

GLADSTONE REGIONAL COUNCIL

OUR PLACE OUR PLAN

10 Year Planning Scheme Review



Cover Image Source: Gladstone Regional Council

Version Control


Report Quality Statement					
Project Manager	Greg Ovenden				 REEL PLANNING <small>Urban & Rural Solutions</small>
Prepared By	Roisin Cosgrave				
Approved for issue	Greg Ovenden				
Rev No.	Date	Description	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
A	06/06/24	DRAFT	Roisin Cosgrave	Tim O’Leary Jennifer Roughan	Greg Ovenden Jennifer Roughan
B	12/06/24	CLIENT DRAFT	Roisin Cosgrave	Tim O’Leary Jennifer Roughan	Greg Ovenden Jennifer Roughan
C	4/07/24	FINAL	Roisin Cosgrave	Tim O’Leary	Greg Ovenden

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
1.0 INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 GLADSTONE REGION	3
1.2 OUR PLACE OUR PLAN PLANNING SCHEME	4
1.3 PURPOSE OF REPORT	4
2.0 REQUIREMENT FOR PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW	5
2.1 STATUTORY REQUIREMENT TO REVIEW THE PLANNING SCHEME	5
2.2 THE NEED TO REVIEW THE PLANNING SCHEME	5
2.3 METHODOLOGY FOR THE PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW	7
3.0 GAP ANALYSIS: LITERATURE AND POLICY REVIEW	8
4.0 POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT, INDUSTRY AND CENTRES REVIEW	10
4.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REVIEW	10
5.0 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	13
5.1 INDUSTRY FEEDBACK	14
5.2 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK	15
5.3 INTERNAL COUNCIL FEEDBACK	16
5.4 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY	18
6.0 STATE PLANNING REVIEW	19
6.1 ALIGNMENT WITH STATE PLANNING POLICY AND CENTRAL QUEENSLAND REGIONAL PLAN	19
7.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	20
7.1 POLICY FRAMEWORK	20
7.2 WORKABILITY	22
7.3 PLANNING SCHEME ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS	23
7.4 OTHER	24
7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS	26
8.0 CONCLUSION	27

TABLES

TABLE 1: PLANNING SCHEME ALIGNMENT WITH CURRENT STATE PLANNING POLICY	19
---	----

FIGURES

FIGURE 1: METHODOLOGY	7
FIGURE 2: PLATFORM INTERACTIONS	13

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – GAP ANALYSIS

APPENDIX B – POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT AND LAND SUPPLY STUDY

APPENDIX C – ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

APPENDIX D – STATE INTEREST INTEGRATION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gladstone Regional Council Our Place Our Plan Planning Scheme (planning scheme) formally commenced on 12 October 2015. Legislative requirements under the *Planning Act 2016* require Council to review its planning scheme within 10 years of it being made. It is therefore timely for a review of the planning scheme to be undertaken.

The 10 Year Planning Scheme Review (the Review) examines the operation of the planning scheme and assesses whether it accords with current legislation, Council's vision for the Region and community expectations. It identifies key findings and information gaps and includes recommendations arising from the consideration of these findings.

While the current planning scheme has been generally successful in its operation to date, the current policy framework needs to be updated to reflect emerging trends and issues to remain contemporary and effective. The Review found that:

- The existing planning scheme's structure is fundamentally sound.
- Amendments are required to appropriately integrate all State Planning Policy state interests and ensure that the key outcomes reflected in the community, industry and Council feedback received are delivered.
- There is a need to improve the information base on which the planning scheme relies (through updating existing studies and mapping, and preparing new studies) so that the quality of, and confidence in, the planning scheme is high.
- There is a need for all internal Council departments to fully participate in the planning scheme review to ensure the appropriate integration of information, resolution of competing interests, and to build a shared ownership of the revised planning scheme.
- Ongoing industry and community participation will ensure that the revised content is consistent with community and industry expectations.

On balance, the Review did not identify any fundamental deficiency in the planning scheme that would prevent it from continuing to be applied to the regulation of development. Further, the development outcomes of a new planning scheme are not expected to be significantly different to the current planning scheme and the foundation of the current planning scheme remains solid. On this basis, the Review recommends that Council resolve to make substantial amendments to the current planning scheme rather than preparing a new planning scheme. This will ensure the current planning scheme remains contemporary and responsive to local social, economic and environmental interests.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GLADSTONE REGION

The Gladstone Region is located approximately 500km, or six and a half hours' drive north of Brisbane City, with a population of approximately 65,400 people and a total land area of 10,484 km². The city of Gladstone, areas of Boyne Island and Tannum Sands, and town of Calliope are the main population centres in the Region with approximately 56,000 people living in these localities. Nearly 8,000 people live in smaller communities in the region such as Miriam Vale, Baffle Creek, Deepwater and the beachside localities of Seventeen Seventy and Agnes Water, according to the 2021 Census.

The natural environment of the Gladstone Region encompasses rich and diverse landscapes, including coastal areas, rainforests, waterways, and nearby hinterlands. The Region is also in proximity to the southern reaches of the Great Barrier Reef UNESCO World Heritage Site. These protected areas preserve diverse ecosystems and wildlife and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and eco-tourism.

In recent decades, the Gladstone Region's economy has been built around heavy industry with access to a deepwater harbour for import and export trade. The Region has experienced a series of economic "booms" associated with major new industry and port development. A supporting catalyst has been the reservation of 27,000ha of industrial land in the Gladstone State Development Area for major industrial development, managed by Economic Development Queensland.

The Region's booms have seen unprecedented levels of major economic activity related to mining and gas, port operations, and major industry, ranging from an alumina smelter, aluminium refinery, Orica chemical plant, LNG plants on Curtis Island and major port expansion at Wiggins Island. They also led to a significant number of non-resident construction workers in the Region, placing increased demand on housing supply and various goods, services and infrastructure.

Historically, the Gladstone Region enjoyed strong population growth between 2001 to 2014, coinciding with the economic booms described above. However, this has been followed by a period of very low population growth coinciding with the world-wide pandemic, a period of economic slowdown, and of the completion of the construction of three LNG plants on Curtis Island (accompanied by the reduction of very large non-resident construction workforces). Based upon historical population growth trends, proposed major industrial projects in the Gladstone area and current economic and industrial trends, the Gladstone Region population is expected to increase to approximately 83,300 residents, with an estimated 34,421 dwellings required by 2041. The annual growth in population will require significant urban development and supporting infrastructure.

Given Gladstone Region's strong economic dependence on a range of carbon-intensive industries, it is facing major economic transformation as large industries increasingly seek to decarbonise. The challenges facing the Region emanate from the need to manage the shift away from fossil fuels and the impacts associated with new energy industries which are being attracted to the Region. While the risks of a changing energy sector are significant (given Gladstone's current economic ties to carbon-intensive industries), the existing industrial base, strong supply chains, deepwater port and skilled workforce, have led to the Region attracting significant investment in renewable energy generation, green hydrogen and biofuel production.

Several renewable energy projects embracing biofuels, solar energy, hydrogen and new waste management practices are being developed or considered for the Gladstone Region. Approval to proceed with these projects would position the Gladstone Region as a renewable energy hub, taking the economy in a new direction.

Due to the scale of change facing the Gladstone Region and the likely impacts on the economy, community, workers and natural landscape – strategic planning and coordination are imperative for long term sustainability. The Gladstone Regional Council Planning Scheme “Our Place Our Plan” (planning scheme) will play a pivotal role in balancing competing priorities and interests. As a result, it is important that the planning scheme is regularly reviewed and updated to keep pace with growth, changes and emerging trends.

1.2 OUR PLACE OUR PLAN PLANNING SCHEME

Our Place Our Plan (planning scheme) sets out the preferred land use strategy for the Gladstone Region along with the planning controls to guide future land use and development. The planning scheme was prepared with a 17 year horizon and is a key tool for implementing Council’s vision for the Region and responding to growth management challenges. It works alongside Council’s other policies and projects, which may in part be implemented through the planning scheme.

Since the commencement of the planning scheme, there have been a range of policy and legislative changes, as well as the commencement or continuation of a range of infrastructure and other projects, which have the potential to significantly affect future land use and development in the Gladstone Region. Further, the planning scheme was developed during a time of high population growth, with the actual population growth experienced in the Region remaining well below the population projection that the planning scheme was based on. As a result, while the planning scheme has been generally successful in its operation to date, the current policy framework needs to be updated to reflect emerging trends and issues to remain contemporary and effective.

1.3 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the Review is to undertake an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency planning scheme in meeting future growth challenges, and whether it accords with community expectations, current legislation and Council’s adopted vision and strategies. The Review examines a range of factors including:

- Current State planning legislation, guidelines, policy strategy and projects.
- Council’s vision and current strategies, policies and projects.
- Currency of planning scheme mapping.
- Amendments undertaken to date.
- Development trends and examples including an evaluation of the performance and operation of the planning scheme (review of development data, outcomes on the ground and legal proceedings).
- Internal, industry and community consultation findings regarding expectations and the delivery of planning outcomes.

The Review has resulted in a comprehensive body of work, drawn from a diverse range of stakeholders and technical experts and documented in the companion reports attached at **Appendix A – D**. These reports contain a broad range of comments from high level strategic statements to detailed issue specific statements. The Review seeks to extract the key issues that will inform a final recommendation from this vast collection of feedback. It identifies key findings and information gaps and includes recommendations arising from the consideration of these findings. Based on the outcomes of the Review, Council must decide on the best pathway forward (new planning scheme or major amendment) to ensure that the planning scheme remains contemporary and reflective of local social, economic and environmental issues.

To the extent that changes to the planning scheme are considered necessary, the Review seeks to identify a broad scope of supporting studies that may be required to address any technical issues identified. It is important to note that predicting the full range of supporting reports required to underpin the new or amended planning scheme at this early stage would be premature and this will need to be further interrogated as part of future bodies of work.

2.0 REQUIREMENT FOR PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW

2.1 STATUTORY REQUIREMENT TO REVIEW THE PLANNING SCHEME

A planning scheme is a statutory instrument made by a local government to guide and regulate how land will be used and developed at a Local Government Authority (LGA) level. It is key in expressing a vision for how a Council will respond to development and growth management challenges. In accordance with the Act, a planning scheme must:

- Integrate matters of State interest to be delivered in the planning scheme ensuring alignment with state and regional interests as expressed in the State Planning Policy (SPP) and the Central Queensland Regional Plan 2013.
- Identify strategic outcomes for the local government area to which the planning scheme applies (the Strategic framework).
- Include a number of elements/measures that will facilitate the achievement of the strategic outcomes (e.g. zones, local plans, codes, overlays and planning scheme policies).
- Identify and coordinate delivery of infrastructure to support growth.

Section 25 (1) of the *Planning Act 2016* (Act) requires that a local government review its planning scheme within 10 years of the planning scheme being made (or if the planning scheme has been reviewed, within 10 years of the planning scheme being last reviewed). Based on the outcomes of the review, the local government must decide whether to amend or replace the planning scheme.

The Gladstone Regional Council *Our Place Our Plan* Planning Scheme formally commenced on 12 October 2015 and as a result, must be reviewed by 12 October 2025.

2.2 THE NEED TO REVIEW THE PLANNING SCHEME

The planning scheme is the first for Gladstone Regional Council and replaced the three previous planning schemes (Calliope, Gladstone and Miriam Vale). The planning scheme was made under the former *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* and its mandatory *Queensland Planning Provisions* (QPP) – a suite of standardised planning provisions necessary for inclusion in a planning scheme with opportunity for the incorporation of local content and variation. Since this time, there have been significant changes to the legislative and policy context within which the planning scheme sits. New requirements for local government planning schemes are now established under the *Act* and *Planning Regulation 2017* (Regulation).

Key changes in legislative intent between the Act and the previous *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* include:

- **More flexibility:** The Act and Regulation remove the mandatory components of the Queensland Planning Provisions ("QPP") which specified a consistent structure and standard provisions for planning schemes but does provide for "regulated requirements" (e.g. standard definitions and zones). A local government planning scheme is required to adopt the use terms and definitions in Schedule 3 (and Schedule 24) of the Regulation and only select from the standard zones outlined Schedule 2 of the Regulation (including name, purpose and colour required for mapping).
- **New terminology:** The Act introduces the terms "categorising instruments" to collectively specify the categories of assessment required for different types of assessable development and "assessment benchmarks" to describe what an application must be assessed against.
- **Categorisation:** The Act introduces the term "local categorising instrument" (e.g. a planning scheme) which is to specify the category of assessment required for assessable development and assessment benchmarks.
- **More guidelines for planning scheme drafting process:** The Act introduces the *Minister's Guidelines and Rules* that sets out the matters which must be addressed when making or amending planning schemes.

- **Greater discretion in impact assessment:** The Act introduces the concept of “relevant matters” in impact assessment e.g. need; relevance; factual errors etc. This allows greater discretion in decision making and places pressure on scheme provisions to be more clearly expressed and for the purpose and importance of development requirements to be evident.
- **Clear decision rules for code assessment:** The Act requires code assessable development only be assessed against identified benchmarks and to be approved if it complies with applicable assessment benchmarks in codes, or can be conditioned to comply. This means that all relevant benchmarks need to be self-contained and how to achieve compliance with assessment benchmarks needs to be clear cut.

Whilst the planning scheme has been amended to update terminology and improve consistency with the PA and SPP, there are aspects of the planning scheme, including assessment benchmarks and levels of assessment, which would benefit from further review. The removal of the mandatory QPP structure and assessment rules, as well as the lack of prescription in relation to what constitutes an “assessment benchmark”, provides an opportunity for structural changes, simplification and other improvements. In particular, the interpretation rules in parts 1.5 and 5.3.3 of the planning scheme may be refined and clarified. This could ensure the planning scheme has greater useability and better reflects local circumstances.

In addition to the range of policy and legislative changes outlined above, it is important to note that since the planning scheme was adopted:

- Gladstone Regional Council has undertaken a significant amount of strategic planning work, directly and indirectly associated with development related matters, that is not fully reflected in the current planning scheme.
- The Gladstone Region has seen significant advances in the planning and construction of Region shaping infrastructure and other projects, including the Fitzroy to Gladstone Water Pipeline, Gladstone Heavy Vehicle and Oversize Overmass Load Transport Corridor, Inland Rail Extension to the Port of Gladstone, Harvey Road Sports and Events Precinct. This infrastructure has the potential to significantly facilitate development within the Region and affect future land use and development.
- There have been significant changes to state interests with substantial amendments to the SPP. Further guidance has also been provided by the State in relation to the operation of certain aspects of the SPP.
- Valuable insights into the planning scheme have been gained through its application. planning scheme users, including Councillors, Council officers, applicants and submitters, developers and consultants all have valuable insights into the operation and performance of the planning scheme.
- The actual population growth experienced in the Local Government Area has remained well below the population projection on which the planning scheme was based. This provides a unique situation where the existing planning scheme includes an oversupply of land designated for urban purposes.

Due to these factors, there is a need to holistically review the planning scheme to ensure that it remains contemporary and reflective of local social, economic and environmental interests.

2.3 METHODOLOGY FOR THE PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW

While the planning scheme was prepared with a 17 year horizon, the Review is an opportunity to ensure the planning scheme continues to respond appropriately to community, industry and Council expectations and identifies and supports the orderly sequence of future development whilst maintaining the liveability of the Region.

Figure 1 below illustrates the methodology (Stage 1) adopted to deliver the Review.

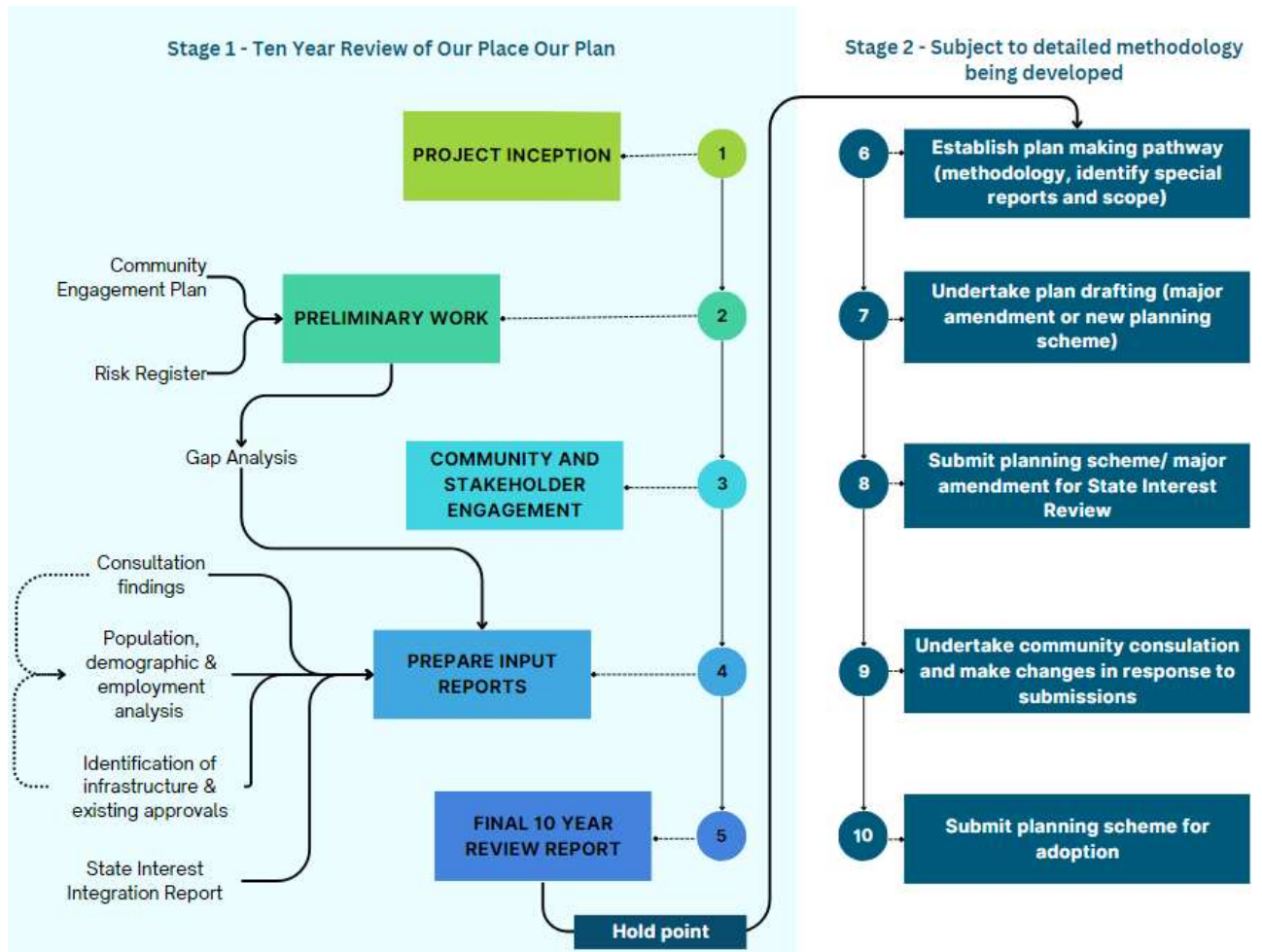


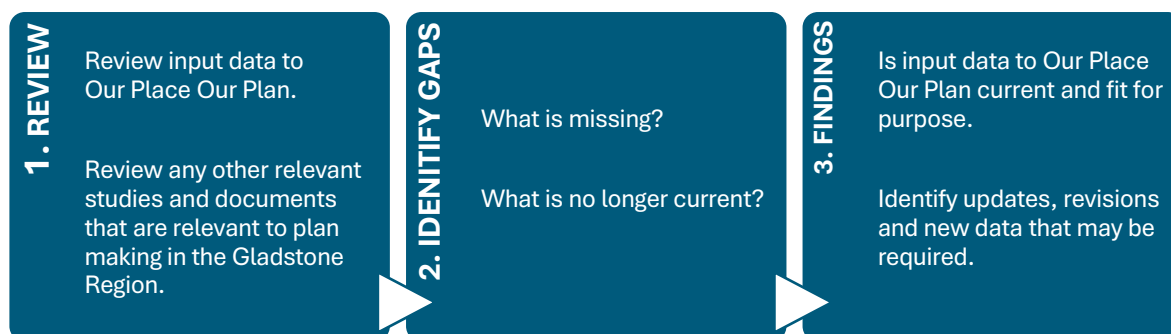
Figure 1: Methodology

Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 of this document outline the key inputs of the Review. Section 7 outlines the Review findings and provides recommendations to respond to key findings to improve planning policy for the Gladstone Region.

3.0 GAP ANALYSIS: LITERATURE AND POLICY REVIEW

A gap analysis was undertaken to:

1. Review the studies and technical documents that are relevant to planning and development in the Gladstone LGA. This includes documents that were considered in the drafting of the planning scheme as well as documents that may be relevant and were not considered at the time of drafting. These studies and technical documents are not limited to work completed by Gladstone Regional Council (GRC) but also other agencies and organisations.
2. Consider the value, suitability and useability of all background documentation and identify any gaps that will need to be addressed in the drafting of a new planning scheme or major amendment. This information will be essential in scoping the plan making pathway and the specialist reports that will be necessary. The currency of studies and technical reports that were considered in the development of Our Place Our Plan will be determined. This will assist in establishing if the planning scheme remains contemporary, responsive, and relevant to informing and guiding the future of the LGA.
3. Identify the updates, revisions and data that is now available and when they should be applied by providing a recommendation for each document that has been reviewed as part of the gap analysis. These findings and recommendations contribute to the ultimate recommendation put forward as part of this Review.



Key findings and recommendations from the Gap Analysis are summarised below. These findings should be considered as part of any amendment or replacement of the planning scheme.



Housing Supply

It is recommended that:

- The residential land analysis completed as part of the background study and mapping prepared by Norling Consulting and Map and Data Co be considered.
- The workforce accommodation land use as defined by the Regulation is incorporated.
- A workforce accommodation development code be incorporated.
- Specific area studies are undertaken.
- Applications/approvals in the Kirkwood Road Structure Plan area are reviewed.
- Structure plans are reviewed and amended.
- The most recent Census data is utilised to inform supporting reports. This includes the ongoing LGIP review and any additional infrastructure studies undertaken to address the planned and projected influx of renewable energy projects.

- The Economic Transition Roadmap – 10 Year Roadmap 2022-2032 and Local Housing Action Plan (2024) prepared by Gladstone Regional Council are considered to ensure the planning scheme:
 - Reflects current market, growth and demographic trends
 - Includes an appropriate supply and balance of industrial zoned land
 - Encourages a mix of housing and lot typologies within the low-density residential zone, low-medium density residential zone, and medium density residential zone.



Infrastructure

It is recommended that:

- Each document informing the current planning scheme is reviewed as part of Council's ongoing review of the LGIP.
- An updated LGIP is prepared to ensure appropriate infrastructure is available.
- The latest design standards are called up by assessment benchmarks.



Environment

It is recommended that:

- The recommendations identified within the Landscape Assessment and Building Height Strategy (2011) are embedded in the planning scheme.
- A review of the scenic amenity is undertaken to determine its effectiveness, if any impact has occurred within the overlay area, and if any emerging areas of scenic amenity should be included.
- Building height outcomes are reviewed to ensure a mix of accommodation typologies can be appropriately provided that respond to their location and any significant areas of scenic amenity.



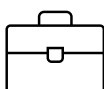
Social

- The Open Space and Recreation Plan (issued June 2006) considered by the current planning scheme was a 5-10 year plan for the Region's open space, recreation and sporting areas that is now outdated.
- A review of this plan should be undertaken as part of Council's ongoing review of the LGIP.
- Any amendment or replacement of the planning scheme will require an updated LGIP to ensure appropriate infrastructure is available.



Natural Hazards

- The current planning scheme considered the following flood studies:
 - Auckland Creek Flood Study
 - Calliope River Flood Risk Assessment Study
 - Awoonga Dam, Boyne River, Dam Break and Flood Modelling Study
 - Concept Flood Storage and Conveyancing Improvement Assessment at Agnes Water
- Given the age of these documents, it is unlikely that they meet the current SPP expectations for a local government wide fit for purpose risk assessment.
- Council has adopted 2019 flood studies for both Baffle Creek and Auckland Creek.
- Council has adopted the Our Coast Our Future – Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy.
- New bushfire mapping has been published in the SPP integrated mapping system (and further revisions are anticipated shortly).
- It is recommended that these recently adopted documents and mapping are considered as part of a more comprehensive risk assessment consistent with current SPP expectations, and to provide updated hazard overlay mapping and address.



Commercial

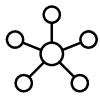
- The key retail studies considered by the current planning scheme are based on outdated population projection data.

- The population, employment and land supply study prepared by Norling Consulting has identified that there is insufficient land located within the centre zones and the expansion of the existing major centres is heavily constrained.
- It is recommended that a new Retail and Commercial Strategy be completed as part of any amendment or replacement of the planning scheme to identify suitable locations for Local and District Centre zoned land.



Industry

- The Industrial Land Strategy considered by the current planning scheme is based on outdated population and land occupancy data and did not consider the Queensland Government's initiative to reduce emissions to 75% below 2005 levels by 2035.
- A new Industrial Land Strategy should be undertaken as part of any amendment or replacement of the planning scheme to ensure appropriate land is available for the balance of industrial zoned land and the expansion of the renewable energy industry.



Other

- It is recommended that the revised State mapping layer for agricultural land classes and stock route network is incorporated into any amendment or replacement of the planning scheme.

A copy of the Gap Analysis is provided at **Appendix A**.

4.0 POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT, INDUSTRY AND CENTRES REVIEW

Council engaged Norling Consulting to undertake a population, demographics, employment and land use demand (residential, centres and industrial) analysis (the Analysis) for the Gladstone Region. The Analysis investigated population, demographic, employment, residential, centres and industrial assumptions that underpinned the planning scheme. It also provides population and employment projections and examines future demand for residential dwellings, retail floorspace and industrial land.

The Analysis is structured as follows:

- Population - describes the population, historic population growth, projected population growth, trends and characteristics of the community (non-resident workers) and implications.
- Demographics – looks at the demographic profile on which the planning scheme was based, 2021 census demographics and demographic changes over time.
- Employment – provides an overview of the Regions employment profile, key drivers influencing economic growth, employment projections and implications.
- Residential land supply analysis – provides an overview of the existing dwelling types and housing markets trends, building approvals, projected dwelling demand, vacant residential lots and concluding whether there is sufficient supply of residential land to support the future population.
- Centres – identifies retail centres and their function, projected retail demand and vacant centre lands.
- Industry - identifies and describes industrial activity in the region, projected demand for industrial land and existing industrial land.

A copy of the Analysis is provided at **Appendix B**.

4.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REVIEW

Trends/opportunities identified within the Analysis which the planning scheme may influence or need to respond to are outlined below:



Population growth

The Analysis adopts a 2046 population of 83,300 persons, which closely approximates with the latest Queensland Government Statisticians Office high series projection. As this population projection is well below the 2031 projection underpinning the planning scheme, there is a presumption that the local government area should be able to accommodate population growth to well beyond 2046.

The Region's population growth should be matched by adequate housing supply to fulfil the needs of the growing population. The Analysis projects a need for an additional 8,700 residential dwellings in the Region, which represents only approximately one-third of the current capacity of 27,400 residential dwellings.

The anticipated growth in the Agnes Water – Miriam Vale Area, while able to be accommodated, requires more specific consideration to ensure it is meeting community needs and expectations

While the Analysis found that there is sufficient residential zoned land in the Region to support the predicted population growth, careful monitoring is recommended to ensure supply is sustainably managed and adequately reflects changing consumer preferences (types of housing, amenity, affordability).



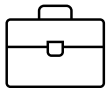
Demographic change

Demographic changes which have occurred since the adoption of the planning scheme are generally consistent with current trends. Due to a strong industrial influence, the Region generally has a higher number of younger, blue-collar residents who predominantly live in detached dwellings and earn slightly below average household incomes. The proportion of blue-collar workers has increased slightly since planning scheme adoption, with the proportion of workers in health care, social assistance, and education and training increasing significantly over the past decade. To ensure the Region remains an attractive place to live, it will need to meet the housing preferences of existing and new residents. Improvement in the employment, training and entertainment opportunities offered within the Region will be critical to retain young adults and attract families.



Housing choice and affordability

The majority of dwellings in Gladstone Region are detached dwelling houses and this trend is likely to continue (Norling Consulting, p42). As occurred in many other parts of Queensland, residential market activity in the Region increased significantly during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, with larger volumes of sales and significant price escalations. Coupled with the strengthening resources sector in Central Queensland, this increased market activity has resulted in an average dwelling price increase of approximately 45% since the commencement of the pandemic. Household incomes have increased slightly over the decade but fell significantly behind the growth obtained by the Queensland average, creating greater demand for more affordable housing (Norling Consulting, p23).



Drivers of employment

Economic activity is a major driver of growth through job creation and activity. Gladstone's employment is currently dominated by manufacturing (15%, 2.5 times the state average), construction (11%, which is 12% above the State average), health care and social services (10%, which is 36% below the State average), and retail trade (10%), education and training (9%), transport, postal and warehousing (9%, which is 72% above the State average) and accommodation and food (8%).

The industry sectors projected to obtain the greatest increase in jobs in the Region over the 25-year projection period are expected to comprise:

- Health care and social assistance (15%)
- Accommodation and food services (13%)
- Manufacturing (12%)
- Education and training (11%)
- Construction (10%)

In the 2021 to 2046 25-year period, the Analysis predicts an increase of approximately 9,500 jobs in the Region. This growth will require an additional land area of approximately 260ha, of which the major component should comprise industrial lands of 200ha. The current vacancy of land in the Region is more than 18,000ha and therefore, is considered sufficient.

However, there is the potential for a significant number of renewable energy projects (such as solar and/or wind farms) to establish in the region to support emerging industries which may absorb a large portion of this land. The provision of vacant low impact industry and commercial land is also particularly low.



Technology

Technology will play an increasingly important role in the growth of the economy, including advancements the provision of aged care/health (e.g. telehealth) and education, improved building automation systems and the use of robotics in construction delivery. It will also have

significant impacts on previously dominant sectors of the economy, reshaping retail, offices and other services.

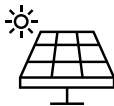
Technology is increasingly enabling businesses and employees to become mobile, with a growing ability for people to choose their work location based on “qualities of place.” Lifestyle localities within the Region such as Agnes Water offer the opportunity for people to work remotely and still be connected. It is often difficult to plan for technological change.



COVID-19

Long term impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic including health, working arrangements, consumer and business confidence, willingness to travel by air and urbanisation/decentralisation need to be considered. COVID-19 has seen increased numbers of people working/learning remotely and this may result in higher levels of migration. The impacts of such changes on demand for retail and office space are also likely to have an influence on the role of centres in the future.

The Analysis indicates that there is likely to be insufficient centre zoned land to accommodate projected demand to 2046.



Renewable Energy

Significant volumes of renewable energy (such as solar and/or wind farms) are required proximate to the Gladstone Region to underpin the major new energy and industrial projects proposed for the Region (including green hydrogen production). These renewable energy projects need to be sufficiently close to the electricity grid supplying Gladstone with its power. Should these renewable energy projects occupy industrial lands within the Gladstone Region, there is the potential for them to absorb a substantial amount of land without contributing to significant employment growth.

It is understood that Economic Development Queensland is aware of this issue and is actively resisting the release of further land to produce renewable energy. Further work is required to identify suitable land in suitable locations for this type of development and mitigate potential land interface issues.



Lifestyle changes

Preserving and enhancing access to the coast, leafy neighbourhoods, regional landscapes, environmental quality, community facilities and waterways will be critical to protecting the livability of the Region.

The trend for new residents to locate in coastal areas, such as Agnes Water and Seventeen Seventy is expected to continue into the future.

5.0 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Community and stakeholder engagement for the project was carried out between November 2023 to March 2024. The engagement process provided an opportunity to:

- Gain insight into the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the planning scheme and any areas for improvement.
- Gain an understanding of community sentiment regarding the operation of the planning scheme in terms of on the ground development outcomes and key land use planning issues that are important to industry and the community.

This level of engagement was considered most appropriate at this stage as it:

- Enabled project transparency.
- Provided opportunities to discuss what the project involves, answer questions, and actively engaged with the key stakeholders and the wider community.
- Created opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback and local knowledge to inform and shape project outcomes.

The process was delivered in two (2) distinct stages, targeting two (2) stakeholder groups. The first stage involved engagement with industry and business stakeholders, as well as identified public sector entities (industry stakeholders). The second stage involved engagement with the wider community (community stakeholders). The engagement process included a variety of communication and engagement activities facilitated through online, targeted and in-person platforms. Several communication tools were used to promote engagement activities including social media posts, Council’s website and targeted emails. Engagement activities included:

- Interviews with identified stakeholders.
- Drop-in sessions held at Calliope, Gladstone and Agnes Water.
- A project briefing for industry stakeholders.
- An online industry stakeholder survey.
- A dedicated project page on Council’s website.
- Calls and emails to identified stakeholders.
- Social media posts on Council’s Facebook and LinkedIn pages.
- A community survey, which could be accessed:
 - Online via Council’s project webpage.
 - Hard copy at Council offices or Rural Transaction Centres.

A total of **2,130** interactions were recorded against all engagement platforms (**Figure 2**). A copy of the Project Engagement Summary report is provided at **Appendix C**.

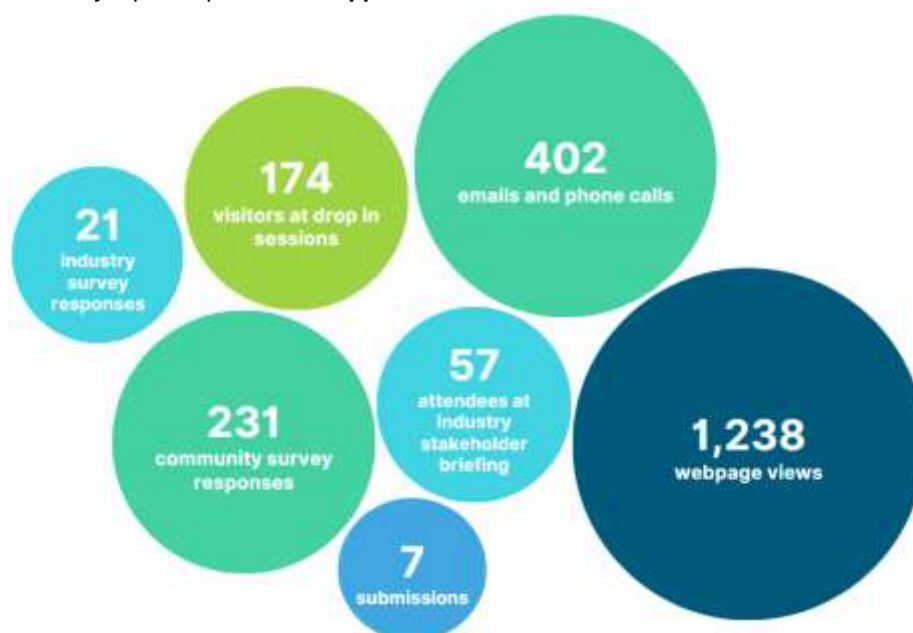


Figure 2: Platform interactions

5.1 INDUSTRY FEEDBACK

Industry stakeholder engagement was delivered from 28 November 2023 to 24 January 2024 and included the following activities:

- A project-specific webpage scope, timeline, and frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- Interviews with select industry stakeholders.
- An online survey.
- Phone calls and emails.
- An in-person industry briefing.

The overall sentiment from Industry stakeholders indicates that the planning scheme is sound in its operation but could be more effective in several ways. Key areas for improvement emerging from industry feedback are summarised below:



Review current land use zoning mix

- Zoning should be updated to reflect local context and preliminary approvals/ residential subdivisions.
- Some land uses are difficult to establish in the Region.
- Need for more ‘smaller’ industrial lots.



Review levels of assessment for certain uses and aspects of development

- Over-regulation of smaller developments (dwelling houses etc.).
- Triggers requiring impact assessment for Reconfiguring a lot applications require review.
- Review of land uses that are accepted or code assessable development in each zone.



Provide greater support for the growth of local business and economy

- Greater support and flexibility for local business seeking to increase in size or capacity.



Ensure greater consistency and clarity of planning scheme requirements and assessment benchmarks

- Removal of planning scheme ‘grey’ areas.
- Clearer line of sight between acceptable outcomes and performance outcomes and more clarity around the policy position that they relate to.



Manage transition to renewable energy

- Managing the social and environmental impacts (i.e. housing market (availability and affordability) and environmental protection).
- Ensuring that the cultural rights of traditional owners are protected.



Reflect the importance of neighbourhood level planning and protecting the natural environment

- Good development should have little to no impact on the natural environment.
- Desire for natural corridors for wildlife movement.
- Desire for a ‘village feel’ where people can live and work in the same area.
- Need for housing diversity and affordability and active transport options.

5.2 COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Community stakeholder engagement was delivered from 25 January 2024 to 1 March 2024 and included the following activities:

- Three (3) drop-in events were held in Calliope, Gladstone Central and Agnes Water between the 9 – 11 February.
- An online community survey available on Council’s project Conversations webpage from Thursday 25 January to Friday 1 March 2024.
- Meetings with key community groups (where requested).

Key themes that emerged from analysis of community feedback include:



Functionality

- Need to make the planning scheme easier to access, understand and use.
- The “one size fits all” approach is not effective for towns and communities outside of the Gladstone urban extent. The importance of the assessment tools being locally relevant (both at a regional and town/neighbourhood level) was consistently raised.



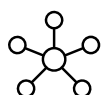
Use thresholds

- Need to implement thresholds to identify capacity, intensity and impact for uses in specific localities, particularly as not all land uses will impact all areas in the same way.



Values and suggestions

- Strong desire for the planning scheme to:
 - Protect the natural environment.
 - Support the efficient planning and delivery of infrastructure. Facilitate greater housing choice and diversity.
 - Be locally relevant (both at a regional and neighbourhood level). Preparing local area plans or localised assessment benchmarks for key localities or areas with specific or significant character (e.g. neighbourhood character, escarpment/slope, rural areas, emerging communities, etc.) was identified as a valuable planning tool to encourage the most appropriate types and forms of development.
 - Support the creation of employment opportunities.



Other

- Gap between expectations and perceived current state of the built and natural environment.

It is important to note that most participants at the Agnes Water drop-in session were from Agnes Water or 1770. As a result, overall community feedback may be heavily influenced by residents of these localities.

5.3 INTERNAL COUNCIL FEEDBACK

Internal stakeholders within Council, who influence or are influenced by, and/or who interact with the planning scheme, were asked to review those aspects of the planning scheme they currently work with to identify key issues. The internal Council feedback considered the following:

- The strength of the strategic framework and its alignment through the planning scheme.
- Core and other key issues identified by several Branches within Council that influence and/or interact with the planning scheme.
- Key findings from a review of development assessment issues with respect to development outcomes and operational issues.
- Key legal proceedings from the commencement of the planning scheme and the implications of these.

A key finding from the consultation was that the planning scheme functions well but most participants supported moderate change to the planning scheme.

Positive feedback on the current planning scheme included:



Functionality

- Planning scheme is clear, uses simple language and is well laid out. The structure of the document is well received with the strategic framework providing the big picture and the later sections breaking down the information to key policy areas.
- Purpose statements are working effectively.
- Good checks and balances that help prevent unwanted development e.g. industry in a residential area.
- Low density residential zone code reverts to the Queensland Development Code (QDC) for setback requirements, removing duplication.
- The principal centre zone facilitates a variety of development and the reutilisation of existing buildings – ‘accepted development with no requirements.’
- Approvals and refusals generally align with planning scheme intent and strategic outcomes.
- Appeals are generally concerned with enforcement matters rather than development approval decisions.



Flexibility

- Reconfiguring a lot and residential zone codes (medium density residential zone code and low-medium density residential zone code) operate well and provide an appropriate level of flexibility.
- Low density residential zone code and medium density residential zone code do not restrict GFA, only height. This often results in good design outcomes.
- Reduced regulation in the industry zone encourages development and creates greater certainty for applicants.

Feedback for planning scheme improvement is summarised below:



Functionality

- Some planning scheme policies (PSPs) seek to regulate development (i.e. central business district PSP and non-resident worker accommodation PSP). Assessment benchmarks within PSPs should be removed and considered for incorporation within codes in the planning scheme.
- Parking rates are difficult to locate within the planning scheme.



Clarity and interpretation

- Acceptable outcomes are not always relevant to the corresponding performance outcomes and it is often difficult to determine what acceptable outcomes apply to a development. Improve the clarity and strength of performance outcomes and their

relationship with acceptable outcomes so the policy position underpinning them can be easily identified.

- Assessment benchmarks should deal with single specific elements, not try to address several things.
- There is confusion around the role of the flood hazard planning scheme policy. Provide additional guidance on how to use PSPs to inform development.
- It is unclear how structure plans connect to the rest of the planning scheme.
- Consider reviewing how structure plans are addressed.
- The boundary relaxation and amenity policy may be over complicating development assessment. Consider reviewing how the planning scheme relates to building matters and remove duplication.
- Consider reviewing and updating car parking rates.



Review and refine tables of assessment

- Tables of assessment are not always clear or user friendly and require a detailed reviewed to ensure they are practical and functioning effectively. Priorities should include tables of assessment for:
 - building work;
 - operational work (vegetation clearing);
 - overlays (i.e. dwelling houses are triggering assessment in the biodiversity overlay); and
 - reconfiguring a lot (i.e. triggers for impact assessment).
- Development which is “accepted subject to requirements” needs to be revised.



Review overlays assessment triggers and mapping

- Need to update hazard overlay mapping as this has been superseded by new state mapping.
- Overlays (i.e. flood investigation, steep land and biodiversity) may unnecessarily trigger development assessment for dwelling houses. Consider incorporating more practical requirements for houses to comply.
- The flood investigation area is overly extensive (particularly in Agnes Water where even the headland is included in the overlay).



Zoning

- Investigation is required to confirm the outcomes sought for rural and industrial zones and uses.
- Mixed use zone is not operating effectively. Many lots within the zone are being utilised for residential purposes with no desire to embrace Mixed use zoning. Review location, functioning and purpose of Mixed use zone.
- The principal centre zone facilitates a variety of development and the reutilisation of existing buildings – ‘accepted development with no requirements.’ This results in some issues i.e. a carport can be converted to a bar as ‘accepted development with no requirements.’ Generally low risk.
- Some of the industrial investigation zone is heavily vegetated and subject to flooding. Consider review and revision to ensure zoning is appropriate.



Over regulation of residential development

- Dwelling houses are overregulated. Approval process needs to be streamlined and made simpler to enhance useability.
- The planning scheme currently includes an amenity and aesthetics resolution as well as scheme provisions which vary the QDC. Consider rationalising provisions or reverting to QDC requirements.
- Planning scheme should encourage more multiple dwelling developments, density and variety in the CBD.
- Planning scheme needs to recognise housing preferences within the Region. Smaller lots (<450m²) are not in high demand. Consider alternative pathways to provide housing

density and diversity e.g. facilitating the development of secondary dwellings and multiple dwellings rather than the creation of small lots.

- Greenfield areas should be master planned to achieve a diversity in lot sizes and housing design. Reducing lots to 300m² will not be supported by the community and are unlikely to sell.



Addressing emerging industries

- Investigate emerging uses and consider more generally how the planning scheme could appropriately deal with these uses in the future.
- More guidance is required for renewable energy projects e.g. solar farms. Triggers based on the scale of the facility are required.
- Provisions for 'hip camps' are required as this is currently resulting in compliance issues.



Other

- The reconfiguring a lot code requires review (lot sizes).
- Consider liaising with EDQ to ensure State developments are reflective of Council's planning scheme requirements (i.e. street widths).
- The advertising device code includes accepted provisions that are hard to meet. Consider regulating advertising devices under a local law.
- Use thresholds identifying capacity, intensity and impact need to be considered for some localities, particularly as not all land uses will impact all areas in the same way.
- Interaction and relationships with other legislation, including local laws, should be reviewed to reduce duplication and the amount of regulation in the planning scheme.

5.4 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Findings from engagement activities indicate there is a diverse range of opinions amongst community and industry stakeholders regarding the efficacy of the planning scheme. A high portion of people who participated in the engagement process encountered challenges when using the planning scheme, suggesting that user experience does not align with expectations.

Overall, the sentiment from engagement activities indicates that:

1. The planning scheme is adequate but could be improved.
2. There is a gap between expectations and perceived current state of the built and natural environment.
3. There is a desire for a change in the way the planning scheme is written and applied, so that it aligns more closely with the needs, expectations and values of both the community and industry.

Opportunities for the planning scheme identified through engagement activities include:

- Maintain simplicity and keep clarity in strategic framework and purpose statements.
- Improve/streamline how dwelling houses are assessed. Establish a position on whether to vary QDC provisions and remove unnecessary overlay triggers.
- Improve community understanding of how the planning scheme works.
- Improve operation of overlays.
- Continue to emphasise protection of the environment.
- Bring all intended assessment benchmarks into planning scheme (and remove reliance on PSPs provisions).
- Improve clarity and operation of tables of assessment and codes generally. Explore opportunity under *Planning Act 2016* (now QPP has fallen away) to modify the function of codes and assessment benchmarks.

6.0 STATE PLANNING REVIEW

6.1 ALIGNMENT WITH STATE PLANNING POLICY AND CENTRAL QUEENSLAND REGIONAL PLAN

A State Interest Integration Report (**Appendix D**) has been prepared to:

- Identify areas where the planning scheme may not integrate the current state interests or the Regional Plan.
- Determine the scope of work required to appropriately integrate State interests and the Regional Plan.
- Inform the ten year review of the planning scheme in accordance with s25 of the *Planning Act 2016*.

Overall, the report demonstrates that there is good alignment between the planning scheme and the latest version of the SPP (2017). However, mapping and content improvements to the current planning scheme are required to update and fully integrate all State Planning Policy state interests. Further, there is a need to improve the information base on which the planning scheme relies (through updating existing studies and mapping and preparing new studies) so that the quality of, and confidence in, the planning scheme is high.

The priority outcomes of the Regional Plan are largely reflected within the planning scheme. An opportunity exists to update the strategic framework, water resource catchment overlay code and regional infrastructure overlay code to promote appropriate security and reliability of water supplies. **Table 2** provides summary of the extent to which the planning scheme is aligned with or requires updating to properly integrate with the current SPP requirements.

Table 1: Planning Scheme Alignment with Current State Planning Policy

STATE INTEREST	STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK	SCHEME PROVISIONS	SCHEME MAPPING
Housing Supply & Diversity			N/A
Liveable Communities			N/A
Agriculture			
Development & Construction			N/A
Mining & Extractive Resources			
Tourism			N/A
Biodiversity			
Coastal Environment			
Cultural Heritage			
Water Quality			
Emissions & Hazardous activities			
Natural Hazards, Risk & Resilience			
Energy & Water Supply			
Infrastructure Integration			
Transport Infrastructure			
Strategic Airports & Aviation Facilities			
Strategic Ports			
Regional Plan			
Aligned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planning scheme is aligned with the state interest/regional plan element and there are no gaps in information • Only requires minor edits to update grammar/references 		
Generally aligned, requiring updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planning scheme is only partially aligned in some sections of the state interest /Regional Plan element and there are some gaps in information, or there is general alignment, but there is a need to update the evidence base and incorporate new opportunities or directions • Requires moderate edits/updates to information 		
Not Aligned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planning scheme is not aligned with/accurately reflects the State Planning Policy/ Regional Plan elements • Requires significant edits/creation of new scheme provisions • Significant gaps in information 		

7.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the Review is to identify issues that are impacting on the planning scheme's ability to effectively regulate the use and development of land within the Gladstone Region. The Review synthesises a comprehensive body of work, collected from a diverse range of stakeholders and technical experts and documented in **Appendices A – D**. These reports contain a broad range of comments from high level strategic statements to detailed issue specific statements. The Review found that the current planning scheme:

- Is generally operating effectively as a planning instrument.
- Is not significantly out of date.
- Generally aligns with Council's current policy positions.

The Review also found that the planning scheme would benefit from changes to:

- Strengthen alignment with more recent local and state policy.
- Update various mapping layers.
- Address information gaps and emerging issues.

The key findings from the Review are summarised below. These findings have been fundamental in informing a final recommendation - whether to amend or replace the planning scheme.

7.1 POLICY FRAMEWORK

Finding 1: The strategic intent of the planning scheme needs to be strengthened and updated to reflect emerging trends and issues to remain contemporary and effective.

- There are opportunities to improve on the clarity of the policy line of sight through the planning scheme.
- The strategic intent needs to be updated to address changes that have occurred within the Region since the planning scheme was adopted almost 9 years ago, including incorporation of the outcomes and recommendations identified in strategic documents prepared by Council since the planning scheme was adopted.
- Several initiatives at a State level have not been incorporated into the planning scheme. There are opportunities for improving alignment with the SPP across most policy areas, with the key areas of focus being Natural Hazards, Risks and Resilience and Biodiversity.

Finding 2: The policies and strategies in the planning scheme should be updated to respond to emerging economic trends (opportunities/impacts) including:

- Advancements in key industry sectors including health care and social services, accommodation and food services, manufacturing, education and training and construction.
- Opportunities created by key infrastructure projects including the Fitzroy to Gladstone Water Pipeline, Gladstone Heavy Vehicle and Oversize Overmass Load Transport Corridor, Inland Rail Extension to the Port of Gladstone, Harvey Road Sports and Events Precinct. This infrastructure has the potential to significantly facilitate development within the Region and affect future land use and development.
- Long term implications of COVID-19 including health, hybrid working arrangements, consumer and business confidence, urbanisation vs decentralisation will need to be considered. COVID-19 has seen increased numbers of people engaged in remote working/learning and this may result in more people relocating outside of major cities.

Finding 3: Policies and strategies within the planning scheme need to align with community values.

The following community values should be reinforced within the planning scheme:

- Protection of natural assets.
- Climate sensitive design.
- Liveability and lifestyle.
- Sense of community.
- Connectivity and access to services.

- Affordable housing / living.
- Neighbourhood character and amenity.
- Community identity (town/suburb/street character, rural context/setting, role and function of the local towns/ suburb/street, urban design).
- Employment opportunities.

Finding 4: Policies and strategies within the planning scheme in relation to the natural environment should be strengthened.

- Investigate opportunities to of define and map Matters of Local Environmental Significance (MLES).
- Incorporate the latest MSES layers within planning scheme mapping.
- Ensure combined mapping is meaningful and supported by well-considered assessment benchmarks for new development in or near these values.
- Consider opportunities to establish corridors that serve both an environmental/open space and transport function.
- Consider developing a biodiversity areas planning scheme policy to identify source data (if MSES/MLES mapping layers are combined) as well as to set out the nature and extent of ecological investigations that may be appropriate to address the assessment benchmarks.
- Consider the establishment of a local environmental offsets policy.
- Establish clear guidance on addressing issues of conflict between the natural and built environment.
- Avoid duplicating matters that are already subject to State assessment.

Finding 5: Policies and strategies within the planning scheme in relation to the built environment should be further developed.

- Explore opportunity to undertake new Region-wide design investigations to establish a clear and consistent direction on the desired built form and public realm outcomes in each zone or relevant part of the Region.
- Planning scheme provisions applying to small rural communities compared to those applying to Gladstone City should be identifiably different (less complex and locality specific).
- Prepare revised high level structure plans for new neighbourhoods in Gladstone, Boyne Island, Tannum Sands, Calliope and Agnes Water to aid in the logical and sequential development of land and efficient use of future infrastructure.
- Investigate opportunities to provide finer grain planning for Agnes Water and 1770 to address constraints and opportunities for development and community expectations around land use and development outcomes and character attributes.
- Establish a clear vision for urban form (framework) and further refine approach to urban design and place making requirements. This could be achieved by ensuring higher-level strategic outcomes in the structure plans are more effectively reflected in the performance outcomes and acceptable outcomes of the various zone codes and use codes.
- Clearly articulate the attributes that are important to sense of place and ownership values within the community which need to be protected or reinforced (and how).
- Support and align development of a scale that advances the role of centres and the efficient utilisation of established infrastructure in well-served locations.

Finding 6: Updates are required to appropriately address water security issues.

- Establish a plan for development that facilitates the long term security of water within the Region, both in terms of the quantity (amount of water available and level of use) and quality (including enhancement through means such as water sensitive urban design and potential deterioration of quality as a result of development within catchment areas) of the water supply. Noting that Gladstone Area Water Board are key stakeholders and maintain control over bulk raw water storage and supply.

7.2 WORKABILITY

Finding 7: planning scheme policies should be reviewed to ensure they do not regulate development (e.g. include assessment benchmarks).

- Transfer all provisions of a regulatory nature into appropriate codes.

Finding 8: Opportunities exist to create greater clarity and consistency of interpretation in relation to assessment benchmarks.

- Ensure that assessment benchmarks are fit for purpose.
- Ensure clarity and consistency in the use of terminology and language.
- Ensure alignment between performance outcomes and acceptable outcomes.
- Performance outcomes and acceptable outcomes should be appropriately drafted (each should address one issue only) and acceptable outcomes should be measurable.
- Use graphics throughout the Planning scheme in support of text.
- Make wider use of administrative definitions.
- Support the planning scheme through the use of guidelines, checklists, explanatory notes, etc.
- Incorporate strategic framework content in codes to ensure their applicability to code assessable development.

Finding 9: As the structure of the planning scheme is no longer dictated by the Queensland Planning Provisions (QPP) consideration should be given to changes that would benefit its use and function.

- No specific changes were identified in feedback, however, this matter is considered worthy of exploration. In particular, there are opportunities for refinement of the interpretation rules in part 1.5 (the hierarchy of provisions) and 5.3 (reading assessment tables and how to comply with codes) which could support more concise drafting and more effective operation of the planning scheme.

Finding 10: Remove unnecessary duplication/repetition.

- There are several planning provisions relating to built form. Consider how the planning scheme relates to building matters and consider rationalising provisions or reverting to Queensland Development Code (QDC) requirements to remove duplication.
- Review interaction and relationship with other legislation, including local laws, to reduce repetition and the amount of regulation in the planning scheme.
- Consider whether some forms of development can be better regulated through referral agency advice. This may reduce regulation, preventing development from requiring separate development approval under the planning scheme.

Finding 11: The planning scheme should be supported by education / information mechanisms to assist users and the general community in interpreting and understand the outcomes it is seeking to achieve and how it works.

- Flow charts, information sheets, informative videos, fact sheets, practice notes, etc. could be developed and communicated via Councils various media platforms.

Finding 12: Opportunity to improve/streamline the assessment of dwellings under the planning scheme (removing unnecessary or excessive assessment triggers).

- Consider alternative pathways to provide housing density and diversity e.g. facilitating the development of secondary dwellings and multiple dwellings rather than the creation of small lots.
- Overlays (i.e. natural hazards and biodiversity) may unnecessarily trigger development assessment for dwelling houses. Consider incorporating more practical requirements for houses to comply.

7.3 PLANNING SCHEME ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

Finding 13: Undertake a detailed review of tables of assessment to ensure they are practical and functioning effectively.

- Review priorities should include tables of assessment for:
 - building work;
 - operational work (vegetation clearing);
 - overlays (i.e. dwelling houses are triggering assessment in the biodiversity overlay); and
 - reconfiguring a lot (i.e. triggers for impact assessment).
- Development which is “accepted subject to requirements” needs to be revised.

Finding 14: The flood investigation area overlay requires review to reduce its extent.

- The flood investigation area covers a large area and this needs to be quantified with actual data to allow for defined flood levels to be incorporated into the Scheme (particularly in Agnes Water where even the headland is included in the overlay).

Finding 15: Consider how the planning scheme should reflect variation approvals.

- Variation approvals are currently listed in a schedule to the planning scheme (statutory requirement). They might also be mapped to assist in their identification.
- Consider whether the underlying zoning of land subject to a variation approval should be changed to align with the variation approval.

Finding 16: Review location, functioning and purpose of mixed use zone.

- The mixed use zone is not operating as intended.
- Many lots within the zone are being utilised for residential purposes with no desire to embrace Mixed use zoning.
- Potential to reevaluate extent and location of mixed use zone.

Finding 17: Review the extent and location of industrial investigation zone.

- Some of the land included within the industrial investigation zone is heavily vegetated and subject to flooding.
- Consider review and revision to ensure zoning is appropriate.

Finding 18: Prepare non-resident workforce accommodation code

- review the current non-resident workers accommodation planning scheme policy and utilise to prepare a non-resident workforce accommodation code to regularise the use and ensure the standard of development is consistent with Council’s vision and expectations for the LGA and does not detrimentally affect any nearby sensitive uses.

Finding 19: Consider regulating advertising devices under a local law.

- The advertising device code includes accepted provisions that are hard to meet.
- Consider regulating advertising devices under a local law instead of via the planning scheme.

Finding 20: Consider how the planning scheme regulates renewable energy facilities.

- Further investigation and consideration of renewable energy uses is required throughout the planning scheme to ensure well designed outcomes are delivered.
- Consider addressing the role of renewable energy production and battery storage within the strategic framework.
- Review level of assessment for renewable energy facilities.
- Update planning scheme definitions to include Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and consider appropriate level of assessment for the use.
- The Gladstone Region’s role in the emerging fields such as Queensland's hydrogen economy and defence should be identified and appropriately integrated in the planning scheme.

- Consider adding use specific assessment benchmarks for renewable energy facilities to the rural zone code to better regulate this form of development. In drafting these provisions, consideration should be given to *Solar Farm: Guidance for local government in plan making (2020)* prepared by the State Government.

Finding 21: Undertake further work to promote the delivery of development in accessible and well-serviced locations that maximise the use of existing infrastructure capacity.

- Review planning scheme to identify any policy gaps which could result in the under-development of urban land.
- Identifying long-term (to 2050) infrastructure corridors within planning scheme mapping to protect the integrity of existing and approved future infrastructure locations from incompatible development.

Finding 22: Review planning scheme to safeguard the safety and efficiency of the existing and future transport network.

- Review planning scheme to reflect the outcomes of the Gladstone Regional Council Transport Strategy 2022 as well as the outcomes of the Access and Inclusion Action Plan currently being drafted by Council. The following resources may also assist in drafting:
- Prepare standardised assessment benchmarks for the design of road and street networks.

7.4 OTHER

Finding 23: There is a range of strategically/detail focused work that should be undertaken to better inform the content of the planning scheme.

- Undertake Region-wide built form and public realm investigations.
- Plan to guide future growth and the management of growth.
- Consider undertaking a local study of non-urban land values to identify agricultural areas and rural activity clusters or opportunities of local importance that may be worthy of planning scheme policy responses.
- Further engagement with First Nations people is recommended to determine how best to consider matters of Aboriginal cultural heritage and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage and other relevant matters in any amended or new planning scheme.
- Differentiate between types of heritage places (i.e. State vs local) to assist in ensuring the planning scheme does not duplicate state assessment matters (triggered by schedule 10 of the Planning Regulation and SDAP).
- Flood studies are currently being prepared for Auckland Creek and Baffle Creek. Consider undertaking an additional flood study for the Calliope River and Agnes Water.

Finding 24: Further evaluation of industrial land supply is required.

- The Gladstone Region has a sufficient supply of industrial lands to last for many decades however, the provision of vacant low impact industry land is particularly low.
- Consider preparing a new industrial land strategy to ensure an appropriate supply of industrial zoned land to provide for the expansion of the renewable energy industry and low impact industry uses (particularly within the Gladstone Urban Area).

Finding 25: Consider preparing a new housing needs assessment and housing strategy.

- Prepare a new housing needs assessment and housing strategy to ensure the planning scheme promotes and provides for affordable and diverse housing options in accessible and well-serviced locations.
- Identify planning scheme measures that have the greatest effect on land and housing costs and make any necessary adjustments (e.g. lot sizes, civil works standards, infrastructure charges, car parking requirements, plot ratios, density standards, etc.).
- It should be drafted with regards to the *Integrating State Interests in planning schemes guideline* (section 2.2.3) and incorporate directions from Gladstone Regional Council's *Local Housing Action Plan 2024* and Queensland Government's *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027* and *Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021 – 2025*, and the State's new *Homes for Queenslanders 2024*.

- Outcomes/ recommendations of the new housing needs assessment and housing strategy should be reflected within the planning theme (i.e. amending levels of assessment, assessment benchmarks and zone codes etc. where required)

Finding 26: Consider preparing a new retail and commercial strategy.

- The Population, Employment and Land Supply Background Study indicates there is insufficient centre zoned land to accommodate projected demand to 2046.
- Consider preparing a new retail and commercial strategy. As part of this strategy, opportunities to further differentiate the planning scheme's centre hierarchy to include district and local centres should be investigated. The benefits of this option should be weighed against any potential risks to ensure the most appropriate outcome is achieved.

Outcomes/ recommendations of the new retail and commercial strategy should be reflected within the planning theme (i.e. amending levels of assessment, assessment benchmarks and zone codes etc. where required)

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The cumulative findings gathered throughout the Review have been fundamental in informing a final recommendation on whether to amend or replace the planning scheme.

On balance, the Review did not identify any fundamental deficiency in the planning scheme that would prevent it from continuing to be applied to the regulation of development however, several changes are necessary to address emerging issues and to maintain currency. These include creating greater consistency with the State Planning Policy (statutory requirement) and improving the information base on which the planning scheme relies (through preparing new studies and updated/ new mapping).

It is acknowledged that there may not be significant time or resource benefits in addressing the identified issues through amendments to the current planning scheme compared to preparing a new planning scheme. Nonetheless, the development outcomes of a new planning scheme are not expected to be significantly different to the current planning scheme and the foundation of the current planning scheme is solid. On this basis, the Review recommends that Council resolve to make a series of amendments to the current planning scheme over several years rather than preparing a new planning scheme. This will ensure the current planning scheme remains contemporary and responsive to local social, economic and environmental matters.

To manage this risk throughout the amendment process, it is important that the Council identify the discrete projects and components of the planning scheme requiring amendment or update that are of most importance to the organisation and the community, and that will make the greatest difference to the value of the planning scheme. It is unlikely sufficient resources and funding will be available to complete all the recommended amendments identified within the Review project (refer **Figure 1**), as such it is recommended Council prioritise a short, medium and long term scheduling of works.

Since the planning scheme was adopted, only one amendment has been made to align the document with the *Planning Act 2016* and associated legislation and rules. The planning scheme is intended to be a living document and needs to be regularly updated to ensure it remains responsive to community, policy, State and Local Government priorities. Council must ensure strategic planning and planning scheme amendments are business as usual and are undertaken regularly to maintain the currency of the planning scheme.

Should Council formally resolve to prepare planning scheme amendments, the next steps in the process are to undertake the necessary background planning work to fill the information gaps and to commence the formal amendment drafting work. Stage 2 (background planning) of the project is intended to coordinate the outcomes of several background studies and projects which will inform future land use planning for the Gladstone Region and identify key directions for planning scheme amendments. The timing and policy direction of planning scheme amendments is heavily dependent on the timing and outcomes of these projects.

It is anticipated amendments to the planning scheme will be undertaken using a phased approach, undertaken over several years and ongoing. The initial phase of scheme amendments will commence in late 2024.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Gladstone Regional Council has undertaken a major ten year review of the Gladstone Regional Council planning scheme in accordance with the requirements of section 25 of the *Planning Act 2016*.

Almost 2,150 interactions with community, industry and agency stakeholders were recorded against all engagement platforms. The feedback has been broad ranging, touching on all elements of the planning scheme and the many and different ways in which it shapes land use and development across the Region.

A clear and consistent message throughout the feedback is that the current planning scheme is not fundamentally flawed and has served the community well in regulating development since it became operational in 2015. An equally strong message is that there are several ways in which the planning scheme can be improved.

The need for a well-articulated, overarching plan to guide development across the Region, underpinned by a robust suite of planning policies was strongly supported. As was the need to ensure that the planning scheme recognises and responds to the different needs of communities across the region, particularly the differences that exist between the Region's largest urban centre, Gladstone City, and the smaller towns and villages.

Recent and planned investment by government and the private sector in major infrastructure, including the Fitzroy to Gladstone Water Pipeline, Gladstone Heavy Vehicle and Oversize Overmass Load Transport Corridor, Inland Rail Extension to the Port of Gladstone, Harvey Road Sports and Events Precinct, have created opportunities for the Region and will assist in ensuring it is well positioned going into the next decade. There are also many challenges facing the Region including population and employment growth, a changing climate, resilience to natural hazards, advancements in industry and technological innovations.

The next iteration of the Gladstone Regional planning scheme must realise these opportunities and address key challenges. The existing planning scheme is generally successful in its operation and regulation of development to date. As a result, the development outcomes under a new planning scheme are not expected to be significantly different to the current planning scheme.

On this basis, it is therefore recommended Council resolve to make a series of amendments to the current planning scheme rather than preparing a new planning scheme. This will ensure the current planning scheme remains contemporary and responsive to changing social, economic and environmental conditions.