

13 December 2024

Warren Bunker  
Chief Executive Officer  
Whitsunday Regional Council  
via email

Dear Warren,

**Re: Submission to Corporate Plan 2025-30 consultation**

The Whitsundays Chamber of Commerce and Industry is committed to supporting initiatives by the Whitsunday Regional Council that aim to strengthen our community, economy, and long-term liveability.

Recently, the Chamber invited its members to participate in the Council's consultation process for the proposed Corporate Plan 2025-2030.

The Chamber's submission to the consultation consolidates the views and insights of 15 participating members, reflecting mixed perspectives from within the Whitsundays business community. On the following pages you will find a consolidated response and verbatim comments received for your own interpretation and analysis.

The Chamber Board's topline review of the responses suggest:

- **Community Connectivity:** Uniting the region's diverse districts—each with its own history, needs, and future possibilities—requires strong leadership and a clear, shared vision.
- **Secure Funding and Deliver:** Prioritise efforts to secure state and federal funding for critical infrastructure, including roads, major projects, health, education, and land-based tourism.
- **Future-Proofing Infrastructure:** A focus on long-term sustainability is needed to upgrade essential infrastructure such as roads, water, utilities, and waste management systems.
- **Transparency in Decision-Making and Procurement:** The Chamber calls for greater openness around Council decisions and procurement processes to ensure investment in regional businesses and local economic growth.

The Chamber will also make a public statement about members perceptions and well as making our submission public.

Please contact our Chamber Liaison, Dr Julia Evans, on [admin@whitsundaycoastchamber.com.au](mailto:admin@whitsundaycoastchamber.com.au) or mobile 0438 066 069 to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Allan Milostic, President  
Whitsundays Chamber of Commerce and Industry

## **Vision, Mission and Values**

Please provide your comments on the Council's Corporate Plan Vision, Mission and what they value.

- VISION – A connected community working together to drive a resilient and strong diverse economy and a liveable environment.
- MISSION – To ensure the Whitsunday region thrives for everyone now and in the future.
- VALUES – Connection, innovation and sustainability.

### **Comments:**

*I like the mission and values, however the vision should be "to create a connected and diverse community that works together to drive a resilient and strong economy in a sustainable environment"*

*VISION: I think emphasis need also be placed on "growth" insofar as the economy is concerned. Having a "strong diverse economy" suggests reliability, while a focus on "growth" avails commitment to investment and willingness to take risks.*

*Great, values shown throughout mission and vision – critical for longevity.*

*OK*

*A 'Connected Community' does this include Airlie Beach?*

*De-amalgamation. Get rid of Bowen and Collinsville. Bring in Bloomsbury. Align with State parliament seat.*

*Fluff, pretty words with no substance that I expect we paid a lot for.*

## Our Economy

The Council's draft Corporate Plan states 'Our Economy: We plan for growth with the future needs of the community, business and industry in mind.'

Please rate the importance of the following Our Economy focus areas:

	Critically important	Highly Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Irrelevant
Identify priorities for advocacy, investment and publish an attraction prospectus	<b>33.33%</b>	26.67%	26.67%	13.33%	
Develop a set of base economic and population studies	<b>50.00%</b>	28.57%	21.43%		
Maximising future returns from Council's commercial businesses	7.14%	<b>42.86%</b>	<b>42.86%</b>	7.14%	
Consider opportunities for commercial activities at regional airports	<b>26.67%</b>	<b>26.67%</b>	<b>26.67%</b>	20.00%	
Advocate for Abbot Point State Development Area planning and development, including the provision of critical infrastructure to enable industry growth	33.33%	20.00%	<b>40.00%</b>	6.67%	
Advocate for State and Federal Government funding support for major projects, roads and land-based tourism attractions	<b>80.00%</b>	13.33%	6.67%		

### Comments:

*Infrastructure is absolutely the key to population growth and managing the growing needs of the business and general community.*

*I think one of the key things that should certainly be considered is some alignment to future transformation initiatives - i.e. creating regional hubs/incubators to facilitate long term changes in the local economy ( i.e, impacts of automation to AG, economic shift towards green energy --> impacting coal etc..).*

*Can Something be done about Hamilton Plains. Please.*

*The roads continue to require immediate work.*

*Our roads are #\$\$%^\$ and need some funding to repair with sustainable materials that don't break down in the heat. There are other countries that have managed to overcome this issue.*

*Council's commercial businesses should not be another way to extract cash from ratepayers - eg. Airport Carparking*

*I understand the comments around the commercial businesses and activities at the airport, however I feel that it is equally as important define the council's commitment to the established businesses that comprise the current and future economy of the Whitsundays. Unless this is happening in another area?*

## Our Community

The Council's draft Corporate Plan states 'Our Community: Our places and spaces enhance the liveability and diversity of our communities.'

Please rate the importance of the following Our Community focus areas:

	Critically important	Highly Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Irrelevant
Improve the look and feel of the region, with a focus on levels of service for parks and gardens, community facilities, aquatic centres, sportsfields and roads	20.00%	<b>60.00%</b>	13.33%	6.67%	
Ongoing review of community and recreational grants support to ensure consistency and alignment with future stakeholder needs	26.67%	33.33%	<b>40.00%</b>		
Ensuring appropriate community engagement to guide Council's decision making and project priorities	<b>53.33%</b>	33.33%	13.33%		
Advocate with the community for State and Federal Government support for major projects, health and education investment	<b>73.33%</b>	20.00%	6.67%		
Promotion of arts, culture and sport within the Region	26.67%	20.00%	<b>46.67%</b>	6.67%	
Continuous development of the Proserpine Entertainment Centre, as the arts and cultural hub of the Region	13.33%	13.33%	<b>33.33%</b>	26.67%	13.33%

### Comments:

*Rebuilding the Proserpine Entertainment Centre in its original location was a missed opportunity. Relocating it to Airlie Beach or Cannonvale would have made it more accessible and utilised, benefiting local businesses and attracting more corporate events. Instead, corporate events are now lost to the islands and even Cairns, limiting its potential. Investing any more time and money into the venue beyond basic upkeep would only waste ratepayers' money and fail to deliver broader community benefits.*

*The PEC is an asset to the area, they need an online media presence to boost the profile of the PEC and attract more international acts. The sports parks are well utilised during the seasons; however, council need to listen to sporting communities about shelters during the summer months.*

*There is a significant opportunity to create an events-based economy in Proserpine, so far excellent line-ups come to Airlie as well as Proserpine, but these tend to be standalone. Having a "dedicate festival" could potentially be helpful. To do this, more emphasis needs to go into the arts and entertainment segment.*

*Would you say Airlie or Proserpine is more of an entertainment precinct? Maybe an 'entertainment centre' would provide improved user and commercial outcomes if it was co located with other entertainment establishments/activities.*

*A hospital in Airlie in needed.*

## Our Environment

The Council's draft Corporate Plan states 'Our Environment: Our region is resilient and celebrates its natural assets.'

Please rate the importance of the following Our Environment focus areas:

	Critically important	Highly Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Irrelevant
Undertake a review to improve the look and feel of the region, with a focus on levels of service for parks and gardens	33.33%	<b>40.00%</b>	13.33%	13.33%	
Continue to invest in the waste network to prepare for the future and remediate legacy infrastructure	<b>46.67%</b>	<b>46.67%</b>		6.67%	
Ongoing improvements to community facility energy efficiency	26.67%	<b>46.67%</b>	13.33%	6.67%	6.67%
Lead and partner with land stewards in ongoing pest management strategies	33.33%	<b>40.00%</b>	20.00%	6.67%	
Partner with government agencies to investigate opportunities to celebrate our natural assets, such as Great Barrier Reef Marine Parks and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, e.g. walking trails	<b>53.33%</b>	26.67%	13.33%	6.67%	

### Comments:

*I have lived here almost 6 years, and visited for many years prior to that, the parks, water parks, barbeques are among the best I have seen. Council needs to invest in better waste management to ensure we have to move less waste to other areas. The transfer station does an awesome job, however we need to work with other states to manage waste better and keep this area as beautiful as we can.*

*I think a significant focus has consistently been the angle of Great Barrier Reef and surrounding environment. This has received considerable support. Looking to 2030, other priority areas are worthy of exploration.*

*Allow access to the public to the numerous state forest reserves. Open the reserves for camping and 4wd trails.*

*All quite obvious but nothing new. I expect all councils would write something the same.*

*Mainland tourism is a critical missing feature.*

*All th above [focus areas] are very necessary.*

## Our Council

The Council's draft Corporate Plan states 'Our Council: People, business and community.'

Please rate the importance of the following Our Council focus areas:

	Critically important	Highly Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Irrelevant
Undertake an organisational review, including Information Technology, Governance, Human Resources, Procurement and Budget processes, with a focus on improving cost efficiencies and service delivery	60.00%	26.67%		13.33%	
Review of workforce planning, safety and wellbeing systems to improve productivity	20.00%	46.67%	26.67%	6.67%	
Assess rating system to better reflect new land valuations, changes in land uses and expected growth	26.67%	26.67%	33.33%	13.33%	
Review commercial business structures to promote Council objectives and maximise cost efficiencies	33.33%	40.00%	26.67%		
Ongoing improvement to asset management systems to support future planning, maintenance schedules and Capital works forecasts	40.00%	33.33%	20.00%	6.67%	
Consistent focus on improving financial planning and sustainability	53.33%	33.33%	6.67%	6.67%	

### Comments:

*Hard work but necessary.*

*Organisational review, workforce planning and anything to do with future capability development is a critical focus area. I have seen so many times where council (and businesses) are playing catchup due to a reactive mind-set approach OR an outdated mindset. These are very real challenges and will affect the economy and livelihood of locals.*

*Like many sporting organisations, the council needs a thorough overhaul to ensure future success. A strong and capable front office is essential for the broader team to thrive. Unfortunately, the council has often functioned as a close-knit group lacking the necessary competence to deliver the best outcomes. This is not a well-kept secret, and many engaged ratepayers would likely agree with this assessment.*

*Get rid of jobs for mates at WRC.*

*Procurement is a biggie, due to current perceptions that out of town business, or "mates" are awarded contracts without due process, money has been unnecessarily wasted on expensive contracts due to bad planning, and cost efficiencies have not been a priority. There needs to be more transparency with the procurement process here in the Whitsundays, as there are strict rules governing this that don't appear to have been followed in the past. There are more Air B&B applications in the pipeline for Airlie, surely there is a limit to these? Rentals are already at a premium, allowing owners to Air B&B their property reduces the long term rentals available. If they are not already, Air B&B owners should have to have a license and prove they have the requisite insurance in place to run their properties accordingly.*

*These questions are all aimed at a positive response so you cannot answer with negativity.*

## Our Infrastructure

The Council's draft Corporate Plan states 'Our Infrastructure: Our region has infrastructure that meets current and future needs.'

Please rate the importance of the following Our Infrastructure focus areas:

	Critically important	Highly Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Irrelevant
Planning for the future across key infrastructure networks, including stormwater, water supply, sewerage, waste, roads and parks	<b>86.67%</b>	6.67%	6.67%		
Advocacy for improved funding of rural roads and upgrades to important roads	<b>73.33%</b>	13.33%	6.67%	6.67%	
Review options for improvements to the Whitsunday Planning Scheme, to better align with community aspirations and meet future needs	<b>66.67%</b>	20.00%	13.33%		
Development of improved transport and drainage infrastructure, with a focus upon enhancing footpath networks and safety	<b>66.67%</b>	20.00%		13.33%	

### Comments:

*All necessary.*

*The appearance is that so many people have moved to the area from interstate and out of state, and the infrastructure is not in place to accommodate more growth.*

*One area I feel is missing, is pre-emptive planning or at least something that will tie into an infrastructure readiness plan in the event of weather events that more than likely prevalent.*

*Foot paths and scooter/ bicycle friendly roads are critical to solving traffic congestion. Likewise free parking bays for scooters and bicycles to encourage their use by workers and residents alike.*

*There is a lot of work to do in this space and it needs to be prioritised.*

*As above, this was a waste of my time.*

## **Additional general comments from survey participants**

*As with any plan, I think what this one is missing are execution milestones of the set areas. I gather these are factored into an internal document, but I think what lends more credibility is having set timelines + activities that would see the "plan item" translate to a "delivery item".*

*We need to prioritise common sense in local decision-making. While some initiatives may fall outside the original plan, it's important to avoid becoming a "nanny state" council. Instead, we should focus on being progressive and forward-thinking.*

*Consider community feedback for example the overwhelming opposition to the highrise in Airlie Beach, yet the council approved it.*

*Airlie Beach cyclone shelter.*

*It's a big job keeping up with demand.*

*Boring, Dull, probably copied from another council as it is all generic fluff.*