



Queensland
Government



North Burnett Regional Council **LOCAL HOUSING ACTION PLAN**

Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027

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Partnership Acknowledgement



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Disclaimer

The North Burnett Local Housing Action Plan is s a non-statutory plan and 'living document' prepared under the Queensland Housing & Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 (Action 5) to support local housing outcomes. This Local Housing Action Plan is not the same as a Housing Strategy under the State Planning Policy, or a housing study, but may inform statutory documents like a planning scheme.

Acknowledgment of Country

Acknowledgement and respect is extended to the traditional owners and custodians, past and present, of the land within North Burnett.

1 INTRODUCTION

This Local Housing Action Plan (the Plan) is developed through a joint initiative involving the Queensland Government, North Burnett Regional Council and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) to respond to a range of immediate, emerging, and longer-term housing challenges in the North Burnett Region.

This is an iterative process that does not intend to duplicate existing actions of Council or the actions under the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027 or the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025. It seeks to identify opportunities, consider an agreed response, develop targeted actions on key priorities and enable ongoing review of effort to adapt and respond to changing need.

The Plan aims to:

1. **develop agreed priority actions** to respond to housing need in the local government area.
2. **establish strong foundations for longer-term housing responses** to assist housing and homelessness outcomes in the local government area into the future
3. **incorporate existing information and plans** that assist with developing responses to housing need and acknowledge work already completed by the Council, state agencies, private and not-for-profit organisations
4. **facilitate targeted interaction between all parties through agreed actions** to ensure a focus on deliverables and projects that can improve housing responses in the short and longer-term



2 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The plan provides an overview of key community and housing characteristics, emerging issues related to housing in the community and identifies a targeted initial set of priority actions to respond to housing needs. It has been developed through a review of a range of supporting documentation including:

- Council's planning scheme
- Relevant Council strategies, reports and plans
- Statistical data from the Queensland Government Statisticians Office, including Census and other data sets such as building approvals, rental market data and housing approvals
- Housing needs data from the Department of Housing and other state agencies as required
- The Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027 and the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025
- Other anecdotal data and information such as general community or industry sentiment as expressed to relevant officers from time to time.

Emerging issues and opportunities, key challenges and potential responses have been developed from the review of a range of data sets, anecdotal feedback, and preceding engagement opportunities with Council and other stakeholders.

3 KEY FACTS

3.1 ABOUT THE REGION

The North Burnett Regional Council (NBRC) area is located approximately 4 hours north, north west of Brisbane, is immediately inland from the Bundaberg Region, and is part of the Wide Bay – Burnett Region. The area comprises of six main townships, being Biggenden, Eidsvold, Gayndah, Monto, Mount Perry, Mundubbera, and an additional 25+ villages and farming catchments.

The region has a total land area of approximately 19,700km² and, as at the 2021 census, had a population of 10,068¹ persons, representing a population density of 0.51¹ persons per square kilometre. While there is no predominant population centre, when grouping state suburbs falling within 20 km of the region's six townships, Gayndah has the greatest population with 2,466 (24.49%) persons, being 337 (3.35%) persons more than Monto (Table 1).

Table 1: Population distribution of the North Burnett Region as at the 2021 Census, within a 20 km radius of each of the region's six main towns

Town	Population (#)	Population (%)
Gayndah	2,466	24.49%
Monto	2,129	21.15%
Mundubbera	1,929	19.16%
Biggenden	1,746	17.34%
Eidsvold	691	6.86%
Mount Perry	525	5.21%
Regional	582	5.78%
Total	10,068	100%

NOTE: Grouped on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) State Suburbs and Localities (SAL) geographical areas within the North Burnett Local Government Area (LGA) where approximately 20% or more of the SAL falls within a 20 km radius of the towns CBD. Where an area falls within multiple radiuses, the population within the SAL is divided evenly based on the number of radiuses it falls within.

Source: North Burnett Regional Council, Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing 2021.

As at June 30, 2022, the Queensland Government Statisticians Office estimates the North Burnett population to have grown to 10,220² persons since the 2021 Census figure, representing a 1.51% increase. The region has a total of 5,451¹ private dwellings.

3.1.1 The economic drivers

Within the North Burnett Region, 52.8% (4,475)¹ of individuals aged 15 years or older are active participants in the workforce. Among these, 59.2% (2,650)¹ are engaged in full-time employment.

The key economic strength of the North Burnett Region is agriculture and farming, particularly in the sectors of beef cattle and citrus farming, which employ 21.7% (923)¹ of the region's workforce. For the Gayndah and Mundubbera areas, which together account for 43.6% (4,395) of the region's total population (Table 1), citrus and small crops emerge as the predominant industries. These sectors experiences notable demand for temporary workforces, particularly during peak picking seasons.

The region is also seeing a surge of interest in renewable energy initiatives. Several prospective projects, such as wind farms, solar farms, and a pumped hydro facility, are currently understood to be in the pipeline for the region. If these projects come to fruition, they are expected to generate substantial workforce requirements, spanning a minimum of two years and potentially extending well beyond, although the need for ongoing labour is less clear.

Additionally, other projects such as the rectification of Paradise Dam and general mining exploration within the region are anticipated to make significant contributions to the local economy in the coming years.

Ensuring the region can adequately accommodate the housing needs of its industries is a top priority. In some cases, this may require innovative, sustainable solutions. Council's aim is to foster growth where possible to ensure a prosperous future for generations.

¹ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, All persons QuickStats, North Burnett LGA – Viewed 25/09/2023.

² Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area, Estimated resident population. Based on ABS data, Regional population, Various editions.

4 LOCAL AREA CHARACTERISTICS

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic data for the North Burnett Local Government Area is based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS), July 2021, and is primarily sourced from the Queensland Government Statistician's Office (QGSO) Queensland Regional Profiles for North Burnett Local Government Area (LGA) (ASGS 2021). Where relevant, data comparisons are made to Queensland (State) data sets. Statistics provided are based on available statistical data, where information from the 2021 Census is available, these figures have been included in this social baseline.

4.1.1 Population

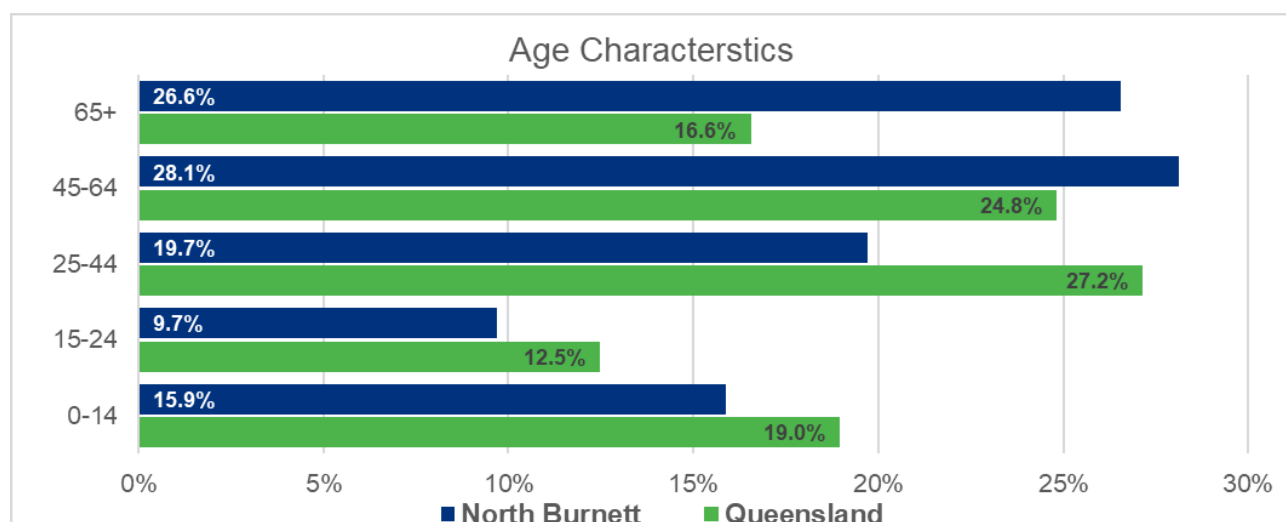
The region's population, as recorded through regular censuses, has been in a steady decline for several years, with historical data from the previous Shire Councils, which now make up the NBRC, indicating that between 1981 and 2021, the region's population has decreased by approximately 1,500 persons, to 10,068 in 2021. The Queensland Government Statistician's Office projects this trend to continue, forecasting a median annual decline of 0.3% per year over the next 25 years, reaching a forecast population in 2046 of around 9,360³ persons. When considering the upper and lower confidence bounds of this forecast, the range spans from an increase to 10,568 persons, to a decrease to 8,246 persons by 2046³. It is understood that these projections do not currently take recent Queensland population growth into account, from which the region appears to have already benefited, albeit modestly.

While the forecast decline is of concern, when looking to neighbouring Local Government Areas, most are forecast to grow over the same period. The overall Queensland population is also forecast to grow by 1.4% per year over the next 25 years, amounting to approximately 2,082,281³ additional persons by 2046. With demand for affordable housing at its current levels and the economic drivers in the region, Council remains optimistic around the region's population growth prospects, and hopes to meet or exceed the upper population forecast of 10,568³ by 2046.

4.1.2 Age

As at June 30, 2021, the median age of the population in the North Burnett Region was 49.1 years⁴, older than the Queensland median age of 38.4 years⁴. The proportion of individuals aged 65 years and older is higher in the North Burnett (26.6%) than in Queensland (16.6%), while the representation of people aged 25-44 years is lower in the North Burnett Region at 19.7% in contrast to Queensland's 27.2% (Figure 1). Overall, the data reflects an ageing population base in the region.

Figure 1: Age characteristics of the North Burnett Region as at 30 June 2021



Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Population by age and sex. Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Regional population by age and sex, 2021

³ Source: Queensland Government Population Projections, 2023 edition.

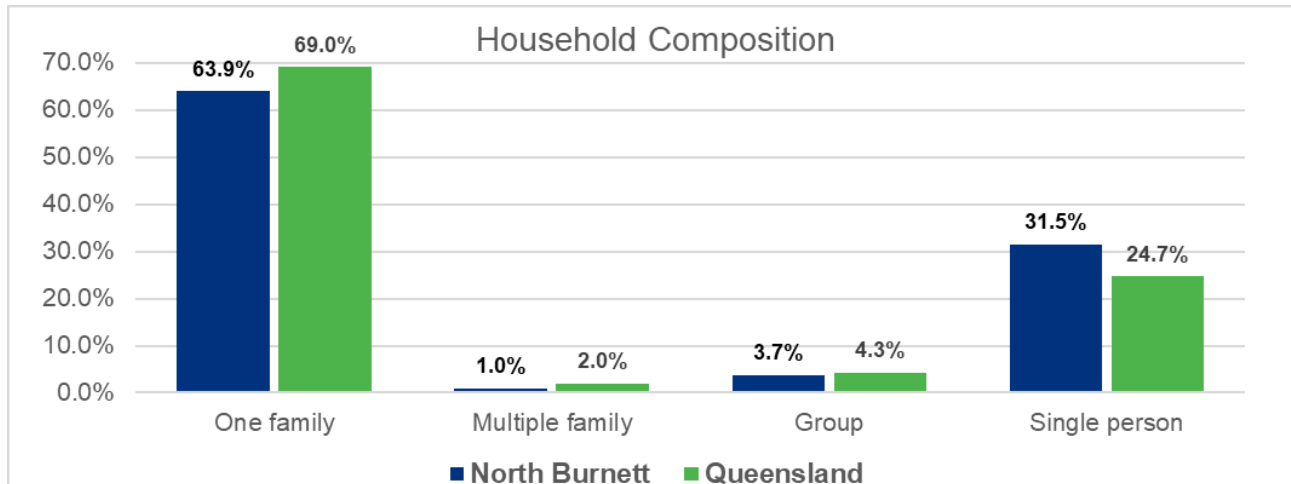
⁴ Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Population by age and sex. Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Regional population by age and sex, 2021.

4.1.3 Household composition

A household comprises one or more individuals aged 15 years or older residing in a private dwelling⁵. Household composition refers to the types of relationships within that household, including whether it consists of a single family or multiple family units or if it is composed of unrelated household members.

In the North Burnett Region, it is most likely a household will be made up of a sole family (63.9%), slightly lower than the proportion of such households across Queensland (69.0%). Group households and multiple family households make up only 1.0% and 3.7%, respectively. Single person households represent 31.5% of identified households, exceeding that of Queensland at 24.7% (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Household composition of the North Burnett Region as at 30 June 2021

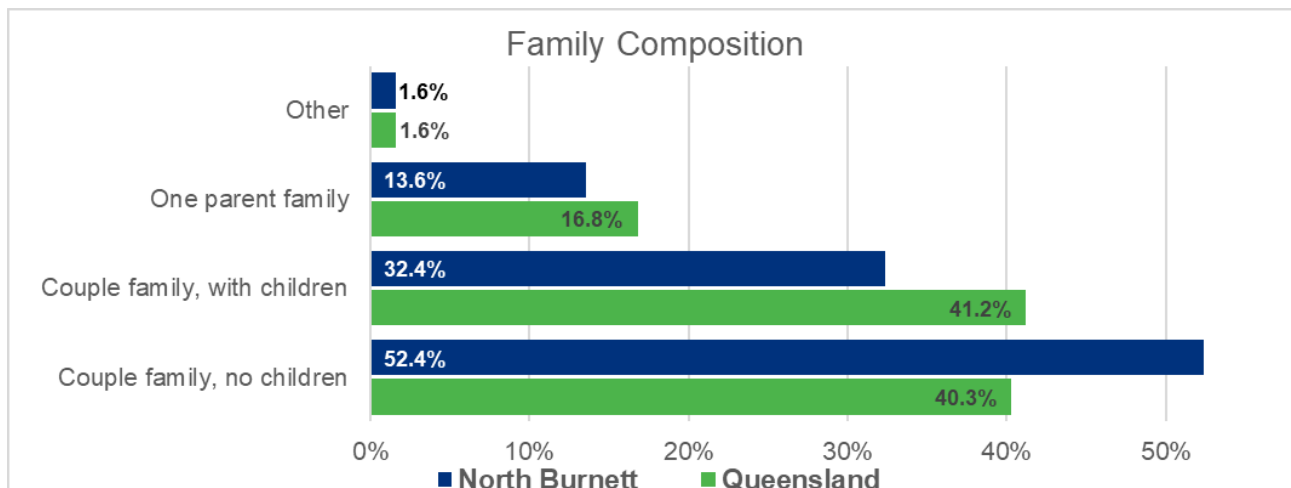


Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Household Composition. Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, unpublished data (occupied private dwellings)

4.1.4 Family composition

Family composition distinguishes various family types based on their typical place of residence. In the North Burnett Region, 52.4% of families are likely to be couples without children, while couples with children and one parent families make up 32.4% and 13.6% of families, respectively. There is a lower percentage of couples with children in the North Burnett Region (32.4%) compared to Queensland (41.2%), while the percentage of couple families without children (52.4%) significantly surpasses that of Queensland (40.3%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Family composition as at 30 June 2021, North Burnett Region and Queensland



Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Family Composition. Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile - G29

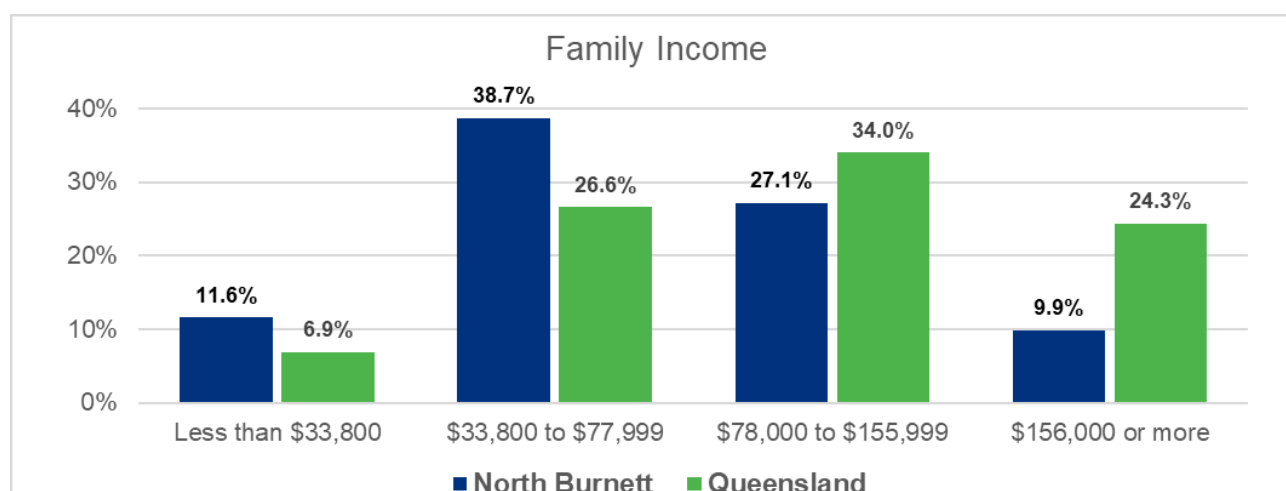
⁵ Source: As per the definition used in the 2021 Census - Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2021, *H*, ABS, viewed 24 October 2023, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/glossary/h>>

4.1.5 Family incomes

Total family income comprises the combined personal income of all family members residing in a household during the 2021 Census. Low-income families are those earning less than \$650 per week or \$33,800 annually. In the North Burnett, there is a higher proportion of low-income families compared to Queensland, with 11.6% of families earning less than \$33,800, compared to 6.9% of Queensland families. Additionally, a larger proportion of North Burnett families fall within the income range of \$33,800 to \$77,999, accounting for 38.7%, in contrast to 26.6% across Queensland (Figure 4).

The median income of families in the North Burnett has seen an increase over time, however this has been disproportionate to Queensland. In 2016, the median family income in the region was \$60,268⁶, while in Queensland, it was \$86,372⁶. This figure has risen to \$68,484⁷ (up 13.6%) per year in the North Burnett, as at the 2021 Census, compared to \$105,248⁷ (up 21.9%) per year in Queensland.

Figure 4: Family income as at the 2021 Census, North Burnett Region and Queensland



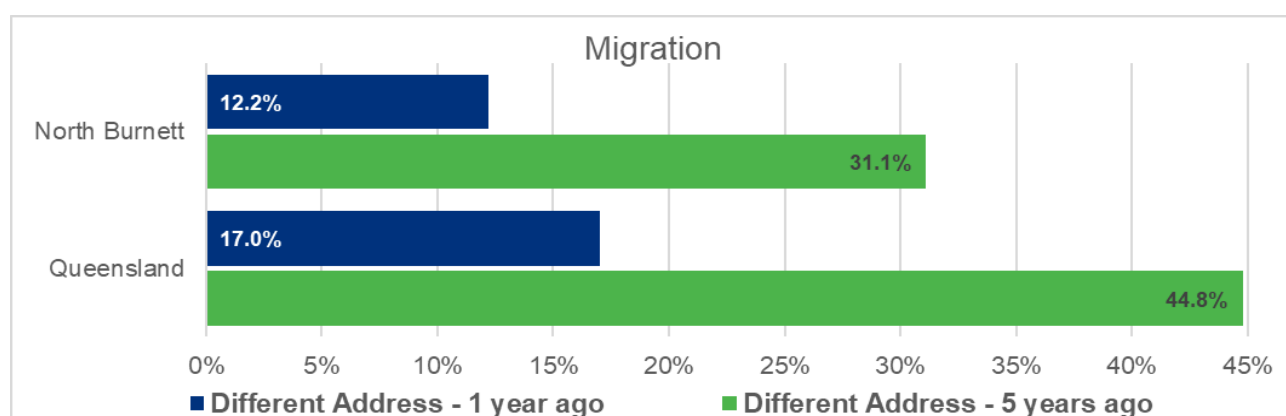
NOTE: Percentages are based on total responses, which includes partially stated and not stated income responses (not shown above).

Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Total family income. Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile - G02 and G32.

4.1.6 Migration

The 2021 Census examines how people's residency has changed by looking at where they lived one and five years before the Census. This data can shed light on local property markets by revealing broadly how many people move in and out of a community, affecting demand and property turnover. In comparison to Queensland as a whole, the North Burnett Region experienced less community migration. Only 12.2% of residents had a different address one year prior to the 2021 Census, and 31.1% had a different address five years prior to the Census. These percentages are lower than the corresponding figures for Queensland, where 17.0% had a different address one year prior, and 44.8% had a different address five years prior, indicating a lower rate of community movement (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Place of usual residence one and five years ago as at the 2021 Census, North Burnett Region and Queensland



Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Migration 1 year ago & Migration 5 years ago. Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G44 and G45.

⁶ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2016, General Community Profiles - G02 (North Burnett Regional & Queensland)

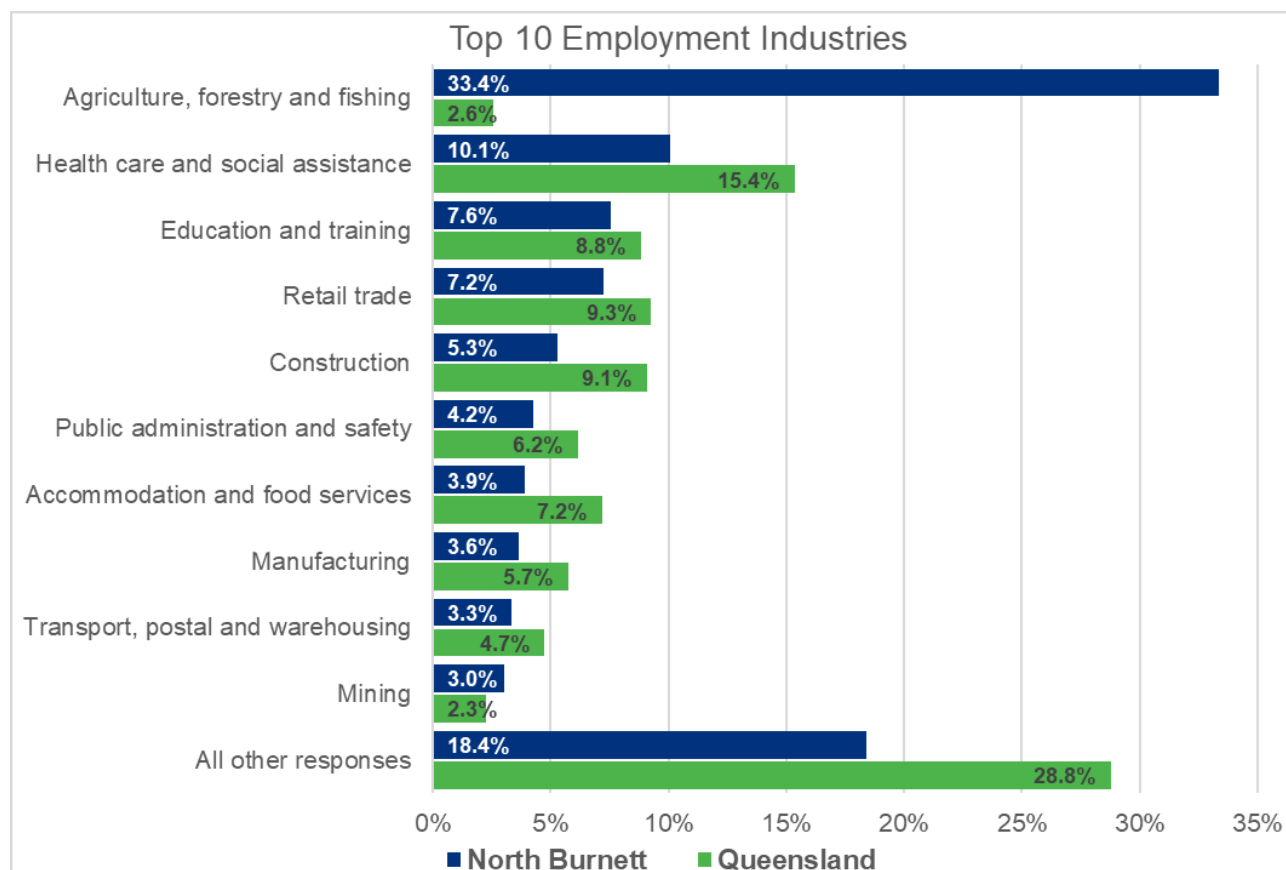
⁷ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profiles - G02 (North Burnett Regional & Queensland)

4.1.7 Other characteristics

4.1.7.1 Industry

The most prominent employment industry within the region is agriculture, forestry and fishing, employing 33.4% of the region's working population. While not uncommon for regional and rural Local Government Areas (LGAs), the industry surpasses Queensland at 2.6%, making it a significant contributor to the local economy and one that must be nurtured (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Employment industries by number of workforce persons employed as at the 2021 Census, North Burnett Region and Queensland



Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Employment by industry. Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G54 and unpublished data.

Notably, of Queensland's working population, 925⁸ are employed in citrus fruit growing, and of these, 301⁹ are in the North Burnett Region, accounting for 32.5% of the industry's employment numbers at a state level.

⁸ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, All persons QuickStats, Queensland – Viewed 25/09/2023.

⁹ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, All persons QuickStats, North Burnett LGA – Viewed 25/09/2023.

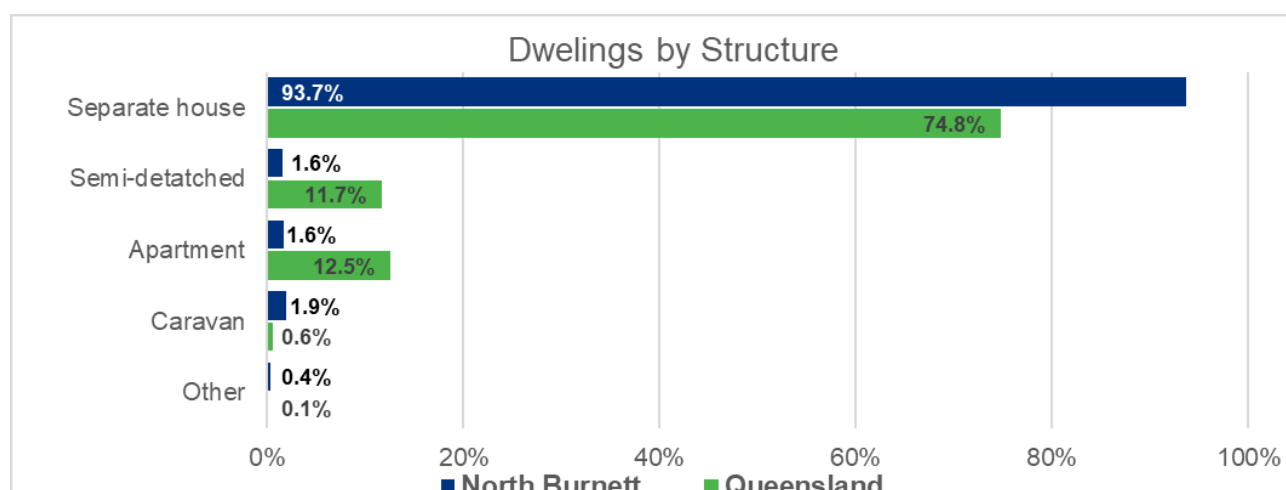
4.2 HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

4.2.1 Dwellings by structure

The 2021 Census shows detached separate houses were the most common dwelling structure, accounting for 93.7% of all dwellings counted in the North Burnett Region. This figure is significantly higher than the state average, where detached houses accounted for 74.8% of dwellings (Figure 7). This is however relatively in line with other regional or remote areas where low-density housing is common. In the North Burnett Region, the prevalence of detached houses translates into lower proportions of apartments (1.6%) and semi-detached homes (1.6%), compared to Queensland's figures of 12.5% and 11.7%, respectively (Figure 7).

Caravan dwellings (including cabins and houseboats) were more prominent than either semi-detached homes or apartments, accounting for 1.9% of the region's dwellings (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Dwellings by dwelling structure type as at the 2021 Census, North Burnett Region and Queensland



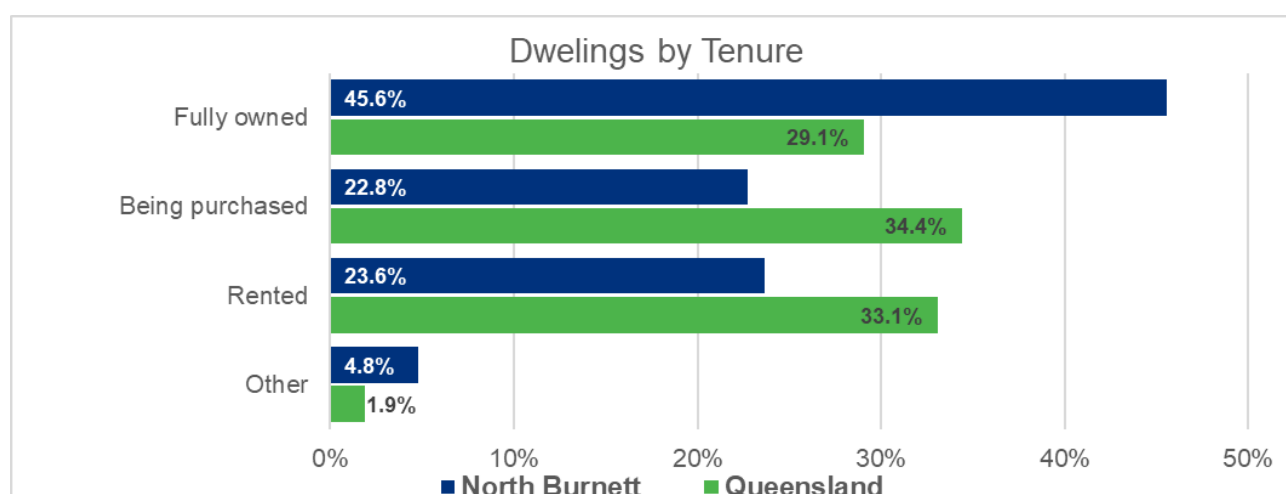
NOTE: Percentages are based on total responses, which includes dwelling structures not stated responses (not shown above).

Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Dwellings by dwelling structure. Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G36.

4.2.2 Dwellings by tenure

As at the 2021 Census, the North Burnett Region had a significantly higher proportion of residents who occupied and owned their dwellings outright (45.6%) compared to Queensland (29.1%). Consequently, this translated to lower proportions of dwellings being purchased (22.8%) and rented (23.6%) compared to Queensland at 34.4% and 33.1% respectively. Of note, the tenure type of "Other" accounted for 4.8% of respondents compared to Queensland at 1.9% (Figure 8). Source data notation suggests this likely relates to dwellings being occupied rent free or under a life tenure scheme.

Figure 8: Dwellings by dwelling tenure type as at the 2021 Census, North Burnett Region and Queensland



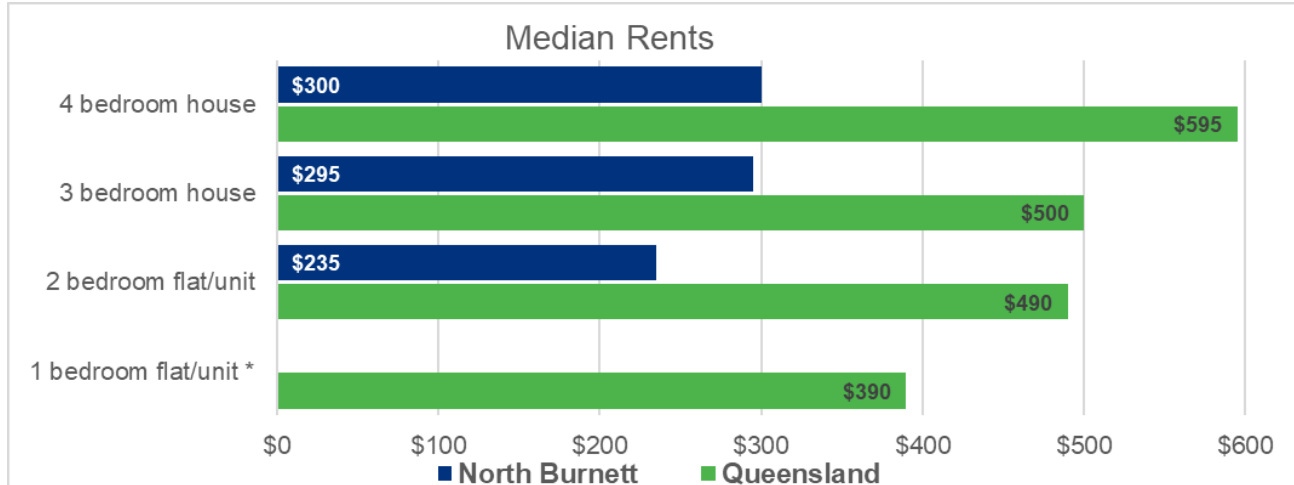
NOTE: Percentages are based on total responses, which includes tenure type not stated responses (not shown above).

Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Dwellings by tenure type. Based on ABS data, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G37.

4.2.3 Renting

Renting in the North Burnett is relatively affordable, with the median weekly rent for a 4 bedroom house of \$300 per week, compared to the respective Queensland median at \$595 per week (Figure 9). Similar trends can be observed in other property types, as depicted in Figure 9. Further, with 63.3%¹⁰ of households indicating rent payments below 30% of household income within the region compared to 58.2%¹⁰ of Queensland households, the region represents an attractive option for renters seeking housing affordability, despite limited availability.

Figure 9: Median rent by dwelling type for the 12 months ended 30/06/2023, North Burnett Region and Queensland



NOTE: Where there are less than 10 bond lodgements with the Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA) for a property type over the 12 month period prior to the date of the data, the median is omitted.

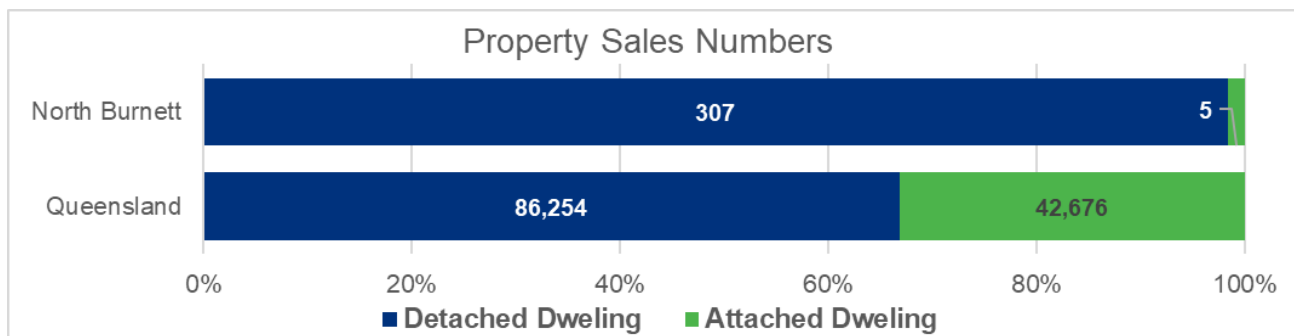
* Insufficient lodgements within the North Burnett Region.

Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Median rents. Data: Residential Tenancies Authority, Rental Bonds data for the 12 months ended 30/06/2023.

4.2.4 Property sales and pricing

Consistent with 97.3% of the region's dwellings being detached (separate house, Figure 7), 98.4% (307) of dwelling sales within the region were for detached dwellings, compared to Queensland at 66.9% (86,254) (Figure 10). Of these sales, the median sale price for a detached dwelling was \$207,500, a considerable discount of 68.1% from the Queensland median of \$650,000 (Figure 11), again representing an attractive option for residents seeking affordable housing, despite limited availability.

Figure 10: Property sale numbers, detached vs attached only, for the 12 months ended 31/03/2023, North Burnett Region and Queensland



Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Residential dwelling sales. Data: Department of Resources, Office of the Valuer-General, Property sales for the 12 months ended 31/03/2023.

¹⁰ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, All persons QuickStats, North Burnett LGA – Viewed 25/09/2023

Figure 11: Property sale values, detached vs attached only, for the 12 months ended 31/03/2023, North Burnett Region and Queensland



* Insufficient attached dwelling sales within the North Burnett Region.

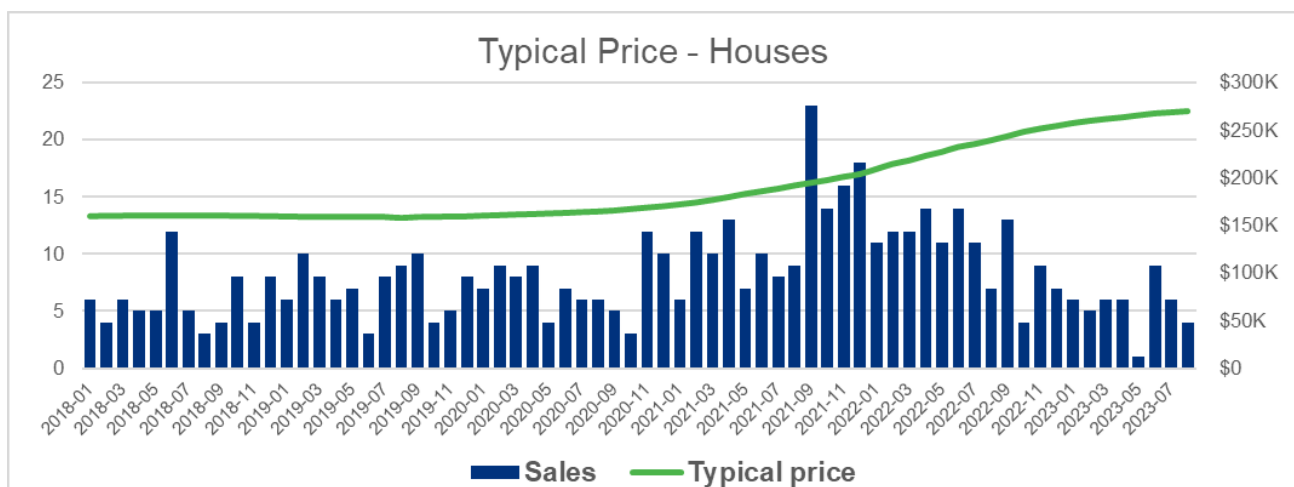
Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, *Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area*, Residential dwelling sales. Data: Department of Resources, Office of the Valuer-General, Property sales for the 12 months ended 31/03/2023.

4.2.5 Market trends

Since January 2021, the “Typical” sale price within the North Burnett has increased by approximately \$100,000 and, with elevated sales transactions between November 2020 to November 2022 (Figure 12), demand for property in the region has grown compared to prior periods.

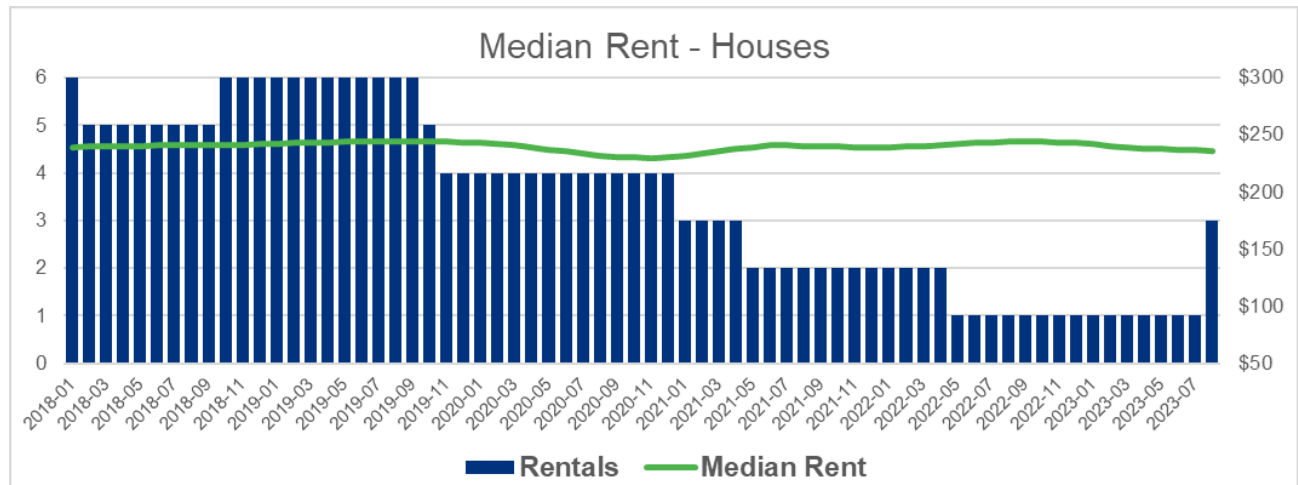
Between January 2018 and August 2023, median rent has remained relatively unchanged however, the number of tenancies entered into over the same period has declined considerably (Figure 13), implying a tightening rental market

Figure 12: Typical sale prices and numbers for the North Burnett Region – 01/01/2018 – 31/08/2023



NOTE: HtAG (the data source) applies a calculation to establish a “Typical Price,” which differs to a median price. HtAG notes this calculation as a “solution to the shortcomings of the Median Price metric which results in a more accurate representation of home values and price trends at a suburb level.” Council does not warrant or endorse the accuracy of the above data in any way.

Source: Reproduced from htag.com.au, Real Estate Data via North Burnett Regional, QLD Property Market & House Prices 2023 – Viewed 25/09/2023.

Figure 13: Typical rental prices and numbers for the North Burnett Region – 01/01/2018 – 31/08/2023

NOTE: HtAG (the data source) notes that "Median Rent is weekly advertised rent based on rentals over the preceding 12 months." Council does not warrant or endorse the accuracy of the above data in any way.

Source: Reproduced from htag.com.au, Real Estate Data via North Burnett Regional, QLD Property Market & House Prices 2023 – Viewed 25/09/2023.

"The region presents an attractive option for housing affordability, with lifestyle and economic drivers, the challenge will be meeting demand without losing affordability in the process."

5 KEY FOCUS AREAS

Areas of focus have been determined through a review of existing data and engagement with stakeholders as identified in the methodology. These focus areas will be considered when identifying and prioritising actions.

5.1 OVERALL HOUSING

The North Burnett Region does not have a predominant population centre. However, approximately 24.49% of the region's population falls within 20 km of Gayndah, surpassing other towns by 3.35% (Table 1), and, consequently, Gayndah is considered the main population centre of the North Burnett. At the Suburb and Locality Area (SAL) level, the immediate Gayndah township (SAL31106) has a population of 1,949¹¹ as at the 2021 Census; however, Council estimates that the true population in this area is now closer to 2,003 persons at the time of preparing this document.

Each town within the region has its own housing needs and profile, with some areas experiencing different demands and/or supply constraints. While this plan has a region wide perspective, some highlighted focus areas and actions will drill down to the particular needs of an area within the region, with the intention of alleviating wider regional demands.

5.1.1 Background

The North Burnett Regional Council area was formed in 2008 through the amalgamation of six (6) Shire Councils. Since this time, there has been very little land and/or building development in the region, as is evident by the total number of private dwellings increasing from 5,441 (Census 2011) in 2011 to 5,451 (Census 2021) in 2021, or a net increase of just 10 dwellings.

While, on average, there have been approximately 28.5 new homes constructed per year for the last 10 years, it is anecdotally understood a proportionate number of dwellings have either been relocated, demolished or otherwise removed from the region. As much of the region's housing stock is aged and/or relocatable (elevated homes, cabins and/or caravans), and with some areas in the region susceptible to bushfires and floods, it is possible this trend will continue.

Since amalgamation, Council has undertaken 1 residential land development, adding approximately 6 freehold lots to the region's land supply, but has also continued another development that was registered pre-amalgamation. Due to the low sale value of residential lots and the high costs to install infrastructure, Council has seen very little interest from private land developers over the same period. Council's records indicate just 3 applications have been approved since 2010 where the development would see the creation of 4 or more lots.

Demand for constructed dwellings is relatively high at present, with some local agents identifying buyers will often pay over the area average for high quality, modern homes. Conversely, while urban residential land remains quite affordable at an average sale price of \$35,000.00 (QVAS), it appears buyers are not as prepared to assume the risk of building to achieve a similar result. This is likely due to the limited availability of local builders and trade providers, with landowners that do choose to build often looking to engage builders from outside of the region. This often comes at a considerable premium, attracting additional travel time and logistical costs.

Due to the region's remote location and lower population numbers, some residents experience difficulty obtaining finance to pursue property transactions. Several lenders are known to have higher deposit requirements for property purchases or building in the region as compared to more populated centres, and other lenders are known to simply not offer finance on property within the region. This provides another barrier to residential construction and potentially adversely influences the region's investment prospects.

The North Burnett's median residential sale price was \$206,250¹² for the 12 months ending March 31, 2023. The region recorded 312¹² dwelling sales, and 62¹² sales of new and vacant land. The median rent for a 3 bedroom house was \$295¹³ per week, with 114¹³ rental applications lodged in the 12 months ending June 30, 2023. The region has a rental vacancy rate of 0.05%¹⁴

¹¹ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, All persons QuickStats, Gayndah, Suburb and Locality (SAL) – Viewed 25/09/2023.

¹² Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area, Residential dwelling sales. Data: Department of Resources, Office of the Valuer-General, Property sales for the 12 months ended 31/03/2023.

¹³ Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area, Median rents. Data: Residential Tenancies Authority, Rental Bonds data for the 12 months ended 30/06/2023.

¹⁴ Source: htag.com.au, Real Estate Data via North Burnett Regional, QLD Property Market & House Prices 2023 – Viewed 25/09/2023.

5.1.2 Current housing situation

There are some 5,451 total private dwellings in the region (Census 2021) – this includes 3,903 occupied dwellings, 908 unoccupied dwellings and 640 dwellings non-classifiable or for visitor only purposes. The average number of people per household is 2.2 (Census 2021).

The region's occupancy rate at the time of the census was 81%¹⁵, leaving 19% unoccupied. Among private dwellings, it's estimated that 68% are owner-occupied, while the remaining 32% are rented or fall under other or unstated occupancy categories, as calculated from Figure 8. A breakdown of the dwelling ownership and type is:

- 3,903 – private, occupied dwellings – (3,656 houses, 63 town houses, 64 apartments, 95 other, and 25 dwelling structure not stated)¹⁵
- 81 – State Social Housing¹⁶
- 9 – Social Housing – Community Housing¹⁶
- 51 – Government Employee Housing (GEH) (Table 2)
- 11 – Council staff properties (3 bed or more houses)
- other short-term accommodation in the caravan park, roadhouse and motel are not captured separately – a mix of ensuite, self-contained and shared accommodation.
- Other State government departmental operational accommodation is not captured.

5.2 SHORT-TERM WORKER ACCOMMODATION

The North Burnett Region, like many other Local Government Areas, has a strong agricultural sector with citrus fruit growing employing 13.2% (104)¹⁷ of the workforce in Gayndah and 14.8% (82)¹⁷ of the workforce in Mundubbera. Mundubbera also has workers employed in other agricultural industries, such as berry growing, packaging services and other agricultural and fishing support services, with these industries employing a further 17.0% (94)¹⁷ of the Mundubbera workforce collectively.

During the picking season, the population of some towns is understood to swell by up to 20% due to the short-term worker demands surrounding citrus and small crops, resulting in added housing demand. A lack of short-term accommodation for agricultural employment has now been exacerbated by consistently low rental vacancies. Caravan parks have become an option for residents that are unable to source affordable housing.

5.2.1 Response Opportunities

- Investigate innovative solutions that offer low capital, high capacity short-term accommodation options in the region's towns most in need of short-term worker accommodation.
- Consider long-term master planning to facilitate provision of worker accommodation.

5.3 HISTORICAL LOT RESTRICTIONS

The North Burnett Region has a number of urban residential lots that are registered however, due to past practices, the necessary infrastructure such as services and roads were not constructed. Landowners are unable to affordably build residential dwellings on this land. Council often receives enquiries regarding these lots, with prospective or current owners seeking information on what can be built on the lots. Despite some owners and prospective owners wishing to undertake a residential build on this land, the historical lot overlay necessitates the construction of relevant infrastructure at the owners expense before a residential build can be considered. This requirement often goes beyond the financial capacity of a landowner.

The most significant group of these lots is located in the township of Mount Perry (~116), however other smaller groups of lots exist in other areas across the region amounting to around 375 lots in total. As historical lots are registered, with many already privately owned, investigating and/or undertaking road construction or other infrastructure provision could represent a minimal work, albeit expensive, option to free up affordable residential land for housing construction. Additionally, given the interest already received regarding the potential construction of dwellings on this land, addressing the lack of infrastructure represents an opportunity to potentially attract a number of residential builds within the area.

While the costs of the necessary infrastructure are unclear and are expected to go far beyond Council's financial capacity, should funding be made available, Council believes addressing this issue will lead to additional housing supply in the region.

5.3.1 Response Opportunities

- Seek funding to investigate the feasibility of resolving the current historical lots issue (or a number of the lots).
- Seek funding to rectify the lack of infrastructure, unlocking residential land for dwelling construction.

¹⁵ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile - G36.

¹⁶ Source: Queensland Housing Profiles for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area, Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, Social housing tenancies. Data: Department of Housing, as at 30/06/2020.

¹⁷ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, All persons QuickStats, Gayndah and Mundubbera, Suburb and Locality (SAL) – Viewed 25/09/2023.

5.4 PRIVATE RENTAL MARKET

Almost all local government areas in Queensland are considered to have 'tight' rental markets (characterised by a vacancy rate under 2.5%)¹⁸. As at the September 2023 quarter, data from the Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ) indicates that Queensland had a rental vacancy rate of just 1.0%¹⁸, with several inner regional LGAs having rates below 0.5%¹⁸. The current rental vacancy rate in the North Burnett Region (as at September 2023) is 0.05%¹⁹ however, continued market monitoring and community feedback suggests the reality of this is between approximately 0-3 rental properties available at any given time across the region. This is supported by a search of a leading property listing site, realestate.com.au, where, as at September 18, 2023, there were 2 houses for rent (\$260 and \$450 per week) and 0 units²⁰ available across the entire North Burnett Region.

While data is limited, rents appear to have increased by around \$50 per week (or 20%) for a three-bedroom home between 2012 and 2022²¹. Properties also appear tightly held and are rarely available in the market.

Residential Tenancy Authority (RTA) data suggests there were 114 bond lodgements related to properties within the region in the twelve months ended June 30, 2023²¹. Based on this data, the median rent for a 2 bedroom flat/unit in the North Burnett was \$235 per week and \$295 per week for a 3 bedroom house. Comparatively, the median for Queensland was \$490 and \$500 per week respectively, presenting the region as an attractive option for those seeking affordable rental accommodation, limited, however, by availability.

Census data shows that approximately 1 in 5 (19%)²² private dwellings were unoccupied at the time of the 2021 Census, however this may require further investigation as it is not reflective of anecdotal evidence. Council estimates this has tightened since 2021 due to growing demand for affordable housing, as is reflected in the current rental and sales markets and depicted in Figure 12 and Figure 13.

5.4.1 Response opportunities

- Consideration be given to incentives to encourage medium density infill development that is likely to be made available as rental stock, such as duplexes and/or unit complexes.
- Consideration be given to bringing forward state social housing projects to free up lower cost rentals for market availability.
- Investigate Council land that may be suitable for urban development and consider innovative disposal methods that could encourage or mandate private development within a reasonable time from the transaction date.
- Consider undertaking not for profit land developments in well serviced centres and dispose of resulting lots through innovative means to attract private building investment.

5.5 AGED PERSONS HOUSING AND AGED CARE

Currently there are 13²³ aged care services in the North Burnett, with few of these offering residential places. There are 5 Home care places and 0²³ Restorative care places within the region. As at 2021, 33%²⁴ of the population suffered from at least one long-term health condition and, with an ageing population (median age of 49, projected to increase to 52 by 2046³), demand for aged care services/facilities is expected to grow over the coming years.

Concerningly, at least two aged care facilities that provide residential places within the region have expressed concerns around their long-term viability. Providers have cited increasing regulation, pending facility upgrades and an inability to attract staff as key concerns.

5.5.1 Response opportunities

- Consider initiatives that increase rental availability in the region, alleviating the housing concerns that may hinder providers ability to attract appropriate staff but also enabling greater in-home care options for residents that may otherwise require a residential place.

¹⁸ Source: Real Estate Institute of Queensland 2023, Queensland's rental vacancy rates take a dip, not a nose dive - Viewed 31/10/2023.

¹⁹ Source: htag.com.au, Real Estate Data via North Burnett Regional, QLD Property Market & House Prices 2023 – Viewed 25/09/2023.

²⁰ Source: realestate.com.au Rental search, Biggenden, Gayndah, Mundubbera, Eidsvold, Monto and Mount Perry - Viewed 18/09/2023.

²¹ Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area, Median rents. Data: Residential Tenancies Authority, Rental Bonds data for the 12 months ended 30/06/2023.

²² Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, All persons QuickStats, North Burnett LGA – Viewed 25/09/2023

²³ Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, Queensland Regional Profiles: Resident Profile for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area, Aged care services, Data: Australian Government Department of Health, as at 30/06/2022.

²⁴ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile - G20

5.6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE HOUSING

Council struggles to accommodate staff due to the lack of suitable and available housing in the region. This shortage relates to both council-owned staff housing and private rentals staff would otherwise seek through the open market. Council has been required to lease 7 rental properties from the private market to ensure sufficient housing is available for key appointments, placing greater pressure on the wider rental market and further compounding the rental shortage in the region. Existing staff have cited rental availability as a rising concern, noting that, should their current accommodation cease to be available to them, they would need to consider relocating outside of the region and leaving Council.

Council requires additional, appropriately sized staff housing stock to ensure it is able to attract and retain candidates for critical positions, ensuring essential Local Government services can continue to be delivered. Additionally, through the development of further staff housing, Council will be able to progressively return rentals currently leased from the private market, further improving housing availability in the region.

Council has assessed its needs for employee housing with a 5-year outlook, these are summarised below:

- **5 dwellings** to meet current and anticipated needs – 1 family sized house and 4 townhouses, apartments, duplex units, or small sized houses.
- **7 dwellings** to return private rentals back to the open market – Preferably all townhouses, apartments, duplex units or small sized houses.

Council has serviced land available which can be developed to meet some of these needs, however additional holdings may be needed in priority workforce areas.

5.6.1 Response opportunities

- Consider the development of a cyclical staff housing program that sees smaller sized and fit for purpose staff housing stock built up to appropriate levels in required locations, but also sees older employee housing made available for purchase in the open market upon their eventual replacement.
- Assess Council's current land holdings for their fitness to support staff housing and, subject to funding availability, consider construction of appropriately sized dwellings on appropriate lots.
- Consider undertaking land developments in priority workforce areas and provisioning sufficient lots for employee housing before lot disposal.
- Seek funding to support construction of new staff housing.

5.7 SOCIAL HOUSING

There is a high demand for social housing across Queensland and allocations are focussed on supporting households with the highest need. Weekly median household incomes in the North Burnett are \$1,021²⁵ compared to the Queensland median of \$1,675²⁵. Applicants for social housing must meet criteria which often includes being homeless and/or living on the poverty line.

There is currently 90²⁶ social housing dwellings in the region, with 9²⁶ of these provided by Community Housing providers.

It is understood there is considerable social housing demand within the region, with the North Burnett noted as a first preference on 14²⁷ social housing applications (22 persons), and a further 34²⁷ applicants (49 persons) identifying North Burnett towns as alternate preferences (Social Housing Register). Community feedback indicates some community members may have withdrawn from making application for social housing as they are aware that houses are not available.

Based on the number of social housing applicants expressing an interest in the North Burnett, coupled with 59²⁸ individuals deemed homeless, Council estimates there is sufficient demand for a further 55 social housing dwellings within the region.

5.7.1 Response opportunities

- Consider the provision of Council land to community housing providers for the development of suitable medium density dwellings.

²⁵ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile - G02.

²⁶ Source: Queensland Housing Profiles for North Burnett (R) Local Government Area, Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury, Social housing tenancies. Data: Department of Housing, as at 30/06/2020.

²⁷ Source: Department of Housing, Social Housing Register, as at 30/06/2023.

²⁸ Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2021.

5.8 STATE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE HOUSING

In order to employ appropriately skilled and suitable employees, employers are required to prioritise attraction and retention incentives such as housing when housing stock is limited, and the standards do not match accommodation expectations.

Relocating an employee's family away from more populated areas creates challenges and availability of good standard housing assists in the transition to remote areas.

The State Government supplies housing for its employees under two (2) arrangements. The Government Employee Housing arrangement (GEH) provides a range of housing types for staff in dwellings owned by the government. In addition, some departments provide "operational housing" for their employees which is located on or adjacent to operational sites e.g., police stations, hospitals, and schools. Departments may also utilise (rent/lease) houses from local government or the private market (where available) to accommodate essential workers.

Currently GEH has 51 dwellings for government employees in the North Burnett Region, the composition of which is detailed in Table 2. Recent advice from GEH indicates that they currently have demand for a further 4 new dwellings (Table 2).

Table 2: Government Employee Housing – Current supply and additional demand as provided to Council in October 2023

Town	Current (#)	Additional Demand (#)
Gayndah	15	1
Monto	12	0
Mundubbera	9	1
Biggenden	5	1
Eidsvold	8	1
Mount Perry	2	0
Total	51	4

Source: Provided to Council by the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), sourced from the Queensland Department of Housing.

5.8.1 Response opportunities

- In parallel with Council's employee housing needs, consider collaborative options to support Government Employee Housing needs where appropriate, seeking economies of scale where practical.

5.9 INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS

Council maintains infrastructure of varying capacity and condition across the region, with some areas having greater capacity to support population growth than others. Some areas within the region are already at or past optimal capacity, and others currently only allow for small growth (50-100 dwellings) before requiring upgrades or expansion. Concerns primarily relate to water supply and wastewater collection networks and treatment plants but also extend to sealed and unsealed road networks.

A high-level assessment of infrastructure capacity indicates significant upgrades would be required to facilitate meaningful housing supply growth. Some areas within the region are already at or past optimal capacity and the estimated level of investment required varies considerably from town to town.

5.9.1 Response opportunities

- Identify priority growth areas to focus infrastructure investment in the areas most likely to experience population growth over the coming years.
- Develop solutions to current sewerage network infrastructure constraints, and triage in accordance with lowest cost and highest value.
- Consider the advancement of scoped and designed water and sewerage infrastructure projects that will enable sustainable town expansion.

6 RESPONSE OPPORTUNITIES

A Local Housing Action Plan enables engagement across all levels of government, as well as private and not-for-profit organisations.

An initial set of tactical actions has been developed, enabling refinement through an ongoing iterative process. These actions provide for a targeted response and outcomes that will seek to either create immediate benefit or establish a foundation for the next phase of actions. More specific responses can then be determined that provide flexibility in delivery and support each of the broad areas identified.



6.1 ACTIONS

Council with the support of the Queensland Government through the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 is committed to engage in the delivery of its initial Local Housing Action Plan through this set of actions, developed to target immediate to longer term housing responses. This is an iterative process, and these actions and target outcomes will seek to either create immediate benefit or to establish foundations that help respond to ongoing housing need.

○	Land and Development	Timeline Starting in March 2024 (months)
1.1	Council to consider undertaking stage two of its current land development in Mundubbera, subject to feasibility and considering the demand for existing lots in stage one.	12
1.2	Review Council's current land holdings across the region and identify any serviced land that could be suitable for development and, if Council is unlikely to develop the land itself in the near future, consider innovative means of disposal where the acquirer is required to develop the land within a reasonable timeframe.	12-18
1.3	Council to undertake appropriate feasibility studies related to the previously developed water and wastewater network concepts necessary to alleviate development constraints on the north side of Gayndah, identifying if there is merit in pursuing such plans, what areas are serviceable and/or if alternative options may be more feasible over the long term.	12-18
1.4	Develop plans and pricing to resolve the current sewer and water network constraints in Mundubbera that limit the town's ability to expand and pose a constraint to current development prospects.	12-18
1.5	Council to undertake an assessment of the historic lots in the region's main towns and determine the most feasible way of resolving the current historic lot overlay restrictions in these areas (or parts thereof), balancing the costs of possible work with the number of lots likely to be freed up for residential construction.	12-24
1.6	Council, subject to capital and/or funding availability, considers undertaking a not for profit (cost recovery) style housing development in a priority workforce area(s) to both free up land for private dwelling construction, but also enable Council employee housing development, should suitable and feasible land be available following the initial review of Council land holdings.	12-48

○	Planning	
2.1	As part of the current planning scheme amendments, continue to pursue opportunities to reduce barriers to residential development.	Immediate
2.2	Council to review its existing 'Dual occupancy and multiple dwelling' fact sheet and, once reviewed, consider wide reaching promotion of the resource, encouraging critical thought around dual occupancy opportunities.	12
2.3	Council to review its existing 'Affordable housing', 'Rural workers accommodation' and 'Dwelling Houses' fact sheets and, once reviewed, consider wide reaching promotion of the resources.	18
2.4	Council to consider temporary fee reductions or rebates related to planning applications that will lead to the creation of 3 or more urban lots, or encourage medium density development such as unit complexes, duplexes or similar structures.	12
2.5	Undertake an assessment of housing needs and identify opportunities in relation to local density aspirations, opportunities for secondary dwellings on existing blocks, mixed use development options, repurposing unused commercial space, types of construction permitted and any other specific initiatives to address future housing need for both public and private sectors.	12
2.6	Undertake the 10-year review of the planning scheme, including related studies, and, following this review, decide whether to amend or replace the planning scheme.	12-24
2.7	Subject to funding availability and feasibility, undertake an analysis of relevant infrastructure, such as water and wastewater assets, across the region's main towns to identify the infrastructure implications of development and where trunk infrastructure upgrades may be necessary to unlock land for urban residential development.	18-36

○	Optimisation	
3.1	Assess possible lease, redevelopment, change of use or renovation of existing Council buildings to optimise community outcomes that support housing needs.	12
3.2	Investigate partnerships with social housing providers where Council may make land available to providers, enabling social housing development.	12
3.3	In centres where demand for transient workers is high, consider hybrid facility/land use options that may provide temporary accommodation options during periods of high demand.	12-24

○	Master planning	
4.1	Consider master planning of identified options to ensure resilient and well thought out development, in line with community expectation, that leads to sustainable and well-designed towns. The planning may be at development, street, or locality level.	6-24
4.2	In centres most susceptible to transient workforce population fluctuation, consider master planning to best integrate this workforce into the fabric of the community.	6-24

○	Supports	
5.1	Council to consider community development opportunities to foster community connectivity and a 'live local, support local' mindset amongst community members.	12
5.2	Council requests that State and Federal Governments provide financial assistance in grants for rural and remote LGA's to support provision of employee housing to reduce the financial burden on communities of meeting these additional costs and obtaining equitable access to essential services.	12
5.3	Council requests that the State Government considers providing interest free loans to councils for the development of serviced land for sale.	12

5.4	Council requests the State Government considers the expansion of the Catalytic Infrastructure Fund to smaller scale residential developments in rural and remote LGA's.	12
5.5	Council requests that the Federal Government consider extending the Home Guarantee Scheme (HGS), as an existing and established scheme, to landholders (including investors) seeking to construct multioccupancy dwellings where loan value ratio restrictions may otherwise be a barrier, with an appropriate value ceiling to reduce potential exploitation.	12-24
5.6	Council requests that the Federal Government provide programs/funding/incentives to encourage and assist local youth to take on trades in the local building industry.	12-24
5.7	Council requests that the State and Federal Governments consider options to remove inequality in access to housing finance options, such as higher Loan to Value Ratio (LVR) requirements, in rural and remote areas.	12-24
5.8	Council requests that the State Government ensure there is sufficient housing of an acceptable standard in rural and remote LGA's for State Government agency and service staff to minimise the impact on the general housing markets.	5 Years

○	People in need	
6.1	Informed by available data, identify any cohort specific housing needs and, if identified, consider actions that can be taken to encourage the development of such in parallel with other actions.	Immediate
6.2	Council to consider the development of a "Move to the North Burnett" informative video presenting the regions liveability features and case studies from local residents, encouraging relocation to the region and attracting essential workers.	12-24

○	Construction	
7.1	Encourage housing development which may repurpose existing commercial properties for specific cohorts to address emerging needs, such as the transient worker demands.	12
7.2	Council to consider the development of new employee housing stock and, once its needs are met, make surplus properties available in the open market as they are eventually replaced.	18

○	Capital solutions	
8.1	Identify appropriate land holdings and, subject to funding availability, begin development of 3 Council employee houses to replace 3 properties currently rented from the private market.	12
8.2	Following feasibility assessments related to water and sewer constraints on the north side of Gayndah, and if a feasible option is identified that will unlock meaningful development potential, seek funding for such.	18-48
8.3	Council, in partnership with the State, to investigate innovative but financially sustainable solutions that offer low-capital, high-capacity short-term accommodation options in the region's towns most in need of short-term worker accommodation.	18-48
8.4	Following the development of a feasible plan to resolve water and sewer constraints in Mundubbera, and subject to funding availability, undertake the identified works.	24-48
8.5	Following the feasibility assessment related to the historic lots in the region's main towns and subject to funding availability, undertake any identified works (if any).	24-48