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ECONOMICS

# Advance Rockhampton Region

Rockhampton Regional Council  
Economic Action Plan

**2016 – 2020**



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## Message from the Mayor

There are many ingredients required to create a strong and diverse economy.

A vibrant and innovative business sector is a must, as is financial support from State and Federal Governments. Tying all this together must be a Council with a vision and a desire to make things happen.

Too often local government sees its role simply as an advocate and not as an enabler. While I will never walk away from fighting for our fair share from other levels of government, this Economic Action Plan lists the things that we control to make things happen. It's a plan for growth that I would like myself and our entire Council to be judged against.

No other region has a Council that is as unified to capitalise on growth in the traditional and innovative industries to create economic opportunities and an unrivalled lifestyle as Rockhampton.

In October 2015, Council launched the Rockhampton Region Economic Development Strategy. This strategy provides our region with a map to achieve growth and economic prosperity. Now it is time for Council to set a clear example on the things we can get moving. I am confident by providing this, catalyst support from other levels of government and a positive attitude within our community will flow.

My Council is united in its vision for our region and we want to be accountable on the things that we control. This Action Plan outlines what we will do as a Council to generate economic activity. It identifies 10 broad areas for growth and the actions we will take to achieve against all of them.



We recognise that Governments create successful business environments - not successful businesses. This is best achieved through prudent policy and planning, investment in the right infrastructure to get things moving, regulation that minimises business impact, skilled people, and basic research needed to identify economic opportunities.

Council is leading the push to develop our region through the initiatives of Advance Rockhampton and Destination Rockhampton; this plan outlines how we will do it. My commitment is to build on our success to create an economic environment that encourages and rewards innovation and attracts the investment and people needed for a prosperous future. We invite you to play your part with us.

## Economic Enablers

Business is the engine driving economic growth. The goal of this plan is to create a vibrant business environment that is innovative, competitive, productive and prosperous.

Rockhampton Regional Council is doing its bit to create that environment through the use of the following economic enablers:

- **Prudent policy and planning:** Clearly stating our intent, backed up with sound planning and actions;
- **Investment in the right infrastructure to get things moving:** Timely and prudent investment in local infrastructure to boost business investment, jobs and prosperity;
- **Regulation that minimises business impacts:** Balancing regulation against investment and jobs;
- **Skilled people:** Assisting entrepreneurs develop the skills needed to start a business;
- **Basic research needed to identify opportunities:** Partnering to provide the information needed for sound investment and business decisions;
- **Promoting our strengths and opportunities to attract investment and people:** Building a national and international profile as a great place to live and invest;
- **Lobbying other levels of government for our fair share:** Fighting to ensure that the Rockhampton region gets its fair share of government investment and service delivery.

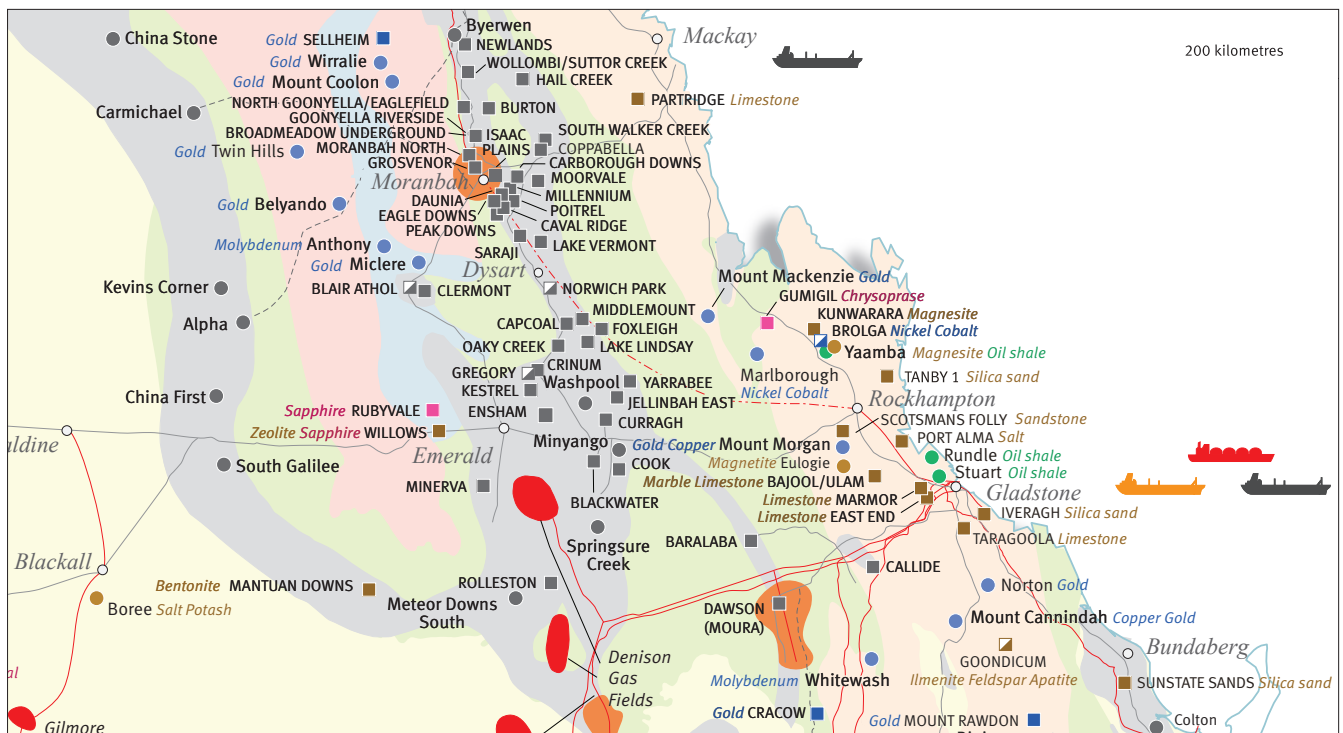


## Strategic Opportunities

### Resources

Most of Rockhampton's remarkable period buildings were founded and funded by the wealth generated by gold.

The Region's well placed to take advantage of world-class coal and gas deposits in the Bowen, Galilee and the Surat basins. Despite its strategic position, Rockhampton has not realised this opportunity and significantly missed out on the benefits of the recent mining boom.



Like Townsville, Mackay and Toowoomba – Rockhampton can be a major regional services hub for the resource sector. To facilitate Rockhampton's development as a Resource Services Hub, Council will:

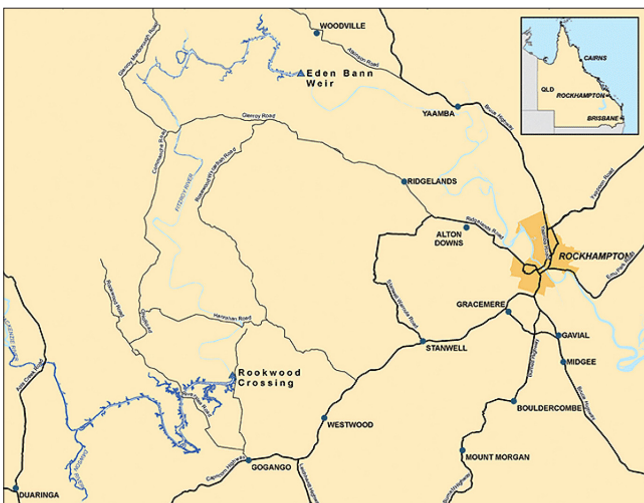
- Appoint an Industry Champion to identify market opportunities and impediments and advocate for the resources sector;
- Promote the City as a Resource Sector Services Hub;
- In partnership with the State Government, and with support from ICN, complete a supply chain analysis to:
  - map industry needs;
  - identify business capacity;
  - pinpoint supply chain gaps.
- Support local businesses to integrate into the mining and major projects supply chain;
- Advocate for strategic infrastructure investment and regulatory reform.
- Support the re-establishment of mining activity at Mount Morgan.

## Water Security and Agribusiness

Founded on the Fitzroy River, water is Rockhampton's lifeblood. It's the essence of the region's environment, prosperity, lifestyle and wellbeing. It provides a sense of space and place; an identity as a vibrant river city.

The combination of abundant grazing land and reliable water established Rockhampton as Queensland's premier cattle producing region. The City is home to major processing and supply chain facilities including two abattoirs and the Central Queensland Livestock Exchange.

The Fitzroy River Agricultural Corridor has been identified for intensive agriculture development. This potential will be facilitated through the Lower Fitzroy River Infrastructure Project incorporating the raising of the Eden Bann Weir and the construction of Rookwood Weir. The proposed Rookwood and Eden Bann Weirs will add 112,000ML to the existing 137,000ML of stored water capacity.



Within the corridor, the potential exists to establish broadacre crops, horticulture and intensive livestock enterprises. This potential is being pursued through the *Growing Central Queensland* program, an initiative to capture sustainable agribusiness opportunities.

The opportunity also exists to use available water and suitable land on the peripheries of Rockhampton to develop niche small cropping and aquaculture enterprises. These enterprises have the potential to produce high value, labour intensive products, adding value to Rockhampton's economy and lifestyle experience.

To sustain these advantages and progress these opportunities, Rockhampton Regional Council will:

- Appoint an Industry Champion to identify local market opportunities and impediments and advocate for water security and agribusiness;
- Work with the State and Commonwealth Government to sustainably manage and exploit the Lower Fitzroy System water resources;
- Support the Lower Fitzroy River Infrastructure Project and the objectives and efforts of *Growing Central Queensland*;
- Pursue options to increase the Barrage storage volume via increasing operating setpoint controls and potential augmentation of the barrage sill and/or gates;
- Work with local land holders, Central Queensland University, the State and Commonwealth Governments to determine feasibility and if appropriate, develop the business case for irrigated small cropping on the peripheries to Rockhampton City.



## Education and Training

Skilled, innovative and dynamic people are needed if Rockhampton is to realise its true economic and social potential.

Highly regarded for the depth and diversity of its teaching, research, and Vocational Education and Training (VET) activities, Rockhampton boasts world-class education facilities including 18 private schools, 22 state primary, 4 state high schools and Central Queensland University, Queensland's only dual sector university.

There are opportunities to exploit Rockhampton's reputation for world-class education and training, and promote our services and location to both national and international markets. To achieve this, Rockhampton Regional Council will take a two-tiered approach to supporting the development of the sector.

### Boarding Schools

Rockhampton offers a range of private day and boarding schools with nationally recognised academic, cultural and sporting records.

In addition to their academic endeavors, these schools provide significant economic and cultural benefits through the employment of staff, the purchase of goods and services, visitation by friends and relatives and integration into cultural and social lives - forming lifelong associations and bonds.

Rockhampton Regional Council will support the development and viability of the regions boarding schools by:

- Forming a Rockhampton Region Education Cluster;
- Completing a Rockhampton Region Boarding School Economic and Market Analysis;
- Facilitating joint initiatives and activities to promote Rockhampton, and the Schools within the city, as a world-class education hub;
- Promote the involvement of private boarding students into local cultural and social activities.

### Tertiary Education

Tertiary education in Australia is becoming highly competitive and geographically deregulated. Rockhampton has a long and mutually beneficial relationship with Central Queensland University. The opportunity exists to engage with other tertiary education providers to attract investment and development, and provide increased choice and course offerings, with a focus on building education activity within the CBD.

To achieve these objectives, Rockhampton Regional Council will:

- Incorporate education into the CBD Framework;
- Develop further planning and development incentives to attract new tertiary education investment within the CBD;
- Engage with Central Queensland University and other tertiary education institutions on the development of a University Campus/Precinct within the CBD;
- Attract additional international students through the Study Rockhampton initiative.



## Defence

Founded on its connection to Shoalwater Bay Training Area (SWBTA), Rockhampton plays an important role in defence of the nation.

At more than 4,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the SWBTA is the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) largest permanent training area. The area's scale and coastal location allow joint and combined services (Army, Navy & Airforce) exercises. The area is used independently by the ADF and Singaporean Armed Forces (SAF) and for joint ADF/US Armed Forces and ADF/SAF exercises. The SWBTA is administered from Rockhampton, with the city acting as a logistics and forward deployment base for SWBTA based exercises.

The Australia-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership provides a foundation for national cooperation within the areas of trade and economics, defence and intelligence sharing, education and innovation and science. The focus for defence cooperation is the joint development of training areas and facilities in SWBTA and Townsville. This \$2.2 billion investment will provide Singapore with enhanced military training capability and access. It also provides a major economic boost from construction and increased training activity proposed for SWBTA. Council will work to maximise these benefits.

Beyond the benefits of periodic exercises, SWBTA provides the opportunity to establish a permanent military presence within the region. While attempts have been made to woo 1st Armoured Regiment, these have been resisted on capability grounds in that it would separate operationally integrated forces. This would diminish unit interoperability at Brigade and Divisional levels.

The purpose of the ADF is to provide security from attack or the threat of attack. It follows that investment must be driven by producing and enhancing essential military capabilities. It is critical that Rockhampton and its regional partners develop the case for a permanent defence presence on the confluence between Australia's strategic defence objectives, fiscal and logistic efficacy and regional development benefits.

Based on these criteria, the relocation of Army Corp training schools from constrained southern locations distant to the units they serve provides the best opportunity to develop Rockhampton region's role in the defence of the nation. Based on the attributes of the SWBTA, the greatest enhancement in capability and financial and logistic efficacy could be derived from the relocation and colocation of any or all of the following:

- School of Armour (Puckapunyal);
- School of Artillery (Puckapunyal);
- School of Transport (Puckapunyal);
- School of Infantry (Singleton).

Council is taking both an immediate and strategic approach in pursuit of defence opportunities. In the short-term, Council will appoint an industry champion and work with the ADF and SAF to:

1. Reinforce and build Rockhampton's role and capacity as a logistics and forward deployment base for SWBTA;
2. Work with the ADF, State and Commonwealth Government agencies and business to maximise the supply chain benefits from the impending upgrade to SWBTA's infrastructure and facilities;
3. Identify on-going supply chain gaps and opportunities and work with defence prime contractors and local business to meet these needs;
4. Develop a military aviation precinct at the Rockhampton Airport;
5. Transition and link high level METS businesses in the region to provide services to the defence industry.

Strategically, Council will investigate a regional partnership with the Queensland Government to develop the business case for the establishment of Military Schools within the Rockhampton region.

## Smart Regional Centre

Rockhampton's journey to being a smart regional centre commenced with the launch of the *Smart Way Forward* strategy.

This strategy builds on Rockhampton's strengths to make industries competitive and the region more attractive for residents, tourists and the region's youth.

The *Smart Way Forward* strategy has a focus on Rockhampton's economy, built and natural environments. It is a whole of Council process designed to achieve the vision of "One Great Region". Implementation is managed at the executive level to ensure integration and coordination.

The economic objectives of *Smart Way Forward* are simple: support local businesses and boost jobs. These objectives are being achieved by:

- Providing support for start-up businesses;
- Reducing the cost of reliable broadband;
- Providing access to data to help entrepreneurs make better business decisions;
- Encouraging students to develop an interest in the skills that businesses need;
- Providing information about innovation relevant to industry;
- Encouraging visitors to spend more in the economy;
- Marketing the region domestically and internationally.

These objectives are being delivered through the following key economic development actions:

1. Establishing a *Smart Hub* on the riverfront in Quay Street;
2. Providing low cost space for education providers to enable *Smart Hub* clients to be digitally ready;
3. Working with business and peak bodies to provide a stream of real-world problems to *Smart Hub* clients;
4. Establishing mechanisms to trial *Smart Hub* innovations;
5. Leveraging Council's scale to bring affordable, reliable internet connectivity to our region;
6. Establishing, in partnership with community stakeholders, a competition for students to gain an interest in the skills of tomorrow;
7. Establishing a *Rockhampton Smart Regional Centre* brand to disseminate information and promote innovation;
8. Installing smart billboards promoting local attractions and what's on in the region;
9. Creating a mobile application to promote the *Visit Rockhampton Region* brand internationally.

## CBD Development

Rockhampton CBD will be the economic and cultural heart of the region: a dynamic place that is thriving, connected and memorable.

This is the vision for the transformation of Rockhampton's CBD.

Rockhampton Regional Council recognises that a vibrant, strong and prosperous CBD is critical for the long-term success of the city and the region that it serves. With this in mind, Council is embarking on a signature project to lead the transformation of the CBD through a comprehensive Rockhampton CBD Redevelopment Framework.

The Rockhampton CBD Redevelopment Framework takes a holistic approach to CBD development incorporating Economic Development, Public Realm, Built Form, Social and Cultural and Access and Transport strategies and initiatives to make the CBD a better place to live, work, shop, play and stay.

Economic Development strategies and initiatives are centred on the objective of creating a prosperous and interesting place to shop, play, do business, visit and invest. This will be achieved through the following strategies and actions:

### Business + Investment Ready

- Investment Attraction Team: focussed on investment and business attraction;
- Development Incentives Program: Incentivise desired CBD developments through the provision of incentives;
- Retail development analysis: Retail market analysis to identify opportunities for retail attraction;
- Renew Rockhampton Program: finding short term creative uses for vacant CBD buildings;
- Strategic Project development: Develop and implement a strategy for CBD catalytic public investment;
- Review and re-align the CBD road hierarchy, including entry points.
- Investigate demand and develop new public transport and public parking infrastructure.

### Active And Vibrant Streets + Laneways

- Eat Street Promotion: Develop Quay Street as Rockhampton's Eat Street destination;
- Street Frontage Activation: encourage street frontage activation through co-investment and promotion of footpath dining;
- CBD Events: permit and promote a program of evening events to activate the nights;
- Laneway Activation: in partnership with traders, develop and implement a Laneway Activation Pilot.
- Streetscaping redevelopment of priority roads and corridors to provide a greener, cooler and more sustainable place.

### A Place to Live For All

- Residential Diversity: partner with private developers, Economic Development Queensland, Central Queensland University and not-for-profit housing providers to establish a mix of residential housing types within the CBD.

### Supporting Creativity + Innovation

- Smart Hub: implement and develop the Smart Hub on Quay Street;
- CBD Tertiary Education Campus: work with Central Queensland University and other higher education providers to establish tertiary education operations within the CBD;
- Free Wi-Fi: provide free Wi-Fi to outdoor locations within the CBD;
- iBeacons: install iBeacons within the CBD Core to allow Council, retailers and businesses to develop and use promotion and information applications.
- Create places in the CBD that transform it into an arts and cultural destination of national significance.

## Tourism and Events – Destination Rockhampton

The Rockhampton Region is a destination for a variety of reasons. Key markets for the region include:

- **Health, education and retail:** Rockhampton is a regional centre providing health, education and retail services to central and outback Queensland.
- **Military:** the City is a logistics and forward deployment base for Shoalwater Bay Training Area based exercises, with both foreign and domestic service people visiting the region.
- **Visiting friends and relatives:** with a population exceeding 80,000, many people visit Rockhampton to be with friends and relatives. Visits to friends and relatives normally include leisure activities with the benefits to the economy that this provides.
- **Leisure/Holiday:** the Rockhampton Region offers a rich and diverse range of natural, cultural and adventure experiences.
- **Business:** people travelling to Rockhampton to provide business services and attend meetings, conferences and exhibitions.
- **Traveling public:** Rockhampton is midway in the journey from the south to the north of the State. The City provides a convenient place to stop and rest for the travelling public and is a popular stop for “Grey Nomads”.
- **Major events:** Rockhampton hosts a range of community and commercial events. These events build on the natural strengths and unique attributes of the Region, celebrating its history, creativity, industry and role as the capital of Central Queensland.

Rockhampton Regional Council collaborates with Capricorn Enterprise in the marketing and promotion of Capricorn Region Tourism.

Rockhampton Regional Council has a direct operational interest in tourism through its ownership and operation of Rockhampton Airport and major attractions including the Rockhampton Zoo and Botanic Gardens, Regional Art Gallery and Heritage Village. Council also has an interest in the operation of Archer Park and Mount Morgan Rail museums and a substantial investment in signature events including Rockhampton River Festival, Wholly Cow Month and the Secret Sunday series of events.

Contributing nearly 2,100 full time equivalent jobs to the region, tourism plays an important part in Rockhampton's economy and development. As both the cultural and economic impacts of the sector increase, Council is playing a greater role in tourism planning, infrastructure provision, marketing and promotion, and major events attraction and promotion. Key tourism actions include:

- Deliver tourism and events under the auspice of “Destination Rockhampton”;
- Appoint a Tourism Officer with responsibility for tourism planning, development, marketing and promotion;
- Develop a Rockhampton Tourism and Events Strategy;
- Work with the airlines to increase seat capacity and routes;
- Progressively implement the Mount Archer Activation Master Plan;
- Progressively implement the Rockhampton Recreational Fishing Development Strategy;
- Investigate opportunities to improve infrastructure and amenities for motorhomes and recreational vehicles;
- Provide improved roadside signage and visitor information on the entrance to Rockhampton and Mount Morgan.

## Transport and Logistics

Rockhampton is the nexus linking Central Queensland's goods and services to the nation and beyond.

In today's globalised economies, efficient and integrated transport and logistics systems are drivers of competitiveness and economic development. For Rockhampton to realise its economic potential, we must redevelop inefficient transport routes, improve national and international linkages and develop contemporary logistics facilities.

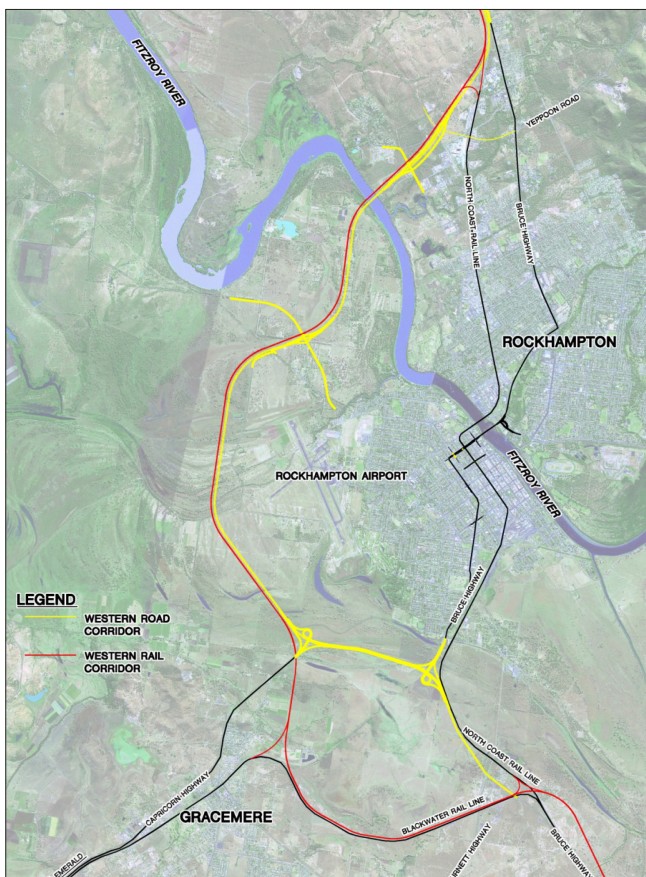
To achieve these, Rockhampton must address three critical challenges:

1. City road and rail bypass;
2. Development of regional integrated logistics and industry hub;
3. Airport planning and investment connecting people with the region and goods freight to consumers.

While the private sector will provide most of the investment needed, the State and Federal Government must prioritise and fund upgrades and improvements to critical transport infrastructure to create the networks and environment needed to mitigate risk and facilitate investment. Rockhampton Regional Council will work to ensure that critical investment is appropriately prioritised to remove constraints to investment and facilitate long awaited social benefits.

To provide the transport and logistics systems the region needs, Rockhampton Regional Council will:

- Appoint an Industry Champion to identify industry impediments, needs and opportunities and advocate for the investment needed;
- Lobby the State and Federal Governments to bring forward the full construction of the Western Road and Rail Corridor;
- Plan for and promote the development of the Gracemere Industrial Area to as a fully integrated regional logistics and industry hub;
- Deliver the Rockhampton Airport Master Plan;
- Work with the Airlines to develop new routes and seat capacity;
- Examine the opportunity for dedicated air freight facilities and national and international freight connections;
- Set aside airport strategic lands for future defence air and ground logistic purposes.



## International Relations and Trade

With the Rockhampton Region at its eastern boundary, the north of Australia is seen as the future of the nation.

It covers more than 40 per cent of Australia's land mass and contains up to 17 million hectares of arable soil, around 60 per cent of the nation's water and 90 per cent of Australia's gas reserves.

By 2050, an extra three billion people across Asia will have living standards similar to those in Australia today. These people increasingly demand quality food, reliable energy and minerals supply, world's best education opportunities and premium travel experiences.

Rockhampton and Central Queensland has competitive advantages, opportunities and existing capacity in each of these areas. Relationships built on friendship, trust and mutual benefit are the cornerstone to building a solid reputation and attracting investment and trade.

The Australia Government has enacted free trade agreements with China, Singapore, Japan and Korea. These agreements arouse and focus interest, with new trade opportunities resulting. With competition strong however, Rockhampton can't rely on these agreements alone and that is why Council is taking a strategic and focused approach to international engagement, proactively building awareness and seeking opportunities for the region.

Rockhampton has longstanding relationships with Singapore and our Japan Sister City – Ibusuki, on which to build our ties to Asia. With China's economy growing from 2 to 13 percent of the global economy in the last 20 years, opportunities abound to build trade and investment partnerships with Southern China. Council will also foster relations with South Korea with a focus on tourism and education.

Working in partnership with Austrade, Trade and Invest Queensland, Rockhampton Regional Council will develop international markets and attract investment by:

- Appointing an Industry Champion to lead Rockhampton's development as an international trade and investment destination;
- Providing a key point of contact for international investment and trade opportunities;
- Leading a Mayoral Business Delegation to Singapore and China;
- Entering into a Friendship City Agreement with Zhenjiang China;
- Promoting and hosting international government and trade delegations;
- Examining opportunities to promote trade and investment with South Korea;
- Developing an international economic and investment prospectus in Mandarin, Korean and Japanese for use by partners and stakeholders.

## Implementation

Rockhampton Regional Council is united in its vision to advance Rockhampton and will be accountable on the things that it controls.

This Action Plan outlines what Council will do to generate economic activity within the region. It identifies 10 broad areas for growth and the actions required to achieve against all of them.

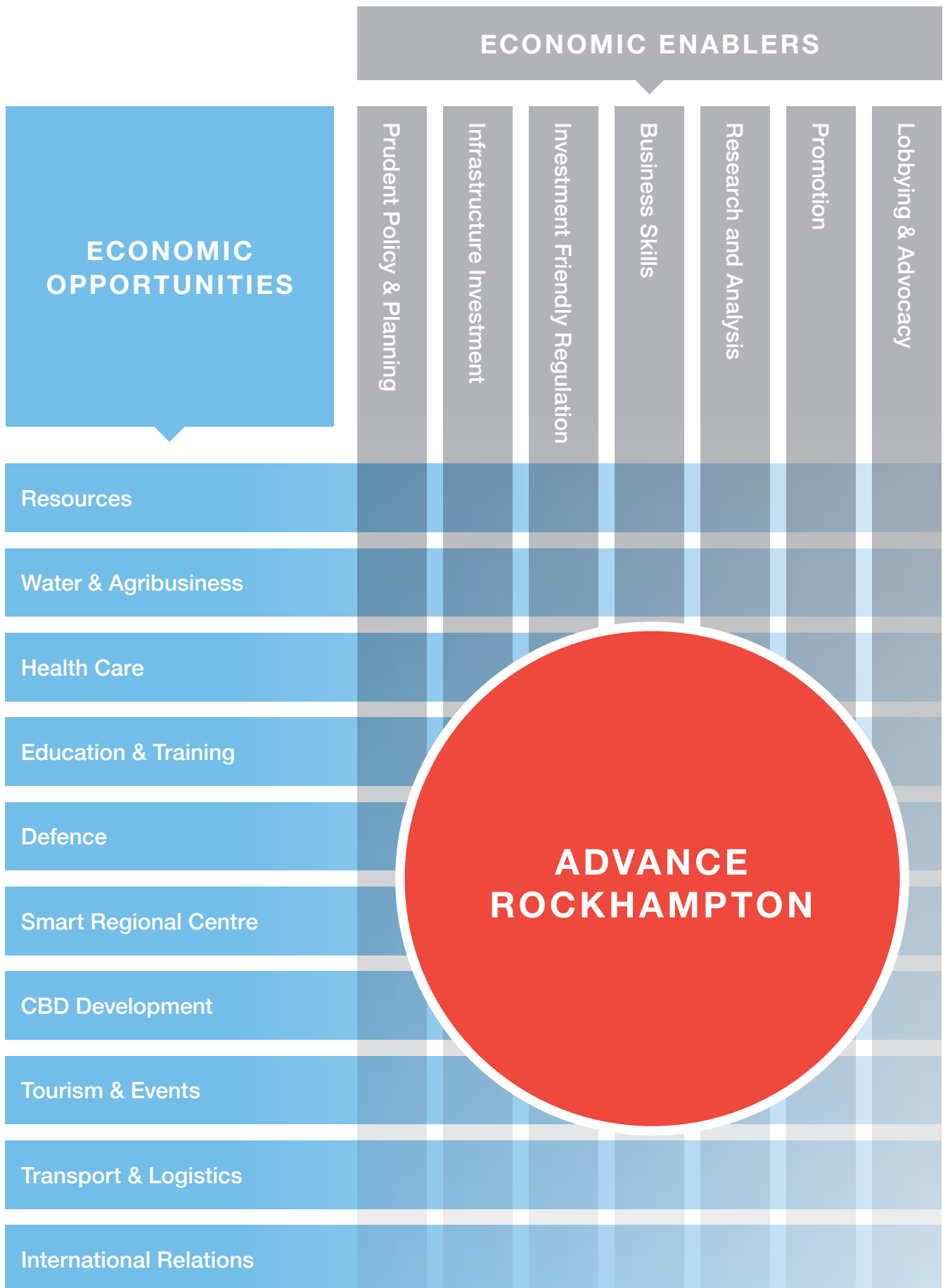
The intent is to provide a framework of action to be pursued through a partnership with the Rockhampton Business Community and Government. This partnership will be enacted through the foundation of the Mayor's Economic Development Advisory Committee – Advance Rockhampton, made up of local Industry Champions representing:

- The Resources Sector;
- Water and Agribusiness;

- Defence;
- The Smart Economy;
- The Development Industry;
- Tourism and Events;
- Transport and Logistics;
- International Relations and Trade;
- Central Queensland University;
- Central Queensland Health and Hospital Service.

Meeting quarterly and chaired by the Mayor, the Mayor's Economic Development Advisory Committee – Advance Rockhampton will monitor progress, and provide operational guidance and assistance in implementing this Action Plan. The Mayor's Economic Development Advisory Committee will report annually to the full Council in May.









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