



Sunshine Coast: demographic differences and a sustainable future

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State of the Region, 13 November 2009

Outline



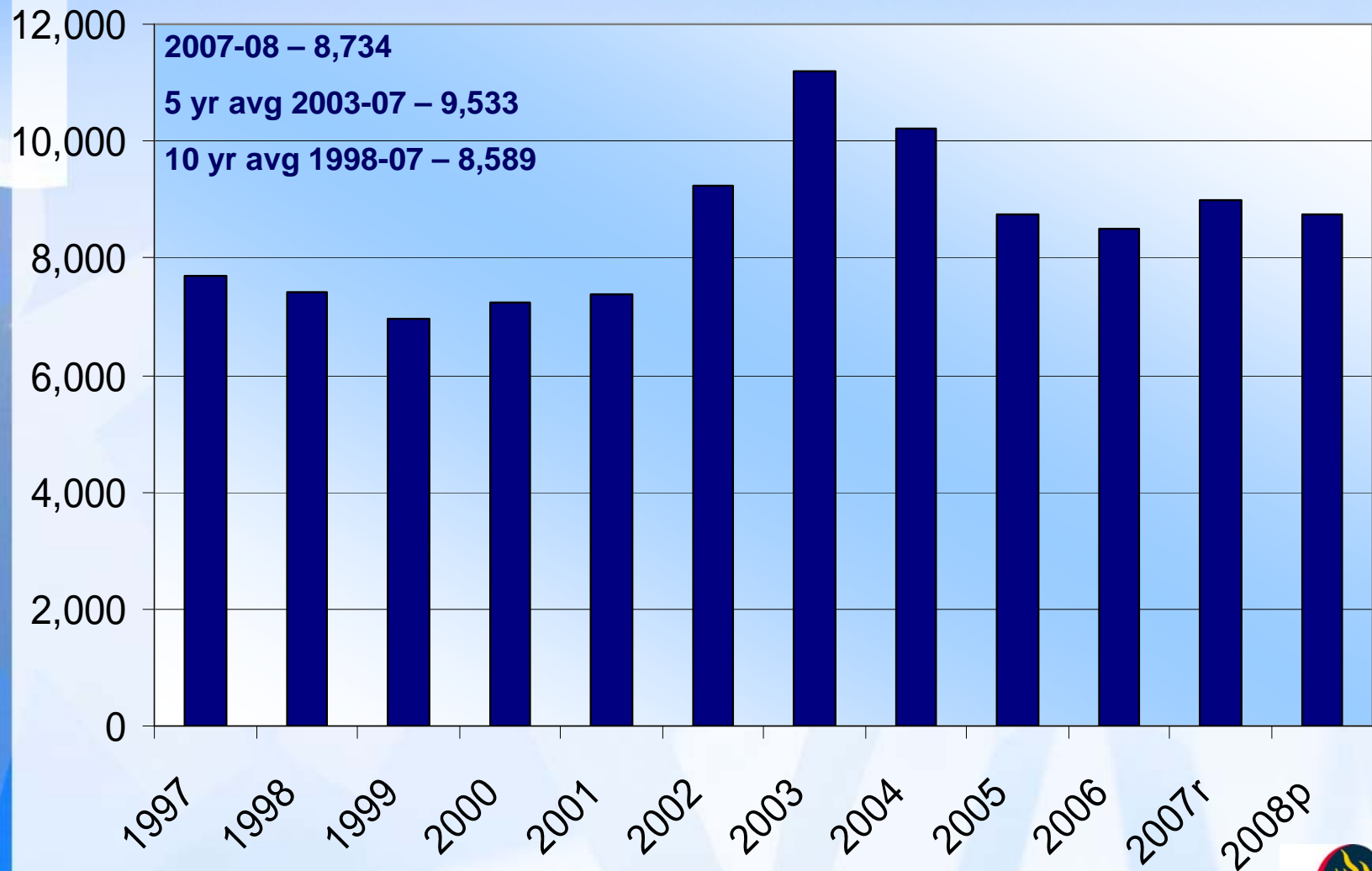
- **Recent trends**
 - Current population growth – strong but slowing
 - Current res land development activity – down substantially
 - Current res dwelling activity – also down
- **Regional issues**
 - Sunshine Coast and sustainability – is it possible?
 - Sunshine Coast as part of the SEQ megaregion – small but significant
 - Sunshine Coast local issues and identity - a work in progress

Recent population growth trends



- Sunshine Coast population around 325,000 (estimated) at Nov 2009
- Annual growth to June 2008 of 8,700 people to reach a total population of 312,800
- Average annual growth over the previous 5 years was 9,500 people
- 2007-08 down about 800 or 8.4% on previous 5 years

Sunshine Coast, annual population growth

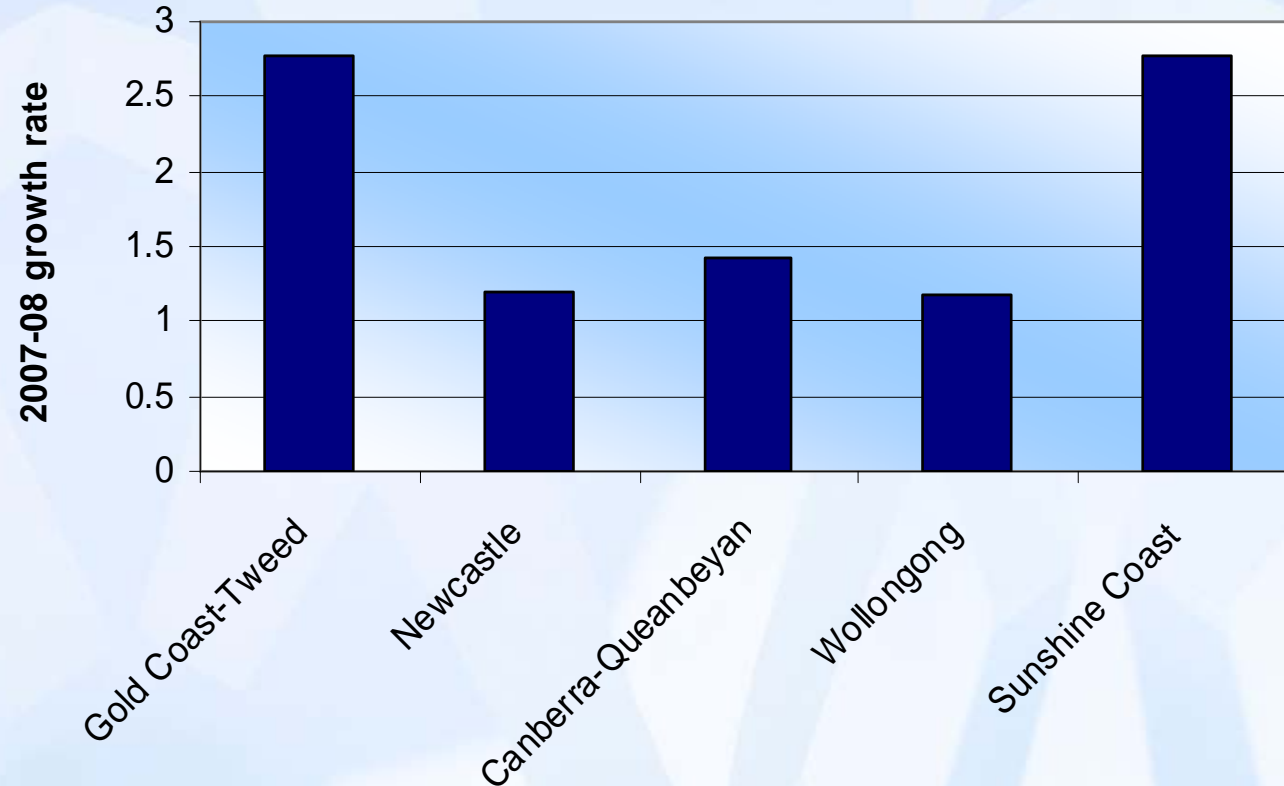


Source: ABS, Cat No 3218.0

Major population regions over 200,000



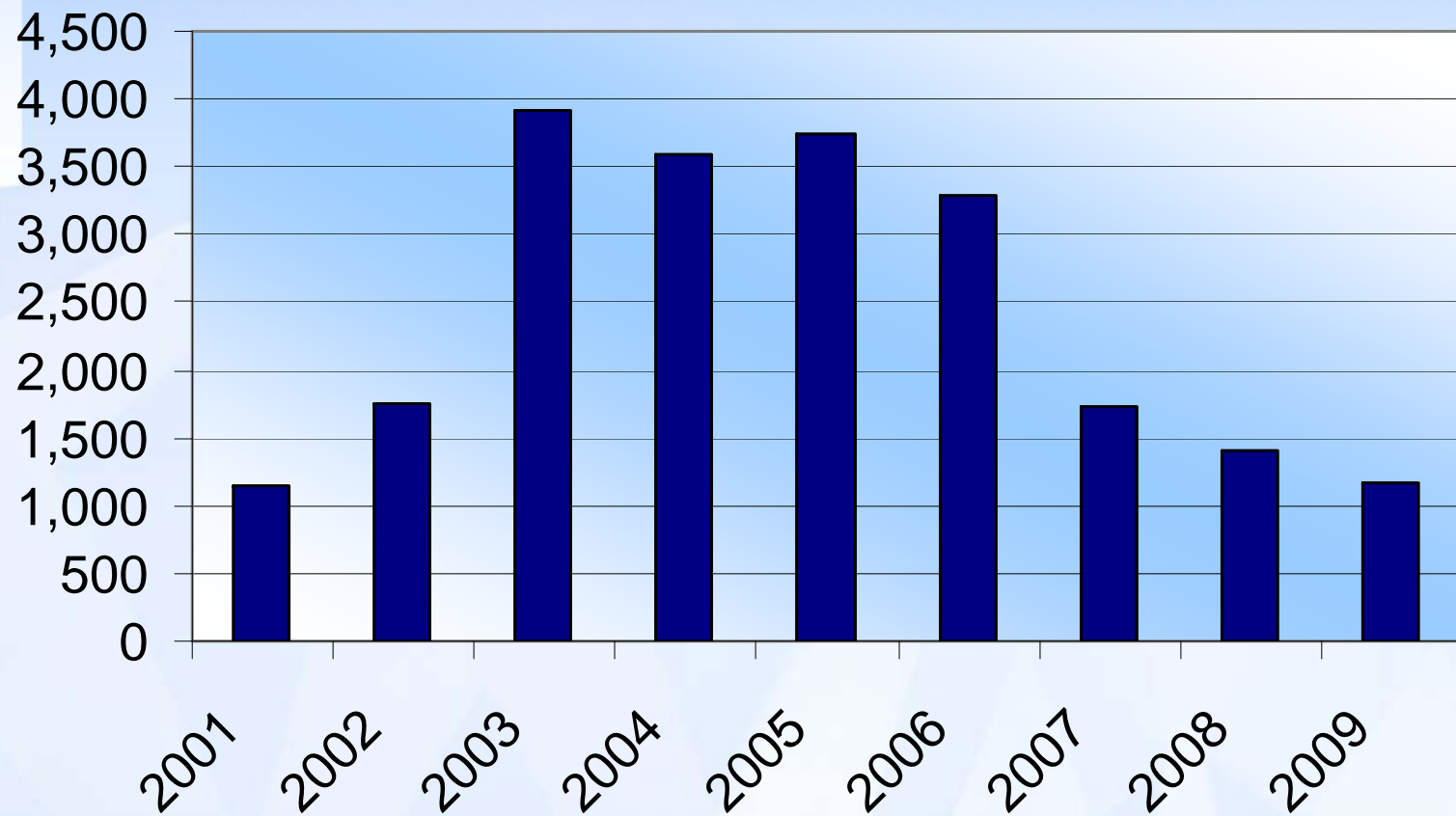
Excluding the capital cities, Sunshine Coast was equal fastest growing in 2007-08 with 2.77%



Source: ABS, Cat No 3218.0

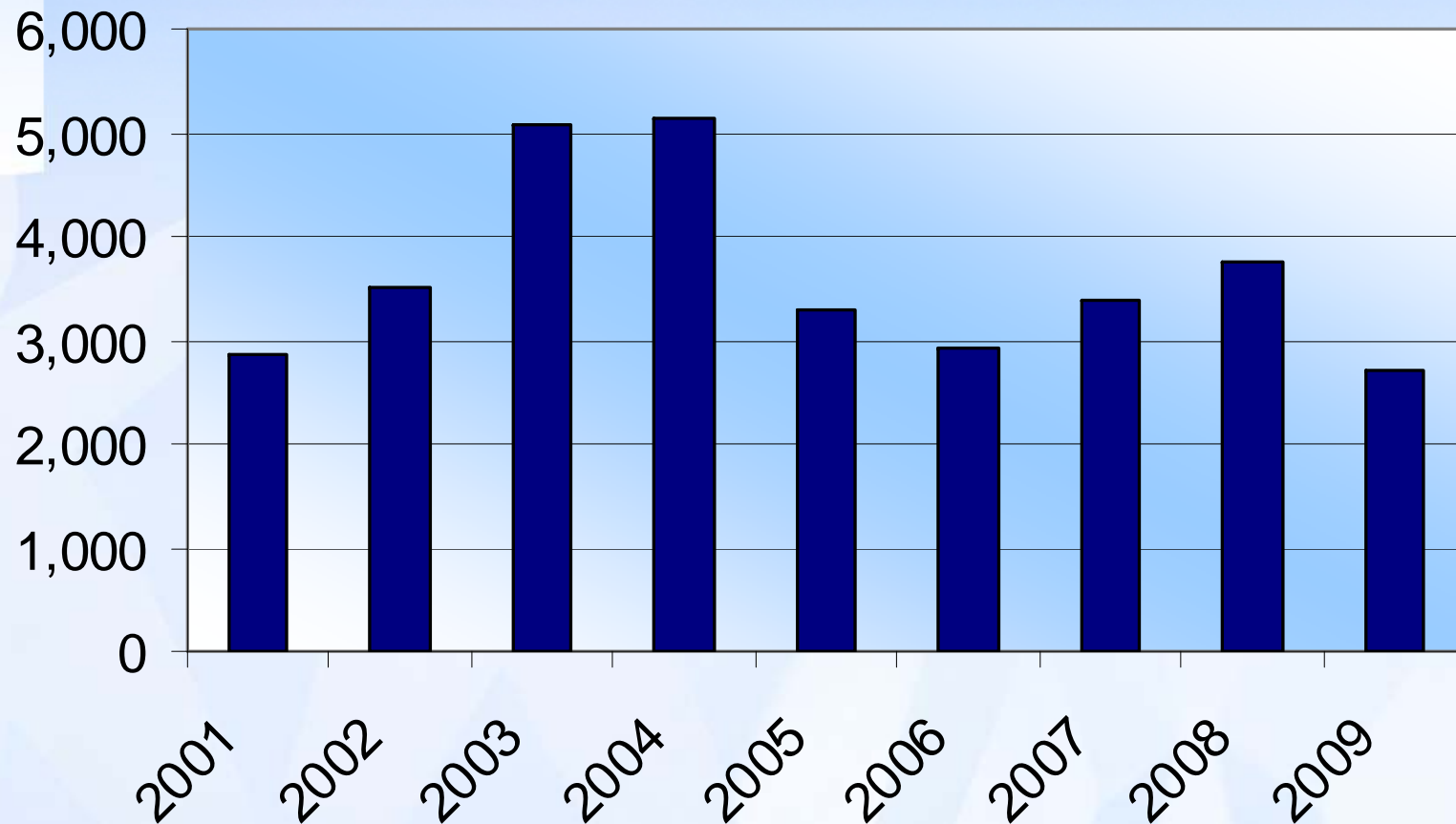
Note: 'Sunshine Coast' here refers to the statistical district

Lot approvals – an indicator of future population growth



- Lot approvals in 2009 at a 7 year low
- 2009 down 52% on average over whole period

Dwelling approvals – an indicator of (more immediate) future population growth

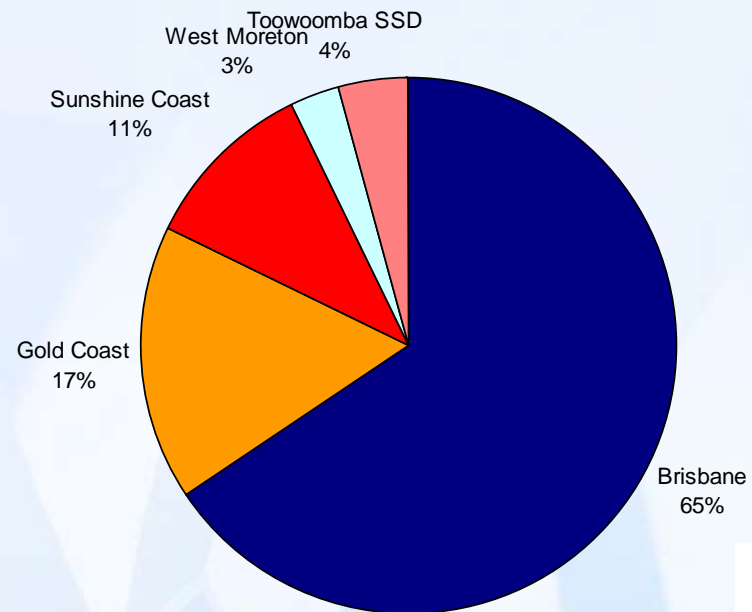


- Dwelling approvals in 2009 at a 9 year low
- 2009 down 25% on average over whole period

Regional issues



- How can sustainability be improved while managing high levels of growth?
- What is the role of the Sunshine Coast in the broader SEQ region?
- What is the Sunshine Coast identity?



Population distribution at 2008

Urban regions and sustainability



Can large scale urbanisation
ever be sustainable?



Hong
Kong



Singapore



China

For example: vertical farms

Belgium designed (by Vincent Callebaut Architectures), this 128 floor vertical farm is self-sufficient for power and water.





Designed to address food production and agriculture in cities horizontally challenged for space. The concept supports houses, offices and laboratories as well as 28 agricultural fields.

Another example: Urban food gardens



Cubans are applying traditional and alternative technologies to food production and are moving towards their goal of total sustainability.

One successful scheme has been urban agriculture.



Havana is the largest city in the Caribbean, housing 20% of Cuba's population.

Urban food gardens



By 2002, 35,000 acres of urban gardens produced 3.4 million tons of food. In Havana, 90% of the city's fresh produce came from local urban farms and gardens, all organic.



The gardens range from small plots to large fields & are cultivated by individuals or community groups.

Implications of sustainability for regional planning



- A longer term time horizon is implicit in 'sustain' – not just 25 years but 50 or 100 for general consideration
 - Actively use indicators to show whether development is heading in a sustainable direction or not
 - Adjust bureaucratic, political and economic structures to encourage longer term thinking
- Emphasise holistic approaches eg. The three E's of environment, economy and equity
 - Integration of perspectives eg. design and planning policies
 - Relationships – political organisation and coalition building

Source: Wheeler, S. 2009 *Regions, Megaregions and Sustainability*
Regional Studies, 43:6, pp 863-876

Implications of sustainability for regional planning



- Acknowledging the limits to regional growth, possibly involving
 - Vigorously managing or ending physical expansion
 - Stabilising population growth
 - Reducing or ending non-renewable resource use
 - Adopting economic development policies that seek qualitative improvement in the region rather than quantitative expansion of its output.
- Importance of local and regional sense of place
 - Avoid the ‘geography of nowhere’
 - Need to highlight ecological settings, materials, architectural styles, technologies, cultural practices & traditions that reflect the uniqueness of the place
- Moral responsibility for the future of the region extends to all

Source: Wheeler, S. 2009 *Regions, Megaregions and Sustainability*
Regional Studies, 43:6, pp 863-876

Sustainable regional development



- Should focus on balanced local communities to reduce regional mobility demands
 - manage land resources & population to live within regional limits
 - efforts to improve equity & to build social capital
 - economic development that strengthens the quality of the region's social & ecological systems rather than the quantity of production & consumption
- Physical expansion of regions should not be a goal unless steps can be taken to address sustainability problems related to
 - Mobility - Growth management
 - Equity
 - Economic development - Governance
- Should promote sustainability not regional growth

Source: Wheeler, S. 2009 *Regions, Megaregions and Sustainability*
Regional Studies, 43:6, pp 863-876

Conflicting local and regional needs



- Area (Medway, Thames Gateway Initiative) planned for supply of new housing in response to wider growth pressures and housing constraints.
- But, local priorities include economic and social development for existing residents as opposed to more housing for incomers.
- Pursuit of regional objectives may complicate the task of local regeneration.

Turok, I. 2009 *Limits to the Mega-City Region: Conflicting Local and Regional Needs*
Regional Studies, 43, 6, pp. 845-862

Case study issues



- Chosen as a site for housing due to available brownfield sites and local authorities being receptive to development
- Many of the 'new' population will have to commute to London and elsewhere for work
- Priority on new housing does not address the needs of existing residents for employment, skills and community services
- Complicates the job creation task by reducing the supply of employment land

Sunshine Coast characteristics, 2006



- Weak engagement in the labour force
 - Higher % part time jobs
 - Higher % unemployed
 - Higher % not in the labour force
- Low job density results in leakage of workers to other centres
 - Caloundra C had one job for every two people of working age (15-64 years) in 2006
 - In comparison, Brisbane had 2.8 jobs for every two people

Sunshine Coast characteristics, 2006



- Smaller % of people are in higher skilled jobs
 - 29.5% of S. Coast residents were employed as Managers or Professionals. In comparison, 31.2% across SEQ
 - Over-represented with jobs as Tradespersons and Labourers
- Reliance on urban development and tourism industries
 - 14.8% of S. Coast employed in Retail Trade (12.4% across SEQ)
 - 13.5% of S. Coast employed in Construction (9.6% across SEQ)
 - 9.9% of S. Coast employed in Accommodation and Food Services (7.1% across SEQ)
 - Under-represented in jobs in Manufacturing and in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

Findings of the Medway study 1.



- Regional policies can reinforce weaknesses in the local economy including the tendency to dormitory town status with weak local amenities, infrastructure and 'sense of place'
- Potential divergence between local and regional interests, with a possibility that the needs of individual areas can be overlooked

Findings of the Medway study 2.



- Identify a productive role or economic function that complements others
- Acknowledge that local areas form important consumption centres for the wider region
- Need for close involvement by local authorities with respect for different needs and constituencies

Conclusions for the Sunshine Coast



- Although population growth is slowing, it remains consistently high at around 180 people each week
- High levels of future growth are projected (S. Coast has around 10% of SEQ's population but is expected to receive around 12.5% of future growth)
- The challenge is
 - to accommodate this growth while improving sustainability
 - to address local issues around employment, skills, infrastructure and services
 - to forge an identity that acknowledges differences but capitalises on regional strengths.



Sunshine Coast: unique and sustainable