

2025/26 STRATEGIC ADVOCACY





Dear Valued Stakeholder,

It is a privilege to introduce you to Gladstone Regional Council's 2025/26 Strategic Advocacy publication outlining critical priorities for the Gladstone Region.

As the tier of government closest to the community, our Council has a unique and trusted understanding of the challenges our region and residents face. We take our responsibility to drive meaningful advocacy on behalf of our region seriously and we will always listen to, and champion for, the communities we serve.

We need support, engagement and investment in our priorities from the State and Federal Governments, including the Opposition, key stakeholders, industry and investors to make this change possible.

The priorities we are advocating for are not something we've thought about overnight – they are well planned, well detailed and are crucial to future-proofing our region.

They are not just policy changes or future developments – they are matters of equity, access, and quality of life for regional Queenslanders. Our community deserves the same standard of services and infrastructure as those in metropolitan areas.

With an annual economic output of more than \$20B, our message is simple – support the region that supports the State and National economy.

The Gladstone Region has proven it's well positioned for continued growth and represents an attractive investment destination.

It boasts a diverse regional economy, a natural deep-water port, highly skilled workforce, strong local supply chain, a significant amount of land available in the Gladstone State Development Area (GSDA) and a range of leisure, lifestyle and living opportunities.

I'm taking a stand for my community, and I call on you to take urgent, coordinated action to help turn our priorities into reality.

As a Council and region, we stand ready to partner, but meaningful change will only be achieved with increased leadership, funding, and policy action from all stakeholders.

I welcome your enquiries and most importantly, your action.

Matt Burnett
Mayor Gladstone Regional Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Gladstone Regional Council would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Bailai, the Gurang, the Gooreng Gooreng and the Taribelang Bunda people.

We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Gladstone Regional Council is committed to cultivating a culture of inclusion and connectedness, acknowledging that our communities are richer when diversity is embraced.

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Securing Sustainable and Equitable Investment in Wastewater Infrastructure

Our Ask

\$80M over the next three years to fund urgent wastewater infrastructure upgrades.
Reintroduction of a dedicated, ongoing State subsidy program for wastewater investment.

The Situation

The Gladstone Region is at a critical crossroads. Council's wastewater infrastructure is ageing rapidly, and regulatory demands continue to rise. The cost of maintaining existing assets, without improvements is projected to exceed \$207M over the next decade. Meeting regulatory requirements through full asset replacement is beyond the scope of Council's long-term financial plan as it would place Council and our community in an unsustainable financial position. Without coordinated investment, the **delivery of essential services and the protection of our environment are at serious risk.**

The Solution

Council is seeking a coordinated, co-funded approach with the State Government to deliver sustainable, fit-for-purpose, environmentally sensitive wastewater infrastructure. This partnership is essential to support regional growth and ensure compliance – without shifting disproportionate costs to local ratepayers.

Addressing Regional Waste Challenges through Scalable and Supported Solutions

Our Ask

Undertake an investigation into the current state of kerbside commingled recycling across Central Queensland, followed by an options assessment and the development of a funded Regional Commingled Recycling Infrastructure Plan, with Gladstone as the processing location for Central Queensland. Regional equity – access to and development of processing solutions.

A partnership funding model that supports Gladstone Regional Council's implementation of a Garden Organics bin service – 75 per cent in year one, 50 per cent in year two and 25 per cent in year three.

The State Government to reinstate and continue the full waste levy payments to regional councils, and revise what are currently unachievable waste diversion targets for regional councils.

The Situation

Regional Queensland faces a growing challenge in delivering economically viable waste processing solutions at scale. Without access to affordable and regionally appropriate infrastructure, Councils are limited in their ability to meet waste diversion targets and effectively manage the financial impacts of the waste levy.

Communities are already shouldering increasing costs to maintain core waste services. Without targeted investment and long-term policy certainty, this trend will continue placing further pressure on regional households and limiting progress toward a more sustainable waste system.

Recent shifts in support and policy direction from the State Government have created further uncertainty for regional Councils. A renewed commitment to consistent funding, regional collaboration, and policy stability is essential.

The Solution

We are calling for the State to work in partnership with regional Queensland to co-develop scalable, cost-effective waste solutions and provide the certainty needed to plan and invest for the long term.



Positioning Central Queensland as a Strategic Asset in Australia's Defence Future

Our Ask

Formal recognition of Gladstone and the broader Central Queensland region as a priority location for Defence investment and operations, including:

- **Establishment of a stronger, more permanent Defence presence in Central Queensland**
- **Inclusion in future Defence manufacturing and logistics planning**
- **Ongoing engagement with the Central to Defence Working Group to coordinate regional delivery and maximise strategic outcomes.**

The Situation

Gladstone and the broader Central Queensland region are strategically positioned to play a pivotal role in Australia's Defence future. The region boasts one of the nation's premier multi-commodity deep-water ports, complemented by the explosives-enabled Port of Rockhampton (Port Alma). It is underpinned by a mature industrial base and a highly skilled workforce with expertise in heavy engineering, logistics, and advanced manufacturing.

Proximity to the Shoalwater Bay Training Area, Rockhampton International Airport, and direct access to the Coral Sea further elevate Gladstone's suitability as a Defence and Defence Industries hub.

Already a trusted partner in Australia's energy and export supply chains, the region's capabilities are readily transferable to Defence applications – ranging from vessel maintenance and logistics to Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance (GWEO) infrastructure. Through the Central to Defence Working Group – a collaboration of three Councils and Regional Development Australia Central and Western Queensland – our region is advancing a united, strategic approach to national security.

The Solution

Targeted Defence investment in Gladstone will deliver dual-purpose benefits: strengthening the operational reach and resilience of the Australian Defence Force, while unlocking economic diversification and building enduring industry capability in regional Queensland.

We call on the Federal Government and Defence stakeholders to partner with local and regional leaders to harness existing infrastructure, skilled labour, and collaborative governance models in support of national defence objectives.





Delivering a Fit-for-Purpose Heavy Vehicle and Over Size Load Corridor in Gladstone

Our Ask

Investment in a fit-for-purpose heavy vehicle uplift to the Port of Gladstone to support OSOM loads and continued major project transport needs for regional Queensland.

The Situation

The Gladstone Region's strategic role as a gateway for industrial freight is being constrained by the lack of a dedicated heavy vehicle and Over Size/Over Mass (OSOM) transport corridor. Currently, OSOM freight must traverse critical community roads and infrastructure not designed for such loads – placing significant strain on community assets intended for everyday use.

With demonstrated growth in containerised freight and continued industrial expansion, this pressure is set to escalate. Without action, local amenity, safety and asset longevity will be compromised and industry competitiveness diminished.

The Solution

Council is calling for State investment in a fit-for-purpose heavy vehicle uplift to the Port of Gladstone. A dedicated freight corridor is essential to protect community infrastructure, improve freight efficiency and support the region's growing economic role.

Enabling a Strategic Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy

Our Ask

Gladstone is not asking if the transition will happen – we are asking for clear direction, coordinated action and the tools to ensure our communities thrive in the economy of tomorrow. We need:

- **Policy certainty**
- **Ongoing Government funding**
- **Infrastructure investment**
- **Unified Government messaging.**

The Situation

The Gladstone Region is uniquely positioned to lead Australia's low-carbon transition. As a proven and expanding energy hub, we are leveraging our skilled workforce, industrial capability, rich resource base, integrated supply chains and world-class deep-water port to support the industries of the future.

Significant research, planning and investment has already been made across numerous green energy and manufacturing projects, alongside decarbonising existing fossil fuel prominent projects. However, uncertainty – particularly from shifting government policy settings – is undermining investor confidence and jeopardising progress across all energy sectors. A coordinated, long-term commitment from all levels of government is essential to maintain momentum and attract private investment.

Local Governments play a critical role in climate adaptation, community engagement, driving local content and enabling new industries. Sustained funding and policy clarity are needed to support infrastructure upgrades, repurposing of legacy assets and development-ready land to meet the needs of a transitioning economy.

The Solution

A coordinated, government-supported transition that leverages Gladstone's unique assets to drive sustainable economic growth. This includes:

- Long-term policy certainty to support investor confidence
- Strategic funding for local governments to lead regional economic and community adaptation
- Infrastructure investment to repurpose and retrofit legacy assets
- Support for land use planning and enabling infrastructure for new and changing industries
- A unified narrative across all levels of government about the economic future of Australia, particularly the Gladstone Region.





Harvey Road Sports and Events Precinct

Project estimate: \$50.5M

Our Ask

\$3.4M to secure approvals and complete detailed designs for the project to be construction investment ready.

The Situation

The greater Gladstone Region needs a major outdoor venue to unlock regional economic opportunities by driving spending, creating jobs, boosting tourism and gaining national exposure through hosting major sports events, outdoor activities and carnivals.

The Solution

The Harvey Road Sports and Events Precinct development will deliver the Gladstone Region and greater Central Queensland with a year-round, multi-sports and events precinct with broadcasting capabilities.

The precinct will be suitable for national, state and regional games, carnivals and large outdoor events with a crowd capacity of up to 10,000 people.

This large-scale social infrastructure project will position the Gladstone Region to be one of only four facilities in Queensland to offer six full-size rugby league fields available in the one precinct.

Fruition of the project will create significant economic/sports tourism benefits and improve the liveability and attractiveness of the Gladstone Region.

Boyne Tannum Aquatic Centre

Current funding: \$15M Australian Government funding through the Priority Community Infrastructure Program.

Our Ask

Match the Australian Government funding of \$15M for the construction of the Boyne Tannum Aquatic Centre.

The Situation

Development of a public swimming pool has long been identified as one of the highest social infrastructure needs for the thriving coastal communities of Boyne Island and Tannum Sands. While residents enjoy access to a diverse range of locally based sport and recreation facilities, parklands and natural open spaces, access to a public swimming pool remains a minimum 25 minutes' drive to Gladstone, the nearest urban centre. With the unfavourable distance of travel and limited public transport between Boyne/Tannum and Gladstone, equitable access to a public swimming pool continues to be an ongoing disadvantage for the 10,000 plus residents that live in the area.

The Solution

The Boyne Tannum Aquatic Centre will be a year-round multi-functional aquatic centre purposefully designed to be a central hub for families, schools, clubs and visitors to connect, recreate and learn, enhancing the health, fitness, social and psychological wellbeing of the community.

The proposed facility will include a 50m outdoor heated pool, all-abilities access (pool ramp) and pool shading for sun safety and comfort as well as shaded turf seating areas and spectator embankment.





Harbour Arbour

Project estimate: \$10.7M

Current funding: \$5.3M Australian Government funding through the Growing Regions Program – Round 2.

Our Ask

\$5M to meet the remaining project estimate and enable construction to commence.

The Situation

Council owned utilities infrastructure in Goondoon Street between Lord and Yarroon Streets are nearing end of life and scheduled for replacement. As part of this work, vital streetscape revitalisation upgrades will be undertaken to deliver a safe and shady pedestrian linkage connecting the harbour to the Central Business District (CBD).

The Solution

The transformation of the harbour end of Gladstone's main street into a vibrant tree-lined boulevard will be an activator of economic activity, generating benefits for retail, business, hospitality, entertainment and tourism.

The project will stimulate urban renewal, help to revitalise the city centre, recognise the city's heritage as an important asset and improve the quality of public spaces and streets.

Once complete, Harbour Arbour will also provide a more inviting pathway for all CBD participants, including future cruise ship passengers to explore the CBD beyond East Shores.

Supporting Community Priorities



Health

Delivering Equitable, Accessible and Locally Led Health Outcomes for the Gladstone Region

The people of the Gladstone Region are being left behind in access to fundamental healthcare. Residents are routinely forced to travel outside the region to receive treatment. There are not enough General Practitioners, specialists, allied health, or mental health professionals to meet demand. Wait times are growing, costs are rising and continuity of care is diminishing.

Behind these issues lie systemic barriers: critical workforce shortages, lack of local infrastructure, few professional development pathways and no clear strategy to grow and retain a skilled health workforce in the region.

Gladstone needs empowered, localised solutions and a genuine shift in decision-making power enabling regions like Gladstone to influence the health outcomes of our own communities.

This is a matter of regional equity, wellbeing, liveability and resilience.



Housing

Unlocking Affordable and Accessible Housing in Regional Queensland

The Gladstone Region continues to face a housing crisis. The cost of construction is soaring, and private developers are not releasing or developing land at a pace that meets community need. This is placing pressure on the availability and affordability of housing – for workers, families, and vulnerable residents alike.

Without intervention, these challenges will continue to limit regional growth, exacerbate workforce shortages, and increase housing stress for our community.

Our region is ready to grow – but access to housing must not be the barrier.

A coordinated, funded response is essential to ensure all Queenslanders have a fair chance at safe, affordable, and secure housing.





Fair Funding

Stopping the Shift

Fair Funding for Local Government Responsibilities

Local Governments are being increasingly burdened with responsibilities that were traditionally the domain of State and Federal Governments – without the funding to match. From community services to infrastructure and regulatory compliance, more is being expected of Councils, often without consultation or financial support.

This cost-shifting is unsustainable. It places unacceptable pressure on local resources, risks service quality and forces Councils to choose between core responsibilities and community needs.

If local government is to continue delivering for communities, it must be resourced to do so – fairly, sustainably and with a seat at the table.



Inland Rail

Unlocking Inland Rail to the Port of Gladstone

A Nation-Building Opportunity

The extension of Inland Rail to the Port of Gladstone represents a transformational opportunity for Queensland and the nation – linking regional producers directly to a world-class, deep-water export gateway.

There is strong stakeholder support, growing private investor interest and a clear economic case.

What's missing is active government facilitation to unlock this potential.

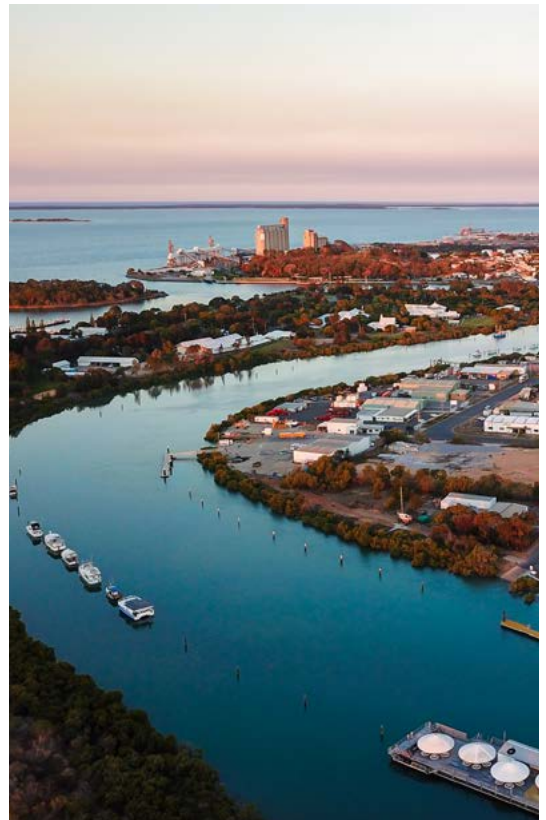
The opportunity is real, the interest is there and the time is now. With government leadership, the Inland Rail extension to Gladstone can deliver long-term national productivity, regional jobs, and global competitiveness.



COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES AND ECONOMIC ASSETS

The Gladstone Region has many natural and economic assets which provide a competitive advantage:

- Natural deep-water port which is one of the largest, multi-commodity ports in the world
- Strategic location in proximity to considerable natural resources across Central Queensland and the Surat Basin
- Industrial land in the Gladstone State Development Area and Strategic Port Land adjacent to existing enabling infrastructure
- Pivotal to the Central Queensland Renewable Energy Zone
- Existing heavy industry and supporting infrastructure
- Strong supply chains to support industry and a highly skilled workforce
- Locally based construction capacity to deliver major projects
- World class tourism destinations on the Southern Great Barrier Reef.



ECONOMIC PROFILE

\$6.7B

in Gross Regional Product (GRP)

27,958

Regional jobs

Approximately

68,065

residents

38 years

is the median age compared to 38.9 years for regional Queensland

78,486

is the expected population of the Gladstone Region by 2046

566,000

average visitors to the region per annum



4,141

Local businesses, with the top employers being;



4,200

Manufacturing jobs



3,363

Construction jobs



2,863

Health Care and Social Assistance jobs



2,668

Retail jobs



2,441

Education and Training jobs



2,416

Transport and Logistics jobs

Source: app.remplan.com.au/gladstone/economy/summary

While care has been taken to ensure all content is complete and accurate, Gladstone Regional Council provide no guarantee that this publication is without error.



REGION OVERVIEW

From Kroombit Tops in the west to the coral lagoons of the Southern Great Barrier Reef, the Gladstone Region is as varied as it is beautiful.

The Gladstone Region is situated on the traditional lands of the Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, and Taribelang Bunda peoples.

Located approximately 500km north of Brisbane City, the Gladstone Region has a population of approximately 65,500 people and a total land area of almost 10,500km².

The city of Gladstone, the areas of Boyne Island and Tannum Sands and the town of Calliope are the main population centres in the region with approximately 57,500 people living in these localities.

Nearly 8000 people live in smaller communities in the region such as Miriam Vale, Baffle Creek, Deepwater, Mount Larcom, Turkey Beach, Rosedale and surrounding communities as well as the beachside localities of Agnes Water and Seventeen Seventy.

The Gladstone Region has a Gross Regional Product (GRP) of \$6.773B with just over 4000 local businesses and nearly 28,000 regional jobs, with about 15 per cent of these in manufacturing. In addition, 20.9 per cent of the Gladstone Region workforce are technicians or trades workers.

The region has a strong record of job creation and investment opportunities, with relaxed living, recreational and tourism options enhancing its liveability and potential for future growth.

In recent decades, the economy has been built around heavy industry with access to a deepwater harbour for import and export trade. Several energy projects, hydrogen, biofuels, solar energy and new waste management practices have been proposed for the GSDA, positioning the city of Gladstone as an energy hub and taking the economy in an exciting new direction.

An Eco-Certified destination, the Gladstone Region features plenty of green open spaces, including nationally recognised Gladstone Tondoon Botanic Gardens, award-winning playgrounds and coastal locations where sailing and boating activities are enjoyed.

Residents and visitors can see historical sites, go bush walking, mountain climbing or snorkel the reef to experience the outdoor environment.

The region's strength is a great sense of community, with a 'can-do' attitude.



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