SHAPING A PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR THE SUNSHINE COAST

FEATURE ARTICLE

Sunshine Coast Mayor
Councillor Mark Jamieson

First elected in May 2012, mayor of the Sunshine Coast Mark Jamieson is delivering on his promise to shape a prosperous future for the Sunshine Coast. He was elected to create the right conditions for jobs while protecting the region’s enviable lifestyle and environment - and that’s what he and the Sunshine Coast Council are doing.

The Sunshine Coast is a region that is embracing being part of a changing world.

We have a clear and coherent plan, and a determined approach to seeing that plan implemented.

We are building confidence – that most essential ingredient in any success story and one that is very important for the growth of a community.

Our focus is on liveability with better access to jobs and services for our residents and making sure our outstanding environmental assets remain just that – outstanding - and a valuable community resource for generations to come.

We are positioning the Sunshine Coast at the forefront of economic prosperity, liveability and sustainability with elements and opportunities that will benefit our neighbours in south east Queensland and through the rest of the State.

In short we are creating a healthy, smart and creative city-region that has its own identity and is intimately connected to the world.

What we are achieving here on the Coast is being recognised nationally and globally.

Infrastructure Australia has listed the Sunshine Coast as one of five cities - in addition to the State capitals – that will drive the productivity of the Australian economy - and we have been included as one of only four Australian regions on the world’s Smart 21 communities for 2017.

In the past 12 months, we have witnessed plenty of progress with our game-changing projects as we seek to take a leading position as a major Australian urban and economic centre.

**Sunshine Coast Airport**

After several years of intensive work, council has secured the required State and Federal
government approvals to proceed with the expansion of the Sunshine Coast Airport.

In October, we achieved our international designation for the airport, securing the provision of customs and border control services for scheduled international flights.

It was followed by finalising financing arrangements for the expansion project through a loan from the Commonwealth and support from the Queensland Treasury Corporation.

Then, in February, we signed contracts with Palisade Investment Partners who will be the Sunshine Coast Airport’s commercial operating partner in a deal worth more than half a billion dollars.

Under the deal, the airport will continue to be owned by Sunshine Coast Council, with Palisade operating the asset under a 99-year lease.

Palisade will be responsible for operating, investing and developing the airport and will oversee future negotiations with airlines to expand both domestic and international routes available from the Sunshine Coast.

The airport expansion project, which includes new fully compliant 2450m long x 45m wide runway as well as upgrades to the existing terminal, will deliver an economic benefit to the region of some $4.1 billion through to 2040 and 2230 jobs over the same period.

The Sunshine Coast Airport continues to be the fastest growing major airport in Australia, hitting the million passengers mark within a single year for the first time at the end of 2016.

**Maroochydore City Centre**
It has also been rewarding to see work progress on our region’s
new Central Business District on a 53ha greenfield site in the heart of Maroochydore.

In February 2016, I had the honour of assisting Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk turn the first sod to mark the start of bulk earthworks for the new city centre – a true heart for our region.

This year will see powerlines, water mains and stormwater drains installed, while on the surface the first roads and pavements will be laid, a new park will be created and a stunning new east-west waterway will be built.

The Maroochydore City Centre project will create more than 30,000 jobs by 2040 and provide a $4.4 billion boost to the Sunshine Coast economy.

The company established to oversee design and delivery of the new CBD, SunCentral Maroochydore Pty Ltd, has already commenced marketing the project to the private sector.

Expressions of Interest are now open for lots in the core commercial precincts of the new CBD and investors and developers have been quick to recognise the potential.

SunCentral is currently considering submissions proposing commercial and mixed use projects with a construction cost of more than $400 million.

This is great news given the very early stages of the development and our council looks forward to seeing these and other proposals for the Maroochydore City Centre progress to contracts in 2017.

We are also taking the opportunity associated with a greenfield site to build in the infrastructure and digital solutions that will make Maroochydore Australia’s first truly smart city.

For example, our council is installing Australia’s first underground automated waste collection system in a CBD.

The announcement of this inclusion attracted attention from around the country, increasing awareness of what we have underway here and the innovation and sustainability principles that are at the heart of what we do.

And there will be more to come as we incorporate smart lighting, smart parking and other smart solutions throughout our new CBD.

Sunshine Coast Solar Farm

We are about to commission our 15 megawatt Sunshine Coast Solar Farm at Valdora, west of Coolum.

This project is being keenly
watched by other councils wanting to replicate what we are achieving.

When operational in just a few weeks, our Solar Farm will offset 100% of council’s electricity consumption across all its facilities and operations, with solar energy going into the grid.

Most other governments are still talking about offsetting 50% of their energy needs from renewables by 2025.

But importantly, this solar facility will reduce the cost of council’s operations – at least $22 million after costs over the 30-year life of the project - and we will no longer be exposed to escalating energy costs.

This is a great win for the environment and a great win for our residents too.

The final of the almost 60,000 solar panels has been installed, while 36,000 trees will be planted to create a 10-metre green buffer area.

**International Submarine Broadband Cable**

Council has lodged a submission with the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to start the process to declare an offshore cable protection zone.

If the zone is declared, this will encourage the private sector to deliver an international submarine broadband cable connection that would land at the Sunshine Coast.

The Sunshine Coast would be the only regional centre in Australia able to offer direct international broadband connectivity to global markets.

If this protection zone is achieved and the cable is delivered, the region’s economy and our attractiveness to new businesses will change profoundly – and forever.

It will provide milli-seconds of advantage and significantly improved speed and bandwidth from Queensland – all from the Sunshine Coast.

Milli-seconds are integral to banking and finance operators, digital solutions developers and those businesses and industries that are heavily reliant on online transactions.

Businesses locating near the cable landing point will achieve a significant commercial advantage so many will want to locate here rather than other regional centres.

The greater speed and bandwidth will also transform the capacity of our Sunshine Coast University Hospital to undertake remote diagnostics and clinical treatments.

The hospital will also be able to gain direct access to some of the world’s leading health and medical research institutes.

The opportunity to market the Sunshine Coast as a place in which to invest and operate a business will be exceptional.

**A new economy**

More broadly, there is considerable activity occurring that is helping us to achieve the strong economic position that we are now able to claim.

Our region has more than $10 billion committed (or in the pipeline) in major public and private investment in the region.

In March, the long awaited $1.8 billion Sunshine Coast University Hospital opened.

Work is now underway on the region’s two large scale master planned communities – Caloundra South (now known as Aura) and the $3 billion Avid development “Harmony” at Palmview.

These master planned communities will eventually be home to 50,000 people and 17,000 people respectively.

The $400 million Sunshine Plaza expansion is underway and is planned to open by the end of 2017.

Each of these major regional projects are contributing to the reshaping of the regional economy and helping to deliver a wider mix of employment options, facilities and services for current and future residents of the Sunshine Coast.

While there is much still to be done, we are in a pretty good place right now and one that is markedly different to five years ago.

We have a wonderful mix of opportunity that is being delivered now and with a firm eye on the future.

There is none like it anywhere else in Australia.

The future is here on the Sunshine Coast and I invite you to be part of it.

**IPWEAQ in conjunction with Sunshine Coast Council invites you to tour the Sunshine Coast Smart Centre and Living Lab and hear about the region’s leading infrastructure projects on Wednesday, 23 August 2017. More information and registration coming soon at www.ipweaq.com/courses**