

## EVOLVE GRIFFITH: AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING PROSPERITY, 2020-2025

**Industry Value**

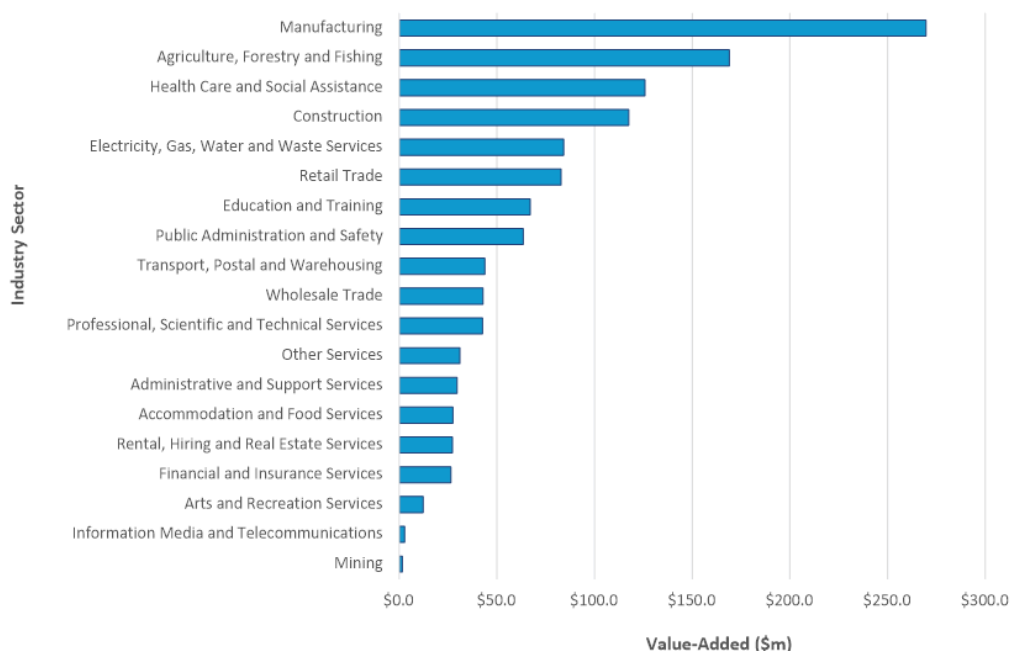
Value-added (or industry's contribution to Gross Regional Product) is an indicator of business productivity. It is the value of goods and services produced by an industry less the cost of production inputs.

In value terms, Griffith's economy is driven by activity in the manufacturing, agriculture, construction and health care and social assistance sectors.

As well as being the largest provider of jobs locally, Griffith's manufacturing sector accounts for one-fifth (\$270 million) of local industry value-added.

This is followed by the agricultural sector, which contributes \$169 million in industry value-added or 13% of the total, followed by the health care and social assistance sector and the construction industry. Griffith's agricultural industry activities include livestock production (beef, sheep and poultry), table and wine grapes, citrus fruits and cereal crops including wheat, rice and other crops.

**Figure 8. Value-Added by Industry (\$m), Griffith City, 2018/19**



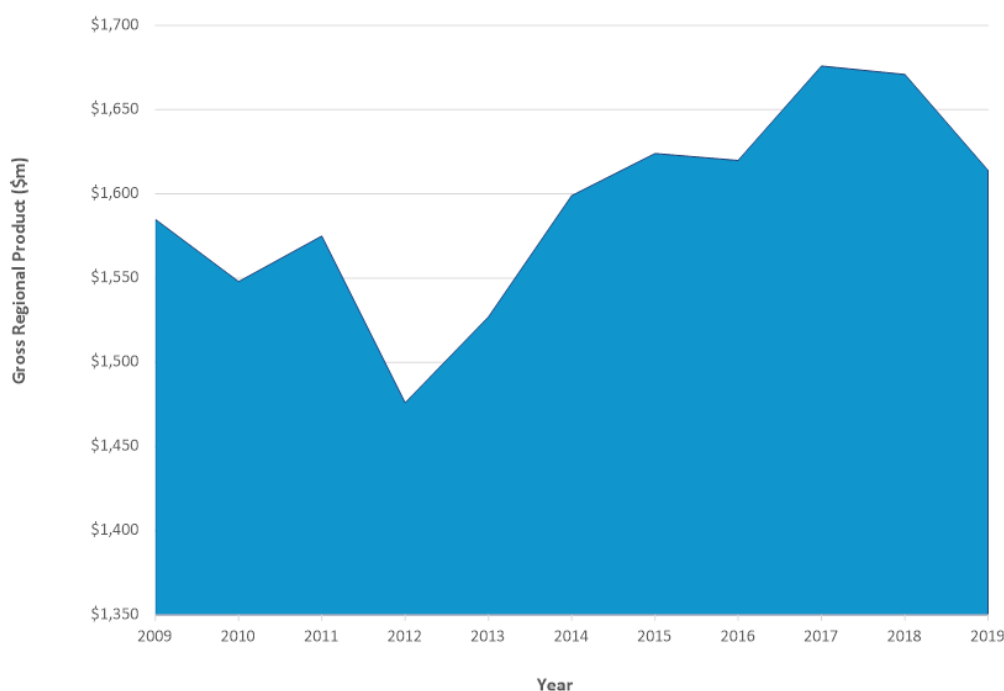
Source: economy.id and NIEIR with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Gross Regional Product (GRP) is a measure of size or net wealth generated by the local economy. It refers to the total money value of all goods and services produced in the local / regional economy over a one-year period.

Griffith City's Gross Regional Product was \$1.61 billion in the year ending June 2019, down 3.4%

on the previous year. As illustrated below, over the ten-year period to 2019, Griffith City's GRP has fluctuated considerably, hitting a low point in 2012 and then rising steadily until 2017.

Since 2017, Griffith's GRP has been in decline, from \$1.68 billion in 2017 to \$1.61 billion in 2019, a decline of \$62 million over two years

**Figure 9. Gross Regional Product (\$m), Griffith City, 2009 - 2019**

Source: economy.id and NIEIR with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

### Griffith's Employment Capacity

One goal of promoting and facilitating local economic development is to maximise employment opportunities locally, leading to a more sustainable community. 'Employment capacity' is a simple way of looking at whether the Griffith economy could theoretically provide jobs for all its residents if they were to choose to work locally.

Employment capacity refers to the number of local jobs in an industry, divided by the number of local residents employed (anywhere) in that industry. A value over 1.0 means there are more jobs available than residents employed in that industry. A number less than 1.0 means there are more residents employed than jobs available in that sector.

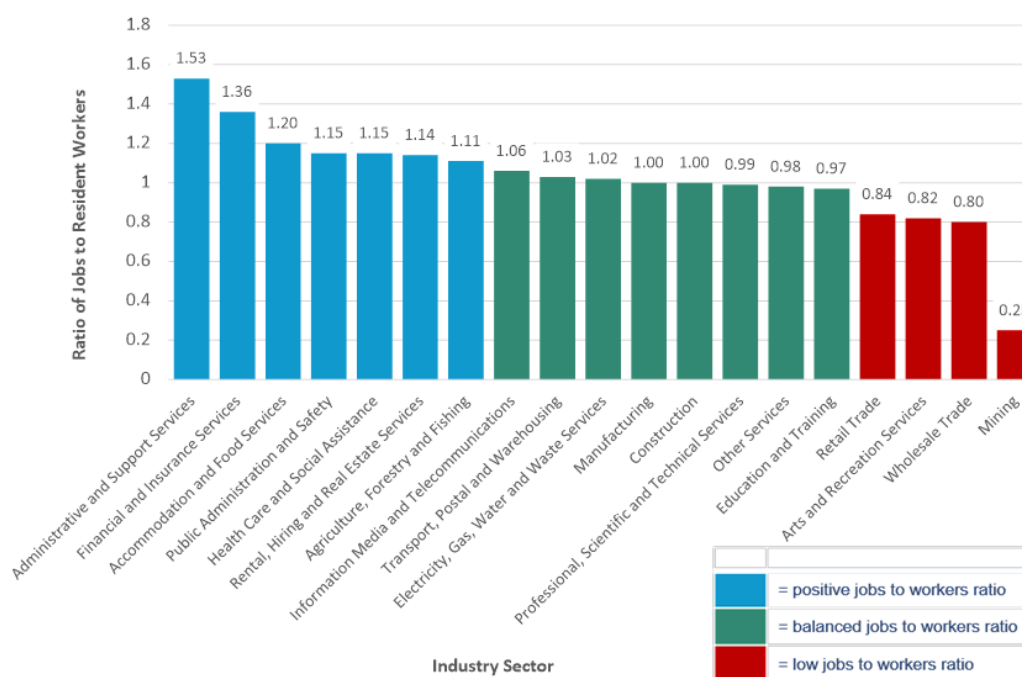
This is a theoretical exercise as, even if there are enough jobs provided locally, there will always be some people who choose to commute out of the Griffith LGA to work elsewhere.

As illustrated below, the jobs to resident workers ratio for Griffith City in 2018/19 was 1.02, meaning that there were more jobs than resident workers. Administrative and Support Services had the highest ratio (1.53), while the lowest ratio was found in Mining (0.25).

Retail Trade, one of Griffith's largest employers, has fewer available jobs than residents who work in that industry.

On the contrary, Accommodation and Food Services has more local jobs than resident workers.

The existence of more local jobs than resident workers in some 'professional services' sectors suggests there may be an opportunity to attract more skilled workers to live in Griffith.

**Figure 10. Employment Capacity by Industry, Griffith City, 2018/19**

Source: economy.id with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

### Griffith's Tourism Profile

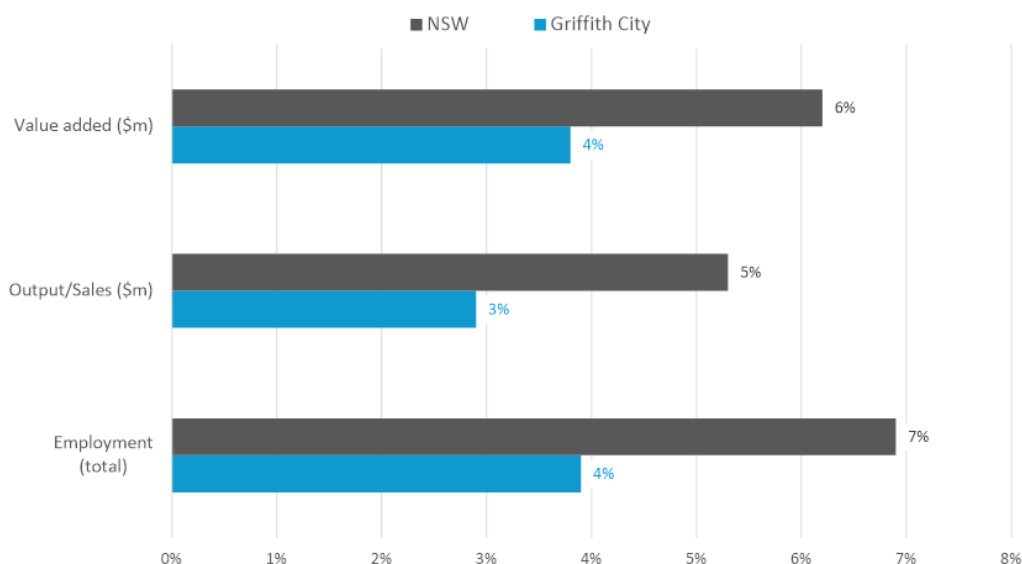
Australia's tourism sector has been Evolve strongly in recent years, and while the COVID-19 pandemic will impact on tourism movements to and within Australia in the short-term, over the medium to longer-term, growth prospects remain positive. According to IBISWorld (June 2020), Australia's tourism industry revenue is forecast to decrease by 19.4% in 2019-20, due to the Federal Government's inbound travel restrictions and limits to domestic travel implemented by state governments.

IBISWorld also notes that domestic tourism is already beginning to slowly start back up, with tourism businesses expected to rely heavily on domestic leisure travellers in 2020-21. If the Australian Government can reach an agreement with New Zealand and any other country that has successfully contained the virus, then some inbound travel may be allowed to start up again before the end of 2020.

Once inbound travel restrictions begin to ease, the industry should start to see a more pronounced recovery.

According to Destination NSW, the tourism and events sector is vital to the State's economy, contributing billions in revenue and supporting tens of thousands of jobs. Tourism employment accounts for approximately one in every 15 jobs in NSW.

The value of tourism and hospitality across three key indicators for Griffith compared to the State average - value-added, output and employment - is illustrated below. The tourism and hospitality sector accounts for only 4% of total employment in Griffith City compared to 7% across NSW. The local tourism and hospitality sector also falls short compared to the NSW average in its contribution to output and industry value-added. This suggests there is scope to enhance the contribution of the visitor economy to economic development in Griffith.

**Figure 11. The Contribution of Tourism and Hospitality to Employment, Output and Value Added, Griffith City and NSW, 2018/19**

Source: economy.id and NIEIR with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

### 3.4 Industry Growth and Share

Another means of informing an assessment of how the local economy is evolving and how it could develop, involves an assessment of industry trends and prospects.

Figure 12 presents an employment growth-share matrix for selected industries in the Griffith LGA. It shows how each local industry performs relative to NSW as a whole with respect to its relative specialisation, as indicated by its location quotient (LQ)<sup>2</sup>, its rate of average annual growth and its size as measured by the number of jobs in that industry sector.

Stages in the growth-share matrix are as follows:

- **Expanding:** If in the top right quadrant (high average annual growth and higher than

average concentration), this implies a strong, adaptive industry sector, which is good news for local economic development.

- **Emerging:** If in the lower right quadrant (high average annual growth / below average concentration), this is also good news, implying an emerging, Evolve industry that may need assistance to mature.
- **Transforming:** If in the upper left quadrant (lower than average annual growth and above average concentration), this is not good news, implying the industry is at risk (overall) and needing to increase innovation and productivity to compete with other regions.

<sup>2</sup> A location quotient (LQ) shows the percentage of local employment in a particular industry divided by the percentage of the NSW average that this industry makes up. Where the LQ=1, that industry is exactly as prevalent as in NSW. A location quotient greater than

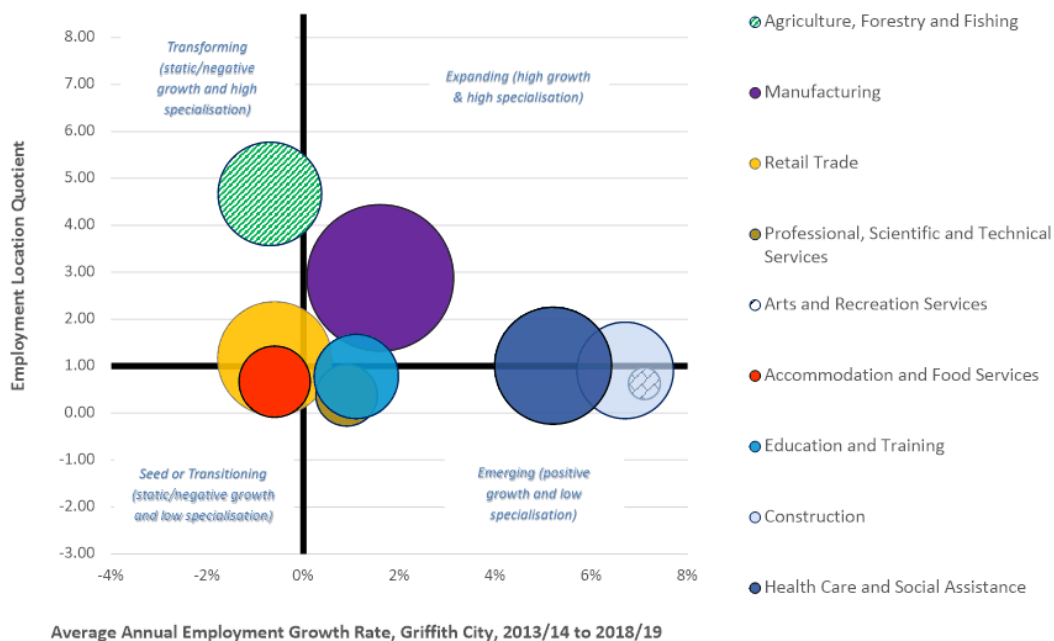
1.2 indicates a significant specialisation of the industry in the local area – possibly a key economic strength. Anything over 2 is a major specialisation.

## EVOLVE GRIFFITH: AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING PROSPERITY, 2020-2025

- **Seed or Transitioning:** If in the lower left quadrant (lower than average growth/lower than average concentration), this could imply that the

industry is neither developed nor Evolve, or it could also mean that it is a 'seed' industry with potential for growth.

**Figure 12. Industry Employment Growth-Share (Selected Industries), Griffith to NSW, 2013/14 to 2018/19**



Source: economy.id and NIEIR with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

Manufacturing, Griffith's largest industry, continues to expand, while agriculture is in a state of transformation. Retail trade too, which has been affected by evolving consumer spending patterns (not to mention the more recent impacts of COVID-19) is in a state of transformation.

Griffith's high-growth sectors (in employment terms) include health and construction as well as arts and recreation services (though from a very small base).

Griffith's emerging industries include education and training, health care and social assistance, recreation, arts and creative industries and professional services.

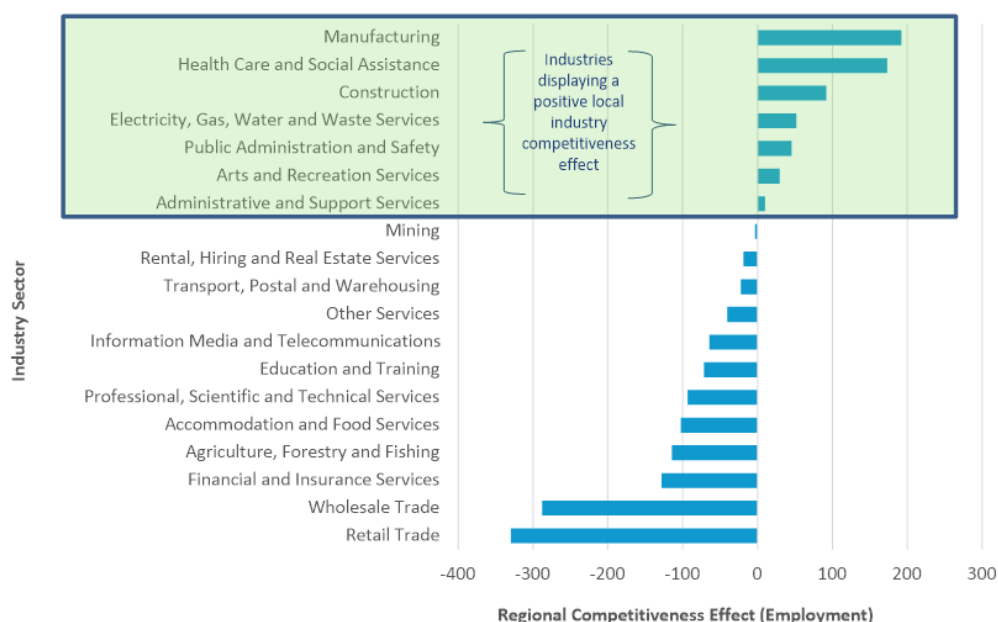
The accommodation and food services sector (perhaps the best proxy for the local tourism industry) could be considered a seed industry with potential for growth.

### 3.5 Regional Competitiveness Effect by Industry

Shift-share analysis provides a useful way of interpreting changes in economic variables between different time periods. It is a way of breaking the growth or decline in an industry into three components: national/state economic performance; broader industry performance; and regional competitiveness. The regional competitive effect for an industry generally indicates how the local industry has performed against benchmark trends. As illustrated in Figure 13, an industry with a positive regional competitive effect (such as manufacturing) suggests local characteristics supported above trend

employment growth while a negative effect (e.g. for retail trade) suggests local characteristics inhibited growth. In the figure, the change in employment by industry shows the net change attributed to local / regional factors after accounting for changes attributed to the amount of growth or decline in the industry that can be attributed to the performance of that specific industry at the NSW level and the amount of growth or decline that can be attributed to the overall growth in the broader (in this case NSW) economy generally.

**Figure 13. Regional Competitiveness Effect by Industry, Griffith City, 2013/14 - 2018/19**



Source: economy.id and NIEIR with interpretations by SC Lennon & Associates

As illustrated above, in Griffith, the strongest regional competitive effect between 2013/14 and 2018/19 (in employment terms) was experienced in the food and beverage product manufacturing sector followed by health care and social assistance and the construction industry. Public administration and safety, utilities and arts and recreation services are also strong. These activities could be further

developed, building on Griffith's lifestyle attributes to attract, for example, government departments and the arts / cultural and creative services. In the same period, the weakest regional competitive effect was experienced in Griffith's retail trade and wholesale trade sectors suggesting these industries are in a period of transition.

### 3.6 The Impacts of COVID-19

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting cities and regions throughout Australia and around the world, the need to understand the local impacts on business and industry and to develop appropriate responses to help promote and support economic development is perhaps more important than ever before.

As discussed earlier, despite the adverse economic impacts of the pandemic, some industry sectors are expected to outperform during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing has pushed many consumers to online channels for shopping, communication, food purchases and working arrangements. This trend has driven a surge in sectors such as online shopping, postal services, and data storage services.

Other industries have suffered direct negative effects, but have also seen positive factors, such as rising demand for repairs and maintenance services replacing new purchases.

IBISWorld (June 2020) has classified the degree of impact of COVID-19 for each industry sector (broadly defined) as 'moderate', 'high' or 'very high'. The level of disruption depends on the degree of industry exposure to international trade, as well as the impact on business confidence and consumer confidence.

The industry classifications of most relevance to Griffith are:

- Food Product Manufacturing - **Very High Impact**
- Other Store-based Retailing - **Very High**
- Accommodation - **Very High**
- Food and Beverage Services - **Very High**
- Arts and Recreation Services - **Very High**
- Agriculture - **High**
- Medical and Other Health Care Services - **High**
- Professional, Scientific & Technical Services - **High**
- Food Retailing - **Moderate**
- Construction Services - **Moderate**

- Hospitals - **Moderate**
- Social Assistance Services - **Moderate**
- Personal and Other Services - **Moderate**

A COVID-19 Outlook Tool has been developed by economy id to show the economic and industry impacts at the local government area level. This tool draws on the economic forecast model developed by NIEIR and focuses on the impacts to June 2020 (with updates planned).

Figure 14 illustrates the estimated impact of COVID-19 on employment and Gross Regional Product in Griffith compared to Regional NSW, NSW and Australia. The impacts refer to September quarter 2020 compared to September quarter 2019.

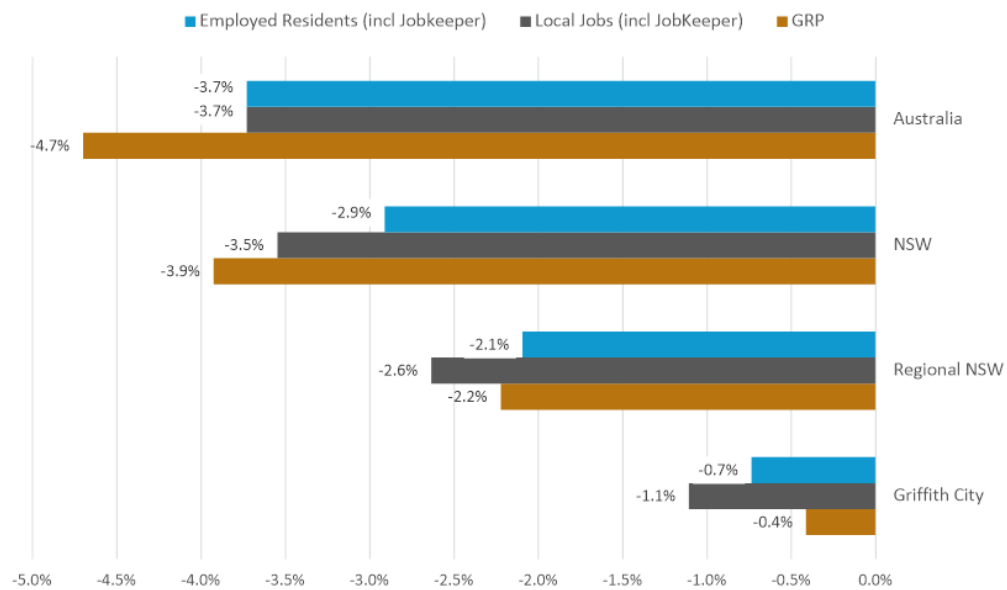
Griffith's GRP is forecast to fall by -0.4% in the September Quarter 2020 compared to the September Quarter 2019. This fall is significantly lower than the Regional NSW (-2.2%) and New South Wales (-3.9%) averages and is indicative of the resilience of business and industry in the Griffith area. Local Jobs are forecast to fall by -1.1%, which equates to a fall of 161 local jobs. Without JobKeeper, the estimated fall in local employment is 206 jobs and the greatest impact will be felt in the accommodation and food services sector, manufacturing and construction.

According to NIEIR's modelling, the impact of COVID-19 on employed residents (-0.7%) has not been as great as the impact on local jobs in the City of Griffith.

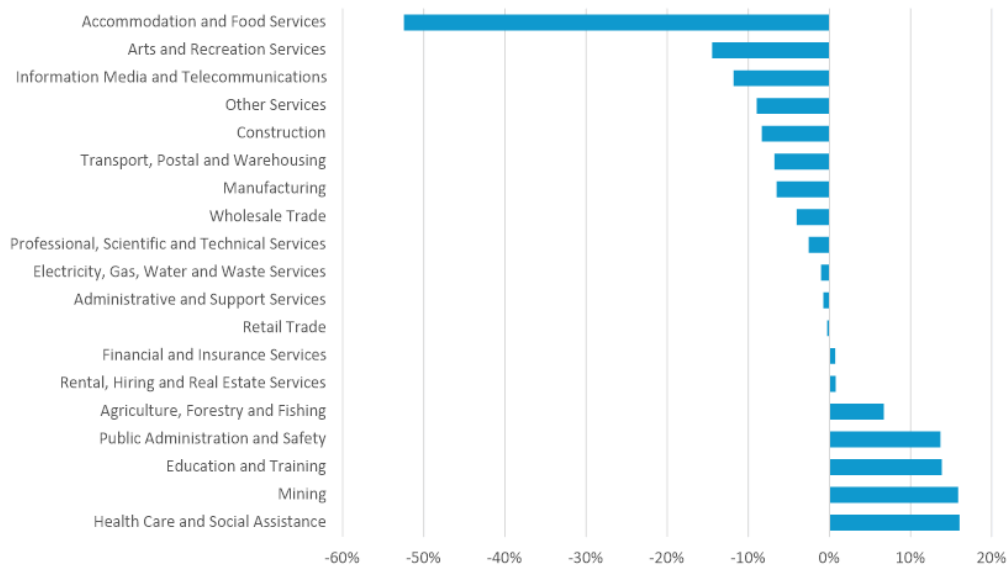
Figure 15 shows the impact of COVID-19 on industry value-added in Griffith. The greatest adverse impacts will be felt in the Accommodation and Food Services, Arts and Recreation Services, Information Media and Telecommunications and Other Services sectors. Conversely, those industries that are expected to be positively impacted include Health Care and Social Assistance, Public Administration and Agriculture.



## EVOLVE GRIFFITH: AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING PROSPERITY, 2020-2025

**Figure 14. COVID-19 Impacts on Jobs and GRP, Griffith City Compared, September 2020**

Source: economy.id and NIEIR (September 2020) with interpretations by SC Lennon &amp; Associates

**Figure 15. COVID-19 Impacts on Industry Value-Added, Griffith City, June 2020**

Source: economy.id and NIEIR (September 2020) with interpretations by SC Lennon &amp; Associates



### 3.7 Griffith's 'Focal' Industries

Economic development is about capitalising on comparative and competitive advantage. Griffith's future economic development will be underpinned by innovation and value-creation in the area's traditional economic mainstays of manufacturing and agriculture; related opportunities in the transport and logistics sector; new investments in

industries such as health care, research and education; tourism and related industries including sport and recreation, retail and the accommodation and food services sector; and opportunities to attract and grow knowledge-intensive activity in the professional services sectors.

**Figure 16. Griffith's Economic Drivers**



While business and industry will continue to drive future prosperity, Griffith City Council recognises that it has a vital role to play in the leadership, organisation, delivery and promotion of local economic development.

Guided by this economic development strategy, Council is committed to creating the conditions for more effective economic partnerships and enabling innovation and entrepreneurship.

## 4. Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities to Promote Prosperity

### 4.1 A Consultative Approach to Strategy Development

*Evolve Griffith* is informed by targeted consultation and engagement with a diversity of government, industry and community stakeholders. The consultations have been instrumental in helping to establish a vision for the economy of the future and to guide Griffith City Council's efforts in promoting

and facilitating economic development. The consultations highlighted Griffith's strengths and attributes as well as pertinent challenges and opportunities for economic development, which this strategy seeks to address.

### 4.2 Griffith's Economic Development Strengths and Attributes

Griffith has a relatively diverse and export-oriented industrial base with a good spread of employment and economic activity across the agricultural, manufacturing, retail, health, education, construction and services sectors. The commercial hub of the Western Riverina, Griffith presents a diversity of economic strengths and attributes.

#### A Strong Manufacturing Industry Base

- Griffith has a competitive advantage in manufacturing (dominated by food and beverage product manufacturing), which is the City's largest provider of jobs and contributor to economic output. Griffith's wine industry is one of the largest in Australia. Employment in Griffith's food and beverage product manufacturing sector has increased over the past five years.
- Griffith is a leader in metal product manufacturing and machinery and equipment manufacturing, which makes a significant contribution to local economic activity and employment.
- Poultry production is a growth industry in Griffith, with the local manufacture of chicken sheds serving the industry's rapid expansion.

#### A Rich Agricultural Region

- Griffith's manufacturing prowess is intrinsically linked to its profile as one of Australia's most productive and diverse agricultural regions.

- Griffith's agricultural industry activities include livestock production (beef, sheep and poultry), table and wine grapes, citrus fruits and cereal crops including wheat, rice and other crops. Fundamental to the success of the region's agricultural sector is the availability of irrigation water.
- In recent years, high-value tree crop production has grown, including walnuts, hazelnuts and almonds. Aquaculture is also a *Evolve* industry in the Griffith area.
- Griffith has strong food product supply chains connecting it to the wider Western Riverina region.
- Supporting the area's agricultural industry, Griffith is home to a wealth of professional service providers in agribusiness, agricultural engineering, finance and insurance and other agricultural industry support services.

#### Tourism Appeal

- Griffith has a strong 'brand' and is a popular stop-over for grey nomad travellers. The city has a strong calendar of major events delivered under its 'Visit Griffith' banner.

### A Commercial Hub and Gateway to the Riverina

- Griffith is a commercial, retail and services hub for the Western Riverina. Behind only manufacturing and the health care and social assistance sector, retail is one of Griffith's largest provider of jobs.
- Griffith has an appealing regional city lifestyle underpinned by its strong agricultural heritage, its demographic diversity, its quality produce and its many quality cafes and restaurants. Griffith also has a strong 'night-time economy'. A lot of businesses in Griffith are family-owned businesses.
- Griffith Airport is a busy, vibrant air transport hub serving as a key gateway for the Riverina region. In 2018 passenger numbers through Griffith Airport increased by 8.4% to 80,000 making it the 45th busiest in Australia.

### A Strong Community and Diverse Labour Force

- Griffith is a welcoming, vibrant and multi-cultural community. The labour force is diverse, offering a range of skills from unskilled to skilled labour. The *Griffith Now Hiring* Program, which links job seekers and current vacancies, supports this.
- Statistically, according to demographer Bernard Salt, Griffith is one of the most desirable places in Australia to live. It has low unemployment, good population growth and affordable housing. Griffith has a consistently low level of unemployment compared to regional and State averages.

### A Centre for Learning

- Griffith provides good access to tertiary education and training through the Western Riverina Country Universities Centre (CUC), Charles Sturt University (CSU) and TAFE NSW Griffith (including TAFE Digital and the Agribusiness Skills Point). (CSU is the only university with a physical campus in the region).

#### Griffith Now Hiring

The *Griffith Now Hiring* marketing program links job seekers with current vacancies through the use of both local and state-wide marketing including:

- Fortnightly newsletters;
- Google Adwords to drive website traffic;
- Facebook and Instagram promotions; and
- Promotional videos.

The program focuses on promoting local job opportunities, Griffith's enviable lifestyle and affordable living to potential re-locaters from metropolitan areas. Now more than ever Griffith City Council and its partners in government, the non-government sector and industry wants to support local job seekers to drive employment levels back up.

The Griffith Now Hiring web site

<https://griffithnowhiring.com.au/> also has a new job search function that lists Griffith's job availabilities in different industry categories based on employer submissions.

- Murrumbidgee Regional High School, which was established as a merged school entity in 2019, has more school-based apprenticeships than any other school in NSW.
- By reducing barriers and providing opportunities through education, the Western Riverina Community College, based in Griffith, provides alternative pathways to employment for the local community.

## EVOLVE GRIFFITH: AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING PROSPERITY, 2020-2025

**A Strong and Evolve Health Care Sector**

- Griffith's health care industry is Evolve, and while there are some gaps in access to specialist services, the capacity of the local health care sector is well-served by Griffith Base Hospital and St Vincent's Private Community Hospital. (Griffith

Base Hospital is building a new facility which is planned for completion in 2025).

- Employment in Griffith's health care sector has grown strongly in recent years, and planned investments in new hospital facilities will support more jobs in the near future.

**Evolve the Horticultural Sector**

- The horticultural sector is a rapidly-Evolve industry and is Australia's third-largest agricultural sector after livestock and broad acre farming. Griffith's long-standing agricultural capabilities provides good scope for greater diversification of horticultural production, particularly in high-value crops and packaged produce targeting export markets.
- Fundamental to the success of the region's agricultural sector is the availability of irrigation water, and the effects of the drought, one of the most severe droughts in NSW on record, have contributed to a decline in agricultural industry output over the past five years or more.
- In response to changing horticultural practices, there is an opportunity for Griffith to pro-actively attract and support the growth of controlled environment horticulture.

- Agriculture is transitioning towards the production of high-value commodities using new technologies, underpinned by research and development into new ways of producing to enable farmers to be more efficient, less wasteful, more productive and more profitable.
- Griffith's agricultural capabilities make it well-placed to develop an 'ag-tech eco-system' which invests in R&D, new technologies and new start-ups to grow value in the region's agricultural economy.
- Investment in new agricultural technologies and ways of producing also requires a commensurate investment in skills and workforce planning to meet changing industry needs.



Image: Grapes being harvested near Yenda, east of Griffith (source: Destination NSW)



### 4.3 Griffith's Economic Development Challenges and Opportunities

#### Rail Freight Interchange Opportunities

- The location of the rail freight interchange in the middle of the city presents both challenges and opportunities. Presently, freight has to be sent into the city before it is transported out to market by rail. This is inefficient and presents some land use conflicts in Griffith's city centre.
- Griffith City Council is working in collaboration with Leeton Shire Council on a proposal to upgrade the WR Connect intermodal facility located between Griffith and Leeton. The proposal has the potential to enhance the efficiency of freight movement in the Western Riverina, improve connectivity to and throughput of the Inland Rail at Junee, and create investor confidence for the wider region.
- A rail freight interchange improvement project plan has been completed and the project has progressed to the pre-feasibility stage. Council and its project partners are working towards the preparation of a full business case, with stakeholder engagement well underway.
- In order to progress the rail freight interchange opportunity, LINX Logistics, which is located on the site, would need to relocate to the proposed new site so that the land in the CBD could be potentially freed up for alternative uses (subject to discussions with the current landowner, Pacific National). LINX already owns land at the WR Connect site and has applied for multiple grants to assist with its relocation, though to date, has been unsuccessful in securing funding support.
- Griffith City Council recognises the importance of key stakeholders continuing to work together in a positive fashion to ensure a positive freight and logistics industry outcome for the Western Riverina region.
- Council's priority is that the WR Connect site be fully operational as soon as possible and it is continuing to work with LINX to support it in transferring its operations to the WR Connect site. However, re-location is still subject to the completion of the business case and securing further funding to assist with the move.
- Long-term, there is an opportunity to consider alternative land uses for the existing interchange in the Griffith CBD, with a focus on urban revitalisation (housing, retail, commercial and entertainment uses) in the heart of the city. This requires on-going engagement with and input from a diversity of stakeholders including the site's existing landholders.



Image: Rail freight presents a major opportunity for Griffith (source: Shutterstock)

### Lifestyle and Liveability

- The Griffith Base Hospital's \$250 million redevelopment project presents an opportunity to capitalise on the City's Evolve health sector, to meet the evolving needs of the community and to support the attraction of new residents and businesses.
- The consultations suggested that some specialist health services are still lacking in Griffith and this requires ongoing attention.
- Griffith can look for ways to build on the work it does with the *Griffith Now Hiring* program to promote its regional city lifestyle to attract people and new investment, to Griffith and the City's smaller settlements.
- Griffith's size and socio-economic diversity coupled with its climate, its services, its relative affordability and its connectivity by air offers a work-life balance which gives it a point of difference to capital city living. These attributes should continue to be promoted.
- Like other regional centres, Griffith has suffered from the effects of its youth leaving the area to work or study elsewhere. The Grow Our Own campaign, designed to encourage young people to live and work in Griffith, is a positive initiative that encourages local businesses to invest in employment and training, something that should continue to be encouraged.
- The amalgamation of the Wade and Griffith High Schools into the dual-campus Murrumbidgee Regional High School has brought with it significant new investments in services, facilities and staff training, as well as the modernisation of the school curriculum, which will significantly benefit Griffith's youth.
- In recent years, Griffith has seen an increase in the number of fly-in fly-out (FIFO) contractors and short-stay workers coming into town to work in a variety of sectors such as nursing for example. This could partly reflect a lack of quality housing

in Griffith. As a result, some businesses need to 'import' their staff.

- It is considered by a number of stakeholders consulted that programs which are building the profile and the capacity of the area to attract more professionals to live and work in Griffith, including doctors and other professionals, will help to address Griffith's 'workforce challenge'.
- Griffith City Council pro-actively lobbies the State and Federal Governments on a range of matters in the interests of the Griffith community. Griffith's role as the regional service centre of the Western Riverina presents an opportunity to continue to engage with State and Federal Government agencies to encourage the re-location of some services (and staff) to Griffith, building on recent successes.
- There have been some recent wins for Griffith in its efforts to attract people and investment. For example, TAFE Griffith NSW is expanding with the addition of 60 new staff in a student support service call centre. The Murray Darling Basin Authority is also re-locating 30 staff to Griffith.
- Despite its strengths and attributes, Griffith, like elsewhere, has pockets of socio-economic disadvantage (health, housing and education). These challenges should continue to be recognised and addressed by the region's community and economic development agencies in a collaborative and constructive fashion.

### Housing Initiatives

- Despite Griffith's enviable regional city lifestyle, the consultations undertaken suggested that a shortage of quality low to medium-cost housing is a major constraint on economic development.
- Discussions held during the targeted consultations suggested that housing shortfalls constrain Griffith's capacity to attract business investment and skilled labour, including professionals such as teachers and health care professionals as well as government bureaucrats and their families.

## EVOLVE GRIFFITH: AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING PROSPERITY, 2020-2025

- The stakeholder consultations suggested short-term accommodation options for visiting professionals (e.g. doctors) is limited. It was also suggested that Griffith has a rental housing shortage which places upward pressure on rental prices.
- Analysis undertaken on behalf of Council during the preparation of the Griffith Housing Strategy (2019) showed that Griffith has a higher than average rate of homelessness compared with NSW, and has experienced an increase in the number and rate of people who are homeless and who are marginally housed since 2011. This includes a high rate of people who are living in severely overcrowded dwellings, in cars and temporary or insecure accommodation rather than 'street homelessness'.
- Griffith City Council recognises that there has been a lack of housing diversity and a relatively high level of housing stress in Griffith. In 2019 Council commissioned a new housing strategy to address the City's housing shortfall.
- The resulting Griffith Housing Strategy, which has been adopted by Council, provides a detailed analysis of the current state of housing availability in Griffith and suggests methods of increasing access to diverse housing options for key target groups in the City experiencing housing stress.
- The Housing Strategy determined that Griffith is under-supplied with smaller dwellings and requires a larger supply of 1 and 2 bedroom strata dwellings. The projected increase in the number of dwellings required is 1,744 dwellings by 2036.
- The Griffith Housing Strategy is now being implemented by Council to help address rental housing shortfalls and housing stress.

**Griffith City Council's Housing Support Initiatives**

The Griffith Housing Strategy provides a detailed analysis of the current state of housing availability in Griffith with recommendations to enhance access to diverse housing options for key target groups in the City experiencing housing stress. Griffith City Council has implemented almost all of the recommendations set out in the strategy, for example:

- The Lake Wyangan Precinct Masterplan is almost complete, inclusive of medium density housing and a suggested housing mix.
- The Collina subdivisions of almost 400 blocks will be completed in the next 18 months. A development application has also been lodged for the next Collina farm slated for subdivision.
- Griffith City Council has donated land to Community Housing Provider Argyle to build affordable housing in Griffith.
- Council was successful in its application for Federal Government Building Better Regions funding of \$6 million alongside partner Argyle to develop the \$12 million Griffin Green affordable housing subdivision. This includes 20 affordable town houses and approximately 45 serviced blocks available for the development of additional affordable housing.
- Council has endorsed the provision of rebates and incentives for affordable housing and secondary dwellings to waive development fees and contributions.
- Griffith's new Development Control Plan is ready for adoption in accordance with the guidelines laid out in the Housing Strategy and Council is working towards updating the Local Environmental Plan and Land Use Strategy to rezone land for further housing development opportunities.
- A manufactured housing estate in Collina has recently been approved by Council.



### Education, Training and Workforce Development

- Griffith has some notable skills gaps, including professionals and managers, as well as some trades (e.g. welders). Attracting quality teachers has also been identified as a challenge in Griffith. This is something Council is working to address through the *Griffith Now Hiring* program.
- Workforce planning and promotion is a priority in Griffith with a number of stakeholders working to provide local career pathways for the region's youth (e.g. the *Griffith Now Hiring* and *Grow Our Own* programs). These efforts should continue to be resourced.
- Skilled migration is important, and programs should continue to be developed which support skilled migrants to settle and stay in Griffith.
- Griffith's Country Universities Centre is at capacity and Council has collaborated with CUC to secure a larger premises to house the facility, which will re-locate to the new Griffith

Community Centre to be constructed in Olympic Street.

- Griffith's education capabilities should continue to be leveraged to nurture and retain the area's youth. For example, TAFE Griffith NSW offers alternative pathways to university degrees.

### Griffith's Retail Challenge

- Griffith's trade sector is suffering from a general industry downturn as consumer behaviours evolve (e.g. more online shopping). This has been compounded by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The stakeholder consultations undertaken to date suggest that Griffith's retail / commercial centre suffers from a number of inactive spaces. Griffith City Council has been engaged in a number of projects and programs designed to support the local retail sector and other businesses in the City's commercial centres (see text box overleaf).



Image: Retail and commercial activity in Griffith's main street is essential to economic development (source: Destination NSW)

**Griffith City Council's Retail and Business Support Initiatives**

Griffith City Council has been engaged in a number of projects and programs designed to support the local retail sector and other businesses in the City's commercial centres, for example:

- Council has almost completed Stage 2 of the Yambil Street upgrade as part of the CBD Upgrade Strategy. The Urban Design team and CBD Upgrade Committee work together on actions to revitalise the CBD and in turn, help boost the local retail sector
  - Council pro-actively seeks out and applies for grants to support place activation and commercial centre development. For example:
  - Council recently applied for a Place Activation for Kooyoo Street grant worth \$350,000.
  - Council was awarded a \$1 million Infrastructure Grant including \$100,000 for City Entrances, \$340,000 for Banna Avenue Bright Lights and \$450,000 for Carpark Railway St, with the balance allocated to pathway improvements.
  - Through the Stronger Country Communities 2 program, Council delivered a new community stage in memorial park to entice more people into Griffith's main street. Another community stage is also being delivered in Community Gardens as part of the Stronger Communities Fund and will also incorporate a new public toilet facility.
  - Tourism and events in Griffith's main street helps drive visitation and retail spend in the CBD.
  - Council actively supports outdoor dining including allowing restaurants to construct external dining areas on Council footpaths.
  - Council has received Safer Communities Program grant funding (\$410,000) to install 81 additional CCTV cameras throughout the city.
  - Council sponsors, promotes and facilitates workshops that assist local businesses to grow. The Griffith Business Survey provided insight that local businesses would like more training on marketing, social media and business planning. This will be Council's training focus going forward.
  - Council's monthly "Evolve" business newsletter promotes workshops, incentives, grants, opportunities and news to local businesses.
- 
- Griffith City Council can continue to play a direct role in helping to revitalise the City's retail precincts by:
    - a) Taking pro-active place improvement measures to enhance and activate public spaces through intelligent design; and
    - b) Providing retailers with access to support services, including business support programs offered by other agencies and organising events such as local 'business inspiration workshops' with guest speakers presenting on informative, topical subjects of relevance to local retailers.
  - Griffith City Council plays a leading role in shaping the City's urban form and function and its sense of place through master planning, place activation and infrastructure improvement programs.
  - Council can also seek out State and Federal Government funding support for place activation and urban improvement programs that will have positive and lasting economic benefits.

## EVOLVE GRIFFITH: AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING PROSPERITY, 2020-2025

**Tourism – Evolve the Visitor Economy**

- While tourism is only a small industry in Griffith, there is an opportunity to explore ways to tap into and grow existing visitor markets including the VFR (visiting friends and relatives) market, grey nomads and the corporate traveller market.
- Griffith City Council recognises the area's tourism potential, and a new tourism strategy will be commissioned in late 2020.
- While Griffith and the wider region has a rich agricultural heritage, agri-tourism and food and beverage tourism (including wine) is under-developed, with only a couple of good cellar door wine experiences of note. New investments in cellar door experiences could attract more visitors to the area. This requires targeted promotion and destination management.
- There is an opportunity to do more to market Griffith to attract tourist to stop and stay in the area. This needs to be backed up with good destination management (infrastructure, events, entertainment, accommodation, visitor information and customer service). Griffith's rich multi-culturalism could be better leveraged to attract visitors.
- The Griffith and Western Riverina Accommodation Investment Prospectus, which was prepared in November 2019 by Destination Riverina Murray, revealed that the existing supply of visitor accommodation in the area is inadequate to meet changing consumer desires for quality, contemporary and experiential accommodation. It suggested significant investment is needed to improve and expand the accommodation supply to match the high-quality regional tourism offering.
- The strategy consultations suggested there is a lack of diversity in visitor accommodation in Griffith, particularly 3 and 4-star motels/hotels. There is also a lack of caravan park capacity to accommodate the grey nomad market.
- Opportunities to enhance the visitor accommodation offer in Griffith could be further explored (e.g. market assessment and business cases).
- While corporate travellers account for a large share of visitors to Griffith, there is not enough space to accommodate business conferences and events. The potential for this market could be further explored.



Image: Festivals and events are a feature of Griffith's tourism and lifestyle offer (source: Destination NSW)