

# Blackall

## Community Development Action Plan



**December 2024**

# Foreword



Nestled in the heart of Queensland, Blackall is a shining example of a vibrant country community that warmly welcomes visitors from near and far. Known for its rich history, friendly locals, and stunning landscapes, Blackall offers a unique blend of traditional charm and modern amenities.

As you explore Blackall, you'll discover a town that takes pride in its heritage, from the iconic Black Stump to the historic woolscour. The community spirit here is palpable, with locals always ready to share a story or lend a helping hand. Whether you're attending one of the many local

events, such as the bi-annual Better in Blackall Festival, or simply enjoying a leisurely stroll through the town, you'll feel a sense of belonging and warmth.

Blackall is not just a place to visit; it's a destination to experience. The natural beauty of the surrounding outback, combined with the town's vibrant arts scene and delicious local cuisine, makes it a must-see for anyone looking to experience the true essence of country Australia. Whether you're an adventurer, a history buff, or someone seeking a peaceful retreat, Blackall has something special to offer.

## Acknowledgements



The formulation of this 'Community Development Action Plan' was initiated and coordinated by the Blackall Community Builders Team (Jane Scobie, Jaimee-Lee Prow and Julee Rooney) with assistance from Rural Aid as part of their commitment to supporting Australia's small rural towns. The formulation of the Plan was undertaken by Peter Kenyon from the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. assisted by Sarah Ferriday, Steph Walsh and Laura Carlton of Rural Aid, and Paul Gravett. Special thanks to so many passionate community members who gave so generously of their time, wisdom and experiences, including a group of enthusiastic students from Blackall State School.

We respectfully acknowledge Bidjara and Iningai People as the traditional owners and First People of the lands which comprise the township of Blackall and its districts. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of the Bidjara and Iningai People.

# Our Story

Blackall is a vibrant and historically significant town located in the heart of Queensland's central-western region. Founded in 1868, the town grew rapidly as a vital stop along stock routes for cattle and sheep drovers. Situated on the banks of the Barcoo River, Blackall's early development was driven by agriculture, particularly sheep farming. Today Blackall has a robust cattle, sheep and goat industry. The arrival of the Central Western railway in 1908 further cemented Blackall's role as a key regional hub, enhancing its importance for transportation and trade.

One of Blackall's most significant historical landmarks is the Blackall Woolscour, established in 1908 as a steam-powered wool-washing plant, which played a crucial role in the region's booming wool industry. It is the last remaining steam-operated woolscour in the world and following a massive community effort from 2002, it now operates as a museum, offering visitors a glimpse into the town's industrial heritage. Blackall's history is also closely tied to Jack Howe, a legendary shearer who made history in 1892 by shearing 321 sheep in one day with hand shears, a world record that still stands today. Our Jack Howe Memorial honours this achievement, cementing Howe's place in Australian shearing folklore.

The Black Stump is another iconic feature of the town, rooted in a significant moment in surveying history. In 1887, surveyors used this site to determine longitude in Queensland.

The phrase "beyond the black stump" became synonymous with the idea of remoteness, and the landmark now represents the town's pioneering spirit.

In addition to its historical landmarks, Blackall has embraced its natural assets, such as the Blackall Aquatic Centre, which features an artesian spa fed by the Great Artesian Basin. This facility is a popular attraction among locals and visitors alike, and is part of Australia's great thermal way. Another notable landmark is the Blackall Sculpture Trail, that celebrates the town's vibrant arts and cultural scene. Through the leadership, facilities and activities of Blackall Cultural Association (BCA), Blackall is known nationally as a key regional artistic centre. One interesting fact about Blackall is its acknowledgement as the birthplace of Australian circus.

Throughout its history, Blackall has maintained a strong community spirit, reflected in its regular events such as the annual Barcoo Pastoral Show, the Bi-annual Better in Blackall festival event, Blackstump Bonanza Rodeo, and local Blackall Magpies Football Carnival which bring together locals and visitors to celebrate its outback heritage. Despite facing challenges such as population decline and fluctuating agricultural markets, Blackall continues to adapt by diversifying its economy, with tourism playing an increasingly important role.

With its rich history, unique landmarks, artistic creativity and strong community, Blackall remains a resilient town poised for future growth while staying connected to its agricultural heritage and outback identity.



# Our Vision

A Vision Statement is a vivid description of what our community aspires to become, without its current barriers, but tied to what we value as a community.

The statement below is our intended outcome:

A vibrant, family-friendly and safe community, embracing traditions and contemporary practices in order to create progressive and community-driven action for all generations to live, work, play and age well

# Our Goals

**Community goals are broad statements of intent that direct our efforts towards accomplishing our vision in line with our guiding principles.**

Below are the nine community goals which guide our community aspirations, namely -

- To retain families in the community by continually strengthening our rural lifestyle and local employment opportunities.
- To actively pursue new economic and entrepreneurial opportunities that strengthen and diversify our local economy and business life.
- To actively promote and showcase our community as a great place to stop, stay, experience, and reside, especially through a vibrant and welcoming town centre.
- To create an environment where our young people feel involved, supported and empowered, and will consider returning to our community for work, business, family and lifestyle opportunities.
- To revamp the main street and enhance its vibe.
- To preserve, maintain and strengthen our significant Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage, cultural, sporting and infrastructure assets.
- To protect our Great Artesian Basin, thereby ensuring water security.
- To ensure strong sporting, cultural and artistic groups, activities, competitions, facilities and traditions through active and collaborative volunteerism.
- To be proactive with a 'can do' attitude through active citizenship and community leadership.



# Our Guiding Values

**Guiding values are the fundamental, moral, and ethical beliefs that we share as a community. They represent core principles and capture what our community considers important. They help foster trust, respect, collaboration, and unity.**

The following six guiding values and attitudes provide the context for our community's identified actions and initiatives, namely:

- **Community Pride and Celebration** – encouraging pride and times of celebration related to our heritage, culture, uniqueness, achievements, structures and future.
- **Respect for Heritage and Environment** – valuing our Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage and culture, and our unique natural and built environment.
- **Intergenerational Connection** – creating opportunities for all ages to share, support and learn from each other.
- **Embracing New Opportunities** – building upon our local assets, capacities and community creativity; and facilitating opportunities that enable all our residents to see and experience their community as a place of opportunity and fun.
- **Collaboration and Positive Mindset** – committing to cooperate and collaborate with a positive mindset to make things happen.
- **Community Inclusiveness, Unity and Engagement** – valuing the involvement and contribution of all our community residents, groups, and agencies; and appreciating and respecting the diversity of all cultures, opinions and ideas.

# Our Challenges

**Like many small inland rural communities, our community needs to respond creatively to a series of demographic, social, economic and environmental challenges. These issues include:**

- An ageing and declining population, contributing to the weakening of social networks and community cohesion
- Volunteer fatigue, declining volunteer numbers, and dependence on a few pro-active community members
- Drought
- Declining school numbers, at both primary and high school
- Community appearance – bland look of the main street and lack of appeal
- Tired signage
- Limited youth recreational and learning options
- Tourism challenges especially seasonal nature and limited tourist product
- Limited visitor infrastructure and attraction
- Business loss and service gaps
- Limited local employment opportunities
- High summer temperatures
- Lack of rental and social accommodation
- No specific crisis housing
- High travel and accommodation costs for out-of-town guests, e.g. difficult to put on concerts or events and get the same 'bang for buck' as the city
- Cost of air travel
- Lack of collaboration and integration across human service providers, and service duplication
- Affordable labour with right skills-mix and ethos- in competition with mining industry
- Flood-prone nature of town
- Limited opening hours of the youth centre
- Flood mitigation
- No Business Association
- No Community Action/Progress Group
- Loss of Shockwave
- Growing mental health issues and limited support

# Our Assets

## People

- Safe town
- Volunteers, Community Crisis Fund
- Children and young people, seniors, returning Blackall people, young professionals
- Old wisdom and young enthusiasm
- Council staff, businesspeople, health professionals, emergency personnel, teachers
- Tourists, backpackers
- Farmers
- Indigenous community
- Creatives – Photographers, artists, musicians, dancers
- Political parties – LNP, ALP
- Church communities
- Blackall Independent Newspaper, Council Catch-Up
- Work camp
- Fishing community, horse community

## Culture, Stories & Sources of Pride

- Premier arts and cultural hub of Western Qld
- Arts – BCA Living Arts, Bushman's Gallery
- Tourist attractions – Sculpture Trail, Woolscour, statues, Granny Harlow, Black Stump, Pioneer Bore, historic Masonic Lodge, Perry Bros Circus Elephant, Memorial Clock, Towner Memorials, Park Ram Museum
- Birthplace of Australian circus
- Jackie Howe, wool industry heritage
- Red Ridge Interior QLD
- Better in Blackall, Historical Society
- Opera Queensland Connection
- Old cinema
- 150-year Barcoo Pastoral Society
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Corporation

## Institutions

- Schools – Blackall State School, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, school of distance education
- BTRC, Blackall Lifestyle & Community Hub (BLCH),
- Hospital, ambulance, Medical Centre, RFDS
- Police, Courthouse, Work Camp, QGAP
- Government housing
- Department of Transportation, Department of Primary Industries
- Airport link to Brisbane
- Hospital, doctors, Outreach Allied Health Service
- Aged care – Mclean Place nursing home, Barcoo Retirement Village
- Social housing
- Lady Gowrie childcare centre
- Centrelink, post office
- Outback Futures
- RESQ
- Country University Centre

# Our Assets

## Economic

- Retail Businesses – bank, pharmacy, grocers x2, newsagency, bakery, butcher, Op Shop, fuel outlets, clothes shop x3, hardware & furniture, garden centre, hair & beauty
- Trades – signs, mechanics, electricians, saddlery, taxi, welding, Sew Barcoo, tyre service, rural supplies
- Professional – Real estate, Elders, Nutrien, accountancy, legal
- Accommodation & Hospitality Businesses – pubs x2, motels x3, coffee shop/café/restaurant x5, mobile coffee shops, caravan park, free camping grounds, hostel, farm stay
- Events – Blackall Show, Flower Show, horse events/rodeo/ Barrel Races, sporting competitions, garden competition, Better in Blackall Festival, Biggest Morning Tea, theatre, circus, dance performances
- Regional mining opportunities
- Ag industry – cattle, sheep, goats, saleyards, slaughterhouse
- Freight centre, airport (link to Brisbane), regular bus service
- Buy Local Christmas campaign
  - Community markets, Buy-Swap-Sell (Facebook)
  - Kangaroo Box

## Social Networks

- Service Clubs – CWA, Men's Shed, RSL Sub-Branch, Anglican Ladies Guild, P&C, P&F, Hospital Auxiliary
- Sporting Clubs – Bowls, tennis, race, pony, swim, netball, fishing, equestrian, rugby, campdraft, golf, clay Target
- Cultural Groups – BCA, Creative Spirits Women's Group, Show Group, Better in Blackall, Historical Society, Garden Club, Cultural Association, old car restoration, Bush Beatz Dance Club, Barcoo Pastoral Society, Historical Woolscour Association
- Churches – Uniting, Catholic, Anglican, Community, New Beginnings, Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses
- Men's health, 60s and better, Gold Club, Bingo
- Children and Youth Activities – Play Group, gym, Mums n Bubs, Kid's Club, Youth Council, Blue Light, Blackall Lifestyle & Community Hub
- Saleyard events, rodeo events

## Physical

- Cultural Centre, racecourse, aquatic centre, skate park, Ram Park, golf course, CWA Hall, Artesian pool & spa, youth centre, gym, pathway to health
- Airport
- Saleyards, Town Common, Showgrounds, Sculpture trail
- Barcoo River
- Pastoral properties, diverse flora and fauna, clean environment
- Idalia National Park, Great Artesian Basin
- Sporting facilities including indoor cricket shed, football grounds, tennis and netball, indoor cricket, gym, campdraft/rodeo arena
- Monuments and sculptures, Blackall sign
  - Bird life





# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme One

### Building a More Engaged & Connected Community

#### ACTIONS

1

1. Form a **Blackall Community Action Group (BCAG)** by:
  - a. Identifying local residents willing to form a three- month task group to develop a BCAG brief, produce a flyer, promote the value of a BCAG organisation and convene a launch meeting.
  - b. Forming a committee and identify initial priority actions.
  - c. Promoting membership and form task groups around a set of priority actions.
  - d. Registering as a member of the Town Team Movement (TTM).
  - e. Developing an annual program of initiatives and identifying short-term Task Teams.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

2. Promote **volunteering and community engagement** through:
  - Continually inviting community members to voice ideas, suggestions and actively volunteer.
  - Recognising and celebrating community volunteers, through media exposure and an annual 'Volunteer Appreciation Event'.
  - Seeking support from Queensland Volunteering and utilising their resources.

**Timeframe: Short - Immediate Term and Ongoing**

3. Instigate a **calendar of events that focusses on connecting residents and building community relationships** e.g. Blackall Family Fun Day, Good Neighbour Day, street parties, Christmas Party in the Park etc.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

4. Plan and in implement a set of business community sundowners to ascertain the interest in forming a **Blackall Tourism and Business Association**. Utilise the experience and assistance of the Tambo Tourist and Business Association (TTBA).

**Timeframe: Short Term**

5. Continue to coordinate the annual "**Buy Local Christmas Campaign**"

**Timeframe: Ongoing**

#### LEAD GROUPS

**Blackall Community Action Group (BCAG)**  
**Blackall Lifestyle & Community Hub (BLCH)**  
**Blackall-Tambo Regional Council (BTRC)**

#### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**Blackall community, service and sporting groups**  
**TTBA**  
**Blackall business community**  
**BTRC In-kind & Sponsorship**  
**Funding**

**BCA**  
**RA**  
**FRRR**  
**Queensland Volunteering**

# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme Two

### Enhancing Our Tourism Experiences & Opportunities

#### ACTIONS

2

1. Develop a **Blackall-Tambo Tourism Strategy** through the formation of a **Tourism Strategy Task Team** that engages in the following actions:
  - Auditing current tourism attractions, facilities, events, trails and initiatives.
  - Reviewing regional tourism links, activities and trails.
  - Identifying opportunities to enhance existing products and offerings.
  - Prioritising opportunities to create new tourism products, especially related to heritage and cultural tourism, circus heritage connections and builds upon the strong regional arts assets.
  - Recommending initiatives to enhance marketing, branding, customer service, community storytelling and operator networking.

**Timeframe: Immediate to Medium Term**

2. Undertake a district-wide **Signage Audit** and implement improvements, including out-of-town advertising, town entry statements, interpretative signage and directional signage by forming a **Signage Audit Task Team** that undertakes:
  - Developing an assessment tool
  - Coordinating the audit
  - Reviewing and formulating recommendations for improvement
  - Sharing impressions recommendations with BTRC and the wider Blackall community

**Timeframe: Short Term**

3. Monitor and respond to the **Mainstreet “Revamp” Plans** being developing by a landscape architect consultant.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

4. Continually expand the **outdoor sculpture collection**.

**Timeframe: Ongoing**



# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme Two

### Enhancing Our Tourism Experiences & Opportunities

#### ACTIONS



5. Form a **Circus Heritage Task Team (Blackall Historical Society)** that undertakes:
  - Researching ways that other communities around the globe have built on their circus heritage and connections.
  - Identifying groups and businesses who would support the development of a national Circus Hall of Fame that captures the history of the Australian circus industry.
  - Developing an Action Plan that incorporates:
    - o An Australian Circus Hall of Fame
    - o A program of regular events and workshops related to circus heritage and skills including re-running the “Circus Workshop for Kids in the Big Top”
    - o Links to educational learning and employment options.
    - o Opportunities for public art installations.
    - o Funding and technical support opportunities and connections.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

6. Form a Task Team to explore the potential of and actions needed to establish **Dry Land Botanical Garden (Blackall Garden Club)** in Blackall highlighting local native plants.

**Timeframe: Short Term**

#### LEAD GROUPS

**BTRC**  
**BLCH**  
**Tourism Strategy Task Team**  
**Signage Audit Task Team**  
**Circus Heritage Task Team**  
**Dryland Botanical Garden Task Team**

#### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**Blackall businesses and tourism operators**  
**TTBA**  
**BBRF**  
**OQTA**  
**KABQ**  
**TEQ**  
**RDAEWQ**  
**RAPAD**  
**RADF**  
**TTM**  
**BTRC In-kind & Sponsorship Funding**  
**Work Camp**  
**BCA**  
**BHWA**

# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme Three

### Creating New Opportunities for Our Young People

#### ACTIONS



1. Request BTRC to formulate and implement a **'Blackall-Tambo Youth Strategy'** that:
  - Enables better understanding of the contributions, needs and aspirations of local young people.
  - Provides local young people with effective mechanisms to share their opinions, ideas and contributions.
  - Enhances the potential and range of activities of key youth hubs like the Youth Centre, Aquatic Centre, gym and skate park.
  - Increases youth recreation options.
  - Connects young people with leadership and volunteer opportunities within the community.
  - Identifies new secondary and post-secondary education options.
  - Identifies local youth training and job options including possible traineeships.
  - Identifies youth leadership development opportunities.
  - Promotes intergenerational activities to link older and younger people.
  - Identifies funding options to sustain implementation of the Strategy.

**Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing**

2. Form a **Shockwave Task Team** to re-introduce the popular **"Shockwave" initiative**. Ensure young people are key stakeholders in the process.

**Timeframe: Immediate and ongoing**

3. Advocate for and support the development of **improved facilities and activities at the Aquatic Centre** including better canteen, longer hours in summer holidays, more shade, water park/splash pad facilities and greater use as a venue for events, including movie nights.

**Timeframe: Short Term**

4. Maintain **regular contact with young people after they leave the community** via social media, regular newsletter and organisation of a calendar of school and sporting reunions.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

5. **Identify and support progressive young leaders** through linking them to regional, state and national leadership development experiences.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

6. Seek the support of the two local schools to introduce the **"RU MAD? Are You Making a Difference? Program"** as a means to encourage greater civic engagement by children and young people.

**Timeframe: Short Term and Ongoing**

#### LEAD GROUPS

BTRC

Shockwave Task Team

Local young people

#### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

BLCH  
BAC  
BSS  
SJCPS

Local sporting clubs  
BSS P&C  
SJCPS P&F

# Our Strategies & Actions

## Theme Four

### Instigating Actions to Improve or Create New Facilities

#### ACTIONS



**1. Promote new business opportunities** in Blackall by:

- Utilising all media opportunities including social media.
  - Creating entrance signage that highlights business opportunities.
  - Creating and advertising available workspace opportunities.
- Initial business idea to promote is the **laundromat**.

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

- Actively support the establishment of the **QWool (Queensland Wool Processors) proposed wool processing plant** in Blackall.
- Seeking State Government support in managing the significant social and economic impacts of the proposed wool processing plant project

**Timeframe: Ongoing**

**2. Create a Dog Park Task Team** to develop and implement a proposal for a Dog Park in Blackall.

**Timeframe: Short to Medium Term**

**3. Actively support the implementation of the recommendations of the Local Housing Action Plan**, especially in regard to:

- Identifying and repurposing underutilised properties for accommodation
- Monitoring and responding to aged pensioner housing needs
- Expanding social housing
- Providing support to service provider employers for the construction of employee housing
- Fast-tracking Government Employee Housing (GEH)
- Investigating crisis housing options
- Investigating partnership opportunities with not-for-profit housing providers
- Advocating for assistance to help local youth take on trades in the local building industry
- Exploring the use of non-traditional housing options

**Timeframe: Immediate and Ongoing**

**4. Explore options for the creation of a Recycling Centre** in Blackall.

**Timeframe: Short Term**

#### LEAD GROUPS

**BTRC**

**Dog Park Task Team**

#### POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**Blackall business community**

**BAC**

**QWool**

**Swimming Club**

**DHLGPW**

**GEH**

**BCAG**

**RDAEWQ**

**RAPAD**

# Abbreviations

|                |                                                                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>BBRF</b>    | Building Better Regions Fund of the Australian Government                        |
| <b>BCA</b>     | Blackall Culural Association                                                     |
| <b>BCAG</b>    | Blackall Community Action Group                                                  |
| <b>BHWA</b>    | Blackall Historical Woolscour Association                                        |
| <b>BLCH</b>    | Blackall Lifestyle & Community Hub                                               |
| <b>BNC</b>     | Blackall Neighbourhood Centre                                                    |
| <b>BOI</b>     | Bank of I.D.E.A.S.                                                               |
| <b>BPS</b>     | Barcoo Pastoral Society                                                          |
| <b>BSS</b>     | Blackall State School                                                            |
| <b>BTRC</b>    | Blackall-Tambo Regional Council                                                  |
| <b>CWA</b>     | Country Women's Association                                                      |
| <b>DHLGPW</b>  | Queensland Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works    |
| <b>FRRR</b>    | Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal                                        |
| <b>GEH</b>     | Government Employee Housing                                                      |
| <b>ICPA</b>    | Isolated Children and Parents Association                                        |
| <b>KABQ</b>    | Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland                                              |
| <b>OQTA</b>    | Outback Queensland Tourism Association                                           |
| <b>P&amp;C</b> | Parents and Citizens Association                                                 |
| <b>P&amp;F</b> | Parents and Friends Association                                                  |
| <b>QGAP</b>    | Queensland Government Agent Program                                              |
| <b>RA</b>      | Rural Aid                                                                        |
| <b>RAPAD</b>   | Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning & Development Board              |
| <b>RDAEWQ</b>  | The Regional Development Australia Eastern and Western Queensland Committee Inc. |
| <b>RADF</b>    | Regional Arts Development Fund Program                                           |
| <b>RFDS</b>    | Royal Flying Doctor Service                                                      |
| <b>RESQ</b>    | Rapad Employment Services Queensland                                             |
| <b>SJCPS</b>   | St Joseph's Catholic Primary School                                              |
| <b>TEQ</b>     | Tourism and Events Queensland                                                    |
| <b>TTBA</b>    | Tambo Tourism & Business Association Inc.                                        |
| <b>TTM</b>     | Town Teams Movement                                                              |





QUEENSLAND