

## **GREATER WHITSUNDAYS REGION SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROAD MAP**

### **1. OVERVIEW AND INTENTION**

As part of Regional Development Australia Funding for the period 2021- 2025, each RDA Committee in Australia is required to complete by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 a Regional Economic Development Road Map or Strategy designed to support stakeholders and community to prioritize and deliver economic stimuli across a range of portfolios and projects. The focus of the Regional Economic Development Road Maps is that respective regions, industries, and stakeholders will collaborate to prioritize economic stimuli and seek investment support from local, state and federal government and the private sector to drive local economic growth. The Road Maps provide potential for economic inducements through prioritization and provision of initiatives as new and upgraded civil and social infrastructure, job creation and skills development and water and energy security.

***In a nutshell – via completion of a Regional Sustainable Development Road Maps it is hoped will deliver better coordinated investment across RDA regions via confirmed agreement toward the key areas of economic development focus.***

The Greater Whitsundays region has the potential to take a Regional Sustainable Development Road Map Strategy to the Commonwealth and State governments into the future. There is a need to provide a clear, concise, and robust document that foretells the economic vision for the MIW region for the next 10-15 years and key initiatives and commitments that will help deliver the vision.

The principal objectives of the development of Greater Whitsunday Sustainable Economic Development Road Map will be to.

- Identify a clear and robust vision for the Greater Whitsundays region that builds on the existing strengths and identifies future opportunities to create resilient regional economy, environment, and community.
- Identify key projects and programs that will provide local economic stimuli.
- Identify new opportunities for collaboration, alignment, and preparedness for transformational change.
- Support future bids for regional funding aligned to infrastructure and community development.

#### **Understanding the regional context and being pragmatic**

The Greater Whitsunday region benefits from a world class tourism offer based on the Great Barrier Reef and significant agricultural and resource sector industries in the hinterland and Bowen and Galilee basins. Its heavy reliance on the resource sector provides challenges and opportunities as the sector continues to restructure. The development of an international standard airport and airfreight export centre, rehabilitation of mine sites, water security, development of knowledge industries, an enhanced tourism offer, and renewables and bio-commodities diversification are key priorities for a wide range of stakeholders in the region. Focusing however on what can pragmatically be achieved over the short, medium, and long-term requires some sharpened prioritisation and engagement with different stakeholders. This must also be influenced by an understanding of what a region of up to 250,000 residents and 500,000 visitors needs in terms of hard and soft infrastructure.

### **Key Drivers for the Greater Whitsunday Sustainable Economic Development Road Map**

The principal objectives of the development of the Road Map will be to:

- Identify a clear, robust, and shared advocacy vision for the region that builds on existing strengths and identifies future opportunities to create sustainable economic growth and long-term liveability enhancements.
- Identify key projects and programs that will provide regional economic stimuli.
- Identify and attract new opportunities for collaboration, alignment, and preparedness for transformative change.
- Promote a united voice for future regional social and economic benefits.

### **Recognising previous work and differing plans and strategies**

Currently, a wide range of plans and strategies exist for the region and whilst they tend not to be counterproductive to one another, they do extend the 'wish list' for the region. The Greater Whitsunday Sustainable Economic Development Road Map will need to consolidate, connect, and match the priorities that will deliver the greatest benefit for the region, its businesses, residents, and visitors. Three separate local government planning schemes, several State Development Area development schemes, a host of economic development strategies; two destination tourism plans, various federal, state and local government COVID Recovery Strategies and sector development strategies all currently 'compete for air'. Bringing these together in an erudite and holistic document will create a shared point of advocacy for a bold future.

### **Role of the Greater Whitsunday Sustainable Economic Development Road Map**

The principal aim of drawing together the key priorities for the region will enable a consolidated and unified aspiration across the different stakeholder groups. Speaking with a united voice to a single strategy will understandably strengthen key messages to State and Federal governments for political and funding support and provide a clear message to domestic and international investors that the region is unified, investor ready and prepared to promote new projects and programs.

### **Understanding the broader context of austerity and restructuring**

Much of RDA MIW work in the economic advisory field has taken place in a broader framework of fiscal austerity and economic restructuring and is increasingly seen as critical for focusing priorities to direct investment and future funding to the greatest benefits for a community and region. Increasingly, delivering economic development strategies is becoming difficult due to:

- Government funding and spending cutbacks.
- Changing treasury demands for project support.
- Re-prioritisation of future funding activity.
- Greater public scrutiny and expectation of community benefits, and
- Private sector scepticism of government regulatory frameworks.

Each of these parameters is exacerbated where regions are undergoing economic transitioning. The Greater Whitsunday region is undergoing a period of restructuring but its diverse economy and strong tourism, resource and agricultural pillars provide significant opportunity for growth.

### **Delivering a consistent, simple and effective regional economic message**

Development of a clear, concise and robust document that foretells the economic vision for the region for the next 10-15 years and key initiatives and commitments will help build a uniform vision and create a single point of advocacy. This will assist efforts to secure funding and raise profile.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology for the development of a Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map is split in to four phases.

### Phase 1

The development and creation of a Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map Working Group. The purpose of the working group is to support appropriate planning and preparation and buy in from key stakeholders and develop a Greater Whitsunday Sustainable Economic Development Road Map. The responsibilities for the Working Group may include.

- Oversee the development of a Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map.
- Ensure the key members (core stakeholders) can liaise with their respective bodies for any authorisation or direction.
- Share in the costs of developing a Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map.
- Select and manage the utilisation of a consultant to run the development of the Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map and thus manage consultancy engagement to ensure best outcomes.
- Work with any identified consultant regarding workshop and promotion and attendance
- Receive and consider workshops and report outcomes and develop recommended Greater Whitsunday Sustainable Economic Development Road Map content.

### Phase 2

The inception meeting between a consultant and working group, project management, preparation of workshop material, conducting workshops, gaining shared visions and development of a draft Greater Whitsunday Sustainable Economic Development Road Map.

### Phase 3

The finalisation of the Greater Whitsunday Sustainable Economic Development Road Map and final check in and feedback from regional stakeholders and following final document approval from stakeholders a follow up advocacy set of actions with state and federal government and private sector.

Phase 4 (Optional – outside of direct RDA MIW contract of outputs - translates the Greater Whitsunday Sustainable Economic Development Road Map in to a specific and targeted infrastructure call)

The development of a regional investment deal which takes all the information from above and outlines a specific investment opportunity for state and federal government to support transformation of the Greater Whitsunday region.

### **3. DELIVERY AND OPERATIONS**

The proposal is to undertake 11 tasks and optional 6 additional tasks) which are aligned to the phases supporting the development of a Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map plus the option of an additional opportunity to develop a regional Investment deal to state and federal government.

**Task 1** – RDA MIW Committee to support or otherwise the outlined proposal actions and investment in support of development of a Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map. Note that Phase 4 is not seeking to be initially an investment and activity completed by RDA MIW.

**Task 2** - Establish the Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map Working Group – finalise TOR and gain agreement from key stakeholders to be involved in working group – Working group to be chaired by RDA MIW Committee members and involve up to an additional two RDA MIW Committee members and key stakeholders and have support from RDA MIW staff. See TOR for Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map Working Group.

**Task 3** – Working group to finalise EOI call and selection of a consultant service provider to facilitate the development of the Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map.

**Task 4** – Consultant to meet with the working group to confirm and establish project program, governance, constraints, and risks, including key milestones. The Working Group and supporting key stakeholders’ entities to provide all data and relevant studies to the consultant project team at the inception meeting. Key topics to cover may include:

- Confirm project objectives and project benchmarks for success for the entire project.
- Discussion regarding project challenges and opportunities – including the measure for a successful outcome.
- Project management and communication protocols.
- Discuss stakeholders, especially State and Federal agencies and key stakeholders and their roles in the project and forms of engagement.
- Confirm status of any supporting background studies, ongoing advocacy, and alignment matters; and
- Discuss project risks and established initial risk register.

**Task 5:** On-going project management - Project is required to identify the preferred sequencing of tasks, preparation of materials and deliverables and management of multiple stakeholders, including the roles of the working groups members and RDAMIW. This would include:

- Meetings with working groups and RDA (face to face during visits and via telephone conferences)
- Meetings with stakeholders and State and Federal agencies (as agreed with working group)
- Agreed progress updates, fortnightly likely to be the most ideal.
- Management of the project team and responsibility for final deliverables
- Attendance at client review meetings

**Task 6:** Preparation and Delivery of Workshop 1

- Review of workshop attendees and agenda preparation - A review of participants and organisation into sector clusters to ensure meaningful participation in the workshops. An agenda which covers key trends, opportunities, challenges, and enablers will be established, along with identification of potential key projects, programs and priorities. Note that vision and strategic themes will be raised in the workshop but that this will be the focus of the subsequent second workshop.
- Background review of key trend influences and enablers – the working group will provide relevant materials to help shape a contextual framework for the workshop discussions. This will include local, domestic, and international economic trends and challenges and competitive advantages for the MIW region. This will help focus attention on priorities and work to unlock and deliver key projects and programs. This material will help form a key component of the workshop context setting.
- Pre-work material development – It is essential that participants come informed and engaged to the workshop and this will be aided by context setting material but also directed questions for participants to answer ahead of the workshop on what should be the focus of future activity and success for MIW – such as key industry support, catalysing infrastructure, new policy, strategies and partnerships, strategic planning for innovation in the freight and resources sector, and visitor economy projects etc. This work will be agreed with the working group before sharing with any stakeholders but will aim to be no more than 4-5 pages long, thus erudite and concise.
- Pre-workshop meetings with the working group – It is intended that a pre workshop session occurs in the days prior to the workshop to agree the approach, materials and roles of key personnel – it is likely the consultant will need scribes, table facilitators and ‘agitators’ (to probe and test responses and direct stakeholders. These are likely to be working group personnel). We need to ensure consistency of message across the process and that any risks are considered and mitigated ahead of the workshops.
- Workshop 1 – Ideally the workshops will need to be focussed owing to the nature of the stakeholders, possible self-interest and thus some form of sector consideration needs to occur when considering iterative feedback sessions. This may be along the lines of visitor economy, resource sector, road infrastructure, water resources, etc. This will need to be agreed with the working group, but the logic is to cluster stakeholder opinion and support for key actions and avoid an overly strategic and surface approach. This process could be a facilitated a 3–4-hour workshop session. The agenda will be agreed in advance but will look to follow a rough agenda of

regional economic development priority via the context of benefits, risks, current trends, challenges, opportunities, potential projects and enablers/influencers, next steps and the way forward. The session will include stakeholders working in groups of up to 8 people to direct responses to key challenges and opportunities. Workshop 1 Outcomes Deliverable – The key deliverables will be published document to a professional standard to enable RDA MIW and working group members to use the document to assist stakeholders and initial political conversations, and to showcase RDA MIW and working group strategic economic intent. Deliverable: 1 x A4 (10-15 page) Draft Workshop Report Deliverable. Highly graphic in content with multiple infographics to support context and priorities. Dates to be agreed.

- Post-workshop meetings with working group – A post workshop session is essential to identify the shared intent and agreed messaging from the workshop and any key risks and issues arising from the workshop that need to be managed and mitigated. This is essential owing to the stakeholder groups broad interests and need to keep a consistent but stakeholder informed message for the emerging deliverables.

#### **Task 7:** Stakeholder Feedback Exercise and Update to Workshop 1 Report

Following the development of the Workshop 1 Report it is essential to gain stakeholder support and get buy in to the key findings through a feedback opportunity. It is proposed that this is best achieved by sending out the draft workshop report to all workshop attendees and allowing a 2-week period for feedback that can then be considered and updated as agreed with the working group.

Deliverable: 1 x A4 (10-15 page) Final Workshop Report Deliverable. Highly graphic in content with multiple infographics to support context and priorities. Dates to be agreed.

#### **Task 8:** Preparation and Delivery of Workshop 2

- Review of workshop attendees and agenda preparation - A review of participants and organisations for Workshop 2 is necessary to potentially add stakeholders that may have missed the initial workshop and ensure that any new participants are brought up to date. An agenda which covers an update from Workshop 1, timeframes, vision, theming, clarification and agreement on key projects, programs, and priorities.
- Preparation of Workshop 2 material: Short contextual background review and update from Workshop 1 – the contextual material will use the material prepared for Workshop 1 but merely a 5-minute overview to illustrate the competitive advantages of the MIW region. The update from Workshop 1 will relate to challenges and opportunities to set the context for Workshop 2.
- Pre-work material development – Like Workshop 1, it is essential that participants come informed and engaged to the workshop and this will be aided by context setting material but also directed questions for participants to answer ahead of the workshop on what the potential vision, timing and theming of potential Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map should consist of. This work will be agreed with the working group before sharing with any stakeholders but will aim to be no more than 4-5 pages long, thus erudite, and concise.

- Pre-workshop meetings with working group – It is intended that a pre workshop session occurs in the days prior to the Workshop 2 to again agree the approach, materials and roles of key personnel – like Workshop 1, we will need scribes, table facilitators and ‘agitators’ (to probe and test responses and direct stakeholders. These are likely to be working group personnel).
- Workshop 2 – Consultant will facilitate a 3–4-hour workshop session. The agenda will be agreed in advance but will likely consist of contextual setting, update from Workshop 1, timing consideration (10, 20 years?), MIW today, MIW in 2040 (date to be agreed), feedback from pre-work on vision and group session on vision setting, pre-work feedback on theming and group session on theming, priority projects and enablers and the way forward. Again, this will need to be agreed with the working group. The session will include stakeholders working in groups of up to 8 people to direct responses to the vision, theming, and priorities elements.
- Workshop 2 Outcomes Deliverable – The key deliverable will be published to a professional standard in order to enable the working group to use the document to assist stakeholder and initial political conversations, and to showcase the regions strategic economic intent. A table of contents will be agreed with the working group prior to its delivery. Deliverable: 1 x A4 (10-15 page) Draft Workshop 2 Report Deliverable. Highly graphic in content with multiple infographics to support context and priorities. Dates to be agreed.
- Post-workshop meetings with working group and RDAMIW – A post workshop session is essential to identify the shared intent and agreed messaging from the workshop and any key risks and issues arising from the workshop that need to be managed and mitigated ahead of the next stages. This is essential owing to the stakeholder groups broad interests and need to keep a consistent but stakeholder informed message for the emerging deliverables.

**Task 9:** Stakeholder Feedback Exercise and Update to Workshop 2 Report

Following the development of the Workshop 2 Report it is essential to gain stakeholder support and get buy-in to the key findings through a feedback opportunity. It is proposed that this is best achieved by sending out the draft workshop report to all workshop attendees and allowing a 2-week period for feedback that can then be considered and updated as agreed with the working group. Deliverable: 1 x A4 (10-15 page) Final Workshop Report Deliverable. Highly graphic in content with multiple infographics to support context and priorities. Dates to be agreed.

**Task 10:** Shared Vision - Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map

The Shared Vision document is the amalgamated findings of the two workshops, providing a clear and erudite vision. Table of contents likely to include introduction, key competitive advantages, challenges, aspiration, vision, strategic themes, key projects, timeline and next steps. Deliverable: The Draft and Final Shared Vision will be presented as a 20-30-page document, graphic designed format suitable for publication as a web-based document.

**Task 11: Liaison with State and Federal Government**

Whilst this is relatively early in the engagement exercise it is considered that engagement with selected State and Federal representative members and representatives are essential to enable an update for these parties and gain some sense of potential support or necessary changes required to ensure future support. This exercise will be guided by the working group and may include the use of the consultant to aid in engagement strategy. The aim at this stage is for information sharing and it could coincide with visit to Canberra and Brisbane via liaison provided by with State and Federal members in the region.

**Phase 4 (Optional)**

**Task 12:** Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map Investment Proposal - linked to a Regional Investment proposal or Deal. Following the previous tasks, it is now possible to develop a concise investment proposal which concentrates on the MIW priorities for unlocking opportunity and potential over the next 10-20 years.

This document could form the principal element of future advocacy exercises and hence needs to build on the previous documents by focusing on why key projects are priorities (what they help deliver – addressed against the Federal Government priorities for jobs, skills development, GRP, COVID-19 Recovery, etc), how they align with strategic (regional, State and Federal policy and programs), the potential roles of key agencies and dollar commitments required to deliver.

Deliverable: The proposal document could be a 20-30 page graphically rich and erudite document. It will include a tripartite political support from Local, State and Federal members to demonstrate the buy-in, accord and shared desire to deliver a better, resilient, and more prosperous MIW region. A possible table of contents may include foreword, MIW vision and delivering on behalf of the community, priority actions – individual projects and their commitments (agencies and \$'s), benefits and complementary outcomes and projects. It is envisaged that there will be up to 3 draft versions of the document, including feedback from the working group, and input from stakeholders, the RDA and State and Federal members.

The Phase 4 tasks are presented as outline tasks at this stage as they are outside of the RDA MIW directs deliverable charter of developing a Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map. Dependent upon progress of the activity and advocacy throughout earlier phases some additional advocacy and engagement and sign off activity may include additional tasks outlined below - understanding these additional tasks are beyond RDA MIW direct remit however RDA MIW could help facilitate stakeholder actions.

**Task 13: Advocacy Actions**

This includes liaison, meetings, and promotion of a regional investment deal benefits with Local, State and Federal members and key industry groups.



**Task 14: Statement of Intent**

The key tasks here are to agree on the principal intent and outcomes on what a regional investment deal is attempting to achieve. This is likely to be around the generation of local economic stimuli through job creation, key infrastructure delivery, support for the tourism, agricultural and resource sectors (of comparative advantage) and public realm and liveability enhancements.

**Task 15: Negotiation of the Regional Investment Deal**

This is perhaps the most significant series of tasks as it entails the development of rationale and reasoning for key commitments toward any investment deal, their dollar funding requirement, identification of lead and supporting agency roles and the interrelationship, value and benefits delivered from each commitment. This task frequently takes several months to evolve, negotiate, and agree.

**Task 16: Regional Investment Deal Signing**

Once the negotiation of what the investment deal will consist of has occurred the formal signing is a relatively straightforward task for the political leaders, However, it will require some finetuning on the part of RDA MIW and lead stakeholder officers to ensure buy-in, sign-off and matching to political budget commitments.

**Task 17: Implementation of a Regional Investment Deal**

Once a deal has been signed the real work of implementation begins. This is frequently led by the agencies that have been identified as the leads for each commitment but will require coordination and by a an executive and working group to ensure commitments are kept and delivered.



## **5. COST**

It is envisaged that the cost for completion of tasks 1-11 would be in the range of \$80,000- \$90,000 - additional costs for completion of tasks 12-17 would be in the range of \$28,000 - \$30,000.

## **6. FUNDING OPTIONS**

RDA MIW could consider options of co-investment from Local government and entities such as GW3 to reduce the cost burden on RDA MIW - Prior to COVID-19 intervention the GWCOM Group had agreed to co-fund the development of a MIW Regional Economic Development Strategy with links to the development of a Regional Deal in line with Federal and State government commitment toward City Deals and the Hinkler Regional Deal - Under the project investment arrangement each respective local government was seeking to each co-invest \$20,000 with matching \$20,000 investment from RDA MIW.

The suggestions is that RDA MIW commit up to \$50,000 toward the completion of the Greater Whitsundays Sustainable Economic Development Road Map and seek an additional \$10,000 per local government to fund tasks 1-12 - should local government and others stakeholders seek to complete tasks 12-17 – RDA MIW could look toward contributing a further \$5,000 with other co-investment coming from local government and economic development groups such as GW3 or DSD or DPC.