



COOK SHIRE - RV STRATEGY

Final Report - August 2021





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1. INTRODUCTION

Cook Shire is located adjacent to two World Heritage Listed natural areas, the Great Barrier Reef, and the Wet Tropics Rainforest, and is the Gateway to Cape York Peninsula. Cook Shire's diverse landscapes, natural features and unique history make it a popular tourist destination for a range of markets, including adventure tourists, history enthusiasts, grey nomads and families. Tourism is a key contributor to Cook Shire economy and the Recreational Vehicle (RV) Market is an important feature of this contribution.

Recreation Vehicles as discussed in this strategy, are those that offer self-drive and self-contained mobile accommodation. While there are a number of emerging hybrid and "Off-Road" solutions, the focus of this strategy is on the motor home and self-contained caravan market that rely on well-formed and surfaced roads.

Recent increases in tourism to Cook Shire, and in particular the national increase in the self-drive tourism market, can largely be attributed to:



The "**Baby Boomer**" generation reaching retirement age, leading to a growing active retiree market with increasing participation in self-drive tourism and self-contained camping.



Queensland's growing popularity as a **winter destination** for self-drive tourism, improved promotion of the region, and increased investment in marketing Queensland as a drive and adventure tourism market.



The impact of the **COVID-19** pandemic on international travel, which has led to a decrease in international backpacker markets but a noted increase in domestic travel and particularly self-drive and self-contained travel.



The incremental **sealing** of the Peninsula Development Road further into Cape York, which has improved access to the region, making it easier for travellers to visit.

While the growth in the RV market is mostly a positive for the local tourism economy there are challenges that come with this market including:



Some sectors of the RV market are reluctant to use commercial caravan parks and "pay to use" sites and lobby for increased provision of free to use sites.



Disposal of waste and particularly effluent from toilet systems is a concern for many councils as these are chemically reactive and not suitable for septic or biological waste systems and need to be processed through sewage systems.



The economic benefits from the RV market are associated with both primary spend on stays, fuel and supplies, but also spend on additional experiences such as tours, activities, events, centre visits etc.



Communicating with the market is critical- and high quality reliable advance information is essential to encourage greater spend on experiences and additional night stays.

In response to these and other factors, Cook Shire Council identified a need to develop a strategy around RV tourism to ensure the Shire, the local tourism industry, the community and other partners are in the best position to respond to, plan for, and benefit from this market.

1.1. PROJECT AIM

The development of an RV Strategy for Cook Shire aims to:

“maximise and sustain the economic benefits from the RV tourism market through increasing visitation numbers, increasing spend and extending the length of stay of RV visitors in Cook Shire.”



Figure 1: Study Methodology

Photo Credit: cooktownandcapeyork.com



2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The RV Strategy is underpinned by several of Council's existing plans, most notably, Council's Corporate Plan, Community Plan, and Economic Development Plan. All three plans highlight Council's aspiration to promote the unique qualities of Cook Shire, and ensure strong partnerships between Council and the community, including local businesses to enable Cook Shire to become a recognisable and inviting community.

The Figure below shows where the RV strategy sits within Council's strategic context. A detailed review of these documents can be found in Appendix 1.



Figure 2: Strategic Context of the RV Strategy



3. WHAT IS A RECREATIONAL VEHICLE (RV)?

3.1. WHAT DOES AN RV LOOK LIKE?

The Caravan Industry Association of Australia sets out 9 different types of Recreational Vehicles as detailed below.

Table 1: Types of Recreational Vehicles (from CIAA¹)

TENT TRAILER

Tent trailers typically comprise a box trailer, used to store cooking and camping equipment, plus a lift-out tent for sleeping and living space. Often light and small enough to be towed by small vehicles, there are also off-road versions for rugged terrain.



CAMPER TRAILER

A step up from tent trailers, camper trailers are generally more comfortable and convenient but still easily towed by smaller vehicles. They are generally easy to set up and provide generous room and equipment, usually including a gas cooker, refrigerator, table and sink.



POP-TOP CARAVANS

Pop-tops are similar to fully equipped caravans, sometimes even with an ensuite, but with a pop-up roof providing up to half a metre of the headroom. Their low profile reduces wind resistance when towing and facilitates storage in a garage or carport.



CARAVANS

Caravans vary greatly in size and format, anything up to 10 metres long with up to three axles. They are often equipped with two comfortable berths but can have up to six or more berths. Fit-out can be basic or luxurious, and some have slide-outs for extra space.



SLIDE-ON CAMPERS

Slide-on campers are designed to sit on the back of a ute, pick-up or light truck and can have features similar to a caravan or camper trailer. They allow for towing a separate trailer and can be parked on built-in jacks to enable separate use of the ute.



FIFTH-WHEELERS

Fifth-wheelers are towed by a truck or pick-up via a hitch similar to that in a semi-trailer – the “fifth wheel” – fitted to the bed of the tow vehicle. Usually large and luxurious, they normally feature a raised master suite above the hitch.



¹ <https://www.caravanindustry.com.au/rvmap/types-of-rvs>

CAMPERVANS / CLASS B MOTORHOMES

Campervans – Class B Motorhomes – have a compact fit-out in a high roof or pop-top van. They can be driven on a car licence and used as a passenger vehicle. Equipment usually includes kitchen, eating and sleeping, with en suites in larger models.



CLASS A MOTORHOMES

Class A motorhomes are typically top-end RVs, 7-12 metres long and 7-14 tonnes, with custom bodywork on a specialised RV chassis or adapted truck chassis. Usually fitted with all luxury amenities, they can cost up to half a million dollars, even more.



CLASS C MOTORHOMES

Class C Motorhomes range from economy to luxury models built on a cab-chassis with a caravan-style body. Weighing 4.5-7 tonnes, and measuring 6-13 metres, they retain the donor vehicle's cabin, often with an overhead bunk. Slide-outs are increasingly common.



This strategy focusses on “self-contained recreational vehicles,” which are:

Vehicles with internal cooking facilities, toilet, shower and sleeping facilities; plus water tanks sufficient for 48 hours or more independent use by the occupants; and with holding tanks for grey and black water.

3.3. WHO IS DRIVING THE RV?

The Queensland Camping Options Toolkit outlines three types of consumers who are likely to be involved in drive tourism:

Grey Nomads

These are defined as retired or semi-retired, over 55 and travelling for leisure. They spend a similar amount per day as their younger counterparts but generally have a longer stay.

Youth Market

These are visitors aged between 18-30, and in many cases combine their travel with work or study.

Families

These are identified as the key market for commercial providers. These visitors are looking for cost-effective travel and accommodation options.

3.2. WHAT DOES AN RV NEED?

There are four key infrastructure needs for self-contained recreational vehicles.



Figure 3: RV Key Site Infrastructure Needs

However, RVs do not need all of these at every site, and ultimately the greatest need is Safe Places to Park. Access to fresh water, and dump points will be essential but intermittent. Access to power is decreasingly important as solar-battery technology becomes increasingly efficient and modern RVs become increasingly self-sufficient.

RVs are also services dependant with the main dependency associated with access to fuel and to a lesser extent groceries- particularly perishables.

4. WHY AN RV STRATEGY

Cook Shire is well placed to leverage its environmental, cultural and historical assets to attract more visitors to the Shire, in particular the Recreational Vehicle Market. Its proximity to the Cairns International Airport, and position within Far North Queensland's existing tourism profile places it in an ideal position to capitalise on the tourism strength of the region, increase visitation, and generate economic benefits.

However, it is important to understand the RV market, the trends and the challenges so a balanced strategy is developed. This section details current trends and statistics associated with the RV market and outlines how Cook Shire is currently accommodating the RV market.

4.1. CAMPING, CARAVAN AND RV TRAVEL

Tourism Research Australia produced a number of key statistics on Commercial Caravan and Camping Tourism in 2019. The key statistics are summarised below.

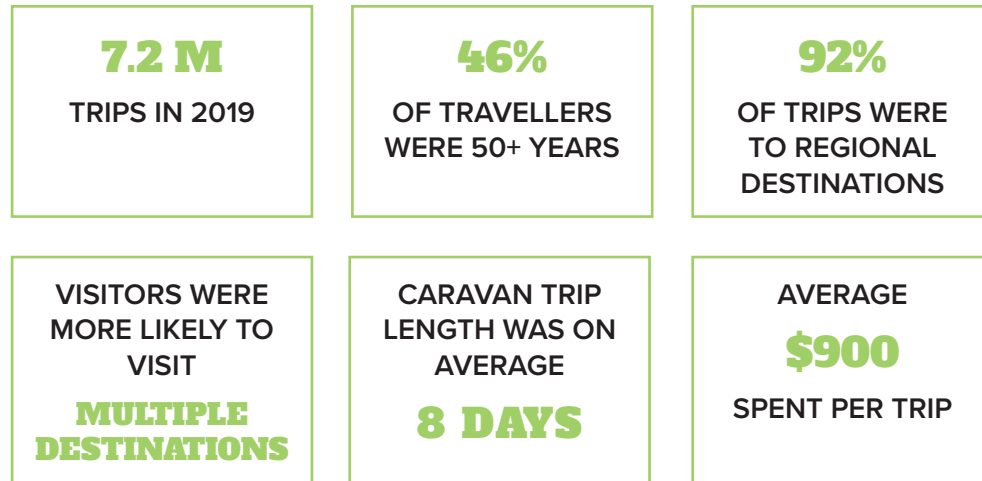


Figure 4: Caravan and Camping Trends (2019)²

² <https://www.tra.gov.au/Domestic/domestic-visitor-profiles>

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia Limited (CMCA) published characteristics of RV users in QLD in 2019. Key characteristics are shown below.



Figure 5: RV User Characteristics in QLD³

According to CMCA:

- « caravan and camping nights continue to be a substantial part of the QLD tourism sector, accounting for 13% of the total nights in Queensland in 2018
- « the top international visitors to the Queensland Market prior to COVID-19 were, Germany (21%), United Kingdom (17%), and France (9%)
- « there was much stronger visitation from younger adults (20-29yo, 53%), while older visitors (over 55) account for only 13%.

³ CMCA RV Road Tourism Forum, 2019

4.2. THE VALUE OF RVS TO AUSTRALIA'S ECONOMY

The Caravan Industry of Australia highlights that the caravan industry provides a significant boost to the Australian economy, as illustrated below:

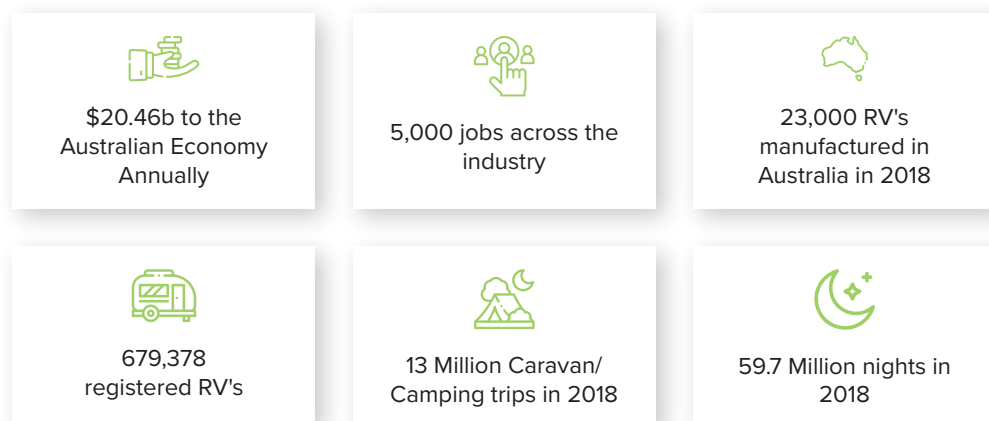


Figure 6: Australian Trends in Camping and Caravanning (2020)

4.3. TOURISM IN COOK SHIRE

Tourism is already a substantial part of Cook Shire's economy. Key features of tourism in Cook Shire are:

- « there are 67 tourism businesses in Cook Shire, 40 of which employ at least one person
- « visitation is typically domestic tourism, with intrastate travellers more than triple that of interstate since 2019 (79,000 compared to 26,000)
- « interstate travellers are more likely to visit for a longer duration, accounting for approximately 33% of total nights stayed in 2018/19, tourism and hospitality accounted for 9.2%⁴ of employment, or 308 jobs in Cook Shire and added \$34.16 million to the local economy, an increase of 5.8% from the 2013/14 values.

Tourism and hospitality are a significant industry in Cook Shire, adding \$24.76 million to the economy and creating 241 full time equivalent jobs in the region in 2019/2020. The table below details the impact the tourism and hospitality industries has on Cook Shire during Covid-19 and pre-covid levels.

⁴ <http://economy.id.com.au/cook/tourism-value>

Table 2: Tourism and hospitality industries (2018/2019 and 2019/2020)

MEASURE	2019/2020	% OF TOTAL	2018/2019	% OF TOTAL
EMPLOYMENT (TOTAL)				
Direct	256	6.2	339	9.9
Indirect	77	1.9	102	3
Total	333	8.1	441	12.9
EMPLOYMENT (FTE)				
Direct	180	4.7	284	9.1
Indirect	61	1.6	96	3.1
Total	241	6.3	380	12.2
OUTPUT/SALES (\$M)				
Direct	35.76	3.8	72.56	6.4
Indirect	9.77	1	19.82	1.7
Total	45.53	4.8	92.38	8.1
VALUE ADDED (\$M)				
Direct	18.95	3.1	38.58	6.4
Indirect	5.81	1	11.83	1.9
Total	24.76	4.1	50.41	8.3

Based on the available statistics and the increased demand in caravan and camping vehicles⁵, in some cases increases of more than 30%⁶, an assumption can be made that the RV market will account for between 15%-20% of the overall tourism sector. Based on this assumption the impact of the RV market on Cook Shire is estimated in the table below.

⁵ <https://www.9news.com.au/national/caravan-sales-boom-as-aussies-holiday-locally-during-covid-pandemic/8f122576-2854-4a50-a18c-e8751648405>

⁶ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-28/border-closures-see-caravan-sales-surge-across-australia/12400134>

The assumptions have been set across three scenarios:

1. Conservative: No increase on current visitation numbers or RV Market Growth accounting for 15% of the overall visitation market. RV visitors will travel in groups of 3, as this will account for the mix between grey nomads and families. Average Spend per trip is set at \$450 (half of the national average)
2. Moderate: No increase on current visitation number but the RV market accounts for 20% of the overall visitation market. RV visitors will travel in groups of 3, as this will account for the mix between grey nomads and families. Average Spend per trip is set at \$900 (national average)
3. Growth: 10% increase in the visitation numbers and the RV Market accounts for 20% of the overall visitation market. RV visitors will travel in groups of 3, as this will account for the mix between grey nomads and families. Average Spend per trip is set at \$1,200 (increased spend)

Table 3: Potential Annual Market Spend – Cook Shire

SCENARIO	VISITORS	RV VISITORS	POTENTIAL MARKET SPEND ANNUALLY	% of overall tourism and hospitality industry (19/20) (COVID Levels)	% of overall tourism and hospitality industry (18/19) (Pre-COVID Levels)
Conservative	105,000	15,750	\$2,362,500	9.5%	4.69%
Moderate	105,000	21,000	\$6,300,000	25.44%	12.50%
Growth Case	115,500	23,100	\$9,240,000	37.32%	18.33%

4.4. CURRENT RV PARK SUPPLY

There are several existing caravan and RV parks within Cook Shire. These range from formal caravan parks, to roadhouses, farm stays and an RV Rest Area for fully self-contained vehicles adjacent to the Cooktown racecourse, currently managed by Council. These are shown in the figure below.

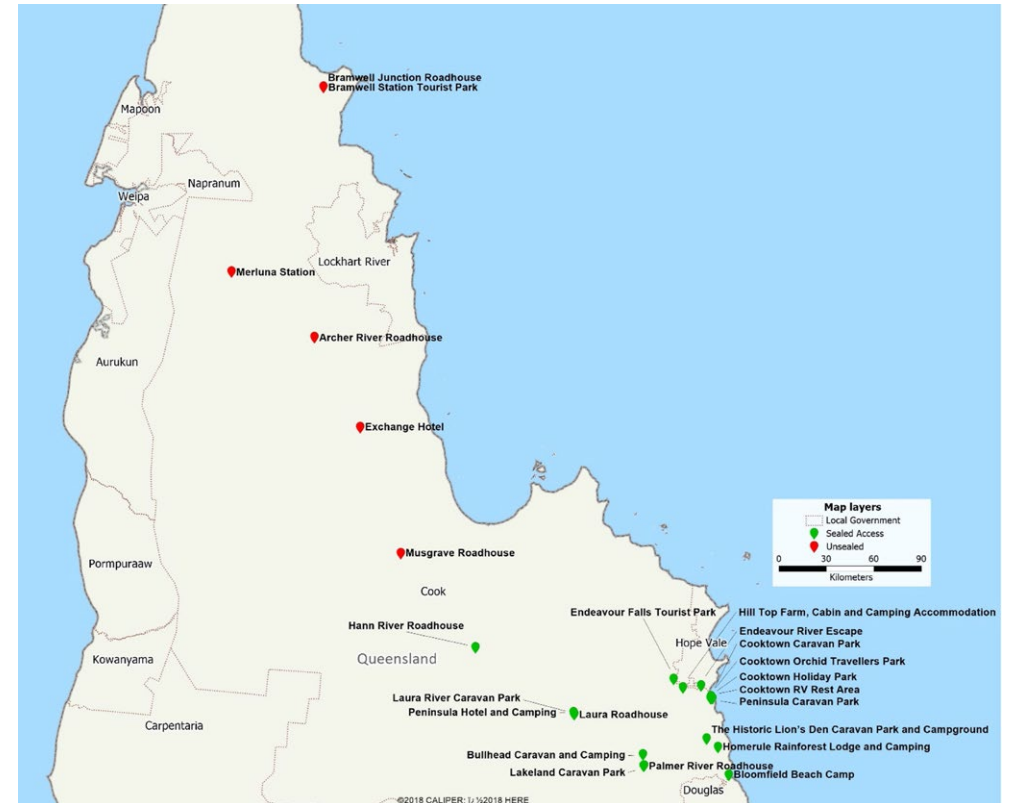


Figure 7: Current Caravan Park Supply

There is a significant supply of RV accommodation in Cooktown, as the main township of Cook Shire and sites along the Peninsula Developmental Road in most townships. A survey of operators was undertaken to understand the capacity of each location, utilisation of sites, and to gain views on the trends in the market. Responses to the survey were varied and in some cases operators were unable or unwilling to provide specific details and site numbers.

The table below details the estimated accommodation stock within each park, and whether or not there is access to a dump point.

Table 4: Available Capacity in Cook Shire

SITE NAME	TOWNSHIP	PROVIDES RV SITES (NO. OF SITES OVERALL) [NO. OF POWERED SITE]	PROVIDES A PUBLIC DUMP POINT
Archer River Roadhouse	Archer River	Yes	No
Bloomfield Beach Camp	Bloomfield	Yes [16]	No
Bramwell Station Tourist Park	Shelburne	No	No
Cooktown Caravan Park	Cooktown	Yes (41)	Yes
Cooktown Holiday Park	Cooktown	Yes [50]	No
Cooktown Orchid Travellers Park	Cooktown	Yes [27]	No
Cooktown - Public RV day parking and Dump Point	Cooktown	Not for overnight stays	Yes
Cooktown RV Rest Area	Cooktown	Informal sites - no services	No
Endeavour Falls Tourist Park	Cooktown	Yes (24)	No
Exchange Hotel	Coen	Yes	No
Hann River Roadhouse	Laura	Yes	No
Hill Top Farm, Cabin and Camping Accommodation	Cooktown	Yes [1]	No
Lakeland Caravan Park	Lakeland	Yes	No
Laura Roadhouse	Laura	Yes	No
Musgrave Roadhouse	Yarraden	Yes	No
Peninsula Caravan Park	Cooktown	Yes (40+)[40]	No
Quinkan Hotel	Laura	Yes	No
The Historic Lion's Den Caravan Park and Campground	Rossville	7 acres [24]	No

Many of the parks close to Cooktown offer powered sites for approximately \$35 per night, and there are no parks that offer spaces at a significantly cheaper price by comparison to other parks. The exception to this is the RV Rest Area which operates on a donation basis; however, this only provides a space to park with no other amenities.

Based on the analysis of the current RV supply it is considered that there is a suitable level of overall sites available to service the expected demand from the Market. However, with approximately 180 powered sites, there may be insufficient supply of powered sites to meet the growing demands of the RV market. Continued analysis of the mix of available RV sites (powered vs unpowered) will be required to ensure that the demands of the market are being met by the available supply, with a particular emphasis placed on increasing the proportion of powered sites.

An important finding from the analysis of the current supply of the current accommodation operators was the lack of detailed information available. Of the 16 commercial operators that were identified, only 7 were able to provide details on the number of sites and powered sites. Similarly, the data available on-site utilisation and peak periods was patchy and not sufficient for any overall demand projections in regard to desired site mix.

There is some basic information available on various websites for the operators, and while attempts were made to gather useful data from all of the operators within Cook Shire, it is clear that improved collation and analysis of data will assist in future planning and tracking of RV tourism trends.

It will be important to the success of this RV Strategy that more detailed information is available to help inform Council and operators make decisions as the market changes over time.

5. ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

A targeted stakeholder engagement process was undertaken, focussing on three key stakeholder groups: Council, the Cooktown Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, and current RV park operators. Key themes to emerge from the consultation are outlined below.

5.1. COOK SHIRE COUNCIL

Council has recognised that the sealing of the Peninsula Developmental Road and the changes in how Australian's are travelling due to the impacts of COVID-19 will have a significant impact on who will be visiting the region, and how many new visitors there will be.

The role of council is to develop partnerships with the tourism industry and general community to support the sustainable growth of the tourism industry. Opportunities should be developed to support existing or new operators to provide the services needed so that the benefits from this growing and evolving tourism market can be maximised for the region. Council indicated that it does not want to compete with commercial providers, but rather has a role to provide a supportive environment for private sector and not for profit groups to meet growing market needs. In some cases, Council may be able to play a role in filling gaps in the short term or working with others to fill those gaps.

The sealing of the Peninsula Developmental Road between Laura and Weipa will be a critical point for the region. There is around 170km still to be sealed with reports that this could be completed within the next decade. Timeframes for completion are unclear as work is ongoing but not at a rate that is likely to complete the project within the next 10 years.

The sealing of the PDR would also offer additional opportunities to develop future tour "sealed loops" (such as Battle Camp Rd) providing different routes to Cooktown and expanding the region's appeal for drive tourism. However, these would be aspirational and highly dependent on available funding.

Council has had representation from the RV industry who have actively promoted increased provision of free camping sites to support the RV sector along with the potential benefits of being RV friendly. Additional needs identified to be RV friendly included greater provision of public "dump" points for effluent disposal and dedicated parking areas in towns.

Council has recognised that "free" camping sites will cost time and resources to maintain and administer and that the economic benefit from users of these free sites is difficult to measure. Unless a significant gap in capacity exists along a stretch of sealed road it is more effective to support the community and tourism sector to accommodate this market and to encourage the development of services, tours and experiences that encourage increased night stays in or near the shire's towns.



5.2. TOURISM SECTOR (COOKTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND TOURISM)

The Cooktown Chamber of Commerce and Tourism identified several key areas that are considered critical to ensuring that the Cook Shire RV Strategy can maximise the economic benefit to the region.

- « Ensure the strategy targets the right sector of the RV market, i.e., those that “will spend money on both essential provisions and services and discretionary items including tours, meals and souvenirs”.
- « Investigate potential ways to increase visibility of activities and services in Cooktown and surrounding Townships, which will attract more visitors and increase the typical length of stay in the region.
- « There is a significant supply of RV suitable facilities within Cooktown and along the PDR for the current number of visitors to the region. Therefore, rather than additional facilities, whether they are public or private, the strategy should focus on working with current private sector businesses to ensure they have the capacity to support additional demand from the growing market.
- « There was strong opposition to any provision of “free camping” sites, including that at the racecourse in Cooktown, stating that there are concerns about the costs associated with the maintenance of such sites and the impact they have on the surrounding amenity and environments. However, the potential to need “overflow “ RV sites was acknowledged and the opportunity for not for profit groups to provide very basic shorter stay options could be useful in future peaks. The preferred approach was to develop more partnerships or a more supportive environment, for the private sector to increase capacity when needed including consideration of peak season overflow needs.
- « Increasing the length of the tourist season in Cooktown and Cook Shire is considered to be the biggest key to success. Extending the current season outside of June - August would bring additional revenue to both commercial operators and the shire more generally, without over capitalising for additional visitors during the peak season. Increased domestic self-drive tourism and changing climate means that the extension of the season past August is likely to be achievable with good number possible into October.

5.3. CURRENT OPERATORS

To gain a greater understanding of the facilities that are currently available in Cook Shire for RV's a telephone survey was undertaken with all identified roadhouses and caravan parks.

There was a consensus that the peak season operated between June and August, however some parks noted that this can be longer dependent on the weather and impacts on the road network.

Operators were asked if there was a need for low-cost overflow short-stay facilities within Cook Shire, in particular Cooktown, to service the market during the peak season. Responses were varied and did not represent a clear consensus. They can be summarised as:

- « There is sufficient supply within the network and no need for an overflow facility as such a facility would negatively impact the commercial operators.
- « There is a need for such a facility, but only when the commercial operators are at capacity within the township.
- « It is not of concern to the operator, as they only operate a small facility, are satisfied with current bookings, and don't believe that such a facility would significantly impact them.

The survey also sought potential strategies that would encourage more travellers, increase night stays or improve the offering from the shire. Identified strategies included:

- « Develop an improved information campaign to ensure visitors to the region are aware of the caravan parks, attractions, and tours available within each township.
- « A number of caravan parks have potential expansion space that could be developed should the need arise.
- « Changes to Council's policies and regulations to reduce the regulatory burden on operators, particularly those in the more rural areas and those looking to offer short stay accommodation as part of a secondary business (primary business was generally agriculture). This may also help diversify the market offering within Cook Shire.

6. KEY FINDINGS

Analysis of the trends, existing infrastructure, and engagement activities generated several key findings that will guide the RV strategy. These fall into two main themes:

1. Infrastructure: This includes analysis of the capacity of the existing supply, the markets' critical infrastructure needs, and ensuring there is a suitable range of accommodation stock within the network.
2. Tourism Partnerships: This includes the non-infrastructure elements critical to ensuring a successful RV Strategy, such as information access and partnerships.

6.1. INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Cook Shire is well placed in terms of accommodation stock within Cooktown, and strategically along the Peninsula Developmental Road. The current supply of traditional caravan parks and roadhouse style camping sites is sufficient for current levels, and there appears to be sufficient undeveloped capacity within existing operators to support growth within the market.
2. There is an opportunity to increase the diversity of accommodation types by improving access to rural properties. for an "RV farm stay" style of experience. A similar model operates in Douglas Shire and New Zealand, allowing rural properties to provide a limited number of short stay sites, as a secondary activity to a rural business.
3. As the PDR is sealed, it will become important to ensure access to dump points especially north of Cooktown. This should be done in conjunction with existing tourism operators, and townships rather than seeking to develop a number of new standalone sites. Improving distribution of and access to, dump points will assist with reducing illegal dumping and influencing route planning for RV tourists. Better information distribution will also be important.
4. There may be a limited role for some free or very low cost/donation based, basic camp sites. Providing a diversity of options can strengthen the depth of the self-drive market and allow for overflow capacity during visitor peaks. It will be important to ensure existing operators are not competitively disadvantaged, but also that the market potential of travellers who desire free or low-cost accommodation options is not disregarded.

5. Signage is inconsistent across the Shire. A single suite of signage options to improve wayfinding and encourage self-drive and RV tourism across the Shire would enhance awareness and improve access and use of existing sites.
6. Information and Marketing systems or "communication and promotion" could be considered an "infrastructure" investment. Access to up to date and accurate information on stay options, integrated with smart marketing of the services and experiences available in the shire and at destinations is recognised in the industry as the key emergent strategy.
7. With the increased prevalence of RVs and larger vehicles, several design issues are emerging around both public sites (parks, rest areas, main street parking etc) and caravan parks that need to be addressed to be more supportive of the RV sector. Key issues are the need to allow for increased length and turn radius and greater consideration of height and visibility for drivers of RVs. Increased use of drive through parking and stay sites is also recommended.



6.2. TOURISM PARTNERSHIPS

1. Council is not in a financial position to develop, maintain and manage all the assets required to sustain the RV tourist market. Partnerships with the State Government, current caravan park operators and the tourism sector in general will be critical to the success of such a strategy.
2. Overall, it will be critical that Cook Shire is leveraging the existing assets at its disposal, including its history, cultural significance, and environmental splendour. Establishing partnerships with various stakeholders will be important to ensure that beyond the infrastructure that supports RV accommodation there are attractions that will continue to drive visitation to and night stays in Cook Shire.
3. Working with key partners to establish a consistent and collaborative marketing campaign that ensures information is up to date and easily accessible will be important and will provide avenues for Council to capitalise on the potential of third-party operators, such as wiki camps, to highlight tourism opportunities. There is an increasing market expectation for on-line information and booking systems to allow advanced trip planning. The use of websites such as *Wikicamps*, *Greynomads.com.au*, *Roadtrippers.com* and many others is growing and getting information onto these sites or developing regional websites for visitors will become the modern “brochure” or guidebook. For example, *Wikicamps* is fully downloadable and can run on a phone or tablet without needing a mobile network, this makes it an extremely popular source of information for self-drive tourists. As it can be downloaded then it is important that a strategy exists to keep the information on the site up to date.
4. Partnerships with the other Councils within the Cape will also be important. Cooktown is well-placed to act as a hub for the rest of the Cape. Leveraging or co-marketing with events in neighbouring Councils may entice more visitors to the shire as part of overall trip planning for the region.
5. There are some "easy wins" that can be developed with minimal investment but would provide immediate benefits to both Council and operators, such as:
 - Certain market segments are more likely to access information online than through traditional sources such as tourist parks or visitor information centres. Improved availability of information online will encourage the younger (20-29 y.o.) market, a key growing RV market segment, to easily research what is available within Cook Shire.
 - Improved data collection will provide more clarity about the RV tourist market and will enable Council and operators to respond to market trends and make informed decisions. Data collection should include information on the visitor profile, the number of nights the region was at capacity, total nights/ duration of stay, and locations visited.



7. RV STRATEGY

7.1. STRATEGY AIM

Cook Shire Council RV Strategy aims to strengthen Cook Shire as an RV destination and maximise and sustain the economic benefits from the RV tourism market. Collaboration with key industry partners will ensure the provision of high quality and sustainable opportunities for RV travellers. Ultimately, the Strategy will increase visitation, spending and night stays by RV visitors. This will help increase and diversify the tourism economy of Cook Shire and its townships.

7.2. STRATEGY GOALS

The RV Strategy will achieve the following goals:

1. Ensure there is sufficient capacity and diversity of RV accommodation and overflow resources available across the shire to meet a growing demand for RV tourism.
2. Develop systems to ensure that information relevant to RV tourism such as accommodation, events, and activities is up to date, readily available and easily accessible.
3. Work with other levels of government, the tourism industry, and other partners to promote the sustainable development of infrastructure that supports and encourages increased RV tourism.
4. Work collaboratively with existing tourism operators, RV accommodation providers, neighbouring councils, and land managers to enhance the RV profile of the region and foster a coordinated approach to management of RV tourism within the Shire.



7.3. ACTIONS

To achieve the aim and goals of the strategy, a number of actions have been identified. Priorities are based on:

H - high priority for investigation and action within 1-2 years

M - medium priority for investigation and action within 2-4 years

L - low priority for review and investigation within 4-6 years **O** - ongoing action

Table 5: RV Strategy Actions

ACTION	DETAIL	RATIONALE	PRIORITY
<i>Goal 1: Ensure there is sufficient capacity and diversity of RV accommodation and overflow resources available across the shire to meet a growing demand for RV tourism.</i>			
Diversifying Commercial Opportunities	Consider a future amendment to the planning scheme to allow small scale short stay RV camping in the Rural zone without requiring a planning approval	<p>There is potential to both diversify the current commercial market offering and ensure that as the demand increases there is scalable capacity within the market. Improving the ability for rural property owners to accommodate RVs on a short-stay basis will enable these residents to establish a secondary source of accommodation within Cook Shire.</p> <p>A future opportunity to make amendments to the Planning Scheme to enable small-scale tourist parks should be sought. The proposal to make this amendment is based on other strategies within the region.</p> <p>Council will need to determine the level of assessment, which will have an impact on the Council's ability to manage developments. Existing provisions under the 'Rural zone' could be modified to reduce regulation and ensure Council can prevent undesirable outcomes.</p> <p>Douglas Shire Council have a similar outcome in their scheme to allow three (3) self-contained recreational vans to be accommodated on Rural properties as accepted development. Important features of the Douglas Scheme include detailing that for a Tourist Park to be considered small scale it needs to meet the following acceptable outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « On land that is actively being used for rural purpose. « Caters for a maximum of 3 self-contained recreational vans at any one time. « Does not cater for camping, accommodation within the main dwelling or any other forms of accommodation other than self-contained recreation vehicles. « Minimum lot size, no less than 10 Ha. « Setback 100m from road frontage and 50m from side boundary « Screened from view of adjoining roads. « No more than 100m from main dwelling on site. « Located in a flood free part of the land. « Maximum of 7 nights in succession. « Ablution blocks not required. « Vehicle's access and exit in forward gear. « Sealing of access and manoeuvring areas. 	M-O

ACTION	DETAIL	RATIONALE	PRIORITY
Overflow RV Parking	<p>Review the draft policy contained in the Queensland Camping Options Toolkit and, if necessary, draft and implement a policy for the Cooktown RV Rest Area to enable provision of overflow parking when needed.</p> <p>Establish an “Overflow Management Committee” to guide the deployment of an overflow site at the Cooktown RV Rest Area. This should include representatives from Council, the racecourse committee, and Cooktown Caravan Parks, including those within 50km of the racecourse. This committee will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Setting the trigger for opening the racecourse to visitors, « Outline events for which accommodation at the site can be sold in advance, « Clear responsibilities for all parties involved, « What services will be provided at the site, ensuring they adhere to competitive neutrality, « Compliance and condition assessment review periods, and « Total number of sites that will be offered at the site and a site map for visitors. 	<p>Analysis of the current supply of caravan parks indicates that there is suitable supply, and some operators believe that the facilities offered at the racecourse negatively impact on the commercial businesses in and around Cooktown. The Queensland Camping Options Toolkit outlines a draft policy to establish an overflow camping ground.</p> <p>The Caravan Parks Association of Qld Overflow Policy also provides a framework to aid both commercial caravan parks, holiday parks and councils by facilitating a system of referrals to other sites when existing supply is at capacity.</p> <p>A similar policy should be established by the proposed “Overflow Committee” to ensure any overflow facility is not putting existing providers at a competitive disadvantage.</p> <p>The Racecourse site could be managed by the Turf Club and used as revenue source for the club.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>M</p>

Goal 2: Develop systems to ensure that information relevant to RV tourism such as accommodation, events, and activities is up to date, readily available and easily accessible.

Wayfinding Signage	<p>Update wayfinding signage, as per the Cook Shire Signage Style Guide, to assist RV users to find RV parking, RV/ Caravan suitable parks, dump points, and directional signage to attractions and information locations.</p> <p>Ensure signage includes information about mobile phone service coverage.</p>	<p>It will be critical that townships across Cook Shire, and in particular Cooktown as the main hub, have a standard suite of directional and informative signage to assist RV users to RV parking, RV/ Caravan suitable parks, dump points, and directional signage to attractions and information locations.</p> <p>Information on mobile service coverage should also be distributed by park operators to ensure that visitors are aware of blackspots and locations where telephone and internet services are available. This will become more important further from Cooktown as there may be limited service beyond the townships.</p>	<p>M</p>
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⁷ https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/qorf-media/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/25192422/Camping_-_Options_Toolkit.pdf

ACTION	DETAIL	RATIONALE	PRIORITY
Online marketing and Other information needs	<p>Support the establishment of the Cooktown Chamber of Commerce and Tourism web-friendly guide to Cooktown, and promote the guide through the Council communication channels, including Council's website, tourism website and social media pages.</p> <p>Develop a small pamphlet that can be given to visitors who are unlawfully camping, directing them to Commercial parks, overflow sites (if open) and including plain English statements about legal camping options within the Shire.</p> <p>This could also include locations of other services such as potable water, dump point locations and rest areas (non-overnight stay area).</p> <p>Work with third-party online camping information providers, such as Wikicamps, to ensure that the information is correct and relevant where possible.</p> <p>Ensure regular updating of all online guides and RV information sites at the beginning of each year (well before the main season starts) to keep visitors and potential visitors as informed as possible.</p>	<p>With limited access to mobile reception, dependent on mobile carrier, across the shire it will be critical that visitors are able to access up to date information on services and facilities that are readily available and to allow visitors to pre-plan their trip effectively.</p> <p>The Cooktown Chamber of Commerce and Tourism is in the process of establishing their guide to Cooktown as a web friendly version to provide additional information to visitors. Online access to the guide will be critical in ensuring visitors can access important information prior to arriving in Cook Shire.</p> <p>Access to and updating of online information will be critical in managing increasing demand and promoting travel to the shire.</p> <p>It will also be important to ensure visitors to the region are aware of the legal overnight stay options.</p> <p>Online information is increasingly the main source of information and as Wikicamps is a downloadable guide it is a critical source to be updated. The annual update role could be coordinated with the industry by Cook Shire's Tourism Manager (or similar role). Collective support from the tourism industry would be required.</p>	<p>H</p> <p>H</p> <p>H</p> <p>O</p>

Goal 3: Work with other levels of government, the tourism industry and other partners to promote the sustainable development of infrastructure that supports and encourages increased RV tourism.

Continue to advocate for sealing the PDR as quickly as possible.	Continue to advocate for the sealing of the PDR and ensuring that the road is maintained to a level suitable to manage the expected increase in use resulting from increased tourism, and different vehicle types.	Continued sealing of the PDR will lead to increased tourism and especially growth within the RV market. This will strengthen commercial provision and encourage diversity of experiences and accommodation options.	O
Improve road, caravan park and rest area design	<p>Ensure that TMR rest areas and council projects (for parks, visitor stops etc) improve consideration of RV vehicles with increased length and turn radius needs.</p> <p>Ensure all new caravan park proposals or upgrades consider the access and size needs of larger RVs.</p> <p>Ensure more powered sites are provided as part of the overall mix of supply of accommodation.</p>	<p>Issues with accessibility of rest areas and some caravan parks have been raised as key design issues and in some cases safety issues.</p> <p>When rest stops or comfort stops are needed, width of road shoulders, length of access slip lanes, turn radius for entry points, sight lines and ability to turn around should be considered in all design.</p> <p>For caravan parks the difficulty for larger vehicles to access sites and drive through parks is a key factor for potential visitors. All new design should consider increased provision of "drive through" sites and internal road networks that accommodate longer/larger and higher vehicles.</p> <p>Although RV's are becoming more self-sufficient, increasing the proportion of powered sites, will be an attractor for RV users, particularly as there will be limited free camping sites available across the Shire.</p>	H

ACTION	DETAIL	RATIONALE	PRIORITY
Dump Points and Waste Management	<p>As the PDR is further sealed, consider provision of additional dump points along the road and work with the current operators along the PDR to determine the best location for such a facility.</p> <p>Planning for Dump Points should consider the need for new points at: Laura and Musgrave.</p> <p>In addition, a dump point should remain in Coen as the last stop within Cook Shire.</p> <p>New dump points could be located in partnership with existing caravan/camping parks. Council could consider providing a contribution to the cost of installation.</p>	<p>There are currently two dump points located in Cooktown, at the Cooktown Caravan Park and on the corner of Chace Close and Hope Street.</p> <p>There is also a publicly accessible dump point at Coen, located adjacent to the JS Love Building.</p> <p>There is suitable provision for Cooktown, and in Coen as the last stop in Cook Shire. However as more of the PDR is sealed it may become necessary to ensure there is access to additional sites along the PDR at Laura and Musgrave.</p> <p>It is recommended that these sites could be provided in partnership with an existing operator to ensure compliance and reduce potential issues with illegal dumping.</p> <p>There may need to be consideration of a limited subsidy for the new dump points if access is to remain free, or use takes time to increase. However, it is anticipated that a small dumping fee would be accepted by the market to help cover the cost of provision.</p>	M
<p><i>Goal 4: Work collaboratively with existing tourism operators, RV accommodation providers, neighbouring councils, and land managers to enhance the RV profile of the region and foster a coordinated approach to management of RV opportunities within the Shire.</i></p>			
Promote events in the Cape	<p>Establish relationships with neighbouring councils and incorporate promotion of events that will lead to additional tourism through Cook Shire.</p> <p>Establish a criterion to assess events against the potential benefits to the region and the best use of resources available.</p>	<p>Cook Shire covers over 10 million hectares and is neighbour to multiple councils within the cape and the Tropical North of Queensland. Collaboration with neighbouring Councils will help to strengthen the tourism and event potential for the region.</p>	H
Establish an RV Strategy Workshop	<p>Facilitate a twice-yearly workshop with key representatives from the community including accommodation providers, tourism operators and event operators. The workshop should run prior to the peak season and following the season. The purpose of each workshop is:</p> <p>Prior to the season: This workshop should outline the key initiatives for the upcoming season and potential issues that may arise, key events, and address any new trends from the previous season.</p> <p>Post Peak Season: This workshop reviews the season, address any issues that occurred and sets out the key tasks that need to be undertaken prior to the start of the next season.</p>	<p>RV tourism will ultimately be driven by what is offered within Cook Shire. Council has limited financial and human resources and critical infrastructure that requires annual maintenance. To ensure that the product that is being offered is sustainable, Council will need to work collaboratively with the sector.</p>	H O
Increase Local Tourism Data Collection	<p>Establish a mechanism to collect tourism related data to assist in measuring the success of the strategy. Council will need to collect this data from operators within the region and could use the RV Strategy Workshop as a tool to collect the data. For operators to participate in the RV Strategy Workshop they must submit the required data to Council.</p> <p>At a minimum Council should collect data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « visitor profile (postcode, gender, and age) « number of nights the region was at capacity, « total nights « duration of stay « locations visited. 	<p>There is limited data available for Cook Shire in relation to the RV market. The collection of robust visitation data will enable Council to assess the progress and success of the RV strategy.</p> <p>This data can also be used to advocate for additional funding for road development and government support and promote the region to other agencies and businesses.</p>	H

8. WARRANTIES AND DISCLAIMERS

The information contained in this report is provided in good faith. While Otium Planning Group has applied their own experience to the task, they have relied upon information supplied to them by other persons and organisations.

We have not conducted an audit of the information provided by others but have accepted it in good faith. Some of the information may have been provided 'commercial in confidence' and as such these venues or sources of information are not specifically identified. Readers should be aware that the preparation of this report may have necessitated projections of the future that are inherently uncertain and that our opinion is based on the underlying representations, assumptions and projections detailed in this report.

There will be differences between projected and actual results, because events and circumstances frequently do not occur as expected and those differences may be material. We do not express an opinion as to whether actual results will approximate projected results, nor can we confirm, underwrite or guarantee the achievability of the projections as it is not possible to substantiate assumptions which are based on future events.

Accordingly, neither Otium Planning Group, nor any member or employee of Otium Planning Group, undertakes responsibility arising in any way whatsoever to any persons other than client in respect of this report, for any errors or omissions herein, arising through negligence or otherwise however caused.



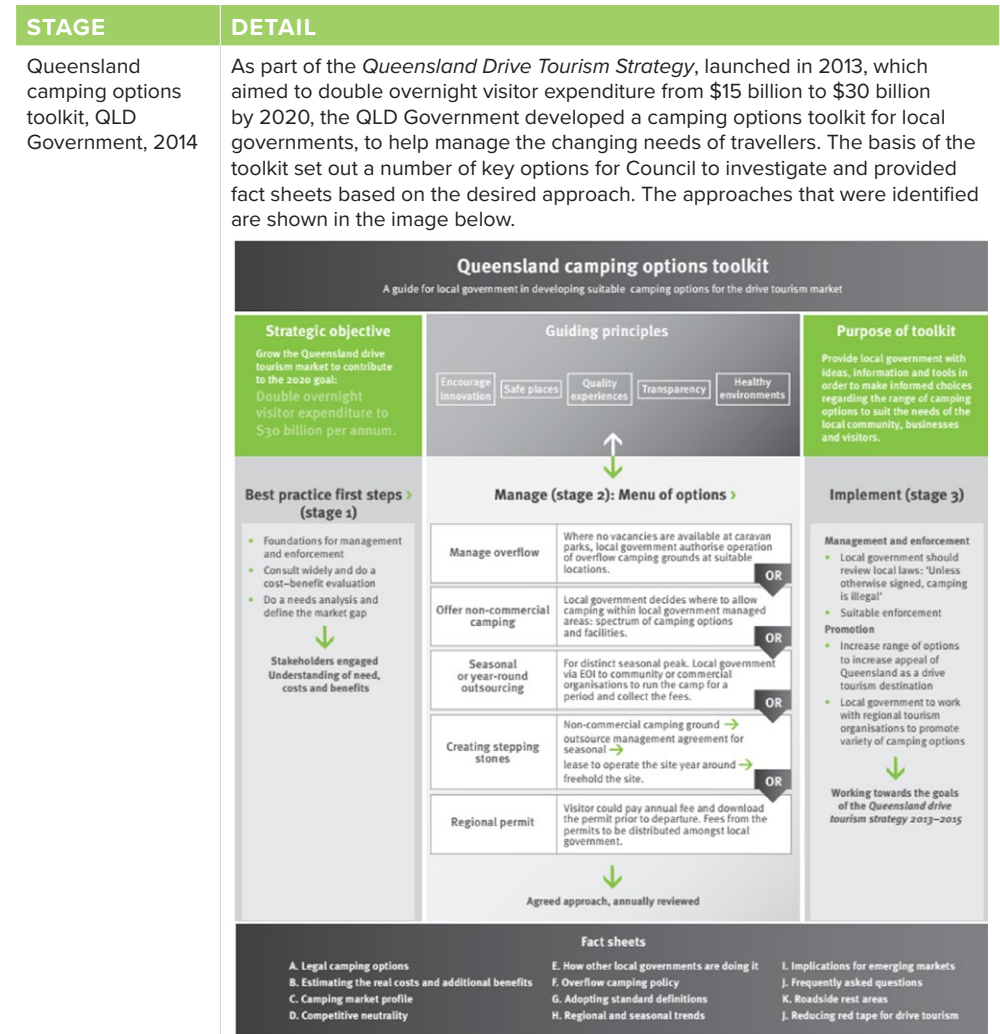
APPENDIX 1: DOCUMENT REVIEW ANALYSIS

Table 6: Background Document Review

STAGE	DETAIL
Asset Management Plan	<p>To ensure Council was correctly managing the assets under its control an Asset Management Plan was developed. The overall vision of the plan was:</p> <p>To ensure the long-term financial sustainability of Council, it is essential to balance the community's expectations for services with their ability to pay for the infrastructure assets used to provide the services".</p> <p>The objectives of the plan are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Ensure that Council's infrastructure services are provided in an economically optimal way, with the appropriate level of service to residents, visitors and the environment determined by reference to Council's financial sustainability. « Safeguard Council's assets including physical assets and employees by implementing appropriate asset management strategies and providing appropriate financial resources for those assets. « Adopt the Long-Term Financial Forecast as the basis for all service and budget funding decisions. « Meet legislative requirements for all Council's operations. « Ensure resources and operational capabilities are identified and responsibility for asset management is allocated. « Provide high level oversight of financial and asset management responsibilities through Audit Committee/ CEO reporting to Council on development and implementation of the Asset Management Strategy, Asset Management Plans, and Long-Term Financial Forecast.
Cook Shire Community Plan 2021-2031, Cook Shire Council, 2021	<p>The 2021 Community Plan set out six themes to achieve the vision, Respecting people, places and progress.</p> <p>The six themes and actions that will impact the development of the RV Strategy are listed below:</p> <p>1. Places for People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Create thriving and sustainable cultural, tourism and heritage activities and events that encourage locals and visitors to celebrate and enjoy. « Ensure our town centres and gathering spaces are safe, easy to use and attractive places where pedestrians have priority. <p>2. Wellbeing and Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Support communities across the Shire to become more resilient, self-sufficient and sustainable, with a continued focus on genuine regional collaboration. « Implement the Arts and Culture Strategy to foster creative arts in the Shire and continue to deliver public art, inclusion of art in built form, and provide opportunities for local artists in creative spaces.

STAGE	DETAIL
	<p>3. Accessibility and Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Position the Shire as a region without boundaries and encourage our community members to be the loudest advocates for what's great about our region, fostering regional collaboration and participation. « Actively promote our parks, open spaces, and community facilities to ensure full utilisation and to connect people regionally. <p>4. Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Promote Cook Shire as a recognisable, unique and inviting place to live and work and promote confidence in our economy. « Improve investor confidence and foster a "can do" attitude that encourages investment and assists businesses to develop, with a focus on emerging industries. « Facilitate the development of diverse, innovative and sustainable industries across the Shire. « Build local business capacity through partnerships, networks and skill development. <p>5. Environmental Responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Foster the use of environmentally sustainable design principles. <p>6. Organisational capability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Manage Council's activities and decision making with strategic oversight, transparency and accountability. « Enshrine asset management principles to ensure that Council's only owns and maintains assets that are utilised by the community. « Focus on genuine collaboration between Council and its stakeholders on projects that add value to the Shire's economic, social and environmental outcomes. « Enable the Shire to be 'easy to do business with' through by continuously improving customer-facing processes. « Respond to stakeholder, community and customer needs by listening to, communicating, consulting and engaging with residents, businesses and community members in a timely, open and collaborative manner.

STAGE	DETAIL
Corporate Plan 2017-2022, Cook Shire Council, 2017	<p>The Five-year Corporate Plan states that Council will be directed by the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Lifestyle aspirations and values of the people of Cook Shire « Fiscal dependence on State and Federal Funding « Challenges of climatic and environmental extremes; and « Economic /social challenges of political “green policy, land tenure and stewardship. <p>The vision of the corporate plan is: <i>Building sustainable communities with respect for our unique natural environment, celebrating our diverse culture and sharing our pride in Cape York.</i></p> <p>The main strategies of the corporate plan, that are related to this project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Encourage the building of strong partnerships with community, private sector, and government so as to build community capacity and develop strategies to encourage and support leadership and self-responsibility in the community. « Encourage vibrant and active community participation in arts, culture, and natural heritage activities to enrich lifestyle and encourage tourism. « Appropriate consideration is given to planning and development controls, design guidelines, traditional ownership and sustainable development principles when making planning decisions. « Compile an economic growth strategic plan and orient council's organisation to facilitate economic growth. « In partnership with local business, industry groups, economic and regional development organisations and neighbouring local governments continue to develop strategies to assist, strengthen, develop and promote existing and new businesses and industries.
Cook Shire Economic Development Plan 2016-2020, Cook Shire Council, 2016	<p>The Cook Shire Economic Development Plan outlines how the shire plans to play a lead role in the economic development and promotion of Cook Shire and will make the most of Cook Shire's assets to secure prosperity and jobs for the long term future of the region. This will include leveraging off the plans of the nearby major regional destination Cairns.</p> <p>The key economic challenges that are facing Cook Shire include ensuring that the community can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Participate in the digital economy « Secure construction material, particularly for roads « Improve food security « Ensure decisions are sustainable and benefit the community <p>As part of the plan Council identified several issues and potential solutions moving forward. Those that are relevant to this project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> « Develop itineraries with Cooktown Chamber of Commerce and Tourism. Increase promotion at trade shows with online booking capabilities. « Develop a self-drive tour from Cooktown including points of interest, tour and accommodation options. « Work in collaboration with the FNQROC cycling strategy. <p>Council is also seeking to increase the number of events, particularly in Cooktown, which will make any redevelopment of the events precinct critical.</p>





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