

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023 - 2025

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 @ShireofQuairading

 @QuairadingCaravanPark

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Shire of Quairading's Economic Development Strategy 2023-2025 is a key document setting the Shire's intentions for the next 3 years in relation to supporting and enabling the local economy. Over the past decade, the Shire of Quairading has experienced considerable changes to the local, regional, national and international economic environment, including through the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This along with the release of the Shire's Strategic Community Plan 2021- 2031, which sets new goals and priorities directly reflecting the needs and priorities of our diverse community, has prompted the requirement for this renewed Economic Development Strategy–2023-2025. The development of the Economic Development Strategy utilised the results of the extensive stakeholder engagement undertaken to develop the new Strategic Community Plan, which included residents, ratepayers, businesses, government and non-government agencies and Shire employees. After consulting with the community, the Shire is proud to present an authentic, dynamic and forward-thinking strategy that identifies six key focus areas that will ensure the Shire's vision and economic purpose are achieved. The Economic Development Strategy keeps business engagement and support at the forefront bolstered by investment attraction, planning for the future, leadership, tourism industry support and development and strategic economic advocacy.

## 2. QUAIRADING

Quairading is nestled in the central Wheatbelt of Western Australia, on Noongar Ballardong country just 167km east of Perth on the York-Quairading Road. Quairading is a farming community with a population of approximately 1,200, producing cereal and grain crops, forestry, wool, sheep and cattle supported by rural service industries. The district includes the localities of Quairading, Pantapin, Yoting, Badaling, Dangin, South Caroling, Balkuling, Doodenanning and Wamenusking.

The Shire of Quairading presents unique opportunities and considerable challenges for both private enterprise and the Shire. Quairading's diversity is unique in a regional area with agricultural sweeps of land, natural environments including regional and state parks and reserves, bushland, a light industrial area, established residential areas and yet to be developed land to cater for the next 50 years of population growth. This diversity combined with the forecasted population growth presents incredible opportunities for private investors. There is a strong economic base to build on and although the local economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, there is promising growth in the professional, technical and scientific services, health care and social assistance, and the education and training sectors.

Quairading has a proud history of agricultural production and although this industry is facing significant challenges from climate change, agribusiness remains a key niche industry with the industry undergoing transformation and new opportunities presenting.

The tourism sector remains a significant niche industry for Quairading. A notable increase in market interest has been observed in tourism opportunities across the region, including accommodation, the re-development of Toapin Weir, agri-tourism and regional approaches to market development (e.g., Paths to Wave Rock). The Shire is a strong supporter of the local tourism industry through the development and promotion of our regional brand, ‘Take a Closer Look Quairading,’ which recognises the value and incredible potential of the Shire.

The Shire works collaboratively with our neighbouring Local Government Areas; the Shires of Beverley, Bruce Rock, Corrigin, Cunderdin, Tammin, Merredin, Northam, Kellerberrin and York on regionally significant projects, initiatives and activities to deliver larger scale outcomes only possible through regional collaboration.

### 3. STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT / VISION

#### VISION

**“Our Shire is a place of welcome for all where we work together, with thriving industry creating jobs, a bright future for our young people, and a bustling town in a beautiful and productive rural setting.”**

The Strategic Community Plan 2021-2031 encourages Council to take a more active role in economic development across the Shire. In tangible terms this means:

- Increasing the residential population
- Supporting business and industry
- Facilitating the provision of State and Commonwealth government services
- Increasing tourism
- Increasing the quantity and diversity of accommodation
- Improving general amenities and facilities, including medical facilities, aging in place facilities and sporting facilities

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	WE KNOW WE ARE SUCCEEDING WHEN:
<b>1. COMMUNITY</b>	
1.1 Work collaboratively with local and regional service providers to engage the community as active citizens.	The Shire facilitates inclusive access to all facilities and services
	Work towards Reconciliation Action Plan Committee aspirations
	Preservation of assets and education of our local culture and heritage
	Actively support youth development

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	WE KNOW WE ARE SUCCEEDING WHEN:
1.2 Provide social and cultural activities for all members of the community	Sporting and recreational facilities Increased participation
1.3 Advocate for the provision of quality health services, health facilities and programs in the Shire	Retention of local health facilities and visiting services Ageing in place can occur within the district Facilitate support for mental health to vulnerable persons
1.4 Support local volunteer organisations through initiatives that reduce volunteer fatigue and strengthen their resilience	Volunteers feel supported by the Shire Delivery of the Shire’s Community Grants Program
1.5 Support emergency services planning, risk mitigation, response and recovery	We collaboratively plan and respond to emergency situations identified in Local Emergency Management Arrangement (LEMA)
<b>2. ECONOMY</b>	
2.1 Promote the Economic and Business Growth Strategy for current businesses and the sustainable attraction of new industry (Small Business Friendly Local Government and Action Plan)	Work towards initiatives in our Economic and Business Growth plans Support and advocacy for agriculture Local economic diversification Delivery of the Shire’s Business Grant Program
2.2 Build upon our “Take a Closer Look” brand with the development of an internal marketing strategy focusing on our community, events and facilities to increase our permanent and transient population	Local businesses capture opportunity through the caravan park and tourism assets and experiences Improved online presence and awareness Visitors receive timely and accurate information about our Shire attractions and services Well attended local events and celebrations
2.3 Shire engages stakeholders and partners to help capture local economic development initiatives	Demonstrated progress with stakeholders to facilitate land development, industry and jobs growth
2.4 Encourage local workforce participation	Residents can access local, inclusive and modern childcare facilities and services Traineeships / apprenticeships / flexible employment models
<b>3. BUILT ENVIRONMENT</b>	
3.1 Safe, efficient and well-maintained road and footpath infrastructure	Achievement of the 10yr road plan goals and strategies

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	WE KNOW WE ARE SUCCEEDING WHEN:
	Less impact on our roads due to extreme weather events and increased vehicle tonnage (road engineering, stormwater management)
3.2 Parks, gardens and social spaces are safe and encourage active, engaged and healthy lifestyles	Completion of the Community Park in the Quairading town site
	Access and aesthetic improvements at the cemetery are undertaken
3.3 Improvements to building infrastructure including our sport and recreation facilities, residential and service delivery facilities following considered cost benefit analysis models and venue management plans	Updating of Shire's Asset Management Plan to ensure viability and sustainability of the Shire's Building Assets
	Planning and development for sport and recreation facilities is coordinated and cohesive (Masterplan Sport and Rec)
	Agreed Concept Design and Project Plan for Multi-Purpose Precinct
	Heating of the leisure pool at the swimming pool enables greater patronage
<b>4. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	
4.1 Maintain a high standard of environmental health services	Compliance with environmental health legislation
4.2 Conservation of our natural environment	Community engagement in the management of invasive species
	Management of nature reserves
4.3 Demonstrate sustainable practices of water, energy and waste management	Preservation and improved efficiency and use of natural assets (water, sun, wind)
<b>5. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP</b>	
5.1 Shire communication is consistent, engaging and responsive	Residents and community groups believe they are being listened to and fairly treated
5.2 Forward planning and implementation of plans to determine Strategic Plan and service levels	Collaborative planning amongst key stakeholders
	Local community engagement level
5.3 Provide informed and transparent decision making that, meets our legal obligations, and the needs of our diverse community	Performance against targets – Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan goals
5.4 Implement systems and processes that meet legislative and audit obligations	External Audits and Reviews confirm compliance with relevant legislation.

## 4. CORPORATE PLAN ALIGNMENT

A key objective of the Corporate Business Plan 2023-2027 is to address the economic objective of the Strategic Community Plan 2021-2031 – ‘Growing Economy and Employment Opportunities.’

## 5. KEY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Whilst the Shire of Quairading faces significant economic challenges, there are also unique strengths and opportunities. The West Australian economy is heavily reliant on the mining sector. Comparatively, the Quairading economy is much less reliant on mining, and conversely reliant on the agricultural sector. The ability to demonstrate generational success and sustainability across the agricultural sector for over 100 years provides a bespoke opportunity for private investment and growth. It also provides for opportunity for supportive, parallel and complementary business, trade and investment.

### **Growing Population Base**

After decades of population decline, the population across Quairading is on an upward trend. This is predominantly because younger generations are returning to farming after achieving education and establishing families. There has also been an increase in the general populous due to the affordable property options within the townsite. Finally, with the agricultural industry thriving, transient work is available across the year for people choosing to live in Quairading on a seasonal basis. A growing population base demands an increase in product and service delivery, which means the creation of new business.

### **Key Strategic Locations**

Well located in the Avon Region of the Wheatbelt and connected with access to other regional towns and the State’s south, the Shire is home to the localities of Quairading, Pantapin, Yoting, Badaling, Dangin, South Caroling, Balkuling, Doodenanning and Wamenusking.

Welcoming light industry and other businesses to the Shire through an incentives-based approach, Quairading is well-positioned to attract and retain any number of private or government enterprises wanting central access to the Wheatbelt Region.

### **Vibrant Employment Opportunities**

Quairading provides an attractive base for existing and new businesses to locate, relocate and grow. New cluster opportunities are available in the new light industrial area precinct and Council is flexible and supportive in terms of investment being developed on other parcels of land.

## **Investment Ready**

Quairading offers diverse investment opportunities suitable for local, national and international investors. The light industrial precinct is in its final stage of development. Key essential services infrastructure has been upgraded across the Shire. Innovative initiatives to grow the population are underway. Incentives for small business are offered year-round. Now is a better time than ever before to invest in Quairading.

## **Supportive Business Environment**

The Shire of Quairading is committed to providing a business-friendly environment combined with strong local support networks and an enviable education presence. Quairading is the perfect place to launch, locate or grow a business.

## **Tourism Opportunities**

The Shire offers incredible tourism opportunities involving both natural and built assets: Indigenous, lakes, State parks and reserves, eco-tourism, accommodation, historic buildings, and agri-tourism.

## **Available and Affordable Land**

Quairading has high quality and affordable land available for both business and residential growth. Quairading is likely to have the most cost-effective development opportunities of any 'like size' or larger Shire in the State.

# 6. KEY ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

## **Employment**

- Number and diversity of local jobs – strategic vs population driven.
- Business creation, attraction, retention and expansion.
- Local pockets of relatively high unemployment and low labour force participation – understanding the where, why and who.
- Ageing population.
- Matching skills required by employers to available workforce.
- The impact of artificial intelligence, robotics and automation.
- Future of work arriving early/fast changing work environment/challenges of re-skilling the workforce.
- Local job growth continues to lag population growth, with the number and diversity of local job opportunities remaining the top economic challenge identified through the consultation process.



## **Land**

- Retention of land for employment purposes (worker's accommodation, Shire staff housing) including interim uses for land that may not be required for employment purposes for decades.
- Modernising the planning framework to ensure it is flexible and supportive of local business.
- 'Arriving late in the game' regarding some funding opportunities.
- The demise of Royalties for Regions funding and Building Better Regions funding.
- Government's drive for a regional approach to securing funding, rather than a local government alone approach.
- Funding bodies are targeting 'innovation,' not core business.

## **Investment Attraction**

- Public investment to enable on-time provision of strategic infrastructure.
- Private investment for business establishment and growth.
- Creating an enabling environment for investment - making it easy to invest, reducing red tape.
- Forecasted rising interest rates.
- Attracting national and global interest in opportunity is time-consuming and expensive.
- To balance supporting local existing business verses not increasing local competition.
- Absentee landowners in the main street.
- Efficient and effective promotion of the Economic Development Strategy.
- How to target identified business opportunities.
- Council Resources available to carry out the Economic Development Strategy.

## **Infrastructure**

- Power strength, frequency and reliability (e.g., not sufficient for heavy industry).
- Provision of major freight and passenger transport infrastructure.
- Strategic transport connections.
- Improved high-speed telecommunications infrastructure.
- Keeping pace with new and emerging technologies.
- Optimising the return on investment for key infrastructure projects.

## **Sustainability**

- Cost of energy and managing the transition to a carbon neutral economy.
- Managing waste at all points along the supply chain, transitioning waste from being a liability to a valuable resource.

- Managing the transition to a circular economy (i.e. markets that give incentives to reusing products, rather than scrapping them and then extracting new resources).
- Sustainable procurement (including financial, social and environmental considerations).

## 7. STRATEGIES & UNDERPINNING PROJECTS

### Increasing the residential population

- ‘My Home’ partnership: Up to 6 houses to be constructed in Quairading for the low-socio economic population. Cost to rate payers is nil.
- Cuneata Rise Housing Development: The development of a local campaign to populate the blocks.. For a limited time, residential lots at Cuneata Rise on Edwards Way and Reid Street will be available for the purchase price of \$10,000 (incl. GST).
- Quairading Co-op partnership: A collaborative approach is taken to secure State Government funding for the construction of worker’s accommodation. A community led initiative.
- Provide for aged residential independent living unit accommodation. Lobbying the State Government for freehold ownership of Lot 501 Suburban Road, Quairading. Facilitating a joint venture with an aged residential independent living provider for the construction and management of the aged residential independent living units.
- Re-develop the Quairading Sports & Recreation Precinct. Breaking the project down into manageable stages for funding and project management purposes.
- Improve general amenities and facilities (e.g., Community Park, Toapin Weir, Dog Park etc.) to maintain and increase residents.
- Facilitate the provision of State and Commonwealth government services (e.g., virtual power plant, upgrade of poles and wires etc.) to ensure population growth can be sustained.
- Support small business and light industry to ensure shopper convenience meets resident’s need.
- Improve street façade (e.g., works notices resulted in upgrade of dilapidated buildings at the entry to town) to attract more permanent residents.
- Secure a Doctor and a Nurse for the Quairading Medical Practice (a State Government responsibility) to meet the needs of all residents, across the spectrum of ages.
- Provide an electrical vehicle charger for the use of residents and tourists.

### Supporting business & industry

- Develop the light industrial area lots to ‘be ready’ for industry innovation and approach.
- Enact the Tourism Strategy.
- Increase the residential population (which translates into new business clients).

- Develop new and redevelop existing signage across the Shire.
- Facilitate the provision of State and Commonwealth government services (e.g., power capability, health services etc.).
- Continue the Small Business Grants program.
- Provide for worker's accommodation.
- Improve general amenities and facilities (e.g., Community Park, Toapin Weir, Dog Park etc.) so tourists stop, and the residential population increases and is retained.
- Improve the street façade (e.g., works notices resulted in upgrade of dilapidated buildings at the entry to town).
- Provide an electrical vehicle charger for business clients, residents and tourists.

### **Facilitating the provision of State and Commonwealth Government services**

- Lobby the State Government for a Virtual Power Plant.
- Lobby the State Government for electrical pole and wire replacement programme.
- Lobby the State Government for the transfer of land behind the hospital to the Shire (free hold) to enable the facilitation of a joint venture for the construction of aged residential independent living units.
- Increase the quantity and diversity of accommodation (a State Government responsibility for the low socio-economic population).
- Improve general amenities and facilities through securing government grant funds.
- Secure a Doctor and a Nurse for the Quairading Medical Practice (a State Government responsibility).
- Provide for aged residential independent living accommodation.
- Re-develop the Quairading Sports and Recreation Precinct to encourage new residents and retain existing residents.

### **Increasing tourism**

- Enact the Tourism Strategy.
- Develop new and redevelop existing signage across the Shire.
- Facilitate the provision of State and Commonwealth Government services (e.g., power capability).
- Support business and industry to ensure shoppers choice and convenience.
- Improve general amenities and facilities (e.g., Community Park, Toapin Weir, Dog Park etc.) for tourist convenience.
- Improve the street façade (e.g., works notices resulted in upgrade of dilapidated buildings at the entry to town).
- Provide an electrical vehicle charger for tourists, business clients and residents.

- Provide for a selection of accommodation options.

### **Increasing the quantity & diversity of available accommodation**

- Increase number of cabins in the Quairading Caravan Park for tourists and other transient people (e.g., tradespeople).
- ‘My Home’ partnership: Up to 6 houses to be constructed in Quairading for the low-socio economic population.
- Cuneta Rise Housing Development: The development of a local campaign to populate the blocks. For a limited time, residential lots at Cuneata Rise on Edwards Way and Reid Street will be available for the purchase price of \$10,000 (incl. GST).
- Quairading Co-op partnership: A collaborative approach is taken to secure State Government funding for the construction of worker’s accommodation.
- Increase amenities at Toapin Weir and promote this camping destination more heavily.
- Provide for aged residential independent living accommodation.

### **Improving general amenities & facilities**

- Support and provide for health care amenities (Chemist, Medical Practice and Hospital).
- Provide for aged care accommodation for ‘aging in place’ and aged residential independent living to retain and grow the residential population.
- Re-develop the Quairading Sports and Recreation Precinct for new and existing residents.
- Support small business and light industry.
- Community Park development to retain residents, to encourage new residents and to encourage tourists.
- Dog Park (off-leash) development to retain residents, to encourage new residents and to encourage tourists
- Virtual Power Plant project to provide for a sustained increase in population.
- Quairading Caravan Park expansion to accommodate more tourists and other transient people.
- Street signage upgrade.
- Toapin Weir facilities upgrade.
- Increased type and quality of accommodation options.
- Improve the street façade (e.g., works notices resulted in upgrade of dilapidated buildings at the entry to town).

## 8. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF STRATEGIES

The additional benefits of implementing the Economic Development Strategy include:

- Quairading is sustainable, meeting the needs of our community today without compromising the needs of our future communities
- Quairading is a major contributor to regional productivity with a strong economy providing a diverse range of local job opportunities
- The strengths and opportunities of Quairading are well known
- Existing and potential investors are engaged and receive excellent customer service
- Key networks actively seek out Quairading as a partner for opportunities and regional collaborations
- Quairading is known as a tourism destination, with key and iconic tourism assets recognised as being linked to the Shire of Quairading “Take a Closer Look” brand
- Delivery of larger scale outcomes through regional collaboration
- Diversifying and strengthening the local economy;
- Reducing local unemployment
- Expanding local capabilities and skills (e.g. apprenticeship and traineeships)
- Increasing the availability of skilled trades
- Strengthening existing businesses (trading or servicing new business)
- Reducing vacant shops in the main street
- Leading by example (e.g., through construction of housing)
- Generating strategic thought by industry and business owners (as to potential new business’ that might establish and be successful in town)
- The attraction of customers from other towns.

## 9. ROLE OF COUNCIL

- To operate at strategic level, providing for a robust, strong and sensible Strategic Community Plan 2021-2031.
- To hold one annual formal Strategic Planning Session with Council and the Executive Management Team, facilitated by an independent person.

- To hold quarterly Concept Forums to further progress the outcomes of the annual Strategic Planning Session.
- To support Shire Officers in the implementation of the identified strategies and projects.
- To provide funding for the identified strategies and projects.

## 10. COUNCIL INCENTIVES

Incentives should be targeting economic development, not small business. Small business should be only one cohort eligible for the incentive. Recommendations include:

- Convert the Small Business Development Grant to an Economic Development Grant. Open the grant up to all parties interested in enacting a project that will improve Quairading's economic position.
- Fund the development of the remaining Light Industrial Area lots.
- Populate the Cuneata Rise Development by capping the residential lots at \$10,000 (incl GST) for a limited time (with strong caveats attached to the construction component of the project).

## 11. FUNDING OF THE INCENTIVES

Funding options available to progress and complete the initiatives within this document are unfortunately limited but include:

- Self-funding through the annual budget process
- Self-funding using reserves funding
- Joint ventures (e.g., gifting land to a project)
- Securing tender or grant monies to cover part components of the initiative/s.

Officers are continually balancing the above options when investigating the viability of a project and the probability of securing external funding to contribute to the project.

## 12. REVIEW OF THIS STRATEGY

The Economic Development Strategy be reviewed annually by Council and the CEO.

## 13. KEY STRATEGY ACTIONS - YEAR 1 & 2

The Key Strategy Actions for 2021/22 were:

- Draft Budget deliberations on the level for the New Business Incentives Scheme.
- District Prospectus be developed and published (online and hard copy).

- Concerted wider promotion of the District as a viable and affordable location for businesses, visitors and new residents. May need external assistance with promotional expertise.
- Use of various channels for promotion (electronic, print and social media).
- Strengthen partnerships with the following key stakeholders to seek out business start-up and relocation opportunities and external funding possibilities.
- Wheatbelt Development Commission.
  - Wheatbelt RDA.
  - Wheatbelt Business Network.
- Small Business Friendly Council Program - action in accordance with the program guidelines when Council dealing with businesses.
- Audit of available existing vacant business floorspace and rents – recommend being undertaken by external resources and then used as a reference for interested parties.
- To ensure that a contemporary Town Planning Scheme is in place to accommodate appropriate land uses and businesses. Particularly, appropriate planning measure for home based businesses.
- Subject to funding, progress to the further development of the Light Industrial Land lots (in Stages).

For the most part, these Key Strategy Actions now form a component of every day core business.

## 14. KEY STRATEGY ACTIONS - YEAR 3

The Key Strategies for year 3 are:

- Increase the residential population
- Support small business and industry
- Facilitate the provision of State and Commonwealth Government services
- Increase tourism
- Increase the quantity and diversity of available accommodation options
- Improve general amenities and facilities.

The Strategy Actions that will underpin these Key Strategies are the actions needed to enact the projects detailed above.. In addition to those detailed above, these actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Re-evaluating Town Planning Scheme No 3, which is nowhere near flexible enough to accommodate innovation in residential construction nor innovation in small business needs
- Contemporary, innovative and active marketing of land sales (residential and commercial)
- Lobbying of State and Commonwealth Government for quality products and services that rate payers pay to receive.