



## Topic 3. Visitor Accommodation in the Longreach Region

In 2016, the Longreach Regional Council released its strategic economic development document 'Outback Prosperity 2021'. One of three action areas identified was to develop and promote the Longreach Region's tourism offer. The key actions to support this objective included preparing a short-term accommodation needs analysis and strategy and explore opportunities for an 'eco-lodge' concept in the Longreach Region.

As a member council of the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD), the Longreach Region was included in the CWQ Data Collection and Analysis report prepared by Stafford Strategy in March 2020.

### **CWQ Data Collection and Analysis Report**

An overview of the findings for the Longreach Region from the report include:

#### Data

- Longreach is the major air access point and has one of two railway stations for Central Western Queensland
- Longreach is also at the intersection of the Landsborough Highway (A2) and Thomson Developmental Road (79)
- Visitation across Central Western Queensland is highly seasonal (Peak seasons April – October)
- Longreach Region offers 383 hotel/motel/airBnB/apartment rooms with an average of two guests per room and an average stay of 2 nights
- Longreach Region offers 421 sites in tourist parks with an average of two guests per site and an average stay of 2 nights
- Longreach Region offers approximately 422 freedom camping sites (number subject to verification but location of campgrounds known)
- To holiday is the motivation for near half (2019, 49%) of visits to Longreach and

business accounts for near a quarter (2019, 24%)

- Longreach is the most visited LGA in CWQ for international, domestic and local visitors
- Value of total visitor spend in the Longreach region is \$227.1m per year (2019) with domestic overnight visitors contributing the greatest share

#### Analysis

- Market gaps in visitor accommodation were identified as boutique eco-chalets/stations/farm stays, glamping, hotels, high-quality destination holiday parks
- Market gaps in visitor attractions which may involve material change of use or building work were identified around Aboriginal cultural experiences, health and wellness retreats, heritage rail experiences, tours/permanent 'under the stars' dining location

(Note: Evening light/sound show has already received development approval and been undertaken, DA19/20-001)

The CWQ Data Collection and Analysis report can be accessed here:

<https://www.rapad.com.au/assets/Uploads/CWQ-Tourism-Data-Collection-and-Analysis-Public-Version-v1-1.pdf>

### **Recent Development Approval Activity**

Since the CWQ Data Collection and Analysis report was released, the following visitor accommodation development approvals have been issued by council:

- DA21/22-001: Development Permit for Material Change of Use for Nature-based Tourism (11 campsites and guided tours)
- DA21/22-002: Development Permit for Material Change of Use for Short-Term Accommodation and Multiple Dwelling (Four (4) Units)
- DA20/21-003: Development Permit for Material Change of Use for a Tourist Park (150 caravan and camping sites)
- DA19/20-008: DA19/20-008 – Development Permit for Material Change of Use for Short Term Accommodation (Additional 17 Motel Rooms)

Council has also commissioned and adopted the Thomson River Master Plan which sets out a long-term vision and supporting strategies to guide investment informed by the gaps identified in the CWQ Data Collection and Analysis report (refer to the Topic 1 paper for Major Amendment No. 2).

### Community Attitudes Towards Tourism

In 2017 and 2019, Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) undertook comparative surveys of attitudes towards and impacts of tourism on local communities in TEQ's Outback Queensland region (which extends across 18 LGAs including the Longreach Region). Relevant findings from the 2019 survey include:

- 66% of Outback Queensland residents “really like” tourists
- 71% of Outback Queensland residents felt their area should “attract more” tourists
- 76% of Outback Queensland residents were “happy with continued growth” of tourism development
- 79% of Outback Queensland residents agreed “tourism has a positive impact on the community as a whole”
- Outback Queensland residents’ attitudes towards tourism were very positive compared with findings from across the State
- Of the negative impacts that were acknowledged, of greatest concern for Outback Queensland communities were:
  - impacts on access for locals
  - increase in property prices
  - increased disruption.

- Concerns in Outback Queensland communities regarding negative impacts on the environment and potential rise in delinquent behaviour from tourism exceeded the comparative level of concern about those impacts across the State.

The Social Indicators 2019 Outback report by TEQ can be accessed here: <https://cdn2-teq.queensland.com/~media/55bbf29bdf92448c9a0037b5e4135470.ashx?vs=1&d=20191024T121905>

The current Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions to people’s lives and travel (both for leisure and business purposes) globally. These impacts are current and evolving. Empirical evidence suggests that:

- The pandemic has heightened the desire of travellers to connect with nature, in the course of travelling to avoid locations subject to lock-downs and as restrictions ease.
- For the Longreach Region, the pandemic has caused a near complete decrease in international visitors but an exponential increase in domestic visitors to the region. It has also contributed to a potential change in the demographic spread of visitors (increase in family groups, while older travelling couples remain strong) and increase in the duration of the average stay.

Whether these changed dynamics are to persist in the medium to longer term is yet to be seen. However, the current increased exposure provides an opportunity to increase the profile of the Longreach Region and leverage development investment.

The market gaps identified in the CWQ Data Collection and Analysis report are offerings consistent with attracting “high value travellers”. TEQ has published ‘Domestic High Value Traveller Profiles’ (May 2018) based on researched commissioned by BDA Marketing Planning in 2017, which may be a useful resource in understanding the socio-demographics and travel behaviours and expectations of such visitors.

Major Amendment No. 2 provides an opportunity to review and where necessary amend the planning scheme with regard to visitor accommodation uses to respond to identified market gaps, regulate to achieve desired standards of development and

mitigate against potential negative impacts on the community.

Particular consideration is intended to be given to bush camping experiences and share-economy (eg. AirBnB, Stayz) use of residential buildings for visitor accommodation, as the current policies and practices relating to these types of visitor accommodation were not contemplated when the planning scheme was originally made.

## Options for Amending the Planning Scheme

The planning scheme does already identify a Tourism Zone (refer to **attached map**), determined to be an appropriate location for visitor accommodation and tourist attractions. There remains development potential within this zone, however it is presently intended to include more traditional forms of visitor accommodation. Demand exists for a more diverse range of visitor accommodation offerings.

The planning scheme also already includes applicable use definitions, as well as development application and assessment requirements for:

- bush camping/glamping (typically falling within the 'nature-based tourism', 'short-term accommodation' or 'tourist park' use definitions); and
- the use of existing residential buildings for engaging in the share-economy (typically falling within the 'short-term accommodation' use definition, or when the permanent resident remains present like a bed-and-breakfast or farmstay, the 'home-based business' use definition).

Consideration should be given to the appropriate zones and locational requirements for these more contemporary styles of visitor accommodation.

Consideration could also be given to the potential consequences of emerging share-economy platforms for camping opportunities (eg. hipcamp.com, youcamp.com). While there are presently only limited offerings in the Longreach Region, it is noted that the use of such platforms are increasing in popularity in surrounding local government areas.

Visitor accommodation offerings, while subject to seasonal demand in the Longreach Region, involve period of quite intense occupation. The capacity and peak impacts on trunk infrastructure networks and other public facilities should be considered when planning for this type of development.

This Major Amendment No. 2 project represents an opportunity to integrate more contemporary policy and practices, articulate a specific vision regarding new visitor accommodation offerings in the Longreach Region and improve and refine the application and assessment requirement of such future development to achieve that vision.

There are some limitations on the use of terminology and means of regulating visitor accommodation in a planning scheme. Presenting Council's overall position on this issue to the community in the form of a supporting fact sheet or similar, may aid awareness and understanding of the relevant planning application and assessment requirements.

Some options for amendment, including foreseen advantages and disadvantages, are outlined in the following table.

Planning Scheme Amendment – Option and description	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><b>1. Amend the Strategic Framework to address the extent and circumstances in which new visitor accommodation offerings are to be supported in the Rural Zone</b></p> <p>This is particularly relevant in relation to bush camping/glamping experiences. The planning scheme presently only expresses clear aspirations in terms of the towns in the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statements and outcomes in the Strategic Framework express Council's overarching policy position on a matter and can be applied to the assessment of impact assessable development applications. They</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unless also considered and addressed through in the table which identifies if and what type of planning application is required and/or the codes (and their assessment criteria) in the</li> </ul>

Planning Scheme Amendment – Option and description	Advantages	Disadvantages
	<p>can provide grounds for approving, conditioning or refusing an impact assessable development application.</p>	<p>planning scheme, this approach alone does not prevent accepted or code assessable development occurring or being approved which may conflict with or compromise the Strategic Framework.</p>
<p>2. Amend the Strategic Framework to include those aspects of the <a href="#">Tourism and Events Queensland's Nature-based Tourism Strategy 2021-2024</a> that should specifically be supported in the Longreach Region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statements and outcomes in the Strategic Framework express Council's overarching policy position on a matter and can be applied to the assessment of impact assessable development applications.</li> <li>• Consistent with the State Planning Policy and plan-making requirements to consider and integrate findings of State endorsed tourism studies and plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per 1. above</li> </ul>
<p>3. Amend the Strategic Framework to address the extent and circumstances in which share-economy use of residential buildings to provide visitor accommodation is to be supported.</p> <p>Are there particular zones or areas where this type of use may be supported and others where it is to be deterred?</p> <p>Is there a preference for share-economy use which constitutes a 'home-based business' (ie. bed and breakfast or farmstay), as opposed to 'short-term accommodation' where the permanent resident is not present? How does this contribute to maximising building occupancy so as to maintain/increase the gross population of an area and realise associated economic and building up-keep opportunities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per 1. above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per 1. above</li> </ul>

Planning Scheme Amendment – Option and description	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><b>4. Set out circumstances where planning approval is not required for new visitor accommodation offerings.</b></p> <p>This would not change the need for building, plumbing or other approvals before commencing such development.</p> <p><b>For instance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When ‘nature-based tourism’ or ‘tourism park’ development is undertaken in certain zones by or on behalf of Longreach Regional Council.</li> <li>• When for a self-contained recreational vehicle ground, in certain zones, when certain requirements can be met. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Factsheet A: Self-contained recreational vehicle grounds within existing tourist parks (2019), Mackay Regional Council</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Factsheet B: New self-contained recreational vehicle grounds (not associated with a tourist park) (2019), Mackay Regional Council.</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces developer risk and cost which can improve the attractiveness of undertaking such development.</li> <li>• In relation to allowing Council to undertake certain development without needing planning approval, it reduces to associated administrative and approval costs to Council (and its rate-payers), while recognising there are alternate accountability mechanisms to moderate Council’s actions.</li> <li>• This approach may assist in facilitating development envisaged under the Thomson River Master Plan, including its visitor accommodation offerings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires a degree of risk tolerance, in terms of an unforeseen and unintended form of development being able to satisfy the exception.</li> <li>• Risks and impacts need to be considered and addressed at the time of plan-making rather than assessing a development application for a specific proposal.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Include an administrative definition (or similar drafting technique) to establish as a sub-category within an existing defined use, so as to apply different application and assessment requirements.</b></p> <p>Such requirements may be more or less onerous depending the strategic objective to be achieved.</p> <p>Can circumstances be described where planning approval is not required for new visitor accommodation offerings? This does not change the need for building, plumbing or other approvals before commencing such development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A drafting mechanism which can allow for regulatory differentiation and support particular strategic objectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can add a layer of complexity to the readability, interpretation and application of the planning scheme.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Include assessment benchmarks (ie. overall outcomes and criteria) in the to Rural Zone code in relation to new visitor accommodation offerings.</b></p> <p>The code provisions would be consistent with and informed by the aspirations expressed in the Strategic Framework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to 1. above</li> <li>• Supports achieving the strategic aspirations by setting out a criteria which can be applied to determine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning approval requirements can deter such investment or income generating activities. They can also require</li> </ul>

Planning Scheme Amendment – Option and description	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><b>For instance, relevant assessment benchmarks will include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring suitable standards of essential infrastructure and access to services is provided and maintained for the use and benefit of visitors</li> <li>• Ensuring the use does not compromise the safety, efficiency or maintenance of public infrastructure including roads and the stock route network</li> <li>• Ensuring the health and safety of visitors, their property and any development infrastructure, such as flood and bushfire risk mitigation plans and disaster management procedures</li> <li>• Ensuring the scale and density of the use and associated structures and infrastructure do not compromise the other priority and surround land uses (ie. agriculture or resource extraction) or detract from the amenity and aesthetics of the area</li> <li>• Ensuring the use does not contribute to adverse environmental, cultural protection and biosecurity impacts</li> </ul>	<p>development which is accepted subject to requirement or to code assessable development applications to prevent the strategic aspirations from being compromised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address a current gap in the planning scheme as some types of visitor accommodation uses in the Rural Zone are currently code assessable against this code.</li> </ul>	<p>Council to consider its enforcement strategy to ensure compliance.</p>
<p><b>7. Include specific assessment benchmarks to apply to share-economy use of residential buildings to provide visitor accommodation</b></p> <p>The code provisions would be consistent with and informed by the aspirations expressed in the Strategic Framework.</p> <p><b>For instance, relevant assessment benchmarks will include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring suitable standards of essential infrastructure and access to services is provided and maintained for the use and benefit of visitors</li> <li>• Consider the impacts of the use (including cumulatively) may have on trunk infrastructure network capacity and public facilities in an area</li> <li>• Consider and address increased demand on car parking spaces</li> <li>• Ensuring the health and safety of visitors, their property and any development infrastructure, for instance that such development resulting in increased occupation in a flood, bushfire or other hazard area should be avoided</li> <li>• Ensuring the scale, density and presentation of the use and associated structures and infrastructure do not compromise the other priority and surround land uses or detract from the amenity and aesthetics of the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to 1. above</li> <li>• Supports achieving the strategic aspirations by setting out a criteria which can be applied to determine development which is accepted subject to requirement or to code assessable development applications to prevent the strategic aspirations from being compromised.</li> <li>• Improves clarity and guidance around the expectations associated with such development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning approval requirements can deter such investment or income generating activities. They can also require Council to consider its enforcement strategy to ensure compliance.</li> </ul>



## Have Your Say

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There will be multiple opportunities to have your say during the process. The first of these will be in January 2022 when we release a public survey gathering feedback from our communities on all aspects of the current planning scheme. We will also be seeking to engage face to face with stakeholders on the unique issues covered in each amendment. We anticipate this process commencing in February 2022.

## How Can I Keep Updated?

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For more information about the proposed planning scheme amendments, or to register for email updates please visit [longreach.qld.gov.au/townplan](https://longreach.qld.gov.au/townplan) or contact us directly:

Email: [assist@longreach.qld.gov.au](mailto:assist@longreach.qld.gov.au)

Phone: (07) 4658 4111



## Extent of existing Tourism Zone

Longreach Regional Council Planning Scheme

23°25'47"S 144°15'28"E

23°25'47"S 144°17'25"E



23°27'16"S 144°15'28"E

23°27'16"S 144°17'25"E

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Scale: 1:17500

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Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994

Projection: Web Mercator EPSG:102100

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## Extent of existing Tourism Zone

Longreach Regional Council Planning Scheme

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