

The background of the entire page is a scenic photograph of a river or lake at sunset. The sky is filled with orange and yellow clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, reflecting on the water. A line of trees with green foliage runs along the far bank. In the foreground, the water is calm, showing clear reflections of the trees and sky. On the right side of the image, there is a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping white-outlined hexagons. Some of these hexagons contain a solid green color, while others are empty. The overall aesthetic is natural and serene, emphasizing environmental themes.

ROCKHAMPTON REGIONAL COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY.

TOWARDS 2030

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Rockhampton Regional Council would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians within our Region, the Darumbal People, the Gaangalu Nation People and the Barada Kabalbara Yetimarala People, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge the Torres Strait Islander people whose land is in the Torres Strait but who live and work on Aboriginal land.

Council also gratefully recognises the contributions of our staff, local residents, community groups, businesses, industries and other levels of government in the preparation of this Strategy and as part of our continuing sustainability journey.

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'Framing Toonooba' by Madelyn Holmes



CREATING A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR OUR REGION.

At its heart, sustainability is about taking care of the environment, so that our environment can continue to take care of us.

As we move towards 2030, our rapidly changing world brings both challenges and opportunities for the Rockhampton Region. Sustaining the liveability and prosperity of our Region requires Council to work together with our local residents, communities, businesses, industries and other levels of government to create the future we want to see.

The Rockhampton Regional Council *Sustainability Strategy (Towards 2030)* seeks to deliver local initiatives that help us to align with the evolving policy landscape, whilst simultaneously strengthening our community, environmental and economic resilience. In doing so, the Strategy outlines key strategic priorities which will inform planning, guide decision-making and drive action and investment. Continuing the great work that we've already started, this Strategy delivers on our vision for a sustainable future through four interconnected pathways and a range of strategic actions that Council will lead over the life of the Strategy.

Together, we'll look for new ways to strengthen our capacity to live sustainably; create even more liveable and resilient communities; position our Region to thrive; and continually improve our environment and sustainability performance across Council's operations and services.

We look forward to working with you on the next chapter of the Rockhampton Region's sustainability journey.



Councillor Donna Kirkland
Water and Environmental Sustainability Portfolio



OUR REGION.

The Rockhampton Region is a major economic and lifestyle hub for Central Queensland. Our vast geographic area, and diverse natural environment, supports a variety of urban and rural communities, businesses, industries and livelihoods. Together, our community, our environment and our economy are key to our way of life.

OUR COMMUNITY



82,311
Rockhampton Region
2021 population



~35,000
private dwellings



113,096
Rockhampton Region
2036 population forecast



42
schools and one
University/TAFE within
the Rockhampton Region

OUR ECONOMY



\$5.56B
Gross Regional Product
2021



>5,000
Local businesses



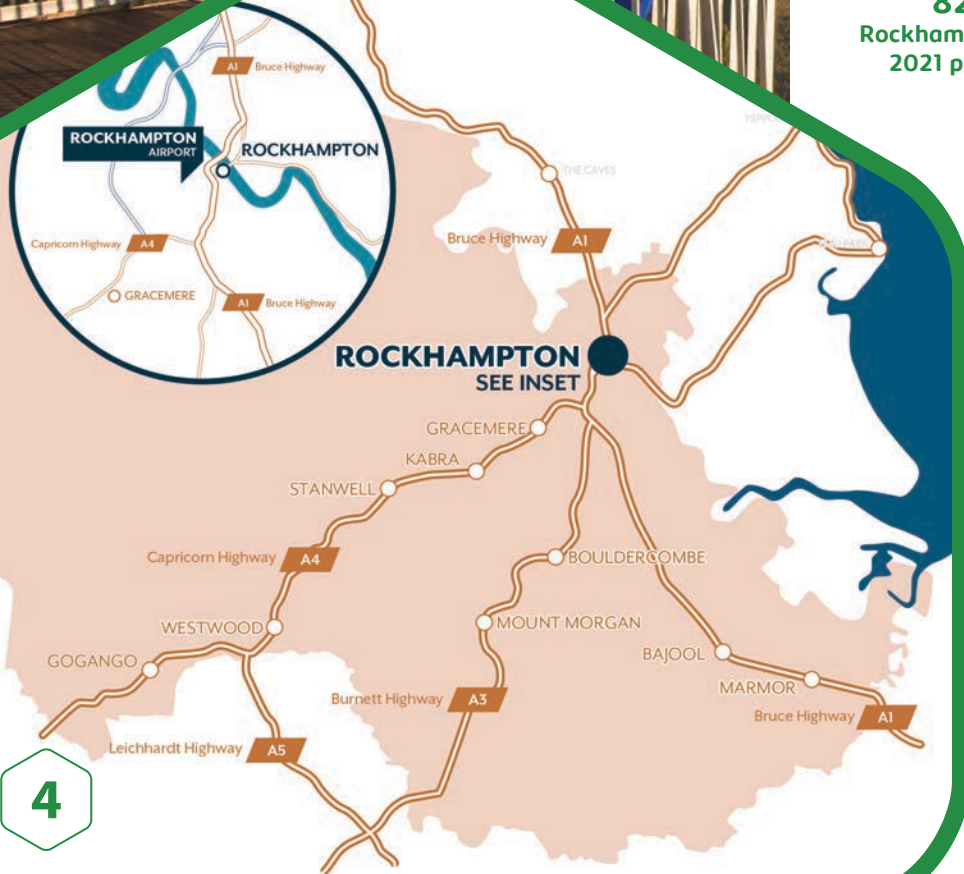
**LOCAL
EMPLOYMENT**
15% Healthcare
and Social Assistance
11% Retail Trade
10% Education and Training
7% Accommodation
and Food Services
7% Construction
5% Mining



\$229M
added value of Tourism
and Hospitality into
Rockhampton Region in 2021



\$75M
total value of agricultural
outputs (mostly livestock)



OUR ENVIRONMENT



6,585km²
total area



418km²
wetland habitat
= 6% of our total area



30%
remnant vegetation
remaining



2nd LARGEST
seaward draining
catchment in Australia



LARGEST
river flowing to the
Great Barrier Reef



~5%
of Region protected as
National Parks, Conservation
Parks and Nature Refuges



610
species of
native wildlife



1207
species of
native plants



80
rare or
threatened species

“We want to ensure that the Rockhampton Region remains a great place to live, both now and in the future. We know that a healthy environment underpins a strong community and economy, so when we balance all three, we’re ensuring our Region is best placed to prosper.”

- Mayor Tony Williams

Source (page 4): ID Informed Decisions (2022), accessed 17 June 2022 at <https://profile.id.com.au/rockhampton>

Source (page 5): Department of Environment and Science, Queensland (2022), accessed 17 June 2022 at <https://wetlandinfo.des.qld.gov.au/wetlands/facts-maps/lga-rockhampton/>

OUR CHANGING CLIMATE.

The Rockhampton Region experiences a variety of weather cycles that are, and have always been, part of our natural environment. However, climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather and natural disasters. At a local level, our community has already experienced intense droughts as well as severe fires, floods and storms.

As the climate changes, so do the challenges facing our local community, environment and economy. The term 'climate risk' is used to capture the impacts on our human and natural systems from changing climate conditions - this includes a variety of physical, transition and liability risks.

PHYSICAL RISKS

Changing climate conditions and extreme weather events can directly impact on life, property and the environment. Physical risks can be acute like flood or chronic like drought.



IMPACTS may include personal injury, loss of life, property damage, lower asset values, insurance accessibility and affordability issues, habitat degradation and fragmentation, loss of wildlife and biodiversity, supply chain disruption, reduced water security and declining liveability.

TRANSITION RISKS

Policy changes, technological innovation and social adaptation can cause disruption as both operations and markets adjust to change and the new operating environment.



IMPACTS depend on the speed of transition but may include changes to pricing and demand, stranded assets, defaults on loans, technology disruption, policy uncertainty, investment hesitancy and skills shortages in key areas.

LIABILITY RISKS

Liability risks arise when an individual or organisation fails to appropriately consider or respond to the impacts of climate change.



IMPACTS may include stakeholder litigation, regulatory penalties, legal claims, business disruption, insurance issues and reputational damage.



OUR CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES.

The United Nations defines sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Sustaining the Rockhampton Region, especially under increasing climate change pressures, requires us to strengthen our community, environmental and economic resilience.

By embracing the challenges and opportunities that this presents, we can work together to:

- Maintain the continued liveability of the Region and better protect our natural environment, productive lands, waterways, biodiversity and other natural resources upon which we rely.
- Respond to, and remain compliant with, rapidly evolving legislative requirements and community expectations.
- Drive a circular economy that reduces waste to landfill whilst adding value within our local supply chains.
- Leverage our natural resources, affordable renewable energy and skilled workforce to support our growing communities, businesses and industries.
- Build the local jobs and industries of the future, whilst keeping pace with global changes in a responsible manner.
- Access new and emerging markets by expanding our local processing and manufacturing sectors and producing carbon-free goods and materials that are in high demand from the rest of Australia and the world.
- Improve water security for our local communities, industry and agriculture.
- Support our agricultural sector to meet the increased global demand for safe, high-quality food, whilst exploring the benefits of regenerative grazing to improve productivity, biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration opportunities.
- Position our Region to prosper, both now and in the future.

OUR LOCAL CONTEXT.

Council's Sustainability Strategy is influenced by a complex and rapidly evolving policy landscape. International agreements are driving national and state policies that flow through to the regional and local level.

Some of the major policy drivers include the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Australia's commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (the Paris Agreement) which establishes the global goal of net zero emissions.

The Australian Government has committed to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and has legislated a national emissions reduction target of at least 43% by 2030 (compared to 2005 levels). The Queensland Government also maintains a range of complementary policies on matters including sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, resilience, adaptation, biodiversity and ecosystem restoration, renewable energy, waste management and emissions reduction.

To make the most of emerging opportunities for our Region, this Strategy seeks to align with these national and state policies and targets.

INTERNATIONAL

- UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals)
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (Paris Agreement)
- UN Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework
- UN Convention on Biological Diversity
- UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021 – 2030

NATIONAL

- Commonwealth legislation such as the *Climate Change Act 2022*, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and *Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020*
- Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan
- Reef Blueprint for Resilience
- National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy
- Australian Strategy for Nature 2019 – 2030
- National Waste Policy Action Plan
- National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework

STATE

- Queensland legislation such as the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011*
- Qld Climate Action Plan
- Qld Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy
- Qld Zero Emission Vehicle Strategy
- Qld Organics Strategy and Action Plan
- Qld State Disaster Management Plan
- Qld Strategy for Disaster Resilience
- Qld Protected Area Strategy

- Central Queensland Sustainability Strategy 2030
- Fitzroy and Capricornia Regional Resilience Strategy
- Central Queensland Regional Plan
- Regional Waste Management and Infrastructure Plan
- Rockhampton Region Emergency Risk Management Assessment
- Communities in Transition Rockhampton Roadmap (Making Water Work project)

REGIONAL

- RRC Corporate Plan
- RRC Operational Plan
- Rockhampton Region Planning Scheme
- RRC Environmental Sustainability Policy
- RRC Disaster Management Policy
- RRC Waste Strategy
- Disaster Management Strategies and Plans
- RRC Economic Development Strategy
- RRC Walking and Cycling Strategy
- RRC Biosecurity Plan

LOCAL

OUR ROLE.

As the level of government closest to the community, Council plays an important role in the protection of our local communities and in positioning the Region to thrive. At times, this may include acting as a:



PROVIDER

Deliver and maintain assets and services for the community



ADVOCATE

Promote the interests of the community to other decision makers and influencers



LEADER

Lead by example, ensuring that our actions help to guide the behaviour of others



PARTNER

Foster partnerships with other parties that support Council and the community



FACILITATOR

Bring individuals, groups and other interested parties together



EDUCATOR

Build awareness and skills to enhance local capacity and capability



SUPPORTER

Support other organisations to deliver services via funding and other assistance



REGULATOR

Regulate activities through local laws, policy and the planning scheme

OUR PRIORITIES & PATHWAYS TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

We know that the future isn't just somewhere we're going... it's something we're creating.

Council's Vision for the Rockhampton Region is:

One Great Region. Live. Visit. Invest.

Achieving this vision, both now and in the future, requires us to embed sustainability considerations within everything we do.

Council is committed to putting sustainability into action through its corporate commitments and governance arrangements; its strategies, services and operations; and its community programs and partnerships.

As we move towards 2030, this Strategy will support our vision for a sustainable future by delivering local initiatives that help us to align with the evolving policy landscape, whilst simultaneously strengthening our community, environmental and economic resilience.

In pursuing this sustainability journey, Council will work together with our local residents, communities, businesses, industries and other levels of government to lead a variety of strategic actions via four pathways. Underpinning the pathways are key strategic priorities that will help the Rockhampton Region to prioritise a healthy natural environment, transition towards net zero emissions, create a climate resilient region and build a low-carbon circular economy.



'Last light' by Russel Prothero



INDIVIDUALS & HOUSEHOLDS.

Let's work together to strengthen our capacity to live sustainably.

COMMUNITY & LOCAL GROUPS.

Let's work together to create a vibrant, liveable and resilient community.

One Great Region.
Live. Visit. Invest.

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.

Prioritise a healthy natural environment.
Transition towards net zero emissions.
Create a climate resilient region.
Build a low-carbon circular economy.

BUSINESS, INDUSTRY & GOVERNMENT.

Let's work together to position the Rockhampton Region to thrive and grow sustainably.

COUNCIL OPERATIONS & SERVICES.

Let's work together to continually improve our environment and sustainability performance.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.

As we move towards 2030, Council's Sustainability Strategy recognises the need to address four strategic priorities.

Together the priorities help to focus attention on the actions necessary to align with national and state policies and targets; strengthen our community, environmental and economic resilience; and position us to make the most of emerging opportunities for our Region.

PRIORITISE A HEALTHY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

TRANSITION TOWARDS NET ZERO EMISSIONS

CREATE A CLIMATE RESILIENT REGION

BUILD A LOW-CARBON CIRCULAR ECONOMY



OUR PRIORITIES.

The Strategy's four key strategic priorities are designed to guide planning and decision-making, whilst driving action and investment.

- **PRIORITISE a healthy natural environment by protecting, maintaining and enhancing our natural assets.**

Our personal health and wellbeing, lifestyles, businesses, industries and the economy all depend on the natural environment that surrounds us. By using our resources wisely and taking care of our natural assets – our air, soils, groundwater, land-based ecosystems, freshwater rivers and wetlands, and our coastal and marine ecosystems – we are taking care of the environment that sustains us.

- **TRANSITION towards net zero emissions by accelerating local climate action.**

Human activities create greenhouse gas emissions that are changing the natural cycling of carbon through the environment and increasing climate-related risks. By doing our part to reduce emissions, we are protecting the places and way of life we value, whilst aligning with national and state policies and targets.

- **CREATE a climate resilient region by preparing our Council, Region and community to adapt and prosper in a changing climate.**

Our Region faces a variety of climate-related pressures that are already impacting our communities, environment and economy. By increasing our understanding of the risks and opportunities presented by climate change, we can drive long-term resilience that supports the Region to better prepare for, recover from and adapt to the associated impacts.

- **BUILD a low-carbon circular economy by working with business, industry and government to ensure our Region thrives.**

The linear economic model of make-use-dispose is dependent on a range of finite resources and materials that generate significant waste. By transforming how we manage our resources, a low-carbon circular economy delivers a variety of benefits for the Region by optimising the whole value chain to design out waste, re-use and recycle materials, and regenerate natural systems.



INDIVIDUALS & HOUSEHOLDS.

PATHWAY 1 OBJECTIVE.

**Let's work together to strengthen
our capacity to live sustainably.**

Our residents influence the Rockhampton Region through the many ways they live, work and play across diverse urban and rural settings.

This pathway focuses on how individuals and households can contribute to the sustainability of the Region. It reminds us that our daily choices and habits make a difference both locally and globally.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- 1.1** Support local residents to adopt sustainable behaviours that help them to save money and reduce household emissions.
- 1.2** Accelerate the transition towards zero waste by driving waste avoidance and waste diversion at the individual and household level.
- 1.3** Help residents build their household resilience to climate-related risks by connecting them with practical tools, workshops and resources.
- 1.4** Link individuals with sustainable transport and active recreation opportunities that connect with key local destinations and open spaces.
- 1.5** Provide residents with the opportunity to participate in a range of local sustainability programs, initiatives, activities and events.



KEY INITIATIVES.

- Deliver targeted community engagement activities such as the Get Ready Queensland and Living Sustainably programs
- Implement residential waste diversion initiatives including the establishment of a FOGO (food organics and garden organics) kerbside collection program
- Support greater use of sustainable transport options by planning for well-connected walking and cycling infrastructure and improved end-of-trip facilities
- Support local events that foster sustainable behaviours and promote active and sustainable transport use
- Enhance digital and paperless communications, such as e-Notices
- Continue targeted incentives and rebates such as Council's residential water efficiency rebate
- Promote other national and state initiatives that help residents to live more sustainably such as climate-responsive residential housing design, national building codes and energy efficiency programs
- Continue to support residents to cool, shade and beautify their yards through Council's Native Plant Program and free native plant giveaways

PATHWAY 2 OBJECTIVE.

**Let's work together to create
a vibrant, liveable and
resilient community.**

Our local not-for-profit groups, sporting clubs, special interest groups and broader community interactions contribute to the rich fabric of the Rockhampton Region.

This pathway focusses on the role our collective community can play in contributing to the strategic priorities and supporting the future of the Region.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- 2.1** Grow the community's capacity and capability to understand, adapt and build resilience to climate-related risks.
- 2.2** Explore opportunities to work with, learn from and strengthen outcomes through partnerships with First Nations Peoples.
- 2.3** Enhance the liveability of our Region by supporting initiatives that protect local biodiversity, restore landscapes and increase urban canopy cover.
- 2.4** Foster community collaboration on key local environment and sustainability initiatives.
- 2.5** Encourage initiatives that help the community to adopt sustainable behaviours, avoid waste and reduce emissions.



KEY INITIATIVES.

- Work with Traditional Owners and First Nations Peoples to implement Indigenous Land Use Agreements and support connection to country
- Provide opportunities for our local community to get involved with the restoration of our natural environment
- Continue to support local natural resource management and pest management works
- Deliver community engagement programs that address climate-related risks and opportunities
- Support community partnerships, capacity building activities and community grants opportunities
- Implement targeted urban greening activities
- Deliver sustainable community infrastructure
- Plan for, and support the development of, public charging infrastructure for zero emissions vehicles
- Encourage participation in citizen science activities to increase local knowledge and data collection
- Develop and deliver local education and awareness activities
- Support schools and community groups on their sustainability journey

PATHWAY 3 OBJECTIVE.

**Let's work together to position
the Rockhampton Region to
thrive and grow sustainably.**

A diverse range of business, industry and government interests shape and influence the Rockhampton Region.

This pathway focuses on all sectors of the regional economy, from small to large businesses, and also recognises the important role that the Australian and Queensland Governments can play in supporting the future of our Region.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- 3.1** Advocate and partner to progress local sustainability priorities at the regional, state and national level.
- 3.2** Actively pursue opportunities associated with sustainable industries and infrastructure that deliver local social, environmental and economic benefits for the Region.
- 3.3** Progress workforce and economic planning that will ensure we prosper as the demand for low-carbon products and services grows.
- 3.4** Grow local visitation and tourism opportunities that celebrate our natural assets and contribute to the liveability of the Region.
- 3.5** Work with business, industry and government to drive low-carbon circular economy initiatives, alongside other innovative and sustainable practices.



KEY INITIATIVES.

- Identify and plan for local climate mitigation, adaptation and transition priorities
- Continue collaborative disaster management planning and action
- Support the development and implementation of regional plans and strategies that support sustainable development, regional resilience and other local sustainability outcomes
- Advocate for regional water security and water quality improvements (reducing pollution, nutrients and sediments)
- Progress the Making Water Work Program and the Circular Economy Pathway
- Continue to implement the Rockhampton Region Waste Strategy and to integrate broader regional waste management and circular economy initiatives to avoid waste and divert resources from landfill
- Support local skills and training partnerships
- Continue to activate nature-based tourism including recreational fishing, mountain-biking, walking, cycling and bird-watching
- Encourage business water, waste and energy efficiency
- Continue to collaborate with local industry, other levels of Government and key partners – this may include the Central Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, Reef Guardian Councils program, the Queensland Climate Resilient Councils program, the Capricorn Pest Management Group, Economic Development Australia, Regional Development Australia, the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health, the Fitzroy Basin Working Group and the local Chamber of Commerce

PATHWAY 4 OBJECTIVE.

Let's work together to continually improve our environment and sustainability performance.

As an organisation, Council is responsible for providing a wide range of infrastructure and services across the Region.

This pathway focuses on the ways in which Council staff can contribute to the strategic priorities by embedding environment and sustainability considerations in their day-to-day work.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- 4.1** Accelerate Council's transition towards net zero emissions by actively monitoring and reducing emissions within Council's operational control.
- 4.2** Embed climate-related risk considerations into Council's decision-making, planning scheme, local developments and operations.
- 4.3** Apply sustainable procurement, circular economy and lifecycle principles to the delivery of products, services, assets and projects.
- 4.4** Implement management policies, planning and practices that protect our natural environment and support the resilience of our biodiversity and natural assets.
- 4.5** Foster sustainable behaviour, and encourage the wise use of resources, by making sustainability second nature within Council's operations and services.



KEY INITIATIVES.

- Develop Council's Corporate Emissions Inventory
- Implement Council's Corporate Emissions Reduction Plan
- Facilitate implementation of the Climate Risk Management Framework for Queensland Local Government
- Set minimum energy efficiency standards for Council-owned buildings and assets
- Pursue renewable energy sources and, where practicable, install behind the meter solar PV on Council facilities and key community infrastructure
- Continue Council's fleet transition planning to support the move towards zero emission vehicles and equipment
- Update Council's procurement practices to help avoid waste, reduce emissions and pursue sustainable products and materials
- Seek partnerships and funding to protect and enhance biodiversity values in priority areas
- Achieve water quality improvements, through improved management of discharges from the region's wastewater treatment plants, urban stormwater network and local agricultural activities
- Develop integrated management systems for high risk operations
- Deliver an internal engagement program to build staff knowledge and skills to implement sustainable behaviours in the workplace

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY.

This Strategy pursues a coordinated approach that integrates sustainability considerations across Council's many and diverse functions.

In implementing this Strategy, Council will:

- Lead our Region by example, supported by a clear sustainability governance framework that extends through our corporate plans, policies and decision-making processes.
- Work with local residents, communities, businesses, industries and other levels of government to communicate and support the vision and strategic priorities.
- Communicate and collaborate to ensure we make the best use of finite resources and avoid duplication of effort or missed opportunities.
- Continue to monitor the evolving policy landscape and best practice sustainability standards.
- Maintain an internal action plan that identifies and tracks each initiative, allowing actions to be reviewed or accelerated if stronger and more meaningful opportunities arise.
- Provide funding to support the action plan, subject to Council's budgetary process and other funding sources such as government grants.
- Maintain a supporting engagement plan that ensures stakeholders are engaged and informed during the life of the Strategy.
- Coordinate an internal Sustainability Strategy Executive Group to oversee implementation of the Strategy, with representatives from each Section of Council, meeting quarterly. The Group will be accountable to Council's Leadership Team and Councillors.
- Monitor implementation of the Strategy against the action plan as well as progress towards emissions reduction targets.
- Be accountable and report progress back to the community through a range of tools including Operational Plan reporting and the annual Sustainability Strategy Year in Review.





TOWARDS 2030.

As we move towards 2030, we look forward to continuing the great work that we've started, whilst looking for new ways to:

- prioritise a healthy natural environment by protecting, maintaining and enhancing our natural assets;
- transition towards net zero emissions by accelerating local climate action;
- create a climate resilient region by preparing our Council, Region and the community to adapt and prosper in a changing climate; and
- build a low-carbon circular economy by working with business, industry and government to ensure our region thrives.

We're excited about the opportunity to positively influence the continuing liveability and prosperity of this wonderful place we call home. By working together with our local residents, communities, businesses, industries and other levels of government we are taking proactive steps to create the future we want to see.

We welcome you to be part of the next chapter in the Rockhampton Region's sustainability journey.

**Let's continue to work together to create
One Great Region. Live. Visit. Invest.**

'Last light' by Russell Prothero



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