

# Engagement and Research Summary

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Showgrounds Strategy

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March 2023



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### Acknowledgement of Country

Delos Delta would like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal, Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Peoples who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we work. We would like to express our respect for their Elders past and present.



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# 1. Introduction



Council is developing a *Showgrounds Strategy* (the Strategy) to guide investment in planning, developing, maintaining, and managing its portfolio of showgrounds across the region.

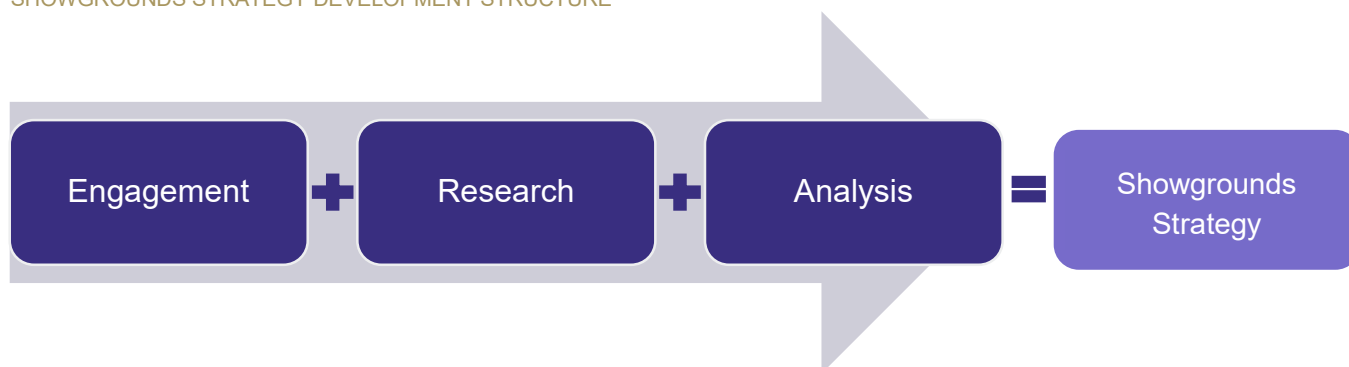
This summary provides a snapshot of information gathered during the first phase of community engagement, and initial research. It is intended to summarise findings to date to inform discussions in the community.

## 1.1 Why Do We Need a Strategy?

The Strategy will guide future planning and development of our showground assets and develop recommendations to optimise governance, management, and operational arrangements.

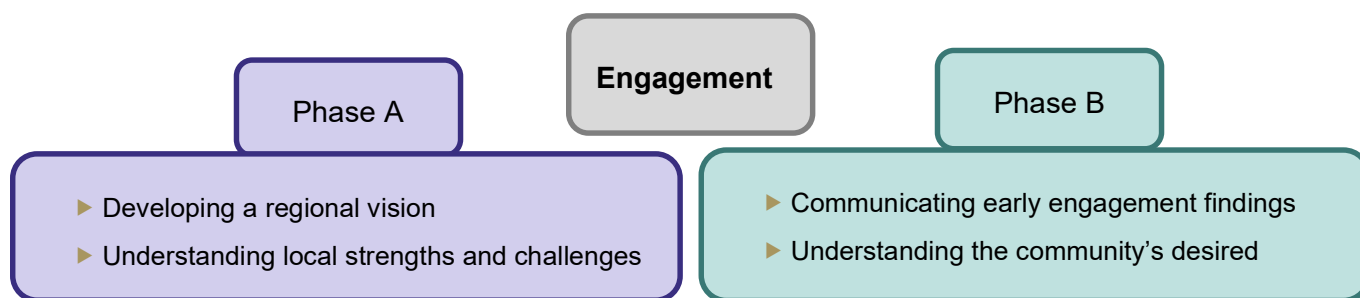
The Strategy is being developed through a multi-phased process, which seeks the input and feedback of key stakeholders, the communities of the Western Downs, and Council as a core part of strategic development. Engagement is complemented by research on the current state of our showgrounds' assets, along with research into best practice and national and global trends. The overarching process to developing the Strategy is noted below.

### SHOWGROUNDS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE



## 1.2 Our Engagement Approach

Western Downs Regional Council is conducting engagement with stakeholders and the community to ensure the Strategy is developed in line with the priorities of the region. Engagement consists of two phases. Early engagement (Phase A) sought to identify a vision for showgrounds across the Western Downs. It examined how the strengths and challenges of each site could be leveraged to address the needs of the region. The second phase of engagement (Phase B) presents the outcomes of Phase A and seeks to understand priority outcomes and aspirations of the community and stakeholders for our showgrounds into the future.



This engagement process provides the Western Downs community with the opportunity to voice their ideas, and shape the *Showgrounds Strategy* to their needs.

### 1.3 Early Key Findings

The below highlights some key findings that have been elicited from phase A engagement with community members, key stakeholder groups, and Council Staff.

- ▶ Stakeholders in the Western Downs highlighted the importance of showgrounds in their community, with maintenance of the showgrounds assets as a key consideration.
- ▶ The majority of the community use their local showgrounds monthly, or occasionally, in part reflecting the event-based use of showgrounds across the Western Downs.
- ▶ When compared to similar neighbouring Local Government Areas, the number of showgrounds in the Western Downs is similar, relative to the size of the population.
- ▶ User groups on showgrounds are diverse, with differing needs. Co-location on sites, and cooperation between user groups were noted as important opportunities and considerations.
- ▶ Considering and formalising management arrangements, including proactive maintenance planning, was noted as important for sustainable management of showgrounds.
- ▶ Diversity in showgrounds sites across the region indicates the need for differentiated site planning.

Additional insights are summarised below:



#### Reliance on Volunteers

Volunteers were found to be highly important in the functioning of local showgrounds. Volunteers play key roles in the management, and maintenance of showgrounds.



#### Trade-offs for higher service levels

Improving service levels requires high levels of funding. Improvements in one area may require hard decisions for future investment.



#### Some Facilities are Underutilised

Whilst Western Downs has a similar number of showground facilities to neighbouring Local Government Areas, there is an opportunity to increase utilisation at local showgrounds.



#### Desire for Regional Cooperation

Regional cooperation, knowledge sharing, and collaboration were heard by stakeholders as an opportunity to support more efficient and effective management, and use of showgrounds.

## 2. Where are We Now?



This section gives an overview of the current state of showgrounds in Western Downs. Understanding the current state enables a base upon which strategic development can occur.

### 2.1 Showgrounds in Our Community

Western Downs Regional Council has 7 showgrounds that lie within the scope of the Strategy.

- ▶ Bell Recreation Reserve
- ▶ Dalby Showgrounds
- ▶ Jandowae Showgrounds
- ▶ Miles Showgrounds
- ▶ Tara Showgrounds
- ▶ Wandoan War Memorial, Racing and Recreation Reserve
- ▶ Chinchilla Showgrounds (although privately owned, the Showgrounds will be acknowledged in the Strategy)



The location of the showgrounds sites within Western Downs can be seen on the map to the right.

Early engagement focused on developing a common vision for showgrounds across the Western Downs. Engagement with key stakeholders revealed the respective strengths and challenges of each showground site, and potential opportunities these presented. As part of this approach, site visits and engagement took place with key stakeholders at each site as illustrated above. Early engagement and the number of stakeholders reached included:



**204 stakeholders engaged**



**7 site visits**



**5 workshops and additional follow-up interviews**



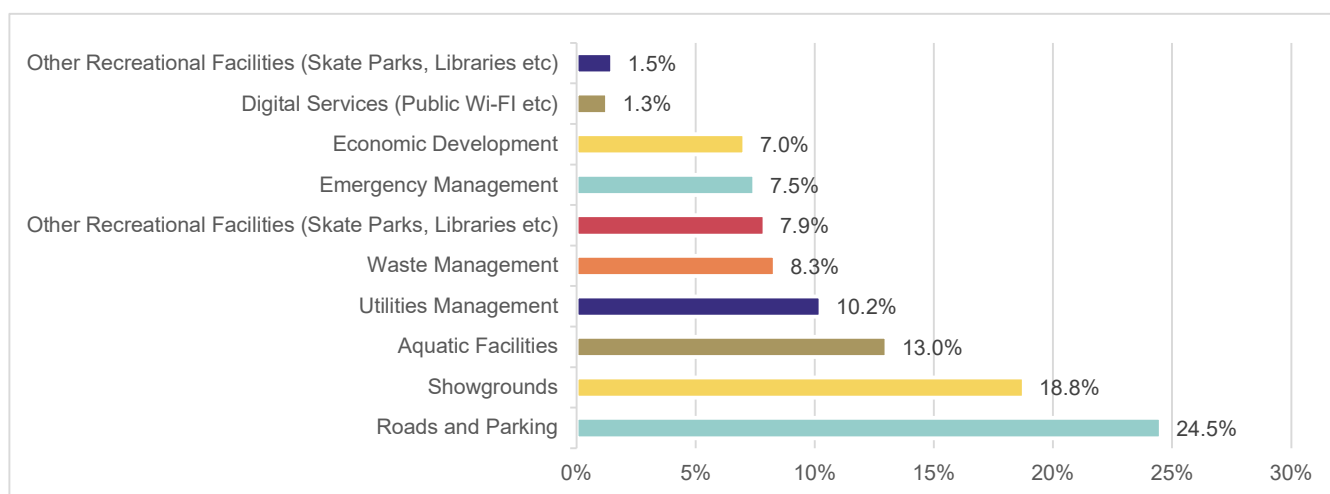
**142 survey responses**

## 2.2 High Level Engagement Insights

During early engagement, community members, Councillors, Council employees, and other key stakeholders identified common aspirations for showgrounds in Western Downs. Common aspirations were that showgrounds should be well-maintained, activated, and master-planned so they could continue their valuable social role for local communities.

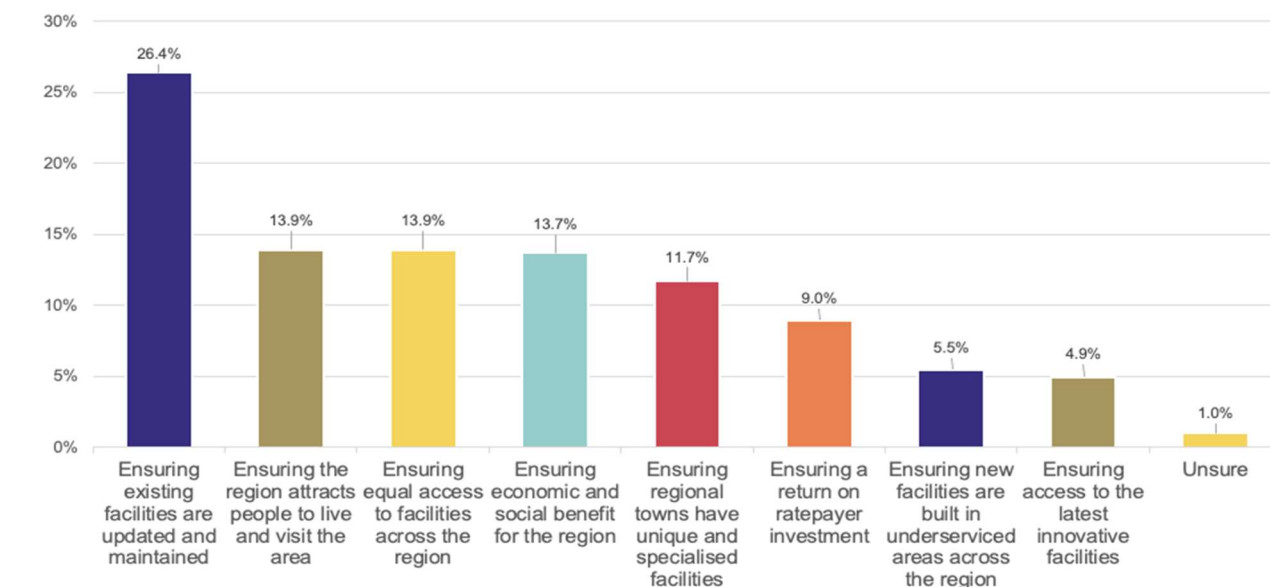
The community place importance on showgrounds as a key local government service. Almost 20% of community survey respondents noted that showgrounds were of highest priority to them, as the graph below illustrates. It should be noted that samples may not be representative, and results could be skewed by a sample bias, nonetheless the results still demonstrate that showgrounds are important.

### WHICH LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES ARE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY TO COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENTS



The graph below reveals that community have a clear preference for Council to focus investment on ensuring existing showgrounds assets are updated and maintained (26.4% of community survey respondents), in comparison to other imperatives such as attracting people to the region (13.9%).


### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON WHAT COUNCIL SHOULD PRIORITISE WHEN MAKING INVESTMENT DECISIONS FOR SHOWGROUNDS IN THE WESTERN DOWNS






## 2.3 Showgrounds Strengths and Challenges

This section summarises key strengths and challenges of showgrounds in the Western Downs identified through research and engagement.

Themes	Strengths
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ The diversity and relatively high number of showgrounds in the Western Downs is a strength of the region.</li><li>▶ Local user groups and volunteers remain a key pillar in managing and maintaining showgrounds across the Region. Over 60% of community survey respondents identified as a member of a local user group.</li><li>▶ The facilities at showgrounds are perceived to be accessible for the community, with over 60% of community survey respondents stating that their current access to showgrounds facilities were either good or very good.</li></ul>

Themes	Challenges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Succession planning and 'bringing in the next generation' of showgrounds users and volunteers is a key challenge, especially considering the important role volunteers play currently to showgrounds maintenance and management.</li><li>▶ Many assets on the showgrounds are nearing or at intervention level, posing risks to the usability of the assets, as well as health and safety risks.</li><li>▶ The unclear delineation of accountabilities and responsibilities associated with maintaining, managing, and operating showgrounds across the region is a challenge in the efficient and effective functioning of the sites.</li><li>▶ The challenge of being able to host larger or more diverse events on showgrounds was noted due in part to insufficient space or amenities, such as toilets, showers, access, or lighting.</li></ul>

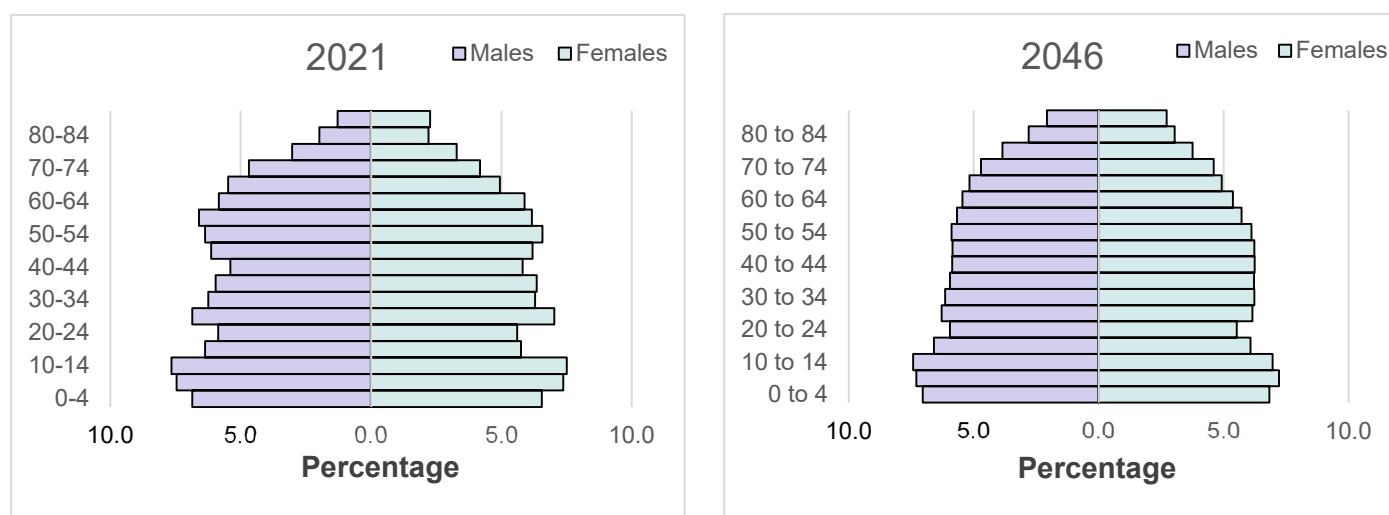


## 2.4 Population Trends

Population projections can provide valuable insight about the types of assets, services, and facilities at our showgrounds are required in the future. It is important for us understand how our community will change so that our decision-making now reflects and accommodates these changes. Key demographic trends include:

- ▶ Western Downs population is expected to grow to 37,000 by 2046. This represents a population change of 6.75% between 2023 and 2046.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Between 2011 and 2021 the median age of the Western Downs population increased slightly from 37 to 38, on par with Queensland's median age of 38.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ The trend of an ageing population in Western Downs is forecast to continue to 2046, as the population pyramids below suggest.
- ▶ The percentage of those aged over 65 is projected to increase to 18% and 19.6% for males and females, respectively by 2046, compared to 16.4% (males) and 16.9% (females) in 2021.

**GRAPH 1. WESTERN DOWNS POPULATION PYRAMID IN 2021, AND PROJECTED POPULATION IN 2046<sup>3</sup>**



Between 2026 and 2036, and 2036 and 2046, Western Downs is forecast to experience changes in different ages groups, as seen in the graph overpage:

- ▶ Between 2026 and 2036, the largest growth in age groups will be within the 25 to 29 age group (growth of 166 persons) and the 5 to 9 age group (growth of 143 persons).
- ▶ Between 2036 and 2046, however, the largest growth will be in age cohorts of 75 to 79, and 80 to 84.

Possible implications of these demographic trends include:

- ▶ The forecasted population changes suggests that in the next 10 to 15 years, showgrounds could look at opportunities to diversify uses and attract younger users.

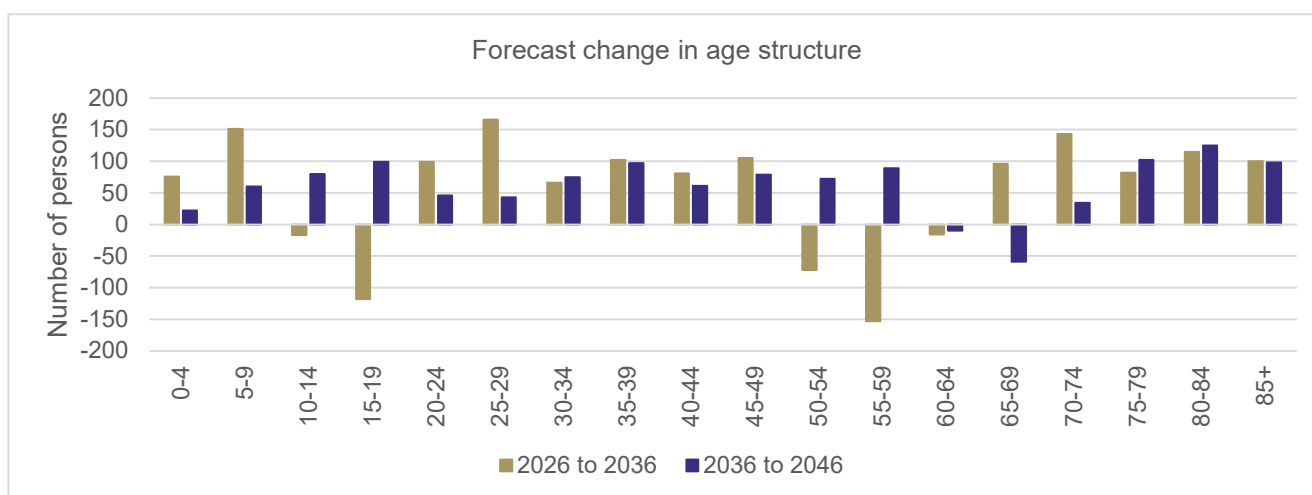
<sup>1</sup> Forecast.id, Western Downs

<sup>2</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2011/LGA37310>, <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA37310>

<sup>3</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA37310>, <https://forecast.id.com.au/western-downs>

- Whereas, between 2036 and 2046, population ageing will be a key consideration. Population ageing can point to opportunities for showgrounds. The 65 and over age groups are strongly represented in community volunteer work, thus volunteer succession planning in the short term, may assist to realise benefits and support a strong volunteer population in the future.<sup>4</sup>
- Finally, the predicted growth of the Western Downs population in general will likely increase overall demand for showground usage. The development of an Showground Strategy will ensure this demand is factored into decision-making now.



FORECAST CHANGE IN AGE STRUCTURE OF WESTERN DOWNS BETWEEN 2026 TO 2036 AND 2036 AND 2046<sup>5</sup>



## 2.5 National Trends - Showgrounds

This section offers a list of national and global trends underway that are most relevant to the showgrounds assets the Western Downs.

### NATIONAL SHOWGROUND TRENDS








Trend	Description
 <b>Ageing facilities</b>	The majority of showgrounds across Australia were built in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century. For example, Dalby showground has been operational since 1870 <sup>6</sup> . The development of this Strategy presents an opportunity to prioritise future showgrounds investment.
 <b>Increase of Current Showgrounds Users</b>	Several existing showgrounds users are growing. For example, the Australian National Campdraft Council notes that campdrafting is becoming one of the most profitable horse sports in the country <sup>7</sup> . This reveals an opportunity for Western Downs to harness this growth, through promotion of its sites as potential event spaces.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/VA-Key-Statistics\\_2020.01.pdf](https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/VA-Key-Statistics_2020.01.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://forecast.id.com.au/western-downs>

<sup>6</sup> Dalby & District Show Society, <https://www.dalbydistrictshow.com/>

<sup>7</sup> ABC News, 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2018-07-19/outback-campdrafts-big-business-for-horse-owners/10003970>

 <b>Diversification of Uses and Associated Facilities</b>	<p>Showgrounds are increasingly becoming multi-use spaces, with traditional uses such as rural agricultural shows have declined.<sup>8</sup> Diverse uses and events, such as agtech trials and innovation hubs, sporting facilities, and community gardens on showgrounds are becoming more common<sup>9</sup>. Showgrounds in our region, similarly, could diversify, in turn supporting economic development, and enhanced liveability outcomes.</p>
 <b>Volunteer Challenges</b>	<p>Volunteer numbers across Australia have been declining since 2006 – particularly in regional areas<sup>10</sup>. Showgrounds in the Western Downs should consider this trend in the future planning and management.</p>
 <b>Changing Tourism Trends</b>	<p>The popularity of camping, and tourism trends, such as 'slow travel', or travel that builds a connection to local people, cultures, food, and music, is forecasted to grow in popularity.<sup>11</sup> This presents an opportunity to harness these trends to increase visitation to the sites and the region.</p>
 <b>Relocation of Showgrounds</b>	<p>As showgrounds are commonly located in township centres, mainly due to historic legacy, the case for relocation to larger spaces that are not impacted by town/city development has grown.</p>
 <b>Showground Asset Removal</b>	<p>As showground assets are ageing, and use is declining, non-replacement of assets at end of life and in some cases removing unused showgrounds assets is taking place. The Strategy can assist to prioritise future asset removal or replacement.</p>
 <b>Rise in Agri-Tourism Nationally and Internationally</b>	<p>Agritourism is expected to reach \$18.6 billion by 2030 at around 5% per annum growth.<sup>12</sup> This trend presents another avenue for showgrounds use in Western Downs in the future.</p>
 <b>Link between Showgrounds and Community Development</b>	<p>Showgrounds can play a role in community development and liveability. This Strategy can explore utilising showgrounds for the betterment of the wider community for example, as social enterprise or community use spaces.</p>
 <b>Sports and Recreational uses of Showgrounds</b>	<p>Showgrounds can be an excellent way for Council to invest in the development of sports in the region. Underutilised space on showgrounds could be repurposed to be used by local sporting clubs like football, netball, cricket and tennis clubs.</p>

<sup>8</sup> DAFF (2022) Australian agricultural trade and the COVID-19 pandemic, Australian agricultural trade and the COVID-19 pandemic - DAFF. Available at: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/products/insights/australian-agricultural-trade-and-the-covid-19-pandemic> (Accessed: February 16, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> <https://communitygarden.org.au/listing/blacktown-showground-community-garden/>

<sup>10</sup> (2021) Volunteer. Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers> (Accessed: February 16, 2023).

<sup>11</sup> <https://hospitalityinsights.ehl.edu/what-slow-tourism>

<sup>12</sup> Agritourism. Available at: <https://research.csiro.au/foodag/premium-interactions/experiences-and-tourism/>



## Climate change impacting Showground infrastructure

Western Downs is projected to experience climate change impacts, such as more frequent hot days, and higher temperatures.<sup>13</sup> Showgrounds are likely to be adversely impacted by these episodes due to older infrastructure and their use for animal keeping and community events, which indicates consideration in the future.<sup>14</sup>

The trends outlined above are important to assist in identifying new opportunities, and best practice uses of showground sites. It is important for us to understand these the implications associated with changes in this space so that we can make investment decisions based on the future needs of the community.

## 2.6 How Our Showgrounds Compare

This section provides an internal and external comparison between showgrounds in Western Downs, and in similar nearby regional local government areas.

### 2.6.1 Regional Comparison

The table below indicates the number of showgrounds per 10,000 persons in Western Downs and neighbouring or similar regional local government areas. The results reveal that Western Downs has an average number of 2.0 showgrounds per 10,000 population suggesting that the region has a similar proportion of showgrounds relative to population size to other local government areas.

#### LOCAL SHOWGROUNDS COMPARISON

Council	Showgrounds per 10k Population	Showgrounds	Population (to nearest 1000) <sup>15</sup>
 <b>Western Downs</b>	2.0	7	34,000
 <b>South Burnett</b>	2.2	7	32,000
 <b>Maranoa</b>	2.3	3	13,000
 <b>Southern Downs</b>	1.1	4	36,000
 <b>Charters Towers</b>	1.7	2	12,000

<sup>13</sup> Climate change in the Maranoa and District region. Available at: [https://www.qld.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0027/67914/maranoa-climate-change-impact-summary.pdf](https://www.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/67914/maranoa-climate-change-impact-summary.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Heat Smart Showgrounds Project. Available at: [https://lgnsw.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Environment/Climate%20Change%20case%20studies/Heat\\_Smart\\_Showgrounds\\_Goulburn-Mulwarree\\_Council.pdf](https://lgnsw.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Environment/Climate%20Change%20case%20studies/Heat_Smart_Showgrounds_Goulburn-Mulwarree_Council.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>

### 2.6.1 Local Comparison

The table below presents the total attendees to the regions showgrounds in comparison to the population of the relevant local catchment. The ratio of attendees to population size is diverse across the region, with Bell Recreation Reserve recording a ratio of 10.6 attendees to population size, and Miles Showgrounds at 0.8 attendees to population size.

#### SHOWGROUND USE STATISTICS

Showground	Annual Average Attendees	Population of Township (2023) <sup>*16</sup>	Ratio of Attendees to Population
Bell Recreation Reserve	<b>4,464</b> (2016-17 to 2020-21)	<b>421</b> (2021) <sup>17</sup>	<b>10.6</b>
Dalby Showgrounds	<b>16,118</b> (2016-17 to 2021-22)	<b>13,219</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Jandowae Showgrounds	<b>5,693</b> (2016-17 to 2017-18 and 2019-20 to 2021-22)	<b>1,004</b> (2021) <sup>18</sup>	<b>5.7</b>
Miles Showgrounds	<b>1,400</b> (2017-18 to 2021-22)	<b>1,841</b>	<b>0.8</b>
Tara Showgrounds	<b>6,074</b> (2016-17 to 2021-22)	<b>2,034</b>	<b>3.0</b>
Wandoan War Memorial, Racing and Recreation Reserve	<b>3,334</b> (2016-17 to 2021-22)	<b>666</b> (2021) <sup>19</sup>	<b>5.0</b>

The results above indicate there are opportunities for greater utilisation of showgrounds in the region, and this Strategy provides an avenue to support this.

<sup>16</sup> <https://forecast.id.com.au/western-downs>

<sup>17</sup> ABS 'Census All Persons QuickStats', 2021

<sup>18</sup> ABS 'Census All Persons QuickStats', 2021

<sup>19</sup> ABS 'Census All Persons QuickStats', 2021

## 3. Next Steps



The development of the *Showgrounds Strategy* will guide investment in planning, developing, maintaining, and managing the portfolio of showgrounds across the Western Downs region.

The research and engagement undertaken to date provides the backdrop for deeper engagement with the community on the development of the Strategy. This second stage of community consultation is happening now, and we want to hear from you.

We're interested in what the community notes as important outcomes for showgrounds now and in the future, and potential opportunities the new Strategy can unlock. A selection of key opportunities that may be worth exploring are below.

### 3.1.1 Planning and Prioritising Investment and Development

Each showground is unique and diverse, and determining the future directions of each site, should consider external context, and trends to prioritise development and investment.

**Key Opportunity:** The Strategy can enable direction for investment, in a manner that considers the context and enables future uses that support innovation, and diversification of the sites

### 3.1.2 Expansion of Uses

Western Downs is in a good position to harness trends that may support increased utilisation and diversity in uses.

**Key Opportunity:** the Strategy can encourage expansion of use of the Showgrounds sites. Expansion could be in relation to diversity of uses, number of events held, and number of attendees attracted, through mechanisms, such as marketing, or new or upgraded facilities that enable new and innovative types of events

### 3.1.3 Strengthen Governance, Management, and Operational Arrangements

Showgrounds in the Western Downs can look toward opportunities for knowledge and resource sharing across sites, between Council, and user groups to support increased efficiency and effectiveness of the sites.

**Key Opportunity:** The Strategy can facilitate collaboration between Council and user groups and support the development of strong future governance, management, and operational arrangements.