

# GROW\_Wagga Wagga

## **A blueprint for continued economic growth of the city 2008 through to 2018**

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### **Preamble**

This draft document has been prepared in September 2007 following a range of consultations with business, industry and institutional leaders from across the city.

The consultations focussed on the key issues affecting the city's future growth and the opportunities that the city should consider pursuing to continue the positive growth experienced during the first 5 years of Acceler8 from 2003-2008. The discussions focussed on areas in which the city has competitive economic advantages and sought to link these to anticipated global growth opportunities. The plan does not envisage Wagga Wagga pursuing a scattergun approach to growth but rather a tightly focussed strategy that builds on the city's natural attributes – acknowledging that the plan will need to be reviewed annually to accommodate inevitable changes in global opportunities and local circumstances.

It should be noted that a significant part of the document reflects a continuation of existing strategies from Acceler8\_WaggaWagga, which is not surprising considering the success the city has experienced over the last few years. The consultation did however identify some limitations in the Acceler8\_Wagga Wagga Plan's structure, and accordingly a modified structure for the new plan is presented in this paper.

The document is a strategic plan that establishes the aspirational goals of the city for economic growth and describes the key objectives or outcomes of the plan that will be needed if Wagga Wagga is to continue to prosper through the next decade. The plan will provide the framework for a future detailed business plan commencing in 2008/09. The feedback from the Commercial Strategy Committee was that the plan should be re-named to indicate that it is a new and progressive direction for the city and the suggested name for the plan is GROW\_Wagga Wagga – A blueprint for economic growth - 2008/18.

The document has been considered by the Commercial Strategy Advisory Committee in late September 2007 and will be presented to Council for its consideration at the April 2008 Council Meeting.

# GROW\_WaggaWagga The Plan:

## Our vision for economic growth is:

*“By 2018 Wagga Wagga will be the preferred regional city in Australia for sustainable business and balanced living.*

Economic growth in Wagga Wagga will be driven by the city’s ability to grow existing and attract new businesses to create jobs, together with the ability to retain and attract people to fill those jobs.

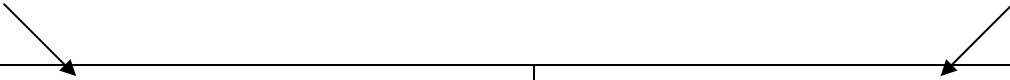
Our plan is therefore structured into 2 distinct sections:

1. Business and Industry Outcomes and
2. People & Living Outcomes

The Business and Industry Outcomes describe the business related outcomes that the city will aim to achieve over the next 10 years and the People and Living Outcomes describe the things we need to do in the city to make it an attractive place for people to come for jobs.

## Our key outcomes for growth are:

These outcomes are focussed on attracting & retaining Businesses for Jobs and attracting & retaining People to fill Jobs



<b>Business &amp; Industry Outcomes</b>	<b>People &amp; Living Outcomes</b>
<p>By 2018 Wagga Wagga will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The pre-eminent sustainable regional transport and distribution hub servicing Eastern Australia.</li><li>• A major alternative fuels and energy centre in Eastern Australia.</li><li>• A knowledge centre for agricultural research and integrated agribusiness development.</li></ul>	<p>By 2018 Wagga Wagga will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The preferred regional city in Australia, a place of Energy, Vision and Opportunity offering the living of the future.</li><li>• Providing a sustainable lifestyle with a focus on becoming carbon neutral</li><li>• A globally linked city with technology and communications equivalent to metropolitan standards.</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ leveraging off the EH Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation and the National Wine &amp; Grape Centre of Excellence at CSU</li> <li>● A Global Water Smart City <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ leveraging off the International Centre for Water at CSU</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The leading inland education hub in Australia for tertiary education.</li> <li>● A city in which business, our institutions, city council and riverina regional partners are well connected and strategically focussed on growth opportunities.</li> <li>● A city in which local industry strengths not otherwise mentioned in this plan are fostered and grow - in particular : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the building industry</li> <li>○ the retail sector</li> <li>○ tourism</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Well planned, well connected and prepared for change.</li> <li>● An education hub of choice with specific capability in defence, health, professional, para-professional and trades skills.</li> </ul>
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The city will develop an annual business plan that will include the detailed strategies and subsequent actions to be undertaken to give effect to these outcomes.

In addition to the actions that will be specifically developed to deliver each outcome in the future business plan, there are **Infrastructure and Marketing** strategies for the city that underpin the delivery of the proposed outcomes of the plan that need to be incorporated in the plan. Those strategies are outlined in the table on the following page.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Infrastructure Strategies</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Marketing Strategies</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base Hospital Re-development &amp; Inland Health training precinct.</li> <li>• Riverside Precinct Development</li> <li>• Road &amp; Rail Intermodal Hub</li> <li>• Metro comparable Information Communication Technology</li> <li>• City Centre Renewal</li> <li>• Airport development</li> <li>• An innovative and proactive planning environment</li> <li>• A highly networked responsive business community (designed to foster the new industries and suit a younger, more highly remunerated demographic)</li> <li>• Recreational and cultural facilities to meet demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local marketing undertaken to capture graduates / recruits /skilled professional and trades people to remain and work in the city</li> <li>• External marketing strategy(s) implemented to attract new businesses and skilled professional and trades people to the city <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evocities</li> <li>○ C-change</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

\* It should be noted that GROW\_WaggaWagga is only one of a number of plans being developed as part of the City's Strategic Plan for 2008-2018. This plan will be integrated with the other plans, for example the Social Plan, or the Cultural and Recreational Plan and some of the outcomes for this plan, particularly in the People and Living section may be delivered through those other plans.

The balance of this document provides the background for the inclusion of the proposed outcomes of this plan provided by business and industry across Wagga Wagga during the consultation phase of developing the plan in September 2007.

## Background rationale for proposed outcomes

### A. Business and Industry Outcomes

- *Be the pre-eminent sustainable regional distribution hub servicing Eastern Australia.*

Wagga has shown it is a natural location for national distribution activities with significant growth being generated over the last 5 years through this strategy. It is proposed that the city actively market the recent successes to other prospective companies looking for national distribution (and potentially manufacturing) locations.

- *Be a major alternative fuels and energy centre in Eastern Australia.*

The emergence of global warming as a key driver of future activity is self evident. It is anticipated that there will be a gradual shift from fossil fuels to alternative fuels commencing within the next few years. The city has already experienced some strong interest in the production of bio-fuels within the city. Wagga Wagga is ideally located due to proximity to raw materials for local manufacturing and perfectly sited for national distribution. In addition the city has the research capability at CSU and the EH Graham Centre to support industry development. Collectively these attributes make Wagga a potential stand-out as a location for the development of an alternative fuels industry centre.

- *Be a knowledge centre for agricultural research and integrated agribusiness development.*

The EH Graham Centre is a joint venture between The NSW Department of Primary Industries and Charles Sturt University and boasts one of the largest collocated agricultural research capabilities in Australia. The CSU Wine and Grape centre of Excellence is emerging as a key research and development institution for this industry within Australia. The existence of these institutions provides the platform for the establishment of agribusiness industry clusters within the city by linking the research to business growth opportunities.

- *Be a Global Water Smart City.*

The Murrumbidgee River Catchment is internationally renowned as a demonstration catchment for best practice in irrigation. The United Nations have established the Asia Pacific regional office for the UN HELP (Hydrology for Environment Life and Policy) at CSU in Wagga Wagga. This research capacity and linkage to the UN provides an opportunity for the city to position itself as a global leader in water management. Establishing this reputation will create opportunities to attract international visitors as well as water related industries to the city.

- *The leading inland education hub in Australia for tertiary education.*

The tertiary education sector provides a significant opportunity for job growth in itself. The nature of the jobs are high level, well remunerated jobs providing additional choice within the city and career paths which are otherwise not available.

- *Be a city in which business, our institutions, city council and riverina regional partners are well connected and strategically focussed on growth opportunities.*

Growth of the local SME sector will inevitably generate more jobs within the city if it is functioning effectively. It is evident from the city's experience over the last 3 years that significant SME growth can be generated within the city if there is a positive attitude adopted and investment is encouraged and stimulated. A well articulated vision for the city which instils confidence in the local business community is a fundamental requirement for ongoing growth. A connected city in which all of the major institutions and businesses are clear on where the city is headed also assists in providing leadership within the city. Connection to the region is also critically important as Wagga Wagga will be the catalyst for regional growth within the Riverina.

- *Be a city in which local industry strengths not otherwise mentioned in this plan are fostered and grow - in particular :*
  - the building industry
  - the retail sector
  - tourism

There are a number of key local business sectors that traditionally drive job growth in our local economy. Those sectors need to be fostered to ensure that growth continues. This outcome will ensure that the city engages with these sectors and is responsive to their needs.

## **B. People and Living Outcomes:**

- *Be the preferred regional city in Australia, a place of Energy, Vision and Opportunity offering the living of the future.*

The market research undertaken in the last few years has reinforced that there are a significant number of people living in Sydney who are disenchanted with their lives and are looking for an alternative. Presenting Wagga Wagga to those disaffected people as an alternative place to live, work and invest is one way of addressing the looming skills shortage crisis. The Evocities project being jointly promoted by the 7 largest inland cities in NSW is one mechanism to raise the profile of the city within the metropolitan area to attract people. The C-change bureau is a local

regional initiative also focussed on attracting people to the region from the metropolitan areas. This outcome will encapsulate a range of initiatives being undertaken within the City's Strategic Plan 2008-2018 incorporating other plans such as the Social Plan and the Recreation and Cultural Plan. The idea of a place with a balanced lifestyle and good career opportunities is an appealing prospect and achieving this outcome will be critical to the success of the city attracting skilled people to come to the city.

- *Provide a sustainable lifestyle with a focus on becoming Carbon Neutral*

In an age of global warming and increasing pollution and congestion in the metro centres, a city like Wagga Wagga has the potential to position itself as a "sustainable" city which will have ever increasing appeal to an increasing proportion of the population who are concerned about their carbon footprint.

- *Be a globally linked city with technology and communications equivalent to metropolitan standards.*

Connectivity to the global village through the internet is a precondition for most people today and will be increasingly important over time as more and more industry and homes becomes reliant on information technology. If Wagga Wagga is to remain attractive to people as a place of choice in which to live, access to the latest technology for linking to the internet (at a price and speed comparable to metro centres) is fundamental.

- *Be well planned, well connected and prepared for change.*

For people and business to thrive in a place like Wagga Wagga, the city needs to have plans in place to accommodate anticipated changes and the capacity to respond to unanticipated changes. Being prepared through good planning practices is a matter for the Council and steps are in place to ensure the city's major planning documents are reviewed on a five yearly cycle which should ensure the city is able to plan for anticipated changes. Responding to unanticipated changes is more problematic but one strategy that improves the city's ability to respond is to be well connected (between industry, institutions and the local government) to enable rapid response across the city if needed. New partnerships and innovative arrangements will need to be considered if the city wants to remain abreast of global changes.

- *Be an education hub of choice with specific capability in defence, health, professional, para-professional and trades skills.*

Wagga Wagga already has an enviable collection of institutions providing educational opportunities within the city – these include the defence bases training, the University and the Riverina Institute. The opportunity exists to leverage off this capability for the city to establish precincts within the city

such as the health precinct associated with the hospital redevelopment to incorporate a range of educational activities associated with medicine and allied health (many of which are already taught at CSU). Similar opportunities exist through the defence bases, in particular the National Aerospace Training Centre of Excellence operated by Riverina Institute of TAFE and through Riverina Institute directly in para professional and trade skills development.