5. Strong communities

The region has vibrant, inclusive, safe, active and healthy communities, where a range of social services are accessible by all, and where unique cultural heritage and diversity is acknowledged, valued and celebrated.

Continued population growth in the region presents many challenges in supporting existing local communities and their capacity to deal with change. Demographic factors such as a significantly higher than average ageing population and the dispersed settlement of the population mean supporting growth within the region is a complex task.

Community wellbeing is influenced by geographic location, access to transport, appropriate and affordable housing, family and social support, adequate income and employment, a quality built environment, community safety and optimal health.

Many residents live in rural areas, where essential community services are often provided via outreach from key centres. The dispersed urban form in the region results in many residents travelling some distance to access health and education services, business and employment opportunities, and social and cultural experiences. Due to their location, residents in rural areas have limited access to timely and affordable transport options, further inhibiting access to such services. Differing government agency service boundaries also make holistic service delivery difficult.

Well-planned growth in a more compact urban form will help reduce social and locational disadvantage. Providing opportunities in employment, education and training will influence and support changes in the demographic age profile, and result in a more balanced social mix, enabling communities to prosper.

5.1 Social planning

Principle

5.1.1 Social planning is incorporated into planning processes to manage and respond to changing communities, and support community wellbeing and quality of life.

A strong community can have positive impacts on the actual and perceived liveability of the region. Liveability factors have flow-on effects for the local residents by assisting in the attraction of new business and migration to the region, and drawing greater diversity of services and community activities.

Policies

5.1.2 Land-use and community infrastructure planning decisions incorporate social and community needs assessments.

5.1.3 Planning outcomes that support an ageing population, including appropriate housing, retirement and aged care options, and access to services and facilities, are actively pursued.

5.1.4 An accessible and high quality public realm is achieved by allocating or revitalising open space and creating well-designed public spaces.

5.1.5 An evidence-based approach, which identifies social characteristics and demographic trends, is used to inform planning processes.

Programs

5.1.6 Profile and respond to the social impacts of in-migration patterns (including people from other cultures), and incorporate in planning frameworks.
5.2 Addressing social and locational disadvantage

Principle

5.2.1 Social and locational disadvantage in communities is recognised and addressed.

Disadvantage concerns any unfavourable circumstances or conditions affecting an individual or group of people. The dimensions of disadvantage within the broader community may include a lack of access to affordable, diverse and age-appropriate housing, education and health services, or an inability to participate in, or have access to, a variety of employment, recreation, family support or social network opportunities.

Traditionally, people living in rural or fringe areas often find it difficult to access a diversity of services such as health, recreation, education or employment. Owing to the existing highly dispersed settlement pattern, these circumstances are exacerbated for many in the region. Barriers preventing community members from accessing these opportunities include a lack of public transport options and limited availability of desired services within the local area. In order to reduce the likelihood of further disadvantage occurring as a result of future decision-making, social planning principles and strategies that enhance community participation and engagement will be implemented.

Identification of development locations for community infrastructure and services will build on the strength and self-containment of subregional communities. Co-location opportunities for sharing infrastructure and facilities with neighbouring communities will improve efficiencies in providing and operating these services, and will contribute to the reduction of disadvantage.

Policies

5.2.2 Appropriate social services and community facilities are cost-effective, sustainable, accessible and responsive to community need.

5.2.3 Strategies to respond to identified pockets of social and locational disadvantage are developed and implemented.
5.2.4 Accessible and affordable transport options that enhance connectivity and level of service to remote or locationally disadvantaged communities are investigated.

5.2.6 Establish partnerships across community, government and business to provide more proactive, community-driven, coordinated and sustainable responses to social and locational disadvantage.

Programs

5.2.5 Implement and evaluate flexible, integrated, client-driven and sustainable prevention, promotion and early intervention strategies to pre-empt and address social and locational disadvantage.

Notes

Many factors influence the degree of social disadvantage experienced by individuals, including relative ease of access to housing, employment, income, education, health status and service access. Many residents of the region experience multiple disadvantages, particularly those living in smaller rural areas.

Community servicing and support needs in rural communities are quite different to urban areas. Outreach services are the norm for rural and coastal communities; however, higher service demands in larger communities can mean outreach service provision to these rural and coastal areas is reduced.

The region’s migrating and existing resident community includes, in part, the socially disadvantaged that relocate from other areas. This is due to factors such as rising housing costs or reduced housing availability in nearby areas such as South East Queensland. This trend increases the demand for local services and support facilities.

The development of strong, supportive social networks, the provision of affordable housing, education, health, high-speed and reliable internet access, recreation opportunities and accessible public transport play a central role in responding to regional disadvantage and minimising exclusion.

A strong socially inclusive community is about all residents being able to fully participate in community life. This can be a significant challenge in some communities (notably rural settlements), as geographic location often restricts social participation and leads to feelings of isolation.

Technological advances (for example in telemedicine and videoconferencing) are useful tools that enhance access to specialist health and support services. The major public hospitals located in Hervey Bay, Maryborough and Bundaberg already have videoconferencing facilities that provide access to specialist practitioners within the broader Queensland health care network.

Sustainable community planning outcomes will only be achieved where all levels of government and community stakeholders participate in working partnerships to respond to current and emerging issues of disadvantage.
5.3 Healthy and safe communities

Principle

5.3.1 Quality of life is enhanced by offering healthy and safe environments that promote active living and healthy lifestyles, and provide accessible health services.

The relative health of communities is underpinned by a range of considerations, including social disadvantage, population characteristics, social cohesion, access to key social infrastructure, housing affordability, transport, availability of open space, physical activity and climate change.

It is important to recognise that ‘health’ not only refers to a physical state, but also to mental health and psychological wellbeing. Appropriate community-based planning specifically addressing the needs of each community will provide safe, accessible open space and health services to enable the communities to enjoy active lifestyles and participation.

The community will be strengthened by an increase in housing choice and diversity, accessible and reliable infrastructure (including information communication technology), appropriate motorised and non-motorised transport options, and strong and supportive social network prospects.

Policies

5.3.2 Physical activity and healthy lifestyles are supported through appropriate location and design, including facilitating the provision of active transport infrastructure such as pedestrian and bicycle paths, and appropriate sport and recreation facilities.

5.3.3 Crime prevention through environmental design principles is applied to enhance community safety in public areas.

5.3.4 Biting insect mitigation strategies are developed and implemented.

Programs

5.3.5 Develop a collaborative framework that requires multi-strategy and multi-tiered prevention and promotion programs to address community health and safety issues.

5.3.6 Undertake a health service planning program across the region, addressing inpatient and preventative health to provide a coordinated and holistic forward service planning approach which maximises the health and wellbeing of care recipients.

Notes

Regular physical activity and appropriate nutrition is required to prevent a range of negative health and wellbeing impacts, including chronic diseases. Community wellbeing is optimised by the provision of open space, sport and recreation opportunities, walk and cycle paths, and supporting infrastructure that makes physical activity and participation safe. Supporting infrastructure includes seating, lighting, toilets, shade and water fountains.

Biting insects

The health of communities (notably in coastal areas) requires responsive planning and mitigation of the effects of biting insects. This can be achieved by limiting residential developments within insect habitat areas, putting management plans in place to mitigate impacts, and ensuring appropriate water-flow design. Monitoring programs will continue to be important in identifying increases in biting insect numbers to ensure mitigation strategies are appropriately deployed.

Toward Q2

Making Queeslanders Australia’s healthiest people is a key theme in the Queensland Government’s Toward Q2: Tomorrow’s Queensland.

For more information visit www.towardq2.qld.gov.au.

Wide Bay Burnett Regional Recreation and Sports Strategy 2010

The Wide Bay Burnett Regional Recreation and Sports Strategy 2010 identifies future regional recreation and sporting requirements, and builds on existing government recreation and sport planning work. It assists local government, state agencies and sporting organisations to plan for future land and facility provision.

For more information visit www.wbbroc.org.au.
5.4 Community engagement, capacity building and identity

Principle

5.4.1 Strong, connected and functional communities exist as a result of grassroots community development, engagement and participation, and maintaining and improving a community's sense of shared identity.

Community engagement refers to the connections between governments, residents and broader social networks on a range of policy, program or service issues. It includes a variety of community interactions, including information sharing, to actively participate in decision-making processes.

In the region, there are a variety of community groupings and established networks that have unique needs for interaction, relationship building and social connectivity that differ from other places. The capacity of all residents and community stakeholders (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as people from other cultures) to actively participate and have their say in the future of their communities is important to community empowerment and participation.

Capacity building strategies will contribute to the development of the strengths of people and communities to engender a strong regional identity. Actions and opportunities for community members to build additional skills, networks, knowledge, and a sense of belonging will improve the community's ability to meet their own needs, be resilient in times of change, and have the capacity to influence decision-making and effect positive change for their region.

An important marker of a strong community is the proportion of residents engaged in volunteering across the region. Currently, the community receives volunteering services from many older people. At the time of the 2006 Census, there were 42,519 volunteers in Wide Bay Burnett Statistical Division. This represented 21.0 per cent of the total people aged 15 years and over. In comparison, Queensland recorded 568,230 volunteers, or 18.3 per cent of the total people aged 15 years and over. The Wide Bay Burnett Statistical Division represented 7.5 per cent of the total volunteers in Queensland.

The ongoing need for volunteers is a critical consideration for the region, given its ageing population and future projected demand on the aged care sector. Opportunities for enhancing volunteer numbers should be considered where appropriate in future planning activities.

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Crime prevention through environmental design

Urban planning and design policies that incorporate safer design or Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) Guideline for Queensland principles will lead to buildings and public spaces designed to create safer communities. While such principles focus on key aspects of design relating to personal safety from a crime perspective, pedestrian safety from vehicular traffic also needs to be considered. To reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, specific considerations include access and connectivity, links to open space and natural areas, flexibility and adaptability, pedestrian presence and approaches, sight lines, and natural surveillance and lighting.

For more information visit at www.police.qld.gov.au.

Healthy Spaces and Places

Healthy Spaces and Places is a national guide for planning, designing and creating sustainable communities that encourage healthy living. This guide provides a range of practical information, including design principles for built environments. CPTED is incorporated into these principles.

For more information visit www.healthyplaces.org.au

Active, healthy communities

Active, healthy communities: A resource package for local government to create supportive environments for physical activity and healthy eating is a complementary tool, specifically designed for Queensland councils. It provides practical and easy-to-use ideas for councils to consider and incorporate into their various planning approaches.

For more information visit www.activehealthycommunities.com.au.

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Policies

5.4.2 Local government and community planning activities incorporate, value and build on the unique local characteristics and history of the area to ensure a strong sense of place, belonging and community identity.

5.4.3 The capacity of communities to identify and respond to community need is built through their involvement and engagement in land-use decisions, and aligns with evidence relating to community issues, needs and solutions.

5.4.4 Key regional networks are supported and encouraged to participate in, and inform, planning development processes.

5.4.5 Genuine community engagement principles and programs relevant to community and cultural considerations are implemented in consultation programs.

5.4.6 Community organisations and agencies are supported in efforts to increase the numbers of volunteers involved in community activities.

Notes

Strong, meaningful community engagement leads to more empowered communities that are more willing and able to identify community issues and work toward solutions. The advantage of taking the time to develop relationships with communities leads to positive planning outcomes and program delivery.

An understanding of community engagement principles and the integration of effective engagement principles and practices are essential in planning for communities. For example, community engagement techniques for engaging with Aboriginal communities, or people from other cultures, are quite different to techniques used in other communities. Involving residents in government planning and decision-making is critical to the legitimacy and responsiveness of these processes, the quality of public policies and programs, and the effectiveness of services.

As has been evidenced in the region’s recent history, the community regularly faces losses caused by natural disasters such as bushfires, floods or storms, which can challenge a population’s sense of purpose, identity and future plans. Such events can have devastating impacts on communities, the economy, infrastructure and the environment. Given the increasing regularity and severity of natural disasters, such as recent flood and storm events across the region, coordinated and cooperative efforts are required to enhance the region’s capacity to withstand and repair following these traumatic events. These efforts should include the recovery of the built environment, as well as the community’s general physical and emotional wellbeing.

Recovering from severe natural disasters and meeting the day-to-day needs of particular community groups and individuals rely on the generosity and time of volunteers. Volunteering involves people of all ages, provides opportunities for residents to be active and involved in their local communities, and will become a more critical issue in coming decades. The need for volunteers is a key consideration for this region, given its significant proportion of ageing residents, which will see the demand for volunteers to support the aged care sector continue to increase. It is also recognised that many older people in the region work as volunteers. As they retire or are no longer able to participate in these programs, demand for new volunteering services are anticipated to escalate.

Wide Bay Burnett Human Services Working Group

The Wide Bay Burnett Human Services Working Group is recognised as a key network in the region. It identifies regional human service issues and considers appropriate responses. It is also a very valuable network for relationship building, information sharing, recognising partnerships and professional development between all levels of government and the community sector.
Community plans

The Local Government Act 2009 requires all local governments in Queensland to prepare a long-term community plan. It is prepared in a community engagement and capacity building framework. Community plans are developed alongside local government corporate and operational plans, and express the community’s vision, its aspirations and key priority areas.

The community plan, developed in accordance with a comprehensive community engagement process, will provide the basis and context for:

- local government input to the regional planning process
- local government strategic land-use planning and priority infrastructure planning in accordance with the Sustainable Planning Act 2009
- local government corporate plans
- local government long-term financial planning and sustainability strategies.

For more information visit www.dlgp.qld.gov.au.

The Queensland Compact

The Queensland Compact was developed by the Queensland Government, and outlines expectations and commitments for government and the non-government sector to contribute to better outcomes for Queenslanders. It commits stakeholders to actions to strengthen working relationships, drives engagement in planning and policy processes, and strengthens sector capacity and service quality.

For more information visit www.communityservices.qld.gov.au.
5.5 Heritage, arts and cultural development

**Principle**

5.5.1 The region’s unique heritage places and experiences are identified, protected and valued, with further opportunities for arts and cultural development provided.

Cultural heritage relates to those places that have a unique claim on our landscapes, lifestyles, community history and identity. Conserving this heritage is an important part of protecting and building on an established sense of place and social practices, contributing to a strong and connected community.

The region’s heritage is embodied in its archaeological sites, cemeteries, historic homes, landmark structures, wide street formation, and rural and urban landscapes. They are important and highly valued features that strengthen and bind the community to their local area, and create a shared sense of the region for all resident Queenslanders, as well as tourists.

The significant heritage themes of Gympie, Hervey Bay and Maryborough and regional townships provide a comprehensive understanding of the historic use and development of the region. The patterns of development within these themes have defined and shaped the region and encompass important heritage places.

**Policies**

5.5.2 Heritage places, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage (such as archaeological sites, landscapes, places or objects) are appropriately recognised and protected.

5.5.3 Accessible public spaces exist for cultural activities, events and festivals.

5.5.4 Arts and cultural infrastructure, facilities and programs are provided to meet community need.

5.5.5 Arts workers are supported at local levels through regional initiatives and programs.

5.5.6 Business opportunities based on culture, heritage and the arts are recognised and promoted to attract investment and diversity to the region.

5.5.7 Historical and contemporary cultural information, artefacts and sites significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are identified, protected and preserved, including the development of local agreements and protocols as required.

5.5.8 Initiatives are developed aimed at raising the profile of the region and enhancing pride by increasing awareness of heritage, culture and the arts.

**Programs**

5.5.9 Build the capacity of government, community and industry groups to recognise and protect heritage and sites that are important to the region.
Notes

Many heritage places across the region are listed in the Queensland Heritage Register. Places that are important at a local level, but which do not necessarily meet state heritage requirements, can be recognised by local governments in their own heritage register, or directly in planning schemes.

The major historic themes for the region provide a comprehensive perspective on the heritage of the region, and a guide for assessing heritage significance. The patterns of development within these themes have defined and shaped the region, and encompass important heritage places for the region.

The following should be considered when developing guidelines and identifying heritage places and precincts.

Historic themes:

- pastoral industry (1840s to 1880s)
- settlement from 1880s
- dairy industry
- sugar industry and South Sea Islanders’ role in establishing the industry
- timber industry
- mining (including gold)
- secondary industries (e.g. manufacturing, engineering works, factories, sawmills)
- Aboriginal history, including the establishment of Cherbourg.

Heritage cities in the region include Maryborough, Gympie and Bundaberg, which have each retained significant elements of heritage character over time.

Heritage places in Bundaberg include the Burnett River Bridge, weeping figs in Bourbong Street, and Fairymead House. Maryborough has numerous historical homes, hotels and other heritage buildings, while Gympie’s heritage places include the war memorial gates, and buildings such as the school of arts and the courthouse.

Townships in the region that have retained significant historical places include Kingaroy, Nanango, Wondai, Murgon, Goomeri, Gayndah, Monto, Childers and Kilkivan. Of particular note are the Eidsvold homestead in North Burnett, Gayndah racecourse, Mount Perry Masonic Lodge, Kingaroy peanut silos, Nanango butter factory, and the Boondooma Homestead in Wondai.

The built environment is not the only location where the region’s heritage value is stored. The surrounding rural areas preserve and enhance historical and regionally important landscape features including:

- contour farming in the South Burnett Regional Council area
- mining landscapes in the Gympie and North Burnett regional council areas
- dairying and fruit growing landscapes in the Gympie, Bundaberg and South Burnett regional council areas.

The region has a diverse mix of cultural opportunities provided by entertainment, arts, museums, recreation and leisure pursuits. Multiculturalism and the relocation of new residents to the region enable diversity, and often bring new ventures, cultural and artistic opportunities and energy. Cultural facilities provide public places to hold festivals, events and functions. Existing facilities should be maintained, and new ones established, to ensure cultural and artistic opportunities and avenues continue to stimulate wealth, community spirit and belonging.
**Queensland Heritage Strategy**
The Queensland Heritage Strategy establishes a framework for managing Queensland’s heritage over the next 10 years to allow for growth and development of the state, while preserving its valuable heritage places. For more information visit www.derm.qld.gov.au.

**The Burra Charter**
The Burra Charter is a nationally accepted standard for conserving places of cultural significance. It outlines best practice principles necessary to identify, care for and manage heritage places. For more information visit www.derm.qld.gov.au.

**Queensland Heritage Act 1992**
The Queensland Heritage Act 1992 provides for the conservation of the state's cultural heritage by protecting all places and areas entered onto the Queensland Heritage Register. This Act requires local governments (unless exempt) to keep a local heritage register.

**Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003**
The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 provides for the recognition, protection and conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage. This Act requires the maintenance of a cultural heritage register that records significant sites and provides guidelines for protection. The Act also requires local governments (unless exempt) to keep a local heritage register of places of significance within their boundaries. Evidence suggests that custodianship and confidentiality issues exist with recognising and registering sites and artefacts on databases presently available. Development and growth must not cause inappropriate harm or change to cultural sites or landscapes, as these need to be retained for future generations to enjoy.