

Sunshine Coast Region 2025 Federal Election Priorities



Message from our Mayor

The Australian Federal Election comes at a critical time for the Sunshine Coast.

Our region is experiencing extraordinary population growth, increasing by 2.7 per cent per annum with the current population of 365,942 expected to reach 518,000 by 2041.

In parallel, we are preparing for a successful Brisbane 2032 Olympics and Paralympic Games and the enormous benefits our community will receive from the new mountain bike centre, indoor sports centre, upgraded stadium and athlete's village that will each deliver a lasting legacy for the Sunshine Coast.

As people continue to be attracted to the area, we recognise that more region shaping infrastructure is needed. Sunshine Coast Council's immediate priorities focus on the delivery of roads and public transport, an efficient international airport, a contemporary convention and performing arts facility, advancing manufacturing and innovation, and supporting growth in jobs, tourism and housing supply.

The unprecedented population growth within the region is placing significant pressure on housing supply and urgent action is required to increase affordable housing to enable families to have a safe and secure place to call home.

The strain on our road infrastructure and public transport facilities in particular, is intensified by the attraction of more than 11 million visitors to the region every year.

Our industry and tourism providers continue to innovate and grow, but require support to provide employment opportunities across expanding domestic and international visitation, manufacturing and construction.

We recognise the challenges of climate change and the need to protect our coastlines and associated private and public infrastructure from issues such as rising sea levels, storm surge and coastal inundation.

Urgent Australian Government action is required to assist Sunshine Coast Council respond to the needs currently confronting the region. Restoring the Australian Government Financial Assistance Grant to Local Government to at least the equivalent of 1 per cent of total Australian tax revenue would be an excellent starting point.

The commitments we are seeking prior to the Australian Federal Election are about the future of our residents, our communities and our region, as well as enhancing the Sunshine Coasts already significant contribution to the Australian economy.

Council understands that by working together, we can achieve more for our community and for Australia. Our Council looks forward to continuing to work with the Australian Government to realise important outcomes for the Sunshine Coast.



Rosanna Natoli
Mayor, Sunshine Coast Council

What we are seeking

Transport and infrastructure



Commit to working with the Queensland Government to extend the **Direct Sunshine Coast rail line to Maroochydore** by 2032.



Commit to implementing the findings of the **Sunshine Coast Public Transport Detailed Business Case**.



Commit to fund and deliver the **Mooloolah River Interchange upgrade**.



Commit to co-fund the development of **Sunshine Coast Airport international terminal expansion** to facilitate its opening by 2032.



Commit to fund a new business case for the **Sunshine Coast Convention and Performing Arts Centre** with a further commitment to contribute to the construction.

Climate ready



Coastal Hazard Protection – Commit to continuing the **Disaster Ready Funding program** until at least 2029-30 and to increase the existing \$200 million funding pool to **\$300 million**.

Policy and statutory



New housing – Commit to fast-tracking the **Housing Australia Future Fund** for social and affordable housing on Sunshine Coast.



Fairer funding – Commit to restoring the value of the Australian Government Financial Assistant Grants to Local Government to the equivalent of **1 per cent of total Australian Taxation Revenue**.

Supporting our industry



Commit **\$27.5 million** to deliver significant innovation outcomes on the **Sunshine Coast**.



Commit **\$5.2 million** to support the **advancement of manufacturing** in the Sunshine Coast region.

Sunshine Coast snapshot



Population 365,942

Forecast to be 518,000 by 2041



\$23.5 billion economy

For year ending 30 June 2023



Average annual job growth 6,754 per annum



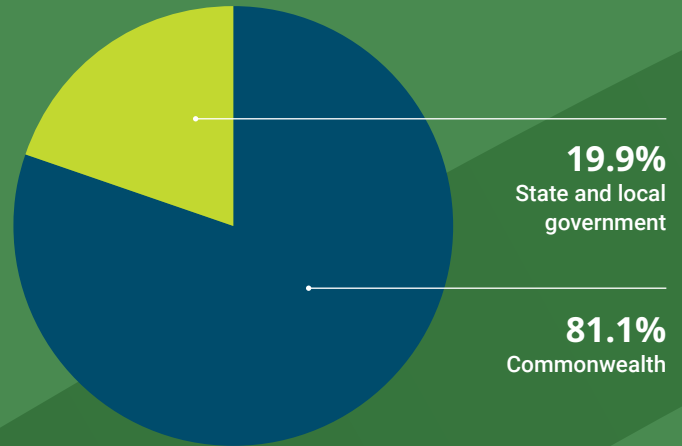
Average job growth of 3.73% per annum



11 million visitors

to the region (including Noosa) each year

Contributions to government



Based on 2020/2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics taxation revenue data.

What we need



Liveability

Measures to preserve the liveability of our Sunshine Coast as it continues to grow to more than half a million people in the next 20 years.



Region shaping infrastructure

Construct region shaping infrastructure to provide economic stimulus, provide safe and accessible transport options and maintain the liveability of the region.



Industry stimulus

Major stimulus to help our industries and their supply chains, generate jobs through sustainable development and advance manufacturing, innovation and business expansion.

Transport and infrastructure



Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line

The Queensland Government and Sunshine Coast Council have identified the Direct Sunshine Coast (DSC) rail line as region-shaping infrastructure.

For a region that is projected to grow to 518,000 residents by 2041 the DSC rail line is a critical element of the region's Southern Sunshine Coast Public Transport Strategy and Integrated Transport Strategy. The DSC will help the Sunshine Coast to sustainably prepare for this population growth, maintain its liveability and reduce its current high levels of car dependence.

The DSC rail line will take train services into the urban core of the Sunshine Coast, connecting major

development areas, beachside suburbs, business precincts and tourist hubs to Queensland Government's existing passenger rail network via the North Coast Line. This project will enable residents and visitors to choose public transport over private vehicle travel and will accelerate the delivery of more than 3,000 affordable and diverse homes around new rail stations over the coming decade.

Council applauds the Queensland Government's commitment to deliver the DSC to Maroochydore by 2032 and is calling on the Australian Government to fund 50% of the project.

Council seeks an Australian Government commitment to work with the Queensland Government to jointly fund the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail to be delivered to Maroochydore by 2032.



Transport and infrastructure



Sunshine Coast Public Transport Detailed Business Case

Our region's lifestyle and its natural environment are at risk due to the very high dependence on private motor vehicle travel and the absence of a reliable, accessible public transport network.

A more efficient public transport network to service the high-growth coastal corridor, that connects to the regional rail network, is critical to relieving current and future congestion of the road network.

Forecasts indicate that 830,000 extra car trips are anticipated each day if the focus remains on catering primarily for vehicular traffic, without shifting people to more sustainable transport options like public transport, in the areas where the majority of these vehicular movements are occurring.

The Sunshine Coast Public Transport Project is an important element of Council's plan to manage the region's forecast growth. Providing an effective public transport network can set the region on a path to sustainable transport and appropriate urban development.

Council seeks an Australian Government commitment to work with the Queensland Government to fully fund and implement the findings of the Sunshine Coast Public Transport Detailed Business Case.



Artist impression provided by Department of Transport and Main Roads.



Mooloolah River Interchange

The intersection connecting Kawana Way, Sunshine Motorway and Brisbane Road (known as the Mooloolah River Interchange) is a serious traffic bottleneck and has become more so since the opening of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital in April 2017.

As the December 2017 Building Queensland Infrastructure Pipeline Report states, the existing infrastructure at this location “is congested and lacks capacity to accommodate forecast travel demand”.

Infrastructure Australia evaluated the Mooloolah River Interchange business case in 2022 and as a result upgraded the Infrastructure Priority List to an investment-ready proposal, recognising

the nationally significant problem of capacity and safety at the interchange.

The failure of this part of the region’s road network has become a daily feature in the lives of Sunshine Coast residents. The inadequacy of this interchange has become even more pronounced and will continue to decline as the region grows.

The Australian Government and Queensland Government announced joint funding for Stage 1 of the project in 2022 and early works commenced to make way for the critical infrastructure upgrade. However, the Australian Government’s review of infrastructure investment resulted in committed funding for the project being withdrawn.

Council seeks an Australian Government commitment to work with the Queensland Government to fund and deliver the Mooloolah River Interchange upgrade within the next term of government.

Transport and infrastructure



Sunshine Coast Airport International Terminal Expansion

Sunshine Coast Airport (SCA) is seeking Australian Government support to fund an international terminal expansion.

The existing international facility at SCA has limitations and presents several significant challenges for the region including restricting the growth of inbound international tourism and limiting the ability for local producers and manufacturers to export products.

The current facility is limited to processing a maximum of 130 passengers in peak hour and can only process inbound and outbound passengers separately. An expanded international facility will be able to process 320 passengers in peak hour, with the added ability to process simultaneous inbound and outbound flights, leading to far greater passenger throughput and efficiency.

The development of an expanded

international facility will be a catalyst project that will deliver far-reaching economic benefits for the region.

The first year-round international service between Sunshine Coast and Auckland commenced in December 2024 and will provide 58,000 seats per annum. This route alone will result in a significant increase in regional tourism.

Economic modelling demonstrates an expanded international facility will:

- Support more than 1,100 jobs due to increased tourism.
- Support other industries that rely on international connectivity such as international education and the facilitation of freight.
- Contribute \$80 million annually to Queensland's gross state product (GSP).
- Facilitate the expansion of international routes directly into the region.

Sunshine Coast Airport is identified by the Queensland Government as a gateway for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Development of an international facility will be key to supporting the region's delivery of the games by providing direct access into the region, rather than visitors arriving through other ports.

This would support the more than \$400 million that is being invested in airport developments, including an expanded domestic terminal over the next 5 years.

Sunshine Coast Airport seeks an Australian Government commitment to co-fund the development of the Sunshine Coast Airport international terminal expansion to facilitate its opening by 2032.

Sunshine Coast Convention and Performing Arts Centre



The proposed Sunshine Coast Convention and Performing Arts Centre is the result of more than 20 years of planning. It is region-shaping infrastructure that will stimulate the business and cultural hub of the Sunshine Coast.

It has the potential to significantly enhance the diversity and strength of the region's tourism, premier events and knowledge industries. The Convention and Performing Arts Centre will be the most flexible meeting and events venue between Brisbane and Cairns, situated in the Maroochydhore City Centre.

A detailed business case for a Sunshine Coast Exhibition and Convention Centre was completed in June 2019. Funded by the Queensland Government and

Council it provided a compelling case for government investment in the centre.

Almost 6 years have passed since the business case was developed – Sunshine Coast Council is seeking funding support to develop a new business case. This new detailed business case is required to deliver a viable asset that will increase business and tourism events, increase high value employment opportunities and will maximise flow on benefits for our community and economy.

A project of this nature will provide substantial and meaningful social and economic benefit for the region and enhance the liveability of the Sunshine Coast.

Council seeks an Australian Government commitment of \$5 million to deliver an updated business case and concept architectural plans for the Sunshine Coast Convention and Performing Arts Centre and a further commitment towards the construction of the facility.



2019 artist impression (subject to change).

Climate ready



Coastal hazard protection

Our Sunshine Coast lifestyle is focussed on the beach and coastal areas where people enjoy spending their leisure and recreation time.

More than 85 per cent of Australian residents live within 50 kilometres of the coast, which is reflected in the main population centres of Sunshine Coast including Buderim, Mountain Creek and Maroochydore.

The beautiful beaches and seaside park areas are a key reason that more than 11 million visitors are attracted to the region every year.

Protecting our coast and associated parkland, residential and business infrastructure is becoming increasingly

important as global climate change continues to impact our environment causing sea levels to rise.

Sunshine Coast Council has completed a Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy and is implementing coastal protection works which includes repair and construction of sea walls, groynes and beach access infrastructure.

The Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund provides a key funding pipeline to assist Council to undertake these projects. The consideration and increase of the program is considered vital for the protection of the Sunshine Coast's long term future.

Council seeks an Australian Government commitment to continue the Disaster Ready Funding program until at least 2029-30 and to increase the existing \$200 million funding pool to \$300 million.

Policy and statutory



Fairer funding

The last 20 years has seen a significant erosion of Australian support for the invaluable infrastructure and services that are delivered by councils to support the needs of communities across Australia.

The value of the Australian Financial Assistance Grants in the mid-1990s sat at approximately 2 per cent of total Australian taxation revenue. Today, it sits at 0.5 per cent.

Over that same period, we have seen increasing devolution of responsibilities from the Queensland and Australian Government to local councils.

Local governments across Australia are also responsible for 33 per cent of the nation's infrastructure, including

76 per cent of the roads. Yet collectively, councils across Australia receive just 0.5 per cent of the total Australian taxation revenue through the Financial Assistance Grants.

This is neither a sustainable nor viable option going forward, given the extensive infrastructure and service responsibilities that reside with councils.

If the Financial Assistance Grants were restored to 1 per cent, for the Sunshine Coast Council this would mean an additional \$12 million, based on the Financial Assistance Grant Council received in 2023-24.

Council is best placed to ensure this funding is directed to where it is needed most in our community.

Council seeks an Australian Government commitment to restore the value of the Australian Financial Assistant Grants to Local Government to the equivalent of 1 per cent of total Australian taxation revenue.



Image courtesy of Visit Sunshine Coast.

Policy and statutory



Housing system investment

Sunshine Coast is experiencing a housing crisis, driven largely by declining housing affordability.

The Sunshine Coast is one of the fastest growing Local Government Areas in South East Queensland and Australia.

Median housing costs and rents are significantly higher than the South East Queensland region and Queensland as a whole, while median incomes are lower than the Queensland average.

The number of people experiencing homelessness has increased by 54 per cent from 785 in 2016 to 1,205 in 2021.

The Sunshine Coast has a lower proportion of social housing (2 per cent of total residential dwellings in June 2022) compared to 3.6 per cent for South East Queensland and the state average 4.2 per cent. The rental vacancy rate was 1 per cent in March 2023, which is three to four times less than the rate considered suitable.

Urgent Australian Government intervention is required to address this critical issue.

Council seeks an Australian Government commitment to:

- 1. Fast-track the Housing Australia Future Fund for social and affordable housing on Sunshine Coast.**
- 2. Ensure the role of Local Government is articulated in the National Housing and Homelessness Plan with established direct funding mechanisms.**



Supporting our industry



Sunshine Coast Innovation outcomes

The Sunshine Coast region is one of Australia's fastest growing regions.

The \$2.5 billion investment in the new Maroochydore City Centre will cement the Sunshine Coast as one of Australia's most advanced economies, transforming the region into a highly connected, vibrant hub of commercial and cultural activity anchored by technology and innovation. The 50 First Avenue tower, spanning 15 levels of premium A-grade office space, is under construction and will be the first commercial tower to be delivered as part of the Maroochydore City Centre project.

The Sunshine Coast International Broadband Network and establishment of the SC1 Edge Data Centre by NEXTDC, provide unprecedented digital connectivity and a unique asset for future economic growth.

The construction of the new Sunshine Coast Airport international runway has further connected our people and products to the rest of the world.

The Sunshine Coast has earned recognition as one of the world's Top 7 Intelligent Communities for the fourth time in five years, a testament to our unwavering commitment to digital innovation, workforce development, sustainability, and business investment.

Innovation places are recognised around the world as engines of a modern economy, instigating sustainable (and equitable) economic growth and job creation – where business, industry and researchers work together to bring new ideas to life and commercialise them. This leads to home-grown technologies with real-life application and commercialisation prospects.

The establishment of a centralised innovation hub at Maroochydore will release the potential of the existing Sunshine Coast innovation network to bring together the region's knowledge, investment, and talent with a strong focus on the green, digital and knowledge economies.

Innovation outcomes will be further complemented by an upgraded innovation centre at the University of Sunshine Coast, enhancing industry led digital and future skills development providing an exceptional regional platform for students, research, business leaders, entrepreneurs and investors.

Combined, the Sunshine Coast innovation hub, an upgraded University Innovation Centre, the Commercialisation Hub and TURBINE will create an exponential growth network befitting one of Australia's fastest growing regions.

Council seeks an Australian Government commitment of \$27.5 million to deliver significant innovation outcomes on the Sunshine Coast that will deliver significant jobs and economic benefits to Queensland.

Supporting our industry



Advanced manufacturing commercialisation demonstrator hub

The Sunshine Coast region has growing capabilities in the advanced manufacturing sector that have the potential to redefine the region and create an enduring economic legacy, particularly in relation to the aviation sector and autonomous vehicles.

The region's manufacturing sector is already home to more than 1,400 businesses with total sales in excess of \$3.5 billion. With the appropriate support, the Sunshine Coast can further establish a strong international presence in advanced manufacturing with high-end products being exported across the world. To capitalise on this

opportunity, a commitment is sought from the Australian Government to work in partnership with the Manufacturing Excellence Forum to establish a dedicated advanced manufacturing demonstrator hub.

The hub will be dedicated to accelerating the commercialisation of manufactured products at high volumes and will build upon the highly successful electric vertical take-off and landing vehicle (eVTOL) student team being run by the Manufacturing Excellence Forum in partnership with the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Council seeks an Australian Government commitment of \$5.2 million combined operational and capital funding for the Manufacturing Excellence Forum to deliver the Common User Facility for a minimum 4-year period.





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