



**Gunnedah**Shire  
Open New Horizons

# Invigorate **Gunnedah**

COVID-19 Business Recovery Package

*Recover / Rebuild / Revitalise*



## Consultation Process

Date	Type	Details
19/05/2020	Business Survey Opened	Survey developed to better understand how the pandemic has affected Gunnedah Shire businesses.
03/06/2020	Business Survey Closed	Survey results analysed
18/06/2020	Councillor Workshop	Background data presented and potential projects outlined
01/07/2020	Councillor Workshop	Themes and specific projects presented
15/07/2020	Councillor Workshop	Final objectives and projects presented

## Document Management

### Document change history

Version	Date	Author	Description of Change
0.3	08/07/20	Charlotte Hoddle	Initial draft
0.4	08/07/20	Andrew Johns	Draft review
1.0	08/07/20	Charlotte Hoddle	Draft document for Council
1.1	15/07/20	Charlotte Hoddle	Adopted by Council

## Introduction

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on businesses in Gunnedah Shire. Initial restrictions on trade enforced by the State and Federal Government commenced in March. In response to the restrictions on trade, in April, Gunnedah Shire Council enacted business support measures through the Community Resilience Fund: COVID-19 Business Support Package (Support Package). The Support Package had a total estimated value of up to \$1.6 million. This was made up of a variety of new and existing measures, a multi-faceted approach aimed at supporting the COVID-19 impacted businesses in the Gunnedah Shire economy.

As restrictions on trade ease, Gunnedah Shire Council (Council) is focused on putting measures in place to stimulate our economy. Invigorate Gunnedah is the second phase of the COVID-19 Business Support Package and includes a number of projects and initiatives aimed at recovering, rebuilding and revitalising our economy.

## Background

The Community Resilience – COVID-19 Business Support Package (Support Package) was adopted by Council in April 2020.

The objectives of the Business Support Package were to:

1. Provide fees and charges relief to small business;
2. Provide relief from interest on overdue rates, annual charges and fees whilst ever Council's BCP is activated;
3. Provide assurance that Council will not escalate overdue debts whilst ever the Council BCP is activated;
4. Support local employment and local purchasing;
5. Encourage business diversification and capacity building;
6. Communicate updates from all tiers of Government and Non-Government to the business sector;
7. Further support to those businesses in need due to the pandemic impacts where any significant gaps are identified in the Federal and State packages.

At the time of adopting the Support Package, Council was aware that the environment was rapidly changing as a result of both the spread of the pandemic and the response strategies implemented by the Federal and State Governments. The Package was always intended to be in two phases:

Phase 1. COVID-19 Community Resilience Business Support Package

Phase 2. COVID-19 Community Resilience Business Recovery Support Package

In order to plan for the recovery measures, the following steps were taken:

- Step One: Assess the economy
- Step Two: Engage with the business community
- Step Three: Measure the success of the support package
- Step Four: Assess the measures in place from State and Federal governments
- Step Five: Understand the measures that Council have already enacted

### Step One: Assess the economy

According to the economy.id Gunnedah Shire COVID-19 Economic Outlook Tool (version 1.1) in the June Quarter 2020:

- Gross Regional Product (GRP) forecasted to decrease by -9.7% in the June Quarter 2020. This decrease was lower than the state average (-13.6%).
- Local jobs forecast to fall by -6.1% in the June Quarter 2020. This equates to a loss of 335 local jobs.
- If JobKeeper recipient impacts are included then the employment loss is estimated at -12.1% (663 jobs).
- The employed residents change was -5.6%, which was less than the state average at -14%.

Gunnedah's GRP and local job impact forecasts were less significant than forecast for NSW, mainly due to the fact that mining and agriculture (our economy's two largest industries) were minimally impacted. Gunnedah's Accommodation and Food Services sector (the most impacted sector) also has a lower sector mix than the state average.

### Step Two: Engage with the business community

In order to stay connected with the business community, Council's Economic Development staff remains in regular contact with the Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Chamber).

In order to better understand how COVID-19 impacted our local business community, Council conducted a business conditions survey which was open from 19 May 2020 until 3 June 2020. The survey responses were collected online, in person as well as over the phone. Council received 80 detailed survey responses from local business owners, with a broad range of industries represented. The majority of responses came from accommodation and food services businesses (25.3%), retail trade (22.4%) and other services (17%) (which includes hair and beauty).

The results of the survey clearly demonstrated how businesses in the Gunnedah Shire have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 76% of respondents reporting a decrease in income in the surveyed period. The survey found that some industries fared better than others in terms of income, retail trade reported mixed results 53% of respondents reported a decrease in trade however 46% saw an increase in the same period. A summary of the results is below:

- 76% respondents experienced decrease in income
- 23% respondents experienced an increase in income
- 1 in 3 had accessed training webinars
- 71% had received Council's Business e-newsletter
- 56% utilised JobKeeper
- 25% received the \$10,000 Small Business Support Grant
- 37% had a local Chamber membership
- 44% businesses stated they have 'no concerns' about the future
- 24% were concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on mental health

The survey asked open ended questions relating to suggestions for support that Council, Government or the business community could provide to revive the local economy post-COVID. A summary of the results is below:

- Shop Local

- Reduction of rates
- Industry events
- Move markets into CBD
- Focus on small business
- Continue with NightQuip
- Financial assistance for rent & electricity
- Support for local sporting events
- Council should support local spending

The survey also asked for suggestions to grow the local tourism sector. The key themes are presented below:

- Events
- Campgrounds at river
- Grow our koala profile
- NightQuip
- Marketing
- Cultural Precinct
- Porchetta and other food festivals
- Attractions

### Step Three: Measure the success of the Support Package

When developing the projects and initiatives included in Invigorate Gunnedah, it was imperative to consider the efficacy of the measures contained within phase one (the Support package). The outcomes were assessed based on a number of areas such as total costs incurred, business uptake, feedback from businesses and levels of engagement.

The following data is provided as examples of these outcomes:

Objective	Action	Outcome
<i>Provide fees and charges relief to small business</i>	1.4 Waive annual Liquid Trade Waste Inspection Fees for Category 1 and 2 customers	319 eligible assessments, total combined credit amount \$37,439.97
<i>Encourage business diversification and capacity building</i>	7.31 Deliver an additional round of Business Partner Program aimed at getting businesses online with e-commerce platforms - \$2,000 to be awarded to each business with budget allocation from existing BPP Reserve.	22 successful applicants of the COVID-19 round of the BPP with \$32,617 awarded to assist businesses increase their online presence.
<i>Communicate updates from all tiers of Government and Non-Government to the business sector</i>	6.27 Continue to provide relevant updates to the community and businesses via Council websites, Council Facebook, electronic direct mail (eDMs), local paper and email distribution lists.	7 business community newsletters reaching 402 businesses with an average open rate of 40%.
<i>Support local employment and local purchasing</i>	4.16 Allocate funds from within existing Economic Development Community Programs and Events budget to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>promote Localised, highlighting the 'marketplace' functionality, which promotes local procurement</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>92 businesses now listed on Localised</li> <li>5925 takeaway menus sent to Gunnedah Shire residents</li> </ol>

	<p>b. Support local food businesses by advertising updated listings of changed services in the local paper and online</p> <p>c. Promote “Ways to Support Local Businesses” Campaign on social media</p>	<p>c. Takeaway menu posted on Facebook reached 9,000</p> <p>d. Total reach of post 4460 – 56 shares.</p>
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#### Step Four: Assess the measures in place from State and Federal governments

It was important to monitor the support measures made available by various tiers of Government to ensure the Package did not duplicate an existing initiative. The State and Federal government rolled out a variety of measures aimed at keeping people in employment and supporting businesses. A number of the key areas of support are listed below:

- JobKeeper (up to \$1,500 per fortnight per eligible employee, commencing 30 March)
- Small Business Support Grant up to \$10,000
- HomeBuilder Program \$25,000
- \$1.8b Road & Community Projects Funding
- Household Stimulus Payments
- ATO Cash Flow Boost (BAS Credit) & Tax Deferrals
- Apprentice/trainee wage subsidies
- Arts & Culture Package \$50m
- Fees & Licence waivers across impacted industries

The recent Gunnedah business survey results show that 56% of local respondents are using JobKeeper and 25% received the Small Business Support Grant.

#### Step Five: Understand the measures that Council have already enacted

The 2020-21 financial year sees the continuation of a substantial and accelerated delivery of capital works totalling \$23 million.

Gunnedah Shire Council has made a number of considerable attempts to support the economy throughout the recent prolonged period of drought. In October 2019, Council committed \$1 million for the purpose of funding projects under the Community Resilience Program (CRP) focusing on supporting projects that engage local suppliers, contractors and labour. Council also used this funding to successfully lobby NSW State and Federal Governments to match Council’s financial commitment.

The CRP has funded projects totaling \$1.5 million, of which \$413,000 was already paid to local organisations as of June 2020. A further \$500,000 was allocated to support the “Farmer Army” a temporary workforce of people, whose primary income had been impacted by the drought. This offered flexible work arrangements to help keep money coming in. The Farmer Army was extended in June to also provide employment for those people who have had their income impacted by COVID-19.

## Why Invigorate Gunnedah?

Invigorate Gunnedah is a set of revitalisation, rebuild and recovery measures aimed at stimulating the economy following the effects of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is made up of a variety of short and long term measures to stimulate economic growth. In the short term, the measures are targeted and tactical, aimed at driving spending in the economy and minimising job losses. The longer term projects aim to build in resilience back into the economy, these projects will be aimed at job creation and aim to help prevent against future shocks.

The Package aims to be proactive and not to simply get Gunnedah 'back on its feet' but also consider any gains that can be made during this time. Tourism, investment and resident attraction are fantastic opportunities for Gunnedah in the aftermath of COVID-19. It is also important to consider supporting our local businesses and ensuring a vibrant Gunnedah town centre in order to foster resilience, growth and connected community. Below is a summary of the key opportunities that Invigorate Gunnedah will focus on.

### Tourism

Recovery projects seek to engage the community, simplify the experience for the consumer and focus on product growth, tactical marketing and brand development. The foundation of tourism industry recovery provides a formula for ongoing tourism development and measures the outcomes of these efforts. The Gunnedah Shire has the opportunity to enhance our agriculture and koala brands to become not just a location but a destination.

Our nationally accredited Visitor Information Centre has capacity to capitalise on the domestic tourism focus and reinvigorate its purpose of connecting guests to Gunnedah tourism experiences. Council's role in tourism is a conduit to enabling the local industry, providing support for industry recovery through tactical tourism promotion.



### Tree Change/ Resident Attraction

The experience of dealing with of COVID-19 has removed one of the most significant barriers to a substantial population shift in this country, according to the Regional Australia Institute (RAI). From 2011 to 2016, our two biggest cities, Sydney and Melbourne lost more residents to regions than they gained; these figures are before COVID-19. COVID-19 has changed the notion of how we work and it is clear that this change coupled with the trend towards living in regional Australia represents an opportunity to grow the population of Gunnedah.

### Revitalising the CBD

As COVID-19 restrictions ease it is important to put in place measures to revitalise and reinvigorate our town centre. In many instances town centres have the greatest opportunity to capture local spending in the local economy. A vibrant town centre is not just about supporting our retail sector but also ensures our hospitality sector can recover after being heavily impacted by trade restrictions. Lifting of restrictions presents an opportunity to encourage the community to get back down to the CBD and experience what we have to offer and make those important social connections that were missing during the lockdown period.



### Supporting local spending

Supporting local businesses can be done by a variety of measures and does not just include encouraging people to spend their money at local shops. Council runs a large procurement program and requires many goods and services to run its large capital works programs. The actions outlined in this package show a commitment and focus on local procurement to support our business community.

### Business resilience

It is important that we not only support our local businesses but we encourage ongoing resilience to ensure our business community are protected against potential future shocks. This package outlines a number of measures including targeted grants through the Business Partner Program and a variety of grant opportunities aimed at encouraging long term employment benefits and business diversification.



### Key infrastructure projects

One way of encouraging long term employment is through Council's maintenance of a strong capital works program. Council should be focused on "game changing" projects that bring employment benefits to the Shire. By ensuring Council are prepared with "shovel-ready" projects Council can attract funding opportunities for long term growth and prosperity of our residents.



## Invigorate Gunnedah Objectives



*1. Support local spending*



*2. Bring vibrancy back into the CBD*



*3. Strengthen our businesses and encourage resilience*



*4. Grow our tourism sector*



*5. Promote Gunnedah as the first choice to live, work and invest*



*6. Drive local infrastructure projects to create more jobs*

<b>1. Support Local Spending</b> <i>Actively promote increased local spending in the Gunnedah Shire economy</i>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>Desired outcomes</b>
1.1 Deliver a 'shop local' campaign to promote retail spending in Gunnedah Shire: "Do your Christmas shopping early"	Short	\$7,000	Supporting local retail businesses and marketing the diverse retail offering in Gunnedah
1.2 Launch Vendorpanel platform	Short	\$1,000	An online tool aimed at supporting local procurement opportunities

<b>2. Bring vibrancy back into the CBD</b> <i>Deliver initiatives that bring vibrancy back into the CBD</i>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>Desired outcomes</b>
2.1 Deliver the CBD Placemaking Strategy and CBD Activation Plan	Medium	\$80,000	Sets a plan in place for future development and upgrades to CBD
2.2 Boost Chamber of Commerce Christmas Fair by increasing sponsorship	Medium	\$12,000	Future opportunities for local retailers, hospitality and community connection. Access to shopper data.
2.3 Deliver the Cultural Precinct 'pop-up' public domain project	Medium	\$25,000	Enhanced CBD presentation and community connection
2.4 Launch a Christmas Campaign including themed community displays and events around Christmas, e.g. "Come home for Christmas"	Medium	\$30,000	Enhanced CBD presentation and community connection. Enhances largest period in the retail sector
2.5 Arrange pop up art in vacant local shops and subsidise the rent of vacant shop fronts for art display	Short	\$3,500	Enhanced CBD presentation and provides opportunities for local artists.

### 3. Strengthen our businesses and encourage resilience

#### *Incentives and initiatives to strengthen businesses and encourage resilience*

Action	Priority	Total Project Cost	Desired outcomes
3.1 Deliver an additional Business Partner Program round aimed at street beautification and activation grants of up to \$1,000 for signage and façade upgrades	Short	\$40,000	Supports local suppliers, improves presentation of businesses including main street.
3.2 Significantly boost funding for Business Partner Program for FY2020/21 to help get businesses back on their feet and assist employment generating projects	Short- Long	\$200,000	Business resilience, employment generating
3.3 Deliver training and workshops to local businesses aimed at resilience building	Short	\$5,000	Aims to provide resilience to businesses to protect against future shocks.
3.4 Deliver a series of training opportunities to get local businesses tender ready	Short	\$5,000	Provides more opportunities for businesses to access larger contracts.
3.5 Continue to promote the Localised platform as a way of more local businesses to have an online presence	Ongoing	\$2,000	Further opportunities for businesses to have increased online presence.
3.6 Boost funding allocation for Small Business Month FY 20/21 as a way of providing training opportunities and encouraging entrepreneurship and resilience in the business community	Short	\$10,000	Resilience building and business connections
3.7 Establish an Access and Inclusion incentive fund	Medium	\$10,000	Assists businesses with projects to improve access to customers and stop leakage to larger cities.

<b>4. Grow our tourism sector in Gunnedah Shire</b> <i>Actively promote tourism in Gunnedah by leveraging off the domestic tourism resurgence,</i>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>Desired outcomes</b>
4.1 Industry Membership Program	Long	\$50,000.00	Ongoing funding in the tourism operational budget to keep program
4.2 Tactical Yield Extension Promotion Gunny Money promotion aimed at encouraging visitors to extend their stay	Short	\$85,000.00	132% ROI after break-even, all allocated funds direct local economy stimulus for short-term improvement
4.3 Brand-Aligned Product Development Establish farm tours in Gunnedah with support of the Visitor Information Centre	Medium	\$5,000.00	Establish a long-term process that can be easily adopted by local producers and facilitated through VIC
4.4 Remove Barriers from Existing Experiences Update tourism and way finding signage at key tourism locations	Short-Long	\$20,000.00	Improve existing experiences and increase opportunities to increase yield and visitation
4.5 Establish a Gunnedah Grown Social media platform Leverage existing content and improve story-telling	Medium	\$15,000.00	Transition council Instagram account to a tourism-focused platform
4.6 Establish an Event Partner Program	Medium	\$20,000.00	Reposition Weeks of Speed Festival and flagship sporting events

## 5. Promote Gunnedah as the first choice to live, work and invest

*Actively encourage new residents to move to the Shire by Capitalising on the renewed 'tree-change' movement and; Actively sell investment opportunities as a way of bringing long term job opportunities and investment into our Shire*

Action	Priority	Total Project Cost	Desired outcomes
5.1 Deliver a multi-channel economic development marketing campaign selling the lifestyle benefits and job opportunities of living in Gunnedah	Short	\$50,000	Capitalise on the 'tree change' movement to encourage new residents
5.2 Launch a Gunnedah Jobs platform as way of promoting local job opportunities in the Shire	Medium	\$5,000	Provide a platform to assist job seekers and local businesses
5.3 Promote the "Welcome to Gunnedah" pack including a Gunny Money gift card to new residents	Medium	\$10,000	Cash injection and assist new residents make connections
5.4 Deliver a Welcome to Gunnedah event for new residents	Medium	\$5,000	Assist new residents make connections in the Shire
5.5 Deliver an Invest in Gunnedah website as a way of selling investment opportunities in Gunnedah	Long	\$20,000	A selling tool to support long term growth and employment generation
5.6 Deliver a multi-channel economic development marketing campaign aimed at encouraging investment into Gunnedah Shire	Short	\$50,000	Attract investment for long term growth and employment generation
5.7 Promote the Investment Prospectus – 'Invest Gunnedah'	Short	\$2,500	A selling tool to support long term growth and employment generation
5.8 Review and refresh an employment lands (industrial and commercial), land use strategy	Long	\$50,000	A key document an tool that will help drive the establishment of the Processing Precinct

**6. Drive local infrastructure projects to create more jobs**  
***Ensure 'shovel ready' projects progress to enable funding opportunities***

- Koala Park and Education Centre
- Cultural Precinct
- Saleyards Upgrades
- Processing Precinct
- Housing Strategy
- Clifton Road Upgrade
- Grain Valley Road Upgrade
- Mystery Road Upgrade
- Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society Poetry Precinct
- Airport Upgrades
- Bulunbulun Road Upgrade
- Rangari Road Upgrade

## Invigorate Gunnedah value

Total Package Value: \$818,000

Additional Funding Required: \$603,500

## Invigorate Gunnedah Funding

\$600,000 of unspent funds from the Community Resilience Program can be reallocated to fund a significant portion of this Package. An additional \$3,500 will be required to be allocated from the General Fund.

## Approval Management

The tables below provide details of the document approvals.

### Document approval

Version 1.0 of this document is to be approved by the Executive Management Team.

Version	Name	Representing	Date Approved
0.4	Eric Groth	General Manager	08/07/20
0.4	Andrew Johns	Planning and Environment	08/07/20
0.4	Jeremy Bartlett	Infrastructure Services	08/07/20
0.4	Damien Connor	Business and Finance	08/07/20
0.4	Tim Muldoon	Corporate and Community Services	08/07/20

### Council Endorsement

Version 1.1 of this document was approved by resolution of Council on: 15/07/2020