



Investing in the South Burnett Discussion Paper

*(The Economic & Tourism Development
Peak Body)*

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Introduction

In the future, economic and tourism development in the South Burnett cannot just rely on involvement with external organisations, State and Federal governments and ad hoc involvement between local organisations and South Burnett Regional Council (SBRC). The South Burnett is well placed to identify, implement and drive strategies that are consistent with other regional plans and projects. Importantly, SBRC together with participation by proactive community leaders with appropriate skills are at present in a position to shape the South Burnett's future by joining forces to meet this challenge.

Economic and tourism development in the South Burnett could be enhanced by leaders from within the Region joining in a united approach and aligning existing local organisations to work together with SBRC to agree on and deliver defined economic development and tourism development outcomes.

SBRC's involvement with external organisations such as Regional Economic Development Advisory Committee (REDAC), Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils (WBBROC) and its move to the South East Queensland Country Regional Tourism Organisation (Super RTO) has provided momentum and set the scene for the future. The creation of the 'Super RTO' which includes the Regions of Toowoomba, Southern Downs, Western Downs and the South Burnett provides a unique opportunity to promote the South Burnett. The focus of Regional Development Australia (RDA) for the Wide Bay Burnett Region is on funding regional infrastructure and strategic projects such as FIFO (Fly In Fly Out). This too provides the South Burnett with a unique opportunity to use the mining boom to create development in the Region.

It is suggested that the establishment of a South Burnett Economic and Tourism Organisation (name to be determined: the 'Entity'), will inform, advise and monitor specific strategies. Evaluation of specific strategies is also important in ensuring that deliverables are tangible. In the process it is envisaged that the South Burnett is perceived as promoting and retaining its competitive advantages for existing businesses and as a Region that attracts and welcomes new business.

'South Burnett is open for Business'

An outcome from a number of recent meetings instigated by the South Burnett Mayor with locally based business and industry representatives, Local Member for Nanango and Council Officers elicited positive support for the establishment of a peak South Burnett body with clear vision, structure and resource to drive economic and tourism development.

Discussions held with economic development practitioners from across Queensland indicate that the success of a professional, strategically focussed organisation evolves through various stages of development during which time participation and commitment by the right people requires management and leadership.

Leadership is the key to success. To hasten progress in a measured manner it is suggested that SBRC is the body that is in a position in the first instance to establish, manage and lead an 'Entity' with a strong foundation along a pathway towards a sustainable South Burnett economic and tourism development legacy.

To ensure local business and tourism associations maintain their focus, current bodies are encouraged to continue pursuing their local objectives. However, it is prudent that these organisations have a strong relationship with the new organisation and in addition become involved in its working.

SBRC's proposal is to establish a peak body (the 'Entity') within four (4) months which will set up the 'Entity' and prescribe the governance and working framework that focuses on:

- Supporting existing business in the South Burnett
- Increasing investment by existing businesses in the South Burnett
- Attracting investment in the South Burnett
- Promoting the South Burnett through Regional Tourism
- Supporting Economic and Tourism Sustainability of the South Burnett

It is envisaged that the 'Entity' will evolve through 3 stages:

1. Set Up Phase
2. Initial Operational Phase (up to 24 months after Set Up)
3. Operational Phase

The Set Up Phase

It is considered prudent and expedient to commence this arrangement as an unincorporated association under the *Local Government Act 2009*. SBRC would be prepared to create and resource the Set Up Phase under such an arrangement.

It would be envisaged that as the organisation's foundations strengthen SBRC's 'hands on' approach will reduce and its focus shift away from governance to strategic visioning and project delivery.

The *Local Government Act 2009* allows a Local government to set up the following types of organisations for the benefit of the community on the proviso that the Local government does not create an unlimited liability nor borrow or lend money without approval:

- a partnership; or
- an unlisted corporation; or
- another association of persons that is not a corporation.

The proposed scope of the 'Entity' would initially encompass:

- Economic Development
- Tourism Growth
- Major New Events Attraction

Another major deliverable during the Set Up Phase is the organisation's charter. The governance and management of the organisation would be outlined in its charter.

The Set Up Phase will be akin to a project whereby a group of eminent local identities will be drawn together to develop the constitution, determine the selection process of the 'Entity' members for the initial Operational Phase, appoint the 'Entity' members and develop the charter of operations.

Membership on the Set Up Phase Committee will be by invitation to current community leaders. The SBRC Deputy Mayor will be tasked with Chairing this Committee and be required to deliver the constitution, select and appoint members of the 'Entity', determine the corporate standing of the 'Entity', and develop the charter of operations. Records of meetings are to be made including attendance.

In the best interest of the 'Entity' and Region, people with fresh ideas and a passion to succeed are to be preferred as members of the 'Entity'. It is imperative that the 'Entity' members have the time and skills to fulfil their role as an 'Entity' member.

It is suggested that the 'Entity' is limited to no more than 10 community representatives and that it meets 12 times per annum or more on an as needs basis.

'Entity' members should ideally be individuals of vision with a regional, national and international outlook who can evaluate and advise on the economic scope of projects within the context of the South Burnett Region. At least 50% should be skilled based members with expertise, experience and/or qualifications in business.

'Entity' positions are to be advertised in the media and all applicants will be required to complete an application form and be assessed against selection criteria through a transparent selection process. This will be the responsibility of the Set Up Phase Committee.

To summarise, during the Set Up Phase SBRC will:

1. Seek local business and tourism endorsement for the establishment of the 'Entity'
2. With the support of the business community formally adopt the establishment of the 'Entity'

It is anticipated that this Set Up Phase will operate for up to three (3) months before producing a final report to be provided to the Mayor, SBRC.

Initial Operational Phase

The 'Entity' will be managed by a chairperson and appropriately skilled local community representatives who would have the ability to either:

- provide specialist business or industry knowledge aligned to a geographical area; and/or
- provide specialist knowledge.

This phase will be for a period of up to 24 months during which time the 'Entity' will manage and oversee strategic projects and over time determine and recommend the most appropriate structure, membership base and income model for the long term ongoing success of economic and tourism development in the South Burnett (Operational Phase).

It is suggested that the 'Entity' be comprised of a Chairperson which during the Initial Operational Phase be the Mayor, SBRC. Members of the 'Entity' would be as follows:

Membership (10): Five (5) geographical representations covering the major South Burnett townships and a key industry segment. Five (5) Skills Based Members.

Townships (geographical) Based Members:

- Blackbutt/ Benarkin
- Kingaroy
- Murgon
- Nanango
- Wondai/Proston

Skills Based Members

- Tourism
- Industry
- Retail
- Events
- Agriculture

Specialist's expertise (not covered listed under Skills Base Members and not covered by Townships Based Members) could also be considered. Examples include:

- Education
- Medical
- Employment

It was noted during the business information sessions held 6th December 2012 that a skilled based Steering Committee of up to 7 people would be better placed to make decisions and focus on development and growth as opposed to group of people based on geographical location.

The responsibilities of the 'Entity's' Chairperson and members are as follows:

- Chair of the 'Entity':
 - Chairmanship duties
 - Provide vision
 - Represent the Region
 - Advocacy on behalf of the 'Entity'
- Members of the 'Entity':
 - Communicate the business and industry interests of geographical areas represented; and/or
 - Provide specialist advice and support
 - Assess South Burnett Economic and Tourism Development Strategies;
 - Assist with approved projects;
 - Provide advice on the future structure of the 'Entity';
 - To attend 'Entity' meetings.

'Entity' members will not receive any form of remuneration except for reimbursement of reasonable expenses as determined by the 'Entity'.

'Entity' members will be required to maintain confidentiality on issues of a sensitive nature and in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009*, and to act in an ethical manner in the consideration of issues and the provision of advice to Council and to act in accordance with the 'Entity's' Constitution.

The 'Entity' will have access to the SBRC Economic Development Manager who will report to the SBRC Chief Executive Officer with a functional reporting responsibility to the 'Entity' Chairperson. The officer's responsibilities will include:

- Meeting co-ordination, minute taking and reporting;
- Manage the evolution of the entity to become an effective peak body;
- Represent SBRC on economic and tourism programs and bodies as deemed necessary, for example:
 - REDAC Regional Economic Development Advisory Group to the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils
 - Liaise with State and Federal government officers on projects.
- Implement and report on the South Burnett Economic and Tourism Development Strategy incorporating major projects approved by SBRC and the 'Entity' (the Economic Development Strategy provides a framework of actions for the future);

- Prepare Project Implementation Plans which prioritise, provide timeframes, details resource allocation, partnerships with stakeholders and what each activity aims to achieve;
- Build an ongoing monitoring and evaluation program that assesses the effectiveness of the entity and the projects undertaken.

The Initial Operational Phase will be fully funded by SBRC. This will include a full time officer resource, administration support, office and meeting space and *ad hoc* economic development funding as approved in the 2012/13 adopted budget for approved projects.

SBRC is investigating the possibility of setting up an innovative Economic and Tourism Development presence in the Kingaroy Forecourt in the Kingaroy CBD. This office will accommodate SBRC economic and tourism staff dedicated to developing the South Burnett's future through this peak body. The office will include office, meeting and display space together with digital marketing hardware and software, static product displays opportunities and in time e-commerce services to buy local.

Professional promotional material may include (not limited to):

- Jobs in the South Burnett
- Local businesses
- Communications
 - ICT
 - Radio
- Fashion in the South Burnett
- Medical services
- Tourism providers
 - Wine
 - Accommodation
- Events
 - Race Meetings
 - Wine & Food in the Park
- Buy Local
- Growing the Burnett
- Transport
- Major industries

Initially, SBRC will present the 'Entity' with a suite of economic and tourism development projects for determination by the 'Entity'.

Attachment 1 depicts a structure that may serve the Entity's operations and provide one avenue for funding through the Qld Government's 4 pillars – tourism, agriculture, resources and construction. Advisory committees consisting of local tourism and business associations together with other specialists could work with SBRC's Manager Economic Development to focus on projects within the scope of each pillar.

During the Initial Operational Phase it is envisaged that the 'Entity' will (**deliverables**):

1. Conduct 'Entity' meetings in accordance with its charter;
2. Submit a operating charter to SBRC for adoption;
3. Lead and manage projects;
4. Identify opportunities and ideas for the future benefit of the South Burnett;
5. Make recommendation to SBRC on:
 - a. The most appropriate composition and management of the 'Entity'
 - b. A workable funding model

- c. A working model that creates linkages with other South Burnett business and tourism organisations, with external regional organisations, and with State and Federal governments.
6. Establish relationships with South Burnett business and tourism associations, relevant regional organisations and with State and Federal governments.

The Operational Phase

The Start Up and Initial Operational Phases of the 'Entity' are necessary steps in establishing a professional body as the South Burnett's peak economic and tourism development organisation.

Within 24 months of commencing the Initial Operational Phase, the 'Entity' will recommend to SBRC the preferred organisational structure and charter to drive economic and tourism development in the South Burnett in the medium to longer term.

The future composition of the 'Entity' may take the form of:

- an unlisted incorporated body, limited by guarantee and managing funds that drive economic and tourism development, or
- stay as is an Enterprise established under the *Local Government Act*, or
- a hybrid model of the above or
- some other structure.

Summary

SBRC, with community support is prepared to, in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009*, establish an organisation to drive economic and tourism development in the South Burnett.

Over a 3 month period, the Start Up Phase, a committee will be formed to develop the governance and constitution of the 'Entity' as well as appoint the members of the 'Entity'. This will be followed by a period of up to 24 months called the Initial Operational Phase when it is intended to manage and guide this 'Entity' to create a strong structural foundation with flexibility and community involvement when combined are capable of making a difference in the Region in respect of economic and tourism development. During this time the 'Entity' will also be responsible for reviewing its governance and report on possible changes that enhance its impact.

Following this Initial Operational Phase the 'Entity' will move to the Operational Phase which is intended to deliver on outcomes in the medium to long term.

Attachments:

1. Possible Operating Structure