

2026-2028 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROADMAP

shaping the Hinchinbrook Way

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

OUR COMMUNITY

- 11,194 residents, +0.6% increase over 12 months
- Average resident age of 52.4 years
- \$644 weekly median personal income
- 52.1% of the population hold a post-school qualification
- 94.1% Employment rate

OUR ECONOMY

- \$800 MILLION Gross Regional Product
- 1,293 businesses
- \$95 MILLION tourism spend per annum, +104% increase over 12 months
- 4,426 dwellings, 23 new dwellings per annum
- \$34.94 MILLION Total value of building approvals per annum
- 54,300 hectares of land under sugar production, -2% decrease over five years

OUR TOP THREE INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT



¹ FNQROC 2025 Shire of Hinchinbrook (<https://profile.id.com.au/fnqroc/>)
² Queensland Government Statistician's Office (<https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles>)
³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (<https://www.abs.gov.au/>)
⁴ National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (<https://nieir.com.au/>)
⁵ Canegrowers (<https://www.canegrowers.com.au/>)

STRATEGIC THEMES



This roadmap draws on themes developed in the Hinchinbrook Shire Council's Liveability 2035: Shaping the Hinchinbrook Way.

The Hinchinbrook Liveability 2035 themes – **connected**, **resilient**, **authentic** and **aspirational** – provide the community-centred foundation for economic development by linking investment, workforce attraction, infrastructure planning and business growth to the qualities that make the Shire a desirable place to live, work and visit.

Together, they ensure the Shire's economic development objectives are not only focused on growth, but on sustainable, place-based outcomes that strengthen local identity, improve community resilience and unlock long-term opportunity.

1. ENABLING NEW INVESTMENT

2. UPSKILLING AND TALENT ATTRACTION

3. SUPPORTING BUSINESS SUCCESS

4. ADVOCACY, PROMOTION AND RELATIONSHIPS TO UNLOCK POTENTIAL

Defining success

MEASURABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Success will be demonstrated through improvements in key indicators such as local investment, business activity, employment, visitor spend, development approvals and gross regional product.

DELIVERY OF STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Progress will be measured by the completion of priority actions that remove barriers, enable investment, support business growth and strengthen Hinchinbrook's competitive position.

STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

A successful strategy will build trusted relationships with industry, government, education providers and regional partners to attract funding, influence policy and unlock new opportunities for the Shire.

LONG-TERM RESILIENCE AND DIVERSIFICATION

Success will mean a broader, more adaptable local economy that is better prepared for demographic change, climate impacts, workforce pressures and shifts in traditional industries.

ECONOMIC SHAPERS

SHAPERS

IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Changing demographics and regional migration

Evolving demographics are increasing demand for high-quality lifestyle and employment opportunities. Residents expect access to services and amenities comparable to those in metropolitan areas while retaining a relaxed regional lifestyle.

This creates opportunities to enhance liveability through social infrastructure, health, education, and community services, but also places pressure on housing availability, infrastructure, and service delivery.

Workforce makeup

The Hinchinbrook Shire's workforce is complex and requires analysis beyond the headline figures to fully understand its profile. Seasonal industries, itinerant and short-term workers, and FIFO employment opportunities outside Hinchinbrook all contribute to the diverse mix of work pursued by local residents. The growth of remote working presents an opportunity to diversify the local economy by attracting professionals, entrepreneurs, and families.

Digital technology

Improved digital connectivity and capability will strengthen business resilience, enable innovation, and support workforce attraction. Investment in digital skills and infrastructure will open new pathways for economic growth and enhance access to services across the Shire.

Sugar industry sustainability

Sugar is the backbone of the Hinchinbrook economy – with over 54,300 hectares under sugarcane and agriculture as the region's top employer. Fluctuations in global sugar commodity prices and seasonal variability in crop sizes flow directly through to grower incomes, mill throughput, and local spending. Impact mitigation includes resilience planning for the industry, and value-adding opportunities for in agritourism, biofuels and bioproducts.

Resilience to hazards and biosecurity threats

Investment in natural hazard resilience and sustainability is critical to protect industries and communities. Strengthening infrastructure reliability, improving disaster and biosecurity preparedness, and business continuity planning will enhance long-term economic stability and recovery capacity.

Eco-tourism demand

Leveraging natural assets and aligning with global tourism trends provides opportunities to increase visitor numbers, extend visitor stays, and grow local expenditure. A focus on conservation-based tourism can strengthen the Shire's position as a nature-based destination.

Value-adding and diversification

Diversification beyond traditional industries is essential for long-term economic sustainability. Opportunities exist in biocommodities, agritourism, ecotourism, events, manufacturing and processing, alongside innovation within existing sectors is required to balance economic headwinds in our mainstay industries.

Renewable energy demand

The Shire's strong agricultural base, available land, and proximity to regional energy infrastructure position it well for renewable energy investment. This presents opportunities to support the energy transition, create jobs, and drive sustainable economic development.



ENABLING NEW INVESTMENT

- Undertake a comprehensive **review** of Council's customer service environment to identify barriers to engagement and development facilitation, and develop an action plan to address them.

THEMES: **AUTHENTIC** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Review** the Hinchinbrook Shire Planning Scheme to ensure land for future development is clearly identified and development standards enable streamlined approval pathways.

THEMES: **RESILIENT** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Develop** master plans for strategic growth areas to guide future residential, tourism, and industry development in collaboration with industry stakeholders and the community.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **ASPIRATIONAL** | TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Develop** engagement and support pathways for emerging tourism products to navigate Council approval and regulatory processes, including:

- Mountain biking
- Eco-tourism
- Short-term accommodation
- Biofuels
- Manufacturing and processing

THEMES: **AUTHENTIC** | **ASPIRATIONAL** | TIMEFRAME: FY27/28

- Work** with landholders and industry to develop market-ready investment opportunities, including:

- Guided tours and local experiences
- Short-term accommodation
- Residential development
- Industrial development

THEMES: **AUTHENTIC** | **ASPIRATIONAL** | TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Identify** unallocated state land for prioritised conversion to freehold land to support future investment across the Shire.

THEMES: **ASPIRATIONAL** | TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Identify** opportunities for investment incentives through Council's regulatory and assessment processes.

THEMES: **ASPIRATIONAL** | TIMEFRAME: FY27/28

UPSKILLING AND TALENT ATTRACTION

- Continue** to broker partnerships across government and non-government sectors to facilitate skills pathways for critical industries and address skills gaps through the Hinchinbrook Employment and Skills Reference Group.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Build** partnerships with tertiary and vocational education providers to identify and promote local work placements as part of accredited training and education programs.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Develop and implement** a program of digital skills training activities to support future employment needs in the Shire.

THEMES: **RESILIENT** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Leverage and enhance existing** campaigns to better promote living and working in the Hinchinbrook Shire to:

- Skilled professionals
- Health professionals
- Migrant and working holiday visa holders
- Agricultural labour and trades
- FIFO workers in mining and gas sectors outside the Shire

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **RESILIENT** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Develop** a Council workforce strategy, recognising Council's role as a major employer in the Shire.

THEMES: **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY27/28

- Develop** a workforce and skills action plan to demonstrate the Shire's commitment to addressing skills gaps and encouraging partnership investment.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY27/28

- Collaborate** with local schools and employers to deliver promotional activities highlighting career pathways in the Hinchinbrook Shire.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **ASPIRATIONAL**

SUPPORTING BUSINESS SUCCESS

- Undertake a **review** of Council's regulatory environment to streamline and simplify business compliance processes.

THEMES: **AUTHENTIC** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Deliver** regular local supplier engagement activities for Council works and services requiring small business support.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **RESILIENT** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Work** with the Hinchinbrook Chamber of Commerce and Industry to deliver 'shop local' campaigns.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **RESILIENT** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Develop and implement** programs to build resilience to natural disasters and economic conditions.

THEMES: **RESILIENT** | **AUTHENTIC** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Facilitate** tourism engagement with local operators to showcase trends, drivers, and innovation in the sector, and encourage collaboration.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **RESILIENT** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Develop** a recognition framework to celebrate local business success.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **RESILIENT** TIMEFRAME: FY27/28

- Facilitate** tourism engagement with operators to showcase trends, drivers, and innovation, while fostering collaboration and a culture of support across the sector.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Investigate options** for a business incubator hub in Ingham.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY27/28

- Support** initiatives that strengthen local supply chain participation in major regional projects, including meet-the-buyer events and project forums.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **RESILIENT** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

ADVOCACY, PROMOTION AND RELATIONSHIPS TO UNLOCK POTENTIAL

- Continue** to **develop** targeted advocacy materials to support engagement with government on key enablers for growth and development.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Develop** sector-based investment marketing materials for key opportunities in the Hinchinbrook Shire, including:
- Biofuels
 - Agritourism and ecotourism
 - Residential development
 - Short-term accommodation

THEMES: **AUTHENTIC** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Develop** a marketing and promotion package for the TYTO Conference and Events Centre to attract events and conferences that showcase the Shire's potential.

THEMES: **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Participate** in regional economic development dialogue with Regional Development Australia, State agencies, Townsville Enterprise Limited, and neighbouring councils.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Continue** to build strategic partnerships with Townsville Enterprise Limited to promote the region across key sectors and investment opportunities

THEMES: **AUTHENTIC** | **ASPIRATIONAL** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Investigate** opportunities to attract and develop new events, including live performances, sporting events, and cultural activities that drive visitation.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **RESILIENT** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Build** strategic relationships with the defence sector to increase local spend and engagement.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Build** relationships with recreation groups (e.g. bushwalking, sailing, fishing) to understand needs and opportunities to grow visitation in the Hinchinbrook Shire.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27

- Continue** Council's membership in the Small Business Friendly Councils program.

THEMES: **CONNECTED** | **RESILIENT** TIMEFRAME: FY26/27