

Four Year Priority Action Plan



PortAugusta
CITY COUNCIL

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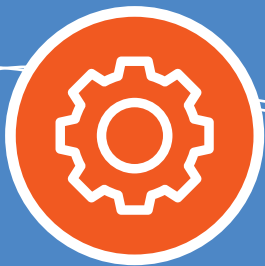
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*Port
Augusta
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Hub*

*Tourism
Hub*

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Hub*

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Culture Hub*

*Retail and
Business
Hub*

*Government
and
Defence
Hub*

*Community
Services
Hub*

*Mining and
Renewable Energy
Hub*

*Education
Hub*

2 Mayor's Message



Linley Shine

I am pleased to present the Strategic Directions for the Port Augusta City Council, serving as the primary guide for our city's future aspirations. This document offers a renewed focus for both the Council and the Community, it will certainly take us forward to embrace economic growth and enhance all the wonderful characteristics of our beautiful city.

A key highlight within this plan is the Hub concept, emphasizing the significant role the Port Augusta City Council will play in providing services to the Upper Spencer Gulf, the Far North regions of our State and beyond. As we witness an increase in major projects, Port Augusta is focusing particularly on housing and local procurement opportunities. The Council remains committed to building strong relationships with the Local Government Association, as well as State and Commonwealth Governments, ensuring the necessary support to promote our history and deliver the facilities our residents and tourists expect.

Port Augusta is known as the crossroads of Australia, strategically connecting highways to various regions and states, we serve as a gateway to iconic landscapes.

Our proximity to the Flinders Ranges offers residents and visitors access to one of South Australia's most treasured natural wonders.

We are increasingly recognised for our liveability, making Port Augusta an ideal place for families. We aim to enhance this by developing a vibrant retail hub, offering a diverse range of shopping and dining experiences to cater to both residents and visitors.

Port Augusta City Council will continually review its operations to ensure economic and sustainable functionality. With strong leadership and good governance, the Council will maintain its focus on achieving the Vision and Goals outlined in this Plan.

I extend my gratitude to those who contributed to this Plan. This is a remarkable opportunity for Port Augusta and the Upper Spencer Gulf to showcase everything we have to offer and demonstrate our capabilities as a community, city, and region. Our future holds immense opportunities, and we are ready and well positioned to embrace these.

"This document offers a renewed focus for both the Council and the Community."

3 *Our Strategic Directions Aspirations for Port Augusta*

Our **Strategic Directions 2035** document notes that Port Augusta has a long history as a Regional Hub that is able to adapt and reinvent itself. Our aspiration is to build on that history and become a model Regional Hub for Transport, Sustainable Industries, Mining and Defence Services, Tourism, Retail and Business, Government and non-Government Services, Education, and Recreation and Culture.

This **Four Year Priority Actions Plan 2024-2028** sets out the medium term actions we intend to take to build towards our longer term aspirations.

“Our aspiration is to build on history and become a model Regional Hub...”



4 Strategic Directions Themes

The **Strategic Directions 2035** document has four community focussed themes and one enabling, organisationally focussed theme. The themes and the goal for each are shown in the following table.

Externally focussed themes and goals



Theme 1: Community

We are a welcoming and inclusive community that understands, represents and preserves our unique sense of purpose and place.



Theme 2: Economy

We capitalise on our unique regional hub attributes to pursue a thriving economy.



Theme 3: Environment

We value, respect and protect our natural and built environments.



Theme 4: Infrastructure

We provide and advocate for fit for purpose infrastructure that improves the physical, economic, environmental and social wellbeing of our City.

Internally focussed theme and goal



Theme 5: Governance and Financial Sustainability

We conduct our business ethically and transparently and seek financial sustainability to enable the Council to provide the infrastructure and services required to achieve our 2035 aspirations.

5 Priority Actions

The priority actions planned for each theme over the period 2024-2028 are shown below. They have been developed to ensure progress towards our longer term aspirations while we also continue to improve the Council's long term financial sustainability.



Priority Action 1: Community

GOAL:

WE ARE A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THAT UNDERSTANDS, REPRESENTS AND PRESERVES OUR UNIQUE SENSE OF PURPOSE AND PLACE

5.1.1 Celebrate cultural diversity

Priority Action

Identify ways to celebrate the past, present and future cultural diversity of Port Augusta, ensuring this is informed by engagement with the local Aboriginal and other cultural communities.

Why?

Port Augusta has a long history of cultural diversity from a meeting place for Aboriginal groups for thousands of years, to European settlement and Afghan camel handlers, until the 1920s saw Port Augusta transform to a transport hub, where camels were replaced by rail and motor transport. More recently, Port Augusta became home to people from Italy, Germany and the Middle East who migrated to our city to reap the employment opportunities.

Port Augusta continues to be a gathering point for the Aboriginal population in the region. The Aboriginal community is growing and is currently around 20.4% (ABS Stats 2021) of the Port Augusta population and covers some 17 – 28 different language or family groups. Port Augusta continues to welcome and embrace a range of cultures with statistics of resident population indicating growth in recent years to 10.7% migrants (ABS Stats 2021).

Port Augusta is an urban centre with a notable and growing Aboriginal resident constituency and operates as a service centre for an even larger Indigenous clientele beyond its boundary. The significance of these Aboriginal numbers and cultural connections for urban planning is heightened by the town's social demography.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The intended outcome is to build community strength by acknowledging, recognising and celebrating the cultural diversity of Port Augusta and its contribution to our unique sense of purpose and place. Council has developed a Reconciliation Action Plan to identify ways in which the Council can be more inclusive and communicate more effectively with the Aboriginal Community.

Role and scope

In identifying ways to celebrate cultural diversity the Council will be acting as a **Leader**. The actions that come from this priority action are likely to be a combination of **Enabler** (which should be the default role) and Reconciliation Action Plan actions as **Provider**. Examples of approaches to celebrating cultural diversity include publishing material, including references to the influence of different cultures on what makes Port Augusta what it is today, and finding opportunities to showcase specific cultures.



5.1.2 Improved relationships and communication with communities

Priority Action

Identify and implement ways to expand avenues of communication and promote Council activities to build better relationships and increase two-way communication with our communities.

Why?

While the word 'community' is often used to describe the people who live or work in a geographic area, the reality is that there are various communities around such aspects as age, location, cultural background, recreational and sporting interests, which together make up our 'community'.

The most important relationship for a Council is with its communities. We believe that the relationship with parts of our communities need to be improved and will work to achieve that over the coming years.

Communication between a Council and its community (and others) is important to build an understanding of community views on the one hand, and what is currently happening and why on the other. Good two-way communication and engagement is a feature of a healthy community and active democracy. There is a sense that this two-way communication is currently limited and there is scope to improve.

With a recent decrease in local media content, Council's current communications whilst effective for some, may not be reaching as much of the community as it has in the past.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The intended outcome is to have a socially cohesive community that understands, represents and preserves our unique sense of purpose and place, and find common grounds for action that builds a sense of identity and participation in order to implement decisions.

Role and scope

In identifying ways to build and measure two-way communication and engagement with our communities, to improve relationships, Council will be acting as a **Leader**. The actions that come from this priority action are likely to be a combination of **Enabler** (which should be the default role) and, potentially, some actions as **Provider**.

5.1.3 Community Safety

Priority Action

Advocate for continued and increased investment and action by other levels of Government to ensure that Community Safety initiatives are delivered, monitored and modified to address the changing community safety needs.

Why?

Community safety is important for the wellbeing of the community as well as the important impact that it can have on the reputation of the City and the flow on effects that this has for tourism and business investment.

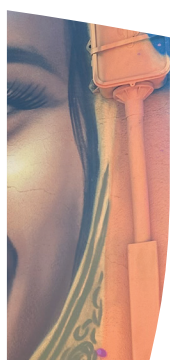
Council has existing relationships with a number of not for profit, State and Commonwealth Government agencies which deliver critical community safety programs within Port Augusta. It is important that Council recognises its advocacy role, to secure the appropriate investments into the community.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The intended outcome is to ensure that the city is a welcoming and inclusive place for residents and visitors alike. This will be achieved by identifying key issues and working collaboratively with the relevant agencies to increase investment in safety related service delivery outcomes.

Role and scope

In advocating for service delivery and investment from other levels of Government, Council will be acting as a **Leader**. The actions that come from this priority action are likely to be as an **Enabler** supporting the service delivery of others with the provision of critical information and data.





Priority Action 2: Economy

GOAL:

WE PROMOTE OUR UNIQUE REGIONAL HUB ATTRIBUTES TO DEVELOP AND CAPITALISE ON A THRIVING ECONOMY.

5.2.1 Balance between attracting new economic developments and building on what we have

Priority Action

Identify and leverage off our natural, built and community assets for economic growth through advocacy for improved Government investment, co-ordination of financial support, and local engagement to maximise positive benefits from the growth in mining, energy and defence activity.

Why?

Economic growth is important for the sustainability of our communities after a number of economic shocks in the form of closure of industries. In 1992 the Federal Government closed the Australian National Railways Workshops. In 2016 Port Augusta's coal-fired power stations were permanently closed, which led to job losses of approximately 450 people (including Leigh Creek).

The future is looking brighter with reason to be optimistic about new economic activity through mining, energy, tourism and transport; however, recent experiences show that circumstances beyond local and regional control can lead to disappointment and frustration at announced developments not proceeding.

With a series of developments flagged for the Upper Spencer Gulf Region, including 1414, Hallett Green Cement, Port Augusta Operations Port Development, the Royal Flying Doctor Service Medical Centre and the SA Government State Prosperity Project including Hydrogen and the Northern Water Supply Project, it is important to ensure that there is government co-ordination and local engagement in relation to potential new developments to provide a positive environment and greater potential for projects to eventuate. It is important to continue to encourage new businesses and their investment and jobs to the region as well as supporting opportunities for economic growth through existing businesses.

The promotion of the planned developments and regional hub attributes will also assist with the attraction of employees to the region.

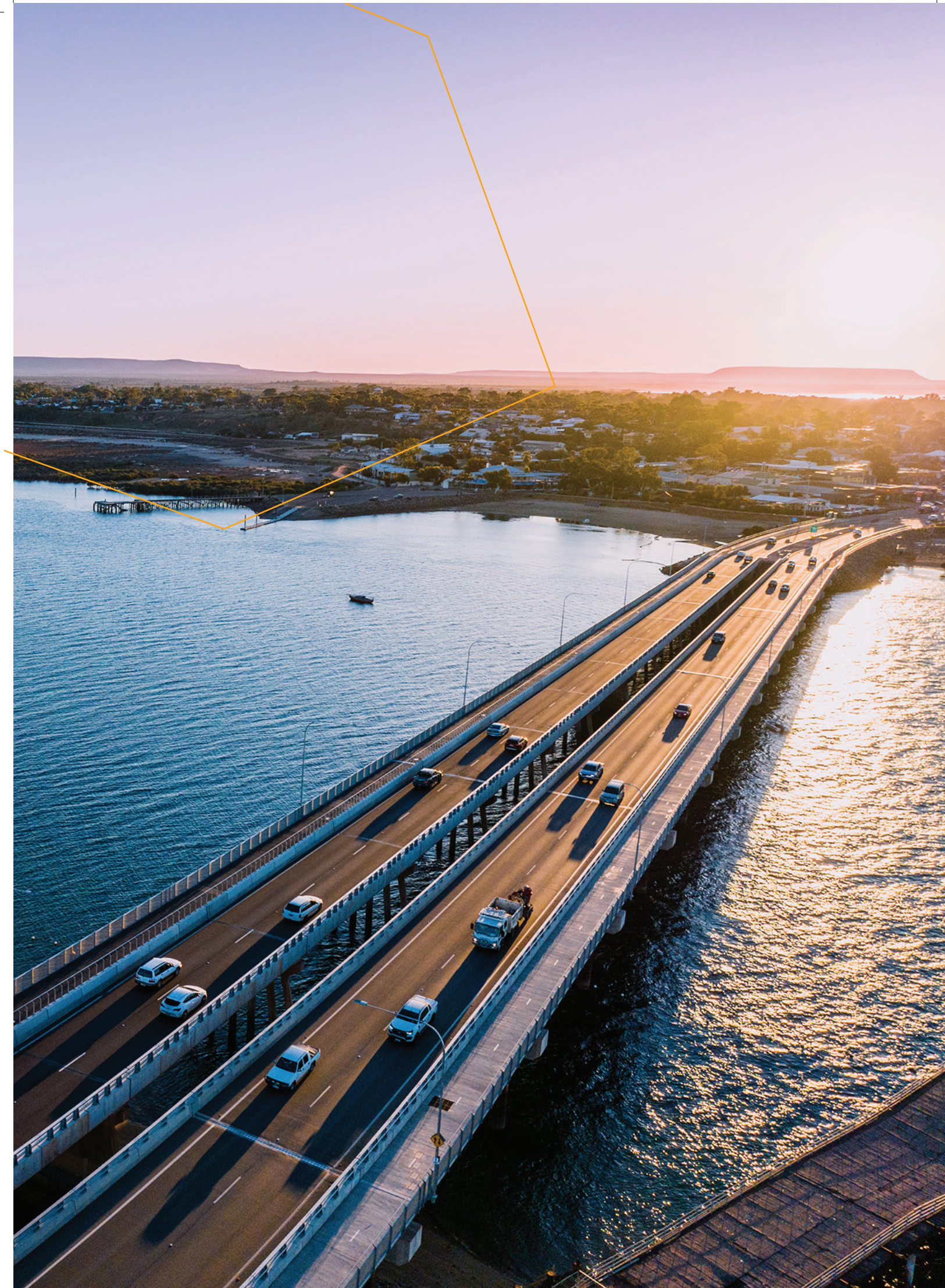
How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

There is potential to provide infrastructure for the development of identified renewable energy projects to strengthen the regional power network, as well as planned infrastructure corridors and improved capacity all-weather road and rail transport supply chain infrastructure to meet mining and energy sector demand.

Role and scope

Council's roles in economic development vary. With responsibilities for land use planning and Development Approvals the Council is a **Leader** and, in the case of infrastructure, the Council may be the Asset Owner (e.g. of a Council road) but may also be an **Enabler** for infrastructure that is the responsibility of other bodies. In other areas such as business development the Council has a role as an **Enabler**, collaborating with service providers and bringing people and business together to maximise opportunities and to advocate for government support and investment.







Priority Action 3: Environment

GOAL:

WE VALUE, RESPECT AND PROTECT OUR
NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS.

5.3.1 Waste management

Priority Action

Review waste management systems in light of further potential changes resulting from government and business decisions, including the Council of Australian Governments decision to ban the export of a range of waste including plastic, paper, glass and tyres.

In undertaking this review, also identify the potential role of the State Government (including Green Industries SA) and the Local Government Association of South Australia in assisting Councils, as well as the potential for business and industry investment in the 'circular economy' where recycled materials are processed and converted into useful products.

Why?

Significant changes in waste management and recycling can be expected to continue as decisions are made by other levels of governments both domestic and international. Businesses are and should be expected to continue to adjust their business models, services and costs in response and/or anticipation of changing circumstances.

Our waste collection system provides kerbside collection of domestic waste, general recyclables, and green organics. At over 5% of total operating budget, the expenditure is the third highest commitment behind road and footpath renewal, parks, gardens, reserves and ovals (open space and greenspace). Good management of the Waste, Green and Recycling services can benefit the environment and manage the costs.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Effective waste management is an important element of respecting and protecting the environment.

Role and scope

The Council has a well defined role as a **Provider** of domestic waste management services. Reviewing those services will need to recognise the volatility of the current situation where there is likely to be more on-shore processing of recyclables which would provide both opportunities and threats for Port Augusta. Planning about waste management will need to have a strong focus on risk management and be incremental with short-term actions that don't restrict future options. Given the cost significance to the Council, this is a crucial priority action.





5.3.2 Environmental management and efficiency

Priority Action

To position Council to take achievable actions to reduce its and the community's impact on the local environment such as effectively reducing waste, efficient use of energy, capture and use of water.

Why?

Council is seeking to achieve improved financial outcomes and operational efficiencies which can be achieved through the implementation of environmentally sustainable improvements and practices.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The increased use of solar power, recycled water, and Electric Vehicles will reduce Council's impact on the natural environment.

Role and scope

The Council has a **Leadership** role in environmental management, providing and facilitating the installation of infrastructure to support the increased use of alternative energy supplies. It also has a **Provider** role as **Asset Owner** in relation to its infrastructure and properties and as a **Regulator** of areas for development. The primary focus of this action is in relation to financial and environmental impacts through the Council's operations, with an added benefit of providing support to people in the community about embracing new technologies.





Priority Action 4: Infrastructure

GOAL:

WE PROVIDE AND ADVOCATE FOR FIT FOR PURPOSE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IMPROVES THE ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL WELLBEING OF OUR CITY.

5.4.1 Improved appearance of the City

Priority Action

Review the relevant Asset Management Plans and strategies, to develop a long-term program to improve the appearance of the City, identifying resources required to implement this improvement and options to reallocate them. Seek opportunities to work with other agencies and businesses to improve the overall appearance of the assets not owned by Council.

Why?

There is a desire to increase the attractiveness of Port Augusta as a place to live, work, invest and visit. An important part of this is to improve the appearance of the City in relation to infrastructure, streetscapes and other public spaces.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The action is intended to improve the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the City.

Role and scope

For its own infrastructure and properties, the Council's role is **Provider (Asset Owner)** and for the infrastructure of other governments and bodies the Council's roles are as a **Leader** and an **Enabler**.

With respect to graffiti, waste, and vegetation management of private properties, Council has an Enabler role with respect to enforcing regulatory compliance.

Making significant improvements in the City's appearance with current resource levels will take many years to achieve. A complicating aspect of implementing this action will be information within the asset management plans as to the methods to improve the appearance and impacts to the current resourcing.

The intention is to continue with recently implemented changes with projects that represent a low risk of not being suitable for the future.



5.4.2 Marine Infrastructure

Priority Action

To manage marine infrastructure on Crown Land but currently under the Council's care and control to ensure the best outcomes for the community, including seeking State and Federal Government investment in Council and State assets.

Why?

Port Augusta has a significant amount of marine infrastructure, reflecting its history as a port. Some of the infrastructure, which is on Crown Land, is beyond its useful life and unsafe for use. Transferred by the SA Government to Council's care and control, this infrastructure is seen as a community asset and its scale and condition mean that it would require significant investment to upgrade or replace. Previous approaches to hand care and control back to the SA Government have been unsuccessful, however there has been a renewed approach to this issue by all Coastal Councils supported by the Local Government Association of South Australia.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

It is recognised that the marine infrastructure has a role in the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of Port Augusta but is not currently fit for purpose.

Role and scope

The primary role for the Council in relation to the marine infrastructure is **Provider** as, although it is located on Crown Land, most marine assets are currently under the Council's care and control. Engaging with the community about a path forward is a **Leadership** role. Working with the community will complement the approach by the Council and other coastal Councils in South Australia to find better solutions to dealing with marine infrastructure. Council also has a role as an **Enabler** to advocate for investment in the Port Augusta Wharf, which remains an SA Government asset. Council should also assist in identifying priority areas and actions that may meet the needs of different interest groups.





Priority Action 5: Governance and Financial Sustainability

GOAL:

WE CONDUCT OUR COUNCIL BUSINESS ETHICALLY AND TRANSPARENTLY AND SEEK FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE TO ALLOW THE COUNCIL TO PROVIDE OR ENABLE THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE OUR 2035 ASPIRATIONS.

5.5.1 Fast-tracked removal of financial operating deficit

Priority Action

Review the current timeframe for extinguishing the financial operating deficit with a view to fast-tracking a balanced budget.

Why?

The Council has a financial operating deficit which has been reduced over a 10 year period from \$3,632,300 in 2013/14 to a projected deficit of \$856,500 in 2023/2024.

Council has revised its Long Term Financial Plan with an aim to reduce the operating deficit from \$0.9m in 2024/25 to a small surplus by 2030.

There are pressures on the Council's budget and some of the changes required to reduce the operating deficit have been implemented. However, further actions are required to either reduce expenditure or increase income, or a combination of both. This can be expected to involve making some difficult and potentially contentious or unpopular decisions.

The aspirations set out in the Strategic Directions 2035 document are ambitious and will require funding to achieve them as well as some creative thinking and a change from being the service provider to a mix of enabler and provider. There is a short lead time in which planning for new investments will take place, following which there will need to be funds available.

It is a difficult position to be in but entering a period of potentially significant investments with a legacy financial operating deficit is dangerous and gives no room for other financial shocks as happened during the global financial crisis and COVID-19.

With an external ESCOSA review scheduled to take place in 2025/26, there is a small window to take definitive action to reduce the financial operating deficit at a faster rate.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Financial sustainability is a key component of the theme goal.

Role and scope

Implementing this action will require **Leadership** from the Council to make informed decisions.



5.5.2 Contingency approach to planning

Priority Action

Investigate and implement a contingency approach for planning for growth or decline.

Why?

The Port Augusta area is currently caught between economic and population decline and growth.

Although there has been a decrease in population over time which could continue, indications are that the SA State Prosperity projects are expected to halt that decrease in the short term, and may in fact increase. Planning by the Council to zone land for residential, industrial and commercial uses as well as decisions about providing new or upgraded infrastructure becomes more difficult with the uncertainty about the growth or decline scenarios.

Council should plan for the various scenarios and lobby for appropriate modifications to the Planning Zones to accommodate and attract growth.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Having an agreed approach to planning for growth or decline will assist in achieving financial sustainability through robust decision making about expenditure of funds for new or upgraded infrastructure.

Role and scope

A contingency approach to planning is a **Leadership** role for the Council. Council should identify triggers about when investments in new or upgraded infrastructure should be made or sought. An example of a trigger would be a funded commitment by a business for a major development. The SA State Prosperity projects (Hydrogen, Northern Water Pipeline, mining in the north of the state) is an example that is leading Council to seek funding to provide infrastructure and planning to support more dense housing, and industrial area activation.

5.5.3 Review Council service provision and assets

Priority Action

Identify potential opportunities to change the mix of Council assets through conversion of properties that aren't central to the Council's operations or aspirations and reinvestment in other priority assets. Assets should also be reviewed to align with the desired service levels resulting from Service Level reviews and the implementation of recommendations from the Strategic Property Review 2024.

Why?

The Council has a significant property portfolio which potentially provides opportunities to convert some assets to other, more pressing infrastructure. This could involve selling some properties which are not central to the Council's operations or aspirations and using the funds to invest in other assets – the result of which is that the level of investment in assets isn't diminished but the mix of assets and, potentially, asset types change.

The infrastructure, services and activities provided by Councils can be loosely categorised as being either mandatory, in that they are required by various pieces of legislation, or discretionary where a decision has been made for reasons other than compliance with legislation. In reality the number of mandatory requirements for infrastructure, services or activities is relatively low and a lot of what Councils provide falls into the category of discretionary.

The Council has been a provider of a range of discretionary services that aren't generally provided by other Councils, with significant budgetary impacts.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Changing the mix of assets will ensure that Council assets align with the service levels that are determined appropriate. The disposal of surplus assets reduces the level of funding required for upgraded or new assets which contributes to improved financial sustainability.

Role and scope

The Council's role is as **Provider (Asset Owner)**. Implementing the action will require **Leadership** to make the case for changes in the mix of assets.

This action will require a **Leadership** role of the Council to work with the community and other stakeholders on identifying the appropriate mix of Enabler, Provider and Leader roles. It is easier to make such decisions about new matters coming before the Council where all aspects are able to be considered in a structured way. Decisions about established services are generally more difficult and a key factor will be whether there are other bodies able to play a role in relation to such services.



5.5.4 Maintain internal and other relationships

Priority Action

Maintain established relationships internally and with external stakeholders including the Australian and SA Government at the political and administrative (locally, regionally, and at head offices) levels, industry, other service providers, and investors.

Why?

Good working relationships internally and externally are important for a Council to succeed in achieving the best outcomes for the community.

Over recent years internal relationships have been improved and critical external relationships have been established with both the State and Australian Governments, key ministers and other external stakeholders, allowing Council to raise matters of importance with the relevant parties in a timely manner, and to advocate for improved community outcomes.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

Maintaining internal and external relationships allows Council to focus on service delivery and advocating for matters that will advance the city and region.

Role and scope

This action requires **Leadership** of the Council. Maintaining relationships takes time and effort and a planned and disciplined approach.

5.5.5 Boundary Reform

Priority Action

Consider whether there is benefit to progressing Council Boundary Reforms to capture developments that utilise Council infrastructure despite occurring just outside of Council's current boundary.

Why?

Port Augusta City Council and the Upper Spencer Gulf has become a central location for renewable energy developments. Many of these developments have occurred within close proximity to the current Council boundaries, and as a result have a large impact on the Council's infrastructure, yet Council is unable to realise the financial benefits of these developments as they are located within other areas.

How this priority action contributes to the theme goal:

The commencement of a Boundary Review process would potentially enable Council to have the Council boundary realigned to include several large-scale renewable energy developments that have been utilising and having an impact on Council's infrastructure for many years.

Role and scope

Implementing this action will require **Leadership**. Council will need to liaise with neighbouring municipalities in relation to this proposal for a successful application to be made through the Boundary Reform Commission.





PortAugusta

CITY COUNCIL

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