

GOONDIWINDI REGIONAL COUNCIL

Drought Preparedness Plan

**Updated: Version 2
22 November 2023**

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
DROUGHT IS A SERIOUS AND RECURRING PROBLEM FOR RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA.	3
INTRODUCTION	5
STRATEGIC GOALS	6
WATER EFFICIENCY IN COUNCIL CONTROLLED INFRASTRUCTURE	6
<i>Water supply.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Sporting fields.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Swimming pools.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Parks and gardens</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Public toilets and facilities</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Stock route and road networks.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Public awareness</i>	<i>7</i>
ADVOCACY FOR INCREASED WATER STORAGE AND IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF WATER ALLOCATION.....	8
<i>In-principle support for Coffey scheme</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Upgrades to weirs and other storage infrastructure</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Monitor and support irrigation industry advocacy regarding Murray Darling Basin plan and state water management plans.....</i>	<i>9</i>
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SUPPORT.....	10
<i>Support local health services and support service providers</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Support local events that promote community connectedness.....</i>	<i>10</i>
RESEARCH AND INVESTMENT IN SUSTAINABLE FARMING	11
<i>Support the One Basin CRC.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Support local innovative thinking, practices and industries.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Advocacy for business mentoring programs.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Retention of Skilled Workforce</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Prepare with shovel ready projects to stimulate the local economy</i>	<i>12</i>
ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION.....	14
<i>Diversification of agriculture, value adding and manufacturing</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Tourism</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Expanded Rail Options</i>	<i>14</i>

Executive Summary

Drought is a serious and recurring problem for rural and remote Australia.

The Goondiwindi Regional Council area is a region that fluctuates between drought and floods. It is inevitable that it will occur again in future. Councils can employ the historical strategies of dealing with the impacts of events such as drought when they occur, as well as embrace more proactive management strategies.

Goondiwindi Regional Council has developed a local Drought Management Plan for our Water Services to address the immediate impact on Council's water resources. To better prepare and manage future drought events, Council has also prepared this Drought Preparedness Plan. This Plan supersedes Council's 2020 Drought Resilience Plan.

GRC Drought Management Plan available here - <https://www.grc.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/1233/grc-drought-management-plan>

This plan provides a systematic approach, with specific actions to mitigate the impact of drought and will concentrate on the following key outcome areas:

Water efficiency in Council controlled infrastructure:

1. Review of sporting fields – irrigation systems; best water efficiency practices and costings.
2. Review swimming pools – operation, use of pool covers, maintenance to eliminate leaks, correct schedule for filter back wash etc.
3. Sewerage treatment – review systems and identify system improvements for water efficiency
4. Parks & gardens – review irrigation systems and watering schedules to maximise water efficiency.
5. Public toilets and facilities – review systems – installation of water efficient fittings.
6. Stock routes and road networks – desilting of dams.
7. Water supply – supplement with bores. Implement as strategic practice in early stages rather than waiting for river based storage to fully deplete. Review Drought Management Plan if any storage or delivery infrastructure changes occur.
8. Continue to encourage water efficiency by rate payers – ongoing information available regarding water saving tips, updates on water storage supplies etc.

Advocacy for increased water storage and improved management of water allocation:

1. Continue advocacy for Coffey Scheme.
2. Advocate for upgrades to weirs and other storage infrastructure including the off stream storage for the Texas water supply
3. Monitor and support irrigation industry advocacy regarding Murray Darling Basin Plan and State Water Management Plans.

Health and social support:

1. Support local health services and support service providers to deliver mental health and community drought support programs – information sharing through Council media outlets and service centres, provision of venues etc.

2. Support local events that promote community connectedness – arts & culture funding, event funding, venue hire etc.

Research and investment in sustainable farming:

1. Support the One Basin CRC
2. Support local innovative thinking, practices and industries

Economic stimulus during drought:

1. Advocacy for free/ low-cost Business Mentoring programs, like Rural Financial Counsellors to better prepare businesses, and to assist them in managing their businesses during the stressful periods of drought.
2. Advocacy for locally delivered training and upskilling opportunities for residents and businesses
3. Work with locals, as well as State and Federal agencies to identify projects that have the capacity to stimulate the economy during a drought.
4. Advocacy for more agile and tangible support for primary producers and small business with dynamic eligibility criteria and trigger points as appropriate.

Economic diversification:

1. Support new industries (non-traditional irrigation based or value adding) through an agile planning scheme.
2. Provide an efficient and streamlined town planning, building and water services.
3. Advocate for Inland Rail outcomes, including funding for dual gauge connection into in Goondiwindi town.
4. Support tourism initiatives as per the Economic Development Strategy priority action items.

The following plan will provide a clear direction for better management of existing water resources, improved water efficiencies in agricultural industries, better coordination of social support services, improved environmental outcomes and greater adaptive capacity of local communities.

Introduction

Water is a key factor in supporting regional development and the economic prosperity and liveability of the community across the Goondiwindi Regional Council (Council) Local Government Area.

In 2009 Council engaged the University of New England (Institute for Rural Futures) to assess the potential impacts of reductions in productive water on local communities. Although this study was a direct response to the Murray Darling Basin Plan development, the findings can be related to the similar impacts of drought and subsequent reduction in water availability. The analysis is structured around the concepts:

- Exposure (to reductions in water availability)
- Sensitivity (of communities to these reductions because of their dependence on irrigated agriculture)
- Adaptive capacity (of communities to adjust to the impacts and avoid social and economic damage)

The interaction of these three factors determines the overall vulnerability of communities.

Goondiwindi, Texas and Inglewood are the three towns in the Council area that service specific catchments. Goondiwindi in particular is the commercial centre for a large irrigated agricultural area to the west. The sensitivity of our communities to reduced water availability is generally high with Goondiwindi having a moderate adaptive capacity due to a more diverse economy. Texas and Inglewood have a low adaptive capacity as they are heavily reliant on local irrigated farming.

Drought has serious impacts on our economy and business recovery following the drought is the most immediate issue. The economic prospects for broad acre irrigated production are reasonably sound, but those prospects cannot be realised without water. After several years of low incomes, a proportion of irrigators with high debt levels will find it extremely difficult to recover from the drought.

During drought, farmers have in general, scaled back production and tried to minimise costs. They have taken what opportunities they can to diversify into other crops and destock, but there is very limited potential for them to transform their businesses.

Planning to mitigate the impact of drought is essential to grow the local economy and maintain sustainable regional communities. Council can directly influence water efficiencies in the operation of urban water utilities and community facilities through reviewing existing practices and developing plans for infrastructure and service improvement. Other strategies to improve water storage and delivery, increasing water efficiency in key industries and diversifying the economy will require partnerships and advocacy with other levels of government, research and industry organisations and private enterprise.

This plan will provide direction to position Council and our communities to become more resilient to drought in the future.

Council has considered the Darling Downs Regional Drought Resilience Plan in the preparing of this document - <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/darling-downs-rdrp.pdf>

Strategic Goals

To build preparedness to drought and mitigate, where possible, the impacts of drought in the Goondiwindi Regional Council area, with strategies targeting various elements of water use.

The following strategies identify actions that can assist with better management of water resources, agencies/stakeholders responsibility, and Council's role in implementation.

Water Efficiency in Council Controlled Infrastructure

Goondiwindi Regional Council is responsible for water supply to several towns and villages in our region. A summary of the water infrastructure under Council control is contained in the Goondiwindi Water Security Assessment and Drought Assistance Funding Submission prepared by GHD in February 2020. There are several areas of Council operations that can be reviewed to identify potential water efficiencies.

Water supply

Water treatment and sewerage treatment – Council regulates water usage and quality and manages the operation and maintenance of related infrastructure in town areas. A review of systems to identify improvements for water efficiency is recommended to minimise any water loss through infrastructure failure. The installation of bores to supplement urban water supplies was recommended in the GHD report to reduce reliance on surface water supplies. Bores in Goondiwindi, Texas, and Yelarbon have been completed with a bore in Inglewood still to be delivered. Use of bores should be implemented as strategic practice in early stages rather than waiting for river based storage to fully deplete.

Actions:

- Finalise funding and operationalisation of Inglewood bore.
- Review Drought Management Plan as required.

Completed:

- Installation of bore at Goondiwindi
- Works on improving water storage in Talwood and Yelarbon have been completed.
- Trial of mixing bore and surface water completed, and is now standard practice.
- Agreement for Bungunya bore water executed

Sporting fields

Goondiwindi Regional Council is responsible for a large number of sporting facilities across the region. As a social responsibility to provide adequate recreational facilities and acknowledging Council's health and safety responsibility, these venues require adequate grass surfaces. Maintaining these facilities can utilise large quantities of water. System efficiencies and good maintenance can reduce water usage. Greater use of treated effluent (compliant with quality standards) on some sporting grounds should be considered. Goondiwindi Golf Club and Race Club are current examples of recycling treated effluent.

Actions:

- Implementation of recommendations of review of Council irrigation systems at sporting fields to be funded by budget allocations by the end of 2025.
- Installation of automated irrigation systems at the Texas and Inglewood sports fields.
- Identify opportunities for greater use of treated effluent, compliant with quality standards, including use commercial uses to provide economic benefit to council.
- Commercialise waste water and improve quality of effluent for reuse through Green Hydrogen Project. Hydrogen Industry Development Fund approved – as at August 2023 we are currently in construction phase, with project delivery expected in 2024.

Completed:

- Completed review of irrigation systems for best practice water efficiency.

Swimming pools

Council has three public swimming pools in Goondiwindi, Inglewood and Texas, the ages and condition of these pools vary. Inglewood pool was renewed in 2009 and currently has no leaks or unusual water losses. Before refurbishments were completed November 2021, Goondiwindi Pool had been a source of major water loss through ageing infrastructure, this has now been resolved. Texas pool has undergone minor refurbishment in recent years. A leak in Texas pool pipework was located and repaired January 2021. Apart from the maintenance of the pool infrastructure, better management of pool operations is recommended such as, use of pool blankets (where provided) and regulation of filter backwash schedules.

Actions:

- Review swimming pools operation, use of pool covers, correct schedule for filter back wash etc.

Completed Actions:

- Refurbishment of Goondiwindi Pool
- Identification and repair of leak in Texas Pool

Parks and gardens

Council is responsible for a large number of parks, gardens and open space areas in the region. Although we have implemented a public reporting system for any maintenance issues including water leaks in public facilities, the irrigation systems in some instances are old. Advances in irrigation equipment and regulation systems have been numerous in recent years. A review of water management of parks and gardens identifies numerous opportunities for improvement and irrigation upgrades are planned. Council already undertakes mulching and soil composting to support best practice in this area.

Actions:

- Implement the irrigation infrastructure and water management strategies by 2025.

Public toilets and facilities

Toilets and public amenities in all Council owned facilities are a potential source of water inefficiency. Many facilities are older and as such include plumbing fittings that contribute to greater water use. A review of all Council owned facilities to identify opportunities to install modern water efficient fittings is recommended.

Completed:

- Installed water efficient fittings as identified in plumbing fitting review of all Council owned amenities.

Stock route and road networks

Stock routes and road networks are mostly Council controlled (state owned) facilities and involve a network of dams that are critical to the feed options for livestock. Maintaining the dams and reducing the silt can increase storage volumes and prolong the life of the dam structure.

Actions:

- Source external funding to desilt approximately ten dams across the network.

Public awareness

Council's Drought Management Plan articulates the strategies for managing urban water supplies during drought and as part of the broader strategic approach has developed a number of materials for public awareness. To continue public awareness of water efficient practices it is recommended that materials continue to be made available at Council customer service outlets and on various media platforms. Disaster Dashboard on Council's website contains updated information on storage levels and river conditions. Water bills contain information on water usage and comparisons to standard community use.

Actions:

- Continue to encourage water efficiency by providing ongoing information regarding water saving tips and updates on water storage supplies.

Advocacy for Increased Water Storage and Improved Management of Water Allocation

Major water storage infrastructure is the responsibility of Sunwater (Coolmunda Dam) and NSW Water (Glenlyon Dam). Although Council has no direct responsibility for water regulation or infrastructure improvement, there is a role for advocacy to higher levels of government responsible for funding improvement to water storage and management. Consultation with industry stakeholders over several years has identified potential water storage infrastructure projects that can benefit the Goondiwindi Regional Council area. Increasing water storage capacity, diversion of water from coastal catchments and improved infrastructure to reduce transmission losses will mitigate the impact of drought and improve economic sustainability of our communities.

In-principle support for Coffey scheme

During the previous drought there has been increased interest from irrigator groups in the Coffey Scheme to divert water from the upper Clarence River catchment. The scheme was originally devised by David Coffey in 1983 with the engineering feasibility subsequently verified by the NSW Water Resources Commission.

The only potential source of new water for the Murray Darling Basin (MDB) is from the upper reaches of the Clarence River. The Coffey Scheme involves construction of storage dams in the upper tributaries of the Clarence River and diversion of water inland into the upper tributaries of the Darling River. The upper Clarence catchment is one of the most reliable in Australia and the potential of harnessing this water will have significant benefits for the environmental health of the Murray Darling and the sustainability of all basin communities. Hydro electricity generation could be included to enhance the project's environmental and economic viability.

Water in the proposed storage would allow improved regulation and mitigate the flood impacts to communities in the lower Clarence. Improved water quality will also result from better management. The opportunity to divert water into the Darling system will provide increased reliability for the agricultural industries in the MDB.

A percentage of water stored could be allocated for environmental flows to enhance management of the MDB and mitigate the severe environmental, economic and social impacts that drought has on the system. Water from the storage into the upper Darling can be achieved through connection into the Dumaresq River.

The Coffey Scheme is favoured by irrigators west of Goondiwindi, however there is no indication that this proposal is a key deliverable at any level of government.

Actions:

- Continue to provide input to submissions regarding major water storage facilities in the Border Rivers region. Provide advocacy to higher levels of government and support industry proposals for investigation into new major water storage infrastructure.
- In-principle support provided for the Coffey Scheme

Upgrades to weirs and other storage infrastructure

Towns in the Goondiwindi Regional Council area are primarily serviced by surface water allocations taken from the Border Rivers catchment of the Murray Darling Basin. There are significant transmission losses in the system from the storage dams to the weirs and pump stations along these rivers. Several recommendations for improvements to delivery of high priority water are contained in the GHD report under section 7. Medium and long term water augmentation options. Options recommended are:

Actions:

- Advocate for funding for off-stream storage at Texas
- Advocate to Queensland Government for funding to construct infrastructure to improve the reliability of water supply and reduce transmission losses in current delivery systems.
- Continual review of the Goondiwindi Regional Council Drought Management Plan.

Completed:

- Modular off-stream storage at Bungunya has been completed maximising access to available surface water supply.

Monitor and support irrigation industry advocacy regarding Murray Darling Basin plan and state water management plans

Water supply generally in the Goondiwindi Regional Council area is regulated by State Government water management plans (surface and ground water allocations). In more recent years the introduction of the Murray Darling Basin Plan to regulate the environmental management of the Murray Darling system by the Federal Government has added complexity to the supply of water. Council as a water holder, as well as the Local Government authority has a key role in advocating for adjustments to the various water management plans that influence the economic and social impacts on our communities. Goondiwindi Regional Council has been active in monitoring the potential variations to water management and advocating either directly to higher levels of government or by supporting the submissions of local irrigator groups. To secure the sustainability of our region, Council must continue to be a strong voice to ensure sensible and equitable management of water resources.

Actions:

- Continue to monitor water regulation policy and advocate, where necessary, to ensure water resources are managed to the best environmental, economic and social benefit for our communities.
- Maintain connection with local water users through producer groups and organisations such as Murray Darling Association, Border Rivers Food and Fibre, Macintyre Ag Alliance and Macintyre Valley Cotton Growers Associations, as well as other key stakeholders to obtain intel and information that is locally relevant and locally contextualised.

Health and Social Support

The Goondiwindi Region is reasonably well serviced by multiple health services, private general practices, aged care facilities, dental services, allied health professionals and community care providers. These industries support a large number of employees and offer a source of economic diversity for the region. During adverse times such as drought these services are critical to provide support for the physical and mental health of our communities. In addition several local drought support groups have been established during the last drought. These are primarily volunteer based and have proven invaluable in coordinating drought assistance packages and disseminating relevant information on government support programs.

Support local health services and support service providers

Goondiwindi Regional Council has been a member of local Community Advisory Networks centred on local health services. These networks provide important platforms for interagency communication and coordination, assessing community needs and advocating for appropriate service levels. The delivery of mental health services and community drought support programs are critical during stressful times. Council can assist by sharing information through Council media outlets and service centres and the provision of venues for program delivery.

It is also evident that some of our local community groups operating as either not for profits or charities are critical in providing welfare checks on the vulnerable, connecting key services with individuals, organising well-being events and facilitating the distribution of donations. These are the grass-root organisations that are attempting to build a direct relationship with the individuals who most need support.

Actions:

- Continue involvement in local Community Advisory Networks (nominate Council representative to attend monthly meetings).
- Support and encourage continuation of local drought support groups to preserve knowledge and structure to enable activation when required.
- Assist with information sharing.
- Through our Community Grants and Donation program, provide venues for meetings and community information events.
- Continue to provide strong advocacy to higher levels of government to support retention and improvement in local health and support services.
- Advocate for resolutions to key health and social issues or gaps, for example, the inability of local chemists to collect donations to pay for locals unable to afford medications.
- Council to be a relationship facilitator for these community groups, ensuring that requests for donations or information sharing are passed on to these organisations.

Support local events that promote community connectedness

Events provide an important function in regional and rural communities. Social connectivity, economic diversification, encouraging creative activity and providing a venue for information sharing are key elements of community events. Goondiwindi Regional Council supports local events through various funding programs, venue and equipment hire, as well as providing support and advice to local community groups. During adverse events such as drought Council needs to continue support for events that unite our communities and mitigate social isolation and mental health impacts. Events organised by Tie up the Black Dog, Care Goondiwindi and Texas and District Drought Support held in communities including Texas and Inglewood have proven to be effective in facilitating community connectedness on a local level.

Actions:

- Continue to provide annual budget allocation for event funding program and RADF (arts related funding).
- Provide support and advice to assist local not-for-profit organisations in applying to external funding programs.
- Provide support and advice to assist community groups with opportunities to improve water efficiency to ensure their continued operation during a drought.
- Provide promotional assistance through our GoondiwindiRegion.com.au membership

Research and Investment in Sustainable Farming

Regardless of any improvements to water storage or delivery infrastructure, more efficient use of water and innovative application of technology in the agricultural industry are essential to improve drought resilience.

Queensland is recognised by the World Bank as a global innovation hotspot, with the Goondiwindi region proving to be an area of choice for entrepreneurs and innovators. Examples of innovation developed in the Goondiwindi region that can improve land and water management are:

- Telemetry systems that improve resource management and water–use efficiency.
- Artificial Intelligence and drone technology to identify weed location and target spray saving up to 80% in herbicide use and protect ground cover for moisture retention.
- GPS precision guidance systems for auto-steer solutions for agricultural machinery to improve soil management.

To promote water efficiencies and improved productivity, research and development of improved farming technologies is essential.

Support the One Basin CRC

The Goondiwindi Region will lead a national body of research into sustainable water and agriculture technologies thanks to its selection as a regional hub for the One Basin CRC. Led by the University of Melbourne in collaboration with more than 80 partners, the One Basin CRC aims to secure productive and sustainable irrigation regions across the Murray-Darling Basin.

Goondiwindi has been selected as the location of one of just four regional Basin hubs, along with Loxton, Mildura and Griffith, that will work towards increasing agricultural production while ensuring environmental sustainability. The initiative will work directly with industry, businesses, community and government to develop and commercialise opportunities for Australia's irrigated agriculture and rural water industries.

Actions:

- Providing 10 years of financial support to the One Basin CRC research hub whilst located in Goondiwindi.
- Maximising the opportunity of the One Basin CRC hub being based in Goondiwindi.

Support local innovative thinking, practices and industries

Goondiwindi Regional Council has supported growth in innovative practices and industries for improved industry and economic resilience in the region.

Actions:

- Council to commit to continue to engage in sustainable and innovative projects and practices as and when appropriate (eg. The Goondiwindi Waste Treatment Plant Hydrogen project).
- Encourage local uptake of support for projects offered via the Future Drought Fund for improving preparedness of farming businesses and communities to the impact of drought.

Economic Stimulus During Drought

With the economy of regional areas entwined with the success of the agriculture industry, limiting the impacts of drought on the broader economy is fundamental to the survival of many regional towns.

Advocacy for business mentoring programs

Providing one on one business mentoring support to existing local businesses to assist with navigating available support, applications, managing creditors and filling out forms. This is an important mental health and financial component of looking after our residents. Whilst numerous webinars and group information sessions have previously been offered, these are generic in nature, however the evidence strongly favours customised support. Customised support includes a welfare check, limits additional stress of bureaucratic processes, and achieves significant outcomes for the individual and the region as a result.

Business mentors during a time of drought are essential information collectors of impediments to our businesses accessing support. Whether this be related to eligibility criteria, or complexity of applications, Council has an opportunity to work proactively to advocate for resolutions to these issues.

Ongoing business mentoring when we are not in drought is also critical. Droughts occur in our region, and whilst we recognise that the most recent has been particularly damaging, business planning that prepares for these periods for both the agriculture sector and small/ medium businesses is an essential.

Actions:

- Advocate for low-cost Business Mentoring programs to better prepare businesses, and to assist them in managing their businesses during the stressful periods of drought.
- Council to work collaboratively with key local stakeholders on key issues that is impeding our local businesses from accessing support.
- Encourage and promote the services that are offered by the Rural Financial Counselling Service and support providers.
- Continue to support the Goondiwindi Chamber of Commerce and Texas Queensland Inc with business support initiatives, such as the Grow Gundy Gift Card and Shop Local Campaigns.

Retention of Skilled Workforce

A skilled workforce is essential to the sustainability of regional economies. During drought the retraction of workforce in the agriculture sector can have serious flow on effects to the rest of the local economy. Relocation of families seeking employment impacts on retail and service sectors and can potentially create a skills shortage following drought. Strategies to retain and retrain skilled workers in local communities are important to the viability of local business.

Actions:

- Continue to liaise with DESBT, Chamber of Commerce, Gateway to Training and other relevant stakeholders to ensure training for skills to meet local industry demand is ongoing, including the opportunity to engage with opportunities for micro-credentialing.
- Undertake a training needs analysis across the broader Goondiwindi Region to ascertain future employment needs and improved local training options to keep workers locally.

Prepare with shovel ready projects to stimulate the local economy

At both the State and Federal levels of government, they are looking for innovative and successful projects that can stimulate the local drought affected economy.

Councils are often identified as having the local knowledge and the proven record to deliver on contracts that can provide local employment and become an economic driver. The implementation of these projects requires a timely response with projects readily identified and shovel ready.

Large-scale infrastructure projects such as highway upgrades, provide multi-prong outcomes to regional areas during drought periods. In a recent drought, a NSW roads project generated employment opportunities for locals that had lost their jobs, provided much-needed economic stimulus to local hospitality businesses with overnight stays, and addressed infrastructure needs for the region with positive benefits to the drive tourism market, as well as the major logistics gateway that our region provides.

Actions:

- Council to maintain a Pipeline Project list and prioritise resources to ensure key Council projects are shovel ready to stimulate the local economy.
- Advocate for large-scale investment in major projects e.g. National or State Highways.
- Goondiwindi Regional Council to tender for funding to support local projects as appropriate to inject external economic stimulus into the community.

Economic Diversification

The economy of the Goondiwindi Regional Council area is dominated by agricultural industries and a diverse economy is an important element in developing sustainable communities. Industries such as tourism, manufacturing, food processing and information technology are evident in our region and Council needs to be aware of additional opportunities. The provision of suitable land and flexibility in Council's planning scheme are required to encourage industries that are economically beneficial and compatible with the social and environmental values of our communities. Council has developed an Economic Development Strategy with key actions identified for implementation over the coming years.

Diversification of agriculture, value adding and manufacturing

The Planning Scheme has been reviewed and amended to allow smaller rural holdings in the eastern sector of the Local Government area. This is to encourage more high value, water efficient horticulture in the region and a project in partnership with Department of Agriculture has realised advances in the last decade. Other value adding industries and technologies are establishing in the Goondiwindi Region with encouragement from Council.

Actions:

- Provide Development Application pre-lodgement advice to encourage investment in the region.
- Ensure Council's Planning Scheme is sufficiently agile to meet the requirements of preferred industry development.
- Provide a high quality and responsive town planning, building work and water service.
- Continue to foster good relationships with government departments to coordinate advice and assistance to potential investors.
- Monitor progress against priority actions outlined in the Economic Development Strategy.

Tourism

Tourism is a growing industry in regional Australia and the Goondiwindi region has the potential to capitalise on growth in the domestic market. Although it will never replace more traditional industries, the tourism industry can certainly add diversity and cushion some adverse economic impacts of drought. Council has developed a Tourism Strategy, and invested in several tourism infrastructure projects in recent years.

Actions:

- Membership of Regional Tourism Organisation (Southern Queensland Country Tourism).
- Continue to support volunteer community organisations operating tourism infrastructure on Council land, particularly through the implementation of unmanned entry technologies and digital experiences.
- Review and update tourism information as required.
- Deliver manned and unmanned Visitor Information Centre services.
- Encourage industry ownership and collaboration in growing the tourism product in the Goondiwindi region.

Expanded Rail Options

The development of an Inland Rail corridor through the Goondiwindi region is delayed, but still likely in coming years. This nation-building project offers potential for investment in transport & logistics, manufacturing and technology in the region, particularly in Goondiwindi. To capitalise on the benefits of rail expansion, there is a strong business case for works to improve capacity on the feeder rail lines, particularly on the South West.

Goondiwindi Regional Council was successful in securing support from the Federal Government to investigate the options and opportunities to upgrade existing rail infrastructure to complement the Inland Rail. Working with Ernst & Young, Council now has a strong business case to advocate for investment in add-on infrastructure to support rail freight in the region.

Actions:

- Advocate for investment in a dual gauge connecting Goondiwindi town to the expanded rail networks.

Completed:

- Council now has a strong fully costed business case to support the external investment into additional rail infrastructure in the region.