

Draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041

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Acknowledgement

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the the Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunawal, Wolgalu, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Yita Yita and Yorta Yorta countries that make up the Riverina Murray Region.

Aboriginal people have lived in the region for at least 60,000 years. Until colonisation, the environment was sustainable, threatened only by natural hazards which were met with resilience gained from generations of life on Country. The Aboriginal economy was tied to the land, which provided spiritual, cultural and physical sustenance.

Colonisation profoundly altered the lives of Aboriginal people and their land. Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their land and prevented from practising culture. Land was cleared, new flora and fauna were introduced and the movement of water across landscapes was modified.

The draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 recognises that, as part of the world's oldest living culture, Traditional Owners and Custodians share a unique bond to Country – a bond forged through thousands of years travelling across lands and waterways for ceremony, religion, trading and seasonal migration.

Aboriginal people maintain a strong belief that if we care for Country, it will care for us. This requires Country to be cared for throughout the process of design and development. A Connecting with Country approach can help us to meet statutory requirements to sustainably manage Aboriginal culture and heritage in the built environment.

Using comprehensive and respectful approaches, planning for the Riverina Murray can build capacity and pathways for knowledge sharing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

Image on front cover: St. Anne's Winery, Moama.
Credit: Destination NSW.

Image on this page: Wagirra Trail and Yindyamarra Sculpture Walk, Albury. Credit: Albury City Council and Destination Riverina Murray.

Artwork (left below) by Nikita Ridgeway.



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Foreword

A region of natural beauty, varied climate and a strong network of interconnected centres, the Riverina Murray is a great place to live, work and visit. Its location and infrastructure means it makes a significant contribution to NSW's overall economic prosperity.

This Plan recognises the need to maintain the natural assets that underpin communities and business. It includes directions to protect high environmental value areas and biodiversity corridors as well as the nationally significant Murray and Murrumbidgee river corridors.

Aboriginal people as the original custodians of the region, will be supported and engaged as we plan for the region's economic, social and environmental future.

The region's proximity to Victoria presents opportunities to strengthen links between cross-border communities and move agricultural produce to export markets. This Plan will support the expansion of transport networks and improved connections between centres and other regions to bolster business and industry growth.

The Plan promotes more housing and a greater choice in housing throughout the Riverina Murray and will give communities greater flexibility to accommodate an ageing population and seasonal and temporary workers.

The region's cities – Albury, Griffith and Wagga Wagga – and cross-border communities will accommodate the highest rates of growth over the next 20 years. Investment in major services, facilities and industrial activity will share the benefits of growth across all centres in the region.

The Plan builds on the Riverina Murray's excellent freight connections, strong and connected centres, quality education institutions, varied landscapes and potential for industry diversification and innovation.

The Riverina Murray is one of the most significant locations for freight and logistics in Australia, with major intermodals and corridors servicing the eastern seaboard of Australia. Through access to the Port of Melbourne, Port Kembla and Port Botany, the region's producers have strong connections to export markets and will continue to expand as the nation's food bowl.

The draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 encompasses a vision, objectives, strategies, collaboration activities, actions and council activities prepared in consultation with councils and agencies and is now ready for consultation with the community and stakeholders.

I urge everyone committed to the Riverina Murray and its sustainable, prosperous future to consider this draft plan and propose ways that it might be strengthened before its finalisation later in 2022.

The Hon. Anthony Roberts
Minister for Planning
Minister for Homes

Introduction

Figure 1: Local government areas in the Riverina Murray Region



The draft *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041* is an update to the *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036*, which provided the NSW Government’s vision for land uses in the Riverina Murray Region. That plan saw the NSW Government work with councils, stakeholders and the community to achieve priority actions.

The regional plan is a 20-year land use plan with a targeted delivery focus on the next 5 years. It is prepared under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and applies to the local government areas (LGAs) of Albury, Berrigan, Bland, Carrathool, Coolamon, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Edward River, Federation, Greater Hume, Griffith, Hay, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Snowy Valleys, Temora and Wagga Wagga.

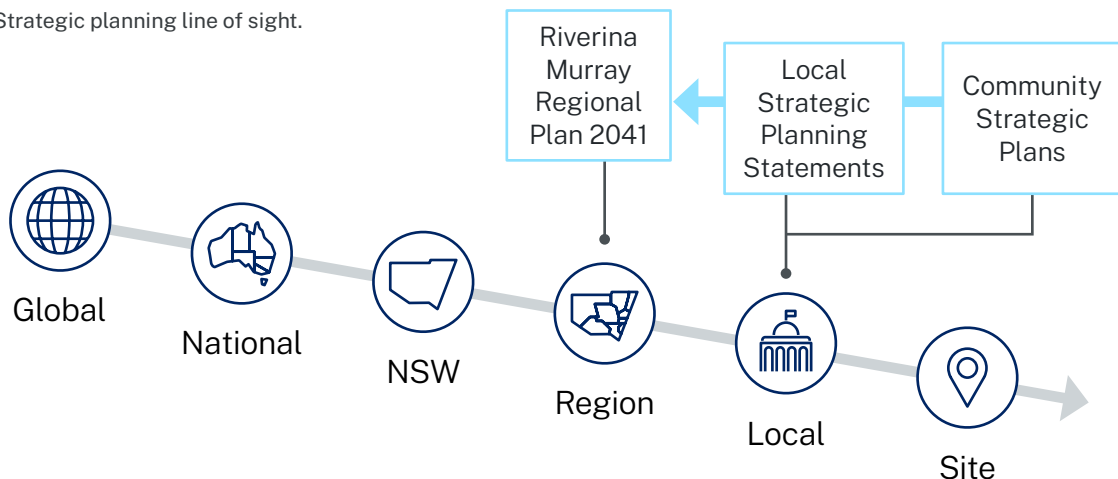
Since the release of the *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036*, amendments to planning legislation have elevated the importance of strategic planning at a regional and local level in managing population growth and change, and require higher-level planning to account for local strategic planning statements.

The regional plan draws from local strategic planning statements prepared by each council for their LGA, acknowledging where there are common interests without duplicating effort. It also recognises the interconnections with Victoria and ACT, as well as the relationships and commonalities with adjoining regions of NSW.

In undertaking this review, we have considered how the region has changed in the last 5 years, the challenges ahead and how best we can respond. Our review included:

- council and agency surveys, as well as online engagement sessions and one-on-one sessions
- analysis of issues and challenges, regional plan actions and government policy changes
- audits and analysis of all 20 local strategic planning statements in the region
- analysis of planning proposals
- investigation by the Western Research Institute, *Region Shapers, Analysis Report for the Riverina Murray, June 2021*
- analysis of interstate policy and investment.

Figure 2: Strategic planning line of sight.



As a 5-year review the regional plan covers all facets of land use planning, including the natural environment, future hazards, housing and related infrastructure, employment areas and town centres.

The Riverina Murray's sense of place underpins this draft plan – its contribution to its people and prosperity makes this region unique. This sense of place influences regional cities and surroundings areas, as well as the opportunities of major transport improvements and digital connections, housing choices and lifestyle needs, the estimated \$12.5 billion in capital investment for construction in the next 5 years and agricultural production.

The recent drought, floods, bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic will have a lasting impact on the natural environment, community wellbeing, infrastructure and the economy. We have considered these impacts in the drafting of this regional plan.

The regional plan focuses on a more ambitious and targeted land use planning approach, drawing on the concepts of:

- sequencing planning and infrastructure
- creating great places
- enriching community character
- unlocking sustainable growth opportunities that come from the region's proximity to Victoria and Canberra and its existing endowments

We have incorporated other recent strategic work such as the regional economic development strategies, the *NSW 2040 Economic Blueprint*, regional water strategies, State and Future Transport 2056, NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan, the establishment of renewable energy zones (REZs), and regional housing reviews and policies. The regional plan complements this work with land use responses that will help to meet NSW Government objectives, while also supporting land use planning undertaken by councils and development proponents in the region.

Key outcomes in the new draft regional plan

- Capitalise on changing regional economy and catalyst projects such as the Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct (Wagga SAP), Albury Regional Job Precinct (Albury RJP), Inland Rail, South-West Renewable Energy Zone (South West REZ) and multiple Murray River bridge projects
- Understand the region's relationships with other NSW regions and states and territories, particularly Victoria, and how to optimise investment and policy decisions that impact the border area and broader Riverina Murray communities
- Recognise stronger than expected population growth, particularly along the Murray River, and related housing pressures
- Better understand and provide more guidance to manage growth pressures in regional cities, commuting towns, border communities, along waterways, and in areas where there is demand for rural residential living.
- Plan different types of housing to meet changing demographics and to meet demand from temporary workers and visitors without impacting availability and affordability for residents
- Continue to assist Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) to better utilise the planning system and removing obstacles to achieve the objectives of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (ALR Act)
- Focus on rivers and riverine corridors as places for cultural connection, activation, recreation, conservation and economic activity
- Align water and land use planning early, as residential or industrial growth must come from within existing water allocations in the context of more frequent and prolonged drought and floods.
- Ensure the aims of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) are considered early in the strategic planning and development process.
- Plan for efficient, sustainable and cost-effective infrastructure and services early in the development process
- Support the transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, including by enabling the establishment of the South-West REZ
- Plan for the implications of climate change and the need for resilient and sustainable communities.

Reading the draft regional plan

The vision for the region to 2041 is supported by objectives, strategies and actions in terms of the environment, communities and places, and the economy. In this regard:

- **Objectives** are high-level goals usually containing strategies, actions or collaboration activities
- **Strategies** identify policy positions or directions implemented through local strategic planning statements, strategic planning, statutory planning or state agency planning to inform land use planning.
- **Actions** are led by the Department of Planning and Environment (the department) in the next 5 years.
- **Collaboration activities** are led by the department in conjunction with state agencies, councils or other organisations
- **Council activities** are those actions identified in local strategic planning statements that relate to the implementation of the regional plan. Their priority, as identified in the local strategic planning statement, remains the same, though this will be refined during consultation. Their inclusion highlights the links between the plan's policy outcomes and local strategic planning.

Resources are documents or websites we will include on the Riverina Murray Regional Plan webpage when the plan is finalised. They will provide further guidance for the implementation of the regional plan. The resources are listed in this draft plan for consultation purposes only.

Questions are noted throughout the draft regional plan to seek specific feedback or advice on any gaps.

Implementation

With leadership, commitment, collaboration and a clear delivery framework, the regional plan will be implemented in accordance with an implementation plan that prioritises actions, collaboration activities and council activities. We will test these priorities during consultation. These priorities allow governments to focus resources to best address land use planning issues.

Indicative timeframes for actions, collaboration activities and council activities refer to the following priorities:

- Short-term – 1-2 years
- Medium-term – 2-3 years
- Longer-term – 4-5 years

Streetscapes, Junee. Credit: Destination NSW



Governance

Department of Planning and Environment – Western Planning Region

The department will coordinate the implementation of the final regional plan and monitor and report on progress. We'll communicate this to the Riverina Murray Regional Leadership Executive (RLE), councils, state agencies and the community.

Regional Leadership Executive

The Riverina Murray RLE supports NSW Government priorities in the Riverina Murray Region. In addition, the purpose of the RLE is to respond to emerging opportunities and issues, lead cross-government or multi-agency actions, provide strategic advice, broker solutions and make decisions using a whole-of-region and whole-of-government lens.

The RLE is the forum to discuss and resolve implementation issues where identified.

Supporting groups

Outcome-specific working groups based around the collaboration activities will include members relevant to the collaboration activity and will meet as needed for that activity.

Planning forums

Bi-annual planning forums between the department and councils will focus on regional plan performance and collaboration opportunities. Councils will be updated on key actions while having the opportunity to discuss emerging issues and trends and to identify where support would be beneficial. The forums may see the reprioritisation or change to regional plan components as required, rather than waiting until the plan is reviewed.

Monitoring and review

The department is responsible for the monitoring and review of progress, with the department's website to include updates on:

- progress towards the plan's actions and collaboration activities
- indicators of relevance to the regional plan such as demographic information
- links to relevant resources and to general tracking tools in the NSW Planning Portal.

Contemporary online information gives people access to the latest information, avoiding the need to wait for point in time monitoring reports.

Planning legislation requires reviews of regional plans as directed by the Minister. Reviews are currently every 5 years. Reviews revisit regional performance, challenges and opportunities and incorporate updated Census data and local strategic planning statements' priorities.

Implementation priorities will be updated as required.

Resourcing

The Riverina Murray Region experiences skill shortages and recruitment difficulties in the construction industry, building professionals and engineers, and skills essential to towns and cities, such as doctors and teachers. The growth of rural and regional towns depends on the availability and utilisation of skills and resources to ensure the economy, community and environment can function.

This includes the strategic planning and skilled professionals that can advise governments and the community on issues critical to economic vitality, environmental enhancement and community wellbeing.

The NSW Government will work with the region's councils and organisations on the human resources needed to facilitate growth that meets the needs of a changing environment and population. Resourcing strategic planning could include:

- reprioritising strategic planning expenditure to support strategic planning projects
- pooling resources across councils
- sharing consultants across multiple councils and/or projects
- consulting with tertiary organisations and professional organisations to provide regionally specific planning courses
- sharing or exchanging resources between the department and the region's councils
- growing the capabilities and number of workers with these capabilities.

Question: *How can we better resource planning and related functions?*

A vision for the region in 2041

A diversified economy founded on Australia's food bowl, iconic waterways and a network of vibrant connected communities

The Riverina Murray's environment – including major rivers, waterways and wetlands – are protected and managed for the ongoing enjoyment of residents and visitors. Adaptation and resilience to a changing climate and natural hazards has made the region a renowned leader in sustainable and equitable water management for industries, communities and the environment.

Wagga Wagga, Albury and Griffith provide a range of job opportunities, housing, education and health services. The region's cities and towns remain the key to vibrancy and prosperity.

The region is connected, attractive, healthy, safe and prosperous. Regional places have a strong sense of community identity, resilience and respect for Country. People can access a range of jobs, housing, events, festivals, education, health, recreational and other community services, all within beautiful natural and rural environments.

The population is growing, particularly in and near regional cities and along the NSW-Victorian border and demographic changes see a greater focus on supporting the older population.

Aboriginal culture, heritage and aspirations for land and water and their management are acknowledged, respected and supported.

With greater global demand for food and resources, the Riverina Murray's highly diversified economy draws from its reputation as one of Australia's premium agricultural areas. Agricultural diversification, innovation

and value-adding leverages advanced and automated technologies to maximise agribusiness diversification. The region is a well-connected export conduit to Melbourne and ports in NSW. The interface between residential and agricultural areas remains a challenge.

The expansion of intensive agriculture and food processing has attracted new families to a diverse and expanding economy, with flow-on demand and benefits for population-focused business and services.

The region's economy also benefits from links to adjoining regions, particularly access to Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Adelaide and Brisbane. Cross-border and cross-region opportunities drive strategic planning and economic development.

The region is a major freight and transport distribution hub with investment in essential infrastructure generating more efficient and higher capacity freight routes, better access to air and sea ports, competitive freight costs and higher regional productivity.

The Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct, Albury Regional Job Precinct and initiatives like the WR Connect freight terminal and the South West Renewable Energy Zone have improved economic outcomes while helping to progress the state's goal of achieving net zero by 2050.

Question: *Is this the right vision for the Riverina Murray for the next 20 years?*

Solar farm solar panels. Credit: DPE

PART

1

Environment



Cocoparra National Park,
Wiradjuri Aboriginal Country.
Credit: John Spencer/DPE



Barmah Lake. Credit: Murray-Darling Basin Authority

PART

1

Environment

The Riverina Murray's environment, river systems and natural water assets shape its settlement patterns and economy and continue to attract people to live and invest in the region.

Biophysical features (landforms, soils, hydrology, bioregions and ecological communities) influence the type and distribution of the region's multiple landscapes within the Murray Darling basin, from the sub-alpine Snowy Mountains sweeping down the western flanks of the Great Dividing Range to form riverine valleys along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers to the south-western slopes and semi-arid plains in the west.

Soil and water influence the type and distribution of the region's ecological communities, including alpine forests, river red gum forests, open woodlands and grassy plains.

Rivers and waterways influence the lifestyle and prosperity of the region's communities, with many towns and villages established alongside the same rivers and waterways that also sustain agricultural enterprises that need irrigation and access to water. These industries must have the availability and security of water provided by the river systems.

Located west of the Great Dividing Range, the Riverina Murray is home to the Olembeyan, Kosciuszko, Cocoparra, Yanga, Woomargama, Livingstone, Murray Valley and Murrumbidgee Valley national parks and The Rock and the Nominne Nature Reserve. It is dominated by large floodplains, river valleys and some of the longest rivers in Australia including the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachlan rivers. The Murray, Edward/Kolety-Wakool, Tumut and Murrumbidgee rivers are home to wetlands reliant on the presence and timing of water, including flood events. This includes Ramsar-listed wetlands such as the NSW Central Murray Forests and the Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands.

The region's topography results in large spatial variations in climatic conditions. Climate projections indicate warmer temperatures and considerable seasonal and annual rainfall variability.¹ The changing climate is increasing or likely to increase the frequency, intensity and extent of floods, bushfire and droughts and could bring about cumulative or concurrent large-scale events or new hazards such as urban heat islands. These changes could affect land use, as well as resilient and sustainable future development outcomes.

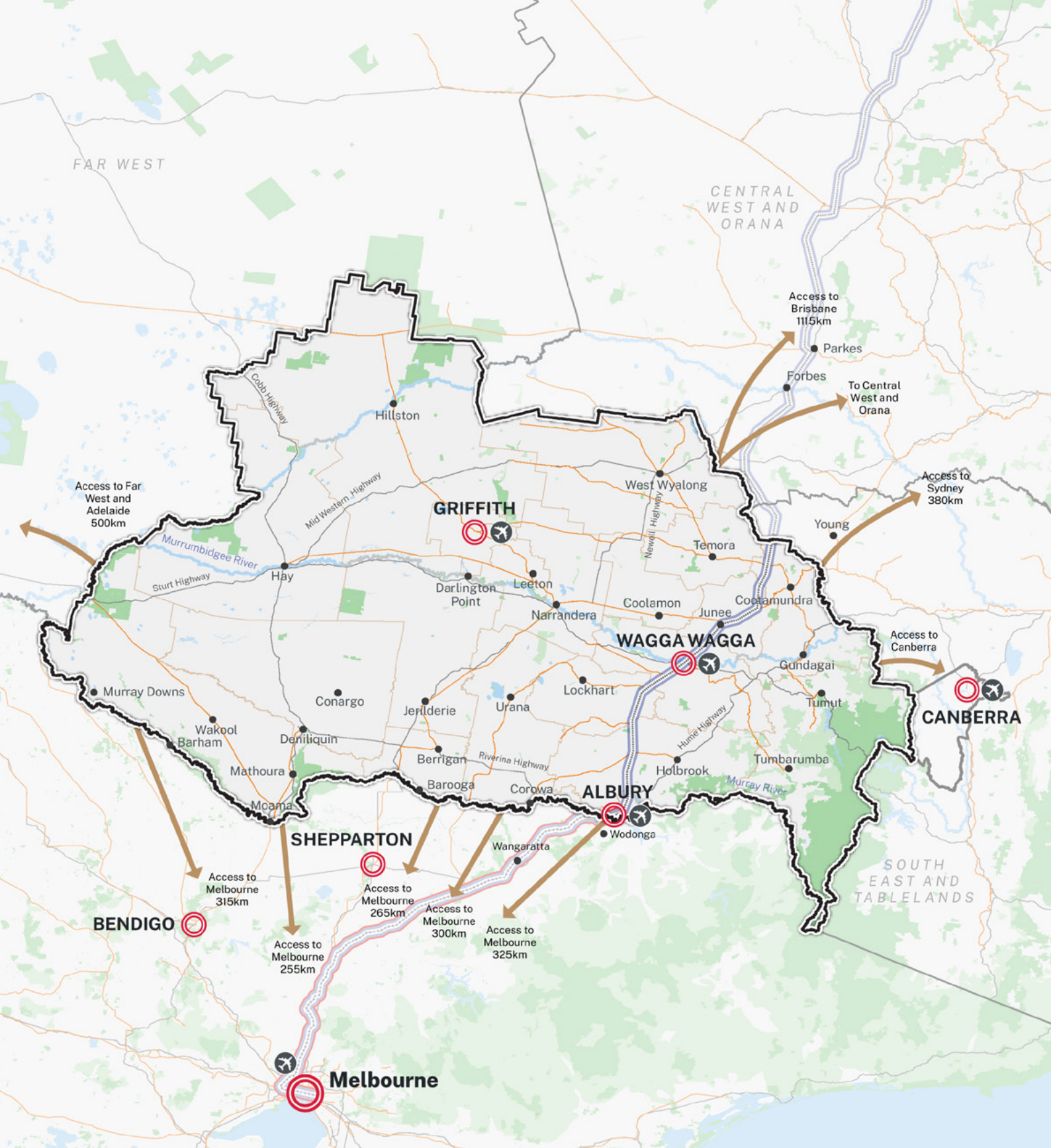


Figure 3: Riverina Murray Region Context
















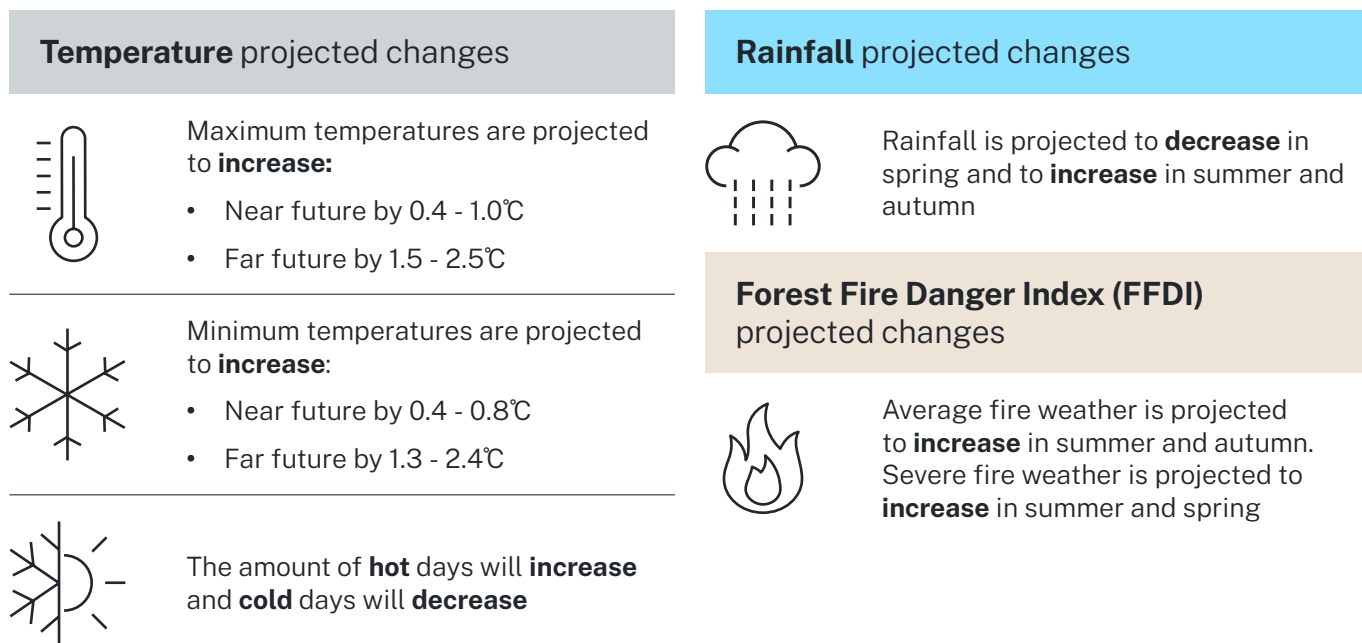
- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--|---|---------------------------|
|  | Regional boundary |  | Roads |  | Local government area |
|  | Metropolitan city |  | Railway |  | National park and reserve |
|  | Regional city |  | Inland rail |  | State forest |
|  | Town |  | Possible Melbourne to Albury-Wodonga faster rail |  | Water body |
|  | Airport | | | | |

Figure 4: Projected temperature and rainfall changes in Riverina Murray Region



Bioregion	Biodiversity features – defining characteristics
Australian Alps	Smallest bioregion in NSW, includes headwaters of Murray, Murrumbidgee and Snowy rivers and highest point of Mount Kosciuszko. Supports alpine and montane habitat.
Cobar Penplain	A semi-arid region characterised by shallow soils and open woodlands.
Murray Darling Depression	Semi-arid climate dominated by plains.
South Western Slopes	Dominated by woodlands and open woodlands. Significant geodiversity including karst landscapes and fossils.
Riverina	Semi-arid climate covering the alluvial fans of the Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers. Along rivers are river red gums and towards the plains are saltbush shrublands.
South Eastern Highlands	Soils and vegetation vary but include box gum woodlands and patches of snow-gum.

The Riverina Murray’s diverse landscapes support a mosaic of native flora, fauna and aquatic habitats for more than 180 threatened species and 11 threatened ecological communities (TECs).

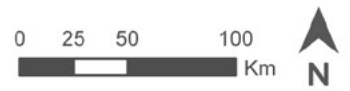
The cooler mountain climates support the TECs of Monaro Tableland Cool Temperate Grassy Woodland and the Montane Peatlands and Swamps in the South Eastern Highlands Bioregion. These cooler mountain communities also contain threatened flora and fauna including the Southern and Northern Corroboree Frogs, Booroolong Frog and Smoky Mouse.

The fertile slopes and low plains of the region’s centre are dominated by agriculture, industrial uses, regional towns and associated services. Once widespread open grassy woodlands are now endangered and critically endangered TECs include White Box Yellow Box Blakely’s Red Gum Woodland, Inland Grey Box Woodland and Weeping Myall Woodland. These and other grassy woodland communities support threatened species subject to landholder, community and government-based protection initiatives. They include Squirrel Gliders, Sloane’s Froglet, Bush Stone-curlew and woodland bird species.

The west and north west of the region are dominated by the open plains of native grasslands, semi-arid shrublands, with areas of mallee in the far north west. These lower rainfall regions include unique species that occupy niche habitats including the critically endangered Plains-wanderer, Malleefowl, Red-lored Whistler and Southern Bell Frog.



Figure 5: Environmental features of the Riverina Murray Region



- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
|  | Regional boundary |  | Ramsar wetlands |  | South Eastern Highlands bioregion |
|  | Metropolitan city |  | Murray Darling Depression bioregion |  | Australian Alps bioregion |
|  | Regional city |  | Cobar Peneplain bioregion |  | Water body |
|  | Town |  | Riverina bioregion | | |
| | |  | South Western Slopes bioregion | | |

OBJECTIVE 1:

Protect, connect and enhance biodiversity throughout the region



Inland Grey Box Woodland.
Credit: Steve Lewer/DPE

The region's multiple biophysical layers have created significant natural environment assets that are important to the biophysical environment while providing positive human experiences and interactions. This can benefit nature-based tourism, especially along the river systems and highlands, and support agricultural livelihoods through the provision of ecosystem services (e.g. shade, shelter, pest control or pollination).

In areas likely to experience population and/or economic growth, biodiversity values could be further compromised through clearing of native vegetation. While local strategic planning statements acknowledge the benefits of the natural environment, we can better identify biodiversity values to:

- inform land use decision-making throughout the development process
- avoid and minimise biodiversity loss;
- identify land for environmental conservation, including on land zoned identified for development
- manage the intersection between the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) and the EP&A Act to achieve the objectives of both.

Strategic planning must identify biodiversity values in the high growth areas of regional cities, Murray River communities, and smaller towns and villages. Providing future growth potential while protecting biodiversity values is best achieved at the strategic planning stage to avoid unnecessary costs and delays at the development application stage.

Biodiversity corridors across landscapes, including waterways and riparian corridors, alongside road reserves including travelling stock reserves, and in urban areas should be strengthened. These corridors connect bioregions, allow the movement of animals and plants, and provide refugia as the climate changes or natural disasters occur. Their identification and protection requires a collective effort from councils, developers and the NSW Government.

Strategy 1.1

Strategic and statutory planning should aim to first avoid, then minimise impacts on biodiversity and the natural environment. Biodiversity offsetting (through the BC Act) should only be used when 'avoid' and 'minimise' principles are not feasible. To do this:

- local strategic planning statements will include:
 - an overview of the LGA biodiversity values and corridors
 - biodiversity protection/enhancement strategies and actions in consultation with LALCs
 - opportunities for restoration of biodiversity values and strengthening landscape linkages such as green infrastructure networks
- strategic and statutory planning will:
 - identify the broad biodiversity attributes/values of zoned and strategy-identified investigation areas
 - identify existing zoned urban areas that may be difficult to develop due to biodiversity values
 - protect high environmental value land through conservation zones and conservation agreements
 - ensure land uses adjacent to high environmental value land and land containing regional and locally significant corridors are compatible with conservation outcomes or have adequate buffers to separate incompatible land uses
 - integrate biodiversity values into new and existing developments through water sensitive urban design, green infrastructure and walking and cycling networks
 - consider biodiversity certification for precinct-scale developments and rezonings
 - review and update biodiversity mapping and best practice provisions in the LEP.

Councils will engage with the department (environment division) when developing their local strategic planning statement, or in the early stages of strategic planning, to achieve this strategy.

Collaboration Activity 1 (Ongoing)

The department (planning and environment divisions) will help councils to develop and review development control plan controls/principles for environmental land to manage the intersection between the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* and the BC Act during development assessment.

Collaboration Activity 2 (Ongoing)

The department will ensure the NSW Planning Portal can capture validated spatial data on biodiversity values, including data collected to inform local strategies and local, regional and state significant development proposals.

Collaboration Activity 3 (Ongoing)

Utilising improved spatial information, the department (environment division) will work with councils to identify and protect regionally significant biodiversity corridors and climate refugia that extend across LGA boundaries.

Question: Do these strategies and activities balance land use planning and environmental outcomes at a regional level?

OBJECTIVE 2:

Manage development impacts within riverine environments



Edward River, Deniliquin.
Credit: Destination NSW

Managing the cultural, environmental and economic importance of rivers requires coordinated and consistent approaches to land use planning from all levels of government. This includes how water resources are managed and planned, how new development interacts with rivers and waterfront areas and the connectivity of riverine environments across the regional landscape.

Managing urban growth and land use in riverine areas such as the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers is essential to enhancing environmental values and other lifestyle benefits (see Objective 9). However, within riverfront towns, desirability for waterfront development (residential, rural-residential development and tourism accommodation), combined with outdated and inconsistently applied policies has resulted in poor outcomes including:

- ribbon development and riverfront fragmentation
- a decrease in public access to rivers and waterways
- a decrease in natural amenity
- a cumulative impact of increased clearing in the river corridors and water extraction.

The *Murray Regional Environmental Plan No. 2* was introduced in 1998 to manage inappropriate riverfront development that can result in increased flood hazards, conflicts among recreational users, boating congestion, loss of riparian vegetation and wildlife habitat, visual impacts and declining water quality, along the Murray River. While the plan's principles remain relevant, it has been inconsistently applied. *The State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021* contains additional guidance that will help to capitalise on the benefits of riverine land.

As the region's climate and communities change, development on riverine land will need to conserve waterways, enhance ecological functions and respond to and plan for future natural hazards. This requires better guidance for councils and communities.

Strategy 2.1



Strategic and statutory planning for riverine environments will be consistent with the objectives in the department’s riverfront development guideline to:

- incorporate waterfront areas into open space networks and prioritise public access to riverine lands and waterways
- prioritise subdivision of urban riverfront land for public access
- ensure adequate setbacks from waterways to accommodate natural river processes and reduce the need for future hazard protection
- take account of natural hazards, including flooding and climate change
- ensure nearby land use intensification is sympathetic to riverine land values
- encourage opportunities for restoration of biodiversity values and strengthening landscape linkages
- integrate riverine land into new and existing developments through water sensitive urban design, cool green cities and walking and cycling networks.

Action 1 (Short-term)



The department will develop waterfront development Guidelines to inform riverfront development as well as strategic and statutory planning to better manage the competing land uses along river corridors and riverine land. The Guidelines will provide best practice design principles to support a regionally consistent approach to the design and siting of development and land uses on riverine land.

Note: The draft Guidelines will be exhibited with the draft regional plan.

Question: Are there any other actions or activities that would support better waterfront outcomes?

Council Activity 2.1

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Prepare riverfront master plans or strategies

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Short-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murray River • Albury (review) |
|-------------------|---|

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Medium-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federation |
|--------------------|--|



Riverside, Wagga Wagga. Credit: Destination NSW

OBJECTIVE 3:

Increase natural hazard resilience

Varying climate conditions adversely impact vulnerable regional systems such as small communities, agricultural productivity, water, transport, energy, tourism and telecommunications and digital connectivity.^{2:3:4} For example:

- The 2019-2020 bushfires burnt 4,626 km² within the Albury-Wodonga and Snowy Valleys LGAs, caused extensive damage to property, infrastructure and the environment, and severely impacted the forestry, viticulture and tourism and hospitality industries.⁵
- Severe droughts between mid-2017 and 2020 saw towns and industries face the prospect of running out of water.⁶
- The 2012 Murrumbidgee flood inundated homes, businesses and land from Jugiong to Darlington Point,⁷ with almost 9,000 people evacuated and more than \$37 million in flood damage to Wagga Wagga.⁸

Regional growth pressures and the desirability of riverfront, rural and environmental lands increase demand for development near floodplains, high saline and bushland hazard areas. As climate conditions change, the interface between new development areas and natural environmental features, will require careful management to ensure that there is an acceptable hazard risk to the local community, which does not increase the exposure of people and property to natural hazards.

To reduce hazard risk and build resilient places and built form, most local strategic planning statements identify priority actions to prepare and/or review flood studies, floodplain risk management plans, bushfire prone land mapping, climate change adaptation plans and urban forest strategies. The statements also look to increase resilience in the built form.

The planning system can be utilised to limit the exposure of development to natural hazards and climate change through a risk-management approach. This approach acknowledges that a natural process has the potential to turn into a natural hazard when three elements interact:

- there is a presence or probability of a natural hazard
- people and/or property are exposed to the hazard
- the characteristics of a community make it vulnerable to the damaging effects of the hazard.



Risk is reduced by decreasing the contribution from one or more of the 3 components while not increasing other components or increasing them to a lesser extent. Considering natural hazards early in decision-making limits exposure and vulnerability to risk.

However, the strategic identification and review of hazard prone lands and their associated risks is a challenge for many councils, particularly given resourcing constraints. This means many councils rely on site-by-site analyses that accompany rezoning or development applications.

To reduce exposure to natural hazards and build resilient communities/places, the impacts of natural hazards need to be considered and addressed early in the land use planning and decision-making process. Reducing the level of vulnerability and risk for communities will involve adaptation and mitigation for existing urban areas and avoiding and mitigating risks for new development.

Strategy 3.1



Strategic and statutory planning will:

- be consistent with applicable NSW policies or guidelines
- take a risk-based approach that uses best available evidence in consultation with the NSW Government, emergency service providers, local emergency management committees and bush fire risk management committees
- locate development away from areas of known bushfire, salinity and flooding risk
- encourage opportunities for co-location of compatible land uses such as open spaces, biodiversity conservation areas and nature-based tourism in high hazard risk locations
- design communities that:
 - provide public spaces that build community cohesion and interaction so that communities are better placed to withstand and adapt to climate change and respond to natural hazard events
 - include green infrastructure networks at precinct and landscape scales to help avoid hazards such as the urban heat island effect
- provide easy to understand information to increase public awareness of potential natural hazard risks and climate change impacts.

Council Activity 3.1

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Prepare floodplain risk management strategies

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Short-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murray River – Moama • Coolamon – Coolamon and shire-wide • Temora – Temora, Aria Park and Springdale • Hay – Hay • Cootamundra-Gundagai |
|-------------------|--|

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Medium-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeton - Murrami, Whitton and Wamoon |
|--------------------|--|

Council Activity 3.2

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Update bushfire mapping in accordance with *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019*

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Short-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junee • Murrumbidgee • Temora • Hay |
|-------------------|--|

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Medium-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeton - Murrami, Whitton and Wamoon |
|--------------------|--|

Resources



Relevant NSW Government policies and guidelines to assist with natural hazard risk management include:

- *Planning for a more resilience NSW: A strategic guide to planning for natural hazards*, December 2021
- *Handbook for Strategic Guide to Planning for Natural Hazards*, December 2021
- *Strategic guide to planning for natural hazards – Resource Kit*, December 2021
- *Considering flooding in land use planning guidelines*, July 2021
- *Planning for Bushfire Protection Guideline*, November 2019
- *Flood Prone Land Policy and Floodplain Development Manual*, April 2005
- *Resilience Outcomes for the Planning System*, December 2021

PART

2

Communities and places



Leeton Township.
Credit: Destination NSW



Streetscapes, Gundagai. Credit: Destination NSW

PART

2

Communities and places

The Riverina Murray is a great place to live, work and visit. A growing population in some areas requires not just more housing, but a greater choice in housing to accommodate older people, smaller households, seasonal and temporary workers, and tourists.

The regional cities of Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith are home to more than 50% of the region's population and many more people commute to work in the cities from surrounding areas. Around 60% of people in the region only travel less than 10 km for work.⁹

The regional cities provide commercial, residential, cultural and industrial opportunities and higher-order services to catchments that can be as much as 2 hours away. For example, people in Young, outside the region, access health and education in Wagga Wagga.

There's a variety in the type of housing and services offered in the region's towns and cities. Smaller towns influenced by the growth of larger towns and regional cities tend to offer larger lots and lifestyle benefits from being close to these larger centres. Housing in Wagga Wagga, Griffith and Albury reflect the broad range of economic and social opportunities on offer, and the fact that the bigger the population, the younger it tends to be.¹⁰

Population growth and housing needs are likely to be influenced by the expected \$12.5 billion investment in major capital projects in the region over the next 5 years, attracting permanent and temporary workers.

Recent demographic changes will alter the population projections, such as tree change migration given more flexible work practices and housing affordability issues, and more young people staying in regional areas, particularly regional cities.

We expect Albury, Griffith and Wagga Wagga, and cross-border communities, to accommodate the biggest rates of growth over the next 20 years. This will require effective strategic planning to achieve sustainable development.

Household size is likely to continue to decline and single-person and couple-only households could make up over 60% of all households by 2041. Almost 1 in 5 people are 65 or older today; we expect this to increase to one in 4 people by 2041. The number of people aged 85 and older is projected to almost double by 2041.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics publishes an annual estimated resident population (ERP) that is rebased off the Census every 5 years. The ERP shows the region has grown consistent by almost 16,000 new residents over the last 10 years and is now home to more than 282,200 people.¹¹

Since the 2016 Census, many parts of the Riverina Murray Region have seen stronger than expected population growth, particularly along the Murray River. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, is exacerbating housing pressures.

Collectively the regional cities account for most new residents (more than 1,100 people a year since 2016), yet when smaller towns see relatively substantial and/or consistent population increases, there is greater pressure on infrastructure and services, as well as housing supply and affordability¹².

For example, the population of Moama (twin town to Echuca in Victoria) increased by an average 146 people per year for the last 20 years (between 2-4% per annum), and an additional 257 people between mid-2020 to mid-2021¹².

Similarly, Mulwala (twin town to Yarrawonga in Victoria) grew by almost 50 people per year over the last 20 years (0.8% to 2.3% per annum since 2016). The small towns around Albury welcome an additional 68 people a year and those around Wagga Wagga, including Junee, welcome nearly 140 new residents a year.

What was expected of housing, public areas, urban design and open spaces in Australia 50 years ago is different from communities' needs, preferences and expectations today. As a result, the supply and diversity of dwellings, as well as public spaces, do not necessarily support the community's aspirations and needs. With agile workforces, changing population structures and climate conditions, strategic planning must consider these issues while directing how development and investment is coordinated to help create high quality, resilient and liveable communities.

It must also protect distinctive features such as historic buildings and tree-lined streets – these scenic and cultural landscapes provide unique settings and are essential to the region's identity, tourism and economy.

COVID-19 and housing

During the COVID-19 pandemic, less people are leaving regions for capital cities and more people are leaving capital cities to live in regions, resulting in record high net increases of people living outside Greater Sydney.

Strong housing sales and increased demand for rental properties in regional areas led to higher housing prices in 2020-21 and rents in regional NSW grew at a faster rate than Sydney. Pre-COVID, house prices in regional NSW were less volatile than in Sydney and rental vacancy rates were steady but tight. Since COVID-19, average regional rental vacancy dropped to below 1%.¹³ These trends have increased pressure on the availability and affordability of housing across the region.

Development activity across the Riverina Murray Region has been strong with some towns and cities experiencing above-average population growth in 2020-21, when the total dwellings approved in the region increased by 15% compared to the previous 4 years.¹⁴ This was significantly higher in some LGAs, such as Greater Hume (26%), Albury (43%) and Coolamon (65%).

In addition, the value of approved residential development increased by 25% during 2020-21 compared to the average value over the previous 4 years.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Supporting Aboriginal aspirations through land use planning



Wagirra Trail and Yindyamarra Sculpture Walk, West Albury.
Credit: Destination NSW

The *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (ALR Act) provides for the return of land to Aboriginal people as compensation for past dispossession. Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) work to improve, protect and foster the best interests of all Aboriginal people in their area. There are 20 LALCs in the Riverina Murray Region straddling multiple LGAs and regional boundaries (see Figure 6).

Native title represents the traditional ownership of land and waters that have always belonged to Aboriginal people according to their traditions, laws and customs. The *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993* sets out how to recognise and protect native title rights, which differs from the statutory right of LALCs to make claims for land under the ALR Act.

The land and environment are deeply entwined with Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal people's connection to Country. As the first managers and carers of the region's lands, Aboriginal people have rights and a moral obligation to care for it under their law and customs.

LALCs and native title holders wishing to leverage economic development of their land usually need to engage with the NSW planning system. However links between land rights and planning legislation have been limited until recently, meaning the benefits of land rights for Aboriginal people have not been fully realised.

The *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036* includes actions to assist in provision of information to LALCs and the department has conducted assessments of land held by LALCs in NSW since 2019.

These assessments, bring together information about landholdings (including mapping and aerial photos), planning controls and constraints, and information about the suitability of land for development. These assessments need to be accelerated in the Riverina Murray to provide base-level planning system information to all LALCs about their land.

Further, strategic planning needs to reflect aspirations of Aboriginal people for Aboriginal land to aid progression through statutory planning processes such as rezonings and development approvals.

There is also opportunity for Aboriginal land owners to capitalise on other NSW Government policy and initiatives such as biodiversity offsetting, providing water to meet Aboriginal cultural and economic aspirations and public infrastructure.

Improving the cultural competency of all planning practitioners benefits the whole community and should be promoted and accelerated.

Community, Land and Business Plans

The ALR Act requires LALCs to prepare and implement community, land and business plans (CLBPs).

CLBPs describe the LALC aims and how these will be achieved. They give LALC boards and staff an understanding of members' expectations and set benchmarks to be met over the period of the plan. They can also support LALC applications for funding from state agencies or through commercial arrangements.

Collaboration Activity 4 (Short-term)

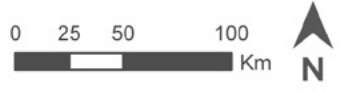


The department will work with LALCs, native title holders, councils and Commonwealth and state agencies to better reflect Aboriginal aspirations in plans by:

- involving LALCs and native title holders in strategic planning and improving consultation processes
- supporting and partnering with Aboriginal communities to identify opportunities to activate land, including through biodiversity offsets
- identifying where land returned to LALCs and native title holders has suboptimal planning controls and facilitating amendments
- supporting Aboriginal land holders to better understand the planning system, including preparing planning assessments of Aboriginal land
- promoting opportunities for cultural awareness training for all involved in planning
- incorporating Aboriginal knowledge into planning considerations and decisions.
- providing planning information to Aboriginal people to prioritise unresolved Aboriginal land claims on Crown land
- coordinating initiatives to improve cultural and economic opportunities associated with water resources.



Figure 6: Local Aboriginal Land Council boundaries and Local Government Areas



- Regional growth boundary
- Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Local government area

OBJECTIVE 5:

Ensure housing supply, diversity, affordability and resilience

Aerial overlooking the country town of Tumut.
Credit: Destination NSW



Stronger than anticipated population growth has, in some areas, exhausted serviced land supply; new growth areas will be required to meet demand. The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have contributed to this growth, with many people unable to leave the region due to border closures and lockdowns.

New housing supply in regional areas is dominated by large, detached dwellings that do not align with demand for smaller, accessible and affordable housing. While many councils identify the need for more diverse and accessible housing, most report limited take-up of infill development opportunities by industry, despite supportive planning provisions and community demand.

Not all factors affecting housing shortages and diversity can be directly addressed through the planning system, however solutions still need to be investigated. Examples of these factors include:

- financial costs and disincentives relating to infill development, and affordable and diverse housing products in regional areas
- the impact of planned major projects on rental and short-term accommodation markets
- meeting thresholds for upgraded or new public infrastructure and services (particularly health and education) faster than expected in some locations
- increased tourism, particularly short-term rentals, that reduce the availability of long-term rental housing stock

- the older population and larger proportion single or couple households
- a lack of tradespeople to meet construction demand, delaying housing supply
- an unwillingness to develop urban zoned land until land prices increase (land banking).

The region was home to 3,254 affordable housing properties in 2017.¹⁵ The 2016 Census found around 3% of all households (and 16% of Aboriginal households) live in social housing,¹⁶ with waiting times for affordable and public housing properties now ranging from 2 to 10 years for one-bedroom properties to more than 10 years for 4-bedroom properties.

We need to better understand current and future demographics and corresponding housing needs in all areas experience growth, including opportunities to provide the diversity of housing that meets community need, and the location and timing of new infrastructure. Staged urban development will help to achieve efficient, appropriate and sustainable housing development processes.

To meet supply and diversity challenges, housing should look for:

- infill opportunities in regional cities, including higher density residential housing such as terraces and apartments near CBDs and public spaces (see Objective 6)
- infill opportunities and other low impact residential products such as villas and townhouses in towns and villages near main streets, open spaces and services.

The region's housing needs to be more energy efficient and resilient to natural disasters to protect occupants from events such as flooding, bushfire and climate extremes such as heat waves.

Making houses more thermal and energy efficient with light-coloured roofing materials, double-glazing, natural light, rooftop solar, heat-pump hot water or making them solar and battery-ready will provide financial and quality of life benefits. Identifying areas for small-scale electricity generation, microgrids and related transmission infrastructure in development areas will allow this infrastructure to be installed upfront or be added without significant disruption.

The diversity of challenges and influences across the region means there is no one-size-fits-all housing solution. A range of solutions will ensure the region's towns and regional cities remain vibrant and productive places to live.

Strategy 5.1



Local strategic planning statements will:

- overview demographic trends, major projects and industries, and other influences shaping housing demand
- identify high-level constraints and opportunities for growth, including hazards and biodiversity
- identify key infrastructure and servicing requirements for future populations
- identify next steps and commit to preparing or updating strategies for diverse and affordable housing in strategically appropriate locations.

Councils are required to prepare local housing strategies (standalone or included in other strategic work) that will:

- identify the drivers of housing need
- analyse constraints and opportunities to the provision of housing
- identify future housing needs
- identify opportunities or initiatives to provide more resilient housing that responds to hazards and climate change
- identify the preferred type and location of housing
- commit to timely and orderly provision of infrastructure to service housing and future populations (see Objective 11).

Strategies will accord with the department's *Local Housing Strategy Guideline* – a step-by-step process for producing a *local housing strategy* (2018) and provide a clear evidence base. They will enable assessment of the implications of various locations for new housing and identify required infrastructure.

Strategy 5.2



Councils should consider preparing local affordable housing strategies, either separately or as part of a local housing strategy, to identify solutions and actions to support low-income renters and purchasers.

Strategy 5.3

New urban development will:

- avoid constraints and hazards
- minimise land use conflict, particularly between agricultural land and freight corridors
- protect areas of high environmental value and, ideally, avoid removal
- be integrated with existing urban areas
- provide a variety of housing that reflects community need
- integrate land use and transport planning
- protect the viability of city and town centres
- protect and enhance local character
- allow provision for services and infrastructure as an area is developed
- accord with staging and release plans.

Council Activity 5.1

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Local housing strategy

Short-term

- Wagga Wagga
- Murray River
- Federation
- Leeton
- Snowy Valleys
- Lockhart
- Temora
- Narrandera
- Albury City (current)

Medium-term

- Cootamundra-Gundagai
- Edward River
- Coolamon
- Bland

Longer-term

- Berrigan
- Griffith
- Carrathool
- Junee
- Greater Hume
- Murrumbidgee
- Hay

Action 2 (Medium-term)

The department will work with relevant state agencies and councils to identify and clarify the approval process for local housing strategies to streamline rezoning processes.

Collaboration Activity 5 (Short-term)

The department will establish a working group with relevant local and state agencies to investigate the issues and extent of housing affordability across the region and identify opportunities for land use planning to improve housing affordability outcomes.

Resources

Relevant NSW Government policies and guidelines to assist with planning for housing include:

- *Local Housing Strategy Guideline – a step-by-step process for producing a local housing strategy (2018).*
- *The NSW Local Government Housing Kit.*

OBJECTIVE 6:

Support housing in regional cities and their sub-regions



Aerial, Albury.
Credit: Destination NSW

The regional cities of Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith provide commercial, residential, cultural and employment opportunities and higher-order services to residents and to surrounding areas. They house more than 50% of the region's population and provide 58% of all jobs in the region, including those who commute to the cities from surrounding areas.

Redevelopment and higher residential densities will be a focus of urban growth in regional cities. Existing urban areas have capacity for infill and revitalisation, particularly near commercial centres. All 3 regional cities have or will provide medium and high-density housing in or near CBDs.

The continued provision of rural residential development in the 3 regional cities needs to be managed to protect future urban growth areas from fragmentation and infrastructure and service provision is economically efficient and effective for the whole city (see Objective 7).

There are economic benefits for surrounding areas when regional cities grow, particularly in areas within commuting distance. These areas could offer affordable housing and a country lifestyle for residents still seeking the benefits and opportunities of a nearby large city.

Recognising regional cities and their surrounding areas as a single housing market will provide opportunities for these communities and enable local and State governments to focus on appropriate growth, rather than competition between the cities and smaller nearby townships.

Wagga Wagga

Wagga Wagga is NSW's largest inland regional city, home to more than 64,000 people and the central hub for much of the region's east. Approximately 88% of people in Wagga Wagga live and work in the city; others commute from areas within an hour, mainly Junee, Coolamon and Lockhart LGAs.¹⁷

Wagga Wagga also provides commercial, health, education, civic and social services to a catchment of approximately 190,000 people, as far as Young in the Hilltops LGA.

While medium density development will increase, the main form of new housing will be in identified urban release areas. The Northern Growth Area will provide more than 6,000 new homes – or 17 years of supply. Council is committed to an integrated master planning process with the NSW Government and infrastructure providers to provide services in a timely and efficient manner.

Wagga Wagga City Council is planning for a transition to a more densely populated city of 100,000 people, requiring a shift in focus for existing rural residential areas on the urban fringe of the city to a more standard housing product, including medium density housing. Council has committed to directing rural residential development away from urban fringes to nearby villages.

In addition, towns and villages like Coolamon, Junee, Culcairn and The Rock could be suitable for standard urban housing at a different price point, as well as lifestyle rural residential opportunities.

Albury

Albury is home to nearly 56,000 people on the NSW side of the Murray River. With Wodonga in Victoria these twin cities are home to almost 100,000 people.

The combined City is a central hub for the region's south east and the north east of Victoria – a broader catchment of around 200,000 people. Nearly two-thirds of Albury's workforce live and work in the city and a further 20% travel from Wodonga. Greater Hume and Indigo (Victoria) LGAs house the most commuters outside Albury/Wodonga.¹⁸

Albury is the fastest growing centre in the Riverina Murray Region, and this will continue with the Thurgoona/Wirlinga Growth Area in the north west expected to provide more than 22,000 new homes (approximately 40 years supply). Growth is supported by comprehensive structure planning.

Albury is unique due to its intrinsic links and interdependence with Wodonga. While the 2 cities function separately, there is a focus on "two cities, one community".¹⁹ Development of both needs to balance growth, competition and sustainable urban outcomes.



Figure 7: Influence of Wagga Wagga Regional City on surrounding areas

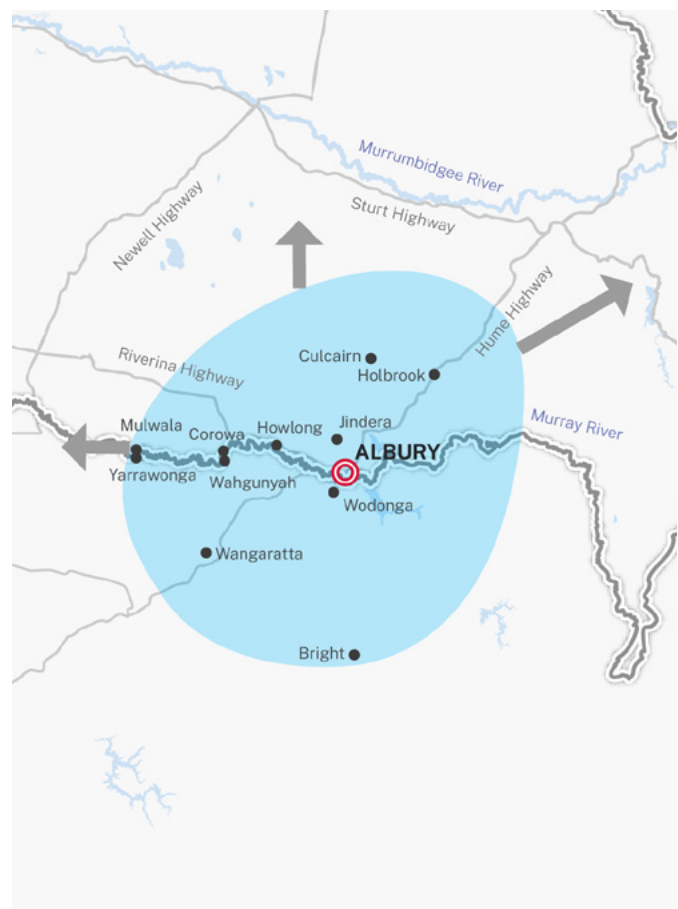


Figure 8: Influence of Albury Regional City on surrounding areas

Albury's urban focus provides opportunities for towns and villages within commuting distance, such as Jindera, Corowa, Howlong, Culcairn and Holbrook, to provide rural residential development.

Griffith

Griffith is home to approximately 27,000 people. It is a major commercial centre providing higher order goods, services, jobs and facilities to a wider sub-region of approximately 50,000 people. Most people living in Griffith (90%) live and work there. It sits within the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, one of the most diverse and productive agricultural regions in Australia.

Griffith City Council's urban release areas at Lake Wyangan and Collina are likely to supply most standard housing for the foreseeable future. Council's housing strategy focused on housing diversity and affordable housing options and opportunities to increase housing in and close to the city centre, where there are substantial redevelopment and mixed-use opportunities for apartments.

Council is seeking to understand demand and supply and identify new areas for development. However, given the increasing cost of housing in regional cities, there are still opportunities for commuting-distance towns and villages like Yenda, Hanwood, Leeton and Darlington Point, particularly for rural residential lifestyle housing.

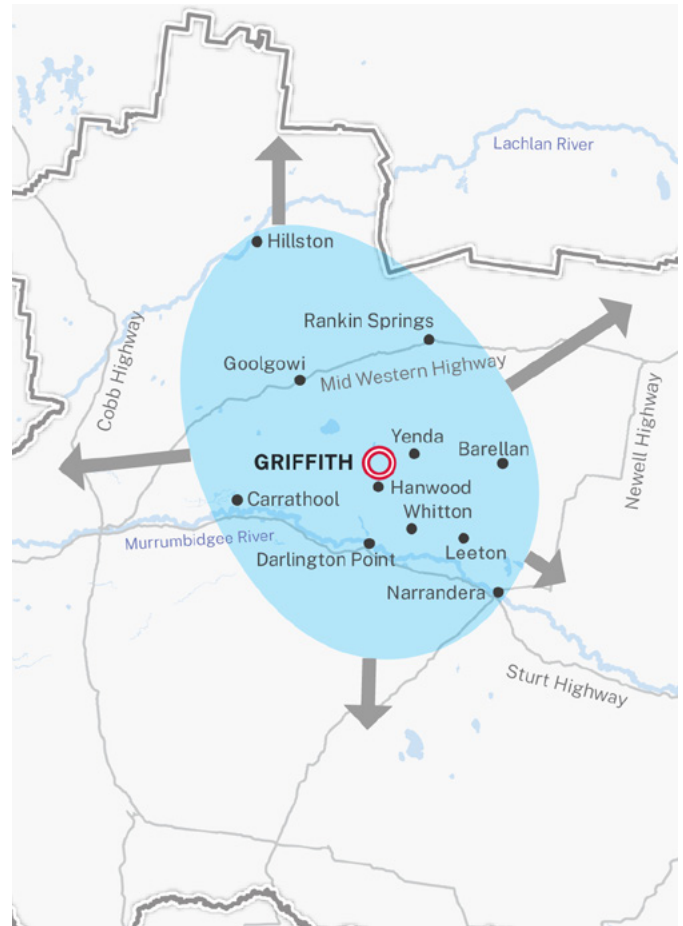


Figure 9: Influence of Griffith Regional City on surrounding areas

Strategy 6.1



Strategic and statutory planning for the regional cities will aim to:

- increase infill and higher residential densities within or close to the CBD
- where strategically justified, transition rural residential development to a standard residential product
- set targets, timeframes and staging for servicing urban land; identify infrastructure requirements and priorities; align infrastructure plans; and audit residentially zoned land to identify development barriers
- review the supply of zoned and strategy-identified land to understand constraints, priorities and development pathways.

Collaboration Activity 6 (Short-term)



The department will work with:

- Narrandera, Coolamon, Junee, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Snowy Valleys, Lockhart and Greater Hume councils to respond to potential housing and economic impacts and opportunities from the growth and development of Wagga Wagga
- Greater Hume and Federation councils to respond to potential housing and economic impacts and opportunities from the growth and development of Albury, in consultation with adjacent Victorian councils and the NSW and Victorian cross-border commissioners
- Leeton, Narrandera, Murrumbidgee and Carrathool councils to respond to potential housing and economic impacts and opportunities from the growth and development of Griffith.

Question: Do the strategy and activity provide enough support and guidance for the growth of regional cities and their subregions?

OBJECTIVE 7:

Provide for appropriate rural residential development



Springvale, Wagga Wagga.
Credit: Destination NSW

Rural residential development provides an option for people who want to live in a semi-rural or urban fringe setting. This type of development is known by many names, including 'rural residential', 'rural lifestyle', 'rural living' and 'large lot residential' development. It is usually on the edge of or near villages, towns and regional cities. Examples in the Riverina Murray include Jindera, about 15 minutes from Albury, which provides a range of housing and lifestyle options, many of which are not available in Albury. Other towns include Coolamon (30 minutes from Wagga Wagga), Moama (10 minutes from Echuca, Victoria) and Yenda (15 minutes outside Griffith).

Demand for rural residential development within commuting distance of regional cities and towns is expected to continue as population and employment opportunities increase, particularly where smaller communities provide lifestyle opportunities without competing with the regional centre. In addition, rural residential development offers housing options in smaller towns where there are low or no growth areas.

Rural residential development supports growth in rural communities and contributes to housing diversity. However, it must be planned to minimise or avoid unnecessary and irreversible impacts as it can:

- increase potential for land use conflict with nearby or adjoining productive agricultural, industrial, mining or energy uses
- fragment rural or agricultural land, to create dwelling opportunities, that can increase the value of rural land and potentially reduces the ability of farming enterprises to amalgamate
- place pressure on infrastructure and services, resulting in an economic burden on councils
- cause biodiversity losses, weed control issues or erosion or, in riverfront areas, water quality issues, vegetation loss or impact infrastructure in and adjoining the waterway
- restrict future urban growth opportunities due to multiple landowners and competing priorities.

Strategy 7.1



New rural residential development areas must be identified in a local housing strategy, approved by the department, prepared in accordance with Objective 5 and:

- be near existing urban areas to maximise the efficient use of existing infrastructure and services, including roads, water, sewerage and waste services and social and community infrastructure,
- not reduce future urban development options
- protect the economic use of rural land and be located away from significant agriculture, forestry, extractive resources or energy production or distribution areas (see Objective 12)
- not be located on environmentally sensitive land or areas of cultural or heritage significance or not adversely affect nearby land with those values
- avoid fragmentation of waterfront areas, and not proliferate additional water rights to water bodies
- avoid areas that could pose a risk to public safety, including flood, landslip, bushfires or contaminated land
- be suitable for on-site effluent disposal (if required), or ensure treatment systems that can avoid overflow during storms
- avoid locations that could adversely impact surface water or groundwater resources*
- provide an adequate water supply for domestic purposes
- offer permanent and safe all-weather access and avoid ribbon development along main roads and minimise access off major roads.

*Note: where onsite sewer is being proposed, the cumulative impacts on groundwater must be considered

Question: Will these criteria effectively manage the impacts of rural residential development?

Council Activity 7.1

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Provide for rural residential development when preparing local housing strategies.

Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrathool • Murray River • Temora
Medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edward River • Snowy Valleys • Coolamon

OBJECTIVE 8:

Provide for short-term accommodation

The Shamrock Hotel Motel, Temora
Credit: Destination NSW



Major projects and industries require temporary and permanent workers during construction and operation. These workers contribute to local economies and communities through direct and indirect employment opportunities and support growth and other investments across the region.

We have seen significant housing stress in some towns and villages from an influx of temporary workers during the construction of large-scale developments, such as renewable energy projects, mining, Murray River bridge crossings and Inland Rail. Seasonal agricultural employment and tourism also creates demand for short-term accommodation.

In some instances, major project and seasonal housing needs are met locally, without analysis of any impacts, nor any remediation, which impacts the availability of housing for residents and tourism.

Strategic and statutory planning needs to ensure temporary workforces are accommodated to support local economic development. This requires a coordinated and ongoing process to understand the scale of major projects and seasonal workers, and where they will occur, to plan for the right types and locations of housing.

Councils need to plan for a range of housing and accommodation options, particularly where demand for temporary accommodation is high. Councils could:

- consider seasonal and itinerant worker accommodation needs in local housing strategies and local strategic planning statements
- review LEPs to provide for temporary worker accommodation, caravan parks, manufactured home estates or moveable dwellings
- implement short-term rental accommodation policies
- review planning controls to identify barriers to the provision of suitable accommodation
- partner with the community housing sector to provide affordable housing supply suitable for short-term worker accommodation and longer term affordable rental housing
- apply for low-cost loans for infrastructure to support private sector housing
- encourage better utilisation of existing dwelling stock.

Strategy 8.1



When identifying sites for short-term worker accommodation, councils and proponents must:

- consider the capacity of existing and planned infrastructure and the proximity to centres to serve short-term workforces and support local economies
- contribute to the supply of housing as well as the local economy and community
- avoid separate worker camps where projects are within safe commuting distance to existing towns.

Strategy 8.2



The proponents of large-scale projects likely to attract large numbers of permanent, temporary, seasonal and itinerant employment opportunities will:

- assess anticipated impacts on local housing markets to ensure workers can access accommodation without impacting housing availability
- consider housing options such as new permanent housing within nearby towns, temporary worker accommodation as part of the project if it is outside a safe commutable distance to the town, accommodation in nearby towns, or more permanent accommodation that could be repurposed.

Collaboration Activity 7 (Short-term)



The department will work with Department of Regional NSW, joint organisations and councils to:

- quantify housing demands from major projects and infrastructure investments to 2027, including mining, renewable energy, transmission, and road and rail projects
- understand the cumulative impacts of major projects on the region and affected communities
- determine suitable planning mechanisms to ensure the project design and development assessment process considers these impacts early.

Collaboration Activity 8 (medium-term)



The department will work with councils to review LEPs to facilitate temporary worker accommodation associated with major projects.

Question: Will these strategies and activities help to provide short-term accommodation?

OBJECTIVE 9:

Plan for resilient places that respect local character

Wiradjuri Trail, Wagga Wagga.
Credit: Chloe Smith Photography; Visit Wagga Wagga.



Main streets, rural landscapes and vistas, interactions with the natural environment and waterways, open spaces and cultural and heritage places can be at the heart of unique, locally recognisable places.

Well-designed places contribute to making great places to live and visit. When planning places, the urban design strategies for NSW can assist efforts to represent community values and ambitions and build resilience.

Understanding what resonates with people and makes an area special can help to retain and celebrate local character.

Urban design strategies for regional NSW



Engage with the history and culture of places

Urban environments in regional NSW are defined by non-Aboriginal cultural heritage, which was preceded by places and landscapes tied to Aboriginal culture. Different histories and shared stories play out across regional cities, towns and villages. Acknowledging and caring for assets and landscapes that represent histories and cultures supports community wellbeing and helps to define places.



Integrate with the natural environment and landscape

Most regional cities, towns and villages have a strong connection with the natural environment and with stories and experiences of Country. Careful planning and design is required to integrate urban development sustainably and appropriately.



Revitalise main streets and town centres

Main streets and town centres typically contain the biggest concentration of public and commercial facilities. Main street buildings and public spaces record stories and histories, carry a sense of local identity, or host major events, parades and festivals.



Prioritise connectivity, walkability, and cycling opportunities

Private cars are likely to remain the dominant form of transport in regional areas. Car dependency can be reduced near urban centres through good urban design, planning and better public transport connections.



Balance urban growth

While there is pressure for new housing development on greenfield sites outside town centres, the long-term impacts of dispersed and sometimes isolated fringe development can have high economic and social costs. Urban design and strategic planning should balance the consolidation and distribution of new development.



Increase options for diverse and healthy living

Rethinking housing forms and densities and providing new options should allow for the needs of older people, proximity to essential services and well-designed public areas



Respond to climatic conditions and their impacts.

Varied climate zones, landscapes and topographies affect different regional urban settlements in different ways.

Aboriginal heritage

Conserving Aboriginal heritage and respecting Aboriginal people's rights to determine how their heritage is identified and managed can help to uphold some of the world's longest standing spiritual, historical, social and educational values. Incorporating local Aboriginal knowledge, culture and traditions into centres, places and developments will embed cultural awareness and build respect for the region's cultural history. Respectfully and authentically combining history and heritage with modern design creates places with shared values and a clear sense of place and identity.

Strategy 9.1



Councils will identify, conserve and enhance cultural heritage values by:

- engaging with the community early (including Traditional Owners) in the planning process to protect, preserve and nurture Aboriginal cultural heritage
- undertaking heritage studies to inform conservation and development opportunities
- encouraging adaptive re-use or sympathetic new design in heritage settings
- managing and monitoring the cumulative impact of development on heritage values and character of
- creating opportunities for Traditional Owners to manage and protect Aboriginal heritage.

Non-Aboriginal heritage

Heritage conservation attracts businesses and residents and creates tourism potential. Better promotion and targeted community education initiatives can increase community support for managing and protecting heritage assets.

Heritage is distinct from local character, in that it is not just about managing the material culture of the past, but also about understanding how heritage influences and shapes communities today. Heritage buildings can be re-used as both cultural infrastructure and modern economic activities.

Heritage is irreplaceable and should be valued and protected. Appropriate heritage management mechanisms, developed with communities, includes Aboriginal and cultural heritage studies. These mechanisms can inform strategic and statutory land use planning.

Council Activity 9.1

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Aboriginal and cultural heritage studies

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Short-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bland • Cootamundra-Gundagai • Edward River • Griffith |
|-------------------|---|

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Medium-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federation • Hay • Leeton • Murray River • Murrumbidgee • Narrandera |
|--------------------|---|

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Longer-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junee • Wagga Wagga • Albury • Lockhart • Snowy Valleys • Coolamon • Carrathool • Berrigan • Temora |
|--------------------|---|

Riverfront

Rivers and riverfront areas can be the centrepiece of riverfront communities, allowing people to visually connect and sensitively interact with the water. Stronger links between towns and rivers can optimise the heritage and character of a place, make waterway areas more attractive, and potentially provide new public space and areas for recreation. Riverfront master planning processes such as the Wagga Wagga Riverside Strategic Master Plan, Albury Murray River Experience Master Plan and the Deniliquin CBD Master Plan create better connections between towns, rivers and people.

Reorienting commercial and retail frontages to riverfronts could help to create riverfront connections for pedestrian and cycle networks between centres, residential areas, employment areas, cultural facilities and transport nodes. This can occur alongside improvements to riparian zones and river channels across the Riverina Murray.

The region's riverfront sites have extensive Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal histories. The celebration of these historic values in interpretive design elements and cultural activities will create new destinations, experiences and stories. Collaboration and partnerships with Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners can help to identify opportunities for cultural practice, better recognition of culture and place and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people, including cultural tourism.

Riverfront activation strategies should consider the impacts of hazards such as flooding and a changing climate.

Strategy 9.2



Strategic and statutory planning will consider:

- areas that can be embellished for tourism, recreation and public open space opportunities, aligned with the principles of the *NSW Public Spaces Charter*
- environmental values to be protected (in accordance with Objective 2)
- opportunities to integrate with urban areas, pedestrian and cycle networks and irrigation channels
- preferred land uses and planning controls for riverfront areas
- opportunities to integrate activation strategies with planning for hazards such as drought and floods (in accordance with Objective 3)
- mapping river corridors in LEPs to increase protection
- connecting river walks and trails
- opportunities for cultural practice and economic uses for Aboriginal people (see Strategy 9.1).

Action 3 (Medium-term)



The department will develop a management framework for western NSW rivers to guide:

- priority areas for activation
- mechanisms to fund public ownership of riverfront land
- the preparation and implementation of riverfront activation strategies
- mechanisms to ensure riverfront areas provide long-term public and environmental benefits
- councils on the planning and management of riverfront lands.

Built environments

The region's places offer distinctive features such as historic buildings and tree-lined streets that help to create a unique character and sense of place. These characteristics are essential to the region's identity, tourism, and regional economy.

The CBDs of Wagga Wagga, Albury and Griffith provide well designed mixed-use, residential, retail and commercial development within and adjacent to the CBDs, and quality public spaces, that encourage more diverse, vibrant and interactive community and business areas.

The region's busy and attractive main streets contribute to the regional economy and social wellbeing. They provide for day-to-day needs and act as a hub for surrounding communities. Examples include:

- Junee's distinctive 2 main streets either side of the railway line, preserved heritage buildings and streetscapes, accessible public open space and community facilities within an idyllic rural setting
- Temora's main street precinct, providing local shopping, dining and services within a preserved heritage streetscape
- the townships of Barooga and Tocumwal and their landscape and urban form that is central to their identity of towns on the banks of the iconic Murray River, framed by magnificent Red Gum trees, and close to premier golf courses, the Murray Valley National Park, regional parks and river beaches.
- Leeton's main street, with beautifully restored and maintained art deco buildings, including the Roxy Community Theatre
- Sheridan Street in Gundagai, which features new tourist and information facilities and greater foot traffic from well-designed civil works and the repainting of buildings.

The revitalisation and development of built environments throughout the region will contribute to the growing population's health and wellbeing in the context of change. Many of the region's town centres would benefit from strategic planning to fully appreciate the opportunities of vibrant built environments.

Strategy 9.3



Councils should undertake strategic, place-based planning of CBDs and main streets to:

- identify opportunities to diversify land uses and activate and/or revitalise centre
- recognise and celebrate the local character of the place and its people
- enhance vitality and economic viability
- consider public domain improvements, public art, community events, markets and festivals, local housing and night-time options such as restaurants and bars.

Public Spaces

Vibrant neighbourhoods feature green infrastructure, and walkable and attractive public spaces.

- Public spaces are publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive. This includes public open spaces, public facilities and streets.
- Green infrastructure is the network of green space, natural systems and semi-natural systems, including waterways, bushland, tree canopy and open spaces.

Public spaces should be of a high quality, well maintained and integrated with the surrounding environment. They need to be designed and managed so that they remain comfortable places to be as the region gets hotter. This can lead to healthier communities, where people are more connected and participate more in community activities, while mitigating climate change impacts, providing habitat for wildlife and improving air and water quality.

Initiatives include increasing planting of trees and other vegetation in developed areas, maximising shading and using materials with greater reflectivity, less heat capacity and (in the case of paving materials) more permeability.



Public Open Spaces

Both active and passive (including parks, gardens, playgrounds, public beaches, riverbanks and waterfronts, outdoor playing fields and courts, and publicly accessible bushland).



Public Facilities

public libraries, museums, galleries, civic/community centres, showgrounds and indoor public sports facilities



Streets

streets, avenues and boulevards; squares and plazas; pavements; passages and lanes, and bicycle paths

Strategy 9.4



Strategic and statutory planning should encourage retaining existing trees and planting new street trees along main streets.

Strategy 9.5



Councils should analyse public space needs and develop public space strategies to improve access and quality of all public space, including planning new and improved public spaces that align with 10 principles for quality public space of the *NSW Public Spaces Charter*.

Council Activity 9.2

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Open space and recreation strategies

Short-term

- Leeton
- Albury
- Temora

Medium-term

- Carrathool
- Greater Hume
- Junee
- Leeton
- Lockhart (The Rock and Brookong Creek)
- Murray River
- Narrandera

Smart Places

Smart technology can contribute to quality, productive, resilient and adaptable places and infrastructure. For example, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, smart CCTV, smart lighting, predictive analytics, 'push to talk' emergency systems, smart screens and smart tour guides can improve public spaces and encourage greater use.

Similarly, embedding smart technologies into utility infrastructure and environmental monitoring systems enables real-time management decisions and actions. Land use and infrastructure planning and design in new communities or precincts and infill or urban renewal areas will embed smart solutions and technologies.

Strategy 9.6



Major commercial, residential and community infrastructure developments will consider ways to enable and incorporate smart technology infrastructure where appropriate.

Strategy 9.7



Statutory planning should be reviewed to support adaptation to new and emerging technology driven-land uses, particularly smart infrastructure.

Resources



Relevant NSW Government policies and guidelines to assist with the planning of resilient places of character include:

- *NSW Public Spaces Charter (2021)*
- *Local Character and Place Guideline (2019)*
- *Urban Design for Regional NSW (2020)*
- *Everyone Can Play – A guideline to create inclusive playspaces (2019)*
- *Better Placed – An integrated design policy (2017)*
- *Draft Greener Places Design Guide (2020)*
- *Movement and Place Framework*
- *Local Government Heritage Guidelines (2002)*
- *Connecting with Country Draft Framework*
- *Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW (2011).*

OBJECTIVE 10:

Improve connections between Murray River communities

Most towns on the Murray River are co-located with a Victorian counterpart (see Figure 10). These twin towns often share housing markets and operate as a single provider of services, employment and retail.

Some Victorian towns and cities in commuting distance of the border are likely to grow significantly over the next 20 years. For example, Bendigo (an hour south west of Moama) and Wodonga (adjoining Albury) are projected to grow by 50% by 2036, taking their populations to over 153,000 and almost 59,000 respectively.²⁰ Other cities such as Echuca, Shepparton and Wangaratta are projected to grow steadily to 2036.²¹

Albury/Wodonga is an essential centre, highlighted by Victorian Government projections that Wodonga will be one of the top 5 fastest growing regional LGAs in Victoria over the next 20 years. In addition, the Albury-Wodonga Regional Deal between both councils and the Australian Government will provide funding and support for economic development and infrastructure and connectivity priorities.

Bendigo's importance to NSW cross-border communities could increase as it is one of 3 regional cities in Victoria that is projected to account for around half of all Victorian regional growth in the next 2 decades.²²

Economic and social connections from the Murray River communities into northern Victoria are more significant than connections with other areas in NSW. Melbourne is just 2.5-3 hours from most border communities (by road and rail) and major towns and regional cities in Victoria are within 30-60 minutes. People connect to parts of Victoria and Melbourne for work, education, recreation, and services and facilities such as specialised health and retail.

The strong commercial and industrial links between the Riverina Murray Region and Victoria are focused on freight moving through Melbourne Airport and the Port of Melbourne. Victoria is expecting freight volumes to nearly triple in the next 3 decades.²³

The region's proximity and connections to Victoria mean almost 8,400 people (7% of Riverina Murray workers) live in Wodonga, Indigo, Moira or Towong LGAs and work in NSW. An equivalent number of people live in NSW and are employed in either Wodonga, Campaspe, Moira or Indigo LGAs.²⁴ Commuting data from 2016 showed more than 55% of workers living in Moama travelled to Victoria for work; and of the people that travelled to work in Moama, 50% came from Victoria. In smaller towns, such as those in the Berrigan LGA, 20% of workers travel to Victoria for work.²⁵

Figure 10: NSW-Victoria cross-border towns and area of influence



Growth in Victoria's regions is guided by 8 regional growth plans endorsed by all Victorian regional councils. The plans will see housing, jobs, transport and community facilities provided when and where they are needed.²⁶

Visitors, residents and workers along the Murray River do not always appreciate the different legal and administrative requirements of the State border. While this can increase opportunities for funding or leveraging off the success of a cross-border counterpart, it can limit coordination of service and infrastructure delivery, fragment government, duplicate resources, and result in varying approaches to rules and regulations.²⁷ Cross border commissioners in NSW and Victoria are looking to develop common approaches and resolve issues unique to cross-border communities.

Some of the challenges unique to land use planning in this sub-region include:

- different forms of riverfront ownership. Much of the Victorian side of the Murray River is Crown land, which limits private development opportunities, yet provides tourism and amenity opportunities, while most of the NSW side of the river is in private ownership
- resolving state legislation and requirements for development that often result in more favourable conditions in one area over another
- the combined housing markets for twin towns that operate over separate jurisdictions, meaning housing is planned in isolation from cross-border counterparts
- better integrating transport and land use planning between jurisdictions (see Objective 17)
- addressing pressure for holiday homes and rural residential developments in small NSW towns and communities, where house prices are increasing, and rental markets and affordable housing opportunities are tightening.

Collaboration between NSW and Victorian agencies and between NSW and Victorian councils could draw from Albury-Wodonga's collaboration experiences and outcomes. Regular dialogue is essential to identify issues, points of difference, best practice examples and potential collaboration activities.

Two Cities – One Community

In preparing individual community strategic plans, the respective Albury and Wodonga communities identified that the 2 councils should work more closely to achieve community aspirations and ambitions, value for money and a regional perspective.

A combined community strategic plan 2017-2021 adopted by both councils sets out long-term goals and actions to guide collaboration to realise community benefits and to build on an enduring partnership.

<https://www.alburywodonga.gov.au/>

Strategy 10.1



Local strategic planning statements for LGAs adjoining the Murray River should:

- overview cross-border issues including inter-relationships, inter-dependencies and drivers of change
- recognise opportunities for a cross-border housing market and employment lands
- identify infrastructure and servicing constraints and opportunities in a cross-border environment.

Strategy 10.2



The LGAs of Murray River, Berrigan, Federation and Albury City will collaborate with their Victorian cross-border local government counterparts through strategic planning for the cross-border towns of Murray Downs/ Swan Hill; Barham/Koondrook; Moama/Echuca; Barooga/Cobram; Mulwala/Yarrowonga; Corowa/Wahgunyah; and Albury/Wodonga and investigate shared housing markets to understand demand and supply for housing in the area.

Collaboration Activity 9 (Short-term)



The department will work with relevant councils and agencies to share successful cross-border planning collaboration with other cross-border jurisdictions through workshops, practice notes, lessons learnt, or sessions with Joint Organisation planners' groups.

Question: Are there other outcomes for cross border planning you would like to see in the regional plan?

OBJECTIVE 11:

Plan for integrated and resilient utility infrastructure



Hume Dam.
Credit: Dave Taylor

The region relies on quality utility infrastructure, including water supply, sewerage, stormwater, electricity, gas and telecommunications. With growth and climate change, infrastructure should be well designed, more resilient and located in the right place at the right time.

The Regional Housing Taskforce identified deficiencies in utility infrastructure and inadequate alignment between strategic and infrastructure investment planning. These are barriers to urban development and industry diversification or expansion. Many councils highlight the need to prepare or review infrastructure master plans, housing strategies and infrastructure contributions plans to align infrastructure and service provision with anticipated growth.

Strategic planning provides a way to coordinate utility infrastructure that minimises expenditure or duplication of services. It prioritises infill growth opportunities to maximise existing infrastructure and identifies urban growth areas in locations with access to existing infrastructure or where new infrastructure is cost-effective.

Water

Water availability within the region is finite and fully allocated. The expected population growth and urban development, coupled with the pressures of drought and climate change, requires integration of long-term planning for water resources.

The region's water sources include:

- the regulated Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers
- unregulated rivers and creeks
- groundwater sources
- recycled water from local water utilities, local runoff captured in farm dams and water captured through floodplain harvesting.

Access to water is critical for some land uses but not always considered upfront in the planning process. This can lead to population and industry growth in areas with water availability constraints, creating greater pressure on stressed water resources.

In some areas, councils are the local water authority and often draw water supplies from major rivers; in other areas, there are county water authorities, such as Riverina Water that provides water to 4 south east LGAs.

There are opportunities to better integrate water resources in strategic planning to optimise water use efficiency, water re-use and recycling, sharing of existing or new water infrastructure or understanding the impact of land use planning decisions on water sources in the context of a capped system.

Telecommunications

Access to telecommunications is inconsistent across the region. While Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith have established NBN fibre networks, more remote parts have limited access to affordable and reliable digital communication infrastructure or endure mobile phone blackspots. This can limit business growth, the ability to attract skilled workforces and online health and education programs in remote areas. Online health services are essential given the older populations in smaller centres who require appropriate care as they age. Further, a lack of consistent mobile connectivity could be a barrier to the uptake of more autonomous and connected vehicles in the future.

Growing innovation and market competition in communication satellites will improve affordability and reliability of telecommunication services in remote parts of the region.

Strategy 11.1



Strategic and statutory planning will:

- focus development around existing infrastructure and/or promote co-location of new infrastructure, where appropriate
- undertake infrastructure service planning and cost-benefit analysis for identified development land, to establish whether the land can be efficiently and feasibly serviced
- understand and identify necessary infrastructure upgrades to accommodate additional growth in the immediate to short-term
- include staging plans that:
 - identify the thresholds and timelines for major land release and infrastructure items
 - identify capacity for growth and potential take-up scenarios
 - provide a baseline assessment of extent, type and capacity of existing infrastructure
 - evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the infrastructure required to service the area
 - align with capital investment plans/ priorities of infrastructure providers or public authorities
 - consider resilience in infrastructure planning at a local, intra-regional and cross border scale
 - identify and assess appropriate sites and capacity to provide for water security, wastewater service capacity, electricity supply, and emergency services
- optimise development controls to ensure development does not hinder the ongoing operation of infrastructure
- consider and identify infrastructure funding and delivery arrangements such as cross-border/sector funding, planning agreements or public private partnerships
- assist public and private providers in aligning infrastructure and service provision with strategically identified growth.

Strategy 11.2

Strategic planning will optimise water use by:

- considering water supply and quality issues and opportunities throughout the planning process in the context of climate variability and change, planned growth, integrated water cycle management, and water sensitive urban design, rural design and environmental needs
- locating, designing, constructing and managing new developments to minimise impacts on water catchments, including downstream impacts and groundwater resources
- encouraging the re-use of water in existing and new development for extractive or non-extractive purposes, including dual water systems, irrigation and maintaining amenity
- reviewing the cost and regulatory impediments to water recycling projects
- improving provision for stormwater management and green infrastructure
- investigating managed aquifer recharge cost, practicality and efficiency for the temporary storage of stormwater, river flow or purified recycled water in aquifers
- ensuring sustainable development of higher water use industries by supporting more efficient water use and re-use in locations where water can be accessed without impacting other water users or the environment
- identifying and protecting drinking water catchments and storages.

Collaboration Activity 10 (Medium-term)

The department will establish working groups with public and private infrastructure and service providers to better align utility infrastructure delivery with strategic growth, particularly electricity providers.

Collaboration Activity 11 (Longer-term)

The department (planning and water divisions) will investigate land use and population change impacts on water resources to:

- understand the impact of land use and water management decisions on industries, the environment and communities, in the context of a capped water management system
- assess projected population growth, and regional and local development trends to identify spatial changes in water demand and growth in town water demands
- better link approvals for land use with approvals for water access
- inform councils and joint organisations in the development of strategic plans, integrated water cycle management strategies and regional town water strategies
- enable early consideration of how to better integrate water supply, stormwater management and wastewater management
- improve communication and early engagement to inform councils and proponents about existing or emerging risks to water resources in their area
- improve access to information about water availability, critical water-dependent ecosystems and cultural values to guide strategic and statutory planning processes
- identify any water-related gaps in the planning system and assess the adequacy of current land use planning controls to protect water resources.

Question: Are the strategies adequate to support integrated and resilient infrastructure?

Question: Would collaboration activity 10 be useful? If so, can you nominate where this should occur?

Council Activity 11.1

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Update/develop developer contribution plans, water cycle management and infrastructure plans.

Short-term

- Cootamundra-Gundagai
- Federation
- Greater Hume
- Leeton
- Murray River
- Narrandera

Medium-term

- Bland
- Griffith
- Junee
- Murrumbidgee
- Wagga Wagga
- Albury

Resources



Water Sensitive Design Guide for Rural Residential Subdivisions (WaterNSW)

Water Sensitive Urban Design (WaterNSW)

Risk-Based Framework for Considering Waterway Health Outcomes in Strategic Land-use Planning Decisions (2017)

Lock 6 on the Murray River.
Credit: Murray-Darling Basin Authority



PART

3

Economy





Berton Vineyards, Yenda. Credit: Destination NSW

PART

3

Economy

Rural lands and natural resources are the foundations of the region’s economic growth, employment and development. They support agribusiness and primary industry sectors such as agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and mining.

The regional cities also contribute to economic growth through retail, commercial and industrial development and hosting assets such as hospitals, tertiary education facilities and airports.

The region is known as Australia’s food bowl and is the largest value-adding agricultural region in NSW. The region’s competitive advantages are its location between Australia’s biggest metropolitan cities and international airports and ports, its links with Victoria, and its agribusiness and value-added manufacturing sectors.

Figure 11 of the region’s economic assets includes the major freight routes of the Hume, Newell, Sturt and Cobb highways, Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct (SAP), Albury Regional Jobs Precinct (RJP), regional hospitals and health services and agricultural value-add industries and manufacturing. The region will also generate renewable energy in the future.

Question: Does the map include the region’s most important economic assets?

Most resident workers are employed in industrial (32%) or population-serving jobs (27%). Most industrial jobs are agriculture related, which highlights the importance of agriculture and manufacturing.²⁸ In Carrathool, for example, 60% of residents are employed in the industrial sector.

Planning for the region’s economy needs to:

- protect rural land uses from potential land use conflict and fragmentation
- strategically plan for industrial and commercial growth
- grow CBDs and town centres
- provide health and education for local communities
- support well located renewable energy industries and the consequent transition
- encourage tourism developments
- integrate transport and land use.

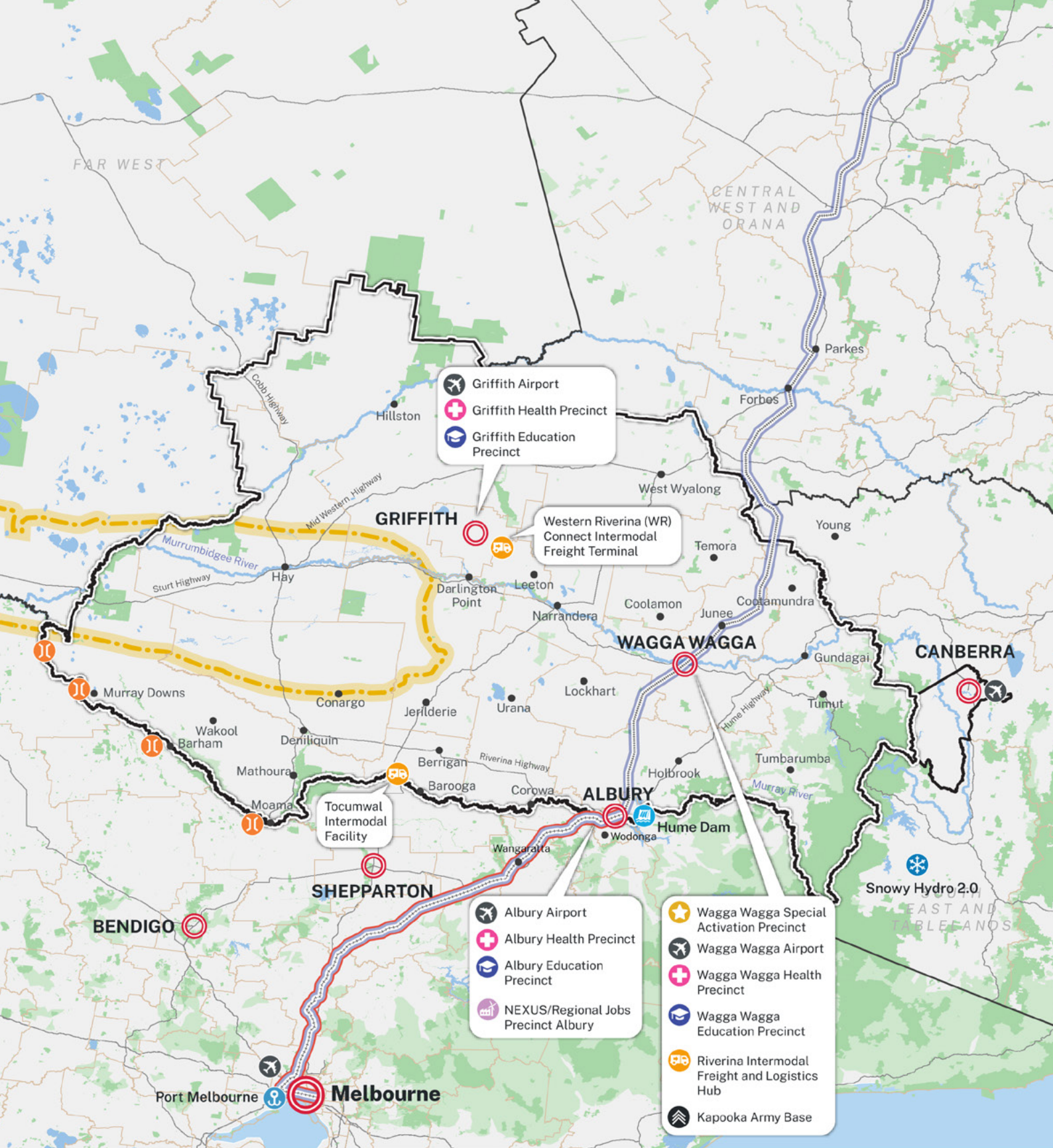


Figure 11: Economic assets of the Riverina Murray Region



- | | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|---------------------------|
| Regional boundary | Airport | Local government area | Water body |
| Metropolitan city | Roads | Proposed south west renewable energy zone | National park and reserve |
| Regional city | Railway | State forest | |
| Town | Inland rail | | |
| Bridge crossing | Possible Melbourne to Albury-Wodonga faster rail | | |

OBJECTIVE 12:

Strategically planning for rural industries

Local Rice Grower, Deniliquin.
Credit: Destination NSW



Rural lands are valued for agricultural production, employment, renewable energy production, tourism, rural industries, extractive industries, forestry, cultural uses, recreation, conservation and rural residential development. These can be competing uses; planning needs to consider the priorities and pathways for the future use and protection of rural land.

This requires analysis to understand the diversity of rural land use, consider emerging influences, and provide land use responses to protect, support and leverage rural enterprises.

Agriculture



Agriculture is worth over
\$2 billion each year
 – the most valuable agricultural region in NSW²⁹

18,400 people
 are employed in agriculture & related
 manufacturing in the region²⁹

Agriculture is the primary use of rural land in the Riverina Murray Region, given the region's soil types, landscapes, availability of water and climatic conditions as well as the diversity of its production. Agriculture drives secondary industries such as processing, milling, pressing, canneries and transport, as well as related industries like wineries, restaurants and tourism.

This agricultural diversity contributes to resilience, a major factor in the region's agricultural success, including:

- Beef production, cropping and fruit and nuts are dominant in the region's east.
- The Murray River area features cropping, beef, pigs, poultry and dairy, and is heavily influenced by irrigated agriculture.
- The Western Riverina plains support industries enhanced by irrigation districts, such as cotton, rice and horticulture (citrus, grapes and nuts).

The historical investment and reliance on water for agriculture supports irrigation districts that benefit Berrigan, Carrathool, Edward River, Griffith, Hay, Leeton, Murray River and Murrumbidgee LGAs. In Berrigan LGA, for example, irrigation infrastructure services more than 75% of the area, making it the most intensively irrigated community in the region.³⁰

With government policy separating land and water almost 20 years ago, planning for agriculture is complex and often driven by market forces, notably the price and movement of water.

Over time, farming operations have increased both physically and in value. Changes to water policy combined with technological advancements and economies of scale have changed farming practices. Only 14% of the region's farms are worth more than \$1 million yet they contribute 53% of the total value of agricultural operations. Most production value in the region is generated from medium to large sized farms.^{31,32,33}

Riverina farm. Credit: Destination NSW



Land use planning can support productive agricultural lands by:

- identifying and managing land use impacts on productive agricultural areas and areas with opportunities for economies of scale and access to assets such as processing or logistics
- avoiding the fragmentation of rural land with housing so that farms can consolidate and minimise land use conflict or loss of highly productive agricultural lands
- locating value-add industries where they can support agricultural production
- ensuring land uses adjacent to highly productive agricultural land are compatible with agricultural production activities or have adequate buffers.

Supply chains, value-add industries and economies of scale are less secure with the market-driven movement of water from different uses and locations. While this has led to growth for some areas such as the nut industry around Tooleybuc, placing pressure on nearby areas to adequately service new communities, it has also resulted in the underutilisation of existing infrastructure and services in other areas, such as within Berrigan LGA.

Rural land use conflict between farming operations or rural industries and uses such as urban development, tourism or recreation can stem from pests, noise, odour, dust, lighting or spraying. We can minimise these impacts with appropriate zoning, permissible uses and development controls.

The BC Act changes requirements for land clearing and creates opportunities for stewardship of biodiversity assets, adopting the principle of avoiding the development of areas of high environmental value where possible. An unintended consequence of the avoidance principle is the need to locate development on environmentally unconstrained land, which is often used for agriculture. Strategic planning needs to balance the needs of communities, economies, developers and the environment when planning for land uses and development outcomes.



Canola Trail, Temora
Credit: Destination NSW

Forestry



The forestry and logging industry is worth **\$11 million**, accounting for **18%** of forestry value in NSW³⁴

Forestry, logging and associated manufacturing³⁵ employs

over **1,700** people

The South West Slopes forestry sector in Snowy Valleys and Greater Hume LGAs is supported by timber processing facilities in Tumut and Tumbarumba. Timber is processed into structural frames, kraft paper and pulp and particle board products.

The growth of the forestry industry has increased the transport of logs and processed timber products to processing plants and export markets via Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Regional road improvements are necessary to cope with the increased volumes and size of trucks.

Strategic approaches for forestry hubs could help to identify forestry transportation routes and address network gaps and inefficiencies to facilitate fast and efficient transportation of timber logs and products to processing plants, domestic markets and export portals.

Snowy Valley Council has identified a Riverina Intermodal Freight and Logistics (RIFL) hub at Wagga Wagga as a strategic asset for the industry and the region and the need to upgrade specific freight routes to the hub.

Bushfire impacts on forestry

The 2019-20 bushfires burned about 492 km² of plantation forest and 8,300 km² native forests. Bushfire damaged forestry operation infrastructure and facilities such as workers accommodation, roads, bridges and fire trails. The lost timber supply affected the forestry processing and manufacturing industries; this combined with import delays and increasing local and international demand resulted in a wood products supply shortage.

With climate change expected to intensify the bushfire threat and affect water availability and soil quality, economic diversification and adaptability for communities with hubs such as Snowy Valleys LGA will be crucial.

Mining



The mining and construction material sector is worth **\$185 million**

Over **500** people are employed in mining and construction in the region³⁶

The region's extractive operations are mainly for construction materials (construction sand, road and concrete aggregates or roadbase). The region's most significant mining operation is Cowal Gold Mine north of West Wyalong in Bland LGA that employs around 385 people.³⁷

Construction material quarries in most LGAs provide local sources of construction materials for housing, roads and other infrastructure.

Areas with known mineral resources and operational construction material resources should be managed to ensure the resources are not affected or sterilised by the encroachment of sensitive land uses. It may be possible to identify activities in key resource areas that enable productive use of the land without sterilising the potential of the underlying resource.

A strategic approach to rural land planning will enable communities and all levels of government to understand the importance of, and plan for, the future of rural industries, energy and mining.

Strategy 12.1



Local strategic planning statements will:

- overview each LGA's rural land attributes, industries, assets (such as supply chain industries and infrastructure, and natural attributes such as soils, water, climate)
- identify confirmed or potential major projects and social and economic opportunities
- recognise trends and opportunities for rural land uses
- commit to preparing or updating local strategies to support rural land uses.

Strategy 12.2



Changes to rural zones and/or lot sizes will be justified by rural land strategies that:

- sets a vision for rural land uses
- identify key natural, cultural and economic assets
- analyse opportunities and constraints to the use and development of rural land, including any potential land use conflicts and proposed responses
- Establish strategic directions, outcomes or policies for the management and development of rural areas
- incorporate consultation with state agencies, the community and industry groups
- include implementation mechanisms, such as planning instruments and policies.
- agricultural trends and opportunities, including agricultural productivity and land use (such as agricultural activities, manufacturing and value-add industries, resource extraction, renewable and other energy), drivers of change, changes in farming practices and processes, and farm investment patterns
- employment generated from rural industries
- natural resources and environmental features and their importance, including sites of archaeological or cultural significance
- environmental hazards that could affect how the land is used and developed, such as erosion, salinity, flooding and bushfire risk
- settlement patterns and demographics of local communities in the area
- existing lot sizes and land use patterns, including holding sizes and trends in land amalgamation
- infrastructure capacities, constraints and thresholds for upgrades available for agriculture and other relevant land uses
- how to protect agricultural land and rural industries from land use conflicts and fragmentation
- areas for urban expansion and options to protect rural land uses until the expansion is realised.

Rural land strategies will be tailored to each area and assess:

- relevant state, regional and local strategic planning policies and objectives
- geographical and physical attributes of the land and its capacity to support productive rural uses including soil type, climate, vegetation cover, access to water, slope and drainage

Strategy 12.3

Strategic planning and statutory planning will consider the life cycle of resource extraction opportunities, including:

- protecting potential mineral and energy resources from sterilising land uses
- protecting resource extraction projects from land uses that could impact operations
- protecting road, rail and freight routes from development that could affect extraction
- promoting opportunities for minerals processing
- addressing water resource constraints and impacts
- identifying future mine closure dates, potential changes to water, economic/skill profiles and demographics, and potential land use changes, mine rehabilitation activities and post-mining land use opportunities.

Collaboration Activity 12 (Medium-term)

Using the regional water strategies, the department (planning and water divisions) and councils will work together to understand the impacts of an open water market on rural communities and plan for resulting land use changes.

Collaboration Activity 13 (Medium-term)

The department and Department of Regional NSW (Mining, Exploration and Geoscience) will identify existing and proposed mining and extractive industry operations in the region and update/produce a map to inform the application of local planning direction 8.1 Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries.

Question: Will these strategies and activities assist balance rural planning outcomes?

Council Activity 12.1

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Prepare rural land use strategy

Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrathool • Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council • Griffith • Leeton • Lockhart • Murray River • Murrumbidgee • Narrandera • Snowy Valleys
Medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bland • Federation • Wagga Wagga • Temora

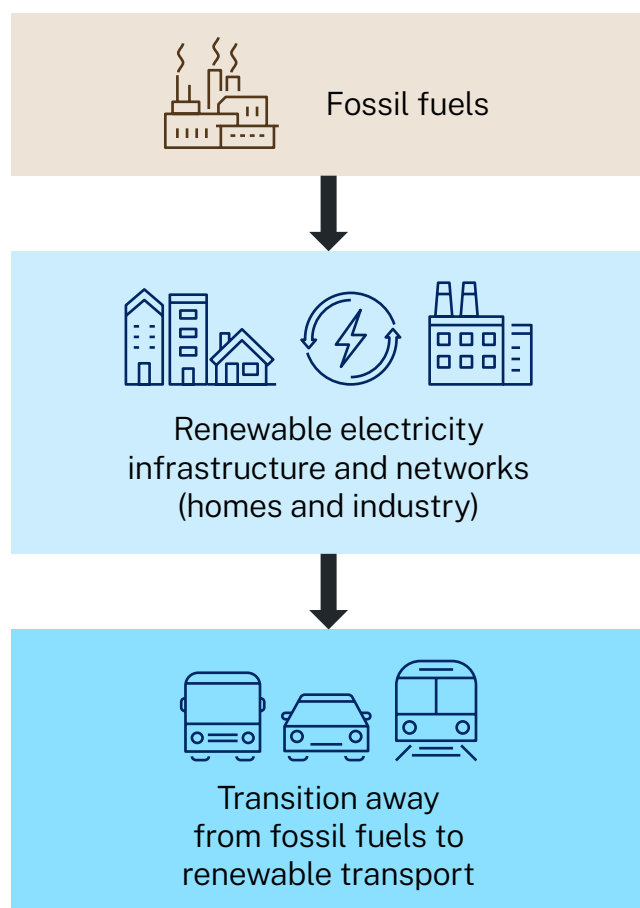
OBJECTIVE 13:

Support the transition to net zero by 2050

Within 15 years, 75% of the state's coal powered electricity generation is expected to reach the end of its technical life. Replacing these energy sources and building the infrastructure needed to connect new energy sources is essential. The NSW Government has committed to net zero emissions by 2050, requiring greater renewable electricity generation, transmission and storage. Renewable energy is now the cheapest form of new electricity generation and is key to the net zero target.

We expect electricity demand to increase as people change how they power homes, transport, industry and centres. The Australian Energy Market Operator forecasts a step-change in the transition away from fossil fuels and higher electrical demand.

This transition requires fundamental changes in how electricity is generated, transported, stored and used. Careful management will ensure the region benefits from employment opportunities and the potential for the new electrical system to coexist with existing and future industries and residents. Land use planning can help to guide an orderly transition and maximise benefits.



The Riverina Murray's climate, resources and strategic connections to utility infrastructure place it in a strong position to contribute to and capitalise on the net zero target and electricity infrastructure plans. Already, large-scale solar farms account for more than 50% of major projects in the next 5 years that are worth more than \$6.7 billion. This includes 16 new solar farms in 10 different LGAs.

The South West Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) is in the early stages of planning. The South West REZ will connect multiple generators and storage in one location, capitalising on economies of scale to deliver cheap, reliable and clean electricity. While we expect the South West REZ to be developed in the medium to long term, it may be needed earlier if the transition away from fossil fuels is faster than forecast.

The region also includes the EnergyConnect project, an interconnector being built by Transgrid and ElectraNet between Wagga Wagga and Robertstown in South Australia, with a connection to Red Cliffs in Victoria. The project will upgrade the 33kV transmission line to 500kV between Wagga Wagga and Dinawan, which links to the eastern edge of the REZ and will unlock additional transmission capacity.

The region is also home to parts of Snowy Hydro 2.0, the largest committed renewable energy project in Australia that will pump water uphill through an underground pipeline into an existing Snowy Hydro dam and release it through an underground hydro-energy power station to create electricity when demand is high. The construction of Snowy Hydro 2.0 by around 2026 offers employment opportunities in parts of Snowy Valley Council.

Land use planning needs to manage several issues to help support the transition.

Land use conflict and local impacts



- While the REZ will manage community benefits and land use conflict issues, these issues will need to be managed for projects that are not part of the REZs:
 - diversification opportunities for agricultural enterprises
 - the production value of high-value agricultural land and mineral resources in the medium to long term
 - increased truck movements (including oversize and over-weight loads) and traffic disruptions on local roads, providing supplies to the construction workforce and potential demand for housing
 - biodiversity impacts and the strategic coordination of offsets
 - visual impacts, particularly multiple projects in the visual catchments of centres.

Generation



- South West REZ and associated infrastructure
- Snowy Hydro 2.0 and associated infrastructure
- Renewable energy generation outside the REZ, including large-scale and distributed generation, roof-top solar or pumped hydro
- Distributed generation throughout communities, including rooftop solar
- Green hydrogen electrolyzers
- Potential long-term REZs, which could be, if required, developed by the NSW Government or private industry (or a combination).

Transmission



- Linking generators into the network to ensure it can deliver power to the National Electricity Market and users within the region
- The EnergyConnect project will connect the energy networks in NSW, South Australia and Victoria, including linking Snowy Hydro identified in AEMO Network Plan.

Storage



- Batteries, including large-scale batteries that support storage and system services and smaller scale, behind-the-meter batteries for the community, industry and households
- Hydroelectric and pumped hydroelectric projects
- Green hydrogen and ammonia generation and storage that could be coupled with both generation and industry.

Infrastructure and industry



- Employment precincts and high electricity-using industries to use the electricity and manufacturing industries that will support the transition
- Distribution and refuelling networks for electric and hydrogen passenger and freight vehicles.

Strategy 13.1

To prepare for the transition to net zero strategic and statutory planning will:

- incorporate renewable into urban design and place-making projects
- provide opportunities for future buildings and urban release areas to be renewable-ready
- identify opportunities for potential high-energy industries, including manufacturing, materials processing
- identify opportunities for renewable vehicle refuelling networks/infrastructure.

Collaboration Activity 14 (Longer-term)

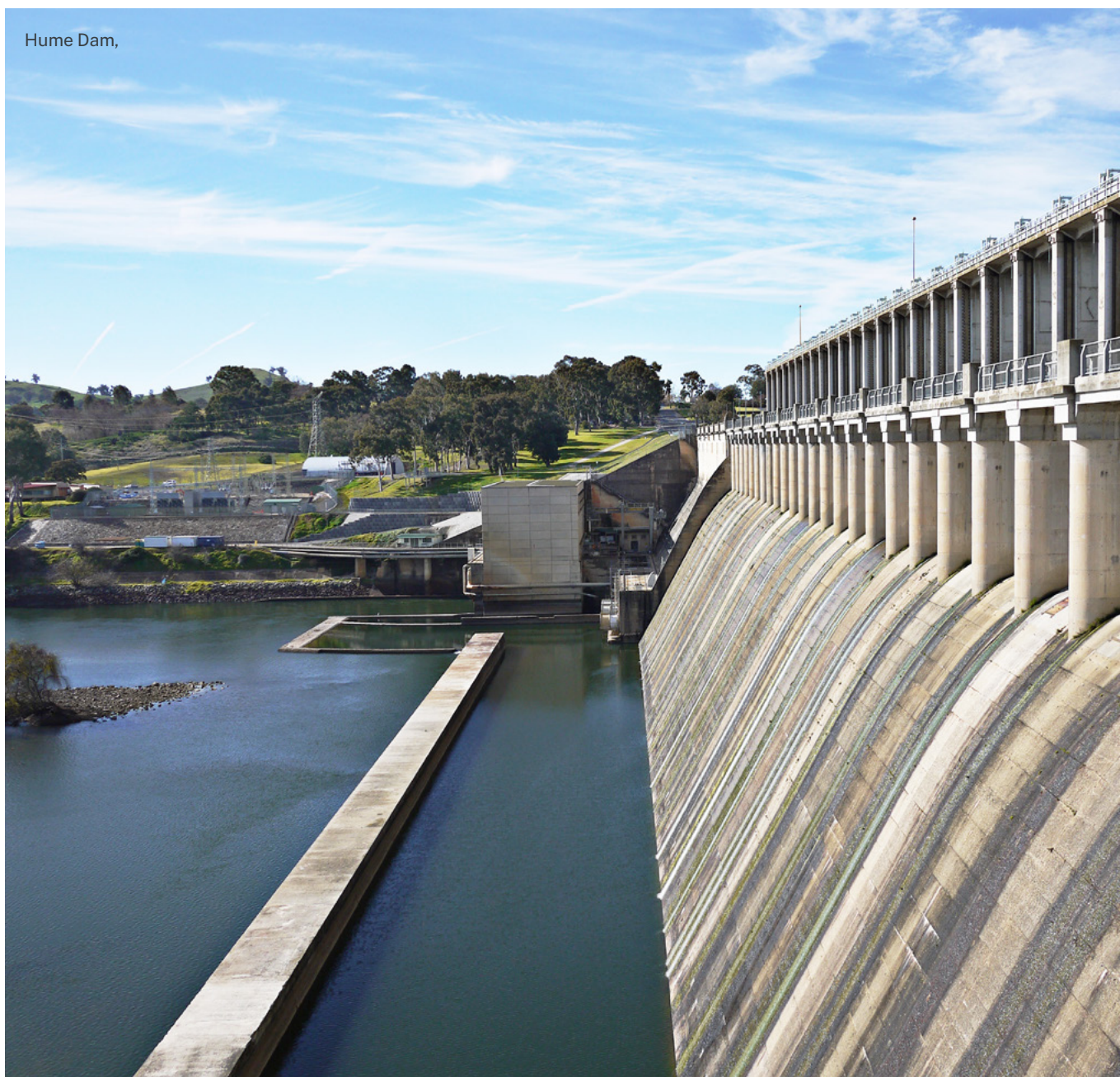
The department will work with Energy Corporation of NSW, the Renewable Energy Sector Board, councils and Aboriginal and community stakeholders to develop the South West REZ.

Question: Are there other planning strategies or activities that could support achieving net zero by 2050?

Resources

- *Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline for State Significant Development (2018).*

Hume Dam,



OBJECTIVE 14:

Protecting and promoting industrial and manufacturing land

Aerial, Griffith.
Credit: Destination NSW



The manufacturing sector is worth
\$1.7 billion

Over **11,600** people
are employed in the
manufacturing sector³⁸

Improved freight connections combined with economic and population growth will drive the need for additional industrial land and precinct opportunities. Already, several industrial precincts supply industrial lands for a range of employment uses. Co-location or clustering compatible

industries in these areas will improve efficiencies and productivity, reduce land use conflict, create new circular economy opportunities and maximise the benefits from infrastructure investment and supply and distribution networks.

Existing Precinct

Wagga Wagga SAP

Wagga Wagga SAP is a 4,500 ha business hub incorporating Bomen Business Park and the RIFL hub. It is supported by local, state and Commonwealth investment in infrastructure, master planning and streamlined planning processes. The SAP will be home to advanced manufacturing, recycling, renewables including hydrogen, agricultural processing and value-add industries. It is expected to generate around 6,000 jobs.

Albury RJP

The Albury RJP encompasses the 480 ha NEXUS Industrial Precinct and existing Ettamogah Rail Hub and will be a hub of manufacturing, agribusiness and freight and logistics and opportunities for circular economy industries. It could generate 9,400 jobs over the next 30 years.

WR Connect

WR Connect is an operational intermodal freight terminal on the border of Griffith and Leeton LGAs. If upgraded, it will be the newest and largest logistics hub for the Western Riverina, supported by a master plan prepared by Leeton, Griffith, Carrathool, Narrandera and Murrumbidgee councils and the NSW Government.

Griffith's main urban industrial area

Griffith's main urban industrial area in the city's south east is constrained by sensitive uses, fragmentation, small lot sizes and limited immediate connections to the classified road network.

Tocumwal Intermodal Terminal and Logistics Precinct

Tocumwal Intermodal Terminal and Logistics Precinct is zoned General Industry to facilitate future business development.

Deniliquin industrial precinct

Deniliquin industrial precinct is home to a thriving manufacturing and light industrial sector centred around engineering products for the rural and agricultural sector. Warehousing for rural products is emerging with businesses mostly relocating from Melbourne and Geelong.

Ongoing government-led strategic planning and infrastructure investment and development in the Wagga Wagga SAP and Albury RJP will grow existing businesses and attract new businesses.

These regionally significant precincts will have broader implications for host cities and the surrounding areas. Understanding the associated impacts in relation to demand for housing, temporary accommodation, social infrastructure and industrial land for complementary/secondary industries will inform decisions around future servicing and support the ability to leverage anticipated business, industrial and residential growth opportunities in nearby LGAs.

Existing and future employment precincts in small and middle-sized towns such as Corowa, Deniliquin, Lockhart, Moama and Jindera already face demand for industrial land. Flexible planning and development

controls can support these areas without undermining regionally significant precincts. This could involve the application of open zones or master planning to create bespoke precincts, support existing industries, attract new businesses and respond to new opportunities and technologies.

New employment opportunities will also emerge from the re-use and recycling of waste and waste products as the region transitions to a circular-economy. Positioning the region to be an early adopter in the renewable energy and circular economy industries will support the diversification and value-add opportunities for existing industries, attract new industries and support an orderly land use transition and the avoidance and management of associated impacts.

Strategy 14.1

Local strategic planning statements will:

- overview of the LGA's key industrial land areas, industries (including major employers) and location and significance of strategic assets (such as supply and distribution chain infrastructure, key freight routes, supporting services and natural attributes)
- recognise trends and opportunities for industrial and/or employment land uses
- commit to preparing or updating local strategies for industrial and/or employment land.

Strategy 14.2

Strategic planning for existing employment lands and new opportunities will:

- locate new industrial land in areas accessible to inter-regional networks or that could allow rail transport, unencumbered by natural hazards or environmental constraints and accessible to businesses and communities
- provide flexible and simplified planning controls that support the changing needs of industry, emerging industries and diversification, adaptation and innovation
- provide for the supply of diverse industrial land to meet the changing demands of industry
- encourage co-location and clustering of compatible industries to improve efficiencies and productivity, reduce land use conflict, maximise infrastructure investment and capitalise on supply networks
- drive competitive advantage by leveraging strengths, assets and attributes while maintaining integrity of existing industrial precincts
- investigate bespoke industrial precinct planning using targeted responses.

Strategy 14.3

Strategic and statutory planning will protect industrial land from potential land use conflicts arising from inappropriate and incompatible surrounding land uses.

Action 4 (Longer-term)

The department will use NSW Government GIS and data tools to audit the region's industrial and business land and individual precinct profiles to guide employment land strategies and release, coordinate infrastructure planning and delivery and direct employment-generating opportunities.

Action 5 (Short-term)

The department will consider the sphere of influence the Wagga Wagga SAP will have on land use in the broader region and the associated services and industries required to support its success.

Note: The analysis has commenced and the outcomes of this work will inform the final plan and will be an input into Collaboration Activity 15.

Collaboration Activity 15 (Short-term)

The department will establish a subregional working group with Wagga Wagga, Coolamon, Junee, Lockhart, Temora, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Greater Hume, Narrandera and Snowy Valley councils to respond to potential housing and economic impacts and opportunities from the Wagga Wagga SAP.

Question: Will these strategies and activities support land use planning of industrial and manufacturing areas?

Question: Should we consider a collaboration activity between the department, Department of Regional NSW and Griffith, Leeton and Narrandera councils around WR Connect and Griffith and Narrandera airports?

Council Activity 14.1 (aligned with local strategic planning statements)		
Develop an employment lands strategy		
Short - term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Griffith • Leeton • Murray River • Narrandera • Snowy Valleys 	
Medium - term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrathool • Coolamon • Hay • Albury • Temora • Wagga Wagga 	
Long - term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junee 	

Council Activity 14.2 (aligned with local strategic planning statements)		
Undertake industrial precinct master planning		
Short - term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murray River (Ham Road-Centre Road area) • Albury (Review NEXUS Masterplan with RJP) 	
Medium - term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Griffith (pending completion of employment lands strategy) • Cootamundra-Gundagai (Stockinbingal) • Temora 	
Long - term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murrumbidgee (Sturt Hwy & Kidman Way) • Hay (Hay airport) 	



Austrak concrete sleeper factory, Bomen, Wagga Wagga. Credit: Wagga Wagga City Council

OBJECTIVE 15:

Support the economic vitality of CBDs and main streets

Streetscapes, Temora.
Credit: Destination NSW



Retail trade in the regional cities is worth **\$1 billion**⁴⁰

Over **8,000** people are employed in retail trade in the regional cities.³⁹

Wagga Wagga, Albury and Griffith CBDs and other town centres are fundamental to communities, providing daily needs and acting as a hub for surrounding communities. They also support the freight network which in turn supports the economic vitality of main streets.

Some centres are experiencing declining business activity which could reduce the critical mass of services and related business activities in these towns, without planned intervention.

Retail and commercial investment should be focused in and around existing centres to strengthen the role and function of these areas and attract activity and investment, while respecting character and heritage values. Mixed use developments, the efficient movement of

people and goods, smart technology, quality public areas, cultural experiences and the night-time uses can combine for existing centres to respond to contemporary influences.

It's important for smaller centres to be flexible and respond to community needs and development opportunities. However, it is also important to protect the connectivity and functioning of commercial centres and minimise incompatible land uses.

New centres outside these existing centres must be of an appropriate size for their service catchment. They should only go ahead if social and economic benefits can be demonstrated, to maintain the integrity of existing centres.

Strategy 15.1

Strategic and statutory planning for centres will:

- maintain and strengthen the economic vitality and function of established commercial centres and focus future commercial and retail activity in these centres, unless:
 - there is a demonstrated need;
 - there is a lack of suitable sites within existing centres; and
 - there is positive social and economic benefit to locate activity elsewhere
- facilitate a range of uses through flexible and simplified planning controls to respond to the changing retail environment
- encourage redevelopment and appropriate higher density residential development in CBDs of regional cities
- encourage infill and appropriate medium density residential development close to main streets and centres of small and medium sized towns
- conserve cultural heritage values and local character (see Objective 9)
- maximise transport and community facilities
- consider freight access early to balance the movement and delivery of goods with vibrant and successful places.

Strategy 15.2

Strategic and statutory planning for new retail centres will demonstrate how they:

- respond to retail supply and demand, innovation and digital trends in the retail sector
- maximise existing public transport and community facilities commensurate with the scale of the proposal
- enhance public areas
- do not detract from established commercial centres.

Strategy 15.3

In collaboration with local communities, council strategic planning will recognise and celebrate the local character of places and people, the vitality of centres and economic viability. Initiatives may include public domain improvements, public art, community events, markets and festivals, and local housing to promote activation, dining and the night-time economy.

Question: *Is there enough support in the strategies for planning commercial centres?*

Council Activity 15.1

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Prepare master plans, precinct plans, CBD masterplans and revitalisation strategies

Short - term

- Cootamundra-Gundagai (Gundagai)
- Murrumbidgee
- Griffith (entrance strategy)
- Junee (Bethungra, Illabo, Old Junee and Wantabaderry)
- Wagga Wagga (CBD)
- Albury (CBD and Lavington)
- Murray River (Meninya St)
- Temora

Medium - term

- Cootamundra-Gundagai (Coolac)
- Carrathool (Hillston)
- Edward River (railway corridor)
- Federation (Mulwala)
- Greater Hume
- Snowy Valleys (Adelong, Batlow, Tumbarumba and Tumut)

Long - term

- Coolamon (Harness, equine and showgrounds)
- Edward River (Villages)

OBJECTIVE 16:

Supporting tourism

The Murray River.
Credit: Destination NSW



Tourism is worth
\$921 million

10,000 people
are employed in the tourism sector⁴⁶

Tourists are attracted to the region's environmental, heritage and agricultural assets, and its strategic location. In river areas, tourists enjoy water sports such as water skiing, paddle boats, house boats, national parks, camping, cycling, mountain biking, hiking, golfing and fishing.

Attractions beyond the water include the Canola Trails, silo art, heritage places and activities, arts and culture, festivals and events - many relating to food and wine. Agritourism is a diverse and unique tourism offering, including farm stays, farmers' markets and farm gate experiences.

Many communities benefit from regional sporting activities and events and Albury and Wagga Wagga attract regional conferences and business events.

NSW Government and council investment can prompt private investment and increase tourism numbers. Collaboration between National Parks and Wildlife Service, Destination NSW, destination networks, councils and local tourism organisations will support a diverse visitor economy.

2.2 million
visitors to the region in 2017⁴¹

Over **50%** of **Murray River**
tourists are from Victoria⁴²

In 2019-20, the **combined NSW**
and Victoria Murray tourism
region was worth

\$1.3 billion

Providing **18,600** jobs
and is the **highest value** tourism
region and tourism employer in
Victoria^{43,44,45}

Other regional plan objectives will benefit the tourism industry, including riverfront activation (Objective 2), natural hazard resilience (Objective 3), Aboriginal aspirations (Objective 4), cross-border coordination (Objective 10) and enhancing commercial centres (Objectives 9 and 14).

Strategy 16.1



Strategic and statutory planning will support and promote tourism activities and locations and ensure planning controls support and enable tourism development in appropriate locations.

Strategy 16.2



Strategic planning by councils adjoining the Murray River should include major tourism projects in Victoria.

Collaboration Activity 16 (Medium-term)



The department and relevant councils will work with Destination Riverina Murray and Destination NSW to develop and implement riverfront activation strategies and the framework for the management of Western NSW Rivers (See Action 3).

Question: Are these strategies and activities sufficient to improve land use planning for tourism?



Deni Ute Muster 2013.
Credit: Destination NSW

OBJECTIVE 17:

Strategically plan for health and education precincts

Streetscape, Griffith.
Credit: Destination NSW



The healthcare, social services and education sectors are worth **\$3.8 billion**⁴⁷

26,700 people
(22% of all jobs)
are employed in the healthcare, social services and education sectors

These sectors are anchored by major health and educational facilities including Wagga Wagga Rural Referral Hospital, Albury-Wodonga Health, Griffith Base Hospital, Charles Sturt University, UNSW Rural Medical School, Notre Dame University Clinical School, Murrumbidgee Clinical Teaching and Learning Centre, 18 TAFE campuses and a range of smaller hospitals and medical/care facilities.

Population growth increases demand for these facilities. With many LGAs experiencing faster than projected population growth and facing the challenge of sustaining skilled workforces, we need a coordinated approach to health and education precincts.

Master planning for regionally significant health and education facilities in Wagga Wagga, Albury and Griffith will increase quality and diversity of services, enable business synergies, attract private sector investment, improve community access to services and develop local skilled workforces.

Health and Education Precincts

Wagga Wagga Health and Knowledge Precinct

Wagga Wagga Health and Knowledge Precinct will support more than 300,000 people⁴⁸ including many of the 5,400 people employed in the health care and social assistance sector in the city.

The precinct includes the Wagga Wagga Rural Referral Hospital, a private hospital, the universities of NSW and Notre Dame, and the largest number of medical specialists of any single location in regional Australia.⁴⁹

Wagga Wagga Health and Knowledge Precinct Master Plan outlines a vision to support additional specialist medical and health services along with short-term accommodation, commercial provisions and training and education services. This requires a transition from residential and industrial uses to uses that will support health and education in the city.

Griffith Health Precinct

Griffith City Council is preparing a health precinct and master plan for the area around the Griffith Base Hospital (currently being redeveloped) and the St Vincent's Private Community Hospital. This will promote complementary uses and minimise land use conflict. The precinct will support additional specialist medical and health services along with short-term accommodation, commercial operations associated with health uses, training and education services.

Thurgoona Education Precinct

Albury City Council, Charles Sturt University and TAFE NSW are preparing a Thurgoona Education Precinct Master Plan to facilitate potential joint venture opportunities for shared school and community facilities, and the co-location of education (primary to tertiary), business, research, eco-tourism, recreation and residential uses.

Albury Health Precinct

A planned Health Precinct Master Plan for the Albury Hospital and the Regional Cancer Centre will be supported by the Albury-Wodonga Regional Deal, a collaboration between the Australian Government, NSW Government, Victorian Government, Albury City Council and City of Wodonga Council.

Strategy 17.1

Councils and the NSW Government should work with social infrastructure and service providers on local strategies that will:

- identify future health and educational infrastructure and service needs, including appropriate locations for future facilities
- determine when, where and what services are likely to be required in response to population growth
- include the growth and development identified in council strategies and plans, economic and employment forecasts, major project approval data and NSW population projections.

Strategy 17.2

Strategic planning and local plans should investigate opportunities to create mixed use precincts around locally significant health and educational facilities through planning controls that encourage co-location of complementary uses.

Strategy 17.3

Statutory planning will ensure that any development on land within a defined health precinct is consistent with a council-endorsed master plan.

Collaboration Activity 17 (Short-term)

The department will support Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith councils as they prepare and implement health precinct master plans and appropriate planning provisions.

Collaboration Activity 18 (Short-term)

The department will work with councils and service providers, such as Department of Education and NSW Health, to provide education and health facilities in growing areas.

Question: Are these strategies and activities appropriate to assist in planning health and education precincts?

OBJECTIVE 18:

Value the integration of transport and land use planning

Bethanga Bridge, Bellbridge.
Credit: Destination NSW



The freight and logistics sector is worth

\$1.8 billion⁵⁰

5,400 people
are employed in the freight and
logistics sector⁵⁰

The region includes the convergence of major freight corridors between Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, opening opportunities to maximise economic growth and take advantage of freight air and/or sea ports at Canberra, Sydney, Wollongong and Melbourne.

Millions of tonnes of freight move in, out and within the region annually by road and rail. The region supports international and domestic supply chains and is home to major logistics and intermodal hubs such as Ettamogah Rail Hub just north of Albury, Western Riverina Intermodal Freight Terminal (WR Connect) in Wumbulgal (Leeton LGA) and Tocumwal Intermodal and Logistics Terminal.

The freight industry is transitioning away from fossil fuels and establishing a network of hydrogen refuelling and electric vehicle charging stations. E-commerce is also increasing demand for warehouse and logistic properties such as automated warehousing.

The region's intermodal and logistic hubs and new infrastructure projects will support the expected growth of the freight and logistic sector, provide economic opportunities, provide jobs and enhance connections within the region and to surrounding regions.

Key regional transport projects

The key regional transport networks supporting the transformation of the region are shown on Figure 3. The following are new infrastructure projects that will improve connectivity and freight movement.

Inland Rail is a 1,700 km freight rail line connecting Melbourne and Brisbane via regional Victoria, NSW and Queensland that will be operational by 2027. It will connect to Wagga Wagga SAP and Albury RJP, benefiting the region's producers and manufacturers to export to domestic and international markets.

Inland Rail's connection with railways between Sydney, Adelaide and Perth at Parkes SAP will give agriculture and manufacturing industries better access to South Australia and Western Australia. The project will catalyse regional investment in agriculture, food processing, manufacturing and packing, and could create opportunities for intermodal facilities and inland ports at major rail junctions such as Cootamundra, Stockinbingal and Temora. As the Inland Rail is upgraded there will be an increase in larger trains traversing through towns and cities, placing pressure on at-level crossings and urban environments.

The **Newell Highway Program Alliance** involves around 40 additional overtaking lanes, widened shoulders and centrelines and audio-tactile line marking. In combination, it will improve safety and freight productivity, and reduce travel times by up to 33 minutes along the highway between the Victorian and Queensland borders. This will provide an efficient road connection to the Parkes SAP for the region's producers to then tap into markets in South Australia and Western Australia via rail.⁵¹

Although Inland Rail will remove around 63,000 heavy vehicle trips a year from sections of the Newell Highway,⁵² the improvement program's travel efficiencies create potential for a viable freight industry along the Newell Highway, which could support communities such as Tocumwal, Narrandera, West Wyalong and Jerilderie.

Major **river crossing** projects in the region include second Echuca-Moama Bridge, Barham-Koondrook Bridge restoration and plans for the Swan Hill Bridge replacement and Tooleybuc Bridge restoration. These crossings provide more than transport functions - they bring social, economic, and environmental benefits to places, businesses and communities.

These projects will address heavy vehicle access restrictions associated with existing crossings and could stimulate investment in agriculture, food processing, manufacturing and packing as businesses leverage unconstrained and efficient access to the Port of Melbourne.

Riverina Intermodal Freight and Logistics Hub (RIFL) will be an 80ha inland port adjacent the Main Southern Rail Line and the future Inland Rail in

Wagga Wagga SAP. It will contain rail infrastructure, turnouts off the Main Southern Rail Line and an intermodal terminal, increasing the region's freight competitiveness in national and global markets.

Planned to service a diverse range of commodities, industries and freight types, the RIFL will drive business synergies by allowing freight to be transported close to where it is manufactured and processed. It will enable and attract development of approximately 300 ha of heavy and light industrial land and open secondary manufacturing and warehousing opportunities in adjoining LGAs. This will require appropriately located and serviced employment land.

The Australian, NSW and Victorian governments are investigating fast and **faster rail options from Sydney to Canberra as well as Melbourne to Albury-Wodonga**⁵³ that could allow businesses to access an expanded workforce and markets, while residents could more easily access jobs and services outside the region.

Transport and land use planning

Integrating land use and transport planning is key to sustainable development and resilient communities. Early and strategic analysis of land use and transport interactions helps to identify implications and opportunities and provide appropriate place-based planning and responses.

Projects like the improved river crossings create opportunities to better integrate transport and land use planning, which could stimulate residential and commercial development. For example, the second Moama-Echuca bridge and associated Cobb Highway, Meninya Street and Perricoota Road intersection upgrades will see Moama's main street revitalised for new retail and business opportunities.⁵⁴

Freight and logistics clusters

Freight and logistics are the backbone of the region's economy. Supply chains, which increasingly operate 24 hours a day, can be impacted by the encroachment of residential areas and other sensitive land uses – these issues need to be considered early in land use planning.

Freight and logistics are being shaped by new technologies and systems such as autonomous vehicles, automated warehousing, aerial delivery and pick-up points, micro-manufacturing and advancements in e-commerce. These could impact how, where and when freight is moved. Land use planning responses need to embed flexibility to accommodate technological and industry changes while providing certainty that negative impacts on or from freight and logistics can be managed.

NSW Government-led strategic planning, technical studies and infrastructure development at Wagga Wagga SAP and Albury RJP, combined with council-

led employment land planning and development initiatives in Griffith, Jindera and Deniliquin will provide well-located, master planned and well-serviced industrial land. Other freight towns such as Leeton, Tocumwal, Hay and Narrandera could establish appropriately located, master planned and well-serviced employment land that enable freight and logistics to move more efficiently to domestic markets and trade gateways.

Connections to the Port of Melbourne, Port Kembla and Port Botany are critical for the region's economy. Western Sydney International (Nancy Bird Walton) Airport could also provide freight opportunities.

As freight volumes grow, so will movements on local and regional roads. However, some roads are already either failing under the pressure of freight movements or offer poor condition or alignment. First and last mile freight issues are more prevalent in industry hubs such as the forestry sector in Greater Hume and Snowy Valleys LGAs or agricultural activities in Edward River and Berrigan LGAs and should be considered when identifying strategic opportunities for growth or investment.

Intra-regional connectivity

The economic and social relationship between regional cities and surrounding towns allows for an affordable housing market near regional cities. However, public transport services between regional cities and surrounding towns are poor, and private vehicles are often the only choice.

We need to better understand public transport needs, including in cross-border locations. Connections should maximise accessibility to and from workplaces, educational institutions, health services, public transport hubs and retail centres.

Behavioural and technological change

The older population and changing travel behaviour to more healthy and sustainable options create demand for public transport, and walking and cycling connections. Many towns and urban areas in the region offer wide streets, grid patterned design, relatively low levels of traffic on local roads, and a gentle topography. These assets could support active and public transport.

However, the tradition of low density communities, separate land uses and car-prioritising infrastructure has impacted:

- public services and infrastructure costs
- public health costs associated with not actively designing healthy activity
- greenhouse gas emissions
- air pollutants
- social equity
- economic competitiveness and resilience.

Reduced car use and vehicle ownership lowers household costs, improves personal and environmental health, and lowers carbon emissions and air pollution. An active and public transport network that integrates nature into neighbourhoods encourages people to enjoy the outdoors while providing corridors for wildlife movement and helping to manage clean stormwater.

The concept of the 15-minute neighbourhood looks to address these many public interests, both for developing new areas and retrofitting existing lower density residential areas. It aims to achieve as much variety in local supporting uses as possible, supported by as much density and variety of housing as is feasible.

In rural towns and villages, the intent is for these places to be 15-minute neighbourhoods, where people need only travel to one place for most of their daily needs. In more rural areas outside villages and settlements, opportunities to link outer residential subdivisions to village centres and connecting villages through walking and cycling networks could be feasible.

Airport transport facilities

The region's air transport infrastructure supports tourism, freight, medical and emergency services, aviation training, agriculture and recreational gliding. Airports in Albury, Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Narrandera-Leeton also provide regular passenger services. With the growth of e-commerce and increased expectation for faster delivery of goods, airports and aerodromes could become more important in the region's freight and logistics sector.

Strategy 18.1

Local strategic planning statements will:

- overview strategic transport assets, including road, rail, air and freight
- identify strategic projects or policies to improve transport, including heavy vehicle or town bypasses
- identify transport issues requiring further strategic investigation or funding.

Strategy 18.2

Strategic and statutory planning will realise land use planning and transport integration by:

- identifying and activating employment lands near freight infrastructure, using planning controls that support supply chain-oriented land uses and limit incompatible land uses
- in consultation with Transport for NSW, identifying and investigating opportunities to reserve future heavy vehicle and town bypasses and associated road corridors
- ensuring development proposals for supply chain or logistics hub uses address urban amenity impacts, including the application of buffers where appropriate
- addressing first mile and last mile freight limitations, including off-street loading docks, kerbside space, formal de-coupling sites, alternative last mile delivery vehicles, appropriate access for vehicles on local road networks and accommodating larger vehicle combinations
- incorporating flexible planning controls to support new and emerging technology-driven land uses.

Strategy 18.3

Strategic and statutory planning will strengthen connectivity and amenity in centres and across the region by:

- planning and designing streets that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport as attractive transport choices, especially in brownfield and greenfield sites
- establishing connected and accessible green walking and cycling networks supported by appropriate user facilities and integrated with public transport
- balancing the needs of pedestrians and vehicle traffic on main streets and prioritising pedestrians in town centres
- requiring major traffic-generating development proposals to demonstrate how the proposal will facilitate walking, cycling and public transport access, where appropriate
- promoting redevelopment and higher densities within walking distance to town centres, public spaces and transport interchanges
- ensuring land use planning creates opportunities for new and emerging transport technologies and services, such as autonomous and electric vehicles and on-demand transport.

Strategy 18.4

Strategic and statutory planning will protect supply chains, freight corridors and logistics facilities from future development impacts by identifying measures to mitigate associated noise and air emissions, encouraging off-road freight or connections between heavy vehicle routes that do not involve local roads, and identifying and maintaining buffers between freight infrastructure and incompatible land uses areas.

Strategy 18.5

Strategic and statutory planning will need to ensure development outcomes near Inland Rail road junctions or corridors do not undermine the function of the Inland Rail.

Strategy 18.6

Strategic and statutory planning for airport and aerodrome upgrades will adopt a precinct-based planning approach to complement the expanded or emerging role of the airports and aerodromes. This includes protection from encroachment of incompatible development by:

- managing and protecting associated land uses and airspace, including potential future operations
- limiting the encroachment of incompatible development
- avoiding development that penetrates the Obstacle Limitation Surface
- identifying and activating employment lands in surrounding areas.

Collaboration Activity 19 (Ongoing)

The department, Transport for NSW and the Australian Rail Track Corporation will collaborate on Inland Rail, the Murray bridge projects and Newell Highway upgrades to understand all impacts and opportunities early in the process.

Question: Will these strategies and activities be sufficient to support the integration of transport and land use planning?

Council Activity 18.1

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Prepare airport precinct masterplans and other strategies

Short-term

- Temora
- Albury

Medium-term

- Hay
- Leeton/Narrandera
- Griffith
- Wagga

Council Activity 18.2

(aligned with local strategic planning statements)



Prepare active transport and transport plans

Short-term

- Lockhart

Medium-term

- Cootamundra-Gundagai
- Edward River
- Hay
- Snowy Valleys
- Temora

Long-term

- Leeton
- Greater Hume
- Narrandera
- Albury

Resources

Streets as Shared Spaces (Department of Planning & Environment)

NSW Movement and Place Framework (Transport for NSW)

Question: Are there any other council activities that should be included in the final plan?

Question: Are there any other resources not listed in the draft plan that should be included on the website?

Glossary

Active transport

Transport that is human powered, such as walking, cycling or using a wheelchair.

Affordable housing

Housing for very low-income households, low-income households or moderate-income households, as prescribed by regulations or provided for in an environmental planning instrument.

Agribusiness

A business that earns most or all of its revenues from agriculture, such as food and fibre production, agrichemicals, seed supply, farm machinery wholesale and distribution, freight, logistics, processing, marketing or retail sales.

Biodiversity

The variety of life on Earth. The life forms, the different plants, animals and microorganisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems they form.

Biodiversity corridor

An identified area of land that connects flora and fauna populations, separated by human developments and activities.

Circular economy

A model that redesigns current linear systems (take-make-waste) to a closed loop or circular system which maximises resource efficiencies, reduces waste and improves natural systems.

Employment lands

Areas zoned for industrial or similar purposes. Generally lower density employment areas that provide space for utilities and urban services, including depots, repair trades and service centres, as well as the research, design, and manufacturing of goods through to their warehousing, distribution, and sale.

First mile/last mile

The first and final stage of a journey in which people or goods travel to a broad range of origins or destinations, such as the trip between a train station and the final destination of a shopping centre or place of work.

Green infrastructure

The network of green spaces, natural systems and semi-natural systems that support sustainable communities, including waterways; bushland; tree canopy and green ground cover; parks; and open spaces.

High environmental value land

Land with:

- sensitive biodiversity values
- native vegetation of high conservation value
- key habitat of threatened species
- important wetlands
- areas of geological significance

Household size

The average number of people living in a dwelling.

Housing affordability

The capacity of individuals or households to enter the rental and privately owned housing markets.

Housing diversity

The mix of housing types such as detached dwellings, boarding houses, purpose-built rentals, dual occupancies, group homes, hostels, multi-dwelling housing, residential flat buildings, secondary dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, seniors housing and shop top housing.

Infill development

Development in areas used for urban purposes, including the re-use of a site within the existing urban footprint for new housing, businesses, or other urban development.

Intensive agriculture

Agriculture activities such as horticulture, irrigated crops, glass housing, feedlots, poultry farms that rely on high levels of inputs such as labour and capital to increase yield.

Local Environmental Plan (LEP)

The main statutory instrument to guide planning decisions for LGAs through zoning and development controls.

Population projections

Projections of future size and structure of a population based on past trends and assumptions about the future, such as births, deaths and migration.

Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)

Zones of energy generation alternatives as power stations close that connect renewable energy such as wind and solar, storage such as batteries, and high voltage power poles and wires in the same location to capitalise on economies of scale to deliver cheap, reliable and clean electricity for NSW.

Resilience

The capacity of a place, town, city or region's systems, businesses, institutions, communities and individuals to survive, adapt and grow, no matter what chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.

Riverine environments

Land identified on a riparian lands and waterways map in an LEP and land within 40 m to the top of the bank of a watercourse.

Ribbon development

Extensive residential/commercial/industrial development occurring in a linear pattern along a river corridor.

Smart technology

Self-Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Technology (SMART) technology that provides cognitive awareness to objects by making use of advanced technologies like internet of things, artificial intelligence, machine learning and big data.

Statutory planning

Includes planning proposals, development applications and other statutory processes that require planning decisions.

Strategic planning

Includes local strategies for issues such as housing, employment, retail, conservation, rural land, recreation and transport; precinct plans; structure plans; master plans and other activities that support statutory planning, such as LEPs and development control plans, and decisions.

Sustainability

Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Urban land

Land zoned under any of the following land use zones:

- RU5 Village
- R1 General Residential
- R2 Low Density Residential
- R3 Medium Density Residential
- R4 High Density Residential
- R5 Large Lot Residential
- E1 Local Centre
- E2 Commercial Centre
- E3 Productivity Support
- E4 General Industrial
- E5 Heavy Industrial
- B1 Neighbourhood Centre
- B2 Local Centre
- B3 Commercial Core
- B4 Mixed Use
- B5 Business Development
- B6 Enterprise Corridor
- B7 Business Park
- IN1 General Industrial
- IN2 Light Industrial
- IN3 Heavy Industrial
- SP3 Tourist

Value-added data represents the economic value that is added by each industry sector in a defined region. It can be calculated by subtracting local expenditure and expenditure on regional imports from the output generated by industry sector.

Western NSW the NSW Government planning regions of Riverina Murray, Central West and Orana and Far West.

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