The township of Mareeba is rated as a very low socio-economic area. The economic capacity of Shire residents is well below the average for Queensland in terms of household income and other socio-economic measures. Around a quarter of Shire households are estimated to be living below the poverty line using internationally recognized criteria and residents live in areas considered amongst the 10% most disadvantaged in Australia.

Reports into persistent communal disadvantage in Australia identify the Tablelands/Mareeba region as highly disadvantaged with concerning high levels of youth disengagement, long term unemployment, and prison admissions. The Shire has a low proportion of people aged 20-34 years, who are likely to have left the region for improved opportunities elsewhere. This exodus of young skilled workers and a remaining low income older population results in a reduced economic capacity for the whole community.

Evidence shows that locational disadvantage is typically entrenched. Without intervention, Mareeba’s residents will continue to experience hardship for many generations to come. The Mareeba Airport Upgrade Project is an opportunity to change this outlook through building infrastructure that drives business investment from the global aviation industry. Through providing training and real employment opportunities for young residents, the community is able to retain skilled workers and in doing so will permanently lift the socioeconomic profile of the whole region.

**DEMAND**
Mareeba Airport is currently home to three flight training operators, several aircraft maintenance businesses and number of recreational aviators. Mareeba
Airport has seen a significant growth in tenancy and usage in recent years. Currently, Mareeba Airport supports over 1,000 aircraft movements per month, which is a 66% increase since funding for the Mareeba Airport Upgrade project was announced in 2015. Training now accounts for approximately 50% of all landings. There are strong prospects for further growth in demand locally, with many existing users of Mareeba Airport proposing to expand their operations over the next decade, particularly with regard to flight training movements.

Globally, the aviation and aerospace industry is set for significant growth over the short, medium and long term. Projections from major companies including Boeing and Airbus are forecasting significant increases. Boeing expects Australia, New Zealand and the nations of the South Pacific to require an additional 30,000 pilots and aviation professionals over the next twenty years to meet the growing demand for air travel. Overall, the Asia Pacific region is expected to need about 253,000 new airline pilots and 256,000 new technicians over the next two decades, with China requiring the bulk of those jobs. Meeting this demand will require innovative solutions to inspire the next generation of pilots, technicians and cabin crew.

Mareeba Airport is perfectly positioned to provide the core infrastructure to establish and expand flight training operations and help meet demand from the aviation industry. Mareeba Airport’s unique location in close proximity to a major international airport, in an area outside controlled airspace, with a safe flying area and local infrastructure provides a real opportunity to support growth of the global aviation industry in Northern Australia. Mareeba boasts 300 sunny days a year and with a sub-tropical climate, makes for ideal conditions for flight training, aircraft maintenance and other aviation-related activities.
Sustained growth in the aviation industry will result in further opportunities for the Mareeba Airport to provide a facility for:

- Agricultural aviation such as crop-spraying, aerial mustering and agri-business support
- Aircraft support industries
- Fly-in, Fly-out operations for mining and agriculture to regional Queensland, Northern Territory and Papua New Guinea
- Emergency landings and disaster assistance
- Parking and storage of private aircraft

The Mareeba Airport Upgrade project will provide a solid foundation to allow Mareeba Airport to be further upgraded to cater for other industries into the future, including tourism and freight.

**PROJECT DELIVERY**

The project deliverables include:

- 50-lot aviation commercial precinct connected to water, sewerage, power and telecommunications;
- Upgrade to the existing runway, aprons and taxiways;
- Additional taxiways and extension to aprons;
- Upgrade to surrounding roads, drainage, lighting, and airport fencing.

Mareeba Shire Council has delivered the majority of the early works packages for the project, including upgrade of surrounding roads and water infrastructure.

Preparatory works for the aviation commercial precinct have been completed, which includes completion of ground clearing, removal of underground cobbles and boulders and reinstatement of the site. This work was undertaken as early works to minimise risk and reduce costly delays during construction of the roads, drainage and services within the aviation commercial precinct.

Mareeba Shire Council is presently evaluating tenders for the construction of the airside infrastructure with construction on the aviation commercial precinct expected to commence in late 2017. Construction of the taxiways and upgrade of the runway is expected to commence in early to mid-2018 and the project is scheduled for completion by August 2018.

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