



BERRIGAN SHIRE

BAROOGA • BERRIGAN • FINLEY • TOCUMWAL



Economic Development Strategy

2025-2029

Quality
BOOKS
CAKE
TEA &
COFFEE





Acknowledgement of country

Berrigan Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and thrive.

We pay our respects to their elders; past, present and emerging.

The peoples of these great Nations, their spirits and ancestors will always remain with our waterways and lands.

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Mayor's message

I am delighted to present the Berrigan Shire Council's Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029; a roadmap for fostering economic growth, resilience, and prosperity across our region.

It outlines clear priorities and strategic actions that build on our existing strengths while embracing new opportunities that will shape a vibrant future for our community.

Over the past years, we have achieved significant milestones in infrastructure and tourism, including the completion of the Tocumwal Foreshore redevelopment, the establishment of the Tocumwal Aviation Museum, and the successful launch of the Tocumwal Residential Airpark. These achievements underscore our commitment to enhancing the Shire's unique assets and promoting sustainable development.

Our new strategy focuses on four key areas: business growth, workforce development, infrastructure investment, and tourism enhancement. It emphasises the importance of collaboration and partnerships, both within our community and across regional and state boundaries, to achieve lasting impact. We also recognise the critical role of advocacy in securing essential services and support for local businesses, particularly in addressing challenges like workforce shortages and infrastructure needs.

The strategy reflects extensive stakeholder engagement, alignment with local and regional priorities, and a shared vision for the future. It also addresses pressing challenges such as workforce shortages, infrastructure constraints, and the impacts of policies like the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

By embracing our competitive advantages - including our fertile agricultural land, rich aviation heritage, high-quality sporting facilities, and strategic transport links - Berrigan Shire is well-positioned to achieve sustainable economic growth. Through collaboration and partnerships across community, regional, and state levels, we aim to secure funding opportunities, diversify our economy, and create a thriving, future-ready region.

This strategy is not just about addressing today's needs but ensuring our Shire remains a premier destination to live, work, invest, and visit for generations to come. Together, by working adaptively and innovatively, we can build a prosperous future for all who call Berrigan Shire home.

Julia Cornwell McKean

Mayor, Berrigan Shire Council



1. Introduction

1.1. About this strategy

The Berrigan Shire Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029 provides a roadmap for the Shire's economic growth over the next five years. It outlines the strategic direction for economic development, supported by evidence-based data and stakeholder engagement. The strategy is designed to be adaptable, allowing Council to seize new opportunities and address arising challenges.

Scope and purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to guide decision-making and resource allocation, fostering a diverse and resilient local economy. It aims to enhance the Shire's competitive advantages, improve quality of life for residents, and position Berrigan as a premier location to live, work, invest, and visit.

The role of local government in economic development

Berrigan Shire Council supports economic development through:

- facilitating development applications for businesses,
- providing and maintaining quality infrastructure,
- marketing the Shire's key attributes,
- supporting external funding applications and
- advocating at State and Federal levels for better services.

Informing this strategy

The strategy has been informed by:

- a review of the 2017 Economic Development Strategy,
- alignment with local, regional, state, and national strategies.
- stakeholder engagement, including business and community input and
- analysis of economic data and trends affecting the region.

Glossary

The following terms are used in this document.

Term	Definition
Agribusiness	Businesses that derive most of their income from agriculture or agriculture-related activities.
Alternative energy	Energy derived from renewable resources to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
Economic impact analysis	A study that measures the effect of an event, policy, or business on the economy of a specified area.
Gross Regional Product (GRP)	The total value of goods and services produced within a region.
Intermodal terminal	A facility enabling the transfer of goods between different modes of transport.
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	A formal agreement between two or more parties outlining their roles and responsibilities in a collaborative effort.
Net zero emissions	The balance between the greenhouse gases emitted into and removed from the atmosphere, with the aim of achieving no net increase in emissions.
Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)	A strategic framework that fosters economic growth and sustainability within a defined region.
Socio-economic disadvantage	A measure of economic and social advantage,
SWOT analysis	Strategic planning tool that identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with a project or organisation.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations and acronyms are used in this document.

Abbreviation	Full term
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
BSC	Berrigan Shire Council
DA	Development Application
EDS	Economic Development Strategy
GRP	Gross Regional Product
IRSED	Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage
LGA	Local Government Area
MEDT	Manager of Economic Development and Tourism
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRTB	Murray Regional Tourism Board
NBN	National Broadband Network
NIEIR	National Institute of Economic and Industry Research
NSW	New South Wales
OLG	Office of Local Government
QFF	Queensland Fruit Fly
RAMJO	Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation
REDS	Regional Economic Development Strategy
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
UoC	University of Canberra



1.2. Strategic alignment

Berrigan Shire's Economic Development Strategy aligns with key local, regional, and state strategies to drive economic growth and resilience. This alignment ensures the Shire's efforts are integrated into a broader framework, supporting sustainable growth, industry diversification, and regional collaboration. By doing so, Berrigan Shire is well-positioned to leverage funding opportunities and enhance its competitive advantage within the region.

Local and regional

Berrigan Shire's strategy is aligned with the **Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)**, which highlights the need to develop infrastructure, support business growth, and leverage natural assets like the Murray River. The REDS framework focuses on:

- strengthening local industries, particularly agriculture, by enhancing water security and investing in agricultural innovation and
- encouraging tourism development by improving regional infrastructure and promoting cultural and environmental assets.

Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO) represents a coalition of councils across the Murray and Riverina regions, including Berrigan Shire. Their **RAMJO Statement of Strategic Priorities** highlights:

- Cross-border collaboration: RAMJO's priorities include fostering better collaboration between New South Wales and Victoria on economic issues such as water management and infrastructure development.
- Regional infrastructure: RAMJO is committed to improving key transport links and freight hubs like the Tocumwal Intermodal Terminal, which directly supports Berrigan Shire's economic activity.
- Sustainability and resilience: RAMJO places significant emphasis on climate resilience, encouraging local councils to adopt sustainable practices and support renewable energy projects, which aligns with Berrigan's focus on agriculture and solar energy.

Being based within the Murray-Darling Basin, the **Murray-Darling Basin Plan** has significant influence on local water resources. The plan seeks to balance environmental sustainability with agricultural productivity, impacting local farming and irrigation practices.

State alignment

The **NSW Regional Economic Development Strategy** highlights the importance of infrastructure investment, skills development, and industry diversification in building stronger regional economies. Berrigan Shire aligns with this plan by:

- investing in local infrastructure to support agricultural exports and improve connectivity and
- promoting workforce development, particularly in agriculture, tourism, and transport sectors, to ensure a skilled labour force for future growth.

The long-term **NSW 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW** focuses on decentralisation, promoting regional areas like Berrigan Shire as attractive alternatives to metropolitan areas. The key priorities include:

- Economic diversification, particularly in industries like agriculture, renewable energy, and tourism.
- Digital connectivity and improving infrastructure to support growth in local businesses and attract new investment.
- Population growth: The state aims to encourage population growth in regional areas by improving liveability, which aligns with Berrigan Shire's focus on enhancing local amenities and infrastructure.

1.3. Berrigan Shire Economic Development Strategy review

The 2017-2021 Berrigan Shire Economic Development Strategy set a strong foundation for growth, identifying several key opportunities and priorities that have significantly shaped the Shire's development trajectory over recent years. This review highlights the main directions, strategies, and achievements of the previous plan, providing insights into how the Council has adapted to changing circumstances while remaining focused on core development objectives.

The review of the 2017 Berrigan Shire Economic Development Strategy highlights a range of successful initiatives that have contributed to the region's economic resilience and growth. While challenges remain, particularly in areas such as business incentives and infrastructure, the progress made in tourism, alternative energy, aviation, and sporting events provides a solid foundation for the 2025-2029 strategy. As the Shire looks ahead, the Council remains committed to leveraging its competitive advantages and addressing the evolving needs of the local economy.

Key achievements

1. Solar/alternative energy production

One of the standout achievements of the 2017 strategy was the successful development of alternative energy infrastructure. This culminated in the establishment of the Finley Solar Farm, a major initiative in the region's commitment to sustainable energy production that has now seen off shoot projects for battery storage.

2. Growing sporting events

The strategy's emphasis on enhancing sporting events saw tangible results, particularly with the PGA Golf events held in Barooga and Tocumwal, and the Cobram Barooga Business and Tourism (CBBT) Sporting Events Program. This partnership with Sports Marketing Australia has been instrumental in expanding the region's reputation for hosting large-scale sports events.

3. Aviation heritage

The 2017 strategy identified the region's rich aviation heritage as a potential growth area. The creation of the Tocumwal Aviation Museum and the aviation-themed Tocumwal Splash Park successfully capitalised on this unique local asset, further enhancing tourism and community pride.

4. Tocumwal Aerodrome development

The sale of the second stage of the Tocumwal Airpark, completed in 2020, marked a significant

milestone for the region's aviation sector. The aerodrome and airpark continue to present opportunities for further development.

5. Tourism growth

Tourism faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Council responded proactively with the Visitor Economy Strategy 2022-2026, designed to reinvigorate the visitor economy and recapture tourism momentum. Efforts included the opening of an accredited Visitor Information Centre and substantial investment in TV and social media marketing since 2020.

6. Tocumwal Foreshore redevelopment

Another major achievement was the completion of the Tocumwal Foreshore redevelopment, enhancing this key recreational and tourism area.

Council priorities and outcomes

1. Lobbying for improved access to services

Lobbying for improved services, such as NBN, electricity, and aged care, was identified as a high priority for local business and industry. This has been a continuous focus for the Council, with Councillors and the CEO taking a lead role, especially during the pandemic, to advocate for essential services. This has led to the Regional Connectivity Project which is delivering 29 communications towers across 20 LGAs as a cross-border collaboration between Victorian and NSW Councils.

2. Marketing the region as a tourism destination

Although the Council historically had limited funds for direct marketing, it leveraged partnerships with Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) and Sun Country on the Murray (Moira Shire) to promote the region. During the pandemic, a marketing campaign targeting regional NSW towns was delivered, but its effectiveness was limited by 2021 border closures. In 2023/24 a new visual campaign was developed with a strong message around adventure activities

for all age groups. This was a high-quality campaign with the visuals used during sporting events such as the PGA.

3. Incentives for new business

While direct financial incentives for new businesses were not adopted as a policy, the Council has made significant strides in streamlining the development process. Close coordination between Building and Planning and Economic Development departments has improved the perception of the Council as being "pro-development," facilitating new business growth.

4. Main Street identity development

Efforts to develop unique Main Street identities were trialled in Finley through a façade painting project, but this initiative was ultimately unsuccessful. Nonetheless, the Council continues to seek new ways to support the character and vitality of its town centres.

5. Continued funding for events

The Council's Major Event Funding Program has supported a range of events, delivering a strong return on investment for the community. A notable success has been the partnership with Cobram Barooga Business and Tourism, which has led to the establishment of nine sports-related events held annually, further boosting the local economy.

6. Active involvement with Chambers of Commerce

The Council's commitment to engaging with local business leaders is demonstrated by the Chamber Presidents Group, which met bi-monthly until late 2022 and has reconvened in 2024, fostering closer collaboration with the business community.

7. Expanding Tocumwal Airpark

The Tocumwal Airpark expansion, completed in 2020, has created new opportunities for aviation enthusiasts and businesses. The Council remains actively engaged in seeking further development opportunities for this unique asset.



2. Where are we now?

2.1. Economic context

Berrigan Shire is a predominantly agricultural region with significant opportunities in tourism, manufacturing, and alternative energy. The local economy is driven by agriculture, forestry, fishing, and a growing tourism sector, but faces challenges such as an ageing workforce and infrastructure limitations.

The key economic data for Berrigan Shire in 2023 provides an overview of the region's demographics and economic drivers. The data is sourced from Profile.id and Economy.id and uses industry structure profiles based on a National Accounts regional econometric model developed by National Economics (NIEIR).

Population overview

As of 30 June 2024, Berrigan Shire's estimated population is 8,766. Projections indicate that the population will grow to 10,017 by 2046, marking a 14.3% increase. Tocumwal and Barooga are expected to grow at a greater rate than Finley and Berrigan which leads to the overall figure being lower than currently being experienced in the border towns.

Age profile

In 2021, the median age of residents was 52 years, with Tocumwal having the highest median age at 52 years, reflecting the Shire's ageing population.

Household size

The average household size in 2021 was 2.22 persons per dwelling, which is typical for a rural community.

Cultural diversity

In 2021, 8.1% of the population was born overseas, compared to the broader Regional NSW average of 12.2%. Additionally, 3.0% of residents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Business profile

- Local businesses: 981 (ABS 2023)

- Gross Regional Product (GRP): \$0.59 billion

Employment profile

- Local jobs: 3,168
- Employed residents: 4,036 (NIEIR 2023)
- The analysis of jobs held by local workers in 2022/23 highlights the three largest industries:
 - Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing: Employing 642 people (20.3%)
 - Health Care and Social Assistance: Employing 384 people (12.1%)
 - Construction: Employing 364 people (11.5%)
- Together, these industries accounted for 1,389 jobs or 43.9% of the local workforce. Comparatively, in New South Wales, only 1.9% were employed in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing; 14.8% in Health Care and Social Assistance; and 9.5% in Construction. This data illustrates Berrigan Shire's economic reliance on agriculture while also showing the significance of health care and construction to local employment.

2.2. Major employers

Following is a comprehensive list of major employers in Berrigan Shire. This list highlights the diverse range of major employers in Berrigan Shire, spanning healthcare, agriculture, local government, logistics, and tourism. Each employer plays a critical role in the Shire's economy, providing a wide variety of employment opportunities for the local workforce.

Licensed clubs

These employers are major entertainment and recreation facilities, offering sports facilities, as well as dining, event hosting, leisure services, and community activities.

They offer employment in hospitality, event management, sports facility management, customer service, and administration.

- Barooga Sporties, approximately 100-120 employees.
- Finley RSL Club, approximately 30-40 employees.
- Club Tocumwal, approximately 80 employees.

Water management

This employer provides water management services to local farms, supporting irrigated agriculture such as dairy, grains, and horticulture.

They offer employment in water management, engineering, environmental services, and administration.

- Murray Irrigation Limited, around 150 employees.

Public administration

This employer manages local government services including infrastructure, planning, community services, and tourism.

They offer employment in administration, public works, town planning, and community services.

- Berrigan Shire Council, approximately 94 FTE.

Health services

This employer provides aged care and residential care services, as well as community-based health support for the elderly.

They offer employment aged care, nursing, allied health, and support services.

- Finley Regional Care, around 100 employees.

Manufacturing

This employer manufactures food focused on sauces and vinegar.

They offer employment in manufacturing and logistics.

- MON, approximately 80 employees.

Logistics

This employer manages a logistics hub supporting the export of agricultural goods, especially grains, to national and international markets.

They offer employment in logistics, transport, and operational roles.

- Tocumwal Intermodal Terminal, around 20 employees.

Dairy and Agri-businesses

These employers produce dairy, grains, and agricultural products. These businesses form the backbone of the local economy, with large dairy farms being prominent.

They offer employment in dairy farming, farm work, agronomists, and operational roles.

The employers vary widely but provides employment for hundreds in farming, operations, and processing.

Horticulture

These employers produce citrus, stone fruit, and horticultural products. These businesses are emerging, with large horticultural farms becoming prominent.

They offer employment in farm work, agronomists, and operational roles.

The employers vary widely but provides employment for hundreds in farming, operations, and processing. Large influx in seasonal workers during peak production periods.

2.3. Enablers

The following are infrastructure and connectivity enablers that play a crucial role in supporting the economic growth and development of Berrigan Shire. These enablers include transport networks, logistics hubs, and vital services that connect Berrigan Shire to regional, national, and global markets, ensuring the smooth operation of agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism industries.

Roads and highways

- **Newell Highway (A39):** This highway is a major north-south route connecting Berrigan Shire with Melbourne and Brisbane, facilitating freight movement and accessibility for businesses.
- **Riverina Highway:** Running east-west, this highway connects the Shire with key regional centres, including Albury and Deniliquin, supporting both freight and local traffic.

Freight and transport

- **Tocumwal Intermodal Terminal:** A critical freight hub that allows for the transport of bulk and containerised goods, particularly agricultural products, directly to the Port of Melbourne. This terminal is a major enabler for local agriculture, providing efficient logistics for exports.

Airports

- **Tocumwal Airpark and Tocumwal Aerodrome:** These facilities not only support general aviation but also contribute to tourism and local businesses. The residential airpark has attracted aviation enthusiasts and further developed the region's tourism infrastructure.

Irrigation and water infrastructure

- **Murray Irrigation Limited and West Cororgan Private Irrigation District:** These entities provide critical water infrastructure, enabling the success of Berrigan Shire's highly productive irrigated farmlands, which are a major part of the local and national economy.

Technology and telecommunications

- **NBN and digital connectivity:** Berrigan Shire, like other rural regions, has been working towards improved digital infrastructure to support remote work, business growth, and regional development.

Murray River

- **Tourism enabler:** The Murray River is a significant natural asset that supports tourism and recreational activities in Berrigan Shire. It offers opportunities for water-based tourism, including boating, fishing, and riverside events, attracting visitors and enhancing the region's tourism appeal. The river also contributes to the Shire's identity and economic growth through associated hospitality and accommodation services.



2.4. What we know

Community engagement has been a crucial component of developing the Berrigan Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029. Our engagement efforts have been designed to ensure that the strategy reflects the aspirations, challenges, and priorities of our community, creating a strong foundation for future economic growth.

How we engaged

Survey

We conducted an external online survey between December 2023 and February 2024 to gather input from various stakeholders. This survey received a diverse range of responses:

- 66% of contributions came from business owners.
- 12% were from individuals managing businesses on behalf of others.
- 12% were from interested community members.
- 10% were from Moira Shire business operators.

The diversity in responses offered a comprehensive view of the economic landscape, providing insights into how different sectors are performing, the challenges they face, and the emerging trends that impact the local economy.

Partner meetings

Quarterly meetings have also been established between Berrigan Shire Council and key Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) partners, including Sporties, Tocumwal Golf and Bowls Club, and the Tocumwal Aviation Museum. These meetings facilitate ongoing dialogue and collaboration to advance shared economic objectives.

Internal engagement

Internal engagement with the newly formed Council will take place to consider the draft Economic Development Strategy and provide further input to ensure alignment with Council priorities.

What we know

The community's feedback has highlighted key areas for focus and improvement. Business and industry stakeholders have emphasised the need for the Council to:

- lobby for improved access to essential services such as NBN, reliable electricity, and aged care,

- market the region as a premier tourism destination, capitalising on the Shire's unique assets,
- develop main street strategies to revitalise commercial areas and attract visitors and investors,
- make more industrial land available to accommodate new and expanding businesses,
- provide incentives to encourage business establishment and growth in the region,
- implement the Strategy for the Visitor Economy to boost tourism and related economic activity and
- continue funding events to draw visitors and stimulate local economic activity.

These priorities are consistent with feedback from previous consultations, reinforcing the ongoing need for targeted economic development initiatives.

Community vision

The recent Community Strategic Plan has also played a vital role in shaping this strategy. Extensive community consultation identified a shared vision for an economy characterised by growth, diversification, and a skilled workforce. The community envisions Berrigan Shire as a destination with a thriving tourism sector and a resilient, innovative agricultural industry.

By integrating these insights and priorities into the Economic Development Strategy, Berrigan Shire Council is committed to fostering a robust, dynamic, and future-ready local economy.

2.5. SWOT Analysis

This SWOT Analysis was originally created for the 2017 EDS. This analysis was built on from input from the whole of community online survey and targeted business forums conducted in 2023.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality agricultural land and irrigation infrastructure. • Proximity to Melbourne access to major highways such as the Newell Highway. • High-quality sporting facilities and emerging tourism products, including the new offerings at Sporties and Tocumwal. • Located on the Murray River. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ageing workforce and a lack of skilled employees. • Irregular retail and hospitality opening hours, which limit tourism potential. • Limited electricity capacity for new and expanding businesses, presenting a barrier to economic growth.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of the aviation industry, building on the success of the Tocumwal Aviation Museum and Airpark. • Development of alternative energy solutions, with opportunities in solar, wind, and bioenergy. • The Finley Lake Masterplan, which offers significant potential for tourism and community revitalisation. • Sport tourism, which has already gained traction with events supported by the Major Event Fund. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of the final stages of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, which may negatively affect the agricultural sector. • Cross-border licensing issues for businesses operating between New South Wales and Victoria. • Ongoing challenges related to climate change, impacting both agriculture and tourism. • The continued decline of retail trade, exacerbated by post-pandemic consumer behaviour.



2.6. Competitive advantages

Berrigan Shire enjoys several distinctive competitive advantages that differentiate it from neighbouring councils, such as Moira Shire, Federation Council, Murray River Council, and Campaspe Shire. By leveraging these competitive advantages Berrigan Shire is well-positioned to achieve sustainable economic growth over the next five years, differentiating itself from neighbouring regions.

- **Transport links:** One of Berrigan Shire's key strengths is its strategic location along the Newell and Riverina Highways, which provide critical freight routes connecting the Shire to major economic hubs like Melbourne and Brisbane. This makes Berrigan Shire a key transport hub, particularly enhanced by the presence of the Tocumwal Intermodal Terminal, which supports bulk and containerised grain exports directly to the Port of Melbourne. These transport links are more comprehensive compared to those of neighbouring councils, giving Berrigan a unique edge in logistics and export capabilities.
- **Irrigation network:** In terms of agriculture, Berrigan Shire's 80% irrigated farmland sets it apart from nearby councils. The Shire benefits from both Murray Irrigation Limited and West Cororgan Private Irrigation District, which provide the water resources necessary to sustain high levels of productivity in dairy, cattle, and crop farming. This extensive irrigation network ensures a competitive advantage in agricultural output compared to regions that rely more on dryland farming.
- **Aviation heritage:** Berrigan Shire has positioned itself as a leader in the aviation sector. The development of the Tocumwal Aviation Museum and the expansion of the Tocumwal Airpark offer unique tourism and business opportunities in aviation that neighbouring councils do not share. This focus on aviation heritage and related infrastructure not only attracts visitors but also supports aviation-related businesses and enthusiasts.
- **Sport tourism:** Additionally, sport tourism plays a significant role in Berrigan Shire's competitive landscape. The region has successfully developed high-quality sporting infrastructure, enabling it to host major events such as PGA golf tournaments in Barooga and Tocumwal. This investment in sporting events has enhanced the Shire's visibility as a destination for both tourists and event organisers.
- **Quality agricultural land:** Berrigan Shire benefits from fertile farmland "above the choke," prized for its sandy loam soil that supports diverse farming enterprises, including both cropping and grazing. This high-quality land is highly sought after and provides significant value for agricultural production.
- **Available and affordable land for housing:** Berrigan Shire offers available and affordable land for housing development, particularly through subdivisions in Barooga and Tocumwal. This provides an attractive option for new residents and supports population growth, enhancing the Shire's appeal as a desirable place to live.

3. Opportunities and challenges

Berrigan Shire faces a mix of exciting opportunities and pressing challenges that will shape its economic future. Opportunities such as tourism growth, renewable energy projects, and cross-border collaborations provide pathways for development, while challenges like infrastructure limitations, workforce shortages, and water require strategic solutions. This section outlines these key factors, guiding the Shire's efforts toward sustainable growth and resilience.

3.1. Opportunities

- **Local Environment Plan:** Council's Local Environment Plan clearly identifies areas for future development, providing a framework to guide growth and investment across the Shire.
- **New tourism products:** Building on the success of the Tocumwal Aviation Museum (2020), Bullanginya Dreaming (2024), and the upcoming renovation of the Tocumwal Golf and Bowls Club (2025), the Shire's tourism landscape offers diverse attractions that will draw visitors to the region.
- **Aviation industry:** With the development of the Tocumwal Residential Airpark bordering the aerodrome, the Shire offers a unique opportunity for aviation enthusiasts. As airspace near Melbourne becomes increasingly crowded and costly, Tocumwal provides a less congested, affordable, and proximate alternative.
- **Finley Lake Master Plan:** The revitalisation of Finley Lake, identified as a community priority, offers significant potential to attract visitors due to its highly visible location on the Newell Highway. The project is viewed as critical to the town's future and community identity.
- **Major events:** Events such as the Tocumwal Air Show, the Murray River Festival of Golf, and the National Beach Volleyball Tour have brought tangible economic benefits to the region. Berrigan Shire's excellent sporting infrastructure presents further opportunities to attract unique events and boost tourism during off-seasons.
- **Renewable energy opportunities:** The Federal Government's Plan for net zero emissions by 2050 opens doors for renewable energy projects in Berrigan Shire. Solar, wind, and bioenergy projects align with local and regional initiatives, presenting opportunities for sustainable energy development.
- **Cross border collaboration:** The memorandum of understanding with Moira and Indigo Shires in Victoria and Federation Council (NSW) highlights strong cross-border ties. Collaborative developments, particularly at Thompson's Beach and Kennedy Park, offer mutual benefits for both regions, enhancing tourism and business opportunities.
- **Space and untapped markets:** There is significant potential for diversification in agriculture, the introduction of new businesses, and expansion into untapped markets that align with the Shire's economic strengths.
- **Workforce flexibility:** Remote work and work from home trends offer opportunities to attract professionals seeking a rural lifestyle while maintaining urban employment.
- **Bike trails and river development:** The Shire has opportunities to expand its bike trail network and develop the Murray River as a destination.
- **Multiculturalism:** Embracing multiculturalism offers opportunities to diversify the local population and workforce while enriching the community's social fabric.

3.2. Challenges

- **Murray Darling Basin Plan:** The implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan has had significant social and economic impacts, particularly in Finley, where population decline, and a struggling retail sector reflect the challenges of water policy reform. The Council will advocate for our communities as further water “buy backs” impact the Southern Connected Basin.
- **Electricity supply constraints:** A lack of adequate electricity supply has hindered business expansion in Tocumwal, Finley, and Berrigan. Although the Australian Energy Market Operator has no immediate plans to address the issue, this challenge also presents an opportunity for private sector-driven alternative energy solutions. The Council will work with Essential Energy highlighting the growth in Tocumwal and Barooga.
- **Skilled workforce shortage:** A shortage of skilled employees, exacerbated by an ageing population and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, poses a significant challenge for local businesses. This issue, seen across Australia, is particularly pronounced in Berrigan Shire, impacting business operations and growth.
- **Technology and digital connectivity:** Limited digital connectivity and low digital literacy in some areas hinder business operations, remote work, and access to services.
- **Loss of commercial accommodation:** The conversion of commercial accommodation into worker housing has reduced the number of available tourism beds by approximately 120, making it difficult to meet demand as tourism rebounds. Additionally, concerns exist about the quality of accommodation when these establishments return to the visitor economy after the leases end.
- **Childcare:** A shortage of childcare services affects workforce participation, particularly for young families in the region.
- **Border communities:** Berrigan Shire faces unique challenges as a border community, including competition from cheaper shopping alternatives in Cobram and cross-border regulatory complexities.
- **Perception of rural living:** Outdated perceptions of rural living as “country hicks” can deter potential residents and workers, making it difficult to attract skilled professionals.
- **Mental health support:** Gaps in mental health services and networks challenge the wellbeing of residents and workers, particularly in high-pressure sectors like agriculture and tourism.



4. Strategic priorities

Our strategic economic priorities focus on fostering sustainable growth and enhancing the region's competitive edge. These priorities are designed to support business development, workforce enhancement, infrastructure investment, and tourism growth, all of which are critical to ensuring long-term economic prosperity for the Shire. Each priority aligns with broader regional and state objectives to maximise opportunities for funding, collaboration, and investment.

1. Business growth

Outcome: The number of businesses in Berrigan Shire increases.

- 1.1 Develop resources and establish partnerships to improve local economic outcomes.
- 1.2 Pursue opportunities to promote local business and industry regionally.
- 1.3 Support new and sustainable business development.
- 1.4 Promote Berrigan Shire as a preferred LGA to live, work, invest and visit.
- 1.5 Assist industry and the community to combat Queensland Fruit Fly.
- 1.6 Review future opportunities to celebrate local industry achievement.
- 1.7 Actively participate in local business and industry networks.

2. Workforce development and education

Outcome: The local workforce is developed through enhanced educational opportunities.

- 2.1 Invest in transition to work and or further education projects.
- 2.2 Explore further development of the Tocumwal intermodal and Silo Rd precincts for agri-business and manufacturing.

3. Infrastructure and investment

Outcome: Sustainable and infrastructure and investment projects are in the Shire.

- 3.1 Encourage investment in future energy solutions.
- 3.2 Invest in community infrastructure that has a tourism benefit.
- 3.3 Promote the region as place for business and infrastructure development projects.

4 Tourism

Outcome: That the tourism sector in Berrigan Shire returns to and then exceeds 2019 visitation rates.

- 4.1 Implement the Strategy for the Visitor Economy 2022 - 2026.
- 4.2 Encourage events to increase visitation.
- 4.3 Support local business and industry in developing new tourism product.
- 4.4 Partner with industry and other levels of government and assist in securing investment needed for the Murray River Adventure Trail.

5. Action Plan

What we want to do	How are we going to do it?	Lead responsibility	Timeframe					Cost/other Resources
			FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	
1. Business growth								
1.1 Develop resources and establish partnerships to improve local economic outcomes.	1.1.1. Fully document the needs of the local business community within the LGA.	Council	●	●	●			Networks
	1.1.2. Lobby all levels of Government for better business services.		●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
	1.1.3. Create relationships and networks with regional and state business entities to enable connections for local business.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
	1.1.4. Implement and renegotiate MOUs with key employers and neighbouring LGA's	Council and MOU stakeholders	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
1.2 Pursue opportunities to promote local business and industry regionally.	1.2.1. Partner with surrounding LGA's. to promote the suitability of the region as a great place to Live Work and Invest.	Council and Country Change	●	●	●			Partner Councils
	1.2.2. Promote Live, Work and Invest in the Berrigan Shire to a broader city audience through the Country Change Program	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
	1.2.3. Research and identify skills gaps in the local workforce and advocate to fill these gaps	Council and Country Change			●			Staff time and possible consultants
	1.3.1. Liaise with Council planning department for business related Development Applications.	Council MEDT	●	●	●	●	●	Other Council depts.

What we want to do	How are we going to do it?	Lead responsibility	Timeframe					Cost/other Resources
1.3 Support new and sustainable business development	1.3.2. Provide economic impact analysis for business ventures and events.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
	1.3.3. Ensure future developments align with and enhance Aviation opportunities and/ or Tourism. product	Council	●	●	●	●	●	
1.4 Promote Berrigan Shire as a preferred LGA to Live, Work and Invest.	1.4.1. Review the "Live, Work and Invest" online promotional material to attract businesses and residents.	Council			●			\$10,000 Staff time
1.5 Assist Industry and the community to combat Queensland Fruit Fly	1.5.1. Support the Goulburn and Murray Valley QFF taskforce Communication Strategy	Berrigan and Moira Shire Councils G and MV QFF Taskforce	●	●	●	●	●	\$10,000 Staff time
1.6 Review opportunities to celebrate local industry achievement	1.6.1. Explore new formats for the Business Awards or Leadership training.	Council	●		●		●	\$30,000
1.7 Actively participate in local business and industry networks	1.7.1. Identify local networks such as Riverine Plains, Finley Workspace, Country University Centre, and Local Agronomy Networks to strengthen business ties.	Council Business Community	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
	1.7.2. Monitor and communicate relevant government funding opportunities to local businesses.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
	1.7.3. Promote the use of Grant Guru to assist businesses in accessing funding.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
	1.7.4. Conduct online surveys to gather insights and address relevant business issues.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time

What we want to do	How are we going to do it?	Lead responsibility	Timeframe					Cost/other Resources
2. Workforce development and education								
2.1 Invest in transition to work and or further education projects	2.1.1. Facilitate and support the Shire Job Expo each year.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	\$6000 Staff time
	2.1.2. Promote and advocate for the Country Universities project.	Council	●	●				Staff time Finley TAFE
	2.1.3. Investigate local industry training opportunities.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	\$5000 and Staff time
2.2 Explore further development of the Tocumwal intermodal and Silo Rd precincts.	2.2.1. Work with operators to develop a strategic vision for the precincts.	Council	●	●	●			MEDT
3. Infrastructure and investment								
3.1 Encourage investment in future energy solutions	3.1.1. Seek funding for EV charging stations in key locations across the LGA	Council	●	●	●			Staff time \$ Unknown
3.2 Invest in community infrastructure with tourism benefits.	3.2.1. Conduct audit of walking and cycling tracks.	Council	●	●				Staff time Feasibility study consultant \$20K
3.3 Support collaborative planning and promote business and infrastructure development.	3.3.1. Facilitate investment in new or expanding business activities by responding proactively to prospective investors.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time

What we want to do	How are we going to do it?	Lead responsibility	Timeframe					Cost/other Resources
4 Tourism								
4.1 Implement the Strategy for the Visitor Economy 2022 - 2026	4.1.1. Promote Berrigan Shire as a premier tourism destination.	Council and Industry	●	●	●	●	●	Annual Budget allocation
	4.1.2. Maintain active membership in regional tourism organisations (e.g., MRTB and Destination Riverina Murray).	Council	●	●	●	●	●	3-year MOU
	4.1.3. Lead the development and enhancement of key tourism assets within the Shire.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	As required
	4.1.4. Invest in the planned redevelopment of Finley Lake to boost visitor attraction.	Council and the community		●				Staff time \$Unknown but extensive
	4.1.5. Regularly update and maintain an image library that reflects the region's tourism activities.	Council	●		●		●	Staff time \$15K annually
4.2 Encourage events to increase visitation	4.2.1. Promote local events and ensure they are listed on the Destination NSW calendar.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
	4.2.2. Support the growth of existing events and help establish new, suitable events..	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time \$60,000 annually
	4.2.3. Focus on attracting long-stay sporting events to the region.	Council	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
4.3 Support local business and industry in developing new tourism product	4.3.1. Collaborate with businesses and industry to create and promote innovative tourism products.	Council and industry	●	●	●	●	●	Staff time
4.4 Partner with government and industry to support the Murray River Adventure Trail.	4.4.1. Actively participate in Murray Regional Tourism planning for Murray River Adventure Trail.	Council MRTB	●					As required
	4.4.2. Conduct and publish a gap analysis to identify areas for improvement and investment.				●			

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Effective monitoring and evaluation of the Economic Development Strategy will ensure progress towards Berrigan Shire's vision and guide future updates. The strategy's success will be based on progress in achieving the outlined objectives. This approach allows for adjustments as needed, ensuring the strategy remains relevant and effective over time.

Reporting

Progress will be reported annually through the Council's Annual Report, ensuring the strategies are integrated into Council's Operational Plan, and provide detail on how the strategy is advancing.

Review

The strategy will be reviewed annually, and minor updates will be made as required.

A comprehensive review will be conducted every five years to assess the strategy's impact and relevance, including a complete evaluation of all objectives and outcomes to guide future planning.

The following measures will serve as indicators of the community's progress towards achieving the strategy's objectives. These measures are designed not as assessments of Council's performance, but rather as a gauge to determine whether the community is moving closer to, or further from, the shared vision.

Measures

Indicator	Source	Baseline		Desired trend
		Current	Trend	
1. Business growth				
Gross regional product (\$m)	Profile ID, Economic profile	587 (2023)	539 (2020)	Increase
Total GST registered businesses (#)	Profile ID, Economic profile, Business trends	981 (2023)	835 (2020)	Increase
Community Leadership and Collaboration Index	University of Canberra, Regional Wellbeing Survey	5.0 (2021)	5.1 (2020)	Increase
2. Workforce development and education				
Labour force participation rate (%)	Profile ID, Social Atlas	48.7 (2021)	49.2 (2016)	Increase
Total unemployed looking for work (%)	Australian Bureau of Statistics, Small Area Labour Markets	3.2 (2024)	3.2 (2020)	Decrease
Median Household Income (\$ weekly)	Profile ID, Community profile	1,115 (2021)	967 (2016)	Increase
Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage	Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Index for Areas	966 (2021)	954 (2016)	Increase
Persons with no non-school qualifications (%)	Profile ID, Community profile	44.5 (2021)	46.5 (2016)	Decrease
Quality of local schools	University of Canberra, Regional Wellbeing Survey	5.5 (2021)	5.8 (2020)	Increase

3. Infrastructure and investment				
Average Development Application lodgement time	NSW Planning Portal 2023-24	30 (2022-23)	25 (2021-22)	Decrease
Average assessment time for Development Applications	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	59 (2022/23)	20 (2020/21)	Decrease
Quality of local roads	University of Canberra, Regional Wellbeing Survey	3.7 (2021)	5.3 (2020)	Increase
Access to Telecommunications Index	University of Canberra, Regional Wellbeing Survey	3.7 (2021)	5.3 (2020)	Increase
4. Tourism				
Population change over 5 years (%)	Office of Local Government, Your Council report	-0.6 (2022/23)	2.5 (2020/21)	Increase
Total tourism sales as a percentage of NSW's total tourism sales (%)	Profile ID, Economic profile, Tourism sector	0.1 (2022/23)	0.1 (2019/20)	Increase

