

Advocacy Priorities 2024

Building Australia's
best regional community



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Building Australia's best regional community

Council's vision is to build Australia's best regional community – a vision that won't be achieved without working in partnership with the federal and state government, and other stakeholders.

Bundaberg Regional Council presents its 2024 Advocacy Priorities to ensure other levels of government understand the opportunity to support Bundaberg become Australia's best regional community.

All Advocacy Priorities are aligned with the needs of our community and reflect a strong commitment by the Council.

Our priorities seek to deliver strong economic, social, and environmental outcomes across our community while also building the resilience and capital of our greatest asset; our people.

Many of the 2024 Advocacy Priorities have already undergone planning or development by Council and represent good opportunities for direct state or federal government support.

Over the last seven years Council has invested more than \$700 million in local infrastructure, resulting in \$1.53 billion of economic activity and 568 construction phase jobs.

Put another way, every dollar spent by Council on local infrastructure stimulates 2.1 dollars of regional economic activity.

To continue this, Council seeks state and federal funding to deliver 19 Advocacy Priorities, all which have an infrastructure focus.

We seek bipartisan support from other levels of government to deliver priorities outlined in this document.

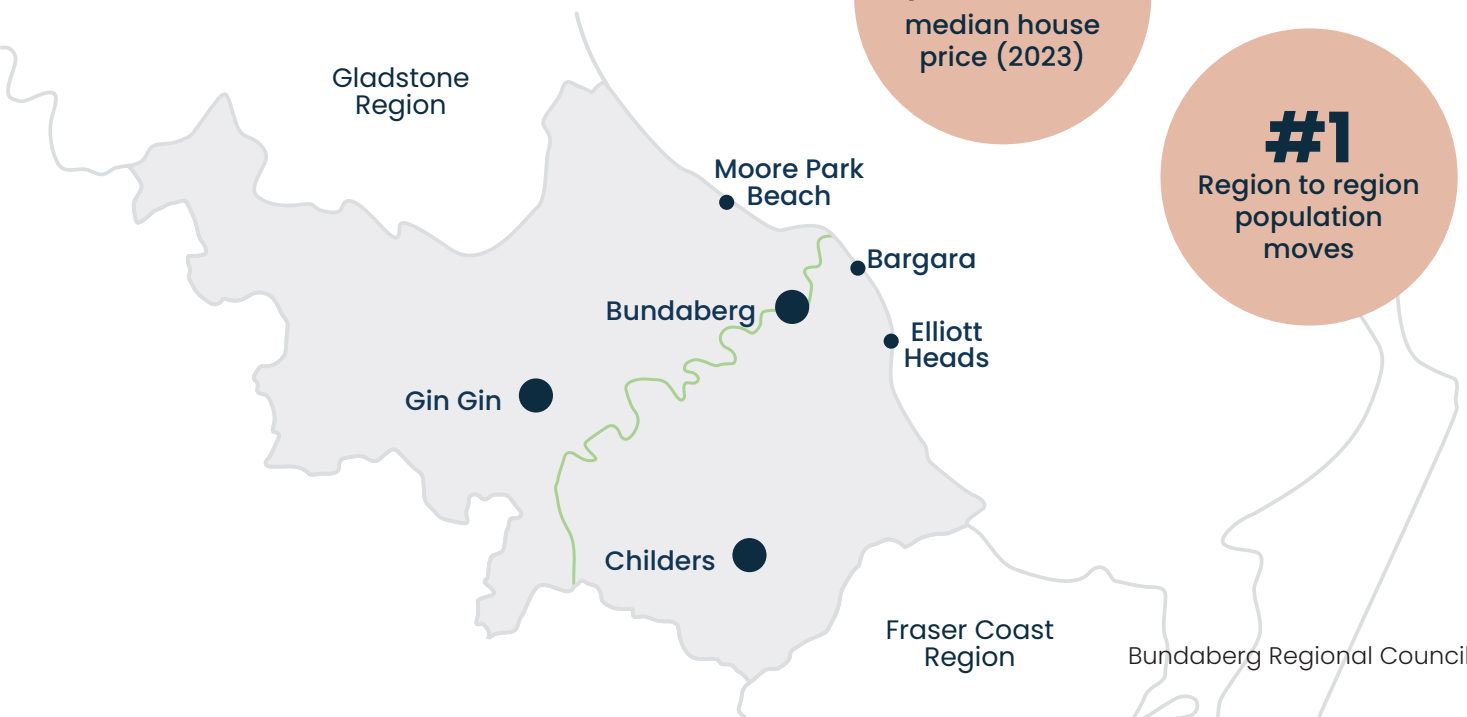
Bundaberg Regional Council

December 2023

Overview of Bundaberg

Location

Located at the southern edge of Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Bundaberg spans over 6,000 square kilometres of rural, natural, urban and coastal environments.



102k
residents
(approx.)

7.2%
Economic growth
(2023)

330k
population
catchment

148k
residents
by 2041

#1
Agriculture by
value add

6.6k
businesses
>\$75k turnover

\$456k
median house
price (2023)

#1
Region to region
population
moves

Economic infrastructure

1. Bundaberg civic and cultural arts precinct

Background

In 2019 Council completed a strategic vision for a new Bundaberg civic and cultural arts precinct in the CBD, including plans for a new Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery (BRAG) and other infrastructure. The strategic vision focuses on land bounded by the Burnett River to Woondooma Street, and Maryborough Street to Barolin Street.

The strategic vision outlines how Council will, over time, deliver a new regional art gallery and other civic, entertainment and community facilities as part of an integrated precinct-based approach.

Since 2019 Council has advanced the following components of the vision:

- Design and business case for a new BRAG,
- Redevelopment of the former Wintergarden building into a community hub,
- Securing funding for the redevelopment of ANZAC Park and Pool,
- Negotiations with precinct stakeholders and other activities to deliver the vision,
- Demolition of buildings to allow delivery of future elements of the vision.

Council will continue to advance multiple elements of the vision for the Bundaberg civic and cultural arts precinct.

Advocacy position

- State and federal funding for precinct development in coordinated stages, with a new Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery being first priority.



2. Revitalise Bundaberg CBD

Background

The last street upgrades to Bundaberg CBD occurred in the early 1990s. Given this, many CBD streetscape assets are in need of renewal. In 2018 Bundaberg Regional Council completed detail designs of CBD streetscape upgrades which would have modified the function of the CBD.

While the 2018 design process included detailed designs of a comprehensive program of streetscape upgrades, the medium-term intention is to stage components of the revitalisation over different periods to minimise disruption to business activity.

This includes retaining the function of the existing streetscape as designed in the early 1990s with minor improvements where applicable. Some detail components of the 2018 designs (such as tree pit treatments in the centre median) would be applied in replacing assets. When implemented, these upgrades will play a role in supporting the revitalisation of the centre.

Proposed elements of upgrades would include:

- New fig tree pits to support heritage listed fig trees between Maryborough and Barolin Street,
- Asphalt resurfacing and pavement repairs at roundabouts,
- Replace concrete and damaged kerbing around garden beds and tree pits,
- Replace pavers in all footpaths with concrete tiles or new slab treatments,
- Replace selected trees and low-level shrubs to support root zones,
- Replace streetlights with LEDs, including potential for solar,
- Replace traffic signal instrumentation at the intersection of Barolin and Woongarra Streets.

Advocacy position

- State and federal government funding to revitalise Bundaberg CBD.
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3. Bundaberg East Levee urban activation

Background

Completed in 2018, the Bundaberg Flood Action Plan included four options to mitigate against flood risk in Bundaberg. Developed by independent consultants and based on community feedback the Plan includes four projects that are currently in various stages of delivery that will mitigate against flood risk in Bundaberg. These include;

- Bundaberg East Levee (committed);
- Upper flood plain evacuation improvements (complete);
- Bundaberg North evacuation route improvements (no progress to date);
- Floodway House Purchase Scheme (no progress to date).

In 2023 a total of \$174.7 million had been committed by state and federal governments for the Bundaberg East Levee (BEL) with construction expected to commence in 2025. Upper flood plain evacuation improvements have also been complete.

While it will be many years before the BEL project is completed, the project offers an opportunity to enhance and activate the urban environment it will protect. The Launceston Flood Levee in Tasmania is a good example of how a levee can be used as a city feature to encourage pedestrian and cycle use.

The BEL project could become Australia's best example of how a levee can be designed to encourage physical activity, along with supporting community and cultural development.

Advocacy position

- State government ensures the final design of the Bundaberg East Levee includes features that activate and enhance the urban environment it protects.



4. Bundaberg Integrated Transport Strategy

Background

Bundaberg Regional Council and the Queensland Government are currently preparing the Bundaberg Integrated Transport Strategy (BITS) which aims to guide the delivery of common transport priorities for the Bundaberg Region. The BITS is being developed to address current transport challenges along with consider future opportunities as the region grows and changes.

Set for finalisation in 2024, the BITS will prioritise several major transport projects for funding and delivery. The BITS was brought forward to support transport funding announcements made by the Australian Government in 2019 under the Hinkler Regional Deal.

Bundaberg transport projects funded under the Hinkler Regional Deal, but not yet commenced, include;

- The de-maining of Quay Street (\$32 million)
- Bargara Road and Princess Street upgrades (\$8 million)

Advocacy position

- That funding committed to the Queensland Government under the Hinkler Regional Deal be put towards priorities identified in the BITS, and that further state and federal funding be provided to support delivery of BITS.



5. Prioritised funding for state roads

Background

In 2023–24 Council will invest \$33.2 million on local roads. To deliver this program Council regularly seeks state and federal funding to help improve or maintain roads across the region. In addition to the Bundaberg Integrated Transport Strategy projects, other significant road projects being prioritised for state and federal funding by Bundaberg Regional Council include:

- **Moore Park Road**
To address flood immunity issues.
- **Goodwood Road**
Bridge or culvert widening at the Elliott River and Turpin Creek, as well as immunity upgrades at Rushy Creek and Yellow Waterholes Creek.
- **Rosedale Road**
Widening and improvements to horizontal and vertical geometry.
- **Gin Gin Road**
Widening and additional overtaking opportunities.
- **Bargara Road**
Upgrades and cycle path investigations by the state and Council.

Advocacy position

- State and federal governments prioritise funding and decision making for the above road and infrastructure projects.



6. Active transport pathways and cycleways

Background

Council's current Active Transport Strategy guides the delivery of a connected pathway network across the region. Each year Council budgets \$2.5 - \$3 million towards building and improving local pathway infrastructure.

Through its Principle Cycle Network Plan Council has also prioritised future expansion of its cycle path network. This growing network aims to connect major residential and visitor destinations across the region.

The capital works program for pedestrian and cycle pathway networks are vital in improving the liveability and accessibility of our region.

Priorities to support these networks include:

- Supporting pedestrian and cycle way connections to schools, such as the Avoca Street raised pedestrian crossings,
- Implement better walking networks to support the Friendly Society Private Hospital, Sugarland Plaza, and Bargara central catchments,
- Ongoing implementation of the Principle Cycle Network Plan, and
- Work with landowners to complete the final connections of the Coastal Pathway from Elliot Heads to Burnett Heads.

Advocacy position

- State and federal funding to match Council's annual pathway and cycle way infrastructure budget.
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7. Bundaberg intermodal

Background

With a rapidly expanding economy, the region's freight task will continue to grow.

Following the declaration of the Bundaberg State Development Area in 2017, subsequent transport and infrastructure studies identified the opportunity to investigate the case for a road-to-rail intermodal facility in the region. The facility would improve regional competitiveness through improving network efficiency and reducing transport costs.

Preliminary investigations suggest the Thabeban industrial area and Claytons Siding Road as one possible location to examine the concept of an intermodal concept further. Other locations may include the Bundaberg State Development Area, or reinstatement of intermodal facilities near Bundaberg railway station.

To explore the opportunity of a Bundaberg intermodal the state government is currently conducting demand and transport studies to investigate the merits of the project. Subject to the outcomes of these investigations, the Bundaberg intermodal project would need coordination through relevant state government agencies.

Advocacy position

- State government coordinates delivery of the Bundaberg intermodal project, subject to the outcomes of current investigations.
-



Social infrastructure

8. Gin Gin Rail Trail

Background

Bundaberg Regional Council has secured \$9.5 million under the Queensland Government's Rail Trail Local Government Grants Program to deliver the Gin Gin Rail Trail project.

As part of pre-construction planning, a Detailed Business Case (DBC) and preliminary engineering design is being prepared to provide greater certainty in the scope, merit, and total cost of the project. This work is particularly important given the project involves the heritage listed Splitters Creek Bridge.

Following the completion of the DBC, Council will be in a better position to consider its level of commitment to the project. The DBC is expected to be completed in 2024.

Advocacy position

- Subject to the completion of the Detailed Business Case, the federal government provides funding to support delivery of the Gin Gin Rail Trail project.
-



Splitters Creek Bridge



Artist impression

9. Sporting infrastructure enhancements

Background

The Bundaberg Sport and Recreation Strategy identifies a number of sporting venues and facilities requiring upgrades or enhancements.

Major priorities of the strategy include upgrades to Kendall Flat to capitalise on the facilities role as a shared AFL and Cricket ground. Salter Oval is also prioritised for enhancements with Council to investigate the opportunity for a 10,000 seat capacity stadium.

In addition to enhancements to Kendall Flat and Salter Oval, upgrades to existing facilities for basketball, touch football, netball and soccer would also support increases in sporting participation and activity across the region.

Advocacy position

- State and federal funding to deliver enhancements at Kendall Flat and Salter Oval, along with support for investigations into other sporting facilities and enhancements.



10. Recreational boating facilities

Background

Bundaberg has the second largest number of recreational boating registrations in Queensland. In 2022 the state government released the Queensland Recreational Boating Facilities Demand Forecasting Study 2022, for Bundaberg Local Government Area .

While many of local government areas have seen state funding provided for recreational boating facilities, no funding has been provided for prioritised Bundaberg facilities.

In 2022 study prioritised the following recreational boating facilities in Bundaberg:

1. Burnett Heads Boat Harbour, Burnett Heads:

Increase car trailer parking, throughput efficiency and replace jetty with pontoon.

2. Strathdees Road (Four Knotts point), Burnett Heads

Provide formal parking and install a fixed sloping walkway to improve throughput and amenity.

3. Walkers Point, Woodgate

Increase capacity and provide breakwater to decrease tidal current impacts on the ramp. Provide new floating walkway.

4. Riverview Boat ramp, Elliot Heads

Provide breakwater to decrease tidal current impacts, install floating walkway and formalise parking.

5. McGills Road, Kalkie

Expansion of ramp to four lanes and increase parking to 90 spaces, including investigation via a feasibility study to determine if a heavy-duty pontoon is viable.

6. Sandy Hook Boat Ramp, Sandy Hook

Formalise parking and provide gangway-access pontoon.

7. Booyan Ramp, Moore Park Beach

Feasibility required to determine if the ramp can be reconstructed as near all-tide. If near all-tide access can be achieved, widen the ramp to two lanes and formalise parking to 30 spaces.

Advocacy position

- State government immediately funds prioritised recreational boating infrastructure in the Bundaberg Region.
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11. Social and affordable housing

Background

Like most Australian regions, the Bundaberg Region is experiencing a shortage of social, affordable, and private market housing. Council acknowledges that addressing this issue will require all levels of government, the community housing sector, and development industry to work together.

While the Queensland and Australian governments have responded with new programs and funding to improve housing availability and affordability, Bundaberg Regional Council has also pursued a range of initiatives. These include:

- Working with the Queensland Department of Housing to identify Council owned land that could be developed for social housing,
- Investigating and supporting local short-term accommodation opportunities,
- Maintaining a supply of over 2,993 residential lots approved and ready for construction,
- Preparation of Local Housing Action Plan (LHAP) in partnership with the Local Government Association of Queensland, and
- Other advocacy efforts.

However further reforms and initiatives – particularly in areas of planning and infrastructure – have the potential to accelerate the supply of social, affordable, and private market housing in the Bundaberg Region.

For example, given the higher marginal cost of trunk infrastructure in regional areas, state government reforms to trunk infrastructure funding would help increase supply of housing in Bundaberg. Reinstatement of trunk infrastructure subsidies to regional Councils, and the removal of infrastructure capping, would help Council's increase the supply of local housing.

Further, changes under the state Planning Act 2016 could also make it easier for regional housing providers to deliver housing.

Advocacy position

- Council supports the state and federal governments in their delivery of more social and affordable housing in the Bundaberg Region.
-



12. Challenger Learning Centre Bundaberg

Background

On board the ill-fated 1986 NASA Challenger space shuttle mission was a small piece of Bert Hinkler's hand-made glider, first flown at Mon Repos in 1912.

Following the 1986 disaster, families of the NASA astronauts established the Challenger Centre organisation to inspire kids in pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM). Today over forty Challenger Learning Centres operate around the world providing simulated space missions that teach and inspire K-12 students to pursue study and careers in STEM.

Bundaberg Regional Council has been working closely with the Challenger Centre organisation to establish a Challenger Learning Centre, Bundaberg. This has included a range of design and cost planning with partners to advance the project that features new partnerships with Education Queensland, TAFE Queensland, and the Queensland University of Technology, among others.

The proposed location for the Centre is the Bundaberg TAFE Campus.

In 2021 Council conducted an expression of interest to identify STEM leaders to govern and operate the Centre. It is expected that the Centre will be funded through a mix of state or federal grants. Opportunity also exists for philanthropy to play a role in funding the project.

Advocacy position

- State and federal government funding and support to establish a Challenger Learning Centre, Bundaberg.



13. Community infrastructure program

Background

Bundaberg Regional Council invests significantly in community infrastructure, managing assets from Airport to Zoos. To deliver Council's larger new community infrastructure projects requires funding from other levels of government.

Projects prioritised by Council for future investment include;

- Bundaberg Recreation Precinct master plan (Stages 2 and 3)
- Completion of the Moore Park Beach Masterplan
- Upgrade of the Childers Community Centre
- Investigation into the upgrading of the Gin Gin Showground

Advocacy position

- State and federal funding to support delivery of local community infrastructure.
-



14. Visitor economy infrastructure

Background

Tourism continues to play an important role in activating the local visitor economy. In 2022 Bundaberg became the fifth region in Australia to achieve Eco Destination Certification, also winning multiple other state and national tourism awards.

Visitor economy infrastructure is important in ensuring the region capitalises on its natural advantage as the southern edge of the Great Barrier Reef. Council has prioritised the attraction and development of visitor infrastructure to ensure the region continues to be a great place to visit.

Advocacy position

- State and federal government funding for visitor economy infrastructure planning and delivery.
-



Green infrastructure

15. Infrastructure for a net zero Bundaberg

Background

In 2022 Bundaberg Regional Council released its Towards Net Zero Bundaberg strategy. Created in partnership with industry, the strategy outlines a regional pathway towards a net zero future, including removal of one million tonnes of carbon from our environment each year.

The strategy identifies that two thirds of the net zero target could be achieved by 'greening the grid', that is by supporting projects supply energy through an augmentation of the existing energy grid to customers.

Examples of proposed large scale renewable projects include the Mt Rawden Pumped Hydro project near Bundaberg, and 500 megawatts of potential solar energy that could be provided through approved commercial solar farms.

The remainder of the target could be achieved by supporting electric vehicle adoption and green-rated building development in the region, along with growing the local circular economy. Establishing a sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) industry in Bundaberg is a further opportunity to grow the economy.

Supporting the net zero target will require new and upgraded infrastructure to be provided by both the public and private sector. Examples include;

- Public electric vehicle charging stations,
- Grid-scale community battery systems and micro grids,
- Upgrades to energy transmission lines and substations,
- Waste and water treatment facility upgrades,
- Sustainable aviation fuel refinery capability,
- Recycling enterprise facilities.

Supporting the region's transition to a net zero future will also require local workforces to have the necessary skills to build, operate the maintain the above infrastructure.

To encourage investment in net zero infrastructure, and in support of the Queensland Renewable Energy Zones and the Australian Rewiring the Nation initiative, a regional net zero infrastructure roadmap is required to support greater investment in necessary projects.

Advocacy position

- State government work with Bundaberg Regional Council to prepare a net zero infrastructure roadmap for the region.
-

16. Environmental protection

Background

Each year Council invests significantly in environmental protection and other initiatives to manage its natural environment.

Council has a number of proposed major environmental initiatives aimed at protecting or enhancing the natural environment. These initiatives are guided and delivered through various plans, strategies, and long-term naturalisation projects.

Funding is required to assist Council deliver the following environmental initiatives;

- Implementation of the Woodgate and Bargara Shoreline Erosion Management Plans, with priority given to sand nourishment at Bargara Beach,
- Preparation of a Shoreline Erosion Management Plan for Moore Park Beach,
- Implementation of various initiatives outlined in the Bundaberg Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy
- Implementation of naturalisation projects within the Saltwater Creek and Washpool Creek catchments, with priority given to stage 3 of Washpool Creek.

Council also works with local natural resource management and land care groups to enhance the environment.

Initiatives like the One Million Trees Bundaberg program have been successful in supporting the region's environment. Local environmental challenges, such as the historic water quality issues relating to Moneys Creek are being actively addressed through a consortium of local stakeholders, including Council.

Advocacy position

- State and federal government funding towards Council's prioritised environmental initiatives and other local environmental issues and opportunities.
-



Human capital infrastructure

17. Building community resilience

Background

Community resilience is the sustained ability of communities to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity. Community resilience also responds to threats and strengthens a community's wellbeing and connectedness.

Locally, greater community resilience is being achieved through a variety of initiatives. Council initiatives include; targeting improvements in health and wellbeing, youth engagement, promoting volunteering, and delivering new infrastructure to coordinate responses in times of natural disaster. Council also works extensively to improve the resilience of the natural environment.

Council has prioritised the funding and delivery of unique community resilience initiatives such as; the Building a Healthy Bundaberg Alliance to improve health and wellness, a Community Resilience Coordinator to engage youth in volunteering, and programs like Eat Breath Move that are educating youth about human metabolism and the periodic table.

These above initiatives, and others, have been part funded through various state and federal government programs and delivered through local partnerships established by Council.

Agencies such as Health and Wellbeing Queensland, the Queensland Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority have become key partners of Council in building community resilience.

Advocacy position

- State and federal funding to support efforts to strengthen community resilience through establishing a regional community resilience fund for regional Queensland Councils.



18. Cardiac services and defib hero

Background

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is the leading cause of death in Australia. Each year around 30,000 Australians die from SCA. Up to 70% of these deaths can be prevented if treated within three minutes of the incident (Source, St John Ambulance).

In Bundaberg 6.4% of residents (6,363) have an existing heart condition compared to 3.9% of Australians (Source, ABS Census 2021). This places our community at greater risk of SCA.

Pre-existing heart conditions can be treated by specialist cardiology services, while SCA can be treated through rapid access to a defibrillator.

Bundaberg is home to one of three cardiac units in regional Queensland, however, has a shortage of skilled cardiologists. For example, Bundaberg has 3.91 cardiologists per 100,000 residents, compared to 4.32 for Australia.

This issue could be addressed if the region was declared a District Workforce Shortage (DWS) area by the Australian Government. A DWS is an area where people have poor access to specialist medical practitioners and allows for recruitment of internationally trained cardiologists when they can't be recruited in Australia.

In 2023 the region will become the first place in Australia to launch the 'defib hero app' that is part of a program by Heart 180 being supported by Council and the community. This initiative aims to save lives by ensuring every resident has access to a defib within three minutes, an outcome that would be an Australian first.

Advocacy position

- Federal government returns District Workforce Shortage status to the Bundaberg Region, and the state government provides funding support for the Defib Hero Bundaberg program.
-



19. Stronger higher education partnerships

Background

Education participation and completion rates continue to improve across the Bundaberg region. Between 2016 and 2021, Year 12 and university completion rates increased by 3.8% and 1.9%, respectively.

Council continues to work with local high schools and the higher education sector to support education participation and completion.

Council-led initiatives like the Bundaberg Jobs Commitment are having a dramatic impact in engaging youth in further education or employment, while work with higher education providers is ensuring youth are exposed to increasingly greater vocational and university pathway opportunities.

Bundaberg Regional Council holds Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the University of Queensland (UQ). Both relationships strengthen the role of these institutions in our region through facilitating various student and industry engagement opportunities.

To further strengthen education outcomes in the region, Council will continue to explore ways to attract investment in new educational programs and infrastructure.

Funded by the federal government, the concept of Regional University Study Hubs helps students in regional areas access higher education without having to leave their community. This funding, along with other infrastructure opportunities will be explored by Council and its partners.

Advocacy position

- State and federal government fund greater education infrastructure in the Bundaberg Region.
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