



**2008 St. George Bank State of the Region Summit Sunshine Coast**  
**University of the Sunshine Coast • Thursday, 6th November 2008**

**Sunshine Coast Business Council  
 & St. George Bank New Ideas Report**

SunshineCoast **Business Council**   
 One vision. One voice.

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Policy Solutions

St George State of the Region Summit Sunshine Coast

*Big Region ... Big Plans?*

6 November 2008

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## PREFACE

This research project was supported by the Sunshine Coast Business Council, St George Bank and Policy Solutions. The project sought to canvass new ideas that the new amalgamated Sunshine Coast could adopt as it seeks to shape the region's future.

Special thanks to focus group participants and others who were interviewed. The work by Associate Professor Meredith Lawley and Lucy Craddock from the Faculty of Business at the University of the Sunshine Coast in conducting the research and preparing the report is also acknowledged.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of research carried out exploring **New Ideas from Key Regional Decision Makers** for the 2008 **St George Bank State of the Region Summit Sunshine Coast**. The research was conducted in conjunction with the *Sunshine Coast Business Council* and supported by the St George Bank and *Policy Solutions*.

Against the 2008 *State of the Region Summit* theme of **Big Region ... Big Plans?**, this research sought to identify the big new plans and ideas key decision makers have that should be driving the Sunshine Coast region into the future. In particular, the research sought to identify new ideas that would harness the opportunities that the new bigger regional focus brings. The focus was to be on ideas that were new, clever and implementable and which would generate discussion and debate as opposed to a wish list of projects that were not practical or were too costly.

The research failed to do this. There were, from those canvassed, no big new ideas, no big new plans. However, several key themes did emerge and important issues and opportunities were identified and possible ways forward proposed. These are worthy of attention.

These findings resulted from three focus groups and input through in-depth interviews (see Appendix 1 for details). In total this research reflects the observations and input of 37 individuals, so while it cannot claim to be representative of all key decision makers on the Sunshine Coast, it does give significant insight and provides a sound basis for further discussion and debate.

In brief, seven key themes emerged from the research:

- **One region but still many tribes:** While the Sunshine Coast is now one region in name, it has a long way to go before it is one region in nature.
- **The Sunshine Coast as a teenager:** *What do I want to be when I grow up?* The Sunshine Coast is at a crossroads with several different possible futures but at this point is uncertain exactly where it is heading or why.

- **Clean, green and sustainable:** The one consistent theme for the future of the Sunshine Coast is that it should be clean, green and sustainable.
- **Moving up in the world:** From a relatively unknown series of fishing villages and farms, the Sunshine Coast is emerging nationally and internationally as a thriving region on the 'way up'.
- **There is no such thing as a big new idea (or even a little one):** No-one has any big new ideas or even small ones. However, there is a diverse range of existing ideas from a diverse range of tribes (see first theme above!).
- **All I want for Christmas is..... (the wish lists):** Like any Christmas list there is consensus on the big items: transport and infrastructure, the need for a clear town centre, a single arts/convention centre and strong strategic leadership. The stocking fillers are numerous, again reflecting the diversity of tribes.
- **The Role of the University of the Sunshine Coast:** One final consistent theme was the importance of USC as a potential central unifying force for the region with the clear ability to improve the skills and knowledge base of the Sunshine Coast as well as providing independent and objective data and advice for key decision makers.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of research carried out exploring '**New Ideas from Key Regional Decision Makers**' for the 2008 St George Bank State of the Region Summit Sunshine Coast. The research was conducted in conjunction with the Sunshine Coast Business Council.

The amalgamated Sunshine Coast Regional Council is Queensland's fourth largest local government and one of the largest in Australia. Against the theme of the conference **Big Region ... Big Plans**, this research sought to identify the big new plans and ideas key decision makers have that should be driving the Sunshine Coast region into the future. In particular, the research sought to identify new ideas that would harness the opportunities that the new bigger regional focus brings. The emphasis was to be on ideas that were new, clever, implementable and would generate discussion and debate as opposed to a wish list of projects that would be impossible to achieve or too costly.

Details of the methodology used in this project are outlined in Appendix 1.

## 2. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

This section reports the results of the five key questions asked of all respondents:

- How is the Sunshine Coast different from other regions in Australia?
- How would you describe the Sunshine Coast as a person or personality from the past to the present and into the future?
- What opportunities are not currently being harnessed on the Sunshine Coast?
- What immediate and long term changes would you make if you were in a position to do so?
- What are your big new ideas for the Sunshine Coast?

## 2.1 How & why is the Sunshine Coast different from the rest of Queensland & Australia?

A number of clear responses emerged from this question.

### **Importance of lifestyle**

The results summarised in Table 1 clearly indicate that the social/lifestyle features of the Sunshine Coast are the key features differentiating it from the rest of Australia (12 factors mentioned 16 times); followed by economic characteristics (7 factors mentioned 9 times); and lastly, environmental features (4 features mentioned 6 times). Interestingly, while most respondents were happy to think of the Sunshine Coast as a region, one respondent thought the Sunshine Coast was not a region at all but more *'part of greater South East Queensland – you've only got to look at the dollars going from the Sunshine Coast to Brisbane for things like prestige cars.'*

The majority of the social/lifestyle factors were positive features namely the laid back lifestyle, the safety and security and the proximity to a major centre, Brisbane. Interestingly, a comment from FG 3 was *'we came here for lifestyle and environment – but we don't want anyone else to come here to spoil it.'* The laidback lifestyle also flowed over into the next group of factors, the economic characteristics as a positive in terms of making it easier to do business.

### **Shallow economy**

However, being easier to do business due to the lifestyle was the only positive economic characteristic with all other economic issues raised being negative such as the reliance on tourism and construction, *'shallow economy with no primary industry'* and the reliance on small business.

### **Proximity to Brisbane**

Proximity to Brisbane that was seen as a positive in terms of lifestyle, was also a negative economically as it meant that infrastructure was often not a priority for state and federal governments as regions at a greater distance from Brisbane needed infrastructure more: *'we need a major sports stadium but we are so close to Brisbane that has several, government won't fund one here but will put it in north Queensland instead – there are better facilities in North Queensland than here.'*

### **Dominance of small business**

One group highlighted the small business characteristic and what that meant, that is, the Sunshine Coast is *'a haven for small business combined with lifestyle'* – *'people start small businesses because they can, but they do not necessarily have the skills/education to run them properly which becomes a key source of business failure.'*

### **Natural and environmental features**

The final group of natural/environmental features was most evident in the U3A (University of the Third Age) group – retirees, which perhaps reflected their ability to choose where to live based on these characteristics rather than things like employment.

### **Summary**

In summary, over 20 features of the Sunshine Coast were identified as making it distinctly different to the rest of Australia, with social/lifestyle and environmental characteristics overwhelmingly positive and economic features distinctly negative. A final interesting point is that apart from the shallow economy, every group and interviewee raised a different variety of issues and while the laid back lifestyle was seen as a positive socially, it was considered a negative economically.

**Table 1: What makes the Sunshine Coast different?**

Characteristic	FG A	FG B	FG C	DI A	DI B	DI D	DI E	Total
<b>Social</b>								
Lifestyle (laid back)			+			+		2
Proximity to Brisbane			+	+				2
Safe and secure		+	+					2
Retirement village		0	0					2
Mix of age groups						+		1
Highly involved community						+		1
Great education/schools/uni						+		1
Great medical; facilities						+		1
Different population mix with different wants to say Gold Coast					0			1
Conservative (politically)			0					1
Reluctant to accept change	X							1
Lack of population diversity	X							1
<b>Economic</b>								
Shallow economy	X	X	X					3
High local unemployment	X							1
Lack of infrastructure (due to proximity to Bne eg sports stadium in Bne so put a new one in NQ)	X							1
Lack of diversity in skill set	X							1
Small size of region (compared to say Sydney)	X							1
Focus on small business		X						1
More laid back and easy to do business		+						1
<b>Natural/Environment</b>								
Climate	+					+		2
Natural environment			+				+	2
Geography (i.e. very long and skinny region)			0					1
Last surf beach before cold and jellyfish			+					1

X = negative + = positive 0 = neutral  
Depth Interview C did not respond to this question

## 2.2 Describe the Sunshine Coast as a person or personality

Respondents were asked to describe the Sunshine Coast as a person or personality in the past, now and in the future. The purpose of this question was to explore where the Sunshine Coast has come from and where it may be going. Responses are summarised in Table 2.

Some of the main findings included:

### **Collection of sleepy fishing villages**

All respondents agreed that 40 years ago the Sunshine Coast was *'a collection of sleepy fishing villages and farms where the lights went out at 8.30.'* Long-term residents remembered the days when it was not possible to travel from Caloundra to Maroochydore without going back onto the Bruce Highway and also recalled an era when *'shops shut on a Wednesday afternoon so everyone could go surfing.'*

### **Toddler trying to find its feet**

Ten years ago, the Sunshine Coast had changed to a *'toddler trying to find its feet.'* The lifestyle and environment led to descriptions of the Sunshine Coast as a *'beach bum – carefree, complacent and laidback'*, while others noted the social class status of the Sunshine Coast as *'poor and working class with high unemployment.'*

### **At the crossroads – a teenager**

Respondents were consistent in describing the Sunshine Coast now as *'at a crossroads,' 'a teenager' or 'ebullient youth' who has 'just finished school but does not really know what to do next or have the experience and expertise to do it well.'* It was noted that to date the Sunshine Coast had not really had to grow up as it was supported by an influx of immigrants bringing wealth with them. This view then carried over to the social class theme, that the Sunshine Coast was seen as moving from a predominantly working class background to a wealthier *'new money'* class. Similarly, it was seen to be *nouveau riche* (new money) – while the Sunshine Coast now had money it still was *'lacking sophistication'*. This was best summed up by the comment that many residents were *'watching a plasma TV, but sitting on a couch from Super Amart.'*

***Potential successful business person wearing a suit***

There was agreement that in ten years time the Sunshine Coast will have matured, but with considerable diversity as to how successful the process will have been and what the end result would be. While one respondent saw the Sunshine Coast in ten years time as a *'successful business person wearing a suit and a tie,'* the majority of respondents wanted maturity without losing the *'laidbackness'* that makes the Sunshine Coast different. Respondents were certain they did not want to live in another Gold Coast. Consistent characteristics desired in the future were *'clean, green and sustainable.'*

In summary, while there was a common perception of where the Sunshine Coast has come from and what the Sunshine Coast is at present, where the region is going and what it will become was less certain.

**Table 2: Describe the Sunshine Coast as a person/personality**

	40 years ago	10 years ago	Now	10 years time
<b>FG A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A collection of fishing village</li> <li>Lights out at 8.30</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An adolescent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A lazy spoilt female adolescent (not having to think because of large influx of people)</li> <li>Need to provide gift with a skill set for the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Still a lazy spoilt female adolescent – but hopefully a beautiful woman</li> </ul>
<b>FG B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fishing village</li> <li>25 years ago everything shut on a Wed afternoon so everyone could go surfing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A beach bum – carefree, complacent, laidback</li> <li>Toddler trying to find its feet</li> <li>Pre teen wearing a training bra</li> <li>9 yo turning 60</li> <li>Live for today</li> <li>Teenager – belligerent – they think they know it all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Still a beach bum</li> <li>Gen Y</li> <li>Loss of identity/ don't know where we are going</li> <li>Just left school – have skills but have to harness them</li> <li>Arrogant teenager</li> <li>Nouveau riche ie not sophisticated plasma screen &amp; an Amart couch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40 something and savvy</li> <li>30 something</li> <li>Matured and key plans in place</li> <li>Sophisticated and sure of itself</li> <li>Adult, efficient, structured but fun loving</li> <li>Hopefully NOT a homeless druggie</li> </ul>
<b>FG C</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One third sport, one third academic and one third recreation/crafty</li> <li>Surfer farmer and fisherman</li> <li>Beautiful baby</li> <li>Working class families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Still a surfer but wearing a trencher or a builder as well</li> <li>Adolescent</li> <li>Suburban dweller</li> <li>Wealthier</li> <li>No more farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not plastic like GC</li> <li>Gordon Ramsey ie chef/ service industries</li> </ul>
<b>DI A</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sleepy</li> <li>More individualistic</li> <li>Self serving</li> <li>Them, them, them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ebullient youth</li> <li>Ambitious 20 – 30 something</li> <li>More united</li> <li>Tribes forming a nation not so much tribal in thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successful business person</li> <li>Wears a suit and tie</li> <li>More established eg industry</li> </ul>
<b>DI B</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(14 years ago)</li> <li>Working class</li> <li>Poor, high unemployment,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nouveau riche</li> <li>Moving up in the world – no longer a poor relation</li> <li>New pride in SC</li> <li>Still tribal but now fighting within tribe rather than between</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depends on leadership capacity</li> <li>Must work together in partnership or we will have problems</li> </ul>
<b>DI C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fishing village in the bush</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raw</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teenager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More mature and aware of strengths and weaknesses</li> </ul>
<b>DI D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sleepy holiday destination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World class tourist destination</li> <li>In transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adolescent – blessed but not spoilt</li> <li>Advantages of living in a city but not the disadvantages</li> </ul>	
<b>DI E</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young and free</li> <li>A quiet family place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling the pressure of development</li> <li>Changing but still naive about the world and how special the Sunshine Coast is</li> <li>Looking over your shoulder but doing little about it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Older and wiser</li> <li>Do not want to make the mistakes of the past</li> <li>Time to stand up and show others that with proper planning and control of population growth, the environment can survive and thrive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wise</li> <li>Recognised the world over as having the guts to stand up to the short term thinkers in government and the development lobby</li> </ul>

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## 2.3 Opportunities not currently being harnessed on the Sunshine Coast

When asked to identify opportunities not currently being harnessed on the Sunshine Coast responses were resoundingly economic in nature (Table 3), perhaps reflecting the common negative economic characteristics of the Sunshine Coast identified earlier. Within this economic focus there seemed some consensus that not enough was currently being done to overcome the economic weaknesses previously identified.

While one respondent felt that *'the Sunshine Coast now has an identity and can speak with one voice and not three,'* a serious issue raised by the majority of respondents was the lack of strong leadership generally and more specifically leadership focused on economic concerns. The views of many respondents were in line with the comment of one respondent: *'The current "small-time" leaders are not sufficiently experienced to manage the change needed to make one region'* and *'they can't even appoint a CEO'* (note: a CEO was appointed to the Sunshine Coast Regional Council shortly after this group was run). One specific example of the lack of focus on economic issues cited by some respondents was the lack of a specific portfolio for economic development within Sunshine Coast Regional Council.

The lack of economic focus is also highlighted by the strong support for the opportunity of making more of smart industries, those that are clean, green and high tech.

The one group who felt leadership was not a serious problem were the retirees who believed that *'it is early days yet,'* progress was being made and *'amalgamation cannot happen overnight and some changes have been made (libraries) and things are heading in the right direction.'*

The fragmentation and replication of many functions and services (both public sector and private sector) were also noted as an opportunity not currently being harnessed, for example having multiple regional newspapers, three show days and not one, one Council Chamber and so on. This is well summarised in the comment that the Sunshine Coast lacks *'the power of acting regionally.'*

**Table 3: Opportunities identified**

Opportunity	FG A	FG B	FG C	DI A	DI B	DI C	DI D	DI E	Total
Education	X		X	X			X		4
Not enough: clean green high tech or solar industries			X				X	X	3
Tourism			X	X					2
The power of acting regionally (too much fragmentation and replication)		X				X			2
Health	X			X					2
Better use of human resources				X					1
Economic issues not being taken seriously					X				1
Not capitalising on our closeness to Brisbane to siphon off IP							X		1
Slow food			X						1

## 2.4 If you were mayor, premier, prime minister for the day what changes would you make?

The changes proposed (Table 4) in many ways mirror the opportunities identified in the previous question with many respondents focused on leadership and planning for the future and economic issues. However, there were some contrasting opinions on the best way to move forward with some respondents proposing the need for 'wide consultation and debate' as part of the strategic decision process while other respondents felt there had already been 'too much consultation' and the new Sunshine Coast Regional Council should 'just do it.'

### **Clean, green and sustainable**

There was agreement that the common vision for the Sunshine Coast was 'clean, green and sustainable.' One group highlighted that 'the regions (within the Sunshine Coast) don't know what they each do best – they need to identify what they do best and focus on it.'

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### **Lack of control over destiny**

Many respondents found it difficult to articulate any possible changes as they felt there was little point in doing so as in many cases state and federal levels of government had already made decisions and plans that could not be altered. The constraints imposed included the South East Queensland Regional Plan and development and infrastructure decisions made by state and federal governments. This lack of control over destiny was reflected by comments such as '*Captain Bligh wants us to remain a weekend destination,*' and '*we need to create an urban footprint and commit to not changing it.*'

### **Infrastructure**

Specifically in relation to infrastructure, one respondent commented 'infrastructure is not keeping pace with population – a major issue is that funding (State and Federal) is based on permanent population and not tourists and yet our population has a significant (permanent) tourist population.'

### **Population caps**

While the majority of respondents accepted the expected and planned population growth for the Sunshine Coast region, the representative of community organisations was strongly in favour of limiting population growth – '*Not every area has to grow for growth's sake. We need to recognise that some areas are best to be nurtured ... Governments need to think longer term and not just the economic imperative.*'

**Table 4: Changes**

Change	FG A	FG B	FG C	DI A	DI B	DI C	DI D	DI E	Total
Common vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean</li> <li>green</li> <li>sustainable</li> </ul>	X	X	X			X			4
Leadership	X	X			X				3
Expedite infrastructure		X		X			X		3
Harness knowledge economy lifestyle					X	X	X		3
Reorganise council portfolios (economic focus and specialists)		X			X				2
Act as one region ie reduce replication		X					X		2
Appoint a CEO	X								1
Reasoned (and not emotive) debate	X								1
A process to develop capacity	X								1
A potent member of (state) parliament	X								1
Proper understanding by Councillors of their role	X								1
Seed money for initiatives				X					1
Innovation taskforce to advise to council					X				1
Create an urban footprint & commit to it						X			1
Planning		X							1
Change name to SC city council as region implies 'hicksville'							X		1
Limit population growth/ downgrade SC airport to a purely domestic operation								X	1

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## 2.5 The 'new' ideas

As can be seen in Table 5, there were no big new ideas, with the ideas proposed most frequently mentioned (transport, a town centre, an arts/convention centre) all being ones currently on the agenda and which have been widely discussed for some time.

### **No magic 'bullets'**

Similar to the question about changes, many respondents had problems actually generating any ideas at all as they could not see beyond the need for a decision on a 'collective vision for the future' before proposing ideas. These respondents made comments like, 'we need to define parameters and involve the public in developing solutions' and 'we need to get a grip on reality – gather the data, identify the trends, do the gap analysis, model the outcomes – make informed decisions' and felt that any discussion of possible big new ideas was 'a bit of a Kevin 07 talkfest, there are no magic silver bullets.'

### **International sporting hub**

There were some ideas proposed that while not big, were new (or at least not ideas widely discussed or debated at present). These included suggestions such as; 'make the region an international sporting destination or hub, model it on the Gold Coast like Indy but have events in keeping with our clean, green sustainable vision, a Tour de Sunshine Coast' and 'make the Sunshine Coast a centre for the aviation industry.'

### **Transport and the proposed CAMCOS rail extension**

Transport was the issue most frequently mentioned where new ideas were badly needed. Respondents talked about transport in two ways, transport linking the Sunshine Coast to Brisbane and transport within the Sunshine Coast. While the importance of improved transport within the region was unanimous, on the issue of the importance of transport links to Brisbane opinions were widely divergent. At one end of the spectrum was the following attitude 'CAMCOS is the worst thing that could happen to the Sunshine Coast as it will facilitate the development of a dormitory suburb - whereas if the focus was on developing a within region transport system the goal of a strong independent region would be facilitated. CAMCOS is the biggest threat to the region's identity.' Others felt that improving transport links to Brisbane

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would make the Sunshine Coast more likely to become simply a dormitory suburb. The opposite view stressed the critical need for better transport links with Brisbane.

In relation to transport within the region most suggestions reflected experiences from other regions, for example: 'we need a feeder bus system like Perth' or we need trams/light rail like Melbourne. One respondent also highlighted the need for any transport system to be 'environmentally friendly.'

### **CBD and convention centre**

Two other issues related to the need for a town centre and an arts/convention centre and while respondents were unanimous in suggesting Maroochydore as the logical location for a town centre, opinion on the location of an arts/convention centre was divided with some opting for Maroochydore and others proposing it adjoin the university.

**Table 5: The ideas**

Ideas	FG A	FG B	FG C	DI A	DI B	DI C	DI D	DI E	Total
Improved transport	X	X	X		X		X	X	6
Establish town centre (M'dore)	X	X	X			X			4
Arts/convention centre (M'dore)		X	X (at USC)			X	X		4
Proper Strategic Planning	X	X			X	X			4
Internal (within region) transport		X	X		X			X	4
Estab a process of community involvement	X				X				2
Define ourselves	X	X							2
Regional Innovation plan					X				1
International Event Hub eg Tour de Sunshine	X								1
One regional cultural festival		X							1
Model /measure it	X								1
Aviation	X								1
Independent research body for baseline data	X								1
Model on GC but replace events to maintain SC vision eg replace Indy with cycling	X								1
Think Tank	X								1
Shift share analysis	X								1
Education WIL				X					1
R & D centre for ecological technologies								X	1

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### 3. KEY THEMES

From the results shown above seven key themes were identified as outlined below.

#### ***One Region but still many tribes***

While not a civil war, the shotgun marriage that resulted in the 'big new region' would be annulled by at least one tribe if possible. All respondents bar one, agreed that while we were technically one new region, the previous tribal boundaries were still clearly evident and until strong leadership could provide a unified common vision this situation would continue. The one voice suggesting the Sunshine Coast was a unified tribe was very new to the region which presents an interesting scenario – given high predicted levels of migration to the region will tribal boundaries disappear more quickly than most respondents think?

#### ***The Sunshine Coast as a teenager: What do I want to be when I grow up?***

A common view was that the Sunshine Coast was definitely growing up from the sleepy fishing villages and farming towns of 20 years ago into a teenager with a variety of characteristics: a spoilt female (moody and demanding); Generation Y.

The region is now at a major crossroads – does it become a dormitory suburb of Brisbane (hopefully not but it appears that is what the parents, ie State Government are planning) or can it assert its independence and mature into an independent, clean, green sustainable community? The key impediment to moving forward was seen as a clear lack of leadership/vision and direction at the local government level.

#### ***Clean, green and sustainable***

The one consistent desire for the future of the Sunshine Coast was that it should be clean, green and sustainable. However there were grave fears that the SCR was not really in control of its own destiny and at present, not capable of being heard independently.

#### ***Moving up in the world***

From a working class background (limited money, poorly educated, high unemployment) 15 years ago the Sunshine Coast has become *nouveau riche* (new money, better educated but lacking sophistication) driven mainly by wealthy retirees.

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The Sunshine Coast is better known nationally, with most Australians knowing where the Sunshine Coast is, although internationally the Sunshine Coast is better known as Noosa and/or Australia Zoo.

***There is no such thing as a big new idea (or even a little one)***

While some groups were very despondent and unable to come up with any way forward (see point 2) due to a lack of leadership, a lack of clear vision and focus and constraints imposed by state and federal governments some groups were able to come up with wish-lists rather than new ideas.

***All I want for Christmas is ... (the wish-lists)***

As with every Christmas list, the items at the top were the big ticket items, transport – particularly internal transport within the region and other infrastructure brought forward (eg hospital). Transport was closely followed by a town centre and an arts/convention centre.

***The Role of the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC)***

A final consistent theme to emerge was the role of USC in moving the region forward. USC was seen as belonging strongly to the (new) Region with no tribal alliances. It was seen as being able to give/coordinate independent and objective data and advice for key decision makers, provide the education necessary to improve the skills of the population and act as a focal point for the entire region.

## 4. Summary of issues and possible solutions

Finally, this section of the report brings together the major issues identified by participants together with the various possible solutions suggested (see Table 6 below).

In conclusion, while the Sunshine Coast is now officially one region, but in reality the process of becoming a single region has only just begun. In keeping with this emerging identity of a single region there remains some doubt about the region's future directions. However, key decision makers do agree that one prime goal of the region is to be clean, green and sustainable.

**Table 6: Issues and solutions**

Issue	Possible solution
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proper understanding by councillors of their role</li> <li>• A potent member of (state/fed) parliament</li> <li>• Innovation taskforce to provide advice to council</li> <li>• Create an urban footprint and commit to it</li> <li>• Strategic planning starting with a clear vision of who we are and where we want to go</li> <li>• Independent research body for baseline data</li> <li>• Think tank</li> <li>• Shift share analysis</li> </ul>
<b>Transport and other infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby government to revise funding model to take account of permanent tourist levels</li> </ul>
<b>Economic issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council to reorganise and revise portfolios to include one for economic development</li> <li>• Encourage more industries               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Clean</li> <li>– Green</li> <li>– high tech</li> <li>– knowledge based</li> <li>– solar</li> <li>– aviation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Encourage Brisbane based businesses to relocate to the SC</li> <li>• Seed money for initiatives</li> <li>• Hub for international (clean/green) sporting events</li> <li>• Education (work integrated learning)</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of regional cohesion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce fragmentation and replication               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– one show day</li> <li>– one newspaper</li> <li>– one town centre</li> <li>– one arts/convention centre</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Change name to the Sunshine Coast City Council</li> </ul>

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## Appendix 1: Research Methodology

Given the task of identifying new ideas, an exploratory design was adopted consisting of a series of three focus group discussions and in-depth interviews (5) with a diverse range of decision makers and stakeholders from the private sector, the public sector and retirees.

Two focus groups comprised key business representatives and leaders (the Sunshine Coast Business Council and the Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network). The third focus group comprised members of U3A (representing the significant group of retirees).

In addition, input was obtained from in-depth interviews with four representatives of the public sector including elected officials, senior public servants and senior managers from the University of the Sunshine Coast and one representative from the community organisations sector. In total this research reflects the observations and input of 37 individuals, so while it cannot claim to be representative of all key decision makers on the Sunshine Coast, it does give significant insight and provides sound basis for further discussion and debate.

### **Key questions**

Both the focus groups and interviews posed the same questions starting by asking respondents to describe how the Sunshine Coast was different from other regions in Australia. Next, respondents were asked to describe the Sunshine Coast as a person or personality from the past to the present and into the future. Against this background respondents were asked to identify opportunities not currently being harnessed on the Sunshine Coast, as well as both the immediate and long-term changes they would make if they were in a position to do so. Finally respondents were asked for their big new ideas.

### **The respondents**

In total 37 individuals participated in either the focus groups or interviews, with profile details in Appendix 2. Focus group participants represented a good cross section of the private sector with fairly even numbers of males and females, a range of industries and organisations, and importantly a range of perspectives from people

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who had spent their entire (or majority of their) lives on the Sunshine Coast through to more recent arrivals with considerable experience in a variety of national and international contexts.

The one key group not represented in the focus groups was public sector decision makers. As this group was very difficult to organise logistically into a focus group, a range of respondents were interviewed, either face-to-face, by telephone or in the case where respondents were unable to talk directly, they were given the opportunity to provide written responses to the key questions. Two of the respondents came from the tertiary education sector while the remaining two were drawn from government, both elected and public servants. All were very experienced and male. One final respondent came from a peak body representing the views of 22 community organisations.

## Appendix 2: Profile of Respondents

Tables 1 and 2 below provide a summary of the main respondents involved in this project.

**Table 1: Summary of focus group participants**

Group number	Rationale	Profile of respondents
<p><b>Group A</b></p> <p><b>Sunshine Coast Business Council</b></p> <p>10 participants</p>	<p>This peak body gave representation to major <b>business</b> SC organisations from a diverse range of industries and company sizes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All were male and senior managers</li> <li>Ages from 39 to 68</li> <li>Working experience on the Sunshine Coast ranged from 3 to 40 years</li> <li>6 had worked overseas</li> <li>8 had worked for significant periods outside the Sunshine Coast</li> <li>2 had spent their entire working life on the Sunshine Coast</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group B</b></p> <p><b>Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network</b></p> <p>8 participants</p>	<p>This group covers a diverse range of business and government bodies as well as ensuring a female perspective. Participants were senior members of this group and/or award winners. Again they represented a diverse range of industries and company sizes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All were female and middle/senior managers</li> <li>Ages from 29 to 53</li> <li>Working experience on the Sunshine Coast ranged from 3 to 20 years</li> <li>3 had worked overseas</li> <li>5 had worked for significant periods outside the Sunshine Coast</li> <li>2 had spent their entire working life on the Sunshine Coast</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group C</b></p> <p><b>U3A</b></p> <p>12 participants</p>	<p>This group was chosen to give a different perspective on the questions being asked, drawing people from a variety of backgrounds and representing a major segment of the SC population.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 females, 4 males</li> <li>61 – 85 years old</li> <li>only 2 had worked on the SC (and then only for 1 to 2 years)</li> <li>1 recent immigrant (2.5y); 7 between 4 to 13 years; 1 grew up and then retired here; 1 50 years</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Summary of in-depth interviewees**

Respondent	Profile
A (male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New to Sunshine Coast (1<sup>st</sup> year)</li> <li>• Public sector</li> <li>• Significant experience other Australia and OS</li> </ul>
B (male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14 years on SC</li> <li>• Significant experience other Australia and OS</li> <li>• Public sector</li> </ul>
C (male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 years on SC</li> <li>• Significant experience other Australia and OS</li> <li>• Public sector</li> </ul>
D (male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 years on SC</li> <li>• Public sector</li> </ul>
E (male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant experience other Australia and OS</li> <li>• Representing 22 community organisations</li> </ul>