



FLINDERS SHIRE COUNCIL

Tourism Development Action Plan





ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Flinders Shire Council would like to acknowledge the Yirendali people as Traditional Owners and the oldest living culture of the land on which our Council operates, and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

The Regional Arts Development Fund is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Flinders Shire Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.



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A STRATEGIC OUTLOOK TO DEVELOP AND ENHANCE TOURISM ACROSS THE SHIRE



Message from the Mayor

I am proud to present the Tourism Action Plan for 2023 – 2028. This document will guide our priorities and actions over the next five years to ensure Council has a strategic outlook on how we continue to develop and enhance tourism across the Shire. The Flinders Shire is the gateway to Outback Queensland and we pride ourselves on the unique and diverse tourism offerings.

The Flinders Discovery Centre Redevelopment is nearing completion which will highlight to travellers the vast array of opportunity the Flinders Shire holds, including reflections on the past and acknowledgement of our future potential.

We look forward to expanding on the Festival of Outback Skies which will compliment the Flinders Shire's busy calendar of events, offering something for everyone!

Our natural attractions remain a jewel in our tourism crown, with the unmissable Porcupine Gorge National Park continuing to wow and wonder visitors. This plan sets out a plan for infrastructure development and enhancement at Porcupine Gorge National Park, but also other natural attractions within the Shire.

Critical to the success of the Shire in tourism and ongoing growth and development is our business community. This plan outlines Council's ambition to work closely with our hospitality, retail, graziers, and other supporting sectors to enhance visitor experiences and extend time of visitation in the Shire.

I thank all who have contributed to this plan throughout the engagement process and look forward to having a shared vision to work together as we move into the future.

Regards,

Kate Peddle, Mayor



ASPIRATIONS PRIORITIES VALUES

A clear way forward for
Flinders Shire Council as a
tourism destination.





Our Plan

The Flinders Shire Council Tourism Development Action Plan (TDAP) is based on the aspirations, priorities, and values of our community and sets out a clear way forward for Flinders Shire Council as a tourism destination.

The TDAP, is a shared community vision and has been developed by balancing what the community has asked for and what needs to be done. Flinders Shire Council has developed this plan through consultation with community via online, telephone, face-to-face community survey and forums. When the plan refers to 'we' and 'our' it refers to the collective Flinders Shire community, including Council, other levels of government, businesses and organisation and residents.

Like a roadmap, the TDAP serves to aid Council in implementation of its tourism projects and allocation of its budgets. The plan highlights what the current challenges are, what will be done, who will be doing it and how these goals will be accomplished and directly support the overarching Council strategic and annual operating plans.

The TDAP directly aligns with the QLD Strategic Plan (2022-2026), Northwest Regional Plan (2010-2023), Flinders Shire Council Corporate Plan (2023-2028) and Flinders Shire Economic Development Strategy, and includes practical, actionable ideas that can be made a reality through a collaborative approach.

Objectives

- The objectives of the Flinders Shire Council Community Service Tourism Action plan over the next five years are:
- Build a strong and competitive visitor offering that can facilitate and increase average overnight visitation and visitor yield with a focus on the growing drive and adventure tourism markets.
- Establish a shared vision of Flinders Shire visitor economy and enable coordinated delivery of key actions.
- Increase competitiveness of the Flinders Shire as a tourism destination through strong promotion that leverages existing tourism opportunities.
- Unlock opportunities for investment in Flinders Shire tourism offerings.

Measuring Progress

Our outcomes are listed in this plan under each theme heading and our progress will be measured and monitored through quarterly and annual reports.



The Engagement Process

Background

To inform the development of the Tourism Development Action Plan, Flinders Shire Council designed an engagement program in accordance with the internationally recognised best practice IAP2 framework for engagement and is based on the fundamental principles for engagement of social equity and justice.

Level of engagement.

Using the IAP2 Framework for Engagement, Flinders Shire Council engaged in three levels of engagement to connect with the community.

INFORMING

CONSULTING

INVOLVING

Residents across the Flinders Shire provided extensive insight and feedback during the engagement activities with close to 10% of the region's population directly or indirectly engaged over the program. Overall, the community valued having the opportunity to voice their opinions and be heard on other topics in addition to the themes discussed.

A key focus of the engagement plan was to ensure that activities were undertaken in Hughenden as well as the smaller towns, providing a sufficient geographic coverage to afford as many community members as possible with an opportunity to participate.





DRIVING THE COMMUNITY TOWARDS ITS DESIRED FUTURE.

Bringing the Plan to Life

Role of Council - Consultation, Delivery and Monitoring

Council has a key role in driving the community towards its desired future.

Council has developed the Tourism Development Action Plan on behalf of the community and will continue to take a lead role in facilitating and advocating the plan's objectives.

Community engagement activities will continue during the five-year life of the plan to make sure our goals for the future meet the changing needs of our community. Council also has a role in delivering key strategies within the plan and will advocate on behalf of the community those activities not resourced by Council by partnering with other government agencies, nongovernment organisations and residents.

This plan is supported by Flinders Shire Council key planning instruments:

- Economic Development Strategy (2023-2028)
- Operational Plan (2022-2023)
- Corporate Plan (2023 – 2028)
- Library and Youth Development Action Plan
- Arts, Culture and Heritage Development Action Plan
- Economic Development Strategy

Key action areas for Flinders Shire Council include:

- Local Business Engagement
- Initiative de-risking
- Planning for growth
- Implementation of existing plans
- Advocacy
- Investment attraction
- Regional promotion and major events

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The Drapl & Zookeeper



Community Aspirations

Our community's aspirations will not be achieved without sufficient resources – time, money, assets, and people – to carry them out. Council is committed to allocating resources to ensure the successful delivery of the strategies within the Tourism Development Action Plan, while ensuring the continuation of basic services in a fiscally responsible manner.

Role of residents and local organisations - Participation

Bringing the Tourism Action Plan to life requires working together. Our residents, community groups and local businesses have an ongoing role in providing input and actively participating in delivery of program and activities

Role of other agencies - Partnership

Through the development of robust and strategic partnerships and sharing resources with other government and non-government agencies, our plans can be brought to life.

Council is committed to working with other levels of government and neighbouring local Councils to support objectives that reach beyond our local government area.

The Flinders Shire Council Tourism Action Plan is influenced by external legislative and regulatory requirements.

State and Regional Context

Flinders Shire Council is influenced by external legislative and regulatory requirements.

Key planning instruments include – State:

- QLD Strategic Plan 2022-2026
- Northwest Regional Plan (2010-2031)
- Creative Together (2020-2030) – 10-year roadmap to arts, culture, and creativity in Queensland
- TEQ (Tourism and Events Queensland) Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024
- TEQ Events Strategy 2025
- Activate Queensland Strategy (2019-2029)
- Towards Tourism 2032: Transforming Queensland
- Dinosaur Roadmap (Queensland)

The Premier has identified key focus areas for that government agencies and Council are to consider in their planning process. The Flinders Shire Council will align with these priorities listed below:

- Good jobs - Good, secure jobs in our traditional and emerging industries.
- Better services - Deliver even better services right across Queensland.
- Great lifestyle - Protect and enhance our Queensland lifestyle as we grow.

The region is also committed to ongoing development and creating valuable experience which provide visitors with memorable experiences. Embedded within the action plan is strategies aligned to the Tourism and Events Queensland Transformational Experience Guide.



YOUR GUESTS FIVE STAGES OF TRAVEL

01

Dreaming

Your prospective guest is imagining their next holiday and it is your opportunity to inspire them and focus their dreams on you through great videos, blogs and stories of the amazing experiences they will have with your offering.

02

Planning

You've got them interested, they are now investigating the logistics of participating in your experience so you have to make it exciting, easy and seamless.

03

Booking

Your prospective guest is ready to book and your booking system needs to make it easy for them to commit to your operation and then provide them with tips and other information to start building excitement for the experience ahead.

04

Experiencing

Your guest is with you after much anticipation and this is where through exceptional customer service at every step of the way you take them on a truly transformational journey.

05

Sharing

Your guest is eager to tell their friends about the experience. Address both positive and negative perceptions, anticipate and provide special moments, and encourage your guest to stay connected after they leave.



Visitor Economy Profile

Hughenden and the Flinders Shire region attracted a record number of tourists in the last financial year to June 2022, according to new data released by Flinders Shire Council.

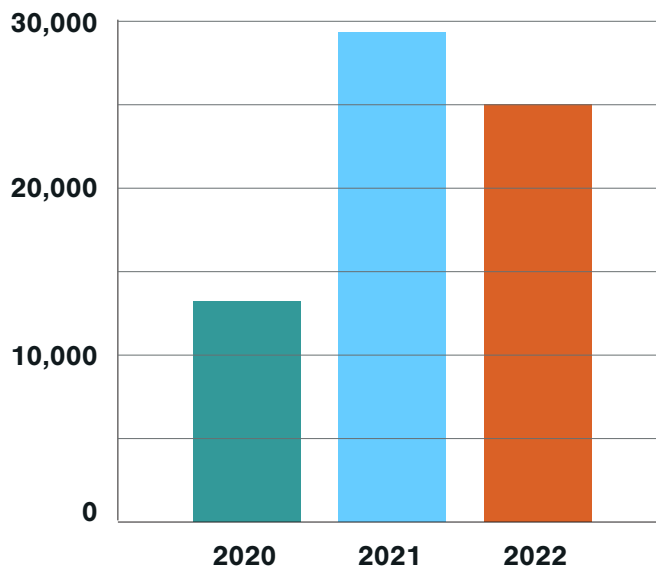
A total of 27,467 visitors came through Flinders Discovery Centre from July 2021 to June 2022, an 11 per cent increase on the previous year and a huge 42 per cent increase on 2019-2020 during the travel restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Flinders Shire Council has placed tourism in the region as a key economic platform to support the community into the future, with a new wave of developments underway including a \$200 million wind farm project, Kennedy Energy Park, and the Hughenden Horticulture Expansion Project, including the development of Riverside, and the implementation of the Flinders Shire Water Strategy.



Tourism Statistics

The region's tourism numbers:



Tourism and hospitality outlets:

(As at June 2023)

PUBS	4
<small>(all include accommodation)</small>	
MOTELS	1
AIRBNB'S	4
TOUR OPERATORS	0
CAFES/ FOOD OUTLETS	6
CARAVAN PARK	1

The region's tourism numbers:

2022	\$1,288,568,022.46
2021	\$1,036,897,103.73
2020	\$683,931,311.72



Strengths

Access

With Hughenden, positioned at the junction of the Kennedy Development Road and Flinders Highway, and where Townsville's coast meets the rugged outback there is a myriad of opportunities for visitors.

As a drive destination, Flinders Shire has a primary opportunity to attract domestic travellers who are curious to seek new destinations within the duration of this plan.

Existing tourism assets

The region's natural attractions, Porcupine Gorge White Mountains National Park, and Mount Walker lookout. As well as the \$12 million Hughenden Recreational Lake and the Flinders Discovery Centre.

'Only in Flinders Shire' experiences

With the identification and implementation of the region's tourism brand promise for visitors: "New opportunities await everyone in this outback town with endless horizons" Flinders Shire Council has been promoting the region across three pillars of promotion Relocation, Investment and Travel (Tourism) under this banner since 2021 with assets and materials provided to businesses and events for use in promotions.

Festival of Outback Skies

The Hughenden Festival of Outback Skies is an unmissable 3-day festival held over the May Day Long Weekend that embraces arts and local culture.

Porcupine Gorge National Park

Porcupine Gorge National Park and the surrounding area are a rich cultural landscape, with three traditional Aboriginal groups (the Gutjal, Yirendali and Mitjumba) continuing to maintain traditional connections to country within the park.

Mount Walker

The perfect spot to catch a famous outback sunset is Mount Walker just 10 km south of Hughenden. With sensational 360° views of Hughenden and surrounds from six lookout points you will get to experience some of the best views available in the Queensland Outback.

Windmills

See the impressive Comet Windmills in Hughenden. The 10.6-metre-tall Comet Windmill on the southern side of the Flinders River in Hughenden is one of 15 ever made in Australia. Its blades are 35 inches each and can pump up to 1M litres of water each day. The Federation Windmill Rotunda is made from two 20 ft Comet Windmills and now the region is home to Queensland's biggest wind farm project.

Dinosaurs

Home of Queensland Fossil Emblem – Muttaborrasaurus. Prehistoric finds include the great Muttaborrasaurus, Hughenden Sauropod and the Queensland Pterosaur. Positioned in the centre of Dinosaur Country, Flinders Shire Council actively participates in the Australian Dinosaur Trail and Queensland's Dinosaur Collective.



Challenges and Opportunities

Tourism and Promotion

Challenges

Whilst the Porcupine Gorge is a well-known point of reference to encourage travellers to come into region, the challenge is to develop guided places of interest for other areas of the region, for instance Flinders Shire has a rich history in rail as well as indigenous heritage.

Another challenge is the stronger dinosaur tourism offering from neighbouring Councils, so there is a need to increase focus on other key features of the area such as heritage and historic events, natural beauty, agriculture, bird watching, and flora and fauna exploration.

Transportation is also a challenge and could be a barrier to tourism in the area with no car hire or taxi service available.

Opportunities

Centralising the historical assets for tourism promotion was regularly mentioned during the consultations as was better signage and promotion of the region and its major towns and villages, including town beautification to make smaller villages more welcoming. Additionally, continuing to support the development of agritourism by implementing a series of workshops and mentoring to support agritourism development.

The community also sees great potential in developing tourism offerings to highlight the natural tourism assets of the area. These could be the development of walking tours of key natural sites.

Accommodation

Challenges

Existing accommodation is consumed by workers coming to the region, which creates gaps in supply and upgrade investment for leisure tourists.

Opportunities

To complete the accommodation supply study that has been commissioned to aligned to town growth aspirations, is required to project future needs.

Employment and investment

Challenges

Our community has identified the need for further investment to encourage new businesses to start up in the region as the key for future sustainability and economic resilience. Encouraging and incentivising a diversity of investment to promote economic growth in the development of new sectors, as well as the growth and expansion of existing businesses is a current challenge for the region.

Opportunities

To continue. providing funding programs and business assistance that assist business and community groups to contribute to an active community.

Large-scale infrastructure investments can be a catalyst for positive change, such as the Hughenden Irrigation Project Corporation (HIPCo) and providing opportunities for the future, making it easier for business to do business and increasing our connectedness with our regional and coastal counterparts. Our opportunity, then, is to be prepared to leverage these moments as they arise.



Domestic Outlook

Tourism Research Australia tourism forecasts for 2022-2027 predict that domestic overnight trip and day trip expenditure will move higher than pre-pandemic levels. By 2027 it is predicted that domestic visitor nights will increase by 11% on 2019, domestic overnight trips will increase 7% and domestic day trips will decrease by 2% with QLD set to experience strong growth in leisure travel and the drive, touring (caravan and camping) and nature-based travel.

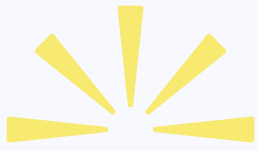
What this means for the Flinders Shire region is that because, like most small regional areas in Australia, the region is reliant on domestic visitors, mostly the VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) market and regional travellers, including the drive, touring and nature-based travellers.

Big Ideas

Through extensive consultation with the Flinders Shire community, the reoccurring themes and ideas for tourism included:

- Develop accommodation options for visitors such as cabin style accommodation at the caravan park, and additional motel accommodation.
- Develop more Agri-tourism opportunities such as farm-stays, property tours, regional restaurants featuring local produce.
- Provide transport options to capture visitors who may fly in or need transportation around town such as hire company who may provide hire vehicles, or a limited taxi / ride share service.
- Seek business and private enterprise investment in tourism activities.
- own beautification and signage upgrade.
- Consolidation of history and tourism assets to develop guided visitor information.





TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

Community themes,
strategies, and outcomes.

We are a welcoming and thriving tourist destination with many unique tourism offerings that enable growth and sustainability for our region.





Outcome 1

What do we want?

Recognised as a must-visit tourist destination in Outback Queensland.

Partners

- State /Federal Government
- Community Groups
- Outback Queensland Tourism Association
- Destination Q
- Tourism and Events QLD
- Flinders Discovery Centre
- Businesses and investors
- Regional partners and tourism operators
- Overlanders Way; Australian Dinosaur Trail; Queensland Dinosaur Collective partnerships

How will we get there	Timeframe			
	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
1.1 Seek funding and investment opportunities for tourism asset development including event precinct plan implementation (Showgrounds, Lake, Diggers Entertainment Centre, Brodie Street).				
1.2 Advocate for implementation of the Porcupine Gorge Development Plan. Explore opportunities to access eco-tourism funding for properties that are adjacent to National Parks.				
1.3 Seek funding and investment opportunities for agri-tourism development such as farm-stays, property tours, regional restaurants featuring local produce.				
1.4 Identify dinosaur fossicking sites both on Council owned and privately owned properties to develop tourism sights.				
1.5 Advocate, support and actively promote the development of the Yirendali Cultural Centre and encourage patronage from tourist market.				
1.6 Ongoing investment in public art trail.				
1.7 Seek funding for Powerhouse Museum redevelopment plan and renewable energy museum.				
1.8 Advocate for investment opportunities to improve visitor amenities and experiences, accommodation, and on-ground transportation across the region such as approaching hire companies to provide services or encouraging local businesses to expand their services.				
1.9 Explore development of community and visitor bike hire station to increase local transport availability.				
1.10 Ongoing development of appealing streetscapes and green spaces for active recreation e.g., Brodie St Redevelopment, Grand Hotel (Prehistoric Park) and Gray Street.				
1.11 Activation of spaces during visitor season e.g., movie nights, markets, events etc.				
1.12 Growth and development of Festival of Outback Skies				
1.13 Ongoing support of community-run events to grow and develop aligning to visitor and community expectations via event mentoring, marketing support and continuing funding programs				



Outcome 1

What do we want?

Recognised as a must-visit tourist destination in Outback Queensland.

How will we get there	Timeframe			
	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
1.14 Explore new tourism opportunities to develop agritourism and renewable energy tourism product with local providers.	Yellow			
1.15 Ongoing marketing plans developed in line with local visitor experiences and target audiences and partnerships opportunities with ADT, OQTA and Overlanders Way.			Yellow	
1.16 Actively promote and develop the region’s visitor products, and recreational infrastructure to key target markets including bird watchers, bush walkers, families, adventure tourists, dinosaur enthusiasts.		Yellow		
1.17 Continue developing Flinders Discovery Centre and opportunities to engage tourists.		Yellow		
1.18 Continue partnership with the Queensland Dinosaur Collective to enhance local and regional dinosaur products and experiences.			Yellow	
1.19 Explore opportunities/feasibility to develop an ‘archaeological dig’ as a visitor attraction and link it to interpretive information available in the Discovery Centre.		Yellow		
1.20 Review merchandise at the FDC to include more local quality products			Yellow	
1.21 Attract private tour operator to the region to deliver tours to Porcupine Gorge and other local attractions.			Yellow	
1.22 Increase accessibility of natural attractions to support adventure-based tourism e.g., Torver Valley Volcano, National Parks infrastructure, Mount Walker infrastructure.		Yellow		
1.23 Continue to encourage station stays and tours with local graziers.		Yellow		
1.24 Shire and local businesses to provide online bookable product and packages.		Yellow		
1.25 Encourage local businesses to be actively involved online with social media, trip advisor, and see the town recognised for quality customer service.			Yellow	
1.26 Incorporate digital technologies e.g., virtual reality tours (walking with dinosaurs; indigenous storytelling; flying over or through the Gorge, Yirendali Story Telling); bring Hughie to life through projection technology and geo caching.		Yellow		
1.28 Apply for awards and recognition programs to celebrate our local community and council achievements.		Yellow		
1.27 Improve lighting and signage at Public Art Works.	Yellow			
1.29 Maintain Visitor Information Accreditation.	Yellow			



Outcome 2

What do we want?

Increased overnight visitation and visitor spend in region.

Partners

- State /Federal Government
- Community Groups
- Flinders Discovery Centre
- Businesses
- Developers
- Investors

How will we get there	Timeframe			
	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
2.1 Review annual marketing focusing on tailored promotional campaign with hidden secrets, local events and local knowledge.	Yellow			
2.2 Revitalise and enhance the region’s nature-based and recreational facilities, museums, and public arts.			Yellow	
2.3 Seek funding for the enhancement of Council-owned caravan park.			Yellow	
2.4 Attract investor to support building of additional hotel/motel accommodation and hospitality options.			Yellow	
2.5 Investigate partnership opportunities with industry bodies such as Caravan Industry Association of Australia to encourage members to consider self-drive holidays to Flinders Shire		Yellow		
2.6 Encourage partnerships with Queensland Music Festival, Opera QLD, Outback Golf			Yellow	
2.7 Continue to seek funding to further develop tourism assets and offers.			Yellow	



Outcome 3

What do we want?

A thriving region that attracts people to live, work and visit.

Partners

- Businesses
- Chamber of commerce
- QLD Business Chamber
- QLD government
- Library

How will we get there	Timeframe			
	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
3.1 Support and facilitate economic development and employment opportunities.				
3.2 Attract new business and employment opportunities to the region, supporting their establishment and retention.				
3.3 Facilitation of an industry/business mentoring program to build industry capacity and capability to be visitor-centric and future focused.				
3.4 Establish local business awards night that recognises excellence in business across the region.				
3.5 Actively promote Council's new business incentive policy				
3.6 Leverage new investment in the Shire for tourism product e.g. tours				
3.7 Integration of liveability, work and investment opportunities messaging/promotion within the Visit Hughenden marketing strategy				
3.8 Promote new businesses and local personalities in suite of videos and marketing campaigns				



Outcome 4

What do we want?

A region that is welcoming to visitors.

Partners

- Businesses
- Flinders Shire Discovery Centre
- Hughenden Chamber of Commerce
- QLD Business Chamber
- QLD government
- Library

How will we get there	Timeframe			
	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
4.1 Upgrade and ensure consistency of branding through signage throughout Shire.				
4.2 Establish defined town entry signage and entry statements for all Shire townships on major highway approaches (including Torrens Creek, Prairie and Stamford).				
4.3 Ongoing commitment to town beatification, upgrade and maintenance of council-owned buildings and facilities				
4.4 Update region highway signage and way-finding signage				
4.5 Develop and maintain place making, public art including silo art and mural trail and cultural tourism programs that provide a strong sense of place and add value to the region.				
4.6 Work in partnership with community members to collate region's historical and Indigenous stories to develop into tourism assets to utilise for tourism and town pride.				
4.7 Promote and support self-guided walking tours by providing AR via QR codes at attractions, public artworks, historical sites that people could scan and link to a video of a local character telling the story of that attraction; or the local artist who designed the sculpture explaining the artwork.				
4.8 Partner with local businesses and Chamber of Commerce to develop promotional materials of local facilities to attract conferences and events such as weddings				



Community themes, strategies, and outcomes.

Outcome

Increased tourism numbers and overnight visitation.

Measure	Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased tourism numbers and overnight visitation• Annual spend in region.• Event attendance numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flinders Shire Council• Tourism and Events Queensland• Tourism research Australia

Outcome

Strong community participation in tourism offering and town pride.

Measure	Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased startup of new tourism-based business by community members/attraction of new people to the region• Community satisfaction with town beautification across the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flinders Shire Council community survey• Flinders Discovery Centre

Outcome

Increased capability of tourism providers and stakeholders.

Measure	Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation in industry/business mentoring program• Enhanced marketing and tourism operations skills across local businesses• Increased engagement across marketing activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flinders Shire Council• Hughenden Chamber of Commerce





FLINDERS SHIRE COUNCIL

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