

Meet the Mayoral Candidates 2024

The Sunshine Coast Business Council (SCBC) invited the mayoral candidates for the Sunshine Coast Council and Noosa Shire Council elections to respond to the following questions:

- 1. Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.**
- 2. Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.**
- 3. From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?**

Of the 10 candidates, nine chose to participate and provide their responses.



Ashley Robinson

Sunshine Coast Council

Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.

The most immediate practical measure that the council has the power to implement would be a review of development approvals already issued to identify which have not proceeded to release stage (and home construction) and why.

Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.

Attracting business that offer higher paying jobs to keep our smart young people participating in the local economy and to draw those with experience and entrepreneurial ability to thrive here will require a new Planning Scheme that has land identified to accommodate that growth. I will work to ensure that occurs in appropriate locations whilst still recognising environmental constraints.

One example of this is the film industry which has a large cohort of skilled workers here who now travel either to the Gold Coast or out of the state to work. Land is desperately needed, zoned for the purpose, to build sound stages and to expand over time. Similar facilities on the Gold Coast are booked to capacity. It's an industry with the capacity to produce huge economic benefits and employment. The same principle applies for attraction of other skilled industries.

From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?

Experience - at a board level and as chair and as a general manager successfully managing other people's money.

Capacity - I'm a listener and a doer with a proven track record of getting teams of people to work together in the one direction.



Jason OPray

Sunshine Coast Council

Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.

The Housing crisis and affordability has become a 'great concern' for our region and is at a point where we see employed people, families, living in cars or couch surfing because they cannot afford or find accommodation on the Coast.

Housing falls on the State Government yet council has chosen to step up and work with the State to lessen the stresses for our communities.

- I endorsed the Sunshine Coast Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2023.
- I have already identified several parcels of land within Division 8 with the intent to build affordable housing, with concepts already developed.
- I'm already working on delivery, finding some solutions, relief for some.
- Our Housing Crisis needs a collaborative approach between the State, Industry and the community.

There is no simple answer. It will take time, but I have a plan, Council has the strategy and we have a willing community to do all we can.

Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.

I played a significant role in the creation of our highly successful Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS), its reviews and delivery.

For the last 12 years I've headed the portfolio of Economic Development, and for more than a decade I've helped build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast, attracting medium and large business investment and helped 'Scale up' long time local businesses.

Working closely with Industry, it is my intention as Mayor, to capitalise on every opportunity and help in the growth of our economy, with a target of \$33 Billion. I have a very clear plan on how to achieve further business confidence and assist in the "Scale Up" of existing businesses.

The Sub Sea Cable, the CBD, The Airport, Solar Farm, Hospital, upcoming Olympics, our plans and Strategy, our EcDev staff, and our industry's will all combine and provide wonderful opportunities for employment and for higher paying jobs.

From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?

1. Experience

Experience is everything. The Sunshine Coast economy is now at \$21 Billion. Council is a \$1 Billion dollar machine with over \$7 Billion in asset, and around 2000 staff.

This is an enormous responsibility and one the Business Community understands completely. I have 12 years as a sitting Councillor, brilliant working relationship with Council staff, Councillors and most importantly, support from all Industries across the Coast. I have the knowledge, the experience and I can start from Day 1 as Mayor.

2. Professional working relationships

Leading the Sunshine Coast cannot be done by 1 person - leading the team is crucial. I have 12 years working closely with our Economic Development Staff and I am proud of the work we have all done in that time.

My Colleagues have genuine respect for my commentary and direction around business and the economy.



Melinda 'Min' Swan

Sunshine Coast Council

Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.

A four-prong strategy:

- A clear vision and a unified, powerful voice to attract investment in transportation and infrastructure. I commit to empowering the brightest minds towards creative outcomes for transportation connection and housing supply.
- Facilitating a Team Sunshine Coast mentality at all levels of Government, business and community. I already have developed relationships to repair the void between elected representatives that is weakening our unified approach to attracting what we need in our region.
- A vision for a new normal - the world is changing, household sizes are decreasing and new housing construction types and sizes need to become normalised as part of the planning scheme review.
- While we manage systemic change, I would explore with industry organisations the viability of extending the existing Sunshine Coast Jobs Board to include a housing component, making it a one stop shop for job seekers. This could include share accommodation options, explore collective employer supported housing, rental breaks and long-term rentals.

Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.

While Government has a role to play, industry leaders are key to the future of the region. Other than the continued advocacy for infrastructure, I would implement a powerhouse Business Advisory Board* of industry leaders, educators and strategists to:

- Reduce leakage of B2B outside of our region (including at a Council level).
- Ensure no Sunshine Coast business is left behind for tenders and new business opportunities – a sharing of resource and knowledge for risk protection, certifications, sustainability goals and capability build in tender and grant processes.
- Seek worldwide examples and develop innovative outcomes to solve talent attraction hurdles.
- Capability build, empowerment and recognition of our industry groups and chambers to become cornerstone essential services to our region, reducing the need for government intervention.
- Design and delivery of world leading outcomes and white papers that will be revered world-wide and continue to showcase us as a mecca for smart business, collective success and innovative world-leading solutions.

From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?

Business acumen and experience – self-employed at 21 growing one of SEQ largest financial planning firms, while completing Bachelor of Business Management, before being approached for a three year 'Head of Strategy' executive leadership role in Sydney. Returned to the Sunshine Coast to start, grow and continually evolve corporate events management firm through both a GFC and COVID periods. Delivered with precision the largest events on the Sunshine Coast with full financial transparency. Currently involved in the management of 8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry Groups, President of the Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network, Leadership Team for Sunshine Coast 2032.

Outcome driven – over the past 15 years I have a proven track record of connecting, collaborating and taking a leadership position within the business community to find creative solutions to issues, been the driving force behind the implementation of outcomes and a continual cheerleader for the region. This passion and persistence would continue in a Mayoral capacity.

**Relates to second column. Name subject to change – example only for illustration purposes*



Rosanna Natoli

Sunshine Coast Council

Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.

I believe our community itself holds the key to solving the housing crisis – if they can be empowered by the leadership of Council. We must encourage the state and federal governments to invest in social housing infrastructure and investigate models for ‘rent to buy’. Innovative solutions will be the way forward.

The Hinterland community wants to be part of the solution, with many hopeful of allowing tiny homes to be built on properties, with the proper environmental checks and balances. Careful and considered development of this type is one option. Similarly, different models of housing that are easily modified, allowing homeowners to rent out discrete sections of their home, could be developed. The ‘missing-middle’ medium density in some of our suburbs is another opportunity.

As Patron of Roofs to Recovery, I know they have an eight-cabin, purpose-built pilot program ready to go, with support from Council to address transitioning from homelessness. We need a multi-pronged approach.

Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.

Securing infrastructure for our public transport and road networks must be the highest priority in order to underpin all investor confidence.

The key is passenger rail to Maroochydore – the single most influential element in building investor confidence along the route from Beerwah through Aura, Caloundra and Kawana. Working with Walker Corporation to accelerate the development of the CBD in the lead up to the Olympics is a must.

Furthermore, securing the Convention and Exhibition Centre in the CBD will foster economic growth. I intend to investigate whether this can include a performing arts component. Peter Wise’s land project is sitting with Council. Five-star hotels are a desperately needed component in the tourism sector. An internal taskforce, chaired by me, purposed to accelerate these projects, will deliver the investor confidence we need.

From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?

I am an excellent communicator and facilitator. I will foster a cohesive team of councillors, working towards a singular purpose for the betterment of our community, with a strong economic focus that underpins Council business.

My training and three decades of experience in journalism allow me to clearly distil complex issues into razor-sharp focus. Bringing the community along with Council and ensuring an open and accountable leadership and communication style is key to the success of major projects across the region.

Furthermore, as a published researcher and academic, I understand data and have keen attention to detail. I am a purposeful and energetic listener – both from the populous and expert and trusted advisors. I have no vested interests and will be able to fully participate in the decision-making process, representing my community.



Wayne Parcell

Sunshine Coast Council

Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.

The State Government's recent *Homes for Queenslanders* initiative is commendable. Immediate action is also required for additional housing outcomes now. This includes advocating strongly to Ministers and Members of the Queensland Parliament that the Sunshine Coast Region, one of the fastest growing areas of the State, with the lowest ratio of supported housing in the State, needs a substantial distribution of state housing investment.

In concert with this, we would seek to establish a Housing Taskforce (of council, industry and community representatives) to:

- review Council policies, rebates, and regulations to improve speed to market of housing completions;
- examine underutilised council property;
- explore enhanced collaboration between community housing organisations, the private sector and council;
- support council advocacy with the State and Commonwealth governments to ensure the Sunshine Coast receives investment commensurate with housing demand;
- publish recommendations and report on the outcomes from the Council's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2023.

Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.

Our lifestyle, clean environment and digital connectivity are a foundation for innovative and forward thinkers to develop their ideas. Investor confidence builds on this with an expectation of certainty from Council about the application of policies and planning instruments, and decisions that are lawful and timely.

The assets of our region need further activation: the Sunshine Coast International Broadband Submarine Cable landing station adjacent to the new Maroochydore CBD; the University of the Sunshine Coast; the Sunshine Coast University Hospital; and, the Airport. Council needs to engage with industry leaders, including in health and life sciences, IT and Artificial Intelligence through an ongoing taskforce supported by a Workforce Development Plan that promotes innovation, tech-hubs and start-ups.

As a priority, we will execute a comprehensive strategy to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast. I will be an active Mayor, present and visible, demonstrating that the Sunshine Coast is open for business.

From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?

Authentic Leadership

The Public Service Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 1996 for outstanding service to Australia in complex areas of government policy and operations overseas. The Special Award in 1995 from the Australian Tourist Commission recognised my outstanding contribution to tourism from Indonesia, with annual visitor visas rising from 30,000 to more than 120,000 in less than 3 years.

Outcomes Management

My 15 years' government service in taxation, intelligence & security, defence and immigration included implementation of Royal Commission recommendations, supporting Ministers and diplomats, dealing with significant budgets, complex national and international issues, and negotiating with the ACTU, international agencies and foreign governments.

Over 12 years, I delivered exceptional immigration services from my business to global corporations resulted in a global consulting firm acquiring the business; I spent more than a decade with the firm, including as a global Partner overseeing a global team exceeding 1100 professionals.



Frank Wilkie

Noosa Shire Council

Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.

Noosa Council has partnered with the State Government and a community housing provider who will build multiple dwellings in Tewantin and Cooroy to house residents on low incomes.

The State currently owns @399 social housing dwellings in Noosa. A significant portion of these are large, 3-4 bedroom houses containing only one or two people. When these new small dwellings are built, the occupants of the larger social housing properties can be relocated and the larger residences be occupied by families in need.

By then, the State will also have been enabled to build multiple social housing units on their land currently containing single dwellings and the spread of secondary dwellings providing affordable long-term rentals will have increased among the potentially thousands of lots able to contain them in Noosa Shire. Changes encouraging landowners to provide social and community housing in new developments will have been enacted also.

Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.

Maintaining the region's natural beauty and great lifestyle is a big part of attracting new businesses and jobs. Creating the right conditions for businesses to flourish via planning scheme settings, resourcing and policies also give enterprises and their resident owners the best chance of success.

Regular engagement with business groups through Business Roundtable meetings and via the Economic Development e-newsletter is key, as is support through economic development and business grants, the Sunshine Coast Business Awards program and linking businesses to the full range of state and federal business support programs. The Peregian Digital Hub is fostering innovative start-ups, (many of which have outgrown it and moved on). The Hub also provides training and support to help create the digital entrepreneurs of the future.

Program's like Business Boost also provides Noosa businesses with free access to specialist advisors across key business focus areas and we are also working with landholders to create spaces for innovative, high-tech businesses.

From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?

Experience in understanding how local government can assist businesses become established through planning scheme settings, economic development grants and advice, creating investment opportunities, resourcing and support through difficult times.

Having worked for many years in Queensland's island resorts up to management level and private businesses such as newspapers/magazines and private education, I've an appreciation and respect for businesses as an essential part of the social and economic fabric of a community and the means by which many resident families exist.



Ingrid Jackson

Noosa Shire Council

Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.

Affordable housing is a complex issue driven by global unrest, economic uncertainty, the national housing crisis, and population shifts to regional locations resulting from COVID.

What is needed is strong commitment to addressing the issue.

Noosa Council approved a Housing Strategy in November 2022 to facilitate building affordable, accessible and social housing. There have been preliminary steps, but no tangible results.

Unfortunately, several proposals to construct affordable housing have been knocked back by Noosa Council without due recognition of the Noosa Plan's strategic intent that "Council will support the Federal and State Government and community based not-for-profit entities in delivering [...] social and affordable housing".

I will promote collaboration between Noosa Council, neighbouring councils, and relevant public, private and community organisations to prioritise the urgent construction of affordable housing.

Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.

I am committed to facilitating a robust Shire economy focused on relevant industry sectors by Council collaborating with business groups in the Shire to prepare and implement a business development plan focusing on small business development and growth, job creation and the accommodation needs of workers.

This will include encouraging Noosa Council to consider business and the Noosa economy in decision-making and planning, including economic impact modelling. A fair and transparent approach will increase investor confidence.

From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?

Two strong skillsets I bring are the ability to respond to the needs of diverse circumstances and the ability to enhance organisational governance.

Running my own management consultancy in Sydney - specialising in organisational change, executive development and communications - required an ability to respond to and satisfy the needs of diverse client organisations.

I have been variously Body Corporate Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer at resorts and apartment complexes in Noosa and Sydney, and also served as Secretary of the Noosa Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Tewantin-Noosa CWA Branch, and the Noosa Parks Association. In each case I took initiative to improve governance processes. This included writing submissions to Queensland and NSW government reviews of body corporate legislation.



John Morrall

Noosa Shire Council

Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.

Affordable housing for our workers needs to be made a priority.

When elected I will turn every stone and every rock to work out what state and council assets can be potentially turned into some kind of affordable housing for our workers.

Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.

Transparent communication, strong governance, consistent performance, positive track record and the ability to focus on the right investor or the type of investors will be key.

If it fits with Noosa Shires values and plans we will seek.

From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?

My leadership skills are one of my biggest weapons and have been for 45 years in business. How can we take everyone on the same journey and enjoy the ride together?

Knowing the numbers. Forecasting, budgeting, profit and loss. What do we need and how do we get it?



Nick Hluszko

Noosa Shire Council

Housing availability and affordability continues to be of great concern, leading to increased homelessness, our workforce struggling to live locally and it becoming more difficult to attract workers to the region. Please share one strategy you want to implement to help address this issue.

While I do not support the State's mandated additional 18,000 new residents we have to be realistic about this and accept it will happen. This in itself does provide a good opportunity to take a more committed stance on affordable housing. I want to see precinct or locality-based plans that place an emphasis on affordable housing where appropriate and that development is in keeping with that unique locality's character.

If elected, I would seek to develop Public-Private partnerships with the state to implement models to incentivise investment in housing at the affordable end of the market – where it is needed the most including for our workers. This should include not only traditional but innovative solutions also. From my own experiences overseas, investment in transport and infrastructure does increase access to affordable housing by improving connectivity and commute times for low-income households. I advocate strongly for transport infrastructure investment.

Please share one way in which you plan to build investor confidence in the Sunshine Coast/Noosa region over the next four years to attract new businesses and encourage existing businesses to expand, with the goal of creating more job opportunities for locals.

We are fundamentally a tourist economy which has, at its' core our natural assets. Everything we do must support and promote Noosa's unique identity and lifestyle - that's a non-negotiable! Encouraging investment into both existing and new opportunities mandates both State and Council investment in infrastructure - we have a lot to do in this sphere.

Diversification into new nature-based tourism and environmentally friendly tourism is seen as a logical move into the future. But we can't throw the baby out with the bath water, and we must continue to support our existing visitor base. A much needed Destination Management Plan is a priority for me.

Finally, redevelopment/ development of existing commercial and retail footprints should be re-evaluated. We have many outdated, environmentally unfriendly and unsustainable developments from the 1970-'s to today that do not at all contribute to the so-called 'Noosa look and feel'. As we evolve, the true value for all is keeping Noosa - Noosa.

From a business perspective, what are your two strongest skillsets that best qualify you to be Mayor?

As a former CEO of several internationally focussed companies, my background is in business management. I also hold a master's degree in business administration.

If elected I want to use my skills and experiences to lead an efficient, well-managed Council controlling bureaucratic costs and imposing only the very minimum rates and levies at a time when far too many are struggling with the cost of living and interest rates.

The community is divided and the business sector feels neglected and not listened to. It is time to unite all our communities for the benefit of all not just a few. I have the skills, passion, energy to do this.