



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

STRATEGIC PLAN 2010

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From the Chairman

Since its formation in 2004 resulting from amalgamation of Merriwa, Murrurundi and Scone Shires, The Upper Hunter Shire Council has been consolidating and planning for the promotion of the Upper Hunter Shire as a whole.

This document details the Council's vision and actions to achieve sustained and desired economic growth, lifestyle and tourist based activities that continue to make our Shire a place envied and sought after, for its natural beauty and social, economic and community based resources.

The plan is partnership between Council, the community and other State and Federal Government agencies. The Upper Hunter Shire Council sees itself as the facilitator, driver and advocate of the ultimate delivery of the goals set in this document.

Significant levels of time, volunteered and paid resources, have been invested in this process to develop such a document that personifies and articulates the hopes and aspirations of the communities within the Upper Hunter.

It is a working document. Changes will occur and Council will review this document in two ways; strategically within the first year of each newly elected Council and tactically, through the Economic Development & Tourism Committee, on a quarterly basis.

Measuring our performance is the key to ensuring adherence to meeting our goals and this document holds Council to account. This helps provide transparent and effective performance criteria for the elected representatives, thereby allowing the residents and visitors alike, to involve themselves in the continued success of the strategic plan.

This is the community's plan and I am proud to present this document as the basis for our future growth.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Johnsen', written over a faint, light blue circular watermark or seal.

Cr. Michael Johnsen

1. Executive Summary

This Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan 2010 (ED&TSP 2010) has been developed over a 2 year period with input from the Upper Hunter Shire Council Economic Development & Tourism Committee and the Economic Development and Tourism units of Council.

The priorities established within the plan are reflections of feedback from the committee representatives and community consultation (refer to Appendix 1 for the full list of priorities).

The plan identifies four distinct Community Strategic Objectives (CSOs) consistent with the Upper Hunter Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2010+ adopted by Council on 23 April 2010.

The Economic Promotion Community Strategic Objectives are:

1. Achieve recognised and successful local area branding
2. Support and develop a thriving, safe and growing business community with increased employment
3. Establish the Shire as a preferred destination for visitors
4. Facilitate and provide for a growing and vibrant resident population

The ED&TSP 2010 document provides a range of strategies to achieve the Economic CSOs and a detailed Action Plan which outlines the implementation for this plan. The Action Plan will be monitored and updated by the Economic Development & Tourism Committee on a quarterly basis. The overall strategic direction of the plan will be reviewed every four (4) years in line with the term of council and the Community Strategic Planning process.

This plan aims to develop and support projects that will ensure the Upper Hunter Shire region is one that is conducive to business expansion, encourages tourists to visit and stay longer, supports local residents, and creates an environment that attracts city based businesses and residents to relocate to this regional location.

This plan identifies a broad range of strategies that may be effective in achieving the stated strategic objectives. Not all strategies will be implemented as economic and political climates change over time necessitating changes in strategies. All activities must be assessed in light of the Council Delivery Program and Operational Plan and the budgetary implications.

Many actions identified in this plan are dependant upon external grant funding and contributions. Changes to government priorities and therefore funding initiatives will have implications for the effectiveness of any of the strategies identified.

The ED&TSP 2010 identifies several **key opportunities** for economic development based on the background information provided, analyses conducted and community consultation undertaken:

- Build on the current reputation that Scone and the Upper Hunter enjoys as the “Horse Capital of Australia”:

The Upper Hunter has long been regarded as the centre for the horse breeding industry in Australia and Scone is recognised as “The Horse Capital” of Australia. This established recognised brand should be further developed and marketed to maintain this credibility and awareness..

The equine industry supports a large segment of the businesses in the region from agriculture through to professional services. Facilitating the expansion of these equine and related support industries whilst ensuring any new developments are sympathetic to the equine industry will ensure that the regional economy continues to grow and remains diverse. There are opportunities to develop ‘import replacing’ businesses as a means of improving the viability of the local economy.

- Capitalise on the renewed interest in “green” industry, the environment and Australian heritage and link existing tourism trails to environmental benefits and the area’s rich heritage.

The Upper Hunter Shire is characterised by a beautiful natural environment, highly productive agricultural land, clean air and plentiful water.

- Capitalise on the identification of the Upper Hunter as one of the NSW Clean Energy Precincts through infrastructure development.

With increasing interest in the region as a viable location for alternative energy generation and the approval for Kyoto Energy park to proceed there is an opportunity to develop a green energy service industry in the region for construction and servicing of these energy projects.

- Encourage outside investment to expand services, housing and facilities targeted at the aging population to attract more over 55s to the area e.g. retirement village.

As the Australian and Upper Hunter population ages there is an opportunity to encourage investment in services for the elderly that can create a viable industry segment.

- Promote the Upper Hunter as a weekend destination by encouraging outlets to provide longer/Sunday trading hours and expand the experience for those visiting the region.
- Promote the experiences of the Upper Hunter to make it a destination place for tourists, including Lake Glenbawn, National Parks, vineyards and horse studs and spectacular landscapes and rich Indigenous and European heritage
- Highlight the proximity of the area to Sydney, especially once the F3 extension to Branxton is completed.

As the region becomes closer in travel times to Sydney there will be increased opportunities to provide work and residential locations for those looking to escape the Sydney rat race but maintain career and work contacts.

A key premise to this plan is that it is more sustainable and economically viable to assist and encourage existing small to medium sized enterprises to expand and grow than it is to develop programs to try and capture businesses from outside the region and have them relocate. A business that is enticed to a region can be enticed to others later on, whereas a local business is invested in the community.

The Upper Hunter Shire Council has an identified role in economic development within the region as indicated below:

- Improve the attractiveness of the local area through capital investment in beautification projects to stimulate population growth and leverage investment
- Create a regulatory environment which provides certainty and direction for business and tourism
- Identify gaps in industry and development and the strengthening of local cluster development
- Manage and maintain existing infrastructure and facilitate the provision of new or upgraded infrastructure
- Assist education and skills training which is targeted to support local business
- Undertake more focused marketing initiatives that promote the existing attributes and opportunities in the region.

- Support the preservation of local, regional and State heritage and facilitate its integration into tourism and other economic development opportunities

2. Introduction to the ED&TSP 2010

2.1 Background

In an increasingly competitive global market it has never been so important for local governments to prepare and implement effective economic development and tourism strategies. Sustainable growth at a local level is vital to generate ongoing business and employment opportunities and to support improvements in infrastructure and community services.

The Upper Hunter Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan 2010 provides a long term, strategic framework for economic development and tourism in the Upper Hunter – identifying Council investment and prioritisation of projects now and in the future.

This plan looks at a 10 year timeframe with input from Council staff and the Community through a range of community consultation processes.

The ED &TSP 2010 addresses the following:

- Identify ways in which job opportunities can be maximised through retaining and supporting existing businesses and attracting new investment and complementary business to the region
- Provide a framework for planned and coordinated economic development and tourism
- Identify ways to attract more visitors to the area and establish the Upper Hunter as a preferred destination for visitors
- Enhance the Upper Hunter's competitive capability and positioning
- Examine and provide direction to the Council's Economic Development and Tourism unit and other responsible peak bodies and agencies in relation to their roles and responsibilities in promoting economic development in the Upper Hunter
- Develop a framework by which Council can assist in developing and supporting industry clusters and competitive advantages identified

2.2 Council/Community Vision

The Council/Community vision, as identified in the recently developed Upper Hunter Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2010+, provides direction and meaning to its activities.

The agreed vision for the Shire is stated as:

“A Quality Rural Lifestyle - in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community”

2.3 Key Focus Areas and Aspirations for the Future

The Upper Hunter Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2010+ identifies key focus areas and aspirations for the future covering the four broad categories (the quadruple bottom line approach) of –

- Social,
- Environmental,
- Economic

- Civic Leadership

The specific Economic Key Focus Areas and Aspirations for the Future are:

Enhance economic and employment opportunities and promote development for a sustainable, vibrant future

Maintain and enhance civil infrastructure and community assets to meet the needs of current and future generations.

In order to support the Community/Council vision and the Economic Key Focus areas in the Community Strategic Plan 2010+, the ED&TSP 2010 aims to provide a framework for economic development in the Shire

All future projects should be tested against these to ensure they are consistent with this intent.

2.4 Economic Community Strategic Objectives (CSO's)

The ED&TSP 2010 identifies four distinct Community Strategic Objectives consistent with the Council Community Strategic Plan 2010+ adopted by Council at the April 2010 Meeting.

- 1 Achieve recognised and successful local area branding
- 2 Support and develop a thriving, safe and growing business community with increased employment
- 3 Establish the Shire as a preferred destination for visitors
- 4 Facilitate and provide for a growing and vibrant resident population

2.5 The Role of Council

There are a number of areas where local government can take a proactive role in the economic development of a region. These provide a backdrop for the development of this plan.

These include:

- Improve the attractiveness of the local area through capital investment in beautification projects to stimulate population growth and leverage investment
- Create a regulatory environment which assists business and encourages appropriate development in a supportive manner
- Identify gaps in industry and development and assist in the strengthening of local industry clusters
- Manage and maintain existing infrastructure and facilitate the provision of new or upgraded infrastructure
- Assist education and skills training which is targeted to support local business
- Undertake more focused marketing initiatives that promote the existing attributes and opportunities in the region.
- Enrich the Shire's appeal for tourism and economic development through the preservation and promotion of its cultural history

Refer to Appendix 2 for an overview of the Economic Development and Tourism functions within the Council.

3. Situation Analysis Summary

(Refer to Appendix 3 for full Situation Analysis)

3.1 The Upper Hunter Shire Today

Growing Population:

The Upper Hunter Shire is a diverse region of 8,100 square kilometres and a population of about 14,000 people. The estimated resident population (ERP) growth in the Upper Hunter Shire from June 2007 – June 2008 was 1.3%. Growth in population is a critically important component in economic development as this growth has positive impacts on the levels of total private and public expenditure in a community.

Affordable Housing:

The Upper Hunter Shire has the competitive advantage of having affordable housing available throughout the shire. Significant industries such as coal mining and the equine industry have a major influence on housing prices and the rental market and this is reflected in the housing prices in Aberdeen and Scone.

Sales Activity - Quarter ending December 2009		SALES, LAST		MEDIAN VALUE		MEDIAN RENT, LAST		CAPITAL GROWTH LAST		RENTAL YIELD, LAST		TOTAL RETURN, LAST	
TOWN	P/CODE	QTR	YEAR	CURRENT	LAST YEAR	QTR	YEAR	YEAR	10 YRS	YEAR	10 YRS	YEAR	10 YRS
ABERDEEN	2336	9	34	\$248,500	\$225,500	\$260	\$250	10.28%	10.25%	5.38%	6.68%	16.37%	17.83%
MERRIWA	2329	6	21	\$170,500	\$159,000	\$225	\$220	7.45%	8.41%	7.09%	8.22%	15.32%	17.66%
MURRURUNDI	2338	3	26	\$166,500	\$161,000	\$205	\$210	3.25%	9.77%	6.57%	8.15%	10.23%	19.05%
SCONE	2337	23	79	\$304,500	\$279,500	\$250	\$270	9.00%	9.34%	4.92%	5.90%	14.55%	15.96%

Source: Residex

Strength in Agriculture:

Agriculture has been and still is the mainstay of the Upper Hunter Shire regional economy. This sector includes broad acre farming, intensive agriculture, livestock production and equine industries.

Agriculture is the life of the region and businesses have traditionally supported this industry. Agriculture in general across Australia and within the Upper Hunter Shire over the last 100 years has shown declining business numbers, increased efficiency and declining employment.

A specific activity within the broad agricultural industry in the Upper Hunter is the thoroughbred breeding industry. Since the early development of this industry activity in the thoroughbred industry and associated employment has and will continue to grow.

Strong Arts and Recreation Services:

This sector has a proportionally high number of employees compared to the Hunter Balance (LGAs located within the Hunter but outside of the UHSC). The art and culture industry is expanding within the Murrurundi district as the town becomes recognised within the art and culture community (but still a relatively low total employer). Sports and recreation services are the major employing subsets of this sector.

Existing Infrastructure:

Infrastructure is vital to the operation and expansion of any business in the region. Transport infrastructure includes the Golden and New England Highways which provide links to Newcastle and Sydney as well as Tamworth to the north and Dubbo to the west.

Main Road 62 from Merriwa to Scone is an important transport route for livestock transportation to the Scone Regional Selling Centre.

The Great Northern Rail Line provides passenger and freight links to Newcastle and Sydney also.

Scone Airport is one of few registered and sealed airports in the Hunter region.

Quality Rural lifestyle:

Rural lifestyle is one of outdoor recreation as well as work based activities. Clean air, green rolling hills and a relaxing atmosphere are attributes residents have identified as typical of the area. This is not only an attractant for residents but also for tourism. With eight national parks, ten nature reserves and the magnificent Lake Glenbawn, the Upper Hunter Shire has much to offer those keen on the outdoors.

Rich Heritage and Culture:

The Upper Hunter Shire has a rich and varied cultural heritage across the landscape with many natural and man made cultural attractions. This may provide a latent tourism opportunity to attract visitors to the Shire.

Environment

The Upper Hunter Shire possesses some magnificent natural scenery and rugged beauty. The Shire contains eight National Parks and ten nature reserves. This includes the World Heritage and Wilderness Areas of the Barrington Tops National Park.

This places the Upper Hunter Shire at a competitive advantage to other nearby shires because the area can be marketed as 'clean and green' and promoted as such to new industry and residents.

3.2 Community Priorities

Upper Hunter Shire Council undertook a Community Research Project in late 2009 to ascertain community priorities and the community's satisfaction levels with council services and operations as input for the Community Strategic Plan.

The survey asked the community to rate the services and facilities on their level of importance and on their level of satisfaction. The consultants conducted a gap analysis of the level of importance and level of satisfaction of 51 services or facilities provided by Council.

The services or facilities with the highest priority ranking are those that the community believes changes should be considered to improve their provision to the community.

"Supporting current business" and "Promoting local employment" were identified as two of the top 10 most important services/facilities for Council focus (see the table below).

The Gap Analysis also found that 'Promoting local employment', 'Establishing new business' and 'Supporting current business' all scored in the top 10 priorities suggesting that these issues have a high importance and low satisfaction rating at present.

Priority Ranking	Service/Facility	Priority Score (Gap)
1	Road maintenance	9.16
2	Promoting local employment	6.44
3	Provision and cleanliness of public toilets	6.4
4	Medical facilities	6.32
5	Health services	6.16
6	Establishing new business	6.16
7	Consideration of the environment when planning for the future	5.56
8	Services and facilities for people with disabilities	5.28
9	Supporting current business	5.12
10	Weed control	5.08

4. SWOT Analysis

A series of workshops were conducted during 2009 with representatives from towns throughout the Upper Hunter Shire as well as four Councillors and Council Staff from the Economic Development and Tourism Committee. This group identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within the Upper Hunter Shire.

Opportunities and Threats provide the basis for future planning and are reflected in the strategies and implementation steps.

The full SWOT analysis is provided in Appendix 4. Below is a summary of the key Strengths and Opportunities for economic development in the Shire.

Strengths:

- Highly productive agricultural land, plentiful water supplies, and the strength and reputation of the local equine industry
- Beautiful natural environment, clean air and natural resources
- Access to quality and affordable residential, commercial and industrial land compared to metropolitan areas
- Proximity to larger towns and metropolitan areas. Although public transport is lacking, the New England Highway and the rail system provide essential transport linkages to major centres and international airports
- A variety of small towns and villages offering their own unique living and surrounding environment for new residents and tourists.
- High quality educational institutions
- Rich history and heritage

Opportunities:

- Build on the current reputation that Scone and the Upper Hunter enjoys.
- Scone has long been regarded as the centre for the horse breeding industry and is recognised as “The Horse Capital” of Australia. This established recognition can be further developed into a shire wide brand as the equine industry is strongly evident beyond the town of Scone in most areas throughout the shire, including the Council logo.
- Capitalise on the renewed interest in “green” industry, the environment and Australian heritage and link existing tourism trails to environmental benefits and the area’s rich heritage.
- Encourage outside investment to expand services, housing and facilities targeted at the aging population to attract over 55s to the area e.g. retirement villages.
- Promote the Upper Hunter as a weekend destination by encouraging outlets to provide longer/Sunday trading hours.
- *A motivated Local Tourism Organisation (Upper Hunter Country Tourism) with marketing material already developed and the opportunity to collaborate efforts*
- Highlight the proximity of the area to Sydney once F3 is completed.
- Recognise the benefit of the area’s long period of indigenous and European history as a basis for tourism and visitor attraction

5. Strategies to Achieve the Economic Community Strategic Objectives (CSO)

5.1 Economic CSO 1: Achieve recognised and successful local area branding

A clear brand identity helps people (locals and visitors alike) to identify with a specific region and to acknowledge the attributes of that region. Whilst branding for the whole of the shire is important to identify the region, it is also important that individual towns within the shire are able to create individual brands under this overarching brand, highlighting specific regional attributes.

Considerable efforts have been directed at creating an overall brand for the shire and for each town within the shire. This is based on the horse capital theme and each town has been signposted to reflect individual attributes within this broad theme.

Council would be expected to take a leading role in regional branding through direct funding support or leveraging of Council funds to secure regional tourism or State Government funding. The Community would have direct involvement in the development of branding strategies that are specific to the region. The branding strategies will develop and market existing brands more effectively to encourage local ownership and pride in the brand.

Branding strategy development:

The Upper Hunter Shire is considered the centre of thoroughbred horse breeding in Australia and Scone is recognised as “The Horse Capital of Australia”. This established recognition has been developed into a shire wide brand focussed on horses, as the equine industry in general is strongly evident beyond the town of Scone in most areas throughout the shire (Refer Appendix 5).

With Scone, “The Horse Capital of Australia” as the strategic focus it is possible to leverage this horse theme and build upon the marketing and investment opportunity for other centres within the shire.

It is also important to recognise the linkages with surrounding regions and the potential for joint marketing and promotion campaigns that reflect consistent themes across regional boundaries.



The Upper Hunter Shire has many features and attributes that are consistent with neighbouring regions, not necessarily within the Hunter Valley. These opportunities should be investigated and implemented. This approach is consistent with Tourism NSW funding programs that are encouraging multi region campaigns.

Resources are required to develop the branding strategy so that future investment is targeted at specific outcomes that will benefit towns and the region socially and economically. This is about making the brands known and developing marketing material that reflects the commitment to the brand.

5.2 Economic CSO 2: Support and develop a thriving, safe and growing business community

▪ Encourage the growth of the existing equine and equine related industries

The Upper Hunter Shire has become the recognised centre of thoroughbred horse breeding in Australia. There are opportunities to support this major industry through changes to the Local Environment Plan to provide a level of security to existing and future investment in the thoroughbred industry.

By developing an understanding of the equine industry as a whole it is possible to identify opportunities for business investment, expansion and import replacement activities that improves the viability of existing businesses and underpins expansion and growth of local industry.

▪ Encourage new businesses which are complementary or not detrimental to the Brand Identity

The Upper Hunter Shire Council will in the first instance ensure that the Upper Hunter and Scone in particular maintains the recognised horse brand through its various development approval processes. Proposed new businesses and developments will be assessed on its fit - or at the very least it not being detrimental - with the Brand Identity.

In addition, the Upper Hunter Shire has the opportunity to leverage the perceived image of clean air, clear water and sustainability that stems from being the Horse Capital of Australia. The pristine nature of its natural environment further supports the opportunity to be recognised as a leader in supporting renewable and renewable-related industries and adopting green technologies.

Council will not be the driver of this growth but can facilitate it through closer linkages with key complementary industries, providing essential infrastructure and supporting the identification of skills gaps and matching these to educational pathways. Identifying future trends or providing such information can also assist local businesses to adapt and prosper through a changing business environment.

This targeted approach to development would provide a further enhancement to the brand identity by adding the tagline: "Living and Working with Nature".

▪ Ensure there is sufficient and effective infrastructure to encourage business growth and development of new industry within the Shire

The provision of infrastructure such as land, communications and a skilled workforce (employment ready) are all factors that affect the ability of businesses to take advantage of changes in the business landscape.

Council will coordinate investment in infrastructure that provides the greatest returns in business investments and employment outcomes. It will conduct an audit of current

industrial and commercial land requirements and identify opportunities for expansion of land development suitable to industrial and commercial use including developing and marketing employment land within the Scone Airpark.

- **Develop a highly skilled and mobile workforce that can adapt to change and that allows businesses to grow as required**

Skills development is critical to assisting businesses to grow. Employment can be sourced locally or externally to the region depending on the skills required. Bringing new families to the region or up-skilling the local employment pool to allow higher paying jobs will provide opportunities for increased wealth for the Upper Hunter Shire.

Significant competition from the coal mines exists within the labour market due to the above award wage rates available within the mining sector. As new coal mines are developed and brought on line there is further pressure on other industries to maintain their existing workforce. Small business may not be able to compete directly on wages but can offer other workplace benefits to combat this skills drain and retain their experienced staff.

- **Support the local Chambers of Commerce and business representative groups to ensure they have the capacity to assist existing businesses and new business development**

Council will provide contributions to the operation of the business chambers within the Shire and provide council staff hours and assistance towards the operation of the Chambers and business groups.

Council will provide contributions to broader Hunter initiatives such as Regional Development Australia (Hunter).

Communication with businesses through local Chambers of Commerce and Industry will be important to maintain contact and gain feedback from the business communities of the shire.

- **Make it easier to do business with Council through systems and procedures that reduce red tape and improve processing times for employment generating development applications**

Assistance to prioritise processing of development applications relating to business investment and reduce the amount of "red tape" that investors are likely to encounter when dealing with Council will be a major priority. How Council operates internally will also be a focus to ensure that businesses receive support and feel encouraged to invest in the region.

Generally Council is the first point of call for potential investors and this experience needs to be a positive one for the investor. On-line support and pre-development application assistance reduces the assessment timeframe. Council will implement an on-line business enquiry system that enables proponents to determine the requirements of development applications before they are lodged.

5.3 Economic CSO 3: Establish the Shire as a preferred destination for visitors

The Upper Hunter Shire region is not well known as a destination point for tourists. Experience and anecdotal evidence suggests that the Sydney market does not venture much further than the Pokolbin Wine Region in the Hunter and they are unaware of what is on offer further up the Hunter Valley.

It is vital that there is a range of experiences for visitors to encounter when in the region and it cannot be assumed that these people will find what they are looking for without some

marketing. The towns of the shire must be receptive to visitors and businesses within should understand that “tourism is everyone’s business”.

- **Develop and implement a program that highlights and supports the importance of “Pride of Place” across the Shire**

Council will encourage and support towns and communities to develop a pride in their local community. By developing this pride there will be impetus to create or maintain pleasant and appealing streetscapes that attract visitors, tourists and residents alike. This will also provide further support to the tag of “Living and Working with Nature”.

Solutions may differ between towns so one generic program may not be appropriate.

- **Develop and support local tourism product and experiences to encourage more time and money spent in the Shire**

The Upper Hunter Shire is surrounded by magnificent National and State Parks, other natural and man-made attractions such as Lake Glenbawn and the Hunter, Pages and Goulburn Rivers.

Tourism development requires product and experiences to allow development of one-day, two day and extended break packages that increase tourist spend in the local economy.

The Upper Hunter region is recognised as a “green” basin for agricultural production and equine breeding. The area has a diverse range of business related to these industries as well as a broad support for tourism through hospitality, cultural activities, accommodation and natural features. Provision to support and market this area as a destination will be beneficial to existing communities and businesses as well as attracting new enterprises.

The Upper Hunter Shire Council will preserve and maintain the valuable natural resources on offer, including supporting our National Parks, to ensure safe, attractive, educational and user friendly environments.

The rich cultural history of the region is also important. Both Indigenous and European culture have enriched this region. It is important that this history is maintained in the landscape and that the story of the region is told and supported to enrich the experience of the visitor. The Heritage DCP and LEP provisions will be incorporated into the ED&T Plan as and when they are developed and adopted by Council.

5.4 Economic CSO 4: Provide facilities and infrastructure to support a growing and healthy resident population

The Upper Hunter Shire has a growing population through both natural increase and employment related relocations. The shire is recognised as a preferred residential location for workers employed in surrounding shires due to its proximity to the mining regions and its lifestyle benefits.

As the major cities of Australia become less and less inviting to its residents there is also an opportunity to provide lifestyle and employment opportunities to metropolitan residents within the Upper Hunter Shire.

Population growth does not come without its challenges; increased traffic flows, residential land and housing price pressures; water supply and sewer capacities; to name a few.

Council can facilitate this process of growth through communication, understanding future needs and pressures, providing infrastructure and planning to allow for future growth without impacting on the values that the residents have already identified within the community.

6. Action Plan

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions
1. Achieve recognised and successful local area branding	1.1 Develop a brand strategy for the Upper Hunter Shire	10,000		Prepare a brief and engage a branding specialist to assist in the development of a branding strategy
				Resource the implementation and ongoing management of the brand
	1.2 Assist localised branding initiatives	10,000		Support local branding strategies that are consistent with the overall brand
				Local brands confirmed as consistent with regional brand
	1.3 Develop effective marketing material for the shire and each town	10,000	10,000	Develop a shire wide investment prospectus and maintain its currency as required
				Develop individual town prospectuses to highlight individual competitive advantages and opportunities
				Update Council and Chamber of Commerce websites with prospectus information as available
				Professionally develop the identified brand/s into marketing collateral including print marketing and website
				Distribute marketing material to appropriate outlets
				Distribute locally to business houses and utilised by local residents and visitors
	1.4 Attend promotional activities to develop the brand	3,000	3,000	Attend Country & Regional Living Expo with appropriate marketing materials
				Identify other marketing opportunities
				Ensure follow up of all leads from activities
	1.5 To ensure that the Upper Hunter and Scone in particular is developed and maintained as			Engage leaders in the equine industry & related community organisations to develop a plan and identify and prioritise future projects in order to promote The Horse Capital

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions
	the Horse Capital of Australia			<p data-bbox="1182 288 1783 316">Identify partners for projects and potential funding opportunities</p> <p data-bbox="1182 363 1939 391">Communicate the future development projects to business & community leaders</p> <p data-bbox="1182 438 2130 491">Investigate the options for development of a 'Horse Heritage Display' that could be incorporated into existing tourism infrastructure or developed as a stand alone product</p> <p data-bbox="1182 539 2107 592">Identify infrastructure requirements to maintain the status of "Horse Capital" and encourage public and private investment in such infrastructure</p>
2. Increase employment in the Shire by supporting a thriving, safe and growing business community	<p data-bbox="394 639 853 715">2.1 Encourage new businesses which are complementary to the Shire brand and not detrimental</p>	10,000	10,000	<p data-bbox="1182 639 2101 667">Identify appropriate business development and complementary industries for business expansion</p> <p data-bbox="1182 715 2051 742">Continue to resource the roles of an Economic Development & Tourism team within Council</p> <p data-bbox="1182 790 2130 842">Conduct a Business Retention and Expansion Program within the Shire to identify business mix and gaps</p> <p data-bbox="1182 890 2078 943">Implement projects identified in the Township Marketing Plans and the Business Retention and Expansion Projects</p> <p data-bbox="1182 991 1704 1018">Support projects and initiatives that create employment</p> <p data-bbox="1182 1050 1928 1077">Identify and encourage and develop import replacement business opportunities</p> <p data-bbox="1182 1125 1951 1152">Promote and support businesses that are sympathetic to the Horse Capital image</p>
	<p data-bbox="394 1195 869 1294">2.2 Ensure there is sufficient and effective infrastructure to encourage business growth and development of new industry within the Shire</p>			<p data-bbox="1182 1195 2107 1248">Coordinate investment in infrastructure that provides the greatest returns in business investments and employment outcomes</p> <p data-bbox="1182 1295 1756 1323">Audit of current industrial and commercial land requirements</p> <p data-bbox="1182 1370 1962 1398">Identify opportunities for expansion of industrial and commercial land development</p>

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions	
				Market and develop employment land within the Scone Airpark precinct	
				Identify telecommunication and technology gaps within the local region and seek support for improved access to higher quality telecommunications	
	2.3 Develop a highly skilled and mobile workforce that can adapt to change and allows businesses to grow as required				Identify skills gaps and training needs through surveys and forums
					Audit of existing training programs and packages available locally and outside the area
					Facilitate the development and provision of identified training
					Actively investigate and support the establishment of specific tertiary training opportunities for clean energy employment and business development within the Shire
					Support school based skills development and traineeships through financial support of UHVEIN and its awards night
	2.4 Support the local Chambers of Commerce and business representative groups to ensure they have the capacity to assist existing businesses and new business development		6,200	6,200	Communicate with businesses through local chambers of commerce and industry
					Provide contributions to the operation of the business chambers and business representative organisations within the shire
					Provide Council staff hours and assistance towards the operation of the Chambers and business groups
					Provide contributions to broader Hunter initiatives such as Regional Development Australia (Hunter), Hunter Business Enterprise Centre
					Support the development of an "umbrella" Upper Hunter Shire Chamber of Commerce that represents the entire shire and includes all town business community representatives
	2.5 That Council is recognised as a leader in the community in supporting clean/green industry and adopting appropriate clean technologies where a business case exists.		3,000	2,500	Undertake a desk top study of other Council initiatives
					Council undertake an audit of its business to determine current carbon emissions

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions
				<p>Council implement the Financial Loss Control model (or equivalent) for its own business and establish targets for reducing the overall business carbon footprint</p> <p>Council communicate the benefits of clean energy production, promote government funding programs that support clean energy initiatives and demonstrate benefits through its own business</p> <p>Communicate and advocate to the broader community the changes made and implementation of those changes aimed at reducing carbon emissions</p> <p>Inclusion of Council sponsored award in Chambers Business Awards for energy saving initiatives</p>
	<p>2.6 Making it easier to do business with Council through systems and procedures that reduce red tape and improve processing times for employment generating development applications</p>			<p>Meet with Council planning staff to identify current policies and procedures for processing development applications</p> <p>Develop policies and procedure for communication of business enquiries</p> <p>Ensure all new business contacts are forwarded to the respective Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Identify and rectify impediments to DA processing and enact policies and procedures that ensure employment generating development applications receive priority processing</p> <p>Develop web-based tools and applications to enable businesses to complete much of the paperwork on-line</p> <p>Introduce on-line and electronic development application lodgement processes</p>
<p>3. Establish the Shire as a preferred destination for visitors</p>	<p>3.1 Develop and implement a program that highlights and supports the importance of 'Pride of Place' in each town and the Shire</p>	<p>21,100</p>		<p>Identify leaders and organisations in the community (such as Tidy Towns Sustainable Committee) to assist in development and implementation of identified programs and projects consistent with "Pride of Place"</p> <p>Council coordinate the formation of CBD committees for each town</p> <p>Develop or review townscape plans for each town</p> <p>Implement townscape and town beautification projects</p>

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions
				Support public art projects that complement the "Pride of Place" concept
	3.2 Develop and support local tourism product and experiences to encourage more time and money spent in the Shire	65,800	10,800	<p>Review the role of the VIC in local area tourism and develop alternate models for delivery of visitor information services</p> <p>Survey/audit of visitors to the Shire to determine demographics, spending habits, value to local economy</p> <p>Support and lobby for the provision of meal choices and dining experiences in each town</p> <p>Develop specific packages to meet different market segments e.g. over 55yrs, families, singles, empty nesters, itinerant workers</p> <p>Ensure accommodation marketing material is current and appropriate</p> <p>Audit and promote wet weather activities</p> <p>Ensure that attractions are well maintained and have appropriate informative signage.</p> <p>Develop and promote drive and heritage walking trails for the Upper Hunter and implement with on-line tools</p> <p>Use the shires diversity of attractions, accommodation types & hospitality to develop marketing campaigns</p> <p>Support the individual themes/events for each township to showcase diversity of the shire</p> <p>Implementation of the "home hosting" program for periods of high local demand</p> <p>Audit of all tourism product in the shire – beds, eateries, attractions, festivals and events</p> <p>Develop shire-wide travel tools such as web-based drive and walking guides connecting regions</p> <p>Develop overnight and short stay packages with operators to market to other regions</p>

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions
				Lobby for better tourism infrastructure such as signage, parking, toilets, rest areas, dump points, sealed roads and ensure appropriate maintenance
				Train and support businesses and their staff to be friendly, recognise tourists and make them feel welcome
				Package up tourism product into event packages e.g. Racing packages
				Record relevant statistics through the VICs, review educational activities, success of events and marketing collateral
				Develop marketing programs through Tourism Hunter that require buy-in from operators
				Promote the benefits of tourism to those businesses that may not be directly involved in the industry but who do benefit
				Develop "Welcome" badges or shirts for business people to wear – through the Welcome to the Upper Hunter Program
				Support and encourage tourism operators to enter the local Chamber Business Awards
				Offer the Aussie Host programme on an annual basis to local business operators
				Communicate tourist needs and report holiday visitations to business operators
				Facilitate the development of a cooperative approach between businesses that ensures at least some businesses are open during tourist hours and on weekends and holidays
				Provide support to volunteers and seek out and train more volunteers to assist in promoting the shire and its tourism product
				Integrate the Shire's indigenous and European cultural history and heritage into the tourism offerings for the Shire
				Promote and build on the Shire's cultural heritage and liaise and assist the Council's Heritage Advisory Committee

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions
	3.3 Market the local tourism products outside the Shire	23,000		<p>Carry out an audit of all local tourism and cultural events</p> <p>Review existing calendars and maintain an on-line events calendar</p> <p>Develop and maintain a process of notification for events and changes to details</p> <p>Communicate with other VIC such as Newcastle, Gloucester, Muswellbrook, Dungog, Mudgee, Tamworth, Taree to ensure our product is on the shelf</p> <p>Attend appropriate regional and state marketing events to increase awareness and exposure of the Upper Hunter Shire</p> <p>Ensure that website presence and online booking systems are user friendly and updated regularly</p> <p>Provide training support to operators to ensure that the product being offered is first rate and they are effectively "selling the shire"</p> <p>Develop & market events to be held in 'trough' periods</p>
	3.4 Market the local tourism products within the Shire	18,000	18,000	<p>Include tourist attractions on Council website</p> <p>Review the current tourism activities of Council and determine future involvement and investment</p> <p>Produce and distribute marketing material to promote these assets</p> <p>Encourage community and organisation involvement when holding events</p> <p>Establish tourist kiosks within prominent retail areas</p> <p>Educate local businesses & organisations with famil events to strengthen their knowledge base of local product & attractions.</p>

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions
	3.5 Develop a Shire-wide marketing group to support and maintain the brand			Support local tourism centres and Council operated VICs
				Investigate funding opportunities through Tourism Hunter marketing funds
				Review marketing tools such as written media, websites, photo albums, web photo albums -Develop a photo Library
				Work in partnership with other like tourism bodies at regional & state level
				Ensure regular deliveries of brochures, including local National Parks brochures & closely monitor stock levels
	Ensure regular surveys of tourists/travellers are carried out and identify target markets			
	3.6 Attractive and safe main streets and tourism areas	20,000	50,000	Audit of signage in each town and surrounds
				Invest in new and appropriate tourism and infrastructure signage throughout the shire on a needs basis
				Support the development, construction and erection of branded town marketing and tourism efforts such as murals and silhouettes
				Identify and proceed with theme enhancement in all towns for main street improvement
				Promote a litter-free environment. Liaise with "problem" industries to develop solutions for litter management
				Lobby for sufficient police presence in each of the towns of the Upper Hunter
4. Facilitate and provide for a growing and healthy resident population	4.1 Promote the Upper Hunter Shire as a preferred place to live	37,000	37,000	Develop a database of all the natural and built attributes (including heritage) within the shire
				Develop communication tools such as town walks to ensure that the public is aware of these assets
				Identify market segments and their specific needs and interests especially active retirees, tree changers and down shifters

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions
				Develop and support community activities that target specific market segments
				Support the preparation and operation of annual festivals and events within the shire that promote the Upper Hunter Shire and its values
	Promote day drives and local attractions that are targeted at different age groups/demographics			
	4.2 Develop a Welcome to the Upper Hunter Program that includes web based support and information, written material, functions and buy local incentives	2,000	2,000	Establish a Welcome to the Upper Hunter Steering Committee
	Develop the material for a welcome package and web based support information			
	Develop a registration system for new residents so that Council may track these residents and ensure their inclusion within the community			
	Organise and conduct regular functions for new residents within the various towns of the shire			
	Develop and maintain a Business Incentive Package for new residents to encourage local retail spend			
	Provide businesses with promotional information on local attractions and day trips			
	4.3 Ensure that there is a sufficient land bank for residential development, accommodation & living options and to ensure that current agricultural activities can continue to flourish			Include areas for a range of residential development types within the LEP to respond to market demand and investigate opportunities for a range of accommodation responses
	Ensure that the LEP recognises the importance of agriculture and the protection of important land for the continuation and expansion of these activities in the future			
	Communicate business and community needs to Council planners to ensure that any issues and shortfalls can be addressed			
	Coordinate infrastructure investment to allow investment in land development			
	Council be actively involved in land development where private investors are not present			

Community Strategic Objective	Activity Strategies	Included in 2010/11 DPOP	Included in 2011/12 DPOP	Actions

Community Priorities

Desired community priorities were examined under the following groupings. A number of these are being handled by other directorates of council. The ED&TSP 2010 addresses a sub-group of these and will be used for future direction.

<u>Community</u>	<u>Commercial</u>	<u>Infrastructure</u>	<u>Land & Water</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Facilities and Services • Aged Care Options • Conference and/or Function Venues • Policing • Education options • Cultural options • Intellectual Capital enrichment opportunities • Cycle ways linking all new subdivisions • A specific Arts Precinct examined for Murrurundi • Welfare concerns • Recreational facilities for people and horses • Horse Precinct • Community Safety • Cultural Precinct in Scone • First rate Public Toilets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBD/Main Street Vision • Development of Resources (like prospectus) to attract appropriate investment to the area • Skills shortages • Tourism options including maximising 'Horse Capital' status and 'Gateway to world class National Parks and Nature Reserves' • Green Employment • Branding • Scone Saleyards • Renewable energy opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scone heavy vehicle alternate route • Rail movements • Airport Future • Mobile Phone Coverage and broadband availability • Public Transport • First rate Public Toilets • Merriwa-Scone Road upgrade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scone/Aberdeen/Murrurundi Town Water Augmentation • Regulated and unregulated water • Rural Water Scheme • Availability and location of appropriately zoned land • The disjoint between traditional agricultural pursuits and extractive mining activities • Development Control Plan for new developments • Environmental Sustainability

Economic Development and Tourism in the Upper Hunter Shire Council –

An Overview

Economic Development is not the sole responsibility of Upper Hunter Shire Council and it should not be assumed that Council can take merit for all job creation and business development within the shire. Much of any business growth is organic (from within the business) and it is difficult to direct businesses to establish or relocate to a specific region.

Tourism is considered a specific sector within economic development because a strong tourism sector supports many activities within the local and regional economy. It is possible to have a strong economy without a flourishing tourism sector however tourism can provide significant turnover and employment to particular sectors of a local economy.

Export businesses (those that generate some or their entire turnover through sales or the provision of services from outside the region) provide the backbone for expansion as these businesses are not reliant on the local economy or resident population for their viability.

The Economic Development & Tourism Unit within Council has many roles that as a whole attempt to maintain the viability of existing businesses, encourage growth where warranted and facilitate the establishment of new enterprises within the shire.

With limited resources in terms of financial and staff, activities and projects must be considered in terms of achievement towards the strategic objectives and benefits versus cost. For this reason a major role is to empower local business representative groups, Chambers of Commerce and tourism organisations so that these groups can effectively be involved in meaningful projects for each business community.

Efforts to gain a share of the tourism market are becoming more competitive regionally. Travellers today are more mobile and demanding than ever before and have more variable recreational tastes, an ever increasing choice of products on which to spend their leisure dollars, and are much more selective in the way they spend.

Tourism is an integral part of any economic strategic plan. It is also an export industry for the region as it brings people into the local economy and therefore local businesses are not solely reliant on the local economy for survival.

The Upper Hunter Shire works in partnership with Tourism NSW, Tourism Hunter and Upper Hunter Country Tourism to achieve outcomes that deliver higher visitation to the Shire. Strong partnerships with neighbouring councils allows for additional promotions between Councils.

A co-operative tourism plan shall be instrumental in forging alliances, developing a tourism profile, establish funding initiatives and encourage tourism planning

The Upper Hunter Shire Economic Development and Tourism unit will focus on fostering, developing and further improving tourism in the Shire through:

- Providing a vibrant visitor information service
- Promoting the Upper Hunter Shire and tourism within and outside the Shire.
- Increasing visitation and bookings through the on-line booking system.
- Developing partnerships with community event organisers in the Upper Hunter, and co-ordinate tourism events.
- Developing collaborative efforts that reduce the financial cost of promotion and increase its effectiveness

Situation Analysis – Upper Hunter Shire

Growing Population

The Upper Hunter Shire is a diverse region of 8,100 square kilometres and a population of about 14,000 people. The Estimated Resident Population growth in the Upper Hunter from June 2007-June 2008 was 1.3%. Even with this ERP annual increase estimate it is expected that the Upper Hunter population will only show slight increases in population over the longer term of less than 1.0%. There are several factors that may influence this growth, the major one being coal mine development around Muswellbrook with the resultant demand for housing in Aberdeen and Scone.

Growth in population is a critically important component in economic development as this growth has positive impact on the levels of total private and public expenditure in a community. There are several sources of population growth evident within the region the major being migration of workers and their families to the region, 'tree changers' looking for a more relaxed lifestyle and net positive birth rate.

Businesses need to look at projected population trends and how the customers are changing and targeting the emerging types of consumers such as wealth-driven upshifters, quality driven downshifters and active and affluent retirees.

With the ageing population it is important that opportunities are created for the working age group (25-45) who will replace retirees and maintain the productive base for continued economic activity in the region. For this to occur there needs to be jobs in relevant industries, affordable housing and a full range of services.

Key Industries and Employment Opportunities

Agriculture has been and still is the mainstay of the Upper Hunter regional economy. This sector includes broad acre farming, livestock, and equine industries and as can be seen in the table below is the major employer industry.

An export industry is one that operates within the region but sells its goods or services outside the region thus providing income that is not reliant on the resident population.

Table 1 – comparative Employment Proportions by Industry Upper Hunter LGA and Hunter Valley Balance (2006 Census)

Industry of Employment	Upper Hunter	%	LQ *	Balance of Hunter	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1,237	26.4%	2.81	3,549	9.4%
Mining	45	1.0%	0.07	5,498	14.6%
Manufacturing	432	9.2 %	1.34	2,605	6.9%
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	23	0.5 %	0.17	1,096	2.9%
Construction	227	4.8 %	0.75	2,446	6.5%
Wholesale trade	121	2.6 %	0.97	1,002	2.6%
Retail trade	506	10.8 %	0.99	4,108	10.9%
Accommodation and food services	299	6.4%	0.83	2,900	7.7%
Transport, postal and warehousing	176	3.8%	1.19	1,188	3.2%

Information media and telecommunications	13	0.3%	0.52	202	0.5%
Financial and insurance services	65	1.4%	0.98	533	1.4%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	36	0.8%	0.40	719	1.9%
Professional, scientific and technical services	178	3.8%	0.99	1,454	3.9%
Administrative and support services	53	1.1%	0.56	765	2.0%
Public administration and safety	209	4.5%	0.83	2,020	5.4%
Education and training	401	8.6%	1.36	2,375	6.3%
Health care and social assistance	387	8.3%	1.07	2,912	7.7%
Arts and recreation services	105	2.2%	1.94	435	1.2%
Other services	121	2.6%	0.62	1,565	4.1%
Inadequately described	48	1.0%	1.06	365	1.0%
Total Employment	4,682	100%		37,737	100%

* The Location Quotient (LQ) provides a means of comparing relative industry employment between different regions. If the LQ for a particular industry sector is close to 1.0 then it can be said that the industry percentage of total employment is comparable to the comparison region. If the LQ is higher than 1.0 then the industry has a higher employment representation than the comparison region and if below 1.0 then the region employs fewer in that industry in percentage terms by comparison.

The green cells indicate those industries within the Upper Hunter LGA that have employment above the balance of Hunter values (Agriculture, Manufacturing, Transport, Education & Training and Arts & Recreation Services) whilst the orange cells identify those industries that have employment percentages below the balance of Hunter statistics (Mining, Utilities, Accommodation & Food Services, Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services and Administrative & Support Services).

By examining the employment figures it is possible to identify industries that may have a competitive advantage within the broader region and therefore possible opportunities for business and economic development.

Strength in Agriculture

An LQ of 2.81 suggests that there is a competitive advantage within this industry sector. In fact this LQ more reflects that the Upper Hunter LGA (an area of over 8,000km²) is predominantly agriculture based with no active coal mining within the shire boundaries and a smaller manufacturing and retail sector. The employment within agriculture for the Upper Hunter LGA is 1,237 of a total of 3,549 for the Hunter Balance.

Agriculture is the life blood of the region and businesses have traditionally supported this industry. Agriculture in general across Australia and within the Upper Hunter over the past 100 years has shown declining business numbers (expansion of business unit size) increased efficiency (more output from the same area of land and units of input) and declining employment (as a result of the previous factors). It is difficult to justify investment in programs that focus on this aggregated industry in general due to the fact that the trends within agriculture (declining employment base) are expected to continue into the future.

A specific activity within the broad agricultural industry in the Upper Hunter is the thoroughbred breeding industry. Since the early development of this industry "activity in the thoroughbred industry and associated employment has continued to expand. With a national and international reputation for the breeding of quality horses, the Upper Hunter is acknowledged as one of the three major thoroughbred nurseries in the world." (HVRF 2006, page 1)

The trend of declining employment within agriculture is reversed within the thoroughbred breeding industry... a trend that should not be ignored (HVRF 2006).

Growth of Manufacturing

The service industries for the coal industry exist lower down the Hunter Valley and have not ventured to the Upper Hunter Shire in any great numbers to date. The lack of appropriate industrial land could be seen as a limiting factor to the expansion of manufacturing industries in the region. Generally distance from key mining areas in the Hunter Valley coal reserves has limited expansion of mining related industry to the Upper Hunter LGA.

Food product manufacturing is a subset of this class with an LQ of 3.81 (241 employees) reflecting the existence of Primo Abattoir, the major employer in Scone. Textile, leather, clothing and footwear manufacturing has an LQ of 5.43 (54 employees) corresponding to the presence of the Walfertan Tannery in Aberdeen. Transport equipment manufacturing has an LQ of 2.65 (25 employees) representing the presence of truck trailer and horse float manufacturers in the region. These industries are seen as key employers and provide some insight into possible expansion and specialisation.

Transport, postal and warehousing

The equine and beef industries are the mainstay agricultural activities in the Upper Hunter and the Road Transport LQ of 1.32 (141 employees) reflects the large number of livestock transport businesses in the region, especially Scone. Specialist horse transport operators locate themselves close to the horse breeding enterprises of the Upper Hunter.

Education and Training

Scone and Aberdeen are the home of several larger public and private schools. The subset of preschool and school education has a LQ of 1.54 (370 employees) reflecting this focus on quality education in the region. The Catholic school located at Aberdeen (a town of 2,000 people) has a student base of over 700 and is expanding. This school, as well as Scone Grammar School and Scone TAFE are recognised as export industries.

Arts and Recreation Services

This sector as a whole scores an LQ of 1.94 suggesting a proportionally high number of employees in this industry compared to the Hunter Balance. All subsets within this sector score well above 1.0. The art and culture industry is expanding within the Murrurundi district as the town becomes recognised within the art and culture community (but still a relatively low total employer). Sports and recreation services are the major employing subsets of this sector but the analysis does not suggest where this employment exists.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is vital to the operation and expansion of any business in the region.

Transport infrastructure includes the Golden and New England Highways which provide links to Newcastle and Sydney as well as Tamworth to the north and Dubbo to the west. Main Road 62 from Merriwa to Scone is an important transport route for livestock transportation to the Scone Regional Selling Centre. The Great Northern Rail Line provides passenger and freight links to Newcastle and Sydney also. Scone Airport is one of few registered and sealed airports in the Hunter region.

Communication is now more than ever key to business success. Access to high speed broadband services is vital to the operation of many businesses, without which it will become increasingly difficult to retain businesses or attract new investment. Access to ADSL+2 is still limited and satellite broadband is filling some of the gaps in these services at present.

Land Availability

Without industrial and commercial land available to generate employment it is difficult for expansion or attraction of new businesses. Those towns currently zoned “village” are able to provide sufficient land for industry and commercial activities through infill and change of land use, however mixing residential and commercial/industrial activities is never ideal and can lead to conflict.

Identified development areas reduce land use conflicts and allow businesses to gather in locations and support each other and share common infrastructure to reduce establishment costs.

It is also important to have a bank of residential land available as this reduces the pressure on prices for land and housing and reduces the impost on families looking to invest and move to the region. Council has taken the role of land developer in towns where the private sector has not done so.

Tourism

Tourism plays a key role in economic development of the Upper Hunter Shire. The region is defined by rivers, rugged mountains and a rich farming and grazing landscape.

Tourism has been based around the rural experiences and the rich cultural heritage found in the region and there are opportunities to develop this industry to capture a changing tourism market including catering for an expanding seniors and ‘wanderers’ market.

Environment

The Upper Hunter Shire possesses some magnificent natural scenery and rugged beauty. It is also characterised by a distinct lack of extractive mining activities.

This places the Upper Hunter Shire at a competitive advantage to other nearby shires because the area can be marketed as ‘clean and green’. The Shire contains eight National Parks and ten nature reserves. Lake Glenbawn provides for a reliable water supply to the towns of Scone and Aberdeen and many and varied recreational activities as well as water supply for intensive agriculture downstream.

Lifestyle

The rural lifestyle is one of outdoor recreational and work based activities. Clean air, green hills and a relaxing atmosphere are attributes residents have identified as typical of the area.

Short travel times to and from work, a lack of local traffic and exciting jobs are seen as positives for the region.

Community Consultation – SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- *Natural Environment – Lake Glenbawn, Barrington Tops, Goulburn River, Towarri, Burning Mountain, etc*
- *Housing and Land Prices – relatively competitive compared to neighbouring regions*
- *Employment Diversity – large range of industry and employment opportunities*
- *Event Diversity – each town has different events to promote to tourists and residents throughout the year*
- *Wide variety of shopping/services/small business*
- *Strong Equine Industry/Agriculture – independent of the mining industries which provides diversity compared to other regions down the Hunter Valley*
- *Quality of life - Fresh Air/Water*
- *Educational Opportunities – full range of education including TAFE*
- *Saleyards – Major draw card for agriculture*
- *Main Streets – heritage aspects and attractive and functional streetscapes as well as minimal vacant shops in townships*
- *Artistic community – especially Murrurundi*
- *History of the region*
- *Health Facilities – each town has a pharmacy, aged accommodation – and a doctor (except Aberdeen who are actively searching for a new doctor)*
- *Safety/Crime Rate – low compared to nearby towns*
- *Proximity to Tamworth, Dubbo, Newcastle, Gloucester, Sydney, Port Stephens, Central Coast*
- *Transport Options – road, rail, bus, air (certain areas)*
- *People – Skill Diversity*
- *Strong Sense of Community*
- *Low Unemployment – around 3.1% - lowest in Hunter Valley*
- *Nature based activities*
- *Environmentally sound – minimal extractive industries*
- *No Power Stations in the shire*
- *No coal mines in the shire*
- *Attractive Lifestyle for residents and visitors*
- *Agricultural diversity – range of land types*
- *Pride in villages – Tidy Towns*
- *Renewable Energy Development Control Plan*
- *Aging Population*
- *Long Term impact of Emissions Trading Scheme (or its equivalent)*

WEAKNESSES

- *Limited extended and weekend trading in all of the towns (other than major supermarkets and McDonalds) – negative impacts on tourism trade when travellers are unable to browse and shop.*
- *Aging population – rural towns aging rapidly with few younger people staying in the towns due to low employment opportunities*
- *Lack of Public Transport – bus service stopped, limited trains to Sydney, no Regular Passenger Transport service for Scone Airport*
- *Medical Services (Specialists) – limited at present, have to travel to Newcastle, Sydney and Tamworth*
- *Limited Council resources for road works – extensive local roads that must be maintained by Council (especially unsealed roads)*
- *Not enough people willing to get involved and do the work as volunteers*
- *Noisy Main Streets – large highway traffic due to highway traffic volumes, especially trucks*
- *Youth Retention – lack of opportunities for the youth to get skilled work in the towns*
- *Signage – identifying Upper Hunter and the towns for travellers and updating signage that is outdated*
- *Financial Resources for Marketing/Promotion of the area is limited compared to areas like Pokolbin – limited tourism market with relatively small number of operators makes it difficult to generate a significant budget*
- *Small Population base for Council to generate rates and implement programs*
- *Cost shifting NSW – local government means more assets and costs are the responsibility of local government without any compensation from NSW Government eg Scone Airport*
- *Coal Creep from lower down the valley – following the coal seams up the Hunter Valley*
- *Lack of capacity to raise direct revenue*
 - *Small rates base*
 - *Rate pegging*
- *Council not always the consent authority on development proposals so can have little impact on major developments such as extractive mining*
- *Long Term impact of Emissions Trading Scheme (or its equivalent)*
- *Access corridors*
- *Water shortage during droughts*

OPPORTUNITIES

- *Link tourism trails with Natural Environment and Heritage*
- *Aging population provides opportunities for housing >55 yrs, services, business specific to that age bracket*
- *Main Street Beautification – seating/meeting places for locals to maintain the community*
- *Developing the Horse brand*
- *Budget Accommodation (YHA, Backpackers) – there are none in the area at present*
- *Airport Development (Scone/Williamstown) – develop the airport to include an RPT service or more regular charter flights*
- *Regional & Local Branding/Marketing – to identify the region’s benefits*
- *Tap into Tour Operators to get them to stop in the shire*
- *Targeting Demographics – understand who they are and what they want. Target age groups rather than regions to move here or visit*
- *Educate Local Population to Market the Shire – provide them with information and skills to enable business owners and residents to be able to sell the region and its assets*
- *New fast food outlets – puts the region on the map and provides employment opportunities*
- *Youth Retention – opportunity for university work experience projects which could be advertised to Yr 12 students before they leave school*
- *GFT – Carbon trading*
- *Tree change wave*
- *Environmental – enhance environmental reputation*
- *F3 link – closer to Sydney once it is completed*
- *UH Regional Funding*
- *Hunter Regional Tourist Organisation*
- *Develop individual towns and their unique characteristics – WOW factor*

THREATS

- *New Fast Food Outlets – Competition for other local shops / Rubbish left outside the town limits*
- *Small Town Syndrome – “Local Rubbish Heap” people looking after the interests of their own town rather than thinking of the bigger regional picture*
- *Drought – impacts on local spending and business viability*
- *Fuel Prices – Changed patterns of travel and how long people travel for*
- *Aged population- business transition as owners age and wish to sell up and retire – encouraging new owners to these businesses early enough to allow transition of ownership rather than closing the doors*
- *Regional Competition – nearby shopping centres such as Muswellbrook, Singleton and Dubbo attract retail leakage. Scone also attracts spend away from smaller centres within the shire*
- *Tamworth’s equine infrastructure developments*
- *Continued Cost Shifting from NSW Government to local government without any financial compensation*
- *Water availability as business and population expands, especially if Glenbawn does not fill regularly*
- *Aging Population*
- *Coal Creep*
- *Lack of capacity to raise direct revenue*
 - *Small rates base*
 - *Rate pegging*
- *Large developments in shire that have major impact on people and infrastructure but that do not produce any revenue for the local council to allow maintenance of public assets*

UPPER HUNTER SHIRE Events and Attractions

ABERDEEN

Highland Games

Horse Studs

UH Rural Life
Museum (Planned)
Team Penning

CASSILIS

Campdraft/Rodeo

Pub

Access to N Parks

ELLERSTON

Polo

SCONE

Horse Capital
Horse Studs
Horse Events
S&UHHF
Parade, Scone Cup,
Rodeo, Polo, Dressage,
Horse Sales
Showjumping
Polocrosse
Scone Art Prize
SCADS
ADFAS
Access to N Parks
Hist. Society
Aust. Horse Centre
(planned)
Scone Horse Show
(Proposed)
Team Penning

GUNDY

Polo

Campdraft

Belltrees—History
Food - Wine at Pub
Horse Trials

MERRIWA

Pony Club

Fest. of the Fleeces
Hist. Museum
Access to N Parks
Cafes
Merriwa Show
Team Penning

MURRURUNDI

King of the Ranges
Murra County Prod
Eye of the Needle
Norville Art Prize
Horse Studs
Art Galleries
Sheep Dog Trials
Keddies Photographic
Cafes
Historical Walk
Beersheba

MOONAN FLAT

Victoria Hotel
Foot Bridge

Access to the
Barringtons Tops
Moonan Mummers

TIMOR

Campdraft
Timor Caves
Scenic Drive

WINGEN

Pub
Campdraft
Horse Sales
Team Penning
Burning Mtn