



Gunnedah

Economic Development Strategy

Volume 2

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS





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The Gunnedah *Economic Development Strategy* was adopted by the Gunnedah Shire Council at its Ordinary Meeting of Council on 19 March 2014 (Resolution Number 13.03/14).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document has been prepared by Jenny Rand and Associates for the Gunnedah Shire Council.

The Council wishes to thank all those people, businesses and organisations who attended consultative forums, met with the consultants and provided information for this *Economic Development Strategy* for Gunnedah Shire Council.

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Economic Development Strategy Planning Context

Gunnedah Shire

Economic Aspirations

Engaging and Supporting
the Community

~

Building Our Shire's
Economy

~

Retaining Our Quality of
Life

~

Protecting and Enjoying
Our Beautiful Surrounds



Introduction

Building a more diversified, sustainable and resilient economy is a priority for the Gunnedah Shire.

The preparation of this Economic Development Strategy is one of the actions being undertaken by Council, in consultation with the Community, to assist in building, stimulating, managing and driving economic growth.

Purpose of the Strategy

The Gunnedah Economic Development Strategy provides the framework and directions for economic development within Gunnedah Shire, with the focus being on actions that can be achieved over the next 5 years. In particular the Strategy addresses:

- The current level of economic development within the Shire and the factors that have and are continuing to influence development.
- The pressures and opportunities for Gunnedah businesses arising from developments at both the Shire and regional level.
- Opportunities for Gunnedah Shire to support, capitalise on and benefit from new and emerging industries.
- Opportunities for Gunnedah Shire to diversify and strengthen its economic base in a sustainable and balanced way.
- Opportunities for Council to promote Gunnedah Shire and attract new businesses.
- Projects within the Shire that Council can focus on to stimulate growth.

Economic Development

The objective of economic development is to develop the local community into one where people wish to live, work, invest and enjoy. It involves improving the economic wellbeing of the community by focusing on retaining, strengthening and growing local businesses, attracting new investment and creating jobs. It explores opportunities to provide a positive and supportive environment for local businesses, including providing businesses with access to the advice and services needed to enable them to capitalise on external opportunities and to plan for and manage change and external threats.

Structure of the Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development Strategy is presented in two volumes:

- Volume 1: Economic Profile
- Volume 2: Strategies and Actions

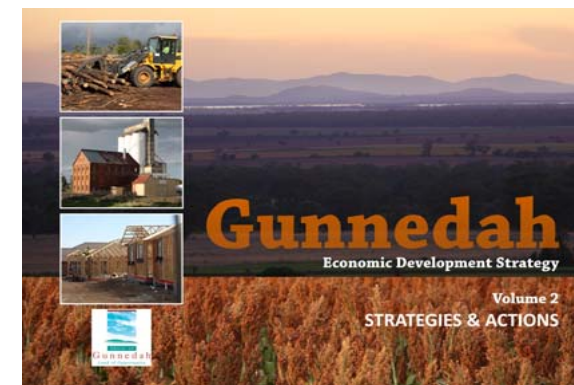
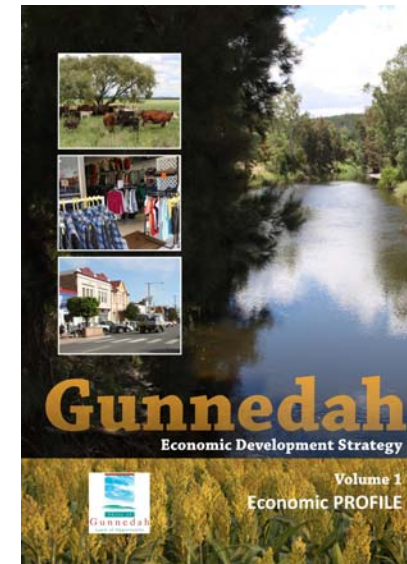
Volume 1: Economic Profile provides an assessment of:

- Gunnedah Shire - its role and position in the Northern Inland Region and its competitive advantages and disadvantages.
- Demographic and social characteristics of the Gunnedah Shire community.
- Economic indicators.
- Main economic activities within the Shire – agriculture, extractive industries, manufacturing, construction, retailing, tourism, healthcare and social assistance, and education and training.
- Infrastructure and services available to support economic development – land availability, transport, utilities and business support services.

It identifies a range of opportunities to grow and diversify the economic base of the Shire as well as the challenges which need to be addressed to encourage and facilitate growth. The analysis provided in the Economic Profile provides the rationale for the Strategies and Actions.

Volume 2: Strategies and Actions articulates the objectives and directions for economic development within Gunnedah Shire and provides the strategies and actions to achieve sustainable growth.

The Economic Development Strategy (Volumes 1 and 2) is linked to other Plans and Strategies that have been adopted by Council as part of its integrated planning approach. To be effective, the Economic Development Strategy must be a living document that is constantly evolving. The recommended actions need to be implemented and the results evaluated. Periodically the Strategy will need to be revised, building on what has been achieved, so that Gunnedah Shire can continue to prosper.



State & Regional Planning Context

The Gunnedah Economic Development Strategy was prepared within the framework set by the NSW State Government through the **NSW 2021 – A Plan to Make NSW Number One**, and the resultant planning and development strategies that have been adopted for the Northern Inland Region of NSW (also known as the New England - North West Region), in particular *the New England North West Regional Action Plan (2012)*, the RDA Australia **Northern Inland Regional Plan**, the **New England – North West Strategic Regional Landuse Plan, Namoi 2030 Regional Strategy** and the various plans and strategies developed for the Namoi River Catchment Area.

The NSW Government’s priorities and key directions for the Region are:

| Priority | Key Directions |
|---|--|
| 1. Support sustainable economic growth | To support economic growth in New England North West, the NSW Government will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster growth sectors such as value-adding industries, agriculture, agribusiness and food processing, aviation and advanced technology • Promote the region to attract new residents and businesses • Continue to build a skilled local workforce • Balance strong economic growth with sustainable management of natural resources and the protection of agricultural land. |
| 2. Invest in regional and local infrastructure. | The NSW Government will increase investment in regional and local infrastructure through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of transport infrastructure, including upgrades to roads, and improved transport corridors and availability of services, including rail and air, to support industry expansion • Delivery of local infrastructure projects in partnership with local government to improve service delivery to the community. |
| 3. Improve education pathways for young people. | To improve education pathways for young people, the NSW Government will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Connected Communities program to support children and young people through school into further training, study and employment • Encourage more students to stay in school through the delivery of innovative and flexible education and training options • Improve education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal students by partnering with non-government organisations and stakeholders to deliver effective initiatives. |
| 4. Deliver quality, integrated health services. | The NSW Government will deliver quality integrated health services in the region through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to specialist health services • Attraction and retention of more health professionals to support increased health service delivery • Delivery of key health infrastructure to improve access to a broader range of services • Improved community awareness of mental health issues. |
| 5. Deliver integrated and coordinated human services | The NSW Government will agree on service need and service response and build strong partnerships with local government to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more affordable housing options • Reduce homelessness • Deliver coordinated services to improve outcomes for Aboriginal communities |

| Priority | Key Directions |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver more community transport services. |
| 6. Support strong, safe communities. | <p>To address these issues the NSW Government will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the community to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour Deliver effective crime prevention initiatives in Aboriginal communities Implement the Coledale Action Plan to address social disadvantage. |

Source: NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet (2012) *New England North West Regional Action Plan*

Gunnedah Shire Planning Context

As required by the NSW Local Government Act 1993, Gunnedah Shire Council delivers its services through an integrated planning approach, with the Gunnedah Community Strategic Plan 2012-22 being the 'co-ordinating' plan that sets the vision, direction and framework for Gunnedah Shire for the next decade.

The Gunnedah Community Strategic Plan recognises the strategic importance of diversifying the economic base of the Shire, and articulates a range of desired outcomes for 'Building the Shire's Economy' as well as engaging and supporting the community, retaining the quality of life, and protecting and enjoying Gunnedah's beautiful surrounds. The vision for the Shire is:

Vision

A prosperous, caring and proud community reflected in the achievements and aspirations of the people.



Figure 1: Integrated Planning Framework



Gunnedah Shire - Strategic Objectives

The Gunnedah Shire Community Strategic Plan identifies a range of outcomes being sought for Gunnedah Shire over the 10 year planning period. The outcomes relevant to Economic Development are:

| Objectives | Outcomes |
|--|--|
| Engaging and Supporting the Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community leadership encouraged and strengthened • Local coordination of funding from national, state and local sources • Funding of local facilities and services through mining royalties • Population increases through targeted promotion of the Shire identity and opportunities • Retention of our young population through increased employment and social opportunities • A well engaged community that is involved in decision making processes • Access to education and training opportunities. |
| Building Our Shire's Economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our economic employment base diversified • Our infrastructure strategically managed • Access to our goods, services and markets • Our identity and reputation promoted to tourists • Entrepreneurs and developers contribute to local economic growth. |
| Retaining Our Quality of Life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our older residents provided with the comfort and respect they deserve • Enhanced access to essential services • Improved housing affordability • Villages are sustainable • Our younger people attracted, retained and developed • Entertainment facilities, cultural development opportunities, equipment and stimulation for community members of all ages • Recognise and support our Cultural activities |
| Protecting and Enjoying Our Beautiful Surrounds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance between development and environmental protection • A secure and high quality water supply • Investment in new technologies and renewable energy • Dealing with our waste • Manage our exposure and contribution to the changing climate • Enhance our Streetscapes in Gunnedah and Villages. |

The Community Strategic Plan recognises that Gunnedah Shire has a strong and diverse agricultural- based economy as well as substantial mineral resources. At the same time, it acknowledges that the Shire faces a number of challenges, including the 'boom and bust' cycles in the agricultural and mining sectors, the competition between these two sectors for access to land, resources and infrastructure, competition from Tamworth and infrastructure constraints. The need to augment infrastructure (transport, sewerage, electricity, etc) to accommodate growth was identified by the Community Strategic Plan as the most immediate challenge facing the Shire.



Overview Economic Profile

The Changing Economy

Gunnedah Shire has a diverse economic base, with over 1,460 businesses across 20 industry sectors. Agriculture has traditionally been the Shire's primary economic driver underpinning other sectors of the community. Until recently, coal mining has been one of a number of economic activities within Gunnedah Shire sitting alongside manufacturing, construction, tourism, retail and a diversified services sector.

Over the past decade, the strong global demand for coal and gas has resulted in the 'ramping up' of the coal and gas sectors, with significant investment occurring in the Gunnedah Basin. Since 2003, coal production has increased by over 400%, with 6 mines now operating, construction about to commence on another mine, and four mines in the investigation and planning stage. Over the next decade, production of raw coal in the Gunnedah Basin is expected to increase from around 11.9 million tonnes per annum to over 40 million tonnes per annum.

Since 2005, the strong growth in the mining sector has been driving population growth and investment in Gunnedah Shire, with the Shire seeing growth across most economic activities. The ability for further growth in non-mining sectors is however being constrained by the competition between the mining sector and other sectors for access to labour, particularly skilled labour, resources and infrastructure.

At a community level, the population of the Shire is aging, and at the same time there has been an increase in births. This means that the Shire needs to consider planning for economic growth, in terms of services and facilities, in the aged-care and child-care sectors.

The need to increase the size and skill base of the local workforce, to provide sufficient land for development, and to augment infrastructure to accommodate growth and capitalise effectively on opportunities, needs to be balanced with social and environmental considerations – protecting the Shire's physical environment and production systems and retaining the community's quality of life. Allied to this is the need to diversify the economic base of the Shire and to increase its resilience to the 'boom and bust' cycles that characterise both the agricultural and mining sectors.

These challenges are being addressed by the State and Federal Governments at regional level, and Gunnedah Shire Council, locally through this Economic Development Strategy.

Gunnedah Shire

Gunnedah Shire is located in the Northern Inland Region of NSW, Australia, approximately 425 kilometres north of Sydney and 77 kilometres west of Tamworth. The Shire sits at the southern end of the Nandewar Range and lies within the upper catchment area of the Namoi River. The Shire has an area of 4,992 square kilometres and is the centre of the highly productive Liverpool Plains and the underlying Gunnedah Basin (a sedimentary basin with extensive coal and gas resources).

The Shire is located on the cross-roads of the Kamilaroi and Oxley Highways, important east-west links that provide access to the New England and Newell Highways (major interstate routes), as well as to the NSW North Coast to the east, Hunter Valley to the south, and Central NSW to the west. The Shire lies on the North West Rail Line, with daily rail passenger services to

ISW



Newcastle and Sydney. The North West Rail Line is part of the Hunter Valley Rail Network (network of public and private railways servicing the coal industry), and carries high volumes of freight – primarily grain, coal and cotton. Gunnedah Shire is serviced by Tamworth Regional Airport, which has frequent flights to Sydney and Brisbane.

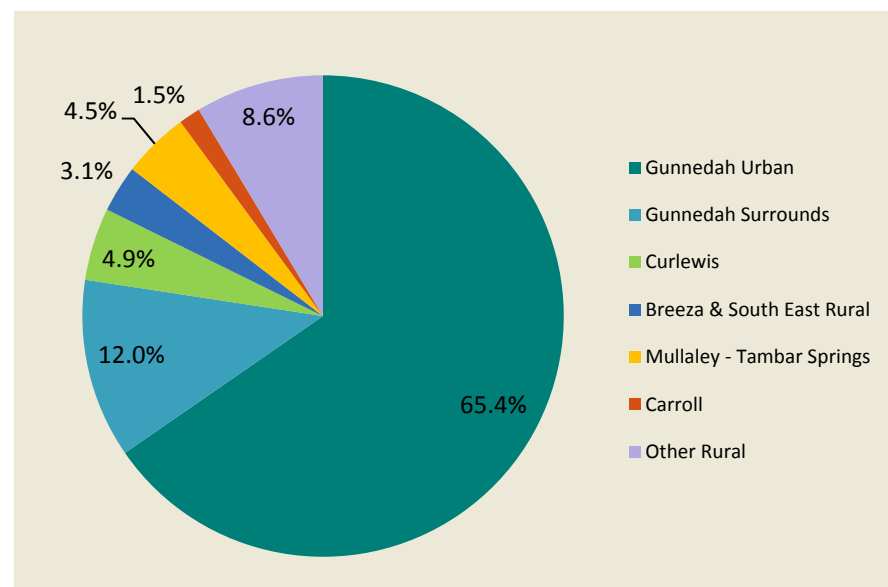
The township of Gunnedah is the commercial and administrative centre of the LGA. Gunnedah functions as a sub-regional / district centre, servicing a trade area that extends into adjoining Shires. The Shire has five small villages – Curlewis, Breeza, Carroll, Mullaley and Tambar Springs, and 26 rural localities - Basin Plain, Blue Vale, Boggabri (part), Booroondarra, Burgurgate, Carroll Gap, Coochooboonah, Emerald Hill, Ghoolendaadi, Gulligan, Gunnembene/Crossing, Keepit, Kelvin (part), Kurrumbede, Marys Mount, Meermaul, Milroy, Mornington, Nea, Noggabri, Orange Grove, Pialloway, Pullaming, Rangari, Watermark and Willala.

Population

At the 2011 Census, Gunnedah Shire had a population of 12,066 people (based on place of usual residence). 55.4% of the Shire’s population (7,888 people) live within the Gunnedah urban area, with 12% (1,452 people) residing in the immediate surrounding rural area¹. Curlewis is the next largest settlement in the Shire with 589 people residing in the Curlewis urban area, with a further 380 people residing in Breeza and the south eastern corner of the Shire. 4.5% (540 people) of the Shire’s population reside in the Mullaley - Tambar Springs area (Tambar Springs State Suburb), with 176 people living in Carroll.

From 1996 to 2006, the population of Gunnedah Shire declined by 10.1% from 12,812 to 11,513 residents, with the decline due to a combination of factors including the closure of the Abattoir (1997) and the Gunnedah Colliery (2000), and the severe drought (2001-2010). From 2006 to 2011, the population of the Shire increased by 5.9% (683 people), primarily as a result of increased exploration and mining activities. Preliminary population projections released by Planning NSW (2013) forecast that the population of Gunnedah Shire will increase by 7.2% between 2011 and 2031 (0.3% per annum compound), to 13,400 people. The population of Gunnedah Shire is aging, with Planning NSW forecasting that the proportion of people aged 64+ years in Gunnedah will increase from 17.4% of the resident population (2011) to 23.1% by 2031.

Figure 3: Distribution of Population – Gunnedah Shire, 2011



Source: ABS Population Census, 2011

¹ Gunnedah State Suburb – total population of 9,340.

Socio-Economic Indicators

Socio-economic indicators for Gunnedah Shire are summarised in the following Table.

| Indicator | Characteristics (2011 Census data unless otherwise stated) |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Education & Qualifications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education levels in Gunnedah Shire are lower than the State average with 55.2% of people aged 15+ years not attending school or leaving school before Year 11, compared to 47.1% State-wide. • Gunnedah Shire has a lower proportion of people aged 15+ years who have completed Year 12 or equivalent – 29.7% compared to the 49.2% in NSW. • From 2001 to 2011 the number of residents in Gunnedah Shire with tertiary qualifications increased by 33.6%. • Gunnedah Shire has a very higher proportion of people with vocational certificates (44.7% of people with tertiary qualifications) – NSW (30.9%). • 17.2% of people with qualifications had University degrees (NSW – 34.7%). • Of the residents with tertiary qualifications, 21.7% of females have university qualifications with 35% having vocational certificates. In contrast, 54.6% of males had vocational certificates with only 12.8% having university qualifications. • In comparison to other LGAs in the Northern Inland region, Gunnedah Shire has the highest proportion of residents with qualifications in engineering and related technologies. • 42.9% of males have qualification in engineering and related disciplines, with 12.8% having qualifications in agriculture and environmental studies. • The main field of studies for females are management and commerce (23.9%), health care (20.6%), education (18.4%) and society and culture (13.7%). There are very few females with qualifications in agriculture or engineering and related technologies. |
| Labour Force | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gunnedah Shire had a labour force of 5,559 people of which 94% were employed and 6% were unemployed. • 63.7% were in full –time employment. • The median age of workers in full-time and part-time work were 44 years and 42 years, respectively, with these median ages being marginally higher than the State average (41 and 40 years respectively). |
| Unemployment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In June 2013, there were 395 people looking for work in Gunnedah Shire. • The unemployment rate in Gunnedah Shire has been progressively falling – 1996 (9.5%), 2001 (9.4%), 2006 (8.4%), 2011 (6%). • Of those looking for work in 2011, 62.7% were seeking full-time employment. • 51.4% of unemployed are females, with the unemployment rate amongst females (6.9%) being higher than for males (5.3%). • Young people (15-19 years) have the highest level of unemployment (14.2%), with the rate being highest amongst young males (14.8%), compared to young females (13.6%). |
| Employment by Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main sectors in which residents of Gunnedah Shire are employed are agriculture and forestry (16.9%), retail (9.9%), health care and social assistance (9.4%), education and training (7.7%), mining (7.5%), manufacturing (7%) and accommodation and food services (6.9%). • From 2001 to 2011, there has been strong growth in the number of people employed in mining (up 347 people) and accommodation-food services (up 177 people). • From 2001 to 2011, there has been a net loss of people employed in the agricultural, manufacturing, retail, wholesale, financial and insurance services, information-media-telecommunications, and rental-hiring-real estate services. • The mining sector has the youngest workforce, primarily employing people aged 24-44 years. • The more traditional sectors – eg agriculture, construction, transport, public administration and health care have older employees, with this most |

| Indicator | Characteristics (2011 Census data unless otherwise stated) |
|---|---|
| | <p>pronounced in the agricultural sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The retail and accommodation–food services sectors are the major employers of young people (aged 15-19 years). Within the Northern Inland Region, 35% of people employed in the mining sector reside in Gunnedah Shire. |
| Occupation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main occupations in Gunnedah Shire are managers (19.3%), labourers (13.3%), technicians and trades (12.7%) and professionals (12.7%). 59.2% of managers work in the agricultural – forestry sector. Labourers are primarily employed in the agricultural (19% of labourers), accommodation-food services (17.2%) and manufacturing (15.9%) sectors. Technicians and trades people primarily work in the construction (17.3% of trades people), manufacturing (14.4%) and mining (10.1%) sectors. Machinery operators are mainly employed in the mining (35.7%), transport (21.1%) and agricultural-forestry (10.9%) sectors. Professional people are mainly employed in the education and training (37%), health care and social assistance (22.7%) and professional-scientific (11.5%) sectors. |
| Income | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 53% of individuals in Gunnedah Shire earned less than \$600 per week (approximates the minimum wage). (NSW 48.2%) 9% earned more than \$1,500 per week (NSW 13.1%). 28.3% of households in Gunnedah Shire are low income, earning less than \$600 per week (NSW 21.7%). 16.7% of households in Gunnedah Shire earned over \$2,000 per week (NSW - 21.7%). Gunnedah Shire has a higher proportion of middle and high income earners than the average for the Northern Inland Region |
| Dwellings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4,975 dwellings in Gunnedah Shire, of which 89.3% were detached houses, 2.8% were town houses and 6.7% were apartments. There is a high level of home ownership, with 66.3% of dwellings being owned outright or in the process of being paid-off. 24% of properties are rented commercially. 4.8% of dwellings are social housing. |
| Mortgage Repayments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The median monthly mortgage in Gunnedah Shire was \$1,300, with 30.1% of households paying less than \$1,000 per month. The median monthly mortgage in Gunnedah Shire was on par with Narrabri and Moree Plains Shire, but less than Tamworth (\$1,430), and higher than Liverpool Plains (\$1,083). |
| Rent Levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The median rent for dwellings in Gunnedah Shire was \$190 per week, which was \$15 per week higher than the median for the Northern Inland Region. The median rent in Tamworth is \$10 per week higher than in Gunnedah, while rents in other adjoining LGAs were \$40-\$70 per week lower than in Gunnedah Shire. |
| Building Approvals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2012/13, there were 103 new residential building approvals (91 houses, 12 townhouses) in Gunnedah Shire, accounting for 16.5% of dwellings approved in the Northern Inland Region, with Gunnedah Shire ranking 2nd to Tamworth. The total value of building work approved in the Shire was \$40,478 million of which \$30,039 million was residential construction. |
| Internet Connections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2011, 63.4% of households in Gunnedah Shire had internet connections, with this proportion being below both the regional (65.9%) and State (76.3%) averages. 88.7% of connections were broadband. |
| Advantage & Disadvantage (SEIFA Indexes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In all four SEIFA indices, Gunnedah Shire sits within the lower 40% of the 153 LGAs in NSW, with Gunnedah Shire ranking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 21/153 in the Index of Education and Occupation (relates to: level of qualification achieved or whether further education is being undertaken and, skill levels relating to employment and unemployment levels). |

| Indicator | Characteristics (2011 Census data unless otherwise stated) |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 43/153 in the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (relates to economic and social conditions of people and households: income, home and car ownership, educational levels, skilled employment, type of work, rent payments, etc.) - 47/153 in the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (relates to low income, low educational attainment, unemployment, unskilled jobs, low levels of English proficiency, single parent families, rents, etc.). - 59/153 in the Index of Economic Resources (relates to financial aspects of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage – home ownership and household income). • Within the Shire, Carroll is the most disadvantaged area, ranking in the lowest 10% of NSW in all indicators. The Tambar Springs-Mullaley area had the highest rankings within the Shire, followed by Gunnedah, and Curlewis-Breeza. |
| Health Indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For most health indicators, particularly chronic disease and premature mortality, Gunnedah Shire has a higher incidence of risk and disease than the average for NSW and Regional NSW. • The number of residential aged care places in Gunnedah Shire is below both the State and Regional NSW averages. |
| Businesses in Gunnedah Shire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 2007 to 2011 there were 562 new business entries and 555 business exits (net gain of 9 businesses) in Gunnedah Shire. • 63.7% of businesses employed no staff, with 20.4% employing 1-4 staff and 15.9% employing more than 5 staff. • Gunnedah Shire was the only LGA in the comparative set of LGAs (Tamworth, Liverpool Plains, Narrabri, Moree Plains and Warrumbungle) that has had a net increase in businesses between 2007 and 2011. |

Economic Base

Gunnedah Shire has a diverse economic base. The largest economic and employment sectors are agriculture, extractive industries (coal and gas), manufacturing, construction, tourism, retail and wholesaling, health care and social assistance and education and training. Agriculture has traditionally been the primary economic driver, underpinning other sectors of the local economy.

Since 2005, mining has also become a primary driver. The leading economic activities that bring 'new money' into the local Gunnedah economy are agriculture, mining, tourism and some manufacturing activities. The other economic sectors are primarily 'responders' dependent on the performance of the leading economic activities. Strategic considerations for the main economic sectors are discussed in Volume 1 – Economic Profile.



Leading Economic Activities

Agriculture is the dominant land use in Gunnedah Shire, occupying 85% of the land area of the Shire. The Shire is the centre of the Liverpool Plains which incorporates some of the most productive agricultural land in Australia, with this land classified as being 'Strategic Agricultural Land of State Significance'. The Shire has around 580 rural producers, with the gross value of agricultural production being \$195.3 million in 2011. Production includes grain, legumes, oilseeds and cotton as well as livestock – cattle, sheep (for wool and meat), pigs and poultry.

Coal mining has occurred on a small scale in Gunnedah Shire for more than 135 years and virtually disappeared in 2000 with the closure of the Gunnedah Colliery. Since 2005, the strong global demand for coal has resulted in the ramping up of the coal industry in the Gunnedah Basin to unprecedented levels. There are 6 operating coal mines, one mine about to be constructed and four mines in the investigative and planning stages. In 2012-13, around 11.9 million tonnes of raw coal was extracted from the Gunnedah Basin, with production expected to increase to over 40 million tonnes per annum over the next decade. The Gunnedah Basin is also rich in coal seam gas, with coal seam gas exploration and extraction potentially a significant growth sector for the region.

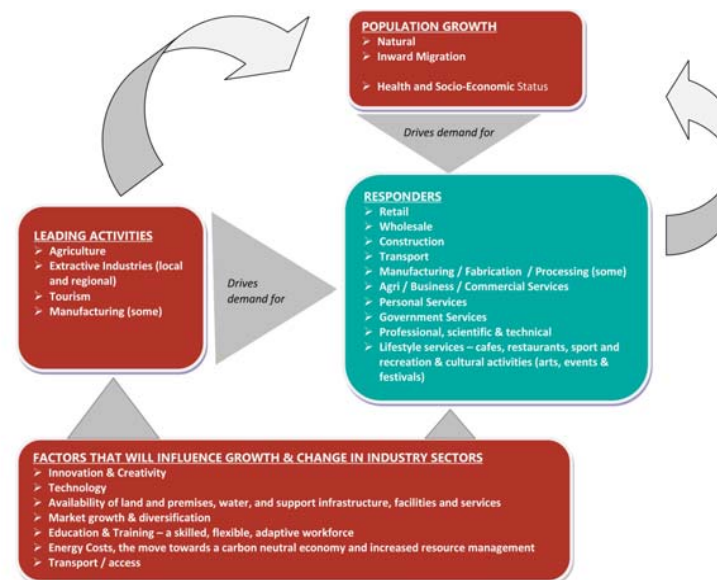
Tourism and hospitality is also a significant economic activity within Gunnedah Shire. In 2011, the Shire attracted an estimated 87,000 domestic visitors who stayed one or more nights in the Shire, with these visitors staying 235,000 nights and spending around \$26 million during their stay. In addition, the Shire attracts a significant number of day visitors and highway travellers who stop and spend money in the Shire. In recent years, growth in the tourism sector has been constrained by the limited availability of accommodation, with travellers displaced by mine-related, construction and infrastructure workers.

Gunnedah Shire has a relatively strong and diverse manufacturing base, with around 50 manufacturing businesses. Manufacturing is dominated by agricultural processing activities – grain mills, feed mills, cotton ginning, leather processing and olive crushing. The Shire also has a brickworks and sawmill, as well as a strong engineering and fabrication sector and a mix of smaller manufacturers including furniture, sign production, construction products and printerries. Manufactured goods from Gunnedah Shire are sold both nationally and internationally.

Responders

Gunnedah Shire has a diverse services sector which incorporates a range of retail, wholesale, construction, agri-business, transport, personal, government, health care, social assistance, education and training service providers. Growth is occurring across most of the service sectors, primarily in response to the stimulus proved by the mining sector and resultant growth in the resident population and business and work-related travellers.

Figure 4: Relationships and Linkages – Gunnedah Shire Economy





Strategic Considerations

Positioning of Gunnedah Shire

Gunnedah Shire will be positioned as:

- A highly productive, resource rich area that is regionally, nationally and globally connected.
- A safe, friendly, caring community with an extensive range of services – an ideal environment for raising a family.
- A contemporary lifestyle in a physically attractive setting – capitalising on the rural scenery, emerging cafe scene, strong community spirit and access to Lake Keepit.

Attributes and Competitive Advantages

| Attribute/Advantage | Rationale |
|--|---|
| Centre of the Liverpool Plains | Gunnedah Shire incorporates extensive areas of highly productive agricultural land. The quality of the agricultural land, coupled with access to water (irrigation and ground water), enables summer and winter cropping in most years. The land is suitable for a range of crops and activities enabling producers to respond to changes in the marketplace and reduce risk. The scale of the sector is sufficient to support a range of value-adding processing activities and agri-businesses. |
| High quality coal and coal seam gas | Gunnedah Shire is centrally located within the Gunnedah Basin which contains 11.3% of NSW's coal resources as well as significant coal seam gas. Coal and gas production within the Region is expected to increase significantly over the next decade, with Gunnedah Shire ideally located to accommodate workers and service these activities. Increased media coverage of the coal resources in the Gunnedah Basin has raised the profile of Gunnedah. |
| Gunnedah is a growing centre | It is recognised that Gunnedah is a growing centre with the Shire's population increasing by 5.9% between 2006 and 2011 and forecast to continue to increase. |
| Location | Gunnedah is within 5 hours' drive from Sydney, 3.5 hours from Newcastle and less than an hour from Tamworth. The proximity to Tamworth provides Gunnedah residents with access to regional city facilities and services including retail, education, health and entertainment, as well as access to RPT air services to Sydney and Brisbane. For coal miners, particularly from the coal fields in western Queensland, Gunnedah has significant lifestyle and locational attributes. |
| Highway location | Gunnedah is located at the intersection of the Kamilaroi and Oxley Highways which provide access to both the New England and Newell Highways as well as to the surrounding North Coast, Hunter and Central NSW regions. Businesses in Gunnedah and the villages also benefit from exposure to, and expenditure by, Highway travellers. The proposed new bridge in Gunnedah will open the Oxley Highway to higher mass vehicles, which will increase the competitiveness of the Shire as a transport node. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Good rail infrastructure | The North West rail line is in the process of being substantially upgraded to increase capacity. The freight rail service provides access to the Port of Newcastle and to Sydney. Gunnedah also has a daily passenger rail service to Sydney. Road and rail connections to Narrabri will also provide the Shire with ready access to the proposed Melbourne to Brisbane rail link. |
| A diverse range of businesses and service providers | Gunnedah Shire has a diverse range of engineering, metal fabrication and other businesses and service providers which support the agricultural and mining sectors as well as other business sectors. |
| A skilled workforce | A significant proportion of Shire residents have vocational training and qualifications suitable for local employment. |
| Lake Keepit | In addition to providing water for irrigation and electricity generation, Lake Keepit is a significant recreational and tourism asset for the Shire. The Lake provides Shire residents with access to a large water-body and water-based recreational activities, and also generates visitation for the Shire. |
| Attractive setting | Gunnedah and the Shire have beautiful scenery and spectacular rural views, the Namoi and Mooki Rivers, an attractive town centre, tree-lined streets, and 'green-belts' created by the river corridor and playing fields. |
| Facilities and services for residents | There is a good range of readily available facilities and services for residents including retail, health, education, community services, sporting and entertainment, with ready access to Tamworth for higher order services. |
| A relatively safe community | The Shire is safe with minimal social problems and issues. |
| Industrial greenfield sites | There are large greenfield sites ideal for industrial development. |
| Housing and residential land | There is a good range of available land which provides choices for housing – medium density, standard residential and large lot rural residential – all with ready access to the Gunnedah town centre. |
| Innovation and best practice | Many agricultural and manufacturing businesses have been recognised nationally for innovation and best practice. The Agquip Field Days also focus attention on Gunnedah as a 'centre of excellence' for agriculture. |



Challenges facing Gunnedah Shire

Addressing challenges and removing barriers is fundamental to attracting investment and delivering sustained growth.

| Areas for Consideration | Challenge |
|---|---|
| Awareness of the Shire | Promoting the strengths and attributes of the Shire to encourage investment from within and outside the Shire. |
| Reducing dependency | Reducing dependency on agriculture and mining by diversifying the economy to increase resilience to cyclical fluctuations in these sectors. |
| Achieving balance | Facilitating growth while at the same time achieving a balance between mining and other sectors, in particular agriculture, to protect the natural environment, water resources, production systems and lifestyle of the Shire. |
| An appropriately skilled work force | Ensuring access to good tertiary education and skill-based training to enhance and diversify work skills, improve tertiary qualification levels and prepare 'work ready' employees. |
| Retaining young people | Providing strong pathways between education and employment to encourage young people to remain in, or return to, the Gunnedah community. |
| Remaining competitive | Developing the capacity and flexibility of both businesses and the workforce to respond to the changing global marketplace and business environment. |
| Changing trends in marketplace | Ensuring access to research and development to keep businesses abreast of changing trends and to drive innovation and best practice. |
| Capacity to compete | Ensuring Gunnedah uses its competitive advantages to compete with Tamworth, Narrabri and Liverpool Plains Shires in attracting investment and workers looking to relocate to the region. |
| Competition from MAC Villages | Addressing the competition from MAC Villages being established in Narrabri, Boggabri and Werris Creek to reduce the impact of mine-related visitors and workers not staying in Gunnedah and influencing location decisions for mine-related workers who decide to relocate to the Region. |
| Availability of land and premises | Addressing infrastructure / utilities capacity constraints to bring 'green-field' industrial sites into production at competitive prices to facilitate growth and attract investment. |
| Social and economic participation | Ensuring residents with low educational, health and/or occupational levels can participate in employment as much as possible. |
| Access to telecommunications | Ensuring access to mobile telephone coverage and high speed broadband throughout the Shire to allow opportunities for economic development. |
| Access to alternative energy sources | Developing access to alternative energy sources to reduce the impacts of rising electricity and fuel costs and to stimulate growth. |
| Capacity of local and regional roads | Ensuring that the local and regional road network can carry the increased volume of heavy vehicle and mine-related traffic. |

Opportunities for Gunnedah Shire

Opportunities exist to diversify and grow the economic base of Gunnedah Shire.

| Areas for Consideration | Opportunities |
|---|---|
| Local and Regional contracts | Increase the competitiveness of local businesses (both individually and collectively) to compete for local and regional service and supply contracts across a range of sectors. |
| Attraction and expansion of businesses | Capitalise more effectively on the mining industry by encouraging expansion and diversification in local businesses, and by attracting mine-related service firms and mine-related workers to relocate to Gunnedah Shire. |
| Value adding | Encourage the establishment of businesses to process and value-add to local agricultural products. |
| Services currently not available | Provide services for the agricultural sector that are not available in Gunnedah, including a seed cleaning plant, grain drying plant, bar code printing and slaughterhouse and packing facilities for the pig industry. |
| Preference for specialty products | Capitalise on consumer preferences for fresh food / local produce / quality products by showcasing the specialty products produced in Gunnedah Shire. |
| Collaboration and learning | Facilitate the expansion of local businesses by encouraging continuous learning, ensuring access to business development information, networking and collaboration, and providing leadership and advocacy. |
| Natural gas resources | Capitalise on the coal seam gas resources in the region by endeavouring to provide reticulated gas for Gunnedah by tapping into the proposed Queensland Hunter Gas pipeline, or extracting gas locally. |
| Aggregate and road base material | Capitalise on the growing local and regional demand for aggregate and road base materials. |
| Growing demand | Capitalise on the growing demand, regionally, nationally and internationally for stock, equine and poultry feed. |
| Transport services | Improve transport services, including the possibility of establishing a container terminal in Gunnedah Shire. |
| Aged-care services | Grow the aged care sector by meeting the demand for independent living units and contemporary nursing home facilities, and developing facilities and services to cater for the aging population. |
| Child-care services | Grow the child care sector by providing additional childcare places and facilities to meet growing demand. |
| Tourism | Build visitation by diversifying and growing the tourism sector. |
| Trades Skill Development | Secure the proposed Trades Training Centre. |

Factors that will influence change and growth in economic activities across all sectors include:

- Innovation and creativity
- Changing technologies
- Changing marketplace and consumer trends
- Access to education and training
- A shift towards a carbon neutral economy
- Increased focus on resource management

Driving Economic Growth

There are a number of initiatives that can be used to drive economic growth in the Shire.

| Initiative | Drivers |
|---|--|
| Leadership and Advocacy | Developing leadership that fosters collaboration and partnerships and advocates for growth and improved infrastructure, services and economic activities. |
| Collaboration & Networking | Building an innovative, collaborative business environment that encourages networking, effective communication and the exchange of information and ideas to build confidence within local businesses. |
| Communication, Marketing & Promotion | Providing dynamic marketing and promotion of Gunnedah Shire as an ideal place to live, work, visit and invest. |
| Planning for Growth | Ensuring that the infrastructure, facilities and services needed to support growth are in place and that the opportunities afforded by the expected growth in Gunnedah Shire and surrounding areas are fully capitalised upon. |
| Business and Industry Development | Growing existing businesses and encouraging new businesses and investment to the Shire; and encouraging and supporting innovation and creativity and the adoption of best practice and sustainability principles. |
| Workforce Development | Developing a skilled workforce by aligning education and training with current and likely future employment requirements. |
| Liveability | Protecting the key lifestyle and natural assets of Gunnedah Shire, coupled with providing the services and facilities needed to ensure that the Shire is an attractive place to live, work and invest. |





Priorities, Strategies & Actions

Priorities for Economic Development

The Economic Development Strategy incorporates four priorities for economic development within Gunnedah Shire. Key Strategies and Actions for each of these priorities are provided in the following Tables.

Priority 1 To establish effective leadership, collaboration and communication between key stakeholders.
Delivering economic development will require strong leadership, strategic partnerships and effective communication and advocacy.

Priority 2 To ensure that the foundation ‘blocks’ needed to stimulate and support economic development are in place.
Strengthening the foundation blocks for economic development will provide a solid base for economic development within Gunnedah Shire.

Priority 3 To support and nurture existing economic activities and businesses – to encourage increased productivity, sustainability, growth and employment.
Adopting a ‘growth from within’ approach in which existing local businesses are supported and nurtured is the most effective way of fostering sustained business and employment growth. As identified in the Economic Profile, there are considerable opportunities to grow and/or diversify a number of existing economic activities and businesses.

Priority 4 To target new businesses and economic activities.
Build and diversify the local economy by targeting new businesses and economic activities that will fill ‘gaps’ and strengthen and broaden existing sectors.



Priority 1: To establish effective leadership, collaboration and communication between key stakeholders.

There are a diverse range of stakeholders involved in the economic development process. These include Council, Government Agencies (infrastructure & service providers), business and industry associations, business operators (both individuals and corporate entities) and community groups. Bringing these groups together and coordinating activities to deliver economic outcomes, will require strong leadership and strategic partnerships, coupled with effective communication and advocacy.

Goals

To build strong and effective:

- Leadership from Gunnedah Shire Council particularly in the areas of coordination and advocacy.
- Partnerships and strategic alliances between Council, Government Agencies, business and community organisations, and local businesses, with all stakeholders working collaboratively towards a shared vision for economic development within the Shire.
- Networking and communication within and across sectors.

Strategies

Strategy 1: Consolidate Gunnedah Shire's role as a leader and facilitator of economic development.

Strategy 2: Build partnerships and strategic alliances.

Strategy 3: Establish effective networks and communication channels.



Strategy 1: Consolidate Gunnedah Shire’s role as a leader and facilitator of economic development.

Gunnedah Shire Council is pivotal to successful economic development within Gunnedah Shire. Council is often the first point of contact for potential new businesses and residents and for developers and investors. Council needs to be welcoming, professional, efficient and proactive in its approach to economic development, with the first, and all subsequent interaction with Council, being positive experiences. Council is in a position to advocate strongly with Government Agencies, coordinate and communicate with stakeholders, deliver critical infrastructure and find innovative solutions that will stimulate appropriate and sustainable development.

Council will be pro-active - welcoming and willing to discuss ideas, concepts and projects, and work through concerns and issues with the proponent to deliver the best outcomes for the Shire.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|--|-------------|--|
| 1.1 | Consolidate Gunnedah Shire Council role as a leader and driver of Economic Development. | 1.1.1 | Ensure that Council’s culture, structure, roles and responsibilities and internal communication channels are conducive to driving economic development within the Shire. |
| | | 1.1.2 | Incorporate the EDS objectives, recommendations and actions into the Gunnedah Community Strategic Plan 2012-2022 and supporting documents, and where relevant, into other strategies, plans and policies developed by Council. |
| | | 1.1.3 | Appoint a Council officer as the point of contact for economic development enquiries. |
| 1.2 | Ensure that the customer service procedures for handling development enquiries and processing development applications are ‘best practice’ – welcoming, helpful, professional and efficient. | 1.2.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the effectiveness of the current procedures and protocols in handling development enquiries and applications to identify opportunities for improvement. • Seek feed-back from recent ‘clients’ who have made enquires or lodged development applications to discuss their experience in dealing with Council. • Explore ‘best practice’ initiatives from Councils that have been highly successful in attracting economic development. • Evaluate the current enquiry process and customer service procedures – to identify opportunities for improvement. |
| | | 1.2.2 | Ensure that internal communication protocols - between reception, planning and economic development are effective, with linkages to the General Manager, Senior Staff and the Mayor. |
| | | 1.2.3 | Put in place a monitoring and feedback system and continue to improve practices and procedures. |
| 1.3 | Ensure that developers / investors and potential new residents and businesses have access to up-to-date, comprehensive information on Gunnedah Shire. | 1.3.1 | Ensure that all plans, strategies and policies relevant to development, clearly articulate Council’s vision and objectives for the Shire, with these documents readily identified on Council’s website and easy to download. |
| | | 1.3.2 | Review the information available for potential developers / investors and up-date and improve where needed. |
| | | 1.3.3 | Continue to improve Council’s website – www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a ‘Thinking of Moving to Gunnedah Shire’ icon on the home page of Council’s website with direct links to the Business Partnership Program and the Moving to the Region – information for new resident’s page. • Under the Planning & Development Tab, provide an explanation of the planning and development process and a ‘checklist’ for proponents. |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|--|-------------|--|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop and more prominently feature the image gallery – promoting the lifestyle attributes of the Shire, the scenery and recreational activities, including Lake Keepit. • Update the information in the business tool-kit and include a section on, with links to, support services provided by Government Agencies and regional organisations. |
| | | 1.3.4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to produce, both in hard copy and on-line, the Gunnedah Business Directory. • Explore options for encouraging residents and businesses to use the Directory – eg the development of an APP. |
| 1.4 | Build support for and commitment to the Economic Development Strategy (EDS). | 1.4.1 | Identify the organisations that Council needs to work with to implement the EDS actions, the roles that these organisations will play, and the activities / projects that need to be undertaken. |
| | | 1.4.2 | Brief each of the organisations on the EDS and work through with them how they can contribute. Endeavour to gain support for the EDS and commitment to working with Council and taking responsibility for relevant activities and projects. |
| | | 1.4.3 | Develop a communications and media strategy to raise awareness of the EDS, and to keep the business community and public informed about activities and initiatives. |

Strategy 2: Build partnerships and strategic alliances.

Through the New England North West Regional Action Plan, the NSW Government has adopted an integrated planning framework to deliver growth, infrastructure and services to the Region. Gunnedah Shire Council needs to work closely with the Agencies that are ‘delivering’ the Plan, adopting a strong advocacy role where needed to ensure positive outcomes for Gunnedah Shire. There is also a need to build partnerships and strategic alliances within the Gunnedah community, and with surrounding LGAs and infrastructure and service providers.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------|--|
| Government Agencies | | | |
| 2.1 | Strengthen relationships with Government Agencies, infrastructure and service providers. | 2.1.1 | Strengthen relationships with key Government Agencies and infrastructure and service providers. |
| | | 2.1.2 | Brief and continue to update the regional Government offices on the key priorities and projects for Gunnedah Shire, and endeavour to have these priorities / projects recognised in regional strategies and/or priority lists. |
| | | 2.1.3 | Ensure that these Agencies / Organisations have access to the EDS, and are included in communications for the Strategy. |
| | | 2.1.4 | Actively participate in relevant forums and workshops run by these Agencies and respond to invitations to comment on draft plans, strategies, etc. |
| | | 2.1.5 | Advocate strongly for improved infrastructure and services. |
| Surrounding Councils | | | |
| 2.2 | Continue to build strategic alliances with Councils in the surrounding region. | 2.2.1 | Continue to build and strengthen the alliances and promote regional cooperation between Gunnedah Shire and neighbouring Councils to achieve regional and sub-regional economic development outcomes. |
| | | 2.2.2 | Continue to be a member of and play an active role in, State and Regional organisations, in order to advocate |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------|--|
| | | | in the best interests of Gunnedah Shire. |
| | | 2.2.3 | Participate in regional training, economic development, marketing and promotional activities. |
| The Gunnedah Community | | | |
| 2.3 | Continue to build relationships with local stakeholders and industry sectors. | 2.3.1 | Identify opportunities for clustering and strategic alliances and partnerships within and between industry sectors and businesses. |
| | | 2.3.2 | Provide direction and support to local business and community groups, not-for-profit organisations and businesses to undertake initiatives consistent with recommendations of the EDS. |
| | | 2.3.3 | Build relationships with key industry sectors both within the Shire and externally. |
| | | 2.3.4 | Encourage the development of a strong business chamber / business group that provides the opportunity for networking, education and training, and exchange of ideas. |
| 2.4 | Harness the skills and experience available within the Shire and surrounding region. | 2.4.1 | Explore options for establishing a 'Business Leaders Forum' to generate ideas and provide feedback to Council and other levels of Government, from an industry perspective. |
| | | 2.4.2 | Where appropriate establish, encourage and support Task Forces / Working Groups, Networks and Business Associations to address specific issues or pursue opportunities. |

Strategy 3: Establish effective networks and communication channels.

Building effective networks and opening lines of communication will help to build local capacity and grow businesses collectively. Networks provide the opportunity for establishing contacts and building relationships, exchanging ideas, sourcing business leads, mentoring and working collaboratively.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|---|-------------|---|
| 3.1 | Continue to improve communication between Council, local business, industry and community groups and with business operators. | 3.1.2 | Continue to produce the business e.newsletter to maintain regular contact with key groups, business operators and other key stakeholders. |
| | | 3.1.2 | Where possible, have a Council representative attend meetings of industry and business groups, with this representative reporting back to Council. |
| | | 3.1.3 | Encourage and facilitate opportunities for business networking. |
| | | 3.1.4 | Continue to build relationships and provide continuity and commitment by nominating specific Council officers as the point of contact for each of the business / industry groups. |
| 3.2 | Encourage business operators to communicate with each other. | 3.2.1 | Encourage / support industry associations to hold functions and activities that will enable business operators to communicate and network. |

Priority 2: To ensure that the foundation ‘blocks’ needed to stimulate and support economic development are in place.

Factors that will be taken into consideration by business and service providers looking to expand and/or establish new businesses in the area, as well as by potential developers and investors include:

- The ‘reputation’ and ‘amenity’ of an area – as a place to work and live.
- Location and accessibility – transport networks, distance to markets, freight costs etc.
- Availability and cost - of suitable land and/or premises (to buy or lease).
- Access to suitable utilities – water, power, telecommunications etc.
- Access to labour – with the required qualifications and/or skills.
- Regulatory environment – ease of approvals, conditions attached and the likely time and costs involved.
- Access to support services.
- Access to capital – willingness of financial institutions to provide capital for projects in different localities.

Likewise, people looking to remain in, or relocate, will take into account a range of factors including:

- Amenity (appeal) of the area.
- Availability and affordability of housing.
- Facilities and services available – retail, health, education, recreation, childcare, broadband and mobile coverage etc.
- Accessibility.
- Employment opportunities.
- Cost of living.
- Safety.

Goals

- For Gunnedah Shire to be an attractive place to live, work and invest, with the Shire recognised as:
 - A highly productive, resource rich area that is regionally, nationally and globally connected.
 - A safe, friendly, caring community with an extensive range of services – an ideal environment for raising a family.
 - Providing a contemporary lifestyle in a physically attractive setting.
- To remove barriers to investment and development.

Strategies

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Strategy 4: | Build a strong, positive profile for Gunnedah Shire. |
| Strategy 5: | Ensure that Gunnedah Shire is an attractive place to live, work and invest. |
| Strategy 6: | Build a strong and skilled local workforce. |
| Strategy 7: | Ensure that there is suitable residential, industrial and commercial land and premises available in the Shire to facilitate growth. |
| Strategy 8: | Ensure that the infrastructure and utilities needed to support economic development are in place. |

Strategy 4: Build a strong, positive profile for Gunnedah Shire.

Raising the profile of Gunnedah Shire and positively promoting the area as a place to live and invest is imperative to attracting investment, development and new residents. Gunnedah is competing with Tamworth, which has a very high profile in the market place. Marketing and promotional activities need to feature the attributes and competitive advantages of the Shire. Visually, the Shire also needs to make a very positive ‘first impression’ on travellers.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------|--|
| Marketing and Promotion | | | |
| 4.1 | Develop and implement a branding and marketing strategy to boost the profile of Gunnedah Shire locally, regionally and beyond. | 4.1.1 | Revise the positioning, branding and marketing of Gunnedah Shire - featuring the positive natural, social and cultural attributes that contribute to Gunnedah Shire being highly liveable. |
| | | 4.1.2 | Ensure that the branding is consistent across the promotional documents produced by Council. |
| | | 4.1.3 | Ensure that images used in Council documents and promotional materials reflect the branding and lifestyle values of the Shire. |
| | | 4.1.4 | Develop and implement a marketing strategy. |
| 4.2 | Build Gunnedah Shire’s ‘digital presence’. | 4.2.1 | Continue to improve the Gunnedah Shire Council and Gunnedah Tourism websites, recognising that the sites have a dual function of providing information and promoting the Shire. |
| | | 4.2.2 | Formulate and implement a social media strategy to communicate with residents, businesses, visitors and the media (recognising that journalists are increasingly using social media to source ‘leads’ and ‘stories’). |
| | | 4.2.3 | Capitalise on opportunities to promote Gunnedah Shire and its products and activities, through third party websites and apps. |
| | | 4.2.4 | Explore options for developing a Gunnedah Shire ‘App’ – possibly converting the Business Directory into an App targeted at local and regional residents. |
| 4.3 | Endeavour to generate positive publicity for the Shire. | 4.3.1 | Work with the local and regional media to identify and strongly promote local ‘heroes’ and achievements – individuals (particularly young achievers and emerging leaders) and businesses that are innovative and strongly reflect the desired positioning and branding of the Shire. |
| | | 4.3.2 | Explore opportunities to use Shire events to generate media coverage of and exposure for the Shire. |
| | | 4.3.3 | Formulate and adopt a public relations strategy that provides the direction and ‘tools’ for counteracting negative publicity. |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| 4.4 | Raise the profile of Gunnedah Shire. | 4.4.1 | Utilise opportunities to gain free / low cost exposure in the regional media, including 'What's On' listings. |
| | | 4.4.2 | Explore with the business community, opportunities to increase Gunnedah's presence on regional television through initiatives such as cooperative advertising and collaborative scheduling of advertisements to maximise exposure and keep 'Gunnedah' in front of the regional audience. |
| | | 4.4.3 | Continue with billboard advertising in strategic locations, ensuring that the images used are vibrant, eye-catching and 'memorable'; and updated regularly to remain 'fresh'. |
| | | 4.4.4 | Work with the regional and State tourism and economic development organisations to bring media and industry 'famils' to Gunnedah Shire. |
| | | 4.4.5 | Endeavour to improve and expand the Gunnedah content in regional promotional material – eg Food and Wine Directory. |
| | | 4.4.6 | Explore options for promoting Gunnedah Shire, both through feature stories and advertising, in the regional media in other coal mining areas in Australia, possibly working in conjunction with the mining companies during their recruitment phases. |
| | | 4.4.7 | Explore options for having information available on Gunnedah Shire in the MAC Villages being established in the surrounding Shires and/or distributed as part of the mine recruitment process. |
| | | 4.4.8 | Strengthen the 'link' between Gunnedah Shire and Lake Keepit – recognising the recreational and aesthetic value of the waterbody for potential residents. |

Strategy 5: Ensure that Gunnedah Shire is an attractive place to live, work and invest.

'Lifestyle' is one of the most significant assets of Gunnedah Shire, with lifestyle factors including a relaxed, casual lifestyle, rural environment combined with friendly people and a strong sense of community. The country town / village atmosphere and the setting / scenery are highly valued by Shire residents. The lifestyle and 'liveability' of a locality are very significant factors in attracting new residents and businesses to an area. 'Liveability' is broader than lifestyle, and includes the physical setting, choice in housing, access to education and other facilities and services, local amenity, community spirit etc. The growth in the mining sector will attract younger families and it is imperative that the Shire is 'family friendly' with a range of facilities and services for families and children. The focus needs to be on:

- Ongoing improvements to the presentation of Gunnedah and the villages.
- Protection, preservation and promotion of the natural and rural environments and significant view corridors.
- Progressively incorporating the Namoi River corridor, National Parks, State Conservation Areas, State Forests and Crown Reserves into the recreation and tourism base of the Shire.
- Raising the profile of Lake Keepit and strengthening the association between Gunnedah and the Lake.
- Building strong, vibrant local communities that welcome and embrace new residents.
- Continuing to provide a diverse range of quality cultural, entertainment and recreation activities and facilities.
- Expanding child care, education, health and support services.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|---|--|-------------|---|
| Protect and enhance the local environment | | | |
| 5.1 | Endeavour to protect the natural assets and scenic rural landscapes of the Gunnedah Shire. | 5.1.1 | Continue to ensure that planning controls and policies at local, regional and State level, protect rural and bushland areas, water resources and significant view-sheds within the Shire from urban encroachment, inappropriate development and visual, dust and other forms of pollution from coal mining and extractive industries. |
| | | 5.1.2 | Provide areas along the main highway / touring route corridors where travellers can pull off and enjoy the scenery. |
| | | 5.1.3 | Incorporate quality images / 'hero' shots of the rural areas into the marketing and promotional material for the Shire. |
| Continue to improve presentation of the towns, villages and highways / touring routes | | | |
| 5.2 | Continue to develop the Gunnedah town centre as an attractive place to shop and socialise. | 5.2.1 | Progressively expand the landscaping to the entire retail and commercial core. |
| | | 5.2.2 | Work with the Chamber / business groups to encourage building and business owners to continue to improve the presentation of their buildings and businesses. |
| | | 5.2.3 | As part of the development of the New Street railway bridge, strengthen the visual link and improve the presentation of the Conadilly Street corridor between the town centre and the new 'entry' point (Warrabungle Street). |
| 5.3 | Create a strong, positive first impression of Gunnedah. | 5.3.1 | Continue to improve the presentation of the gateway arrival points - through landscaping around the gateway entry signs to create a strong, positive visual impact. |
| | | 5.3.2 | Incorporate quality landscaping into the development of the New Street railway bridge and traffic route. |
| 5.4 | Continue to improve the presentation of the main travel routes into and through Gunnedah and the villages. | 5.4.1 | Explore cost effective options of upgrading the presentation of the main visitor / travel corridors. |
| | | 5.4.2 | Continue with corridor tree planting programs. |
| 5.5 | Presentation of the new residential and industrial estates. | 5.5.1 | Ensure that quality landscaping is a feature of new residential and industrial estates. |
| Continue to expand the range of recreational and leisure facilities available in the Shire | | | |
| 5.6 | Integrate the National Parks, State Conservation Areas (SCAs) and State Forests into the recreation and tourism base of the Shire. | 5.6.1 | Encourage the NPWS and Forestry Corporation of NSW to identify features / points of interest that will appeal to visitors and residents, and explore opportunities to increase access, establish walking trails and visitor facilities and provide quality interpretation and information. |
| | | 5.6.2 | Promote the Kelvin Aboriginal Area as a tourist attraction, and work with Narrabri Shire to develop scenic drives / loops that include the Kelvin area and other attractions in the surrounding area. |
| 5.7 | Continue to upgrade the Namoi River corridor in Gunnedah. | 5.7.1 | Develop Cushans Reserve as a major attraction and recreation area for Gunnedah. |
| | | 5.7.2 | Explore options for improving the presentation of the Mullibah Lagoon area and providing interpretation (see recommendations of the Kamilaroi Highway Aboriginal Product Scoping Study). |
| | | 5.7.3 | Continue to extend the shared pedestrian-cycleway along the river corridor, with the cycleway linking to the town centre. |
| 5.8 | Revamp the Bindea Track. | 5.8.1 | Work with Landcare and Community groups to revitalise the Bindea Track and Porcupine Hill – Wallaby Trap areas. |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|--|--|-------------|--|
| 5.9 | Continue to provide a range of quality recreational facilities. | 5.9.1 | Ensure that the new residential estates include recreation facilities. |
| | | 5.9.2 | Explore options for outdoor fitness equipment, possibly as part of a riverside walk. |
| | | 5.9.3 | Continue to upgrade the parks / playgrounds in the villages to meet the needs of both residents and travellers. |
| 5.10 | Extend the cycling infrastructure. | 5.10.1 | Continue to develop recreational and commuter cycleways throughout Gunnedah and provide support infrastructure (eg bicycle rack) in key locations – ensure that the network provides connectivity within and between the existing and new estates, and with the town centre, schools, sporting facilities etc. |
| | | 5.10.2 | Explore options for developing a network of mountain bike trails in the Porcupine Hill area and/or in the State Forests/State Conservation areas located in close proximity to rural villages, for recreation and as the basis for mountain bike tourism and possibly events. |
| Encourage the development and diversification of arts and cultural activities | | | |
| 5.11 | Raise the profile of Gunnedah as an arts and entertainment hub. | 5.11.1 | Support the development of cultural events and activities. |
| | | 5.11.2 | Actively promote the cinema as one of the attributes of the Shire. |
| Advocate for the expansion of services to accommodate population growth | | | |
| 5.12 | Continue to advocate for improved health services within the Shire. | 5.12.1 | Endeavour to attract more doctors, dentists, nursing and allied health professionals to the Shire. |
| | | 5.12.2 | Advocate for comprehensive primary health care and programs (including preventative programs) that address health issues within the Shire – including running the programs in the villages. |
| 5.13 | Ensure that there are sufficient child care places to cater for population growth. | 5.13.1 | Encourage the provision of additional child-care facilities and places within the Shire. |
| 5.14 | Ensure that there are sufficient youth programs and facilities to support population growth. | 5.14.1 | Advocate and provide programs for youth that are designed to improve socialisation and employment skills, and that encourage creativity and innovation in young people. |
| Provide a diversity of dwelling types. | | | |
| 5.15 | Ensure that there is a range of dwelling types developed in the Shire. | 5.15.1 | Continue to encourage a diversity of dwelling types at different price points - including independent living units for the aged, over 55 living, medium density apartments and town houses and larger lot rural-residential sites |
| | | 5.15.2 | Encourage developers to provide innovative, quality building and subdivision designs that are contemporary, and reflect the character of the area. |
| Build strong communities | | | |
| 5.16 | Build community spirit - encourage and support opportunities for community development. | 5.16.1 | Continue to encourage and support activities (eg events, sport, community projects) that will encourage residents to work together, socialise and build pride in and commitment to their local community. |
| | | 5.16.2 | In the design of new housing estates, include areas / facilities that encourage socialisation. |
| | | 5.16.3 | Explore opportunities for providing programs, services and activities that will help new residents assimilate into the community. |
| | | 5.16.4 | Explore options for providing programs and services to assist and support people on temporary and permanent work visas from non-English speaking backgrounds to assimilate into the community. |

Strategy 6: Build a strong and skilled local workforce.

Developing and maintaining a skilled workforce is critical to business growth and diversification and to build resilience within the Gunnedah community. Gunnedah Shire is experiencing labour and skills shortages across most economic sectors. Given the cyclical nature of the Gunnedah economy, the workforce needs to be innovative and adaptable to work across sectors. In some sectors (eg health and aged care and agriculture) the workforce is aging which, if not addressed, will become a significant issue within the next decade. The workplace is also changing with employers increasingly looking for skilled workers, strong socialisation and communication skills, and innovation and creative thinking. 'Green' skills (eg in manufacturing and construction) will also become increasingly important as Australia moves to a carbon neutral economy.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------|---|
| Workforce requirements | | | |
| 6.1 | Identify the number of workers, qualifications and skills (hard and soft) needed now and in the future, by industry sector. | 6.1.1 | Identify skill gaps, current and likely future, and develop a Gunnedah Workforce Plan with industry. |
| | | 6.1.2 | Ensure that the workforce needs of Gunnedah are clearly articulated and included and addressed in relevant State and Federal Government programs including the Regional Workforce Plan, the Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan and the Jobs Action Program. |
| Building the local workforce | | | |
| 6.2 | Explore options for attracting workers to Gunnedah. | 6.2.1 | Promote the various overseas temporary workers and skilled migration programs to local businesses. Make it 'easy' for business by providing information that explains the various schemes as well as contact details for the relevant government agencies. Consider holding a briefing session in which the various programs are discussed and Government representatives from each of the programs are available to answer questions and provide assistance. |
| | | 6.2.2 | Encourage local businesses to participate in the Jobs Action Plan and other promotions occurring at the Regional level. |
| | | 6.2.3 | Explore options for promoting job vacancies / skills shortages on the Gunnedah Tourism website and through the Gunnedah Visitor Information Centre – particularly for seasonal work that may appeal to travellers. |
| | | 6.2.4 | Work with the mining companies during their recruitment phases – promoting job opportunities to partners of mine-related workers. |
| | | 6.2.5 | Develop a 'Back to Gunnedah' program targeting the 'adult children' of Shire residents – encouraging them to return to Gunnedah to raise their families in an affordable, quality, caring community. |
| | | 6.2.6 | Explore options for targeting older workers – people who have been retrenched in Sydney and are looking for a 'tree change'. |
| 6.3 | Assist local businesses to attract and retain staff. | 6.3.1 | Assist businesses to develop strategies and programs and/or change working conditions to attract and retain staff in the face of competition from the mining sector. |
| 6.4 | Endeavour to retain young people in the community by providing training and employment opportunities. | 6.4.1 | Encourage local businesses to participate in school based apprentice and traineeship programs – through the VET and AgCaps programs. Harness the resources of the Regional Apprentice and Traineeship coordinators to grow the program in Gunnedah Shire. |
| | | 6.4.2 | Build partnerships, such as mentor and workplace training programs, between local businesses, TAFE and schools. |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------|--|
| | | 6.4.3 | Investigate with the University of New England, opportunities to run outreach programs with the high schools within Gunnedah and to provide transition courses through the Gunnedah TAFE. |
| | | 6.4.4 | Provide role models – identify and profile local young people who are succeeding within the community. |
| | | 6.4.5 | Explore opportunities to access programs such as the Clontarf Academy and BackTrack and the Northern Regional Partnership Agreement to provide Aboriginal people with the training and ‘soft’ skills needed to enter the workforce. |
| Increase access to training | | | |
| 6.5 | Establish the Trade Training Centre in Gunnedah. | 6.5.1 | Advocate strongly for the establishment of the proposed Trade Training Centre in Gunnedah. If established, explore options for growing the program to provide skills that are transferable across a number of sectors – mining, agriculture, manufacturing and construction. |
| 6.6 | Expand the range of courses available at Gunnedah TAFE. | 6.6.1 | Advocate strongly for the expansion of the range of courses offered at Gunnedah TAFE, with courses targeted to address skills shortages within the Shire and surrounding region. |
| 6.7 | Training Centres. | 6.7.1 | Explore options to provide access to vocational training in health care, aged care and child care – possibly adopting the Trade Training Centre model operating at the Narrabri West Pre-School which provides child care training and Certification to Certificate III level. |
| 6.8 | On-line Training programs. | 6.8.1 | Identify training programs and resources available on-line from Government Agencies and Tertiary / Vocational service providers and promote these as part of the ‘Business Tool Kit’ on the Gunnedah Shire Council website. |
| 6.9 | Introduce a program of short courses and briefing sessions for business owners. | 6.9.1 | Explore business training needs (eg exporting, digital economy, using social media) and work with the Chamber, Government Agencies, Community College and other training providers to deliver information sessions and training programs. |

Strategy 7: Ensure that there is suitable industrial and commercial land and premises available in the Shire to facilitate growth.

Industrial and commercial development within Gunnedah Shire is currently constrained by a shortage of available, serviced (ie development ready) land and a lack of contemporary industrial units and commercial premises available for purchase or lease. The existing industrial areas have limited land and premises available for purchase or lease. While additional land has been zoned for industrial development, the land has infrastructure constraints and it will take time for this land to become available.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|--|-------------|--|
| 7.1 | Establish a register of industrial and commercial land available for sale in Gunnedah Shire. | 7.1.1 | Work with Real Estate Agents to establish and maintain a register of industrial and commercial properties available for sale or lease within Gunnedah Shire. Keep the register up-to-date. |
| | | 7.1.2 | Provide the register to Government Agencies (eg RDA Northern Inland and Trade and Investment) for inclusion in regional promotional initiatives. |
| 7.2 | Facilitate the development and release of | 7.2.1 | Work with the owner of North West Industrial Park and relevant Government Agencies to resolve |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|---|-------------|--|
| | zoned industrial land in the North West Industrial Park (former Abattoir site). | | infrastructure constraints and ensure that services are available to the site boundary. This will reduce uncertainty for potential purchasers. |
| | | 7.2.2 | If the development proceeds, encourage the developer to build some modern industrial / business units for sale and/or leasing. |
| | | 7.2.3 | Establish a 'fall-back' position should the North West Industrial Park not proceed – re-examine options for providing industrial land and commence the studies etc needed to support any re-zoning required. |

Strategy 8: Ensure that the infrastructure and utilities needed to support economic development are in place.

The availability and suitability (capacity) of utility infrastructure, transport networks and telecommunications are significant factors in the decision to relocate to and /or invest in the Region. These factors can also influence the ability of local businesses to grow as well as the timing of land releases. There are issues with water, sewer, electricity and transport infrastructure in Gunnedah Shire which are restricting development and limiting the Shire's ability to compete with surrounding LGAs.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|---|---|-------------|--|
| Availability and capacity of utilities – water, sewerage, drainage, electricity, gas | | | |
| 8.1 | Augment town water and sewerage. | 8.1.1 | Ensure that the sewerage system is augmented to facilitate the development of the North West Industrial Park and the remainder of the Quia Road industrial precinct. |
| | | 8.1.2 | Endeavour to have the sewerage infrastructure projects recognised as priorities by RDA Northern Inland and the NSW Government Agencies. |
| 8.2 | Ensure access to water for agricultural production. | 8.2.1 | Support the agricultural sector in ensuring ongoing access to quality surface and ground water resources for irrigation and other agricultural activities. |
| 8.3 | Advocate for improved electricity supply. | 8.3.1 | Obtain advice from Transgrid and Essential Energy regarding the capacity of the electricity supply to Gunnedah, in particular to the North West Industrial Park and the Quia Road (West) heavy industrial area. If required, advocate for improvement in capacity to facilitate growth. |
| 8.4 | Explore options for provision of gas. | 8.4.1 | Explore options to provide reticulated gas to Gunnedah, including tapping into the proposed Queensland – Hunter gas pipeline, or extracting gas within the Gunnedah Basin for local consumption. |
| Continue to improve the transport infrastructure to and within Gunnedah Shire | | | |
| 8.5 | Endeavour to improve Road Train and Heavy Vehicle Access. | 8.5.1 | Advocate for the preparation and implementation of a Regional Roads Strategy to address issues with the capacity and standards of the road network to accommodate the growing volume of heavy vehicle and mine-related traffic. |
| | | 8.5.2 | In conjunction with local agricultural producers evaluate the effectiveness and impacts of the Grain Harvest Management Scheme and if successful, seek to have cotton, other grain crops and oilseeds included in the list of produce that can be transported through the Shire under the regulations. |
| | | 8.5.3 | Ensure that the NSW Livestock Loading Scheme Maps for Gunnedah Shire are consistent with the RMS Travel Restrictions Vehicle Route Maps for Gunnedah Shire. |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|---|--|-------------|--|
| | | 8.5.4 | Up-date information on the Gunnedah Council website regarding vehicle loads and provide information on the Grain Harvest and Livestock Transport schemes. |
| | | 8.5.5 | Advocate to have Bloomfield Street in Gunnedah re-classified as a Regional Road and upgraded if necessary to take HML vehicles. |
| 8.6 | Capitalise on the trend towards containerisation of freight. | 8.6.1 | With the growing trend to containerisation, re-assess the feasibility of establishing container facilities in Gunnedah. |
| 8.7 | Address rail access issues to the Namoi Flour Mill. | 8.7.1 | Work with ARTC and the Manildra Group to resolve rail access issues at the Mill. |
| 8.8 | Address competition between coal and agricultural produce for rail access. | 8.8.1 | Advocate for the State Government to undertake a detailed regional freight study that looks at both rail and road capacity for the transport of coal, agricultural products and other freight. |
| 8.9 | Explore opportunities to capitalise on the proposed Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail Line. | 8.9.1 | Assess the implications of the Melbourne-Brisbane route for Gunnedah Shire and, if needed, put in place infrastructure to take advantage of opportunities. |
| 8.10 | Seal strategically important roads. | 8.10.1 | Seek funding to seal Grain Valley Road and Clifton Road to improve access to the Boggabri and Carroll Cotton Gins and facilitate the movement of cotton and other agricultural products. |
| | | 8.10.2 | Seek funding to seal and maintain local roads that will facilitate access to existing and proposed coal mines. |
| 8.11 | Plan for the changes in traffic movements that will occur as a result of the New Street bridge over the railway line. | 8.11.1 | Assess the optimal location for the Gunnedah Visitor Information Centre. |
| | | 8.11.2 | Ensure that the signage, landscaping etc on the new route, encourages visitor traffic into Conadilly Street rather than by-passing the town centre. |
| | | 8.11.3 | With the opening up of the Oxley Highway to higher mass vehicles and the growth in traffic on both the Oxley and Kamilaroi Highways, assess whether there is a need for a 24 hour truck stop in Gunnedah, and if so plan accordingly. |
| 8.12 | Capitalise on opportunities provided by the availability of Gunnedah airport and the proximity to Tamworth Regional Airport. | 8.12.1 | Support initiatives to expand air services and increase air freight capacity through Tamworth Airport. |
| | | 8.12.2 | Position Gunnedah Airport as an alternative base for lower yielding activities that may come under pressure as activity at Tamworth Airport increases. |
| Improve telecommunication services | | | |
| 8.13 | Improve mobile telephone coverage and access to high speed broadband in Gunnedah Shire. | 8.13.1 | Strongly advocate for significant improvements in the mobile telephone coverage and availability of broadband in the rural areas of the Shire, with this infrastructure critical for the operation of rural businesses and the establishment of home-based businesses. It will also support the coal mining and gas exploration sectors. |
| | | 8.13.2 | Advocate for Gunnedah to be included in the revised roll out of the NBN. |

Priority 3: To support and nurture existing economic activities and businesses – to encourage increased productivity, sustainability, growth and employment.

Adopting a 'growth from within' approach in which existing local businesses are supported and nurtured, is the most effective way of fostering sustained business and employment growth. As identified in the Economic Profile, there are a range of opportunities to grow and/or diversify existing economic activities within Gunnedah Shire. Growth can be stimulated through a range of activities including:

- Encouraging networking and communication within and across sectors.
- Knowledge sharing.
- Developing strategic alliances and clusters.
- Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurial activities.
- Identifying market opportunities.
- Providing access to data, research and best practice principles.
- Co-operative activities such as joint marketing and promotions, shared purchasing, skills sharing etc.
- Education and training.

Gunnedah Shire Council has a role to play in stimulating growth by improving communication, coordination and information distribution within the business community. There is also a range of advisory programs and services available in the Northern Inland Region and through State and Federal Government programs to assist businesses.

Goals

- Retention and growth of existing businesses and sectors.
- A strong, diversified economic base.
- Resilience to cyclical fluctuations.

Strategies

- Strategy 9.** Encourage the development of business skills and expertise.
- Strategy 10.** Provide opportunities for business diversification and expansion.
- Strategy 11.** Work with industry sectors to address issues and capitalise on opportunities.

Strategy 9: Encourage the development of business skills and expertise.

The business environment is changing rapidly and business operators need both sound information and business acumen skills to remain viable and continue to grow. Encouragement and assistance is required for some businesses to improve skill levels and to focus on working 'on' their business not just 'within' their business. Businesses need to encourage innovation and creativity and be aware of and open to the adoption of new technologies. Some businesses also need assistance to reduce their exposure to 'boom – bust' cycles.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|--|---|-------------|--|
| Provide up-to date information and resources | | | |
| 9.1 | Provide information and resources relevant to local businesses. | 9.1.1 | Continue to develop and update the information contained within the Economic Profile, with this available on-line for access by local businesses. |
| | | 9.1.2 | Explore with the Chamber, the feasibility of establishing a 'knowledge sharing' website. |
| | | 9.1.3 | Regularly feature information 'highlights' in the Economic Development e.newsletter and provide links to information sources. |
| | | 9.1.4 | Through the e.newsletter, ensure that businesses are aware of assistance programs and relevant draft / gazetted plans and policies prepared by Council, and State and Federal Government agencies. |
| Encourage businesses to access support services such as SmallBiz Connect, Export Development Programs etc | | | |
| 9.2 | Raise awareness of and increase access to the business support services and programs available. | 9.2.1 | Prepare and maintain a guide to business advisory services, assistance available from Council, Government support programs and grants and on-line resources. |
| | | 9.2.2 | Build relationships with service providers and provide an 'introductory' service for businesses wishing to access services and programs. |
| | | 9.2.3 | Regularly promote the services and programs through the e.newsletter as well as 'success' stories. |
| | | 9.2.4 | Explore the feasibility of having a service provider 'Expo' to raise the profile and awareness of the services available. |
| | | 9.2.5 | Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to regularly invite service providers to Chamber meetings and other business networking activities. |
| | | 9.2.6 | Encourage businesses to access Government funding programs to assist business start-up or expansion. |
| Provide opportunities for business skills development | | | |
| 9.3 | Harness business organisations and networks to increase access to training opportunities. | 9.3.1 | Encourage the exchange of ideas through business clusters and networks. |
| | | 9.3.2 | Explore options for business organisations and network to host and cooperatively fund training programs for members. |
| | | 9.3.3 | Explore options to introduce a 'Business Mentor' program. |
| 9.4 | Encourage the adoption of 'best practice' principles. | 9.4.1 | Encourage innovative businesses to participate in State and National 'best practice' programs. |
| | | 9.4.2 | Showcase 'best practice' activities through the e.newsletter, presentations to business functions etc. |
| | | 9.4.3 | Ensure that local and regional business awards recognise 'best practice' initiatives. |
| 9.5 | Participate in Business Awards. | 9.5.1 | Encourage local businesses to participate in Regional and State business awards to build awareness and recognition and potentially generate publicity for their business and Gunnedah Shire. |

Strategy 10: Provide opportunities for business diversification and expansion.

Development of strong support and communication networks would strengthen the business community within Gunnedah Shire, facilitating communication, innovation and cooperation. For example, there are a number of significant mining, infrastructure and construction projects proposed for Gunnedah and surrounding Shires. Local businesses are often too small individually to be able to secure work and contracts. There may however be opportunities to form consortiums / joint ventures to bid for work. Collaborative ventures can also be used to access new markets, reduce operating costs, increase productivity and/or share resources. There is also opportunity for local businesses to become agents or suppliers for the national and multinational businesses that are providing services within the Region. There are a number of business models – eg HunterNet, and the local procurement program put in place by BMA in the Queensland coal fields, that could be adopted for Gunnedah. Where skills are not available in Gunnedah, endeavour to working collaboratively with businesses in surrounding LGAs.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|--|-------------|--|
| 10.1 | Identify potential opportunities. | 10.1.1 | Endeavour to identify goods and services that are being ‘imported’ into the Shire or activities being taken out of the Shire (eg packaging and bar coding) that could potentially be supplied by local businesses. |
| | | 10.1.2 | Discuss with potential developers (eg developers of the residential and industrial estates), the goods and services that they will require and endeavour to secure agreement that local businesses will be given the opportunity to ‘quote’. |
| | | 10.1.3 | Work with the mining companies and ARTC to identify opportunities for local businesses. |
| | | 10.1.4 | Monitor ‘Tender’ and ‘New Project’ web sites and identify leads for local businesses. |
| | | 10.1.5 | Explore with local businesses the level of interest in attending ‘tender writing’ workshops, or provide assistance with the preparation of tender documents, particularly for large jobs. |
| | | 10.1.6 | Work with the Chamber to develop a ‘supply chain’ directory and implement a ‘buy local’ campaign targeted to local businesses to encourage them to source goods and services locally. |
| | | 10.1.7 | Explore cross-industry value adding opportunities. |
| | | 10.1.8 | Work with Trade & Investment NSW, other State and Federal Government Agencies and Peak Industry Associations to identify export opportunities for local businesses. |
| | | 10.1.9 | Encourage Gunnedah businesses and operators to be actively involved in the consultation being undertaken by RDA Northern Inland in the preparation of the Industry Development Plans. |
| 10.2 | Encourage businesses to join and/or form strategic alliances / clusters. | 10.2.1 | Endeavour to establish a ‘HunterNet’ style organisation for the local businesses to bid for larger contracts within the Shire and surrounding region. |
| | | 10.2.2 | Identify and assess opportunities for joint purchasing, tendering, training, etc. |
| | | 10.2.3 | Endeavour to have relevant clusters registered on Local, State and Federal Government ‘accredited supplier’ lists. |
| 10.3 | Encourage participation in cooperative marketing. | 10.3.1 | Prepare sector specific marketing and promotional collateral and, where needed, sector specific websites or webpages for existing sites. |
| | | 10.3.2 | Identify opportunities for cooperative marketing and encourage businesses to participate and invest in these activities. |
| | | 10.3.3 | Encourage relevant businesses to participate in marketing activities (eg trade missions, industry and trade expos etc) organised by regional, State and Federal Government agencies. |

Strategy 11: Work with industry sectors and businesses to address issues and capitalise on opportunities.

The Economic Profile identifies the opportunities and strategic considerations for the main industry sectors within Gunnedah Shire. Specific actions that will assist in strengthening, consolidating and/or growing these sectors are included below. These actions need to be read in conjunction with the Strategic Considerations identified in Volume 1.

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|---|---|-------------|---|
| Agriculture – support primary production and build on competitive advantages | | | |
| 11.1 | Protect agricultural land and water resources within the Shire and surrounding Gunnedah Basin. | 11.1.1 | Through local, regional and State planning controls, continue to protect agricultural lands, agricultural activities and water resources within the Shire and surrounding areas from encroachment by residential/rural residential, industrial and extractive activities. |
| | | 11.1.2 | Ensure that planning controls for rural land have the flexibility to accommodate new activities and innovative business models that may include horizontal or vertical integration. |
| 11.2 | Explore opportunities for product and market diversification. | 11.2.1 | Work with Trade and Investment NSW and relevant Federal Government Agencies and Industry Associations to identify market opportunities including export market opportunities. |
| 11.3 | Assist farmers to address labour and skills shortages. | 11.3.1 | Ensure that the Industry Development and Job Plans being developed for the Northern Inland Region recognise the labour and skills issues in the agricultural sector in Gunnedah Shire. |
| | | 11.3.2 | Should the Trades Training Centre be developed in Gunnedah, endeavour to have the course content include skills needed by a range of sectors, including agriculture. |
| | | 11.3.3 | Work with the farming community to explore opportunities for utilising temporary and skilled overseas workers – possibly working collaboratively to ‘share’ labour and reduce costs of bringing in overseas workers. |
| | | 11.3.4 | Work with the Department of Education Apprentice and Traineeship Coordinators and the AgCap program coordinators to grow participation, by both farmers and school students, in agricultural apprenticeships, traineeships and skills development. |
| 11.4 | Address transport and freight issues impacting on the Agricultural sector. | | See Actions 8.5 to 8.11. |
| 11.5 | Access to research and development, innovation and best practice. | 11.5.1 | Working with the farming community, identify R&D, training and information needs and explore options for providing training, access to information etc. |
| 11.6 | Grow the processing and value-adding sectors. | 11.6.1 | Working with producers, explore options to value-add to local products and/or provide services current not available in the Shire (eg seed cleaning plant, grain drying plant, bar code printing, slaughterhouse). |
| 11.7 | Raise the profile of local specialty food producers (organic grains, olives, fruit and vegetables). | 11.7.1 | Encourage local specialty grain and food producers to list in the RDA Northern Inland Regional Food and Wine Guide and producer data-base. |
| | | 11.7.2 | Consider showcasing specialty food products produced locally in the Visitor Information Centre, Plains of Plenty Gallery and through local cafes and restaurants. |
| | | 11.7.3 | Explore the opportunity to display and sell local products at consumer shows attended by the Gunnedah Shire Tourism Unit. |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|--|--|-------------|--|
| Extractive Industries – leverage off the coal mining, gas exploration and other extractive industries | | | |
| 11.8 | Advocate for assistance to leverage opportunities provided by the mining sector, accommodate growth and minimize potential negative impacts from mining and gas exploration / extraction activities. | 11.8.1 | Keep abreast of the initiatives and programs proposed by the NSW Office of Premier and Cabinet NE-NW Taskforce to leverage off coal mining and gas exploration in the Northern Inland Region. |
| | | 11.8.2 | Undertake the investigations needed to support funding applications under programs such as Resources for Regions and for negotiating Voluntary Planning Agreements (or equivalents) with the mining companies. |
| 11.9 | Address issues impacting on the mining sector. | | Need for skilled labour / Training Centre – see Initiatives 6.1-6.5. Rail capacity – See Initiatives 8.7-8.9. Telecommunications – see Initiative 8.13. |
| 11.10 | Encourage mine and mine-related workers to relocate to Gunnedah. | 11.10.1 | Prepare a ‘new residents’ pack and endeavour to work with the mining companies to provide information on Gunnedah to new employees – focusing on what Gunnedah has to offer as well as employment opportunities for partners. |
| | | 11.10.2 | Develop and implement strategies to ensure that the workers residing in the MAC villages, particularly the operational staff during the mine start-up period, are aware of Gunnedah and what it has to offer. |
| | | | Raise awareness of Gunnedah – see Initiative 4.4. |
| 11.11 | Grow the mine-related service sector in Gunnedah. | 11.11.1 | Work with the mining companies and local businesses to introduce a local procurement program, with businesses working collaboratively were needed, to provide the scale and resources necessary to procure mining contracts – see Initiative 10.2. |
| | | 11.11.2 | Endeavour to attract mine-related service companies to establish branches / outlets in Gunnedah Shire. |
| | | 11.11.3 | Encourage local businesses to explore options to become service providers / stockists for the National and Multinational companies that service the mining sector. |
| | | | Ensure that serviced industrial land and premises are available for businesses looking to relocate to the Shire – see Strategy 7. |
| 11.12 | Complementary industries. | 11.12.1 | Investigate opportunities to utilise / recycle waste products from the mining sector. |
| 11.13 | Capitalise on the increasing demand for road base and aggregate. | 11.13.1 | Explore with local quarry operators and the coal mining companies, the feasibility of increasing aggregate and road base production to meet the growing demand from railway, road and dam infrastructure projects. |
| Manufacturing - Strengthen the manufacturing sector and promote Gunnedah Shire as a location for innovative manufacturing activities. | | | |
| 11.14 | Address issues in the manufacturing sector | | Need for skilled labour / Training Centre – see Initiatives 6.1-6.5. Access to industrial land and premises – see Strategy 7. Access to power and gas – see Initiatives 8.3 and 8.4. Improving access to rail and freight infrastructure – see Initiatives 8.5-8.9. |
| 11.15 | Support for business expansion. | 11.15.1 | Support the expansion of local manufacturers who are looking to diversify, expand and/or improve productivity, including – Namoi Flour Mill, Gunnedah Leather Processors, Leon’s Pork and Carroll Cotton. |
| | | 11.15.2 | Ensure that Regional and State development agencies are aware of business expansion plans, particularly for infrastructure planning, and seek support and assistance when required. |
| 11.16 | Endeavour to ensure securing of access to raw materials. | 11.16.1 | Support (advocate / lobby) Gunnedah Timber secure access to timber supplies and extend its sawlog contract past 2025. |
| | | 11.16.2 | Ensure that planning controls protect access to raw materials – eg clay for brick making, road aggregate. |
| 11.17 | Foster innovation, creativity and growth in the | 11.17.1 | Encourage manufacturers to work together to build the sector, forming strategic alliances to access technology, |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|----------------------------|---|-------------|--|
| | manufacturing sector. | | expertise, markets and training. |
| | | 11.17.2 | Explore opportunities for manufacturing businesses to work cooperatively to bundle products and services, develop and sell solutions, and to achieve competitive advantages and critical mass. |
| | | 11.17.3 | Develop strategies to grow and market emerging, innovative activities such stock and equine feed production and waste and resource management. |
| Construction Sector | | | |
| 11.18 | Capitalise on the opportunities that may arise from the development of residential and industrial estates in Gunnedah and surrounding Shires. | 11.18.1 | If discussions with developers identify potential opportunities for the local construction sector and provide developers with a list of construction and related businesses and services available within the Shire. |
| | | 11.18.2 | Explore options for adopting a collaborative approach for local construction businesses, to provide the scale and efficiencies needed to tender for larger building projects. |
| Tourism Industry | | | |
| 11.19 | Capitalise on the potential to grow the tourism sector in Gunnedah Shire. | 11.19.1 | Ensure that the Inland NSW Destination Management Plan for the Tamworth-Gunnedah cluster provides the framework and opportunity to grow the tourism sector in Gunnedah and access tourism funding at the Regional, State and Federal levels. |
| | | 11.19.2 | In needed, prepare a Destination Management Plan for Gunnedah Shire to provide the framework for the development of tourism within the Shire. |
| 11.20 | Improve, diversify and expand the attraction base of the Shire. | 11.20.1 | Capitalise more effectively on the 'raw' assets available including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Namoi River corridor • Rich Aboriginal heritage (see Kamilaroi Highway Aboriginal Product Scoping Study) • National Parks, State Conservation Areas, State Forests and Crown Reserves • Shopping and dining experiences • Local industries and locally produced products. |
| 11.21 | Continue to improve the accommodation base of the Shire and the performance of accommodation properties. | 11.21.1 | Encourage accommodation operators, particularly the 3 star and older properties, to upgrade their properties in line with changing market needs and expectations. |
| | | 11.21.2 | Encourage accommodation operators to increase their on-line presence and introduce on-line, real time reservation facilities. |
| 11.22 | Continue to improve information services. | 11.22.1 | While continuing to deliver information via traditional practices, the Gunnedah Shire Tourism Unit and tourism operators need to significantly improve their web presence and adopt digital and social media channels to communicate more effectively with travellers, particularly at the trip planning stage. |
| | | 11.22.2 | In response to the likely changes in traffic flows from the proposed New Street Railway Bridge, assess options to relocate the Gunnedah Visitor Information Centre to a more prominent and accessible location. Ensure that the new Centre is effectively signposted and that there is adequate parking for caravans and long rigs adjacent to the Centre. |
| 11.23 | Undertake market development. | 11.23.1 | Endeavour to rebuild markets displaced by business and work-related travel – capitalising on the increased availability of visitor accommodation likely to occur as mining-related visitors move from visitor accommodation into the MAC Villages coming on-line in Narrabri, Boggabri and Werris Creek. |
| | | 11.23.2 | Explore opportunities to grow and diversify the market base, in particular, develop special interest and activity based markets, groups markets (eg coach tours, fishing clubs, car clubs) and event attendees. |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|--|--|-------------|--|
| 11.24 | Continue to market and promote the Shire. | 11.24.1 | Revise the branding and positioning of Gunnedah – moving away from the Koala Capital branding. |
| | | 11.24.2 | Maintain and strengthen strategic alliances with the NE-NW Region, surrounding LGAs and LGAs along the touring route corridors (Kamilaroi Highway, Black Stump Way). |
| | | 11.24.3 | Expand and enhance Gunnedah Shire’s web presence, including continued development of the Gunnedah Tourism website, increased presence on third party websites, improved content and images on key tourism websites and Apps and updating information on the State Tourism Warehouse data base. |
| | | 11.24.4 | Incorporate data-base, digital and social media into the marketing mix. |
| 11.25 | Build a skilled, professional, hospitality workforce. | 11.25.1 | As part of addressing workforce issues and skills development in Gunnedah Shire, work with Inland NSW RTO to build a skilled, professional hospitality workforce. |
| Retail & Wholesale | | | |
| 11.26 | Encourage innovation and skills development in the retail and wholesale sectors. | 11.26.1 | Work with the Chamber to ensure that retailers and wholesalers are aware of the trends in the sectors, particularly in relation to changing technology, selling on-line, and changing consumer expectations and purchasing patterns. |
| | | 11.26.2 | Work with the Chamber to provide opportunities for training and up-skilling business owners, including courses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer service • Staff training • Merchandising • Shop window and merchandise display • Marketing • Use of digital technology for sales and marketing. |
| | | 11.26.3 | Encourage the Chamber to put in place initiatives to improve customer service. |
| | | 11.26.4 | Explore options for strategic and cooperative marketing and promotion, increasing the effectiveness of marketing dollars spent by local businesses. |
| | | 11.26.5 | Encourage the Chamber to implement creative marketing activities that encourage residents to shop locally and to attract residents from surrounding LGAs to Gunnedah. |
| 11.27 | Differentiate the retail experience in Gunnedah Shire from Tamworth. | 11.27.1 | Continue to develop the Gunnedah town centre as an interesting and vibrant place to shop. |
| | | 11.27.2 | Endeavour to build relationships with customers by providing quality, professional, friendly, personal service. |
| Health Care & Social Assistance | | | |
| 11.28 | Continue to improve health care services in Gunnedah Shire. | 11.28.1 | Advocate for a significant injection of funds and resources to address current short-falls in services and to plan for the expansion of services to accommodate population growth. |
| | | 11.28.2 | Participate in relevant initiatives from the State Government and Hunter New England Health to attract and retain health care professionals. |
| 11.29 | Grow the health and social services workforce. | 11.29.1 | Explore options that will enable local residents and students to obtain health care, aged care and/or child care qualifications locally to meet the growing demand for skilled workers in this sector. |
| 11.30 | Expand aged care facilities and services to cater for the aging population. | 11.30.1 | Encourage the development of independent living units for older residents. |
| | | 11.30.2 | Explore options for current service providers to expand facilities and services to meet the expected growth in demand. |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|---|-------------|---|
| | | 11.30.3 | Explore opportunities to use the NBN and technology to facilitate 'aging in place'. |
| 11.31 | Expand child care facilities within Gunnedah Shire. | 11.31.1 | Explore options for increasing the number of child care places within Gunnedah, possibly seeking assistance from the mining companies and other business to fund additional child care places to meet the needs of relocating families. |

Priority 4: To target new businesses and economic activities.

Build and diversify the local economy by targeting new businesses and economic activities that will fill 'gaps' and strengthen and broaden existing sectors. There are opportunities in some sectors (primarily mining services and possibly agricultural value adding and retailing) to attract new businesses and economic activities. The release of industrial land will increase the opportunities available. The ability to target new businesses will be dependent in part on having the foundation 'blocks' in place – being in the position to promote Gunnedah as an ideal place to live, work and invest. The initial focus should be on filling 'gaps' and strengthening existing sectors, shifting to encouraging the take-up of industrial land, when released.

Goals

- New business and economic activities to complement existing.
- Business stakeholders working together attract new investment.
- Gunnedah has a highly visible profile beyond the Shire as a place to establish and do business.

Strategy 12: Target new business and economic activities

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|--|-------------|--|
| 12.1 | Identify and investigate opportunities for new business and economic activities. | 12.1.1 | Liaise with the Mining companies regarding likely supplier contracts and explore the possibility of the suppliers establishing operations in Gunnedah Shire. |
| | | 12.1.2 | Liaise with the Agricultural sector regarding opportunities for value-adding activities. |
| | | 12.1.3 | Explore the possibility of a business incubator or similar support services to encourage micro and small business start-up in the Shire. |
| 12.2 | Meet the information needs of potential investors. | 12.2.1 | Ensure that comprehensive, up-to-date information is available, both on-line and in print format. This information needs to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic and economic profiles • Property (land & premises) available within the Shire • Sector specific information • Prospectus / marketing brochure • Information kit for new residents and businesses. |

| Initiative | | Key Actions | |
|------------|--|-------------|--|
| 12.3 | Establish good relationships with key stakeholders. | 12.3.1 | Partner with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property developers • Real Estate Agents • Chamber and other local business groups and clusters • Key business people who could talk to / host potential investors • Relevant Government Agencies. |
| 12.4 | Formulate and implement a Business & Investment Attraction Strategy. | 12.4.1 | Promote Gunnedah as a location of choice for businesses. |
| | | 12.4.2 | Participate in relevant business attraction events organised by Government Departments and other organisations. |
| | | 12.4.3 | Direct marketing to target businesses. |

