

Biloela Community Leaders Council 2025

Output Report

September 2025

Acknowledgement

Banana Shire Council and Coexistence Queensland acknowledges, respects and honours the Traditional Custodians of the lands upon which the Biloela Community Leaders Council 2025 was held, the Gaangalu Nation People (GNP) and that the Banana Shire also includes land of the Iman People, Wulli Wulli People, Wadja People, Wakka Wakka People and Darumbal People. We pay respect to Ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and acknowledge the deep spiritual and cultural connection Traditional Owners have with the land, waters, air and community.

DISCLAIMER

Biloela Community Leaders Council 2025 Output Report is distributed by Coexistence Queensland as an information source only. It provides general information which, to the best of our knowledge, is correct as at the time of publishing. The information contained herein is subject to change without notice. Coexistence Queensland shall not be liable for technical or other errors or omissions contained herein. The reader accepts all risks and responsibility for losses, damages, costs and other consequences resulting directly or indirectly from using this information. The information contained in this report does not constitute advice and should not be relied on as such. While every care has been taken in preparing this report, Coexistence Queensland accepts no responsibility for decisions or actions taken as a result of any data, information, statement, advice or recommendations, expressed or implied, contained within. Where appropriate, independent legal advice should be sought.

Contents

Foreword	4
Background.....	5
Community Leaders Council	5
About Banana Shire Council	5
About Coexistence Queensland.....	5
Event overview	6
Program	6
Attendees.....	7
Event outcomes snapshot.....	8
Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony	9
Scene setting	9
Breakout facilitated sessions.....	9
Visioning for the future in Banana Shire	10
Key topics	10
Proposed vision statements	10
Theme exploration and outputs	11
Key topics	11
Session outputs	12
1. Delivering community benefits.....	12
2. Balancing land use across industries.....	13
3. Workforce development.....	14
4. Infrastructure and regional growth	15
5. Community engagement	16
6. Economic diversification and local investment.....	17
7. Environmental management.....	18
8. Stakeholder partnerships.....	19
Topics to address in future.....	20
Feedback.....	21
Local benefit	22
Next steps	23
Local Reference Group	23
Appreciation and thanks.....	24

Foreword

“The Banana Shire has always been a region where people roll up their sleeves and get on with the job, whether it’s farming, mining, running a small business, or building new industries like renewables. We’ve seen firsthand how much our communities can achieve when there’s a shared commitment to working together.

Partnering with Coexistence Queensland to host the Community Leaders Council event on 27 March 2025 here in Biloela gave us the chance to bring all those voices into the same room – landholders, Traditional Owners, industry, local businesses and government. We heard honest perspectives and ideas, with a shared understanding that our region’s future should be built together.

Events like this help lay the foundation for a stronger, more diverse economy, one that values our people, protects our land, and creates opportunities across generations. I thank everyone who came along and contributed. Your insights and collaboration help make sure Banana Shire remains a proud, productive and inclusive part of Queensland’s future.”



Cr Neville Ferrier
Mayor
Banana Shire Council



“From the start of the day, the true meaning of coexistence was made clear. The event opened with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony led by the Gaangalu Nation People (GNP). Elders Bonnie Reinecker, Lyn Blucher, Bino Toby and Flip Toby spoke about the deep cultural connections to the land beneath our feet – Gangulu Country – and its place in their songlines and dreaming. It set a respectful and unifying tone that carried through the entire day.

Coexistence isn’t a new idea – it’s something our people have practised for thousands of generations. But in today’s context, where regional Queensland is facing big shifts in energy, land use and industry, it’s vital we find ways to bring traditional knowledge, modern expertise, and local insight together.

The Community Leaders Council is one space where this can happen. This report captures the key opportunities, challenges and responses we heard from landholders, Traditional Owners, community groups, government and industry. I encourage everyone reading it to see it not just as a summary, but as a foundation. Remember to keep talking, keep listening, and keep working together in good faith, so our communities and Country can thrive side by side.”



John Anderson
Chair
Coexistence Queensland



Background

Community Leaders Council

The Community Leaders Council (CLC) is an annual forum that not only fulfils Coexistence Queensland's legislative responsibilities but, more importantly, creates a meaningful platform for collaboration and dialogue. Each year it brings together state and local governments, community, and industry leaders from the host region to explore coexistence opportunities and address shared challenges. On Thursday, 27 March 2025, Banana Shire Council partnered with Coexistence Queensland to host the CLC in Biloela, focusing on how traditional and emerging industries can sustainably coexist with local communities and landholders. The event brought together 110 diverse participants including landholders, the agricultural sector, local businesses, community organisations, Traditional Owners, mining and resources, renewable energy, environment, and government to collectively address the theme:

Shared Landscapes – Coexistence challenges and opportunities in the energy transition



After guest speakers set the scene – including sharing preliminary research findings on lessons from the coal seam gas industry, attendees worked together to define what sustainable coexistence should look like for the region in 2035. They explored the opportunities, challenges, and innovations presented by the energy transition and identified key actions, the organisations responsible, and the resources required to implement them. The overall aim of the event was to elevate local voices and promote open communication and respectful collaboration to help drive

sustainable coexistence outcomes. The outputs of the CLC will also guide broader community engagement to identify priorities for community benefit investments paid by developers, so that renewable energy projects in the shire deliver long-lasting, positive legacy.

As part of this process, Banana Shire Council, Coexistence Queensland and the Queensland Government are in the early stages of developing a Local Reference Group (LRG). The group will advise Council on priority infrastructure projects that improve the region's liveability and help attract new residents to the shire. It will also make recommendations to Council on how to allocate the Community Legacy Fund (CLF), which will be established with \$5 million in seed funding from the Queensland Government. Both the LRG and CLF are in the early stages of development, and further information on community involvement opportunities will be available in late 2025. It is important to note that the CLC event took place before the Queensland Government released reforms such as Social Impact Assessments and Community Benefit Agreements for renewable energy projects.

About Banana Shire Council

Banana Shire Council supports a diverse and growing regional economy built on agriculture, cattle, coal, gold, energy, mining, gas, and manufacturing. With over 2,500 registered businesses, the Council works closely with key sectors to encourage development and investment. It promotes value-adding opportunities for established industries, enables resources activities through considered planning, and ensures land is available for housing and commercial use. With a strong history and a clear focus on the future, Banana Shire Council plays an active role in shaping a resilient, vibrant, and sustainable community across Central Queensland.

About Coexistence Queensland

Coexistence Queensland is an independent statutory body established to help facilitate and address how landholders, communities, and the resources and energy industries can sustainably work and thrive together. It assists stakeholders in navigating complex coexistence frameworks through the provision of information resources and services, and acts as a single point of contact for landholders and communities. Coexistence Queensland also advises government and other key stakeholders on issues of concern and opportunities.

Event overview

Program

The CLC explored coexistence opportunities and challenges between resource and renewable energy projects – both current and proposed. This was supported by a program featuring guest speaker sessions, real-time polling using interactive tools to guide conversations, and structured group activities to encourage participation and idea-sharing.

Biloela Community Leaders Council 2025

- **Date and time:** Thursday, 27 March 2025, 8:00am - 2:35pm
- **Location:** Biloela Civic Centre, 96 Rainbow Street, Biloela

Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony (20 mins)

- Gaangalu Nation People (GNP)

Scene setting (90 mins)

- **Opening remarks:** Warwick Squire, CEO, Coexistence Queensland
- **Official welcome:** Cr Neville Ferrier, Mayor, Banana Shire Council
- **Ministerial address:** Mr Bryson Head MP, Assistant Minister for Regional Development, Resources and Critical Minerals, and Member for Callide
- **Plenary address:** Energy transition overview and UQ's 'Leveraging the Lessons' research: Dr Kathy Witt, Associate Professor in Social Performance, Gas and Energy Transition Research Centre, University of Queensland
- **Council update:** Chris Welch, Director Council Services, Banana Shire Council
- **Energy, resources and agriculture Government update:** Darren Moor, Executive Director, Delivery, Georesources, Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development / Carlye Sycz, Acting Deputy Under Treasurer, Energy and Climate, Queensland Treasury / Elton Miller, Executive Director, Agribusiness and Policy, Department of Primary Industries



Breakout facilitated sessions (175 mins)

- **Session 1: Vision for the Banana Shire (45 mins)**
Defining what sustainable coexistence looks like for the Banana Shire in 2035.
- **Session 2: Pathway to achieve the vision (90 mins)**
Defining coexistence priorities, actions, opportunities, challenges and innovations.
- **Session 3: Realising the vision and next steps (40 mins)**
Prioritise/agree actions at local, regional, and state level, and identify who is responsible and the resources required to implement.

Wrap up

- Warwick Squire, CEO, Coexistence Queensland

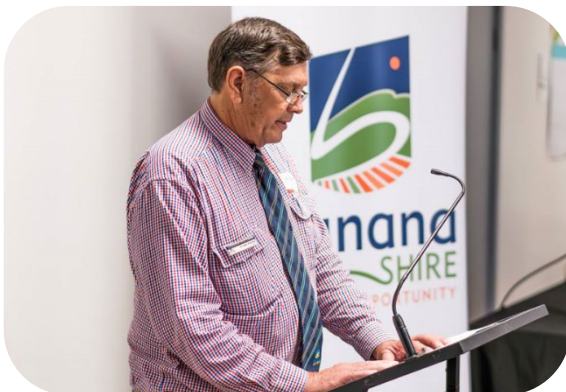
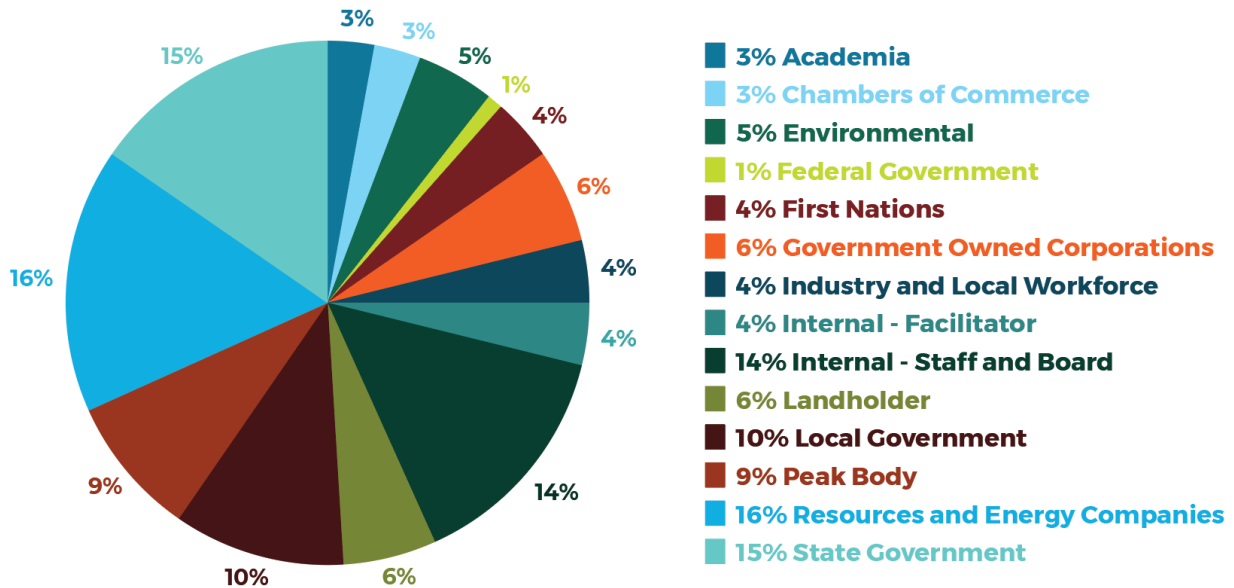
Closing remarks

- Rebecca Pickering, Acting Chair, Coexistence Queensland

Attendees

The event drew Coexistence Queensland's largest Community Leaders Council turnout to date, with 110 attendees representing a broad cross-section of stakeholders. The strong response to invitations reflected widespread interest in shaping the region's coexistence future. A breakdown of stakeholder representation is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Attendees by stakeholder group

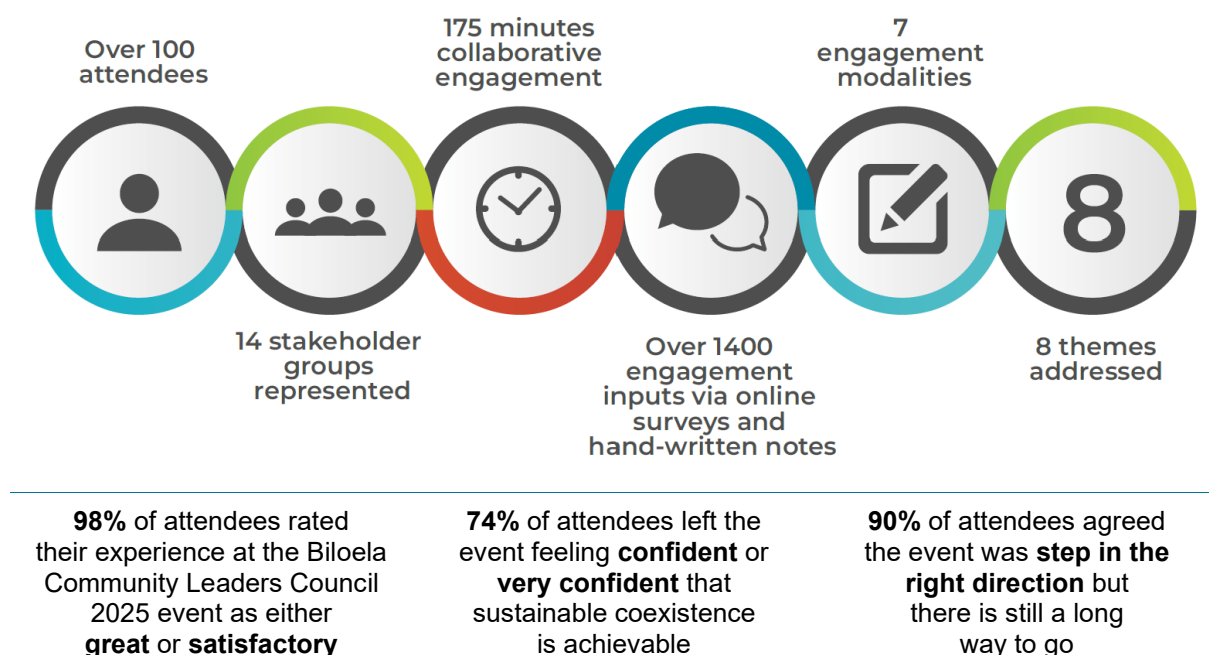


"This meeting shows what can happen when we all come together – industry, government, and community – to have real conversations. It's about finding opportunities, working together to find solutions, and building a stronger, more diverse economy for the future of our region."

*Cr Neville Ferrier
Mayor
Banana Shire Council*



Event outcomes snapshot



Key takeaways from the 8 themes addressed are highlighted below:

<p>1</p> <p>Delivering community benefits</p> <p>Long-term community value must be more than a promise – it needs to be planned, visible, and locally driven. Strategic investment, fair governance of benefit funds, and aligning spending with community priorities are key to ensuring development promotes a positive legacy across the Banana Shire.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Balancing land use across industries</p> <p>Land is under growing co-existence pressure from agriculture, mining, and energy. Fair, transparent, and locally informed planning can reduce conflict and protect key values. Considering cumulative impacts, improving assessment frameworks, and involving Traditional Owners early will help ensure decisions reflect both community needs and land capabilities.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Workforce development</p> <p>Equipping local people with the right skills at the right time is vital to support a changing economy. Building clear training pathways, forecasting job needs, and investing in education and liveability can help attract, retain and upskill a local workforce that is ready for future industries.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Infrastructure and regional growth</p> <p>Infrastructure needs to keep pace with development. Roads, housing, health, and education services must be planned with the community, not after the fact. Shared use, cross-industry collaboration, and long-term regional plans can help manage impacts and support sustainable growth for future generations.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Community engagement</p> <p>Respectful, consistent and purpose-driven engagement helps communities feel heard and informed. Early and meaningful consultation, clear communication of what is and isn't negotiable, and accessible, up-to-date information builds trust and reduces fatigue, which supports better long-term outcomes for all parties.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Economic diversification and local investment</p> <p>A strong, diverse economy builds resilience. Building on existing regional strengths, supporting local business participation in new supply chains, and attracting new investment in diversified industries can help create more jobs, retain young people, and ensure economic benefits at a local level.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Environmental management</p> <p>Responsible environmental management must start early and be built into every stage of development. Coordinated data, better cumulative impact tracking, and genuine efforts to avoid, minimise, and offset negative impacts are needed to protect the region's natural values while supporting a sustainable transition.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Stakeholder partnerships</p> <p>Strong partnerships across government, industry, community, and Traditional Owners underpin successful coexistence. Shared priorities, clear expectations, and trusted relationships help reduce duplication and improve outcomes. Embedding community voices in decision making is essential for long-term success.</p>

Figure 2: Event outcomes snapshot

Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony

The event was formally opened with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony led by the Gaangalu Nation People (GNP). Elders explained the significance of the Ceremony and noted that, while they are part of the broader GNP group of Nations, the event took place specifically on Gangulu Country. Elders Bonnie Reinecker, Lyn Blucher, Bino Toby and Flip Toby spoke for this Country, sharing stories of important landmarks in the region that form part of their songlines and dreaming. The Ceremony set a respectful and purposeful tone for the day, encouraging unity and a shared focus.

Scene setting

Following opening remarks from Coexistence Queensland CEO Warwick Squire, guest speakers provided valuable updates to help frame the day's discussions.

Highlights included a welcome by Banana Shire Council Mayor, Cr Neville Ferrier, and a presentation by Chris Welch, Director Council Services, who shared the breadth of work Council has undertaken and continues to lead to support renewable energy development in the region and its alignment with community values and economic growth. Attendees appreciated hearing Council's commitment to both existing industries and economic diversification, alongside efforts to address infrastructure and service needs to ensure continued improvement to quality of life for the Shire's communities.

The scene-setting session also included an address from Mr Bryson Head MP, Assistant Minister for Regional Development, Resources and Critical Minerals, and Member for Callide. Mr Head set the tone for the day by underscoring the role of government in enabling sustainable growth, safeguarding livelihoods, and maintaining trust with communities.

Another key presentation came from Dr Kathy Witt, Associate Professor in Social Performance at the University of Queensland's Gas and Energy Transition Centre, who shared early insights from her research into lessons learnt from coal seam gas development in Queensland. This work, informed by over 12 years of research, as well as more than 20 in-depth interviews and an online forum, helped shape the 8 themes explored throughout the day.

Following Dr Witt's presentation, senior Queensland Government representatives gave updates from the energy, resources, and agriculture portfolios. Darren Moor, Executive Director, Delivery, Georesources (Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development), spoke about the intersection of energy, resources and agriculture in policy development, highlighting the need for integrated solutions to support sustainable and socially responsible growth across sectors. Carlye Sycz, Acting Deputy Under Treasurer for Energy and Climate (Queensland Treasury), then provided an overview of funding commitments for critical infrastructure in Banana Shire and an update on the draft Renewables Regulatory Framework, including a proposed code of conduct for developers to ensure community concerns and legacy benefits are addressed. Elton Miller, Director for Agribusiness and Policy (Department of Primary Industries), closed the session by emphasising the importance of coordinated government initiatives to balance energy, resources and agricultural development, noting that alignment between sectors is essential for fostering sustainable growth and coexistence in Queensland's regions.

"The CLC provides a unique and valuable opportunity to collectively come up with solutions and identify actions to influence outcomes for the community."

Warwick Squire
CEO
Coexistence Queensland

Breakout facilitated sessions

There were three facilitated engagement sessions. The first defined sustainable coexistence for the Banana Shire in 2035; the second explored the eight identified themes to collectively discuss opportunities, challenges, and innovations; and the last session prioritised strategic actions. Each table had the opportunity to define sustainable coexistence, address one theme in detail, and provide inputs into a secondary theme. An overview of these sessions is provided on the following pages with detailed outputs provided.

Visioning for the future in Banana Shire

Key topics

In the lead up to the event, an online survey was circulated to all invited attendees, asking them to define what sustainable coexistence meant for the Banana Shire in 2035. These early responses helped shape Session 1 and provided inspiration for table-based discussions.

During the event, a live online survey was also conducted, with 75 attendees submitting 92 responses – a strong 68% response rate. These inputs informed facilitated table discussions where each group developed their own vision statements or identified shared themes. In total, 219 visioning inputs were captured during the event.

Combined with the pre-event survey responses, 333 inputs were reviewed to identify key ideas and common themes. From this process, eight central topics emerged to inform the overall vision for sustainable coexistence in the Banana Shire. These are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Key topics raised during vision discussions



Proposed vision statements

From the inputs gathered, three vision statements were developed and are listed below.

Sustainable coexistence in Banana Shire is...

- a thriving, engaged, and adaptive community that benefits from the diverse economic activities of new and existing industries while sustaining and regenerating the environment.
- a practical approach that creates investable opportunities, strengthens local businesses, builds community capacity, improves infrastructure, supports environmental sustainability, promotes community safety, and ensures the benefits from new and existing industries remain local.
- a shared commitment to regional development where communities, industries, and the environment thrive together. It is underpinned by long-term planning, fair outcomes, and inclusive governance. This vision ensures communities are supported by strong local economies, equitable practices across new and existing industries, and respectful engagement with landholders and Traditional Owners. It protects environmental and cultural values, delivers lasting infrastructure and social benefits, and secures stable energy, food, and economic futures for generations to come.

These proposed vision statements will be presented for consideration by the LRG, once established. Selecting a preferred vision statement is an important early task for the group, as it will help provide a shared foundation for their advice to Banana Shire Council. It will also ensure future actions remain aligned with the long-term aspirations of the Banana Shire community. For more information refer to *Next steps* on page 23.

Theme exploration and outputs

Key topics

The facilitated sessions garnered almost 500 inputs across 130 minutes of discussion time. The key topics that consistently emerged across discussions are summarised in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Key topics raised during theme exploration



Each table was assigned to discuss one of the eight themes. The following pages present session outputs for each of the themes, outlining the opportunities identified, the challenges raised, and the responses proposed, some of which were highlighted across multiple themes. Some proposed responses are already in place or in progress and this has been identified in the summaries.



Session outputs

1. Delivering community benefits

Housing emerged as a clear and repeated priority throughout the sessions, with strong feedback that new development must help address local shortages and support long-term liveability. There was broad interest in using community benefit funds to support housing solutions as well as investment in critical services like healthcare, education, and aged care support (further information is provided in 4. Infrastructure and regional growth). Economic growth and diversification were also seen as two of the most important legacy impacts for the community (refer to sections 3 and 6 for further information).

Attendees supported the idea of a regional community benefit fund managed by Banana Shire Council, with advice from a local reference group, to ensure transparency, local oversight, and alignment with community priorities. Pooling contributions from multiple developers or funders – through equity stakes or annual levies – was discussed as a way to sustain funding over the long term, beyond the life of individual projects. While proponents may expect brand recognition, the emphasis was firmly on coordinated, place-based investment that delivers real value to the region.

There was also a strong appetite to reinvigorate community organisations and reduce volunteer fatigue by resourcing local events, activities, and initiatives. Other suggestions included a community grants hub, exploring equity share models for Traditional Owners, and a major project display centre to build awareness and support transparency.

Ideas could be advanced locally in the short to medium term, which may need support from industry and/or local and state government. While not every concept is ready for immediate action, the strong community sentiment was that benefits should be lasting, not one-off, and shaped by genuine local priorities.

Opportunities	Challenges	Responses
1 A community benefits fund could provide long-term economic resilience beyond the life of individual projects	Without structured investment, benefits may be short-lived or unevenly distributed	Establish a sovereign wealth-style fund to provide ongoing support to ensure community benefits continue beyond individual projects
2 Align community benefit investments with community needs and priorities to promote the liveability and sustainability of the shire	Community benefit investments have traditionally been small-scale and delivered short-term benefits	Review Banana Shire Council community and place-based plans to prioritise investments and provide information on Council website
3 Build long-term trust and oversight of CLC-related outcomes and community priorities for legacy impacts	Lack of community visibility of progress	Establish a steering committee (Local Reference Group) to advise Council on community benefits and coexistence considerations
4 Ensure meaningful community ownership in the energy transition	Lack of mechanisms for local and Traditional Owner equity participation	Equity share opportunities for community and Traditional Owners
5 Build local capacity and transition workforce for future industries	Limited awareness of local career pathways and training options	Employment pathway programs – CS Energy Futures Hub could include broader renewables training
6 Celebrate culture, promote tourism and educate the public	Lack of a dedicated space to share First Nations stories and heritage	Create a First Nations cultural centre (like a museum) to showcase history and culturally significant sites that community and tourists can visit
7 Leverage royalties to improve regional digital infrastructure	Connectivity gaps limit participation in education, jobs, and services	AI Connectivity – State Government funds through royalty returns
8 Improve community awareness and transparency around projects	Lack of accessible information and visual representation of major projects	Establish a major project display centre

2. Balancing land use across industries

Attendees acknowledged the increasing pressure on land as agriculture, energy, and mining projects expand across the region. Striking a fair balance between landholder rights, environmental protection, and industry needs was seen as a major challenge, particularly where regulatory frameworks differ between sectors. Strong feedback called for greater transparency in planning and compensation processes, and for development to be guided by clear, locally informed planning schemes that reflect community priorities.

Concerns were raised about cumulative impacts, especially where multiple projects affect infrastructure, agricultural productivity, water flows or road use. Many attendees felt current assessment frameworks don't go far enough in accounting for these combined pressures. There was strong interest in introducing a more consistent regime for renewables – including financial assurance requirements similar to those in place for mining – and in recognising Greenhouse Gas Abatement Zones as assets that should be fairly compensated.

Attendees also highlighted the importance of incorporating agricultural operations into project designs, including co-use innovations like agrivoltaics or using undergrowth for feedstock. Land rehabilitation, carbon farming, and solar integration were raised as opportunities to improve drought resilience and support a more sustainable coexistence model, as well as the need to improve biosecurity understanding among developers.

Suggestions for action included setting up local consultation groups, creating a central point of local knowledge, and establishing a one-stop shop for dispute resolution. Stakeholders may wish to explore how these ideas could be adapted locally, while also advocating for clearer state-wide land use protections and offset frameworks to support fairer outcomes.

Opportunities	Challenges	Responses
1 Enable community voice in complex land use planning decisions	Communities often feel excluded or overwhelmed by multiple processes	Increase community awareness of existing statutory land-use planning processes to facilitate meaningful participation
2 Local knowledge can improve project decisions and reduce conflict	Information is scattered across agencies, proponents, and community groups	Establish a central point of local knowledge to reduce community fatigue and ensure local input
3 Need for early resolution of land use conflict	Formal legal processes are slow, costly, and increase tensions	Create a one-stop shop for dispute resolution, including Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)
4 Innovation in land use can improve coexistence outcomes	New approaches like agrivoltaics lack local demonstration and evidence	Invest in research, development, and extension for coexistence strategies like agrivoltaics
5 Land offset decisions can be coordinated across projects and sectors	Fragmented and uncoordinated offset processes reduce environmental outcomes	Set up an integrated government offset land bank for coordinated decisions on land use
6 Offsets can support both environmental and cultural goals	First Nations priorities are often sidelined in offset planning	Form offset partnerships with First Nations groups to align environmental outcomes with cultural priorities and create job opportunities
7 Shared issues across industries (e.g. biosecurity) require coordinated responses	Industries tend to work in silos and duplicate efforts	Establish multi-industry working groups for areas of interest, for e.g. biosecurity, common use facilities
8 Improve quality and consistency of community impact assessments	Varying project approaches lead to community frustration and inconsistent outcomes	Create a best practice guide to assist projects in assessing community impacts

3. Workforce development

Workforce development was seen as essential to ensuring the region can manage industrial change while creating secure, meaningful jobs for local people. Attendees were clear that planning needs to start now to map out the skills that will be needed in future industries – and to give local workers time to prepare. Transparent forecasts and job numbers are critical, not only for individuals and schools but also for training providers, government, and employers to coordinate their efforts.

There was a strong push to strengthen local training pathways, including school-based vocational programs, micro-credentials, and support for Recognition of Prior Learning. TAFE and other facilities may be able to play a bigger role if supported, and some called for a centralised training hub focused on future skills. Attendees also flagged a need for a clearer regulatory environment that holds developers accountable for investing in the local workforce, and for ensuring a reliable project pipeline so that jobs are not short-lived or fly-in fly-out by default.

Improving liveability was also seen as vital to attracting and retaining workers. This includes access to housing, good schools and health services, digital connectivity, and opportunities for families to settle and thrive. Relocation support and local spending initiatives – like a verified local business directory – were raised as ways to keep the economic benefits in the community.

Banana Shire Council, relevant Queensland Government agencies, training bodies, and industry could collaborate to improve workforce data, training coordination and local service improvements. While some elements are already underway, further effort is needed to link training to real, long-term career opportunities.

Opportunities	Challenges	Responses
1 Centralised training can address skill shortages and support career pathways	Training currently fragmented across providers and not always aligned with local needs	Centralised skills-based training facility
2 Future industry needs can shape proactive workforce planning	Lack of data-driven insight into future workforce demand and gaps	Undertake a skills gap analysis in conjunction with industry based on future workforce projections to inform current training and upskilling requirements for local workforce
3 First Nations knowledge offers unique and valuable skills in land, environment, and culture	Often not formally integrated into training and employment pathways	Utilise First Nations knowledge as a workforce strength
4 Broadening energy focus allows for flexibility and resilience in future workforce planning	Workforce programs may be limited to one energy source or project type	Energy generation agnostic approach to broaden job opportunities
5 A verified local business directory strengthens local procurement and job creation	Existing directories may be outdated or lack quality control	Maintain and verify local business directory
6 Workforce initiatives require coordination and financial clarity to be successful	Ambiguity over who leads and funds workforce development initiatives	Clear understanding of who is going to coordinate and fund initiatives
7 Strengthen school-to-work transitions and align education with future jobs	Disconnection between education system and emerging industry needs	Education – align curriculum to industry opportunities, include STEM and vocation opportunities

4. Infrastructure and regional growth

Infrastructure planning was a central concern, with many attendees warning that the pace of industrial growth risks outstripping the region's ability to support it. Roads, corridors, water, waste, education, and health services were all mentioned as areas already under strain. Housing for workers was again raised as a key issue, not only in terms of quantity but also quality and availability for families, professionals and essential workers.

Attendees emphasised the need for staged, long-term planning that reflects both current and future needs – including disaster resilience, population changes, and the shift toward economic diversification. Better data and coordination were seen as essential to avoid duplication and to identify shared opportunities, such as common user infrastructure or partnerships across neighbouring councils. There was strong support for ensuring that infrastructure investment reflects the full range of community needs and doesn't just follow project sites.

Community involvement in planning was considered vital, as was alignment between community benefit funds and Council's infrastructure priorities, with stronger regulatory mechanisms to ensure this happens. Some attendees suggested any royalties from development should be returned to communities,

Ideas included a regional infrastructure plan. The Central Queensland Regional Infrastructure Plan is being updated by the Queensland Government and Central Queensland councils under the State Infrastructure Strategy and informed by Banana Shire Council's Local Infrastructure Plan. Other proposals included a coordinated impact assessment process across sectors and dedicated studies on road, water and waste networks.

Council is developing workers' accommodation in Biloela to meet some of the emerging demand, has amended its planning scheme to incentivise temporary workers' accommodation near communities, and advocated for limits on on-site accommodation under the state development assessment process. It has also introduced a policy for developers of major projects to contribute to long-term housing stock to support sustained growth. Partnerships with state and federal agencies will be crucial for delivering infrastructure that supports both industry and community over the decade ahead.

Opportunities	Challenges	Responses
1 Growing project activity can drive transport upgrades that benefit both industry and community	Current road infrastructure in some locations is not fit for purpose for movement of large wind farm components from port to site and there will be significantly increased heavy vehicle traffic during construction, affecting other road users	Road transport infrastructure study – Gladstone Port to project sites (being undertaken by Queensland Transport)
2 Transparency around Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) supports better regional planning	Communities and councils lacking access to information on REZ impacts	Queensland Government to provide transparency on renewable energy zone impact assessments
3 Short-term accommodation located near communities is essential to reduce housing pressure during project construction and contribute to the local economy	Temporary and ongoing workforce inflow can add further strain to already stressed local accommodation, housing supply and rental markets	Project proponents to provide short-term accommodation for construction workers and long-term housing for operational staff
4 A coordinated regional plan ensures infrastructure supports long-term growth	Risk that infrastructure investment will be fragmented or duplicated, and considers only up-front capital costs and not recurrent expenditure for maintenance and operations	Develop a long-term regional infrastructure plan led by local government that includes a cross-industry infrastructure review and considers land optimisation
5 Broader infrastructure needs go beyond roads and require integrated analysis	Waste, water, and sewerage infrastructure are nearing capacity or face pressures in some areas	Commission a broad infrastructure study that considers waste, water and sewerage
6 Water security is essential to support industry, agriculture and community growth	Increased demand and climate variability are straining water supply systems	Council to develop a water security plan

5. Community engagement

Community engagement was consistently described as the foundation for building trust, reducing conflict, and creating better outcomes for all parties. Attendees emphasised that engagement must be purposeful, consistent and ongoing – not limited to approvals or major milestones. There was a strong call to move away from box-ticking exercises and instead ensure people understand what's negotiable, what's not, and how their input is being used.

Many attendees expressed frustration with inconsistent, complex, or confusing information from proponents and government. Suggestions included creating a centralised hub or “one stop shop” for engagement, supported by tailored messaging that recognises the diversity of the local community. Human-centred approaches – with communication tailored to different needs, preferences, and levels of understanding – were seen as essential for reducing fatigue and improving trust.

Transparency was another key theme. Communities want open communication, clarity about impacts and timelines, and accountability for commitments. Participants said developers should not use non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) with landholders, should publish impact study outcomes, and engage with purpose and meaning, informed by community values and priorities, to rebuild confidence and improve relationships between communities and industry.

A number of ideas were raised, including industry providing funding for engagement staff within council, including for a one stop shop for information, appointing coexistence representatives for different sectors, developing engagement toolkits to improve industry practice (such as capacity building being led by the Queensland Renewable Energy Council and The Energy Charter), and using local influencers or ambassadors to help spread trusted messages.

Opportunities	Challenges	Responses
1 Embedding specialised engagement staff in councils can improve local responsiveness and alignment	Councils often lack the resourcing to engage deeply on multiple projects	Industry-funded engagement staff embedded within councils
2 Dedicated coexistence roles can improve engagement between new and existing industries and the community	No current framework or mandate for industry-specific coexistence engagement	Appoint specialised coexistence representatives for each industry
3 Lift developer engagement standards and reduce community frustration to build social licence	Engagement quality varies significantly between projects and proponents	Development of engagement toolkits to support best practice
4 Communities need simple access to information and services across projects	Information is often fragmented across agencies and project proponents	Establish a one stop shop for community information and services
5 Using diverse communication channels can broaden reach and improve understanding	Traditional methods may not reach all community segments	Use social media, high-traffic physical locations, and other industry platforms to share messages
6 Tailored messages through trusted voices can build credibility and cut through noise	Generic communications often fail to resonate with key community segments	Develop targeted messaging through ‘influencer’ or ambassador roles
7 Measure whether efforts to improve coexistence between communities and industry are making a difference	There's no agreed baseline or consistent way to track progress across regions and industries	Establish coexistence baselines across all industries, led by independent researchers, with findings informing local reference groups

6. Economic diversification and local investment

Attendees consistently highlighted the need to broaden the region's economic base to build resilience and create long-term opportunities beyond any single industry. The aim is not just to attract new business, but to strengthen existing local enterprises and support innovation that aligns with the region's strengths. Investment should be targeted and strategic – focused on areas with long-term potential and meaningful local benefit and economic growth.

Circular economy initiatives, manufacturing, and tourism were all raised as promising directions. So too was the idea of blending old and new industries – such as combining solar with agriculture – to create diversified income streams for landholders. Drought resilience, land rehabilitation, and regenerative farming were seen as key to protecting existing livelihoods while exploring new ones. Attendees stressed that development should play to the region's natural and community assets, not override them.

Support for local businesses was also a major focus with suggestions including tailored training and upskilling, clearer pathways for locals to access contracts and supply chains, and a business gap analysis to help identify and fill capability gaps. Several attendees saw Banana Shire Council as a potential enabler in this space, particularly in identifying priority sectors and working with partners to attract investment.

While some diversification opportunities can be advanced locally, many will require collaboration with industry, peak bodies and all levels of government. Inland Rail was flagged as a future economic driver, offering supply chain and transport advantages. The challenge now is to link these opportunities with the skills, resources, and coordination needed to turn them into lasting outcomes.

Opportunities		Challenges	Responses
1	Region is well-positioned to broaden its economic base through targeted support and investment attraction for future-focused industries	Risk of disconnected or ad hoc efforts that don't deliver long-term outcomes	Develop an economic diversification plan that is targeted and strategic
2	Emerging markets in recycling and circular economy align with local strengths and sustainability goals	Limited existing circular economy industries or supply chains in region	Investigate recycling and circular economy business opportunities
3	Inland rail can unlock new markets, improve freight efficiency, and attract investment	Region may not be fully prepared to capitalise on supply chain and logistics opportunities	Connectivity – Inland Rail – could open significant economic opportunities and supply chain opportunities for the region
4	Local businesses want to participate in major projects but need support to meet the requirements of developers and Tier 1 contractors	Local business needs to overcome capability gaps, including skills, services, scale and structure and competition with established supply chains to demonstrate they can competitively meet developer requirements	Support local businesses through upskilling, training and local content opportunities

7. Environmental management

Responsible environmental management was seen as non-negotiable for long-term regional wellbeing. Attendees emphasised that future development must integrate sustainability and account for cumulative impacts, not just those of individual projects. There was strong concern that regulatory frameworks are fragmented across government levels, and that poor coordination is undermining both environmental outcomes and community confidence.

Baseline environmental data is either lacking or inaccessible, making it difficult to assess the condition of local ecosystems or the potential effects of new development. A centralised data hub, gap analysis, and partnerships with universities and peak environmental groups were suggested to help close these gaps and inform better decision-making. Using existing infrastructure and previously disturbed land, where possible, was also seen as a practical way to reduce additional environmental pressure.

Attendees called for stronger protection of ecological and culturally significant areas, alongside more innovative and transparent offset management. There was a shared interest in circular economy principles, reuse and recycling, and post-industry land use that supports biodiversity and long-term value. Acknowledging Traditional Owner knowledge and land management practices was seen as a critical part of any future planning.

Banana Shire Council may wish to explore where local partnerships, data sharing or advocacy could support improved environmental outcomes, while also recognising that many of the required changes – particularly around regulation, offsets and cumulative impact assessment – rest with state and federal agencies. Without stronger systems in place, there is a risk that environmental impacts will continue to be under-estimated and poorly managed.

Opportunities		Challenges	Responses
1	AI technology can enhance accuracy and efficiency in monitoring and mapping	Limited uptake of digital tools and data analytics in regional environmental work	Use artificial intelligence to support geo-referencing and environmental management
2	Collaborating with experts strengthens science-based decisions and credibility	Efforts to address coexistence matters through partnerships can be fragmented without clear coordination	Establish strategic partnerships with universities, environmental groups and bodies to support region-specific environmental studies and data collection
3	A dedicated role can drive practical circular economy outcomes across industry	Waste management efforts are currently ad hoc and lack clear leadership	Consider establishment of a circular economy and waste coordinator (e.g. CQROC)
4	Better offset practices can improve environmental outcomes	Offset schemes are often seen as transactional and fragmented, limiting environmental benefit	Innovation in offset management
5	Centralised data supports better planning and monitoring across industries	Environmental data is siloed, incomplete or inconsistently shared	Create a centralised data hub to support proactive environmental management (establish who owns it)

8. Stakeholder partnerships

Strong, trust-based partnerships were seen as essential for managing change and delivering real, lasting benefits. Attendees expressed a clear desire for coordinated action across government, industry and community – not just more consultation. There was a shared belief that Banana Shire has the potential to lead by example, but it will require clarity of purpose, long-term thinking and a commitment to working together in good faith.

Many people spoke about the need to empower local voices in shaping policy and investment decisions. This group also proposed a local reference group as one way to bring together elected representatives, community leaders and other stakeholders to identify strategic priorities and legacy projects. This recommendation and support for a community benefit fund are outlined in Section 1: Community benefits. There was also recognition that partnerships must include the most vulnerable groups, and that funding models should support participation through to the end of projects.

Tensions between community and industry values were acknowledged. Some attendees described a lack of trust, shaped by legacy issues and past experiences. Others flagged the risk of projects being imposed on communities that are resistant to change. Money alone was not seen as a solution – people want a genuine seat at the table and clear expectations around how development should be done in their region.

Practical suggestions included establishing a partnership directory, placing industry-funded staff into councils, and developing shared guides for working in the region. A proposed private sector working group is already in place in Banana Shire Council, bringing together local businesses, major project developers and local and state government representatives. These stakeholders may consider how to strengthen or expand existing partnerships, while also advocating for clearer leadership and policy direction from state and federal government to support fairer, more consistent outcomes.

Opportunities	Challenges	Responses
1 Local ownership strengthens trust and ensures benefits stay in region	Communities often feel left out of project benefits and decision making	Give communities an economic stake in projects (e.g. 1% royalty to council / public / private partnership)
2 Establish clear expectations that support consistent behaviour from new and existing stakeholders	Communities and councils experience inconsistency in how proponents engage	Create a guide that has expectations for working in the region
3 Visibility of existing groups and stakeholders improves collaboration and reduces duplication	Stakeholders don't always know who's active or how to connect	Develop a directory of partners
4 Industry support can build council capacity to deal with project workload	Councils are often under-resourced to respond to development pressures	Major industry could fund and/or place staff into councils – i.e. planners / consultants
5 A dedicated space for business collaboration can drive investment and innovation	Private sector contributions to regional development are often siloed	Establish a private sector working group

Topics to address in future

Through a live survey and a 'parking lot' feedback station, attendees submitted 40 suggestions for future consideration. Responses have been grouped into six key areas:



Economic impacts and innovations

- Understand the mix and scale of the local economy
- Realistic expectations around project economics
- Managing the impact of Callide Power Station's future closure or change in operations
- The role of royalties from traditional resources
- Alternatives to renewables for rural economies
- State-supported promotion of water treatment as a career path

Governance, policy, regulation, and transparency

- Showcase best-practice coexistence models
- Reform legislation to support land use planning
- Address local government limitations in enforcing project commitments
- Clarify state and federal energy policy
- Increase support for councils from the State
- Introduce clearer review processes for ongoing project activities
- Encourage developers to understand their place in the broader regional context
- Integrate traditional and new industries
- Improve transparency through a local project overview
- Reject the use of NDAs by proponents
- Acknowledge when projects are too advanced to influence

Listening to community voices and concerns

- Ensure landholder experiences are genuinely heard and respected
- Respond to biosecurity concerns
- Provide clear answers to landholder and community questions

Practical community education

- Share case studies and real project expectations
- Provide education on energy, renewables, and property rights
- Suggested reading: *Target Atmospheric CO2: Where Should Humanity Aim?* (Hansen, 2008)

Future engagement suggestions

- Encourage ongoing collaboration between events
- Use online tools to continue engagement and action

Impact management and energy equity

- Improve cultural resource management
- Aim for nature-positive outcomes as a region
- Increase focus and action on environmental issues
- Address social challenges tied to development
- Ensure fair distribution of benefits (energy justice)
- Tackle energy security risks equitably



Feedback

Attendees had the opportunity to provide real-time feedback on the overall event, with 55 responses received. The most consistent suggestion was a need for more time, with 14 respondents specifically mentioning this. A summary of all feedback is provided below and will be used to inform future engagement design and delivery.

Time management and structure

- Not enough time for in-depth discussions or workshoping
- Tight timeframes limited meaningful conversations
- More time needed for scene setting and context
- Extend the event to allow deeper engagement

Format and content

- More breakout sessions and interactive formats – less recaps
- Reduce “talking heads” and increase action-based activities
- Include open forums or whole-room discussions
- Consider smaller, more targeted group sessions
- Focus on practical, implementable solutions (like session 3)
- Shift emphasis from high-level strategy to tangible outcomes
- Avoid lengthy formal introductions – get into content faster
- Use real case studies and practical community examples
- Provide clearer context on Banana Shire’s energy landscape
- Allow attendees to choose or engage more in preferred topics



Stakeholder representation and inclusivity

- Increase participation from local landholders, especially in agriculture
- Ensure visible cultural and demographic diversity
- Prioritise local voices for greater place-based relevance
- Include a broader range of stakeholder groups beyond local government

Logistics and accessibility

- Assign people to themes aligned with their knowledge or interest
- Improve visibility of presentation screens
- Share attendee lists (with roles/organisations) ahead of time
- Provide presentation materials after the event
- Minimise single-use plastics
- Create a more comfortable setting for conversations (reduce noise levels)

Future action

- Clarify how event insights will be used
- Establish mechanisms at the local level to support implementation



Local benefit

Coexistence Queensland is committed to supporting regional and rural communities by sourcing goods and services from local suppliers wherever possible. For the Biloela Community Leaders Council 2025 event, 19 local small businesses were engaged, resulting in approximately \$50,000 of direct local spend. An estimated additional \$22,500 was injected into the local economy through indirect spending.

Suppliers spanned a wide range of services – including facilitation, Traditional Owner Welcome to Country, venue hire, AV, catering, printing, stationery, photography, and videography. First Nations businesses were prioritised through Supply Nation, reflecting Coexistence Queensland's commitment to inclusive procurement practices.

Beyond direct procurement, the event drew more than 90 delegates who contributed to the local economy through accommodation, hospitality and incidental spending. These efforts reflect Coexistence Queensland's long-standing approach to regional investment – not only strengthening community connections but also supporting sustainable economic development in the regions it serves. A snapshot of this economic impact is presented in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Economic impact snapshot



Next steps

Local Reference Group

In September 2024, the Queensland Government announced it would provide \$5 million for a pilot Callide REZ Community Legacy Fund to ensure long-lasting, legacy benefits from energy development in the shire. Locals would be involved in identifying priorities for investment of the Fund through a Banana Shire Local Reference Group (LRG), to be established. Banana Shire Council, Coexistence Queensland and the Queensland Government are in the early stages of developing the LRG to advise Council on priority community benefit investments that will improve the liveability of the region and attract new residents to the shire. Additional information about community involvement opportunities will be available by late 2025.

The concept of an LRG was raised during the CLC event to support a more strategic, coordinated approach to engaging about and managing coexistence in the Banana Shire. Participants emphasised the importance of strong local input, backed by independent expertise, to ensure local communities play a meaningful role in shaping the future of the region and securing long-term benefits.



Participants identified that it could provide a forum for constructive dialogue between community, government, industry and Traditional Owners and support the review and prioritisation of the opportunities, challenges, and proposed responses identified through the CLC process.



Appreciation and thanks

Banana Shire Council and Coexistence Queensland sincerely thank all attendees for their insights and commitment to shaping a stronger future for the Banana Shire – Traditional Owners, landholders, community members, local businesses, industry representatives, local and state government, and peak organisations.

The diversity of views shared on the day added real depth to discussions – and this openness is critical to finding balanced, practical solutions for the region's future.

The perspectives and inputs provided by all attendees will help inform meaningful action and ensure future decisions reflect the needs and values of the community.





(07) 4992 9500
enquiries@banana.qld.gov.au
banana.qld.org.au



1300 548 021
enquiries@cqld.org.au
cqld.org.au