

COONAMBLE

SHIRE COUNCIL



*Economic Development
Strategy 2021*

COONAMBLE SHIRE COUNCIL

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Coonamble Shire Council Economic Development Strategy was prepared in 2017 by **JENNY RAND & ASSOCIATES** (www.jennyrand.com.au) and was consolidated and updated in 2020 by Coonamble Shire Council.

Coonamble Shire Council wishes to thank all residents, businesses and organisations that attended our consultative forums, met with our staff and consultants and provided information for our Economic Development Strategy.

The **Coonamble Shire Council Economic Development Strategy** was funded by the **Murray Darling Basin Authority Regional Diversification Program – Energise Enterprise Fund**.



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Acknowledgement of Country

Council acknowledges the Kamilaroi and Weilwan people as the traditional woners and custodians of the land on which it operates, respecting Elders past, present and emerging. Council seeks at all time to show respect to all people and cultures whose previlege it has to serve.

Executive Summary



The Coonamble Local Government Area (LGA) has an area of 9,955 square kilometres and is located on the traditional Indigenous lands of the Weilwan and Kamilaroi people. Coonamble LGA is part of the Orana Region of Central Northern NSW and is bounded by the LGAs of Walgett to the north, Warrumbungle in the east, Gilgandra to the south and Warren in the west.

Coonamble is situated on the Castlereagh River which runs through the town, dividing east from west. Water from the Great Artesian Basin is pumped into reservoirs throughout the town for domestic use. Residents of rural properties account for approximately one-third of the LGA population. The majority of the district's agricultural resources are devoted to dry and broad-acre farming and grazing.

The Economic Development Strategy

This strategy provides the framework for Coonamble Shire Council to identify and undertake activities which will foster and facilitate development.

The focus of economic development initiatives will be to assist the growth and retention of business; attract diverse, sustainable and responsible new industry development; and build the profile of the Coonamble LGA to attract investment, industry, new residents and tourism.

Council received funding in 2016 from the Murray Darling Basin Regional Diversification Program – Energise Enterprise Fund. The outcome was the development of a comprehensive and robust Economic Development Strategy for the Coonamble LGA. In 2020, that Economic Development Strategy has been consolidated and updated to reflect recent achievements, current priorities and actions. It is anticipated that the document will be reviewed and updated annually as Council staff continue to progress the actions identified.

This strategy identifies six key themes for local economic development;

- 1. Open For Business**
- 2. Lifestyle & Liveability**
- 3. Infrastructure & Services**
- 4. Brand Building**
- 5. Grow From Within**
- 6. New Business & Investment**

While business development and investment will be driven primarily by the private sector, Coonamble Shire Council can continue to help to encourage, support and facilitate outcome by ensuring that the LGA offers a positive investment environment and opportunities for growth and development.

Economic, Community and Tourism Overview



3,958

ABS 2019 Estimated Residential Population.



1,416

The number of jobs in the Coonamble LGA.



991,605 ha

Land area of the Coonamble LGA.



\$238,239,000

Gross Regional Product.

Agriculture



The sector contributing most to the local economy, accounting for 39% of output; 31% of jobs; 76% of regional exports; 47% of local expenditure.



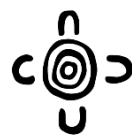
Tourism

One of the least significant contributing sectors to the local economy; delivering 2% of output and supporting 3% of local jobs.



27%

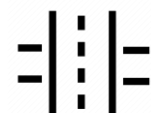
Percentage of the population who have completed high school.



30%

Percentage of the population who identify as Indigenous.

Coonamble



The township with a population of 2,749 which is the commercial and administrative centre of the LGA.



\$175

The average amount spent by a person visiting the LGA for a day.



43

Median age of the population.



\$520

Median weekly income.

Data sourced from REMPLAN – Economic and Community Profile for Coonamble (A).

Key Considerations in 2021

Dependence on the agriculture sector

The future of the Coonamble local economy is dependent on the strength of our local economy. While resilient, the local economy is highly reliant on the performance of the agricultural sector, experiencing significant highs and lows in response to fluctuations in production, demand and commodity prices.

While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was felt by the local economy, research during 2020 demonstrated that recent drought placed a much greater strain on local businesses than the global pandemic. To reduce this exposure and risk posed by the dependence on agriculture, the local economy needs to diversify, strengthen and grow.

Population projection

NSW Population Projections produced by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in 2019 indicate that the population of Coonamble is estimated to decrease from 4,050 to 3,450 between 2016 and 2041. The main driver will be people leaving the area for regional centres such as Dubbo and Tamworth. The working age population (aged 15-64) is estimated to decrease from 2,450 in 2016 to 1,900 in 2041. The number of people aged 65 and over is estimated to increase from 750 in 2016 to 850 by 2041.

When considering additional investment required to support an aging population, and a decreasing workforce, Council must consider new ways to bring income to the Local Government Area while internal capacity for economic development is limited.

Inland Rail

Touted as the most significant freight infrastructure project in the nation's history, a small section of the Inland Rail between Brisbane and Melbourne will pass through the Coonamble LGA. There may be opportunities for local people and businesses to contribute to the construction, and there may be opportunities for local industries to benefit if there is connectivity to the line following completion. It is Council's responsibility to identify and leverage any opportunities which will provide value for our community.

Economic uplift¹ 10 years from commencement of operations is estimated to deliver 15 additional jobs (current workforce of 1,431), total additional \$9.3m GRP, and total additional \$10.6m output, over the 10-year period. For comparison, current annual GRP is \$230m and annual output \$401m.

During 2020, Council has participated in the Interface Improvement Program in an effort to identify and leverage opportunities for economic benefit for the Coonamble LGA. This participation will continue in 2021.

¹ Ernst & Young Australia Inland Rail Regional Opportunities: Northern NSW data was averaged across 16 LGAs.

Visitor Economy

There is great opportunity to diversify local offerings to harness an increased benefit from the local visitor economy. In 2020, this strategy identified opportunities including the development of a dedicated Destination Management Plan, investigating Aboriginal cultural tourism as a means of sharing local Aboriginal heritage and connection to Country, and empowering existing businesses to diversify their current offering.

A Coonamble Shire Council Destination Management Plan has been developed and identifies six strategic themes which are linked to the Destination NSW Country & Outback (DNCO) Destination Management Plan:

1. Celebrating Culture on Country
2. Unlimited Horizons
3. Exploring our Nature
4. Revealing our Heritage
5. Little Places, Big Stories
6. Events

The Destination Management Plan includes an Action Plan which addresses each strategic theme. This Action Plan provides steps to develop local tourism products and operators and includes relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for evaluation.

Coonamble Shire Council Masterplan

The development and adoption of the Coonamble Shire Council Masterplan was one of Council's greatest achievements in 2020.

This plan will guide the management and development of Council assets over the next 20 years. The plan is different to most, in that it includes a tourism and branding review, recognising the interlinked nature of seeking to increase the economic viability of the LGA with both physical assets and marketing collateral.

Individual projects of the Masterplan were prioritised using a scoring tool that ranks importance against a range of criteria. This method maintains transparency and allows funds to be directed towards the most effective projects. Identified priority projects include:

- Main Street and CBD
- Coonamble Visitor Information Centre
- Coonamble Artesian Baths Experience
- Town Entrances

Work on these projects is already underway and will continue to progress as funding is secured.

An aerial photograph showing a large herd of cattle, mostly black with some red, gathered on a paved road in a rural area. The road runs vertically through the center of the image. To the left of the road, there are several trees and a dirt path. To the right, there is a grassy field with a fence line. The background shows more open land and trees under a clear sky. A blue rectangular box is overlaid on the top left of the image, containing the title 'The Strategy' in white cursive text.

The Strategy

Objectives and intended outcomes have been identified by the Economic Development Strategy. These will be achieved by the collaborative and complementary undertaking of more than one strategic initiative. The following framework provides an overview of related strategic components.

Strategic Framework



Objective	Strategic Initiative	Intended Outcome
Provide a positive, supportive and responsive investment environment.	1. Open For Business	Economy is diversified, sustainable and resilient.
Support population growth and the creation of employment opportunities and a skilled workforce.	2. Lifestyle & Liveability	Residents are well educated and gainfully employed.
Upgrade existing infrastructure and secure enabling infrastructure.	3. Infrastructure & Services	A skilled, capable and productive workforce has access to infrastructure that supports growth.
Position the Coonamble LGA as a place where people wish to live, work, visit and invest.	4. Brand Building	Effective communication, marketing & promotion of the Coonamble LGA as an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit.
Support, retain, strengthen and grow local businesses.	5. Grow From Within	Businesses are innovative, entrepreneurial, prosperous, sustainable & growing.
Attract new investment that is sustainable and compatible with community aspirations and the LGA's environment.	6. New Business & Investment	Population, output and productivity is increasing.

Tactics for Success

Strategic Initiative	Tactical Approach
1. Open For Business	1.1 Be a proactive and supportive Council 1.2 Build partnerships and strategic alliances 1.3 Engage proactively with local businesses, industry organisations and community groups
2. Lifestyle & Liveability	2.1 Present towns and villages as attractive places that people gravitate to and socialise in 2.2 Enhance lifestyle 2.3 Encourage and support community development
3. Infrastructure & Services	3.1 Ensure suitable land and premises are available 3.2 Secure Coonamble's water 3.3 Improve reliability of power 3.4 Lobby for improved telecommunications 3.5 Increase capacity of the road network 3.6 Support the road transport sector 3.7 Lobby for improved rail infrastructure and rail access 3.8 Maintain and upgrade Coonamble Airport 3.9 Diversify and improve accommodation 3.10 Grow the local workforce, ensuring it is aligned with local and regional industry needs
4. Brand Building	4.1 Align communication and marketing strategies 4.2 Build Coonamble Shire Council's digital presence 4.3 Build the profile of Coonamble LGA 4.4 Position the Coonamble LGA as a destination of choice for visitors
5. Grow From Within	5.1 Develop business skills and expertise 5.2 Build the profile of local businesses 5.3 Encourage and facilitate growth opportunities for existing businesses 5.4 Strengthen and grow key industries and sectors
6. New Business & Investment	6.1 Formulate the framework for business attraction 6.2 Leverage opportunities

1. Open for Business: Action List

Tactical approach		Key Actions	
1.1	Be a proactive and supportive Council	1.1.1	Employment of Economic Development and Tourism staff.
		1.1.2	Build and leverage effective networks with stakeholders for the collaborative implementation of the Economic Development Strategy.
		1.1.3	Review Council's policies, plans, processes and regulations to ensure that they facilitate and support development, including reviewing the Business Incentive Scheme Policy, Procurement, Development Approval, Facility and Asset Management Plans.
		1.1.4	Formulate and implement a communication / marketing approach to improve the image and perception of Council within the LGA community.
		1.1.5	Following the release of the next available Census data, review and update documents and plans to reflect and capitalise on changes occurring within the community.
		1.1.6	Subscribe to on-line statistical data and modelling tools (eg REMPLAN) to facilitate production of comprehensive demographic, social and economic data; identify and monitor trends; and assess potential impacts of proposed developments and changes in Government / Council policies.
		1.1.7	Produce information and data that will assist Government Agencies, Regional Organisations, Council, businesses, investors and potential residents in their decision-making and to enable Council to monitor impacts and performance.
		1.1.8	Maintain economic development pages on Council website, including the business listing and links to business information and advisory services.
		1.1.9	Advocate for, and where possible, buy locally.
1.2	Continue to build partnerships and strategic alliances.	1.2.1	Strengthen relationships with Government Agencies, regional organisations and service providers.
		1.2.2	Build and strengthen strategic alliances with Councils within the surrounding region and along strategic road and rail corridors.
		1.2.3	Ensure that Members of Parliament representing the LGA are regularly updated of the needs of the LGA.
1.3	Engage pro-actively with local farmers, businesses and business / industry organisations and community groups.	1.3.1	Build knowledge and understanding of local economic sectors and businesses.
		1.3.2	Encourage and facilitate opportunities for professional development, networking and innovation.
		1.3.3	Build and maintain effective networks and communication channels.
		1.3.4	Work with stakeholders to formulate and implement strategies to improve the education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people.

2. Lifestyle & Liveability: Action List

Tactical Approach		Key Actions	
2.1	Present towns and villages as attractive places that people gravitate to and socialise in	2.1.1	Explore opportunities to encourage residents to improve the presentation of their properties / streets, including initiatives to remove old structures, vehicles etc.
2.2	Enhance lifestyle	2.2.1	Progressively implement the Coonamble Shire Council Masterplan.
		2.2.2	Support, foster and promote arts and cultural activities.
		2.2.3	Encourage, host and promote a dynamic and vibrant program of events and activities.
2.3	Encourage and support community development	2.3.1	Advocate for / support initiatives to improve the delivery of education, health and other social services to and within the LGA.
		2.3.2	Support activities (e.g. events, sport, creative arts) that encourage engagement and social inclusion and build pride in, and commitment to, the local community.
		2.3.3	Support community initiatives to develop, grow and enhance the liveability of the LGA.
		2.3.4	Provide information, activities and programs that will help new residents and people on temporary work visas assimilate into the community.

3. Infrastructure & Services: Action List

Tactical Approach		Key Actions	
3.1	Ensure suitable land and premises are available	3.1.1	Annually review land use plans and strategies to ensure that sufficient land is zoned to accommodate growth for industrial and residential activities.
		3.1.2	Develop a data base of the industrial and commercial land and premises available within the LGA and ensure that Regional Development Agencies are kept informed about the sites and premises available.
		3.1.3	Advocate for Government funding to assist in providing enabling infrastructure to facilitate development of the Meglo and Airport precincts.
		3.1.4	Encourage the refurbishment and re-use of buildings in the Coonamble and Gulargambone town centres.
3.2	Secure Coonamble's water supply	3.2.1	Monitor demand for water and if needed secure additional water allocations.
3.3	Improve reliability of power supply	3.3.1	Support the development of renewable / green energy producers within the LGA.
		3.3.2	Where needed, advocate for and assist local businesses access grant funds for 'last mile' infrastructure.
3.4	Lobby for improved telecommunications	3.4.1	Identify mobile blackspots and advocate for these to be improved.
		3.4.2	Advocated for equity of access and affordability to the internet, including public access to wifi.
3.5	Increase the capacity of the LGA's road network	3.5.1	Advocate for the LGA's road needs to be included in regional and State freight and transport strategies.
		3.5.2	Advocate for and seek funding to upgrade and maintain strategically important roads.
		3.5.3	Ensure heavy vehicle access to key sites.
3.6	Support the road transport sector	3.6.1	Advocate for State Government services to remain in Coonamble.
3.7	Improve rail infrastructure and access	3.7.1	Advocate for ongoing improvements to the Coonamble Branch Line.
		3.7.2	Support the development of intermodal / loading facilities (bulk and container) at strategic locations.
		3.7.3	Advocate for any opportunities presented by the Inland Rail Line project.
3.8	Maintain and upgrade Coonamble Airport	3.8.1	Improve infrastructure and facilities to support ongoing use of the airport and the establishment of aviation-based businesses.
3.9	Diversify and improve accommodation	3.10.1	Advocate for / support the development of new accommodation providers in the Coonamble LGA.

		3.10.2	Encourage and support existing accommodation providers to expand and improve current offerings.
		3.10.3	Leverage the potential of the Coonamble Riverside Caravan Park.
		3.10.4	Identify short term peak accommodation demand and need, and provide support as appropriate.
3.10	Grow the local workforce, ensuring that it is aligned with local and regional industry needs	3.11.1	Profile and articulate existing and future local and regional workforce requirements and jobs and skills gaps.
		3.11.2	Ensure that Coonamble LGA's needs are recognised in regional training and employment strategies.
		3.11.3	Work with industry, community and businesses to attract skilled workers to fill vacant positions and address skills gaps.
		3.11.4	Advocate for improved access to education and training services.
		3.11.5	Develop and implement programs to welcome and orientate new employees / residents to assist them to integrate into the community.

4. Brand Building: Action List

Tactical Approach		Key Actions	
4.1	Align communication and marketing strategies	4.1.2	Ensure that the branding is consistent across all of Council's communications and publications.
		4.1.3	Ensure that images used in Council documents, on-line sites and promotional materials reflect the branding and lifestyle values of the LGA.
		4.1.4	Formulate a communications strategy for the Coonamble Shire Council, articulating clear and consistent key messages.
4.2	Build Council's digital presence	4.2.1	Improve and maintain the Coonamble Shire Council and Visit Coonamble websites, recognising the sites' dual function of providing information and promoting the LGA.
		4.2.2	Formulate and implement a social media strategy to communicate with residents, businesses, visitors and the media.
		4.2.3	Capitalise on opportunities to promote Coonamble LGA and its products and activities, through third party websites and apps.
4.3	Build the profile of Coonamble LGA	4.3.1	Work with the local and regional media to identify and promote local 'heroes' and achievements – individuals, community groups and businesses that reflect the desired positioning and branding of the LGA.
		4.3.2	Use LGA events to generate media coverage of and exposure for the LGA.
		4.3.3	Participate in regional economic development and promotional initiatives.
		4.3.4	Improve and expand the Coonamble content in regional promotional material.
		4.3.4	Explore with industry sectors (e.g. agriculture, arts, education, health and social services), opportunities for branding and promotion, as well as PR marketing of the LGA and its producers through the trade media.
4.4	Position Coonamble LGA as a destination of choice for visitors	4.4.1	Annually review and update the Coonamble Shire Council Destination Management Plan (DMP).
		4.4.2	Promote Council owned property and infrastructure (e.g. Showground, Sportsground) as preferred sites to host events which attract visitors from outside the region.
		4.4.3	Support individuals, businesses and community groups to identify and develop new and expanded tourism offerings, including Aboriginal cultural tourism.

5. Grow from Within: Action List

Tactical Approach		Key Actions	
5.1	Develop business skills and expertise	5.1.1	Position Council's website as the 'go to' place for businesses looking for statistics, information, support services and local directories.
		5.1.2	Provide and promote information and resources relevant to local businesses (e.g. regular newsletter).
		5.1.3	Raise awareness of and increase access to the business advisory and support services and programs available.
		5.1.4	Facilitate opportunities for professional development, networking and innovation and encourage the exchange of ideas through business clusters and networks.
5.2	Build the profile of local businesses	5.2.1	Encourage and assist businesses to embrace technology and digital business and marketing opportunities.
		5.2.2	Encourage and assist businesses identify and access online business and marketing opportunities, including developing websites, utilising social media and listing on relevant Government and industry data bases.
		5.2.3	Work with local and regional media to showcase and promote Coonamble industries, businesses, products and people.
		5.2.4	Showcase and promote Coonamble producers and products through the Coonamble VIC, other outlets and events.
		5.2.5	Encourage local businesses to participate in local, regional and State business awards to build awareness and recognition and potentially generate publicity for their business and Coonamble LGA.
5.3	Encourage and facilitate growth opportunities	5.3.1	Identify opportunities where goods and services are being 'imported' or activities being taken out of the LGA.
		5.3.2	Discuss with potential developers, the goods and services that they will require and endeavour to secure agreement that local businesses will be given the opportunity to 'quote'.
		5.3.3	Facilitate professional development and education (eg: tender writing, government procurement processes, business capability statements, etc) to enable local businesses access to opportunities to act as a supplier for major projects and developments.
		5.3.4	Identify opportunities for cooperative marketing and encourage businesses to participate and invest in these activities.
5.4	Strengthen and grow key	5.4.1	Advocate for DPI, Local Land Services and other agencies to retain services deliver extension programs

	industries and sectors		in Coonamble LGA and provide access for LGA producers to research and development, innovation and best practice.
		5.4.2	Explore options for vertical diversification of the local agricultural industry.
		5.4.3	Encourage and support the agricultural industry's adoption of new activities and technologies, sustainable land management practices, and innovative business models.
		5.4.4	Improve, diversify and expand the attraction, activity and experience base of the LGA.
		5.4.5	Strengthen linkages between Coonamble LGA and high-profile destinations and attractions within the surrounding region.
		5.4.6	Improve and expand the accommodation base of the LGA and the performance of accommodation properties.
		5.4.7	Evaluate and progress RV friendly initiatives that have been introduced in the LGA.
		5.4.8	Grow the festivals and events sector to enhance lifestyle, drive visitation and raise the profile of the LGA.
		5.4.9	Support the development of Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives by identifying key stakeholders, events, sites and offerings, to assist the local Aboriginal community share cultural heritage and connection to Country.
		5.4.10	Provide business groups (and their members) information about industry trends and opportunities for training.
		5.4.11	Work with business groups to implement creative marketing activities that encourage residents to shop locally and to attract residents from surrounding LGAs to Coonamble.
		5.4.12	Advocate for continued improvement in health, aged care and social assistance services, programs and facilities.

6. New Business & Investment: Action List

Tactical Approach		Key Actions	
6.1	Formulate the framework for business attraction	6.1.1	Investigate possible business attraction incentives and update Council's Business Assistance Policy to clearly articulate the support Council can offer new businesses and investors and the assessment criteria.
6.2	Leverage opportunities	6.2.1	Investigate opportunities to encourage businesses that service Coonamble, Walgett and Brewarrina LGAs that are based in Dubbo and other towns within the Region, to establish branch offices / outlets in Coonamble LGA, either working with existing LGA businesses or as a new business.
		6.2.2	Participate in collaborative opportunities including marketing campaigns that have the potential to bring new businesses / investment into the LGA.
		6.2.3	Investigate the potential of new and emerging activities such as intensive livestock production, greenhouse vegetable production, agri businesses – e.g. feed mill, processing and packaging, aquaculture, technology-based and creative industries, extractive, renewable energy and carbon farming and utilisation of waste products.
		6.2.4	Develop and maintain an investment prospectus which promotes the LGA to external potential investors.

Conclusion



In order to overcome challenges currently presented by projected population decline and ongoing reliance on agriculture, the local economy needs to be able to identify and leverage new opportunities. Diversification of current businesses and offerings and a focus on attracting external investment and spend will be required for future economic development and growth.

Evaluation

The progress and success of the Economic Development Strategy will be demonstrated by the implementation of actions listed. Monitoring key statistics that measure changes in population, visitation, business activity and employment will allow evaluation of the success of Economic Development initiatives.

Outcome	Measure	Target	Benchmark/s	Data Source
Population Growth	Resident Population	Maintain population through to 2022	4,030 (2011)	ABS Population Census - 2016
	Estimated Population		4,262 (2016)	ABS Population Censuses - 2021
Increase visitation to the LGA	Visitation to the Coonamble Visitor Information Centre	Increase to over 2,000 within 3 years	1,100 (12 months to Dec 19)	Coonamble VIC statistics
	Domestic Overnight Visitors	5% increase within 5 years	28,100 (YE Sept 2014)	Destination NSW – LGA Visitor Profiles – Domestic overnight visitor statistics and expenditure
	Visitor Expenditure	\$23+ million	\$20.96 million	
	Event attendance	5% increase within 5 years	Create benchmark	Council database
Productivity Growth	GRP	5% per annum	\$230 million (2018)	Council LGA Data - REMPLAN
	Value-Add	5% per annum	\$209 million (2018)	Council LGA Data - REMPLAN
	Worker Productivity	Over \$170,000 by 2022	\$162,601 (2018)	Council LGA Data – REMPLAN (GRP / Worker)
Improved business and investor confidence	Number of Businesses	5 additional businesses within 3 years	609	National economic indicators for local government areas, 2017/2018
	Number of existing businesses that have expanded	5 businesses expanding within 3 years.	New measure	Council database
	New Business Start-ups	2 / year	New measure	Council database
Job Creation	Unemployment Rate	Maintain under 6% over next 3 years	5.4% (Jun 2019)	Department of Employment – Small Area Labour Market Statistics.



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