castlereagh region.

The Castlereagh Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018-2022 identifies economic development opportunities that capitalise on the endowments and specialisations of the region and provide the framework for prioritising key economic opportunities.

The REDS contains a number of initiatives categorised under five key themes:

1. Boost key industries' access to market and labour;
2. Invest in water and energy utilities infrastructure;
3. Develop and enhance the regional lifestyle;
4. Develop and promote a broad event and destination profile; and
5. Build support for local businesses.



Since the REDS was prepared in 2018, regional NSW has endured shocks including bushfires, floods, COVID-19 and the mouse plague, and significant new economic opportunities have emerged. The 2023 REDS Update provides a revised evidence base to guide governments in making policy and investment decisions to enhance resilience and drive sustainable, long-term economic growth in regional NSW.

Priorities identified in the Castlereagh 2023 REDS Update include:

- Improve access to external markets, labour, healthcare, training and other services.
- Leverage the Central-west Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) to attract energy and energy related industries and continue to invest in local level water security.
- Develop and enhance the regional lifestyle for work, business and leisure.
- Develop and promote a broad event and destination profile to increase visitation and diversify the economy.
- Capture opportunities from major projects such as the Inland Rail for local industries, businesses and community.

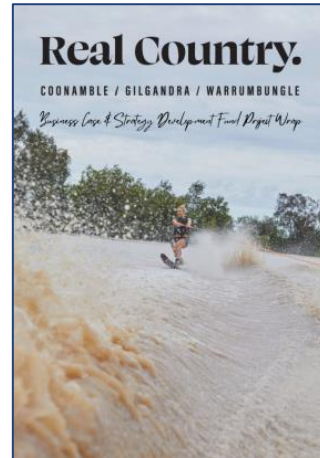
Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Real Country: Coonamble / Gilgandra / Warrumbungle

The Real Country Tourism Experience Strategy and Infrastructure Business Case Project leverages a collaborative partnership between Coonamble, Gilgandra and Warrumbungle Shire Councils and Destination NSW in the Real Country tourism campaign, which was launched in August 2022.

The business case provides invest-ready projects for funding opportunities and financial planning, as well as providing the opportunity to create key tourism connection, experiences and private investment opportunities.

The Real Country destination vision is to ***“Grow Real Country region into a regional experience destination, provide economic support outside of the agricultural industry, engage with communities, enhance natural assets, drive community and visitor access, increased visitation and overnight stays, increase education, provide cultural experience and wellbeing opportunities, improve space for events, and leverage natural assets with initiatives of activities, art and scapes”.***



Delivery priorities include infrastructure catalyst projects and priority actions.

For Warrumbungle Shire, catalyst infrastructure project opportunities are focussed on river precinct upgrades to Coonabarabran, Binnaway and Mendooran. Priority actions for Warrumbungle Shire include:

- Amphitheatre design and seasonal considerations.
- River health and ecological preservation.
- First Nations engagement and cultural identity.
- Promotion of arts and vibrancy.
- Dark sky and unique celestial views.
- Community-driven maintenance and tourism.

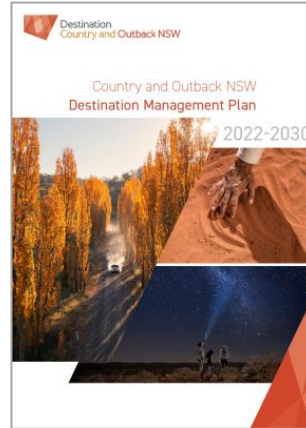
The Real Country Tourism Experience Strategy and Infrastructure Business Case Project also identifies the region's destination marketing catalyst projects, which include:

- Enhance digital presence and marketing.
- Improvement of signage and wayfinding.
- Real visitor experience – promote local businesses and products.
- River health, cultural and historical storytelling.

Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Country and Outback NSW Destination Management Plan 2022-2030

The Country and Outback NSW Destination Management Plan 2022 to 2030 has been developed to align with the directions of the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 (VES). Consistent with the NSW VES (which has been under review), the Country and Outback NSW DMP contains five strategic pillars to guide visitor economy growth. Key initiatives under each Pillar are described below.



Pillar 1: Road to Recovery

- Advocate and maximise the opportunities and resources available from external grant funding opportunities to support regional visitor economy resilience and growth.
- Advocate for workforce solutions around visitor economy staff and skills and housing shortages.
- Host an annual visitor economy seminar or forum that is inspirational.
- Strengthen industry engagement and networking, including through hosting forums.

Pillar 2: Build the Brand

- Create a marketing toolkit that maps the destination's products and experiences.
- Encourage the creation of experience-led remarkable content for multichannel distribution and support a shared program to capture and curate content.
- Strengthen content relating to cross-regional trails and multiday itineraries.
- Facilitate awareness of content that travellers should know and plan for before they arrive in-region.

Pillar 3: Showcase Our Strengths

- Advocate and support the development of Aboriginal and Heritage products and experiences.
- Prioritise high-value touring routes to strengthen and promote a visitor-centric, experience-led approach to drive tourism.
- Identify opportunities for nature-based products and experiences.
- Support operators to further develop agritourism and produce product development opportunities.

Pillar 4: Focus on World Class Events

- Support LGAs and LTOs to proactively pursue, attract and support new event initiatives, including business events and conferences as well as leisure and cultural events.
- Identify and support applications for grants to enable event development for First Nations' cultural events.

Pillar 5: Facilitate Growth

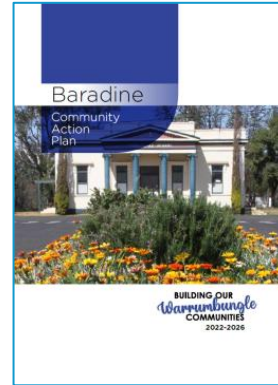
- Leverage opportunities for international and domestic airway route development.
- Advocate for improved digital and transport connectivity.
- Provide advice to local businesses, organisations and community groups to apply for visitor economy grants that can assist them grow.
- Attract investment for major infrastructure projects and improvements that enhance connectivity and accessibility.
- Increase awareness of sustainability and green destinations as well as to assist strengthen the ecotourism offering of the region.

Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Baradine Community Action Plan

The vision for Baradine is to be *“a welcoming, caring, connected and proactive community that takes the lead in embracing our heritage and creating our future”*. Stated goals are to:

- Promote and showcase our community as a great place to stop, stay, experience, work and reside, especially through a vibrant and welcoming town and villages.
- Facilitate opportunities and experiences that build upon local assets and the capacities and creativity of all community members.
- Pursue new economic and entrepreneurial opportunities that strengthen and diversify our local economy and business life.
- Encourage a strong, innovative, customer-focused, and collaborative business environment.
- Support, promote, and celebrate active community participation and volunteerism.
- Retain strong sporting and cultural clubs, competitions, facilities, and traditions.
- Maintain and expand our lifestyle and employment options and opportunities.
- Create an environment where our young people feel involved, supported, and empowered, and will consider returning to our community for work, business, family, and lifestyle opportunities.
- Preserve, maintain, and strengthen our environment, heritage, and community assets.



The Community Action Plan makes the following recommendations:

Theme 1: Community Development and Connections:

- Retain develop and expand sporting facilities.
- Retain and expand community services.
- Community collaboration and networking for events.

Theme 2: Tourism and Event Initiatives:

- Improve and develop tourism access roads and walking/cycling tracks.
- Develop tourism initiatives and events.

Theme 3: Street Appeal and Development:

- Preserve and promote local heritage and attractions.
- Enhance street appeal.

Theme 4: Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction:

- Promote and support existing and new local businesses.

Theme 5: Enhance Lifestyle and Population Attraction:

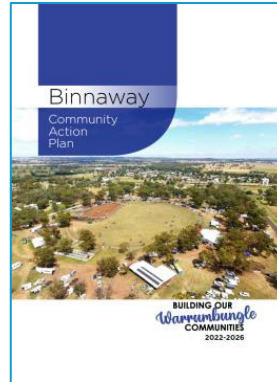
- Promote the community as a great place to live.
- Investigate housing opportunities.

Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Binnaway Community Action Plan

The vision for Binnaway is to be *“an affordable, safe, and family-friendly community in the heart of the Warrumbungles that attracts new residents, visitors, and business opportunities”*. Stated goals are to:

- Actively promote and showcase our community as a great place to stop, stay, experience, and reside, especially through a vibrant and welcoming town centre.
- Support, promote and celebrate active community participation and volunteerism.
- Retain strong sporting and cultural clubs, competitions, facilities, and traditions.
- Facilitate opportunities and experiences that build upon local assets and the capacities and creativity of all community members.
- Conserve, promote, and share knowledge of our district.
- Create an environment where our young people feel involved, supported, and empowered, and will consider returning to our community for work, business, family, and lifestyle opportunities.
- Preserve, maintain and strengthen our community assets and heritage.



The Community Action Plan makes the following recommendations:

Theme 1: Local Tourism and Development:

- Investigate, plan and create silo art on the two silos.
- Investigate and consider creating smaller murals around town.
- Investigate a new festival, e.g. Beard & Moustache, Beer & Beard.
- Join the Central West Cycle Trail and promote cyclist accommodation.

Theme 2: Building Community Connections:

- Form a Community Leadership Group.
- Establish a community owned café.
- Establish town/community markets.
- Investigate and commence monthly dinner dances at the Hall.
- Create a communication board.

Theme 3: Enhancing Lifestyle and Population Attraction:

- Improve police and medical services.
- Create a community bus service.
- Develop sporting facilities.
- Consider town sewerage options.
- Continue expansion and development of Showground facilities.

Theme 4: Town Entrance, Beautification and Signage:

- Make any new trees fruit or nut trees.
- Complete a signage audit and install improved signage as identified.

Theme 5: Youth Development and Retention:

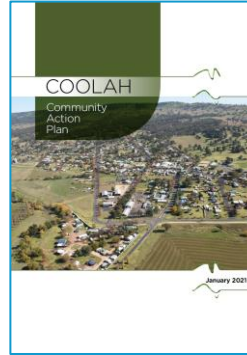
- Retain Youth Development Program.
- Develop and promote kids/youth activities and development.
- Investigate and consider creating smaller murals around town.

Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Coolah Community Action Plan

The vision for Coolah is to be ***“a welcoming, resilient and thriving community, caring for our people and our environment”***. Stated goals include:

- Valuing citizenship and fostering high levels of volunteerism and participation.
- Cultivating a sense of pride in Coolah – “why I live where I live”.
- Creating an environment where our young people feel involved, supported and empowered and will consider returning to our community for work, enterprise, family and lifestyle opportunities.
- Providing a wide range of passive and active recreation and sporting activities, events, clubs, facilities and celebrations.
- Strengthening the capacity, viability and profitability of our local businesses.
- Actively pursuing new economic and entrepreneurial opportunities that strengthen and diversify our local economy and job options.
- Promoting enjoyment of the natural environment by maintaining, enhancing and extending the walking and cycling trail network and developing opportunities in the Coolah Tops National Park.
- Enhancing our community capacity by fostering civic engagement, leadership, collaboration, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Promoting our community as a lifestyle, work, business, investment and tourist destination A welcoming, resilient and thriving community, caring for our people and our environment.



The Community Action Plan makes the following recommendations:

Theme 1: Enhance Lifestyle and Population Attraction:

- River walk project.
- Community garden.

Theme 2: Build Community Connections:

- Cassilis Road view spot.
- Youth engagement, retention, and attraction.
- Community building initiatives.
- Community hub project.
- Educational opportunities.

Theme 3: Community Spaces Appeal and Development:

- Revitalise Binnia Street.
- Three Rivers Recreation Grounds.
- Swimming pool development.
- Recreational facility development.

Theme 4: Preserve Local Heritage and Enhance Environment:

- Railway Centenary (2020) and heritage.

Theme 5: Business and Industry Development and Support:

- Tourism development.
- Business retention and expansion.
- Agricultural diversity and support.

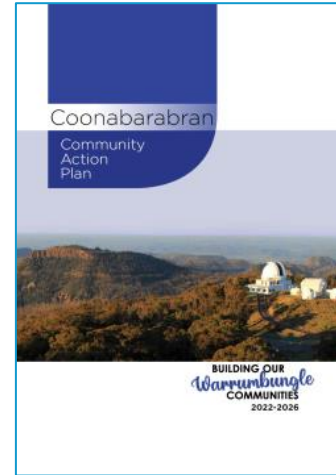
Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Coonabarabran Community Action Plan

The vision for Coonabarabran is to be ***"a welcoming, vibrant and resilient community, where we value growth and lifestyle, caring for our people, unique assets, environment and country"***.

Stated goals include:

- Value and recognise active citizenship, fostering high levels of volunteerism and participation.
- Create an environment where our young people feel involved, supported and empowered, inspiring them to return to our community for work, enterprise, family and lifestyle opportunities.
- Preserve and celebrate our significant Indigenous and diverse community heritage and culture.
- Attract and retain a wide range of skilled people and their families who will contribute to the community.
- Build and support a collaborative and innovative business community, focused on making the customer feel welcomed and valued.
- Retain, develop, and improve the range of available educational, health, and wellbeing services.
- Develop a creative, collaborative, and well-thought-out strategy for the town and highway signage - (road, tourism, business, and community).



- Actively promote and showcase Coonabarabran, the Pilliga, the Warrumbungle National Park and the broader Warrumbungle region to grow tourism and visitation.
- Keep and promote the Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park, the first in Australia to be internationally recognised.
- For the community to know, value, and promote its assets as a great place to stop, explore, shop, stay, and live.
- To have a vibrant and welcoming town, valuing the country's lifestyle, with a diverse range of services to encourage innovation and creativity.
- Build strong working relations with all communities within the Shire to benefit the region.
- An active hub collaborating and supporting the Warrumbungle region through connecting events and trails, etc.
- Maintain and develop our swimming pool, sporting, cultural facilities and infrastructure to a high standard.
- To ensure the Coonabarabran Bypass becomes an asset to achieve growth and enhance lifestyle.
- Protect our unique environmental ecosystems - flora, fauna, geology, soils and water - actively contributing to the improvement of the global environment through positive actions in our community.

Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Coonabarabran Community Action Plan (cont'd)

The Community Action Plan makes the following recommendations:

Theme 1: Building Community Connections:

- Provide diverse entertainment and social activities across the calendar.
- Develop youth activities.
- Strengthen community communications and collaborations.
- Upgrade, maintain, and expand playground equipment.
- Grow community pride and spirit.

Theme 2: Innovation and Excellence in Business, Industry and Services:

- Investigate the viability of a Star Wars shop and café.
- Actively retain and develop health, hospital, and emergency services.
- Retain and grow quality education opportunities.
- Consider new diverse industries and businesses
- Build better connections with newly arrived professionals.
- Improve community safety and continue to reduce crime rates.
- Improve IT and mobile connectivity and coverage.
- Utilise community spaces to display local art e.g. exhibition at the hospital.

Theme 3: Development of Attractive Community Spaces & Sports Facilities:

- Establish entertainment spaces that attract young people.
- Support and grow the sporting club and sports facilities; establish a Park Run.
- Improve the quality of parks by regular maintenance.
- Investigate the possibility of non-motorized water sports in the river.
- Continue to provide shaded car parking.
- Support the establishment of community gardens.

Theme 4: Tourism and Event Development Initiatives:

- Develop cycle and walking trails.
- Retain Tourism icons e.g. National Park, Crystal Kingdom and Siding Spring Observatory.
- Attract and host larger events.
- Reconsider holding markets in the park.
- Create a dog park to attract dog-owning travellers to stop in the town.
- Establish a big playground in each town as part of a Shire-wide family destination/circuit.
- Develop interesting museums.

Theme 5: Bypass Development Strategy & Main Street Enhancement:

- Improved town signage.
- Preparation and leadership to maximise economic and social benefits due to the implementation of the bypass.
- Town beautification.
- Improve public infrastructure.

Theme 6: Creation of Aquatic & Fitness Centre & Water Theme Park of Excellence:

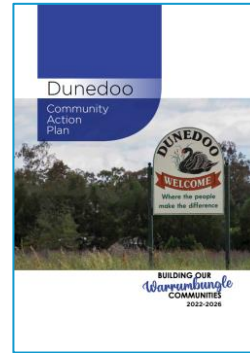
- Upgrade and modernise swimming pool complex.
- Water theme park.
- Multi-purpose complex options.
- Plan and host more community activities at the complex.

Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Dunedoo Community Action Plan

The vision for Dunedoo is to be ***"a welcoming, connected and resilient community caring for our people, heritage and environment. Through strong community engagement we play, learn, work and age well together"***. Stated goals are:

- Retain and attract families and individuals by continually strengthening our rural lifestyle and local employment, educational and health services.
- Encourage a strong, innovative, customer-focused and collaborative business environment.
- Facilitate innovative, economic and entrepreneurial opportunities that strengthen and diversify our local economy, business and industry.
- Actively promote the expansion of available land and lifestyle blocks.
- Promote arts, culture and music through festivals and events to enhance tourism.
- Retain strong viable sporting clubs, competitions, facilities, and traditions.
- Create an environment where our young people feel involved, supported, and empowered, and will consider returning to our community for work, business, family and lifestyle opportunities.
- Achieve shared recognition of our rich Aboriginal culture and heritage.
- Engage, support and retain our valued ageing population.
- Build, preserve and celebrate our significant heritage, agricultural, cultural, environmental and infrastructure assets.
- Cultivate a sense of pride in Dunedoo - 'where the people make the difference'.



The Community Action Plan makes the following recommendations:

Theme 1: Enhance Lifestyle and Population Attraction:

- Access to health services.
- Changes to local environmental planning.
- Access to 24-hour policing.
- Improve library services.
- Expand recycling options.
- Evolve retirement village.

Theme 2: Build Community Connections:

- Secure Dunedoo representative on Warrumbungle Shire Council.
- Promote volunteering and community engagement.
- Youth engagement.

Theme 3: Community Spaces Appeal and Development:

- Cycle and walkways.
- Swimming Pool and Grounds.

Theme 4: Town Development and Beautification:

- Parks and gardens.
- Streetscape development.
- Mainstreet - Bolaro Street Buildings.
- Amalgamated Sporting Club facility.

Theme 5: Business and Industry Development and Support:

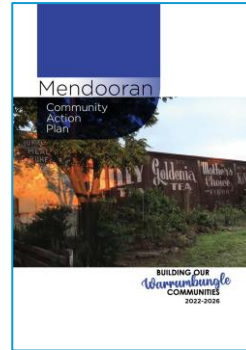
- Tourism development.
- Community owned businesses.
- Promote sustainability.
- Local Environmental Planning.

Informing Directions - Key Strategies Review

Mendooran Community Action Plan

The vision for Mendooran is to be *“a vibrant, safe, and family-friendly community, working together for the future of our people and lands”*. Stated goals are:

- To actively promote and showcase our community as a great place to stop, stay, experience, and reside, especially through a vibrant and welcoming town centre.
- To support, promote and celebrate active community participation and volunteering.
- To facilitate opportunities and experiences that build upon local assets. Utilise capacities and creativity of all community members.
- To create an environment where our young people feel involved, supported and empowered, and will consider returning to our community for work, business, family and lifestyle opportunities.
- To provide a safe and attractive living and working environment that will attract skilled people and families, thereby helping grow our population base.
- To actively pursue new economic and entrepreneurial opportunities that strengthen and diversify our local economy and business life.
- To encourage greater use of our parks and open spaces by both residents and visitors.
- To preserve, maintain, and strengthen our community assets and heritage.



The Community Action Plan makes the following recommendations:

Theme 1: Tourism and Event Promotion:

- Update tourist map.
- Prioritise tourism roads and trails.
- Expand tourism accommodation.
- Expand events, attractions and niche experiences.

Theme 2: Business and Community:

- Advocate for access to community health and welfare services.
- Support local artisans and entrepreneurs.
- Develop and foster services for children and youth.
- Identify trades gaps and attract local tradespeople.
- Create a community garden.
- Investigate local Indigenous history.
- Support Showground development and improvements.

Theme 3: Mainstreet Appeal and Enhancement:

- Refresh town and tourism signage.
- Renew murals.
- Maintain heritage look and unique façade.
- Mainstreet enhancement.

Theme 4: Enrich Lifestyle and Population Attraction:

- Collaborate with Council to facilitate better road and land use.
- Improve swimming pool access and utilisation.
- Enhance and promote riverbank spaces.
- Attract social housing.

11. Key Messages in Summary

Attributes and Opportunities

An assessment of key strategic documents and data, coupled with consultations with Council, point to some key themes.

Warrumbungle Shire's economic attributes and opportunities, expressed at a high level, are illustrated in the form of key words in the graphic opposite.



Key Messages in Summary

Constraints and Challenges

An assessment of key strategic documents and data, coupled with consultations with Council, point to some key themes.

Warrumbungle Shire's economic constraints and challenges, expressed at a high level, are illustrated in the form of key words in the graphic opposite.



12. Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Survey Findings

Survey Themes

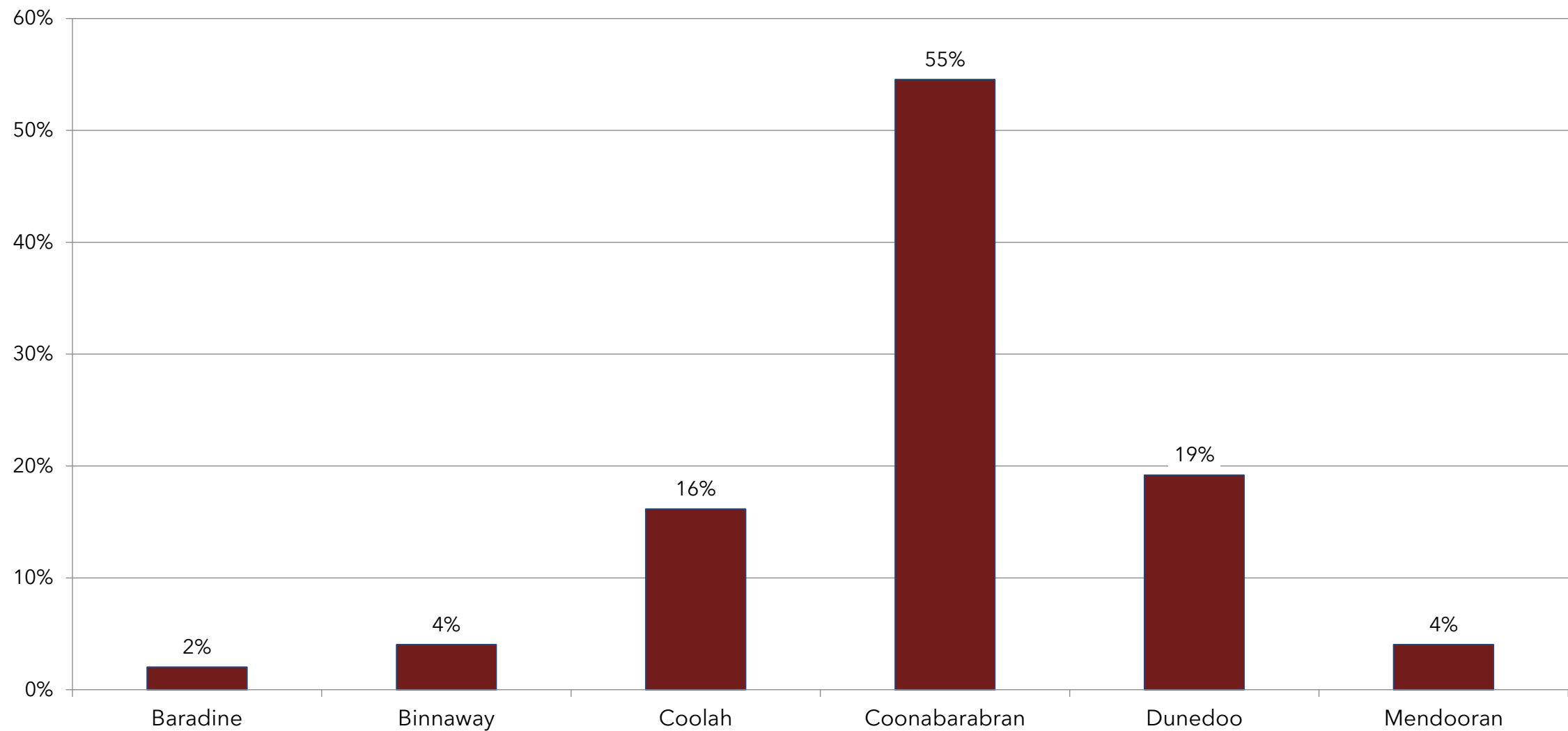
During September and October 2024, Warrumbungle Shire residents were invited to participate in a short online survey as part of the development of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2025-2030. The survey was designed to ensure that the new strategy reflects the priorities of the community for both economic growth and tourism development.

A total of **100 completed responses** were received across three key themes, being:



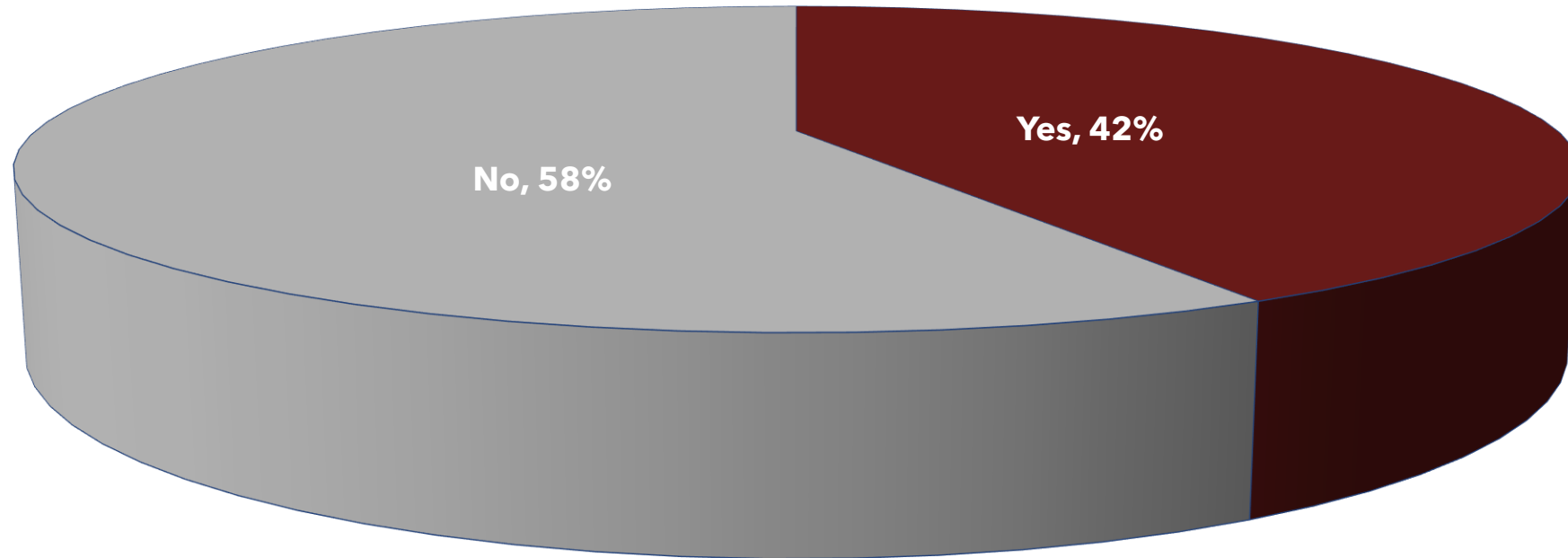
The Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Survey findings are summarised in the following pages.

Locality Where Survey Respondents Live



Respondent Profile – Businesses and Residents

Own or operate a business in Warrumbungle Shire?



Economic Strengths and Weaknesses

Survey participants were asked, from the list provided, to rate on a scale from 1 (significant weakness) to 5 (great strength), Warrumbungle Shire's strengths and weaknesses.

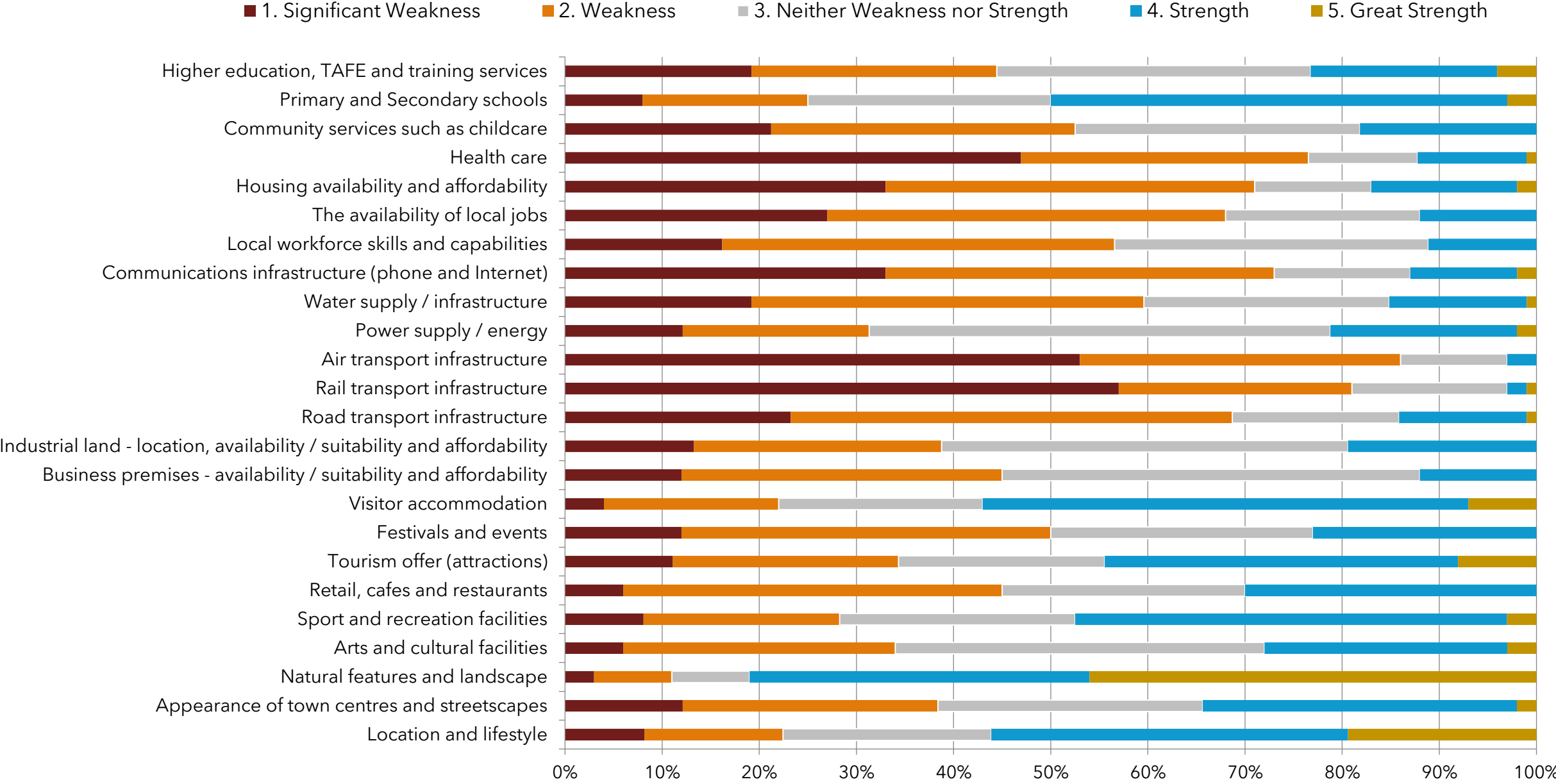
As the chart overleaf illustrates, reported **strengths** include:

- Warrumbungle Shire's location and lifestyle
- Natural features and landscape
- Tourism attractions
- Visitor accommodation
- Sport and recreation facilities
- Primary and secondary schools.

Noted **weaknesses**, according to the survey responses (as shown in the chart), include:

- Health care
- Community services such as childcare
- Housing availability and affordability
- The availability of local jobs
- Local workforce skills and capabilities
- Air, rail and road transport infrastructure
- Communications infrastructure
- Water supply / infrastructure
- Festivals and events

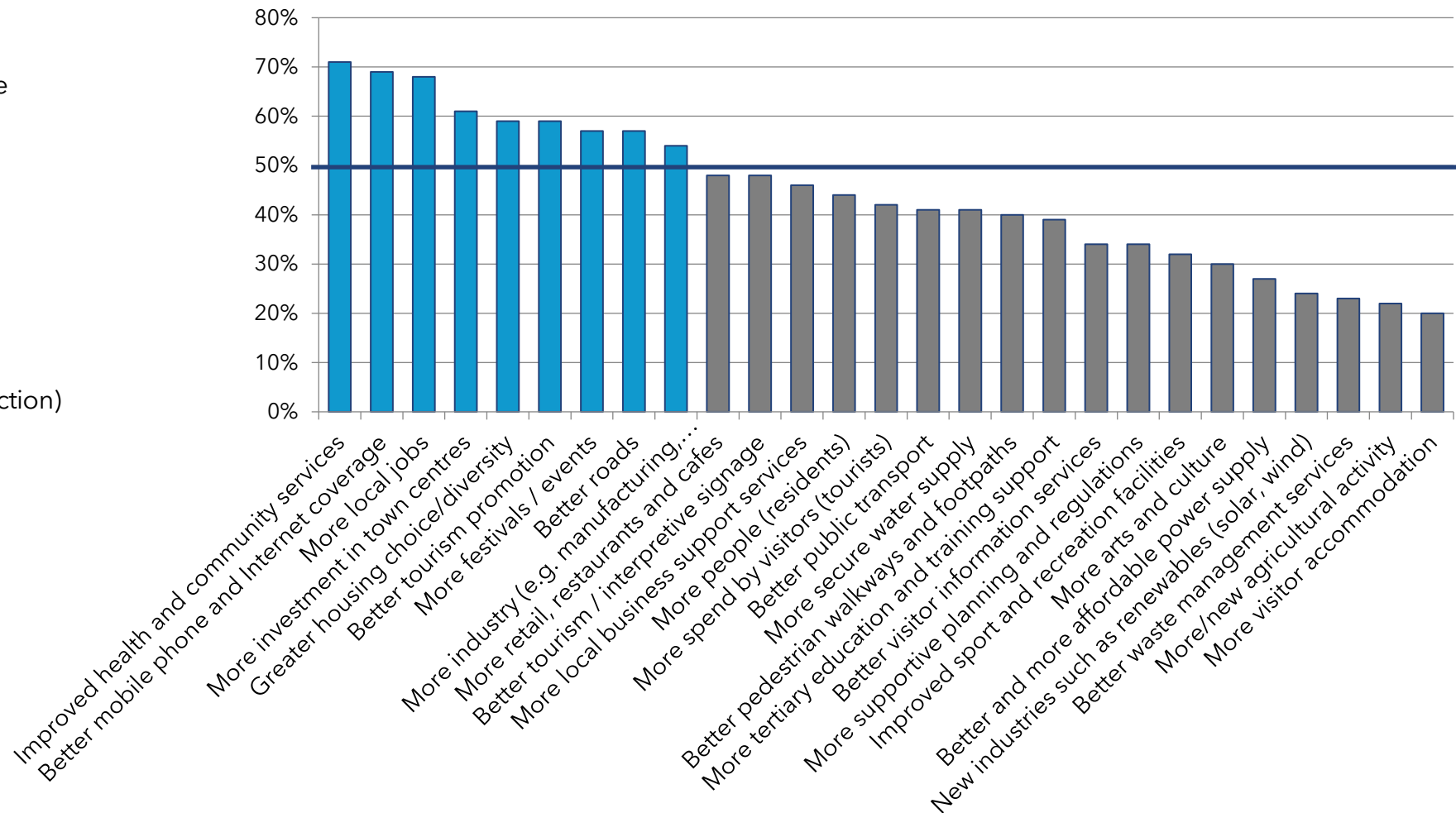
Economic Strengths and Weaknesses



What is Needed to Support Community Prosperity

Survey participants were asked, from the list provided, to nominate what they believe is needed to support Warrumbungle Shire's / their community's economic prosperity. Those topics which received 50% or more of total responses include:

- Improved health and community services
- Better mobile phone and Internet coverage
- More local jobs
- More investment in town centres
- Greater housing choice/diversity
- Better tourism promotion
- More festivals / events
- Better roads
- More industry (e.g. manufacturing, construction)

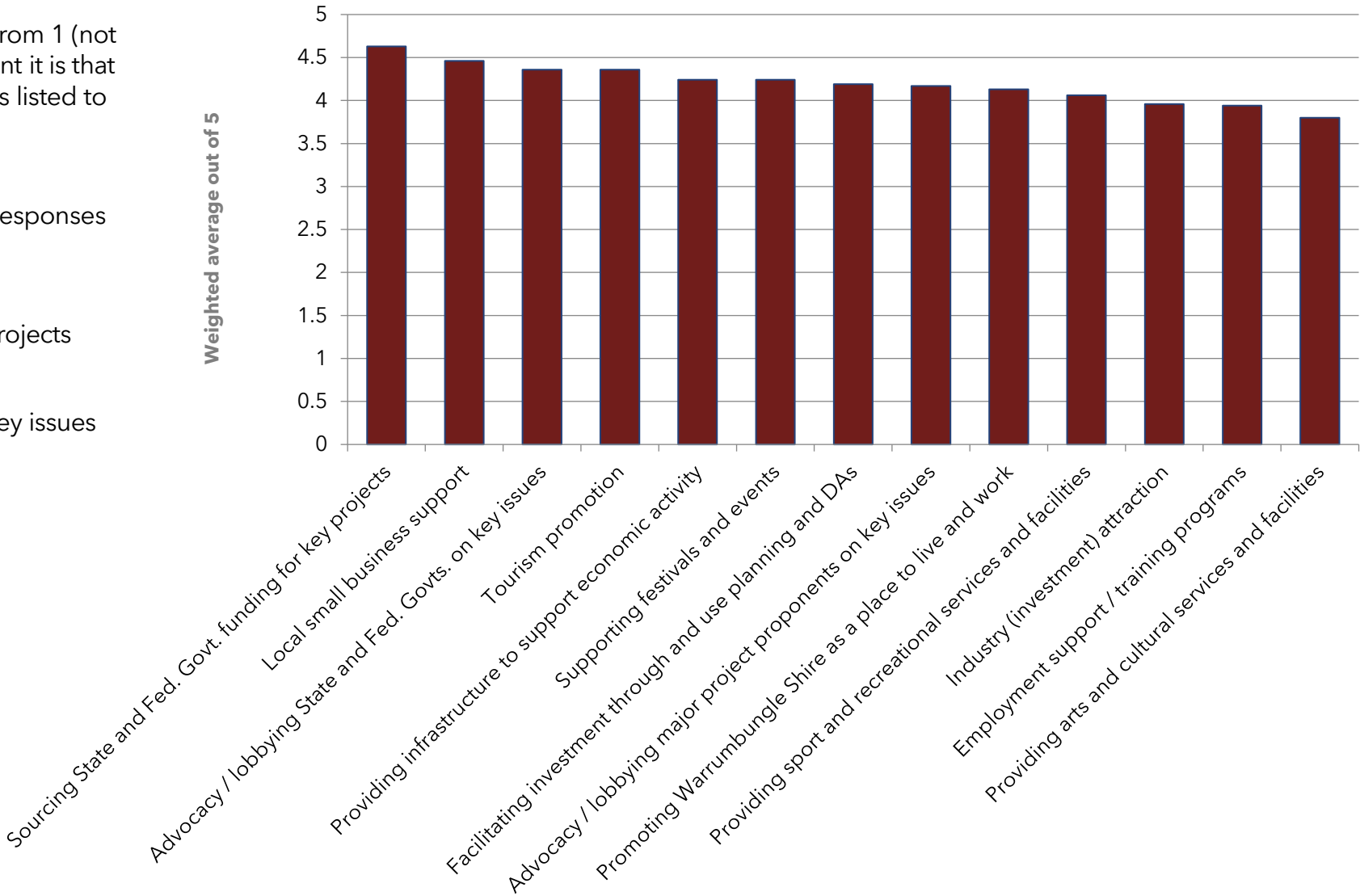


What Council Can Do to Support Economic Development

Survey participants were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important), how important it is that Warrumbungle Shire Council focus on the activities listed to support the economy.

The chart at right shows the weighted average of responses (out of 5). The top three responses were:

- Sourcing State and Fed. Govt. funding for key projects
- Local small business support
- Advocacy / lobbying State and Fed. Govts. on key issues and Tourism promotion (equal weighting)



Topics Raised

Other topics raised in comments made by survey participants are illustrated in this word art graphic.



13. Consultation Findings: An Overview

Consultation Themes

During October 2024, consultation focus groups and interviews were undertaken with community representatives in Baradine, Binnaway, Coolah, Coonabarabran and Mendooran. The consultant also met with key representatives from government agencies and other organisations with an interest in regional economic development and the Warrumbungle Shire.

The consultations addressed a range of topics. These are summarised over the next few pages using the following themes:



Key Challenges for Economic Development and Tourism

The consultations revealed a number of challenges for the Warrumbungle Shire's economic development. In summary, these include:

- **Population** – Population decline, and an ageing population compromise the capacity of the community to engage in productive economic activity.
- **Workforce** – It is difficult to attract and retain skilled workers in key sectors of health and education. This creates a cyclical effect with reduced service delivery impacting on the capacity to attract people and businesses (investment) to the area, which results in fewer opportunities for employment and therefore, fewer residents, further reducing the capacity for investment in key services (and infrastructure).
- **Housing** – A lack of available housing compromises the capacity to attract and retain residents, including skilled workers. There are very few rentals available.
- **Health Care** – It is difficult to attract and retain essential health care services such as a GP, especially in the Shire's smaller communities.
- **Aged Care** – A lack of retirement living and aged care impacts on people's ability to age in place, with an adverse impact on families and community connection.
- **Childcare** – Early childhood education and care is limited throughout the Shire.
- **Tertiary Education** – Access to tertiary education (trade training and university education) is limited.
- **The Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)** – The REZ and associated plans for large worker accommodation camps has created uncertainty in the communities. People are concerned about the impact of the REZ on local infrastructure (e.g. roads) and services, including emergency services. Other concerns include the impact of a large REZ workforce and associated worker accommodation on community character and on productive agricultural land.
- **Regulations and Development Approvals Processes** – It was considered by some that the development approvals process in Warrumbungle Shire is inadequately resourced and slow. (Council doesn't have a full-time fully qualified and experienced town planner).
- **Industrial Land** – It was suggested that there is a need for more light industrial land to help attract and grow a greater diversity of industry in the Shire.

Key Challenges for Economic Development and Tourism (cont'd)

- **Roads** – It is considered that some roads in the Shire require upgrades to facilitate more drive tourism numbers. Road upgrades will also be required to accommodate the movement of containerised freight to the Port of Newcastle, and REZ-related transportation activities such as the transportation of wind turbine blades.
- **Phone and Internet Coverage** – There are a number of connectivity blackspots throughout Warrumbungle Shire, impacting businesses, visitors and residents, including implications for access to emergency services.
- **Seasonality of Visitation to Warrumbungle Shire** – The seasonality of visitation to Warrumbungle Shire and the region means fewer visitors in the summer months when it is too hot.
- **Length of Stay** – A large number of visitors to the Shire only stay for a brief period, if at all. More needs to be done to encourage visitors to stay for longer and spend time and money in the Shire.
- **Access to National Parks** – The Shire's natural features and assets (Warrumbungle National Park, Coolah Tops National Park, etc.) is one of its greatest strengths and biggest attractors. It was suggested that more could be done to encourage (environmentally sustainable) business and tourism activity in and around the parks.
- **Festivals and Events** – There are no catalyst tourism events in Warrumbungle Shire to attract people to the area.



Key Opportunities for Economic Development

The consultations revealed a number of attributes and opportunities for the Warrumbungle Shire's economic development. In summary, these include:

- **The Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Legacy Projects** – The REZ presents opportunities for investment in legacy projects (through grant funding opportunities).
- **REZ Supply Chain and Employment Opportunities** – The REZ provides scope for local businesses to explore supply chain opportunities and to benefit from increased economic activity generated through new business and employment generated by the REZ. The REZ may also offer employment opportunities for locals during project construction and operation.
- **Inland Rail** – The Narromine to Narrabri section of Inland Rail will provide opportunities for local business procurement and employment during construction.
- **Industrial / Employment Land** – There is an opportunity to investigate expansion of existing and / or the establishment of new industrial precincts to attract and grow industry.
- **Central West Cycle Trail** – The Central West Cycle Trail, which traverses Dunedoo and Mendooran, is a major asset for the Shire and region, which should continue to be promoted and capitalised upon for the benefit of local businesses and the communities.
- **Rail Trail** – The area's old decommissioned rail line presents an opportunity to explore the concept of a recreational rail trail as a tourism drawcard and key piece of recreational infrastructure for the communities of the region.
- **Drive Tourism Infrastructure Investment** – Investment in EV charging stations and dump points could be explored, to encourage people to stop and stay for longer.
- **Arts and Heritage** – Warrumbungle Shire's rich arts and cultural heritage (including European heritage such as the railways and First Nations cultural heritage) presents an opportunity to develop this asset as a centrepiece of the area's tourism offer. There is a need for greater investment in the arts and culture to support the Shire's growing population and to underpin efforts to attract and retain people and investment.
- **Town Centre Activation** – There is a need to continually explore and invest in initiatives that will activate retail and commercial activity in the Shire's town centres (e.g. town entry signage, streetscaping, interpretive trails, murals, buy local promotions, markets, festivals & events). Such initiatives should be a partnership between local businesses with Council support.
- **Food and Beverage Tourism** – It was suggested that more could be done to promote the Shire's food and beverage offering (including boutique retail businesses such as the cheese shop in Mendooran), by businesses working together (cross-promotion) with Council support / promotion.
- **Motorcycle Touring** – Warrumbungle Shire is a popular place for motorcycle tourists to visit and pass through. A more concerted approach to establish Warrumbungle Shire as a recognised 'motorcycle-friendly' Shire could boost this form of drive visitation.

Key Opportunities for Economic Development (cont'd)

- **Sports Tourism** – Warrumbungle Shire has an established sports tourism calendar including rugby league and union carnivals, cross-country running and horse events. This visitor market could be further developed (e.g. by exploring other events such as ultra trail running) and promoted as part of the Shire's tourism offer.
- **Nature-based Tourism** – There is an opportunity to explore means to capitalise on one of the Shire's greatest attributes in its natural features and attractions (e.g. eco-accommodation, adventure tourism, cultural interpretive attractions, etc.).
- **Astronomy Tourism** – There is strong support for Council to continue supporting and promoting the Siding Spring Observatory and Dark Sky initiatives.
- **Festivals and Events** – There is an opportunity to elevate awareness of the Warrumbungle Shire through more iconic festivals and events and / or better integrating the promotion of Warrumbungle Shire with events in the surrounding region.
- **Connections Between Towns** – Connections such as the Cycle Trail should continue to be promoted, and other opportunities considered (e.g. a riverwalk between Coolah and Dunedoo).
- **Itinerary Planning and Promotion** – A more organised approach to itinerary planning and promotion is required (and using the latest communications channels and technology such as QR codes, etc.) would help reach visitors before they get here.
- **Tourism Promotion and Visitor Information** – There is an opportunity to take a renewed approach to tourism promotion and visitor information service delivery, to promote the Shire and things to do, to prospective visitors before they get here.



Council's Economic Development and Tourism Support Role

During the consultations, a number of suggestions were made regarding Council's economic development and tourism support functions. These include:

- **Economic Development and Tourism Vision** - Warrumbungle Shire Council has an important role to play in establishing the vision for industry, population growth, employment, lifestyle and liveability. It must promote a positive narrative about the Shire and its communities, their strengths, challenges and opportunities for economic development.
- **Small Business Support** - It was suggested that Warrumbungle Shire Council could help small business in the Shire by complementing its Economic Development Team with a dedicated business liaison officer / concierge / outreach officer.
- **Supportive Regulatory Environment** - Internally, Council departments can pro-actively engage with one another to ensure there is a whole-of-Council approach to business engagement and support in Warrumbungle Shire.
- **REZ Procurement / Supply Opportunities** - Council can work with local businesses and communities to coordinate information between REZ project proponents, Energy Co. and local business and industry to help secure local supply opportunities.
- **Local Procurement** - Warrumbungle Shire Council could lead by example in its support for small business by promoting a local procurement strategy which recognises the wider economic benefits of supporting local businesses.
- **Workforce Planning** - Council could support workforce planning and development through the staging of a career day, exhibiting opportunities for employment in various departments within Council.
- **Housing** - It has been suggested that more needs to be done to identify, plan for and promote the release and development of strategic parcels of land for new housing in Warrumbungle Shire. It was also suggested that alternative models of housing delivery could be explored.
- **Grant Funding** - It was suggested that Council continue to work with communities throughout the Shire to seek out and apply for grant funding for infrastructure and other project opportunities in a strategic, informed and targeted manner.
- **REZ Legacy Project Planning** - Council could coordinate Shire-wide efforts to identify and plan for key legacy projects to be funded through the REZ. This requires a coordinated, strategic and targeted approach, in collaboration with affected communities.
- **Town Centre Infrastructure Investment** - The role of Council investment in streetscaping and town centre improvements is considered essential to enhancing the lifestyle appeal of the Shire and its communities.
- **Investment (People) Attraction** - Council can work with key government agencies to take a targeted approach to investment attraction and to welcoming new residents to the Shire (e.g. a Welcome Pack).

Council's Economic Development and Tourism Support Role (cont'd)

- **Tourism Promotion** – The preparation of a new Economic Development and Tourism Strategy makes it timely for Council to re-visit its approach to tourism branding, marketing and promotion to ensure target markets are being reached. (It is understood that Council is in the process of re-vamping the Warrumbungle Shire tourism / visitor information website).
- **Communications and Engagement** - Warrumbungle Shire Council has an important role to play in promoting the importance of tourism to the local economy. Council can engage in various communications strategies (including via social media) to educate the community on the value of tourism to the Shire.
- **Community Collaboration** – Council also has a role to play in bringing the communities of the Shire together to encourage cross-promotion of the towns, for the mutual benefit of all.
- **Communication** – A common theme raised through the community consultations was a desire to see more pro-active communication from Council, to keep the communities informed of key matters, plans and achievements (including small wins) concerning the local communities and economic development.
- **REZ Advocacy** – The community consultations revealed strong support for Council to advocate transparently to government and project proponents on all matters concerning the REZ, in the interests of the communities of Warrumbungle Shire.
- **Regional Collaboration and Advocacy** – On all matters concerning economic development and tourism, Warrumbungle Shire Council can work with its regional partners, including neighbouring Councils and RDA Orana to advocate in the collective interests of the wider region.



14. Strategy Themes

Based on the findings of the research, consultation and analysis, three prospective Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Themes have been determined by the consultant, each designed to address initiatives to nurture prosperity for:

- *Business and Industry*
- *Tourism and Events*
- *People and Place*

Initiatives / actions have been worked up across these three themes as part of the Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

Warrumbungle Shire Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Themes





Contact:

SC Lennon & Associates Pty Ltd

Ph: (07) 3312 2375

email: sasha@sashalennon.com.au

web: www.sashalennon.com.au



SC Lennon & Associates
economics • planning • policy • strategy

