

## AN ALTERNATIVE FUTURE?

Melaina Voss, Opus International Consultants Ltd

Imagine a Council that without changing the way it does business would be ‘Out Of Business’ within 5 years. A region that was unable to maintain or develop critical infrastructure, support economic development or growth in accordance with its own Planning Scheme. In 2012 a Council faced exactly that situation. How did this Council react to this reality and where do you think it is now?

This Council is located in Mackay, a Region of approximately 80,000 people and was tackling decisions from the past. It had developed in a fragmented way and susceptible to flooding and coastal hazards due to its coastal location. The mining boom was significant for the region and this resulted in rapid growth in easy to develop land. The Planning Scheme was delivering opportunities for growth that required \$400M of infrastructure investment.

Questions from the Council..... *“With the highest rates in Queensland, can we afford to grow and deliver our services as we have been? Is our current approach sustainable for our Council and our Region? **Is Business as Usual sustainable?**”*

By late 2014, this same Council successfully delivered the **Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS)**. An 18 month journey that started with a **Vision** and delivered on that Vision:

***“To develop a clear, coordinated and unambiguous long term strategy for the sustainable development of the whole Mackay Region”.***

The RSS threw out “Business as Usual” and developed sustainable way forward, avoiding the “bust” for the next 30 years. The RSS delivers an alignment of the region’s growth strategy (planning scheme) with infrastructure delivery (levels of service) and funding approach through robust recommendations and prioritisation of growth and infrastructure delivery, internal process changes and discipline around development and decision making, ongoing monitoring and strategy development across all infrastructure.

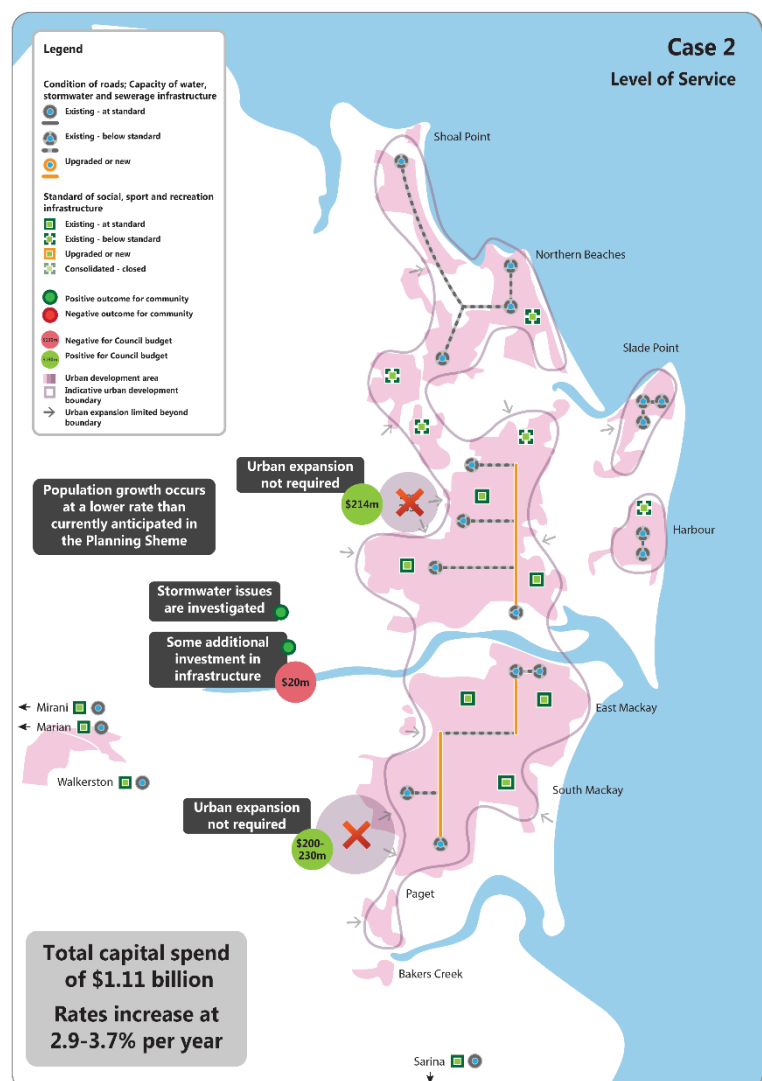


Figure 1 Example Case Study Mapping for the RSS: Increased investment in Levels of Service.

The entire Council were taken on a journey of change and understanding. It faced its fears of engaging with State Government, community members and the development sector for the better, in which engagement was a critical element of success for this project.

**Author Biography** Melaina Voss (BPlan, MNZPI)



Melaina is a Principal Planner and Work Group Manager for Planning, Engagement & Policy at Opus International Consultants in Auckland. She has over 14 years strategic planning and resource management experience in NZ and Australia. She has recently finished her role as the Project Director for Regional Sustainability Strategy and Engagement at Mackay Regional Council, where she directed the Regional Sustainability Strategy and stakeholder engagement team.