

WACRA Response to City of Charles Sturt

Draft Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026

July 8 2022

Introduction

Thank you for engaging with the community with the draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS) 2022-2026. It is good to see that Council has reconsidered the original plan in the light of all the major changes since Covid-19. We apologise for the lateness of our submission.

Another major change is the election at both State and national levels of Labor Governments. Their policies and strategies for action provide many new opportunities for the Council to partner with and enhance their effectiveness at the local level. In particular, sustainability objectives will be strengthened at both levels.

Another new development of importance when considering the EDS is the release of new data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 survey. They have published a certain amount of data on each LGA, not going into all of its survey data, but enough that it is possible to see trends in the data released this week.

We have taken into account previously announced Plans in drawing up WACRA's response to the EDS, such as Our Community Plan 2020-2027 and Our Organisational Plan 2020-2024 and Council's Economic Development Recovery Strategy (June 2022).

We salute the Council for its clear, transparent commitment to planning for the future and publishing objectives and strategies for our community.

New ABS Findings on City of Charles Sturt - 2021

The Council has sustained a large population growth in the past five years. From 111,759 people in 2016, the Council area now houses 121,840. That is a growth of 10,000 in a short time, an indication that the urban densification strategy is working, albeit at the cost of many established trees.

Within the overall population, there has also been a rise noted nationally of the number of people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. In 2016, there were 1,619 people who identified. In 2021, there are 2,005 people or 1/6% of our LGA. The South Australian average is 2.4% and Australia 3.2%.

The median weekly income for a family aged 15 years and over for our Council was \$2,072 slightly higher than the SA average of \$1,889. In 2016, the median weekly income for a family was \$1,607 and SA average was \$1,510.

Pandemic Consequences

The Council's Economic Development Recovery Strategy (June 2022) reveals that the pandemic-impacted sectors in our Council area by job losses since March 2020 have been: Retail Trade - 298 jobs (5.3 %), Accommodation and Food Services - 119 jobs (4.2%), Education & Training - 111 jobs (3.3%). The Arts and Recreational Services sector was highly impacted in all stages of the pandemic, shedding 52 jobs (5.5%) in the first two months after the outbreak.

Clearly there have also been major health impacts and significant illness burden on the community and economy as the virus is now threatening a significant third wave with Omicron 4 and 5. Forecasting its impact on the economy is difficult, as its impacts are widely spread over a third of South Australians, including an estimated 10% living with long Covid.

Summary of Economic Development Strategy Highlights

The draft Economic Development Strategy synthesises the thoughts and aspirations of businesses and community. It builds upon the already strong foundations in Charles Sturt and capitalises on new and emerging opportunities to deliver long-term, inclusive and sustainable growth.

Council has several important roles to play as facilitator, partner, promoter, information provider and advocate creating a resilient, sustainable and prosperous local economy. Most importantly, it leads in setting a vision and growth areas.

The EDS recognises that the environment and economic productivity are intrinsically linked and that increased activity has the potential to bring greater prosperity and equity to the city. We support the EDS as not purely a plan about economic growth. It is focused on economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Vision – Environment Outcomes

In terms of the EDS, Charles Sturt brands itself as a liveable, business-friendly city with a diverse, advanced economy. Council also supports knowledge and innovation and is a leader in terms of planning for environmental outcomes. WACRA is happy to be a collaborative partner in these strategies. From the Community Plan 2020-2027, Environment Outcomes for Charles Sturt include:

- Greenhouse gas emissions significantly reduce and we adapt to our changing climate
- Our city is greener to reduce heat island effects and enhance our biodiversity
- Charles Sturt is recognised as a leading partner and educator in pursuing a sustainable future without our community
- Reduced waste production across our city, combined with growth of our circular economy
- We advocate for the protection of our coastal areas and enhancing biodiversity along our coast.

Climate and health future factors as risks economic development

WACRA wonders how well these objectives are translating into action on the ground. Over the years of the EDS to 2026, the rapid change in climate variables, heat, natural systems being overstretched could mean that our economic base might change quickly and detrimentally.

It is of concern to us that the EDS survey into business climate with 156 respondents found that only 53% stated that they are looking for ways to become more environmentally friendly. It appears that business people on the whole are treating environmental action as an option that they might buy into rather than an imperative to begin to transition into a new kind of future.

- WACRA supports the focus on the three economic, social and environmental outcomes. In the light of Council's climate emergency work that we support, we would like to see more depth and resources in this document placed on leadership to move work from business as usual to creating a more adaptive, resilient economy with the climate emergency risks at the forefront of thinking.

The combination of social well-being and environmental sustainability underpin a green growth economy, one in which Charles Sturt could be a leader if it chooses this path to ameliorate the following potential economy-eroding risks:

Flooding – This year has seen four 'unprecedented' floods, one after the other, hit many regions in eastern Australia. Several analyses have shown that the Port River, under scenarios of rapid sea-level rise, could inundate a lot of the Port Adelaide and Charles Sturt Council low-lying housing areas. Where in the economic development do you make plans for this? What are your strategies for storm water management in this type of crisis? Have vulnerable areas been informed of their potential risk and given ways of preparing?

A new pandemic - Covid-19 came out from nowhere it seemed. Since then, the health of the community has been challenged by epidemics of Influenza and colds in addition to increasing Covid numbers. Monkeypox and other exotic transmissible diseases are beginning to circulate again with the opening of the borders to international air travel. It seems that our community will always need to be fighting these disease threats as they emerge, some of it which may come from climate instability and deforestation which driving animals into closer contact with humans than in the past. Covid has already passed the barrier into a wide variety of animals, where it can mutate and then be passed back again. We must plan for unknown pandemics in the future which could substantially impact our economy as Covid did in 2020-2021.

Heat – New records continue to be broken each month with temperatures, rainfall and many indicators in the 'unprecedented' range. As an urban LGA, not very dependent on agriculture, we have more ability to ride out temperature extremes, albeit with increase in the use of air-conditioning.

We are lucky in SA that our wind and solar initiatives over many years will help provide more sustainable power for cooling. Although it assumes an increased energy usage, consuming power from renewables helps with the decarbonisation of the economy, compared to fossil fuel alternatives. The past few years has seen 51% of workers in our city working from home, using their own heating/cooling systems. More cooling being needed assumes that people have the economic well-being to pay for heating/cooling in their own homes.

- As future-proofing, WACRA asks Council to consider establishing cooling refuges at its own headquarters and other public libraries as places for people to stay during heat waves in safety and be safe and hydrated.

Coast degradation— The degradation of the seagrass meadows has been a factor of concern for decades on the Gulf of St Vincent coast, where the City of Charles Sturt manages 12km. This loss accounts for a number of poor outcomes, including loss of sea life and sand drift to the north. Economic plans for tourism would be thwarted if beaches continue to degrade, as has been seen in the southern beaches.

WACRA supports the Council working collaboratively with regional partners, State Government and experts to more quickly stabilise its coast. Experiments such as the oyster bed at Glenelg could be important to replicate along our section of the coast, as would be small, sand-based groynes to slow the northward movement of sand. This is a topical and urgent question.

- WACRA support evidence based, expert advised planning about coastal management strategies to clearly high-risk scenarios.

Low tree cover - We acknowledge the commitment of the Council to a new target to green the West of 25% cover by 2045. It seems too little, too late. We have provided deputations and strategies to Council to up this target. The more open, low socio-economic suburbs are going to feel the heat effects more severely than any with trees. It is not about looking pretty. People need trees, with some growth which takes years, to cool their local environments.

- WACRA urges the Council to be bolder and revisit the tree canopy targets as a priority, just as you are revisiting this EDS. We are happy to work with you.

Waste and solar – Charles Sturt has taken many strong initiatives in the circular economy that we applaud. We support your energy initiatives on your own properties and in the street lights of the city which are showing business a model of sustainable practice and reducing emissions. There is always more to be done, as we live in a ‘work and buy’ capitalist system where there will continue to be stuff that people throw out. The cost of dealing with this, educating consumers, trialling new initiatives are high but worthwhile in terms of costs that could escalate.

- WACRA supports ongoing work in the waste and solar sector, particularly with the business initiatives.

Transport - ABS Findings in 2016 Census showed that we are still a very car-dependent, fossil-fuel burning population, with only 10% of our population taking public transport to work. The figures for 2021 are less helpful as a large number of people worked at home due to the pandemic.

Transport Mode	Charles Sturt	%	South Australia	%	Australia	%
Used public transport	5,151	10	53,457	7.2	1,225,668	11.5
Used car as driver or passenger	37,551	72.6	539,409	72.3	7,305,271	68.4
Worked at home	1,627	3.1	32,679	4.4	503,582	4.7

There is a lot of work to be done to convert the private car usage in our Council to increased public transport usage. That, in spite of the fact that we have two train lines, Outer Harbor and Grange with good access to the city and quite good coverage of buses which come much more regularly than in the past.

In terms of risk to business, fossil fuels will increase the likelihood of climate extremes occurring more often, thereby destabilising the business and social environment.

Leadership from the Council on converting private car usage to public transport or bike use would make a big change in our Council overall CO2 emissions as part of its sustainability objectives.

- WACRA supports the challenges and opportunities charted on page 23-24 of the EDS and urges the Council to keep abreast and lead in the area of new technologies and targeting opportunities. In the environmental area, both the increase of EV charging stations within the Council area and promoting circular economy businesses are key initiatives.
- WACRA believes that personal transport options are a key variable in economic sustainability that could be moved by leadership, promotion and strategies. We support the new bike paths, bikeways, DDA accessible bus infrastructure and other infrastructure initiatives that make it easier for people to choose to take public transport or ride bikes.

WACRA COMMENTS ON FOUR CHOSEN GROWTH AREAS PLUS ONE

1. Urban Development

WACRA urges the Council to be bold in accepting the challenges of the 30-year Greater Adelaide Strategic Plan. The 30 Year Plan promotes a green liveable city, greater housing choice, walkable neighbourhoods and sustainable transport use. Urban development linked to public transport and open space presents the greatest opportunities along road and rail corridors. Facilitating urban development opportunities will require a collaborative approach involving State and Local Government and the private sector.

Bowden, West, and new sites at The Square at Woodville West are examples of sustainable, green living near public transport options. Our urban planners are working in the policy context of social and environmental goals complementing economic growth. It is clear that the Council land area is undergoing densification and tree loss. Do Council planners have the tools they need to achieve these goals, for instance, tree canopy loss vs development?

- WACRA supports Council's integration of social and environmental sustainability goals in any new construction planned and urges both retention of existing trees and creation of more social and co-housing as a social good.
- We hold concerns about the approval of a big housing development at the corner of Valetta and Findon Roads, Kidman Park, as we do not believe the road infrastructure is currently capable of carrying more traffic entering and leaving.
- We also echo CASA's call for a review of the SA Planning and Design Code with its many flaws and for Council to input on reforms.

2. Tourism (and Creative Industries)

The EDS says that tourism makes a significant contribution to the Charles Sturt economy and presents an opportunity to benefit a number of key sectors across the local economy. Collaborating and promoting tourism as part of the Western Region provides an opportunity to develop and grow tourism employment and visitor spending. The Adelaide Beaches Visitor website has been a key driver in promoting all there is to see and do in region to a broader audience.

Showcasing Charles Sturt as a premier visitor destination and attracting value-adding industries will be important to reduce reliance on population growth and provide jobs for our residents. Hopefully, this will be done in a sustainable way to maintain the lifestyle our community expect.

The Strategy also highlights the new Growth Sectors as part of the State Government Growth agenda, including several that the EDS captures. Creative Industries is neglected in the Charles Sturt EDS. This seems a poor choice, as the Council area is home to a large number of creatives who have suffered in the pandemic with the

closures and cancellations. This seems an ideal time to pick this sector up. It can start with individuals, their business and grow as the artists are able to work, perform and exhibit more often. Creative industries are public services, important to the health of democracy and clear tourism attractors. They put the zip into economic development.

- WACRA recommends extending the category of Tourism to include Creative Industries, just as Defense and Advanced Manufacturing are seen as one area. They both have obvious synchronicities.

3. Health

A demographic trend across Australia and locally is the increasing proportion of both older adults (55+) and the people living with disabilities in society. Charles Sturt also has a high concentration of people with chronic disease. In building the local health economy, Council’s vision aims to respond to the health and wellbeing needs of its community.

It is worth looking at the older age brackets in the 2021 ABS Survey for Charles Sturt. In no category does Charles Sturt have more people in the older ages than SA generally. Contrary to what is stated in several existing Charles Sturt strategic planning documents, this Council does not have more older people than SA generally. The Council area does have more older people than Australia generally however. It is unhelpful to use that as a planning rationale within our State when not factually correct.

Median Age	Charles Sturt	%	South Australia	%	Australia	%
60-64 years	7,570	6.2	112,846	6.3	1,468,097	5.8
65-69 years	6,455	5.3	102,304	5.7	1,298,460	5.1
70-74 years	6,053	5.0	94,040	5.3	1,160,768	4.6
75-79 years	4,362	3.6	66,986	3.8	821,920	3.2
80-84 years	3,383	2.8	45,666	2.6	554,598	2.2
85 years and over	3,732	3.1	47,325	2.7	542,342	2.1

That does not mean that there is not a need for health care, disability support, primary health care and other initiatives which we support.

For some curious reason, the planning documents rarely mention the Western Hospital at Henley Beach, which is a large magnet for health care provision, increased services and large numbers of local users. As a large employer, it should be added to all of your documents as a significant healthcare node. It definitely should be the third hospital on MAP 1 – Economic Development Assets

4. Defence and Advanced Manufacturing

There is potential for advanced manufacturing to diversify with the new federal government looking to vastly expand local production of renewable products, such as solar panels. It is possible for small to medium size enterprises to engage in the defence sector and supply chain as potential economic levers in this Council. Hopefully, some of the older, unused factory sites could be converted to house advanced manufacturing in new digital and AI industries.

There is a significant backlash within the community to Scott Morrison's AUKUS partnership that involves nuclear submarines being built in our neighbouring Council area. There are many areas of concern, but an obvious one which would impact on all the economic and liveability objectives is that building nuclear submarines at Osborne, makes our local area a strategic target of interest to world powers, many of who have, or are developing, missiles that put our city at risk of being hit.

In 2017, WACRA sought to make a presentation to Council on a Nuclear Free Policy but this was declined as such decisions sit with State and federal government.

- WACRA wishes to reiterate our grave concerns about this development and do not support the establishment or extension of any nuclear industry near our Council.

5. Indigenous Focus

WACRA would like to recommend consideration of a fifth growth area in this EDS: Indigenous Focus. The City of Charles Sturt consistently acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional custodians of the land, the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains, its Elders past, present and emerging at meetings, events, in publications. The Council reiterates that it acknowledges the contributions and important role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play within the local community.

Where is the substance of this respect to be found in the plans and actions of this Council? Given the history that is now known and acknowledged, it is curious that such an oversight continues unchallenged.

Our western European paradigm is to think of the place where we live and work as our land we own, to provide for us as we use it. Aboriginal people think of it as their Country, a place they are custodians of, to make it live, to sustain it, not as individuals but as people who are part of a continuum of care over time, ancestors, present living and those to come.

These two perspectives are like oil and water. Neither of us can see why it is so hard to think like we do. And yet, as we are increasingly challenged by the climate emergency unfolding, it is evident that we have much to learn from a culture that could live in the harsh, climate changing world of Australia for millennia. What could we learn if we involved them in our planning of stormwater, of flooding? What about assisting them to run small culture-based businesses where people could pay them for

accessing knowledge and skills? Do we know what this environment meant to them when it was wetlands and hunting grounds, ceremonial places? How can we tap them, fairly, remunerated, for the stories they want us to know? How do we learn from their practitioners how to care for Country?

Our Council is good with words. In the Community Plan 2020-2027, the top community outcome is: **In our City, no one gets left behind.**

The ABS data from 2016 and 2021 for Charles Sturt paints a picture of disparity between the general council population and indigenous residents. For instance, 33% of us own our house outright according to the 2021 Census where that number is only 10% for indigenous people. Household weekly income is an average of \$200 less for Aboriginal/Torres Strait households in both survey periods 2016 and 2021. Data on mortgage repayments, with people trying to raise their home ownership status, shows a potential for mortgage stress, as these households were paying \$200 per month in 2021, well before the current interest rate rises.

ABS Census Data for City of Charles Sturt	2016 All Charles Sturt households	2016 Aboriginal households	2021 All Charles Sturt households	2021 Aboriginal households
Median weekly household income	\$1,231	\$1,052	\$1,563	\$1,358
Median monthly mortgage repayments	\$1,700	\$1,733	\$1,733	\$1,950

The number of indigenous people married is much less than the population generally. Intergenerational trauma, disadvantage, the long tail of the Stolen Generation, racism and other factors, mean that relationships have more challenges than for most people.

This picture, less stable accommodation, less income, more costs, less relationship support is set in the context of 400 more people identifying as Aboriginal in this Census from the last one for our Council. There are more people, more disadvantage, and no acknowledgement of this reality in the planning. The indigenous residents are very vulnerable to being left behind economically.

WACRA feels this is one area where the City of Charles Sturt is well-placed to be an innovator, walking with its indigenous residents, some of whom are well-known leaders. The median age of our indigenous population in the 2021 Census is 24. It is a young cohort, one that is well-placed as a growth area for economic development.

This is a perfect time to form a Council Indigenous Task Force to examine what could be done in the economic sphere to provide opportunities for work, for new businesses, for integration with existing opportunities within the Council.

WACRA has a few suggestions for Council to consider with such a Task Force. It is not our place to shape what actually happens, but these are offered as ideas and visions until you have a group of indigenous people meeting together to determine their own priorities:

- Establishment of a centre in Charles Sturt, using an underused Council building with outside access, as a hub for small enterprise, language teaching, crafts, etc. In Henley, if the white house by the Henley Library is deemed an asset to be kept, this could be such a location, underutilized as it is today.
- Dedicate a stall at the Maker's Market at Henley Square for craft works by local Aboriginal people, coordinated by an indigenous curator. Many people make things but do not have an outlet to showcase their wares. It could give local indigenous people a safe space to meet others.
- Kurna or Ngarrindjeri are the two indigenous languages most spoken in our Council according to this Census. A business opportunity bursting with potential is language classes for both indigenous and non-indigenous people who are keen to learn and speak local languages.
- Tap the new federal government funding for Aboriginal rangers to create positions in the horticulture team as Coast Keepers, Cultural Burners, etc.
- Develop an extended tourist attraction of native grasses along the Port Road corridor. Is there any need for the Port Road central landscape to be grass? What about converting to native grasses, following the Adelaide City Council initiatives in the Parklands which it abuts at the eastern edge of our City? Not only would it increase the butterflies, birds, reptiles in a grassy landscape over the stormwater pipe, it would increase the pedestrian use of these areas with education, interpretation, places for outdoor workshops, basketry, etc. The scope of Port Road's length would make it unique and remarkable, returning Country to its preferred grasses.
- Encourage all local businesses to employ indigenous people as a priority. Provide support and resources for this.
- Encourage start-up businesses and support indigenous entrepreneurs.

We notice is that nothing like this is in the EDS even though we like to use the Welcome to Country and to brand the libraries with Kurna. It is a blind spot in our economic planning.

Now is the time, post-pandemic, to lift into actual working with and listening to local residents to start a cycle of economic development in their lives. We live and work on

Kaurna Country. This type of initiative, new to Adelaide, is well-placed with a population of 2,000 people in our Council. It needs commitment and leadership to get it started, but it is the basis of work that needs to happen someday. Let's start.

Accountability

The City of Charles Sturt Economic Development Strategy (EDS) has been developed collaboratively with input from local businesses, industry representatives and other key stakeholders to ensure long term sustainable and inclusive growth for our community.

Growth in the 21st century means value-adding with knowledge-based industries. The Council is to be congratulated on the new Ngutungka (learning place) West Lakes and the recent decision to fund a Ngutungka Henley. These hubs of community learning, community connection, and empowerment to upskill the community with digital skills and lifelong learning are important foundations of a new economy.

Some courses offered at Ngutungka West Lakes offer residents tools to make use of internet retailing and promotion, small but vital businesses that interact with the global market from this Council area.

Knowledge is power in this century. We lack a university campus in our Council or even a hub of high-tech innovation. As the repurposing of the old RAH into LOT 14 shows and the Mitsubishi plant into Tonsley, older industrial manufacturing areas such as some of ours, make excellent bones to flesh out new knowledge-based industries, research hubs and entrepreneurial launch pads. Our Council needs its own centre of learning at its hub to seriously build up a knowledge-based industry with many spill-overs.

- Given that the State Government is examining a merger of universities, WACRA urges the Council to lobby and bid for a Western campus of such a body and investigate old industrial sites that could be repurposed.

The role of the Council is essentially one of deploying the flow of information more effectively and bringing economic development players together to use this information for greater economic benefit. It also is vital to work with both new Labor governments to seize new opportunities for funding and partnerships.

As outlined in the action plan, the role is largely one of facilitator, information provider, advocate and in all cases, leader.

WACRA agrees that the Council leadership role involves high intensity involvement. We support Charles Sturt being seen as a leader in many fields of local government endeavours. Be bold, use the principles in your planning documents and don't waste a day to make this Council ready for the coming years with resilience and adaptive capacity as the liveable city you are proud to be working for and we residents are proud to live in.