



Blackall-Tambo
Regional Council

Exploring the past. Innovating the future.

Regional Economic

Development Plan

2012-2017

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

The Blackall-Tambo Regional Council has prepared the following Regional Economic Development Plan as a blueprint to drive the economic future of our region.

Our Region is blessed with significant natural resources in the form of natural gas and coal deposits, excellent grazing and pastoral land that has had a proud pioneering history.

The current boom in coal and gas deposits will eventually have an impact across this region. With this in mind, future growth needs to be managed effectively, and leveraged in order to achieve maximum benefit for local residents and the council.

Council needs to demonstrate a clear direction that recognizes the needs of the community through forward planning and economic growth, to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for the entire region.

Recent economic statistical data has highlighted that the Central West Region, is experiencing a steady population decline, an ageing population and a lower than average standard of living as compared with the rest of the State.

The Regional strategies will provide direction in areas such as sustainability; respond to opportunities for new growth and collaboration between local government and community groups that will encourage confidence in maintaining the region's lifestyle and character.

The Economic Development Plan will focus on the following areas:

- Economic Growth and Small Business stimulation
- Natural Resource management
- Supporting community resilience and innovation
- Encouraging rural and local businesses
- Developing infrastructure and future planning
- Tourism Industry investment and development

As leaders of the Blackall-Tambo Region, Council has an obligation to the generations past. We can be guided by the lessons of our history, through exploring the past, nurturing our diverse landscapes and creating a wealth of opportunities by innovating for the future.

Cr Barry Muir
Mayor,
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Plan has identified a range of areas that Council will address over time and in line with available resources. Other infrastructure needs will also be identified over time. The resources available will dictate when the various issues are addressed. Partnerships with the private sector may allow some of these issues to be addressed more quickly.

The Economic Plan will focus on:

- Assisting existing farm and non-farm businesses to grow and improve profitability and their capacity to employ more people.
- Assisting existing businesses obtain economic benefits through mining activity within the region.
- Attracting new businesses linked to farming, tourism and mining activity within the region. A careful analysis of the role of incentives will be an integral part of this approach.

This will be done through:

- Developing hard infrastructure to support business.
- Developing a range of soft infrastructure, such as training programs and online media workshops for small businesses.
- Focused programs for the main industry sectors.

International trends suggest that the beef and sheep meat industries have good prospects, as does drive tourism. However, these trends also suggest that there will be growing international competition in these industries and that continuous improvement will be needed in all areas to maintain and grow markets.

The impact of mining exploration in the region and mining in adjacent regions is still not clear as of July 2012. However, the experience of other regions of Queensland is that the impacts are likely to be significant.

Expectantly, demand for new infrastructure, rising real estate prices, labour shortages and rising labour costs may be experienced.

Identified labour impacts of the mining industry, when linked with anticipated demographic change leading to fewer people of working age, suggest that retaining the existing population and attracting additional population will be a challenge.

Government and business may well need to look for efficiencies from new technologies and management systems, especially arising from information and communications technologies and associated electronics technologies.

However, despite these challenges, it is suggested that, if the potential opportunities are identified and pursued, the Blackall–Tambo region can look forward to a strong positive future.

Ken Timms
Chief Executive Officer
Blackall-Tambo Regional Council

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1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 - Key Issues Underpinning the Economic Development of the Region

A key issue relevant to economic, social and cultural development of Western Queensland for regions such as Blackall-Tambo that have low populations and are quite separate from larger centres is that:

- What might be identifiable and actionable business opportunities in a larger Regional Centre may not be converted in Blackall or Tambo.
 - Most small businesses in Blackall-Tambo are quite small and often have low retained earnings so that they lack sufficient capital to expand;
 - The scale for capacity building is low, perhaps too low to provide an adequate income.
- Public servants in Brisbane and Canberra:
 - Often lack knowledge of the issues faced in remote regions;
 - Are focused on complex problems in larger Regional Centres and often neglect the needs of smaller rural towns.
- People in Western Queensland therefore have to identify and apply their own solutions using innovative methods.
- It is likely that people can live on a lower income, as house repayments are on average \$800 a month lower and rent is on average \$135 a week lower.
- If real estate prices rose due to expansion linked to the mining industry, people may experience real hardship.
- For the median income for Blackall Tambo to equal the Queensland figure, local businesses, and Council, would need to increase wages paid by approximately \$8 million a year.
- If mining companies within a reasonable driving distance are paying very high wages, this competition for labour may create real problems for local businesses and Council as people facing higher real estate prices and rents seek higher paying jobs.
- Rural contractors and workers struggle with seasonal work due to weather influences and market changes and seek more secure employment conditions.
- Industry diversification with tourism becoming a higher priority that contributes to sustaining the economy.
- Changing skill sets with aged care sector growing to become a high employer of the region.

1.2 - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The Blackall – Tambo region has a range of strengths and faces a range of problems in the future, for example:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An adaptable and capable population • Fertile land with good grazing • Artesian water • Minerals and coal seam gas • Adjacent to the Surat and Bowen Basins • Both towns on the Matilda Highway • Sound national, regional and local governance and macro-economic policy • Affordable housing, Lifestyle attributes • Minimal commuting time • Access to most goods and service • Regular air transport • ADSL and wireless Broadband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads under threat from over-use • Much commercial and social infrastructure is aging • Distance from markets • High fuel and freight costs • Housing prices may rise due to mining growth • Inflation from the mining boom leads to high interest rates • Environmental influences such as floods and drought • Lack of critical mass
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and communications technologies lead to new business opportunities and mitigates the distance from markets issue • World demand for meat grows • Networks of graziers selling meat to target markets • World demand for gas rises • New solar technologies make solar power more feasible • New technologies make biofuels cheaper • New transport technologies reduce transport costs • Growth in adventure and nature tourism and those seeking experiences • Recognition of and use of existing assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing beef and lamb production from Africa and South America • Liquid fuel shortages and price rises • Prolonged drought • New jobs in mining areas draws population away • Overuse of artesian water leads to restrictions • Labor shortages from mining boom • Higher local wage rates flowing from the mining boom • Further Council amalgamations • Fluctuating market trends • Prolonged wet periods limiting business activity • Potential closure of the Tambo Cypress mill due to harvest restrictions.

2 - REGIONAL OVERVIEW: EXPLORING THE PAST, INNOVATING THE FUTURE!

"The quality of our region's relaxed and balanced lifestyle is widely known and sets us apart from other regions in Queensland and Australia. As custodians of Australian history, we take our stewardship of history, culture and natural resources seriously.

Our region provides opportunities for strong, diverse and creative Industries to develop, driving the economic development of our communities. People choose to live in the Central West Region. Tourists visit our Region due to our likeable, affordable, safe, vibrant, prosperous and friendly communities."

Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2012

Demography

The local government area of the Blackall-Tambo Region has a total area of 30,451.9 km², or 1.8 per cent of the total area of the state. The region has an average daily temperature range of 14.2c to 29.1c and on average Blackall-Tambo Region receives 496 mm of rainfall each year.

As at 30 June 2011, the estimated resident population of Blackall Tambo Region was 2,084 persons, Blackall-Tambo Region's population in 2031 is projected to be 2,091 persons.

In the Blackall-Tambo Region, as at 30 June 2011, 74.7 per cent of the usual resident population were in the disadvantaged quintile and 15.8 per cent of the population of Blackall Tambo Region were in the least disadvantaged quintile.

Population by Age:

In the Blackall-Tambo Region (LGA) as at 30 June 2010, 17.3 per cent of persons were aged 0 to 14 years, 64.7 per cent were aged 15 to 64 years and 18.0 per cent were aged 65 years and over .

Median Age:

As at 30 June 2010, the median age for Blackall-Tambo Region (LGA) was 44.8 years, an increase of 4.5 years over the five year period from 30 June 2005 to 30 June 2010.

The median age in Queensland as at 30 June 2010 was 36.2 years, an increase of 0.3 years over the same period.

Population Projections:

As at 30 June 2031, the population for the Blackall-Tambo Region (LGA) is projected to be 2,091 persons.

The population for the Blackall-Tambo Region (LGA) is projected to increase by an average annual growth rate of 0.2 per cent over the 20-year period between 2011 and 2031. In comparison, Queensland is projected to have an average annual growth rate of 1.8 per cent over the same period.

Individual weekly incomes:

At the time of the 2006 Census, there were 754 persons aged 15 years and over in the Blackall –Tambo Region (LGA) who stated their gross individual weekly income was less than \$400 (46.5 per cent of all persons aged 15 years and over).

This was higher than the 39.7 per cent recorded in Queensland. In comparison, there were 35 persons aged 15 years and over in the Blackall-Tambo Region (LGA) who stated their gross individual weekly income was more than \$2,000 (2.2 per cent of all persons aged 15 years and over). This compared with 2.9 per cent in Queensland.

Employment by Occupations:

At the time of the 2006 Census, Managers were the largest occupation group of employment of the Blackall–Tambo Region (LGA) usual residents, with 282 persons or 26.9 per cent of the region's employed labour force.

Other occupation groups with relatively large numbers of employed persons included Labourers (241 persons or 23.0 per cent) and Technicians & trades workers (106 persons or 10.1 per cent).

The highest specialisation ratios in the region occurred in the occupation groups of Managers (2.17) and Labourers (1.93).

Building approvals:

In the 12 months ending 31 March 2012, there were 6 residential dwelling unit approvals in the Blackall–Tambo Region (LGA). These approvals were valued at \$1.3 million.

The value of non-residential building approvals in the Blackall-Tambo Region (LGA) in the 12 months ending 31 March 2012 was \$0.6 million. The value of residential building approvals in the Blackall Tambo Region for the March quarter 2012 was \$0.0 million, compared with \$1,472.0 million in Queensland.

Between the March quarter 2010 and the March quarter 2012, the value of new residential building approvals in the Blackall-Tambo Region ranged between \$0.0 million and \$0.7 million. The value of non-residential building approvals in the Blackall-Tambo Region for the March quarter 2012 was \$0.0 million, compared with \$1,238.3 million in Queensland.

Between the March quarter 2010 and the March quarter 2012, the value of non-residential building approvals in the Blackall-Tambo Region ranged between \$0.0 million and \$0.6 million.

3 - REGIONAL GROWTH:

"The Central West region, despite its small population and remoteness, hosts a number of sustainable communities. The sustainability of these communities is closely tied to the responsible stewardship of the natural environment, the residents' spirit, pride and sense of community, and the innovation of small businesses to provide required services."

2009 Central West Regional Plan:

Agriculture and Tourism:

Further development of the region's major agricultural and tourism industries is heavily dependent upon the provision of safe, reliable and cost-effective infrastructure. Regionally, agriculture and tourism have strong growth potential, but are vulnerable to commodity price fluctuation, industry rationalisation, cost-reduction measures, and changes to employment and work practices.

These factors are partly responsible for the decline in population and services in the region's towns.

A broader and more robust economic base is needed to minimise the impacts of outside influences and provide a wider range of employment and economic opportunities within the region.

Strengthening the economy will improve the long-term economic sustainability of the region

Road infrastructure:

Road infrastructure, for example, will be impacted by increased traffic volumes in areas where mining exploration is undertaken. The provision of regional infrastructure, including the maintenance and funding of roads, will therefore require collaborative planning solutions that will need to be developed in consultation with all key stakeholders.

Communication and Partnerships:

Greater communication between all levels of government and the local community will be achieved by working together to develop regional infrastructure solutions, through planning partnerships founded on shared ambitions, shared responsibility and shared action.

Public administration, health care, retail trade and education are also significant sources of employment in the region.

Planning needs to be consistent with relevant land use and economic development strategies to ensure that infrastructure projects are developed to service industry and community demands in a timely cost-effective and environmentally sustainable manner.

In particular, the infrastructure needs of local communities will need to be managed, in planning for growth in the resource sector.

The benefits and opportunities that will be created by growth are recognised by local communities.

Partnerships for the future

Council will look for options to work more collaboratively with:

- Remote Area Planning and Development Board ([RAPAD](#));
- Outback Queensland Tourism Association ([OQTA](#));
- Western Queensland Local Government Association;
- Regional natural resource management organisations e.g. Desert Channels Queensland; Desert Uplands and Desert Knowledge.
- State Government Regional Managers Coordination Network;
- Regional Development Australia (RDA), a joint Queensland and Commonwealth Government group to provide strategic advice to government on regional issues.

Local Governments:

Seven local governments cover the region extending west from the Central Highlands to the Northern Territory border.

- Barcaldine Regional Council
- Barcoo Shire Council
- Blackall-Tambo Regional Council
- Boulia Shire Council
- Diamantina Shire Council
- Longreach Regional Council
- Winton Shire Council.

The Central West and its people have significant employment and growth potential in existing and new industries such as:

- Clean energy from geothermal energy, solar voltaic and solar thermal production
- Good land management and stewardship of grazing land
- Organic agriculture, aquaculture and agribusiness
- Ecotourism, Indigenous tourism, palaeotourism, education/study tourism and heritage/cultural tourism
- Mineral, coal, gas and shale oil resources

4 - BEST PRACTICE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The 2011 ABS Agricultural Census was sent to approximately 163,000 agricultural businesses across Australia and collected data on agricultural production and water and land management best practices.

Data from the Agricultural Census 2011:

The Agricultural Census is only conducted every five years, with surveys in the intervening years, which limits the amount of annual data available.

Regional Drivers:

1. Agritourism and Food tourism:

Australia aims to improve understanding of the drivers and barriers to regional agritourism and food tourism:

- Agritourism and food tourism enterprises can allow farmers to increase their farm-related income, through various forms of enterprise. Enterprises may feature or add value to traditional food and fibre products. Alternatively, some may have little to do with agriculture directly and provide recreation, nature-based, or educational experiences and products.
- Some can be labour and resource intensive, while others require few inputs. They can operate seasonally or year-round. They all have a common theme: they help farmers stay on the farm.

"This gives willing farmers an opportunity to tap into a new market."

ABARES Report 2011-Click on link below to access the ABARES Report:

- http://adl.brs.gov.au/data/warehouse/pe_abarebrs99001744/Agritourism_2010_REPORT_11a.pdf

2. Energy Consumption and Renewable Energy Sources:

Energy consumption of non-renewable and renewable energy sources has recently come into focus for Local Governments. The ABS compiles a range of environment and energy publications and provides some solutions.

- <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/c311215.nsf/web/Environment+and+Energy>

3. Livestock and Meat, Australia:

Livestock and Meat, Australia, March 2012 provides monthly data on livestock slaughtering's and meat production at the national and state/territory level. In March 2012 the trend estimate for cattle slaughtering's remained steady at 608 thousand.

Calf slaughtering's increased by 2% to 62 thousand in March 2012. In March 2012, the trend estimate for sheep slaughtering's decreased by 1% to 426 thousand. Lamb slaughtering's increased by 2% to 1.6 million in March 2012. The trend estimate for pig slaughtering's remained steady at 395 thousand in March 2012.

- <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/7218.0.55.001Mar%202012?OpenDocument>

5 - INFRASTRUCTURE

5.1 - Hard Infrastructure

Council plans to address a wide range of economic infrastructure over time, depending on its budget situation.

Infrastructure such as the Blackall Aquatic Centre has a major community and economic benefit as it is also a tourist attraction.

The balance between community and economic outcomes for infrastructure will need to be monitored.

This hard infrastructure will include:

5.1.1 - Serviced residential and industrial land

- The lack of serviced residential and industrial land is seen as a barrier to growth.
- Council would find it difficult to fund this land development itself and the rate of likely sales may mean that property developers may find it unviable to develop this land alone.
- Council will look to develop new ways of partnering with the private sector to develop serviced land.
- Council will work with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and the Department of Environment and Resource management on planning and property development issues.

5.1.2 - Water supply and sewage upgrades

- Council will develop a long term plan for upgrades of water supply and sewage systems.
- Council will seek Commonwealth and State funding for these upgrades where possible.
- Council may need to consider water management issues at some future time to reduce water use and consequently sewage generation so as to reduce infrastructure costs.

5.1.3 - Improved electricity supply

- Council will work with Ergon Energy in relation to upgrades of traditional electricity supply systems.
Council will continue to work with businesses and households on energy conservation programs to both reduce the need for costly infrastructure to cope with short term peak demand surges and to reduce business operating costs.

5.1.4 - Renewable Energy

- <http://www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au/small-business/>
- Council will look to partner with Ergon, other energy authorities and the private sector to explore new ways to use renewable energy to supplement traditional supply systems.

- In particular, Council will explore opportunities for bulk purchase of solar panels to assist in reducing load demands on the grid, and so hopefully reduce 'brownouts' and to assist households and businesses reduce power costs.
- Council will be required to reassess liability with recently passed Carbon Price Scheme from July 1. As part of its commitment to the Kyoto protocol, the Federal Government passed the "Clean Energy Legislation Package (CELP) which provided a mechanism for pricing Green House Gas emissions.
- CELP will affect each Queensland council differently across a range of areas of operation; variables such as-
 1. Pricing decisions by suppliers and contractors;
 2. Volumes of carbon intensive goods and services being purchased;
 3. Policy positions regarding emissions reduction, abatement programs and changing of service users.

5.1.5 - Blackall Saleyards

- Council recognises the economic benefits from the successful operation of the Blackall Saleyards.
- Council will look at options to place the Saleyards on a more commercial footing so that this facility can better meet the needs of the grazing industry.
- Council will consider commercial routes for re-development of the Saleyards as part of its obligation to responsibly manage its debt position.

5.1.6 - Swimming Pools

- Council recognises the role the Blackall Aquatic Centre plays in attracting tourists, as well as providing a first class amenity for residents.
- A short and long term maintenance program will aim to maintain the quality of the Blackall Aquatic Centre.
- Options for adding a mineral spa at the Tambo swimming pool will be investigated.
- The value of the assets in both swimming pools means that Council will need to develop management strategies that integrate their commercial value in attracting tourists and their social amenity for residents.

5.1.7 - Transport Infrastructure

- Council recognises the critical nature of transport infrastructure and will look to work with the Queensland Department of Transport on regional transport planning.
- This liaison will include cooperation on the examination of rail transport of cattle commenced by Queensland Transport and Agforce in 2009.
- Council will consider how it can work with other Councils along the Landsborough Highway in developing a business case for the upgrading of this critical national highway.
- Council will cooperate with plans by the Commonwealth Government for a National Freight Strategy. Council will actively seek to include local transport companies in these planning processes in terms of new areas of opportunity.

5.1.8 - National Broadband Network

- The National Broadband Network will be a key element of the infrastructure of the region.
- Council will cooperate with other Councils, the State Government and the Commonwealth to ensure the best possible service for residents and businesses.
- Council will explore options through workshops; seminars etc to assist residents and businesses make maximum opportunity from broadband internet services.

5.1.9 - Digital TV Rebroadcasting

- Council will cooperate with the Commonwealth and television stations regarding funding Councils to re-broadcast digital TV services so that residents are not disadvantaged once the broadcasting of analogue services ceases.

5.1.10 - Long term day care

- Council recognises the importance of quality long and short term childcare at both Blackall and Tambo as a key issue in assisting men and women gain employment.
- Council recognises that such day care needs to be on a commercial basis, linked with Government subsidies, and so looks to work with and support community groups where possible to provide quality childcare.

5.2 - Soft Infrastructure

The role of soft infrastructure including training programs and business networks is seen as important in economic development. Council will work with a range of groups to develop relevant soft infrastructure, including:

5.2.1 - Regional Development Australia

- Council seeks to work closely with Regional Development Australia as a way to work on region-wide issues and provide strategic advice to the Commonwealth and State Governments.

5.2.2 - Business Groups/Small Business Forum

- Council recognises the value of business coming together to identify issues, work together and provide Council with informed positions on key issues affecting business.
- Accordingly, Council will assist the Tambo and Blackall business groups develop and consider amalgamation and greater cooperation.
- Council will seek to link these business groups with projects such as these strategies, the Draft Tourism Action Plan 2012-2017, energy efficiency project and small business workshops.
- Council will seek to develop potential links with groups such as Desert Knowledge Australia and Desert Channels Group to establish business networks.

5.2.3 - Skills Development

- Council recognises that improved business skills and improved staff skills are a key way for businesses to better compete in the modern world. Accordingly, Council seeks to assist in the local delivery of a wide range of training programs.
- To better promote Small Business Skills , Council seeks to:
 - Work with DEEDI (DEEDI has been broken into several separate departments), DAFF and RAPAD on local delivery of its small business workshops;
 - Promote sources of information on training through local newspapers such as The Grassland Whisperer and Barcoo Independent;
 - Actively promote online courses, Industry news and developments and small business issues via Small Business Forum Network that will allow small business owners to do courses at home in their own time on their own computer.
- Council will look for ways to assist in the development of information technology skills, for the community in general and for small business, tourism and graziers in particular.
- Council will assist in the delivery of the marketing for tourism businesses courses developed by Tourism Queensland.
- Council will look to work with community groups and government on the wider skills development issues linking into mining and other emerging industries.
- Council will look to support the development of improved training infrastructure for Tambo and Blackall.
- Council will look to support mentoring support structures and networks to assist in skills transfer.
- Council will support Business Networks to allow idea sharing, motivation and inspiration.

5.2.4 - Energy Conservation

- Council will promote the outcomes of the Ergon energy efficient audit program.
- Council will also implement the Sustainable Business Networks program, building on the Ergon program.
- Ways to assist the wider community in reducing energy use, with its resulting savings, will be explored.
- Council will explore how to use the libraries as information sources for the community and business, linked with internet access and the use of electronic technologies.

5.2.5 - Wild Dogs

- Council recognises the economic and environmental significance of controlling the wild dog population.
- Council will therefore work with other groups including the Queensland Government's Q-Dog Committee to identify and implement best practise in wild dog control as a way of making best use of its resources in this area.
- Regional cooperation will be a key feature of Council's future program of wild dog control.

5.2.6 - Pest Management

- Council will develop and implement a comprehensive Pest Management Strategy to control weed and feral animal pests in the region. Wider regional cooperation will be sought where possible.

5.2.7 - Investment attraction facilitation

- Council will maintain a comprehensive database of infrastructure and existing businesses to facilitate inwards investment attraction.
- Council will liaise with mining and associated companies regarding inwards investment attraction.

5.2.8 - Human and Social Capital Capacity-Building

- Council will support community groups as key contributors to the social and economic well-being of the region.
- Council will support local and regional events as recognised as contributors to tourism.
- Council will support community groups as contributors to tourism based products.
- Community facilities and resources will be supported as being major contributors to the social capital and ways to build the capacity of the community.
- Council will extend support to communities to build tourism based products such as arts based tourism packages.

5.2.9 - Social Enterprise

The role of social enterprises will be explored as part of a wider economic development strategy. Examples of social enterprise that might be relevant in a Blackall-Tambo context are;

- Community banking.
- These enterprises include cooperatives and mutual associations that have a commercial outcome as a core aim

6 - GRAZING INDUSTRY

- Council recognises that the grazing industry is a key local industry.
- It is also recognised that the prosperity of the grazing industry is linked with sound natural resource management.
- Council will therefore liaise with relevant agencies regarding the Wild Rivers concept.
- Council will work with industry groups such as Agforce to:
 - Assist graziers access Commonwealth and other funding to explore new ways of improving productivity and environmental management.
 - Explore how 'precision agriculture' and a range of new electronic technologies such as Global Satellite Systems Navigation (GSSN) and other new applications of information and communications technologies might give equivalent benefits to grazing that it has given to the cropping industries.
- Council will also assist individuals or groups of graziers in the preparation of grant applications for:
 - The Grazing Land Management course from QPIF;
 - MLA Edge Workshops;
 - DAFF -Climate Ready grants.
 - Desert Channels Queensland-assisting gain access to Funding
- A Grazing Industry Strategy will be developed to focus these efforts via AgForce.

7 - TOURISM

Council Tourism Strategy BTRC Tourism Action Plan 2012-2017 will focus on:

- Workshops and training programs to improve the skills of owners, managers and their staff,
- Better marketing of the region, as part of the Matilda Highway and Outback Queensland.
- Working with business to develop new ways to encourage tourists to spend longer in the region.
- This will include self-guided day tours, branding the Matilda Highway as comprising a number of 'trails', e.g. a nature trail, guided day tours and new 'bush experiences'. The significant aboriginal rock art in the region will hopefully play a large part of these plans.
- Council to lend support for new Tourism ventures and local initiatives

Tourism projects to be explored include:

- Working with Tourism Queensland on the Tourism Opportunity Plan (TOP) project.
- Identifying a 'tourism signature' for both towns.
- Work with Tourism Queensland and [DEEDI](#) (DEEDI has been broken into several separate departments), QWPS, DAFF re assisting new tourism businesses.
- Develop optional self-guided tourism itineraries for each town.
- Develop and progressively improve a BTRC Tourism Brochure.
- Upgrading of the BTRC Tourism website and exploring other internet based marketing activities eg Facebook, Twitter, YouTube.
- Lobby OQTA in relation to a whole of Matilda Highway marketing, to provide series of low cost attractions along the highway, including linking events so as to create a staged series of events from April in the South to September in the North.
- Event Tourism to be developed and coordinated with neighboring councils. Also link new events so as to be mutually supportive of existing events, eg just before or just after existing events so as to build patronage for both.

- Lobby OQTA to establish Matilda Highway as a:
 - Nature trail, including bird watching;
 - Sand green golf course trail;
 - Mineral spa trail and Artesian Bore Trail;
 - Lawn bowls trail;
 - Art Trails / galleries;
 - Event Trail such as the Kunmurri Artist Trail

- Promote Blackall and Tambo as events venues:
 - Based on the Cultural Centre at Blackall for conferences and similar events;
 - Horse and other rural events such as the Camp draft National Finals; Through developing a significant community event that grows to a major regional event;
 - Attraction of major meetings and conferences such as the Public Art Symposium staged in 2011.

- Encourage guided day tours to be established in both towns by building linkages between:
 - Existing tour operators in Charleville and Longreach;
 - Motel, hotel and caravan operators;
 - Other interested parties.

- Arts & Cultural tourism:
 - Work with the Bidjara people to develop tourism and cultural opportunities from the significant rock art in the region;
 - Work with Blackall Cultural Association and Living Arts Centre to develop art based tourism packages including art retreat and residencies;
 - Work with Barcoo Retirement Village to develop "Community Shed" and Art Gallery at the "Bushman's" Hotel;
 - Work towards growing collection of public art and development of a public art park along the Barcoo River Bank in Blackall;
 - Work with Red Ridge (Interior Queensland) to support art and cultural activities.

- Address issues related to new 'outback experiences' including:
 - Public liability insurance:
 - Bush campsites on lagoons, billabongs:
 - Better utilization of land zoned as Reserves:
 - Farm stays and similar on property experiences.

8 - MINING DEVELOPMENT

Council will work closely with the State Government and other Regional Councils so that it:-

- Better understands the impacts of mining exploration and development in the Blackall-Tambo region.
- To encourage these mining operators to work with local business and to become involved within the local community
- Council will endeavour to establish a forum ,similar to Galilee Basin Operators Forum (GBOF) in order to build better communication between mine and exploration operators and the local community-Blackall Tambo Operators Forum (BTOF)

There are currently two Mining and Exploration Companies working within the BTRC regional boundary, plus a Liquid Natural Gas operation recently based in Alice Springs:

East Energy Ltd:

Recent exploration at the Blackall Coal Project has delineated an Inferred Resource of 1.2 billion tonnes of thermal quality coal defined by an extensive drilling program in 2008/2009. The Blackall Project is secured by tenement EPC 1149, covering 300 sub-blocks over an area of approximately 900 km² in the Eromanga Basin in Queensland. The tenement was granted to East Energy on 22 April 2008 for an initial period of five years.

The area is 65 kilometres south of Blackall Township, 177 kilometres North West of Charleville, and 81 kilometres west of Tambo. Blackall is 1,050 kilometres from Brisbane via the Warrego and Landsborough Highways and is 734 kilometres by rail from Gladstone via Rockhampton, Emerald and Jericho. The spur line from Jericho extends to Yarka 160 kilometres west of Blackall

Coalbank Ltd:

The company holds one of the largest coal exploration permit areas in Australia, and is primarily focused on coal exploration in Queensland. Significant value is added to the company's projects through its team's exploration expertise and commercial discovery experience.

COALBANK's future strategy includes the involvement of strategic industry partners for its key projects to accelerate their development from exploration to production. Given COALBANK's core focus on coal exploration, the company will consider joint venture partners or spin-off opportunities for its petroleum subsidiary, Surat Gas Pty Ltd, and for its metals subsidiary, Harvest Metals Pty Ltd

Energy World:

EWC's wholly owned subsidiary, Australian Gasfields (AGF), is the owner and operator of both fields. Connected to the Queensland pipe gas distribution network through Cheepie-Barcaldine gas pipeline and connected to the Queensland pipe gas distribution network through Mt. Isa gas pipeline. EWC intends to construct a gas pipeline from Gilmore Gas field through to Abbott's Point near Bowen.

The above information are extracts from the websites of each company.

9 - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Blackall and Tambo have to be enjoyable places to live. Therefore, Economic Development will need to be supported by strong cultural, sport, youth, age, and other community development strategies.

The role of key community facilities such as aged care facilities, schools and hospitals in employment, training, local purchase of goods and services, investment and in retaining highly skilled professionals in the region is acknowledged.

10 - GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABARE:	Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics, the Australian government economic research unit on agriculture and the resources sector.
DAFF:	the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry.
DEEDI:	Formally known as DEEDI: the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, has been dispersed into several other departments.
DERM:	Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management. This incorporates the former Departments of Natural Resources and Water and the Environment Protection agency.
MLA:	Meat and Livestock Australia, the industry association for the meat and livestock industries.
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, one of the world leading research groups on economic development.
OQTA:	Outback Queensland Tourism Association, the regional tourism association for outback Queensland.
QPIF:	Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries, part of DEEDI.
RAPAD:	Remote Area Planning and Development Board, the regional economic development agency for the Central West.
RDA:	Regional Development Australia, the group set up between the Commonwealth and the States to focus on strategic issues for regional development.