Hay Shire COUNCIL

Business Paper

Ordinary Meeting

Tuesday, 25th August 2026
1.00pm

Exciting Heritage...Positive Future

Vision

Where our people are resilient, healthy and safe, living together with a strong sense of community in a vibrant and prosperous economy.

Mission Statement

To be a progressive rural council committed to:

- Caring for the welfare of our communities
- Protecting and enhancing the environment;
- Building a climate that encourages opportunities for all;
- Managing the Council's resources in an open and accountable manner consistent with the principles of value for money and equity.

Corporate Values

Integrity
We will be honest, fair and ethical in all our dealings, complying with the letter and the spirit of the law. We will make decisions in an unbiased, objective manner devoid of any personal interests or prejudices. We will treat all people with respect.

Openness
We will be readily accessible and will be transparent in all our dealings. We will communicate truthfully and regularly with our community. We will give reasons for our decisions.

Responsiveness
We will consult with our community and other stakeholders and be guided by their wishes. We will deliver on our promises.

Quality of Service
We will strive to provide best-practice services through continuous improvement and embracing new ideas and we will respond promptly to service problems.

Principles

Council has reviewed its guiding principles in line with the new requirements resulting from the Local Government reform process which are now:-

- actively engage local communities, including through integrated planning and reporting;
- be transparent and accountable;
- recognise diverse needs and interests;
- have regard to social justice principles;
- have regard to the long term and cumulative effects of its actions on future generations;
- foster ecologically sustainable development;
- effectively manage risk;
- have regard to long term sustainability;
- work with others to secure services that are appropriate to meet local needs;
- foster continuous improvement and innovation;
- act fairly, ethically and without bias in the public interest; and
- endeavour to involve and support its staff.

Hay Shire Council
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20th August 2026

The Mayor and Councillors
Hay Shire Council
PO Box 141
Hay NSW 2711

Ladies and Gentlemen:

NOTICE OF MEETING

I have to inform you that an Ordinary Meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chambers, Hay on:

Tuesday, 25th August to be held 1.00pm
in the Council Chambers.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

1. Council Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Confirmation of minutes
4. Matters arising from minutes
5. Declarations of interest
6. Supplementary Mayoral Minute
7. Mayor's Report
8. General Manager's Report
9. Committee Reports

This meeting will be live streamed, and the link can be found at
https://www.hay.nsw.gov.au/Inside-Hay-Shire-Council/Council-Meetings-and-Reports/Council-Meetings-Webcast

This meeting will also be audio-visually recorded and available on Council's website within 48 hours on completion of the Ordinary meeting.

Yours sincerely,

David Webb
General Manager

MINUTES
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- Ordinary Meeting – 28th July 2026
- Extraordinary Meeting – 11th August 2026

MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE HAY SHIRE COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS LACHLAN STREET HAY AT 1.00PM ON 28th July 2026.

PRESENT: Councillors: Cr G Chapman, Cr L Garner, Cr W Miller, Cr C Oataway (Chair), Cr J Perry, Cr M Quinn, Cr D Townsend, General Manager - David Webb Executive Manager Corporate Performance and Community – Kirstyn Thronder, and Executive Assistant – Kerry McRae

Request to attend by Audio Visual Link: Nil

Apology: Cr P Porter

25-090 **Resolved** that Council accept the apology from Cr Porter for the 28th of July Ordinary meeting.

(Perry/Quinn)

This meeting was live streamed and recorded

Address to Council: Nil

Confirmation of Minutes

26-091 **Resolved** that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held 29th June 2026 be confirmed.

(Miller/Perry)

Declaration of Interest: Nil

Mayoral Report

M1 **Mayoral Report**

That Council notes the information provided in the report.

Delegates Report:

Cr M Quinn - ALGA National General Assembly

For Council's Information.

General Manager's Reports

Action Plan Report

The report was received and noted.

C01 DA2026-27 – Sheds and Extensions – 109 Thelangerin Road, Hay

26-092 Resolved that Council approve:

Development Application DA2026-27 for the MRF shed extension (Shed 4) and Rubber & Plastic Crumbing Shed (Shed 1) on Lot 113 DP 448476, and Equipment & Storage Shed (Shed 2) and Hardstand Equipment Shed (Shed 3) on Lot 1 DP 517869 at 109 Thelangerin Road, Hay subject to the following conditions of consent:

1. **Compliance with Consent**
The Development being completed in accordance with plans and specifications stamped by Council being Plan A – D for 109 Thelangerin Road, Hay, except where varied by conditions of this consent.

Reason: *To confirm the details of the application as submitted by the applicant and as approved by Council.*

2. **Compliance with Standards**
Any building and associated works shall comply with the statutory requirements of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act, Local Government Act and the National Construction Code (NCC).

Reason: *The legal obligations of the Council to administer the New South Wales building and planning laws in order to provide satisfactory standards of living and development.*

3. **Siting**
All proposed structures, roof eaves, and guttering must be erected wholly within the respective boundaries of Lot 113 DP 448476 (Sheds 1 and 4) and Lot 1 DP 517869 (Sheds 2 and 3) at 109 Thelangerin Road. A minimum setback of 900mm must be maintained from external allotment boundaries

Reason: *To ensure no encroachments occur onto neighbouring properties and no changes are made to the approved siting of the building.*

4. **Variations**
No alteration to approved plans and specifications is allowed unless separately approved by Council.

Reason: *To ensure the designs meet regulations and standards and are in line with Council policies.*

Reason: *To adhere to minimum boundary offsets as required by the relevant legislation.*

5. **Shed/Garage/Outbuilding Use**
The sheds and extensions are approved exclusively for waste management operations, material sorting/crumbing, machinery/equipment storage, and general council depot uses. No structure shall be used for residential occupation at any time

Reason: *Health and safety reasons, and compliance with the National Construction*

Code.

6. **Construction Certificate Required**
   A Construction Certificate must be obtained from a Principal Authority prior to the commencement of any work.

   Reason: *To ensure that minimal standards relating to structural adequacy, health and amenity are met.*

7. **Further Details Required**
   Prior to the issue of a Constriction certificate details of all structural concrete and structural steel work shall be submitted to the Principal Certifying Authority for approval.

   Reason: *It is in the Public interest that all buildings are able to withstand the combination of loads and other actions which it may be subjected.*

8. **Storm Water Disposal**
   Prior to the issue of a Construction Certificate, a stormwater management plan covering works on both Lot 113 and Lot 1 must be submitted to the Principal Certifier. Roof water runoff must be directed to rainwater tanks or dedicated site drainage to prevent erosion or ponding around structural footings

   Reason: *To ensure that the development does not detrimentally affect the adjoining properties.*

9. **Lapsing of Consent**
   This consent is limited to a period of 5 years from the date of the Notice of Determination, unless the works associated with the development have physically commenced.

   Reason: *To ensure compliance with the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979.*

10. **Second Hand Materials**
    No second hand materials are to be used on any external surface of the building unless made available for inspection and separately approved by Council prior to erection.

    Reason: *To not have a negative visual impact to the streetscape.*

11. **Occupation Certificate Required**
    None of the sheds (Sheds 1, 2, 3, or 4 extension) shall be occupied or commissioned for operational use until an Occupation Certificate has been issued by the Principal Certifier.

    Reason*: Statutory requirement under Section 6.9 of the EP&A Act 1979.*

12. **Fire Safety Equipment Installation**
    Prior to the issue of an Occupation Certificate, portable fire extinguishers and essential fire safety measures must be installed inside Shed 1 (Rubber/Plastic Crumbing) and Shed 4 (MRF Extension) in accordance with NCC Clause E1.6 / AS 2444.

***Reason**: Fire safety and structural asset protection.*

For	*Against*
Cr G Chapman	
Cr L Garner	
Cr W Miller	
Cr C Oataway	
Cr John Perry	
Cr M Quinn	

(Perry/Miller)

C02 Application for Leave of Absence

26-093 **Resolved** that Council grants leave of absence to Cr Will Miller for the Ordinary meeting to be held 27th October 2026.

(Perry/Quinn)

C03 Circulars and other Government Correspondence

That Council notes the information provided in the report.

C04 Economic Development & Tourism June/July 2026

That Council notes the information provided in the report and actions being undertaken.

C05 Corporate Performance & Community Monthly Report: July2026

Notes the information provided in the report.

C06 Finance Report – July 2026

26-094 That Council receives and notes the report provided and approves the Material Budget Variances outlined in the report.

(Townsend/Perry)

C07 Planning and Compliance Report June/July

That Council notes the information provided in the report.

C08 Major Projects Update

26-095 **Resolved** that Council:

(a) Notes the information provided in the report and the actions being undertaken;
(b) Adopts the Hay Park Master Plan, Version 3.1 dated 28th July 2026, as presented.

(Perry/Miller)

C09 Operations Monthly Update Report

That Council notes the information provided in the report.

C10 Tree Removal Requests

26-096 **Resolved** that Council removes one (1) Eucalyptus tree from 218-210 Sidonia Road, Hay, with no replacement.

(Perry/Miller)

Reports of Council Committees

- Hay Showground Management Committee held 15th June 2026
- Hay Showground Management Committee held 20th July 2026

26-097 **Resolved** that Council notes the Committees meeting minutes, and any recommendations contained within be adopted.

(Perry/Chapman)

There being no further business the meeting was terminated at 2.10pm.

Confirmed_____
Cr Carol Oataway
Mayor

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE HAY SHIRE COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS LACHLAN STREET HAY AT 1.00PM ON 11th AUGUST 2026

PRESENT: Councillors: Mayor Cr C Oataway (Chair), Cr G Chapman, Cr L Garner, Cr J Perry, General Manager David Webb, Executive Manager – Executive Assistant Kerry McRae

Request to attend by Audio Visual Link: Cr. M Quinn

Apology: Cr. D Townsend; Cr. W Miller, Cr P Porter

26-098 **Resolved** that Cr Quinn be approved to attend the 11th of August Extraordinary meeting by Audio Visual link.

(Perry/Chapman)

26-099 **Resolved** that Council accept apologies from Cr Townsend, Cr Miller & Cr Porter for the 11th of August Extraordinary meeting.

(Perry/Chapman)

This meeting was live streamed, and audio recorded.

Address to Council: Nil

Declaration of Interest

Nil

Closed Session

At this stage of the meeting the Mayor advised that it is proposed to move into Closed Session for consideration of the following items:

IC1 - Purchase of Garbage Truck

Reason for Confidentiality

IC.1 (d) commercial information of a confidential nature that would, if disclosed:
(i) prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it, or
(ii) confer a commercial advantage on a competitor of the council, or
(iii) reveal a trade secret;

Further that in accordance with Section 10D it is considered that if the matters were discussed in an open Council meeting, it would on balance, be contrary to the public interest as its information that would if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on

person with whom the Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business. As such, the matter is appropriately considered in closed session under Section 10A(2)(d) of the Local Government Act 1993.

IC2 – General Manager's Performance Review

Reason for Confidentiality

(a) personnel matters concerning particular individuals (other than councillors)

Further that in accordance with Section 10D it is considered that if the matter were discussed in an open Council meeting, it would disclose information of a personal nature of an employee of Council.

The Mayor advised that in accordance with Section 11(2)(a)(b) of the Local Government Act 1993, access to the correspondence and reports relating to the items considered during the course of the Closed Session will be withheld.

26-100 **Resolved** that the meeting be closed during the discussion of these matters.

(Chapman/Perry)

Accordingly, members of the press and public were excluded from the closed session.

IC1 - Purchase of Garbage Truck

26-101 **Resolved** that Council:

(a) Accepts the tender for the supply of one (1) new Isuzu side loader garbage truck from Superior Pak Pty Ltd, including all options, in an amount of $592,576.60 (including GST);

(b) Postpones the purchase of the electric mower to future years and use this allocation towards the purchase of the garbage truck and ride-on mower;

(c) Authorises the General Manager to sign the purchase order; and

(d) Disposes of the current garbage truck through a reputable auction house (Pickles).

(Perry/Chapman)

IC2 – General Manager's Performance Review

26-102 **Resolved** that Council endorse the Panel's determined position on the Annual Review as follows:

1. That the record of performance assessment as recorded in the General Manager's Performance Agreement Annual Review be submitted to Council for information.

2. The Panel's Rating for the General Manager was 8.7 and the Panel considered this to be an 'Excellent' level of performance.

3. Endorse the 2026/2027 General Manager Performance Agreement.

4. The General Manager's Total Renumeration Package be permanently increased by 5% (inclusive of the SOORT increase), effective from anniversary date 16th September 2026, recognising the high level of performance of the General Manager, Award increases for other staff, community expectations and market forces.

(Perry/Chapman)

26-103 **Resolved** that the meeting move out of closed session, and the resolutions closed session be made public.

(Perry/Chapman)

Open Meeting

The Mayor verbally advised the meeting of resolutions from the closed session and these resolutions are recorded without any alteration and amendment thereto.

There being no further business the meeting was terminated at: 1:29pm.

Confirmed_____
Cr Carol Oataway
Mayor

Mayoral Minute

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M1. Mayoral Report

REPORTING OFFICER	Cr Carol Oataway – Mayor
ATTACHMENTS	- Nil

July / August have been busy with official engagements, meetings and representation. The following is a summary of my mayoral activities for the period of July / August:

Representation / Engagements

- **RAMJO Board Dinner – 6th August 2026**
  The Executive Manager Corporate Performance and Community and I attended the RAMJO Board Meeting Dinner held in Tocumwal. The guest speaker for the evening was David Farley, Member for Farrer, who provided a wide-ranging and engaging presentation covering a number of issues of importance to rural and regional communities. Mr Farley spoke at length on matters including water policy, immigration and population, and the ongoing challenges surrounding the financial sustainability of rural and regional councils. His presentation provided an opportunity to consider the broader economic, demographic and policy pressures facing councils across the Riverina Murray region and the importance of continued advocacy on behalf of regional communities. The dinner also provided an opportunity to engage with other RAMJO member councils and representatives and to discuss issues of shared importance across the region.

- RAMJO Board Meeting -7th August 2026
  Along with the Executive Manager Corporate Performance and Community, I attended the RAMJO Board Meeting in Tocumwal. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear from government representatives, discuss issues affecting regional communities and consider RAMJO's future advocacy priorities.
  Regional Banking Investment Alliance
  David Heine presented on the Regional Banking Investment Alliance (RBIA), highlighting the decline in regional banking services, with 40% of bank branches lost across regional Australia during 2022–25 despite regional growth. Regional branches provide essential face-to-face services, including cash handling, fraud prevention and professional advice, while bearing costs without receiving commercial benefits. The RBIA proposes a banking industry-funded Community Service Obligation to support banks maintaining or expanding regional branches, estimated at around 32% of average branch operating costs. RAMJO Councils were invited to support the Alliance. Further consideration is required regarding benefits for Hay's Bendigo Bank which is a community bank and may not qualify for assistance. The presentation nevertheless reinforced the importance of maintaining face-to-face banking services in small regional communities and highlighted the broader economic and social consequences of the continued withdrawal of traditional banking services from regional Australia.
  Office of Local Government
  Louise Taylor from the Office of Local Government provided an update on a proposed new methodology for the distribution of Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs). Councils were encouraged to attend the in-person session being conducted by the Grants Commission in Griffith on 14 September. This will provide an important opportunity for regional councils to

better understand the proposed methodology and raise issues relevant to the circumstances of smaller rural councils. Hay Shire Council has registered to attend the session in Griffith. Louise included discussion regarding the proposed 2026 Model Code of Meeting Practice. It is anticipated that a new version will be introduced by the Minister, although there are indications that a further disallowance motion may follow. It was also noted that submissions on the new Model Code of Conduct have now closed.

Giles Butler – NSW Premier's Department

Giles Butler from the NSW Premier's Department advised that the NSW Government has effectively moved into election mode, with the next State election due in early 2027. Consultations are continuing across the South West Renewable Energy Zone (SW REZ), with EnergyCo undertaking engagement with individual communities and councils. The Board was also advised that submissions are being invited for the Riverina Murray Strategic Integrated Transport Plan. This is an important regional planning document and provides an opportunity for councils to advocate for the transport infrastructure and services required to support our communities and regional economy. Hay Shire Council has prepared a submission.

Future of RAMJO Meetings and Advocacy

There was considerable discussion about the future structure and purpose of RAMJO meetings and how the organisation can strengthen its advocacy on behalf of member councils. Suggestions included reducing duplication between RAMJO and GMAC meetings, increasing the focus on advocacy and ensuring that RAMJO meets as a group at the Country Mayors Association and Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) meetings. The development of a RAMJO advocacy brochure was also suggested, clearly outlining the key issues facing the Riverina Murray region and providing a consistent message for use with government and the media. A particular focus was the need for a stronger Murray-Darling Basin Communities Advocacy Campaign. There was a strong view that the message about what is happening to our regional communities is not reaching metropolitan Australia effectively enough. It was suggested that RAMJO develop a united regional message and use a range of communication strategies, including social media targeted towards metropolitan audiences, media releases and direct commentary and quotes from Mayors. A coordinated approach would provide greater visibility for the issues affecting regional communities and strengthen the collective voice of RAMJO councils.

Meetings

- **COAG-19 Meeting – 21st July 2026**

  The General Manager and I met with members of the COAG-19 committee to determine primary health priorities for the Hay region. Follow up on the proposal for physiotherapy services in Hay was sought. This had been formally considered and approved by the local committee but had not yet received Executive approval. The Committee was advised that MLHD is also considering a broader district-wide physiotherapy service model, including an allied health mapping exercise. Concern was expressed that the delay in progressing the Hay proposal could result in the loss of an established local physiotherapy service. The current physiotherapist has now confirmed that he will cease providing services in Hay at the end of August, citing the prolonged uncertainty surrounding the proposal. Executive raised questions regarding the current physiotherapist's private and NDIS work, potential travel payments, referral pathways and the proposed use of COAG-19 funding. The proposed COAG-19 funding was intended to establish accessible community physiotherapy for Hay residents, with referrals anticipated from local GPs and specialists. The service would particularly benefit older residents, post-operative patients, people experiencing mobility or falls issues and residents of local aged care facilities. The Committee was asked to clarify what alternative physiotherapy service MLHD intends to provide for Hay, including the proposed model, provider, frequency,

referral pathway and expected commencement date, as well as any interim arrangements to avoid a further gap in service. Hay has been seeking reliable local physiotherapy access for approximately three years. The loss of the current provider is therefore a significant concern, particularly given the clear and ongoing community need for accessible, face-to-face physiotherapy. The local committee will continue to advocate to have this service funded.

- **Levee Upgrade Meeting – 22nd July 2026**
  A community information session was held regarding the feasibility study into potential upgrades to the Hay North and Hay South levees. Council has appointed Dryside Engineering to determine the likely cost and staging of works. The study follows Council's adoption of the Hay and Maude Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan, which recommended raising the levees to provide a one per cent Annual Exceedance Probability level of protection, plus freeboard. Engineers have consulted affected landowners and are assessing the existing levees, with further consultation continuing. Most sections requiring raising are expected to need less than one metre, with earthen raising preferred where possible and removable or temporary barriers considered in constrained areas. Drainage issues will be considered during the feasibility study. The potential impact on insurance was also discussed, although no guarantee can be given that upgrades would reduce premiums. The study will inform Council's future decisions on flood protection for Hay.

- **GM Performance Review – 29th July 2026**
  Steven Pinnuck of LG Services Group led the annual performance review for the General Manager along with Cr Perry, Cr Quinn, Cr Garner and I. The report was presented at an extraordinary meeting of Council on 11th August 2026 with all recommendations adopted.

- **LHAC Meeting – 3rd August 2026**
  The General Manager and I attended the monthly meeting of the Hay Local Health Advisory Committee (LHAC). The LHAC Forum will be held in Young on 16 and 17 September. No members of the Hay LHAC will be attending. Andrew Pearson has commenced as the new Community Engagement Officer and is warmly welcomed to the role. A *Conversations on the Couch* event will be held on 19 October in conjunction with the Hay Men's Shed. The initiative is delivered by the Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network. The Manager's update highlighted an increase of 582 presentations to the Emergency Department during 2025–26, together with a 90% increase in patients transferred or referred to larger hospitals. Staffing remains stable, with a Junior Medical Officer expected to commence in early 2027. New *Thriving Kids* funding will support children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, including occupational therapy and specialist care. While there is currently some ambiguity regarding how the funding will be administered, it is expected to commence in approximately three months. Hay will host the District Hospital Auxiliary Forum in March 2027. EnergyCo and Marathon Health are also progressing a Health Services Plan incorporating a cumulative impact study. David will be the local contact for this work.

- **SWREZ Online Webinar – 3rd August 2026**
  I attended an online forum to gain further information regarding the distribution of the Community Benefits and Employment Funds across the South West Renewable Energy Zone (SW REZ). The engagement program across the SW REZ is extensive, with consultation designed to identify the priorities and needs of communities impacted by renewable energy development. Key themes identified include economic development and employment, community safety and resilience, health and wellbeing, cost of living, housing, education and childcare. Consultation opportunities will include community pop-up sessions and workshops, as well as an online community survey, providing communities with opportunities to identify projects and initiatives that will deliver meaningful and lasting benefits. It was emphasised that the funds must be directed towards community and employment purposes and should respond

to the needs and priorities identified through the consultation process. The consultation provides an important opportunity for Hay and surrounding communities to ensure that local priorities are recognised and that the Community Benefits and Employment Funds deliver tangible, long-term benefits for the community.

Upcoming Engagements

- Wreath Laying for end of Korean War, VP Day, Vietnam Veterans' Day – 18th August 2026
- Councillor Development Session – 18th August 2026
- Catch Up with OLG – 24th August 2026
- Bullawah Wind Farm Meeting – 25th August 2026
- Meet with David Farley – 27th August 2026
- IPC Public Hearing – Bullawah Wind Farm – 1st September 2026
- Citizenship Ceremony – 3rd September 2026
- Catch Up with Helen Dalton – 4th September 2026
- Catch Up with Giles Butler – 4th September 2026
- LHAC Meeting – 7th September 2026

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the information provided in the report.

General Manager's Report

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Actions Required from Council & Committee Meeting

Month: August
Extraordinary Meeting 11th August

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
26-101	GM/ EM E&O	**Purchase of Garbage Truck**	Accepts the tender for the supply of one (1) new Isuzu side loader garbage truck from Superior Pak Pty Ltd, including all options, in an amount of $592,576.60 (including GST); (b) Postpones the purchase of the electric mower to future years and use this allocation towards the purchase of the garbage truck and ride-on mower; (c) Authorises the General Manager to sign the purchase order; and (d) Disposes of the current garbage truck through a reputable auction house (Pickles). ***Response*:** New garbage truck ordered and purchase order raised. Old truck to be disposed once new truck is in service.	No
26-102	EM CP&C	**General Manager's Performance Review**	1. That the record of performance assessment as recorded in the General Manager's Performance Agreement Annual Review be submitted to Council for information. 2. The Panel's Rating for the General Manager was 8.7 and the Panel considered this to be an 'Excellent' level of performance. 3. Endorse the 2026/2027 General Manager Performance Agreement. 4. The General Manager's Total Renumeration Package be permanently increased by 5% (inclusive of the SOORT increase), effective from anniversary date 16th September 2026, recognising the high level of performance of the General Manager, Award increases for other staff, community expectations and market	Yes

			forces, community expectations and market forces. ***Response:*** Actioned from anniversary date.	

Month: July
Ordinary Meeting 28th July

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
26-092	EM – P&C	**DA2026-27 – Sheds and Extensions – 109 Thelangerin Road, Hay**	Approved the Development Application DA2026-27 for the MRF shed extension (Shed 4) and Rubber & Plastic Crumbing Shed (Shed 1) on Lot 113 DP 448476, and Equipment & Storage Shed (Shed 2) and Hardstand Equipment Shed (Shed 3) on Lot 1 DP 517869 at 109 Thelangerin Road, Hay subject to the following conditions of consent: ***Response:*** Approved with conditions	Yes
26-093	GM	**Application for Leave of Absence**	Council grants leave of absence to Cr Will Miller for the Ordinary meeting to be held 27th October 2026. ***Response:*** Leave granted	Yes
26-094	GM	**Finance Report – July 2026**	That Council receives and notes the report provided and approves the Material Budget Variances outlined in the report. ***Response:*** Approved. Budget variances implemented.	Yes
26-095	GM	**Major Projects Update**	(a) Notes the information provided in the report and the actions being undertaken; (b) Adopts the Hay Park Master Plan, Version 3.1 dated 28th July 2026, as presented. ***Response:*** Adopted	Yes
26-096	EM – E&O	**Tree Removal Requests**	Essential Energy remove one (1) Eucalyptus tree from 218-210 Sidonia Road, Hay, with no replacement. **Response:** No action from Council. EE to remove.	Yes

Month: June
Ordinary Meeting 29th June

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*

26-085	EM CP&C	**Corporate Performance & Community Monthly Report: June 2026**	(a) Notes the information provided in the report. (b) Adopts the draft Cadet Employment Policy as presented; (c) Adopts the Smoke Free Workplace Policy as presented; (d) Places the draft Waste Services Policy on exhibition for public comment for a period of no less than 28 days and a further report including submissions received be presented to a future meeting of Council. ***Response:*** Adopted policies updated in policy register. Draft Waste Services Policy currently on exhibition. See further report to the August ordinary meeting.	Yes
26-087	GM	**Major Projects Update**	(a) Notes the information provided in the report and the actions being undertaken; (b) Places the Hay Park Master Plan, Version 2, on public exhibition for minimum 28 days and a further report be brought to Council in due course; (c) Endorses the submission of a funding application under the Sustainable Communities Program – Business & Industry Round for Stage 2 of the Hay Resource Recovery & Eco Park development as outlined in the report; (d) Endorses the submission of a funding application under the Regional Airports Program for the Hay Aerodrome as outlined in the report (e) Provides co-contribution to applications as outlined in the report; and (f) Authorise the General Manager to finalise and submit grant applications and, if successful, execute all necessary documentation associated with the funding agreements. ***Response:*** See separate report to council. Completed.	Yes
26-088	EM E&O	**Tree Removal Requests**	Council removes three (3) Cedar Trees from 315 Lang Street, Hay with nil replacements. ***Response:*** Out for quotation.	No

Month: May
Ordinary Meeting 26th May

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*

26-064	EM P&C	**Lease of Land adjacent to the Maude Cemetery**	Engages Treespec for the use and management of Lot 7018 DP 1019632 and Lot 7003 DP1019633 at the Maude Cemetery, with the following conditions attached: a) Period of land management – initial period of 12 months, with option to extend for 2 x 12 months. b) Maintenance of land to mitigate bushfire risk and keeping land weed free. c) Maintenance of fencing around the site. d) Keeping limited vehicular access (for funerals and maintenance) and 24/7 pedestrian access to the cemetery component. ***Response:*** Ongoing matters still to be resolved.	No
26-072	EM _E&O		(i) Removes one (1) Gum Tree from 8 Waratah Street, Maude and replace with a suitable species. Out for quotation (ii) Prunes one (1) Gum Tree at 87 Pollard Street. Out for quotation (iii) Removes two (2) Claret Ash Trees from 522 Clay Street and replace with a suitable species. Out for quotation (iv) Removes one (1) Prunus Tree from 379 Cadell Street and replace with a suitable species. Done (v) Removes one (1) Kurrajong Tree from 84 Lachlan Street and replace with a suitable species. Out for quotation (vi) Removes seven (7) large Oleander Shrubs from 374 Alma Street and replace with suitable species. Out for quotation. (vii) Takes no action for Pruning Trees at 152 Lachlan Street as per Council's Street Tree Policy criteria not to consider "obscures or otherwise detracts from advertising signage". ***Response:***	No Yes No action required

26-075	GM	**Hay Sewage Treatment Plant**	(a) Notes the information provided in the report; and (b) Delegates authority to the General Manager to undertake negotiations and execute Deed of Agreement with either of the Defendants. ***Response:*** Ongoing. Deed executed with Builder. Ongoing.	No

Month: March
Ordinary Meeting 24th March

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
26-032		**Mayoral Minute – General Manager's 2026 Performance Review**	The Performance Review Panel meets Wednesday, 29 July 2026, at 9.30am, to undertake review of the General Manager's performance and reports back to Council at a future meeting. ***Response:*** Informal catch up completed. Review set for 29th July 2026. GM self-assessment completed. Review conducted 29th July 2026 and reported to the extra ordinary meeting 11th August 2026.	Yes

Month: February
Ordinary Meeting 24th February

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
26-014	EM P&C	**Proposed Fast EV Charger – Maude Reserve (Opposite Maude Memorial Hall)**	(a) Issues a non-binding Letter of Support to enable the proponent to submit a grant application; (b) Undertakes consultation with the Maude community regarding the potential installation of an EV charger; and (c) Authorises the General Manager to execute all relevant documentation associated with the funding application and, if successful, to negotiate and finalise any resulting agreements. ***Response:*** Letter of support provided. Notice placed in newsletter to community. No further update.	No
26-027	EM E&O	**Tree Removal Requests**	(i) Removes one (1) Paper Tree from 379 Macauley Street and replace with three (3) Crepe myrtle. 1 tree planted. Require paper tree removal prior to planting remaining. Out for quotation (ii) Removes one (1) Claret Ash from 458 Orson Street and replace with a Manchurian Pear. Out for quotation (iii) Removes one (1) Gum Tree from 123 Pine Street and replace with a	No No No

			Manchurian Pear. Tree removed replacement not yet planted (iv) Removes one (1) Paperbark and Prune one (1) Jacaranda at 465 Water Street. Completed ***Response:*** In progress.	Yes

Month: January
Extraordinary Meeting 27th January

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
26-003	GM	**Groundwater Supply Licence**	(a) Notes the information provided in the report and accepts the new water access licence; (b) Authorises the Mayor and/or General Manager to execute, under Council Seal if required, the Notification form to register this dealing with NSW Land Registry Services; (c) Engages legal services to assist in the dealing with this matter. ***Response:*** Drilling of test bores completed. Test results promising. In discussions with Department on the next steps. Underground Water Supply Licence received/approved. Further running and testing of test bores required, likely early September 2026.	No

Month: December
Ordinary Meeting 16th December

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
25-183	EM E&O	**Tree Removal Requests**	Council removes one (1) Silky Oak from 211 William Street and replaces it with a Manchurian Pear. Out for quotation ***Response:*** In progress.	No

Month: October
Ordinary Meeting 28th October

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
25-149	EM E&O	**Tree Removal Requests**	(a) Removes two Peppercorn Trees at 436 Orson Street and replace with Crepe Myrtles. Tree removed, replacement not yet planted. (b) Removes the Cedar Tree at 339 Lang Street and replace with Manchurian Pear Tree. Tree removed, replacement not yet planted ***Response:*** In progress.	No

Month: September
Ordinary Meeting 23rd September

Res No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
25-134	EM – P&C	**Aerodrome Licenses**	(a) Notes the information provided in the report; (b) Submit proposed licence agreements to tenants of Hangars 3,4,5 and 7 for an amount of \$2/m^2 (as per Council's Revenue Policy) (c) Negotiate with Paraway Pastoral Company (or any prospective buyer of the relevant property) with Hangar 6 and the used by Council in the Southwestern corner of the Aerodrome, utilised by Council. (d) Submit a proposed licence agreement to the Hangar 8 tenant (where Council owns the Hangar) for an amount of \$4/$m^{2.}$ (e) Submit a proposed licence agreement to tenants of Site 9 for an amount of \$2/m^2 (as per Council's Revenue Policy) (f) Create a new hangar lease area (marked as 10 in the figure to the right) and put out on EOI to prospective tenants. (g) Submit proposed licence agreements to tenants of Agricultural Sites 11 and 12 for an amount of \$0.50/m^2. (h) Go out on EOI for sites 13-15. (i) All the above will be for a period of 30 days. (j) A further report brought back to Council after the 30-day period. **Response:** Progressing; received an enquiry for a lease for a new hanger site. In negotiations on new hanger site in the Agriculture Area.	No

Month: February 2024
Ordinary Meeting: 27th February 2024

Res. No	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
24-009	EM-EO	Tree Removal Requests	Resolved that Council	
			a. Removes two Gum trees in Pal Richards Park and replace with two Ornamental Pear Trees. Completed	Yes
			b. Removes the Pine tree at 321 Macauley Street and replace with a crepe Myrtle Tree. Completed.	Yes
			c. Remove two Claret Ash trees at 471 Cadell Street and replace with two Crepe Myrtle Trees. Completed.	Yes
			d. Remove 2 x Claret Ash from 322 Church Street and replace with two Ornamental Pear Trees. Tree removed, replacement not yet planted. Completed	Yes

			e. Removes Pepper Corn tree Corner of Cadell and Lachlan and replace with a Manchurian Pear. Tree removed, replacement not yet planted	No
			f. Retain the California Ash at 348 Cadell Street. No action required.	No action required
			g. Removes three Claret Ash Trees in the Swimming Pool Carpark and replace with three Claret Ash Trees (to keep in theme with the existing tree corridor). Completed.	Yes
			h. Heavy prune 12 Claret Ash Trees at the John Houston Memorial Pool carpark. Trees were removed and replaced with suitable species.	Yes
			i. Additional to the replacement trees suggested, Council plant trees within Hay Parks to achieve ten trees planted for every removal. Completed.	Yes
			Response: In Progress	

Month: April 2021
Ordinary Meeting 27th April 2021

Res. No.	***Officer***	***Item***	***Resolution***	***Complete***
21-052	DCCS	Potential Land Acquisition	**Resolved** that Council, **(a)** Notes the information provided in the report; and **(b)** Undertakes an independent valuation of Land at a cost of $2,000 **(c)** Participates in further discussions with Transport for NSW regarding the Railway Land. **Response:** (b)Valuation has been undertaken. Land purchased. (c) Discussions with TfNSW/JHR underway General Manager has been in recent discussions with TfNSW. Waiting on response from TfNSW. Discussions still ongoing. Had recent correspondence with UGL, waiting on response. Followed up with UGL as to status of enquiry.	No

Month: July 2020
Ordinary Meeting 28th July 2020

Res. No.	***Officer***	***Item***	***Resolution***	***Complete***
20-084	DCCS	Classification of Crown Reserve 150036	**Resolved** that Council classify the portion of Lot 222 DP 819305 under its management as operational land and advertises the intention of classification of operational land and allow a period of 28 days for public comment. **Response:**	No

Res. No.	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
			Matter is on hold pending Aboriginal land claim determination.	
20-090	GM	IC 1 – Railways Lands - IN COMMITTEE	**IC 1 Resolved that Council**: (a) Commences negotiation to terminate Agreement 206.2523 and enter into a new agreement which includes Lot 4 DP 812034; and **(b)** A further report be brought to Council in due course. **Response:** Letter written to JHR. Ongoing. Staff liaising with new railway land managers. Discussions still ongoing. Had recent correspondence with UGL, waiting on response. Followed up with UGL as to status of enquiry.	No

Month: March 2020
Ordinary Meeting 24th March 2020

Res. No.	*Officer*	*Item*	*Resolution*	*Complete*
20-038	DCCS	Road Name	**Resolve that Council:** **a.** Endorses the name of road as “Kiernan Lane”. **b.** Continues with naming the unnamed road in accordance with Geographical Names Board requirements; and **c.** Continues with the formalising of the road corridors for Yankee Crossing Road and unnamed road. **Response**: Continuing with process of naming and formalising road corridors. Recent discussions with Crown Lands indicate sticking point around Yankee Crossing Road going through a TSR. Still working with Crown Lands. Kiernan Lane is officially named. Still working on Yankee Crossing Road formulisation. Matter is on hold due to Aboriginal land claim travelling stock route.	

C1 – Community Grants

REPORTING OFFICER	General Manager
ATTACHMENTS	- Community Grants Application and Guidelines - Community Grants Application Form - Community Grants Acquittal Form - Request for Support – Booligal Sheep Races - Request for Support – Hay Amateur Theatre Group - Request for Support – Hay Show - Request for support – Rainbow on the Plains

INTRODUCTION

Annually Council provides financial assistance to various community groups and organisations in the form of event sponsorships and donations.

COMMENTARY

Annually Council provides financial assistance to various community groups and organisations in the form of event sponsorships and donations, provided under s356 of the Local Government Act 1993, specifically:

356 Can a council financially assist others?
(1) A council may, in accordance with a resolution of the council, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions.
(2) A proposed recipient who acts for private gain is not ineligible to be granted financial assistance but must not receive any benefit under this section until at least 28 days' public notice of the council's proposal to pass the necessary resolution has been given.
(3) However, public notice is not required if—
(a) the financial assistance is part of a specific program, and
(b) the program's details have been included in the council's draft operational plan for the year in which the financial assistance is proposed to be given, and
(c) the program's proposed budget for that year does not exceed 5 per cent of the council's proposed income from the ordinary rates levied for that year, and
(d) the program applies uniformly to all persons within the council's area or to a significant group of persons within the area.
(4) Public notice is also not required if the financial assistance is part of a program of graffiti removal work.

The provision of financial assistance to others has, in the past, been a little ad-hoc with the same groups and organisations being recipients. Many councils run community grant programs, which provides appropriate structure, transparency and governance to financial assistance provided to others.

In 2025-26, Council provided the following s356 Contributions:

- The Mini Club of South Australia $1,500
- Hay Merino Sheep Show Inc $500
- Hay Vintage & Veteran Motorcycle $50
- Hay Rodeo Club Inc $1,500
- Maude War Memorial Hall Committee (Christmas) $1,500

➢ Booligal Hall Trustees (Christmas)		$1,500
➢ Hay War Memorial High School		$50
➢ Hay Jockey Club		$1,500
➢ Hay Public School		$50
➢ Booligal Sheep Races		$500
➢ Hay Mardi Gras Inc		$1,500
➢ Hay Show Society		$500
➢ Booligal Hall Trustees (Hall)		$1,500
➢ Hay Bowling Carnival		$500
	Total:	**$12,650**

In addition, Council has traditionally provided financial assistance to following not funded under s356 Contributions:

➢ Shear Outback	$33,000
➢ Hay Tennis Club	$5,000

Council has historically included, for example, the Hay Lions Football and Netball Club amenities building under its insurance policy based on an insured value of $460,000. This value has recently been reviewed, with the building now assessed at an estimated replacement value of $2 million.

In previous years, Council has recovered the Club's proportion of the insurance premium through an annual invoice. For the 2024–25 financial year, the Club's contribution totalled $1,958. Based on the revised replacement value, the Club's estimated share of the annual insurance premium is expected to increase to approximately $7,800. Other facilities who have an exclusive use of a Council facility include Hay Children Services and the Hay Tennis Club.

Given the significant increase in the insurance contribution resulting from the updated valuation, Council may wish to consider subsidising a portion of the insurance premium as ‘’financial assistance’’, or alternatively, pass on the full insurance costs where facilities have an exclusive use.

It is proposed that Hay Shire Council implements a Community Grants Program. The draft Hay Shire Council Community Grants Guidelines establishes the framework for Council's annual Community Grants Program, providing one-off grants of up to $1,000 to eligible community organisations for projects, services and initiatives that deliver benefits to residents of the Hay Shire.

The guidelines outline applicant eligibility and ineligibility criteria, funding conditions, application and acquittal requirements, and the annual grants timeline. Eligible applicants must be not-for-profit community organisations (or be auspiced by one), demonstrate community benefit, financial viability, appropriate governance and insurance, and meet the criteria of the relevant funding category.

The guidelines also identify activities and expenditure that are not eligible for funding, including recurrent operating costs, capital works, retrospective funding, fundraising activities and projects that are the responsibility of other levels of government.

Funding is available across five categories:

- Arts and Cultural
- Diversity and Harmony
- Events
- Health and Wellbeing
- Other

Successful applicants will be required to comply with Council's grant conditions, including project acquittal, acknowledgement of Council's support and appropriate use of funding. The guidelines provide a transparent and consistent framework for the assessment and administration of community grants, ensuring Council funding supports initiatives that strengthen community participation, wellbeing and local outcomes.

It is recommended public exhibit the community grants application and guideline, and bring back to council for adoption, with any amendments. Following this, call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) from the community for grants for the 2026-27 year.

Council has recently received requests for support from the following organisations (see attached), that will need consideration:

- Booligal Sheep Races
- Hay Show
- Hay Amateur Theatre Group
- Rainbow on the Plains

It is suggested that Council does not grant support at this time and advises these organisations to make application when the EOI are called later this year.

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Social** 1.2 Recreational, Civic Spaces, and Infrastructure that meet community needs 1.2.4 Create a safe, inclusive, and resilient community where all members feel secure, supported, and empowered to thrive 1.3 Our community is connected 1.3.2 Build a connected, collaborative community 1.4 Our youth and aged are supported 1.4.2 Support youth and aged services and initiatives 1.5 Our community is inclusive and sustainable 1.5.2 Inclusive and Empowered Communities 1.5.6 Support cultural programs and initiatives, including First Nations **Economic** 3.2 Our community values its history and tourism 3.2.2 Promote events and activities **Civic Leadership** 4.1 Our Council leads by example 4.1.1 Implement and promote best practice governance
FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	Minor: - S356 Contributions Budget - $13,000 - Other budget for Shear Outback and Hay Tennis Club - Other budget for civic and council run events
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Local Government Act 1993
POLICY IMPLICATION	Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 Cultural Policy 2014 Event Management Policy 2021 Hay 10-Year Economic Roadmap 2026 Plan of Management – Crown & Community Land 2022

	Special Events Policy 2014 Youth Strategy 2024
ASSET IMPLICATION	Minor
RISK IMPLICATION	Minor – events are management in accordance with Event Management Policy and processes

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

(a) Notes the information provided in the report;
(b) Provides financial support to Shear Outback and the Hay Tennis Club as outlined in the report;
(c) Passes on the full cost of insurance to organisations that have exclusive use of a council facility;
(d) Places the draft Community Grants Application and Guidelines, Community Grants Application Form and Community Grants Acquittal Form on public exhibition for a minimum period of 28 days; and
(e) Writes to organisations that have recently requested financial support to advise that Council is not providing support at this time and to invite them to make an application when Expressions of Interest are called later this year.

Community Grant Guidelines

Introduction

Hay Shire Council Community Grants Program gives the community the opportunity to apply for financial assistance for services and projects that benefit local residents. These are one-off annual grants to assist community organisations to provide services and projects.

Before completing your application, please read this information carefully.

Eligibility

Grants of up to $1,000 are available for eligible applicants.

Who Can Apply

- Community organisations or groups managed by a volunteer committee of management.
- Organisations based in or servicing the Hay Local Government area.

Eligible organisations must:

- Be constituted, non-profit organisations, preferably incorporated. If not incorporated, the organisation must be auspiced by an incorporated association.
- Provide detailed information regarding the proposed service, project or program for which funds are required.
- Practice equal opportunity and non-discriminatory practices.
- Have current Public Liability Insurance.
- Demonstrate they are meeting a clear need in the community and not duplicating an existing service (sporting organisations excluded).

- Demonstrate it has sufficient community support, a reasonable number of active members and is in a position to remain financially viable.
- Demonstrate the capacity to make a contribution toward the cost of the project either financially or in-kind, such as through the contribution of volunteer time.
- Meet the criteria for their chosen category to be considered.

Ineligibility

Applications for the following will not be considered:

- Individuals (apply direct in writing to Council for individual funding).
- Organisations that have not submitted required acquittal documents from previous grants.
- Political parties or organisations affiliated with a political party.
- Government agencies or departments at local, state or federal level.
- Programs or services considered the responsibility of another authority or tier of government. For example programs for schools.
- Projects with the sole purpose of advocating a religious faith or belief.
- Capital works including those that are covered by Council's Capital Works funding. An item is considered capital if it is permanently fixed to the ground or building and increases the value of the facility.
- Applications from registered or private businesses and/or profit making groups.
- Requests for grants to meet recurrent expenditure such as staffing costs, utilities, rent etc.
- Ongoing administration costs such as paper, printer cartridges etc.
- Equipment that does not directly relate to the delivery of the project/activity for which the funds are being applied.
- Applications for fundraising purposes.
- Applicants seeking retrospective funding where projects have commenced prior to receiving funding approval. Note: Do **NOT** commit, order or spend any

funds for this application prior to receiving funding approval. Council will not reimburse groups for any funds already spent.
- Applications seeking funding for social excursions**.** For example a bus trip to Phillip Island, the zoo or a picnic.
- Applications seeking funding for special occasion functions, such as birthday and anniversary parties or Mother's or Father's Day.

Unsatisfactory applications (ie. questions unsatisfactorily answered and/or attachments and/or support material not provided). Applicants submitting unsatisfactory applications will be contacted and asked to submit the required information within **10 working days**. If the information is not received within this time period, the application will be deemed **ineligible**.

Grants Timeline

July	Grants advertised and applications open. Application forms will be available on Council's Website or at Council's offices
August	**Applications close. No late applications will be accepted.** An acknowledgement email will be sent to groups once the grant application has been received
September	Councillors determine successful applicants. Applicants are advised of results

Conditions of Grant

All successful applicants must adhere to the 'Conditions of Grants and Contributions' as outlined below:

a) The grant amount is defined in the operational guidelines for each grant.
b) Council's contribution is limited to the approved grant amount. Additional costs associated with the responsibility of the applicant.
c) All projects must specify a completion date, and where applicable, recipients must complete the prescribed Final Report (or acquittal) on the funded project within 60 days of the completion of the project. Failure to do so will result in ineligibility for future grant applications.
d) Funding must only be used for the purposes outlined in the grant offer.
e) Where a Grants and Contribution Agreement is required, funding will only be issued after the Agreement is signed by Council and the grant recipient.

f) Signing of a Grants and Contributions Agreement and/or acceptance of funds constitutes acceptance of all conditions within this policy and the guidelines relevant to the specific grant program.
g) Unspent funds greater than 10% of the grant must be returned to Council.
h) Funding may be withdrawn if objectives, eligibility or funding conditions are breached; or if the project fails to progress satisfactorily. Full liability in this instance is borne by the grant recipient.
i) Statutory approvals are the responsibility of the applicant.
j) Hay Shire Council must be acknowledged in all promotional material for the funded project.
k) Projects related to gambling, drugs, alcohol or smoking are not funded unless they support practices such as (but not limited to) smoke free areas, shade and healthy food choices.

Important Information

- **Grant applications do not guarantee funding and the full requested amount may not be awarded.**
- **This funding is one-off and non-recurrent. Applications for the same project/program may not be successful in subsequent years.**
- Applications must be submitted using the Community Grants Application Form on Council's website or at Council Offices.
- The Community Grants Program is conducted on a financial year basis from 1 July to 30 June.

Maximum Grant
The maximum grant allocated under the Community Grants Program is **$1,000**.

Number of Grant Applications
Only one application will be accepted per community group/organisation for this grant.

Auspice Organisation
If your organisation is not incorporated, you must obtain endorsement from an auspice organisation. The auspice organisation must be incorporated, not for profit, and must be aware of and support the grant application.

Usually grant funds will be paid directly to the auspice organisation who will manage the funds on behalf of the group and ensure the funds are spent in accordance with the grant application.

Categories

- **Arts and Cultural**
- **Diversity and Harmony**
- **Events**
- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Other**

Applicants should read the category descriptions below and indicate on the application form one category they consider their project best fits.

This grant program is subject to an eligibility assessment by Council officers, prior to evaluation at the meeting of Council.

The following information is presented to explain how your application will be assessed.

The information you provide in your application will be used to assess your application against the criteria under the four categories listed below. Council reserves the right to consider applications in any category deemed appropriate.

Arts and Cultural
The Arts and Cultural category supports projects that support the growth of high quality arts and culture in Hay Shire Council area. This includes displays, visual and literary arts, programs/workshops, music, performances, one-off art based events, historical activities.

This category will consider the level of artistic/cultural merit of the project/program, and the extent to which the project:

- Facilitates partnerships and sharing of creative skills and talents between artists, community groups/organisations and the broader Council community.
- Encourages and supports the development of arts and cultural activity across the Council area.
- Showcases the uniqueness, quality and diversity of the Council's arts and cultural community.
- Increases community participation in the arts and cultural life of Hay Shire Council.
- Demonstrates the number of residents to benefit from the activity/service.

Diversity and Harmony

The Diversity and Harmony category aims to support projects and programs which promote and celebrate the uniqueness of Hay Shire Council which is culturally diverse, accepting of people of all abilities, and inclusive of all its residents.

This category will consider the level to which the project / program meets the following criteria:

- Increases the capacity of the target communities to access services.

- Reduces isolation of community members excluded from participation due to cultural, physical, social or economic reasons.
- Encourages dialogue and partnerships between different ethnic and cultural groups and promotes the benefits of many cultures living and working together.
- Provides resources that enable participation in programs or services.
- Provides opportunities for the community to learn about and experience different cultures and diversity.
- Demonstrates a direct benefit to the Hay Shire Council community.
- Demonstrates the number of residents to benefit from the activity/service.

Events

The Events category supports the development of new and existing community events primarily catering for residents in Hay Shire Council area. It also encourages community-based organisations to develop and conduct events that showcase their talents, provide public entertainment and celebrate the diversity within the council area.

Eligible events must:

- Be held in a certain place during a particular interval of time and be a significant occurrence or happening which will attract people. It must be a gathering of people in one location for a specified purpose.
- Attract a crowd of at least 100 people.
- Be held within the Hay Shire Council local government area.
- Open to all residents.

This category will consider the level to which the project/program meets the following criteria:

- The event's location, accessibility and appeal to residents of Hay Shire Council and assessment against similar events.
- The event's capacity to bring communities together and foster community partnerships, volunteer participation and skill development.
- The degree to which the event highlights and celebrates the uniqueness and/or diversity of the Council.
- The event organiser's capacity and ability to host the event including compliance with Council and other authorities' requirements.
- The event organisers have proven evidence of their ability to host the event including financial, marketing and risk management plans and the capacity to operate under best practice principles.
- The number of residents to benefit from the activity/service.

Health and Wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing category supports projects/programs that focus on social, physical or mental health, improve access and participation by people with disabilities, and provide recreation and/or leisure activities for all ages.

This category will consider the level to which the project/program meets the following criteria:

- Increases participation of people with a disability in community based sport and leisure opportunities.
- Increases community awareness of the needs of people with a disability, health issues and older residents.
- The identified community needs which the activity/service will address.
- The ongoing benefit of the project/program to Hay Shire Council residents and/or specific target communities.
- Demonstrates a direct benefit to the Hay Shire Council community.
- Demonstrates the number of residents to benefit from the activity/service.

Other

The Other category provides financial assistance to community organisations for essential operational and organisational needs that support their ongoing sustainability and capacity to deliver services, programs and activities for the Hay Shire community. This category is intended to assist with costs that are not directly associated with a specific event or project but are necessary to enable organisations to continue operating effectively.

Eligible applications may include:

- Establishment costs for new community organisations or groups.
- Public liability and other essential insurance costs.
- Essential operating and administrative expenses.
- Volunteer recruitment, training and recognition initiatives.
- Governance, strategic planning and organisational development.
- Minor equipment or resources required to support the organisation's ongoing activities.
- Other initiatives that strengthen the capacity and long-term sustainability of community organisations.

This category will consider the level to which the application meets the following criteria:

- Demonstrates a clear community benefit for residents of the Hay Shire Council area.
- Strengthens the capacity, sustainability and governance of the organisation.
- Supports the delivery of ongoing community programs, services or activities.
- Demonstrates a genuine financial need and identifies any other funding sources or in-kind contributions.
- Represents value for money and provides broad community benefit.
- Demonstrates the organisation has the capacity to effectively manage the funding and deliver the proposed outcomes.
- Contributes to increased community participation, volunteering, inclusion or organisational resilience.
- Aligns with the strategic objectives and priorities of Hay Shire Council's Community Strategic Plan

Hay Shire Council Community Grant Application

Let's get started

Thank you for your interest in applying for Hay Shire Council's Community Grants Program. This program provides one-off grants of up to $1,000 to support community-driven projects and services that benefit the residents of the Hay Shire Council area. Please read the eligibility criteria and guidelines carefully before completing your application.

Before you submit your application, you will need to provide the following information:

- **Project Proposal**, including goals, outcomes, and how the grant will be used
- **Project Budget** showing detailed expenses and income
- **Letter of Support** from key stakeholders or community members (if applicable)
- **Bank account details** for payment of the grant, if successful

Please ensure all documents are complete and accurate to avoid delays in processing your application.

Closing date: 5 pm Friday XXXX 2026.

More information: Kirstyn Thronder – (02) 6990 1100.

What is your organisation's name? Required

What is your organisation's address?

Who shall we contact about this application? Required

What is your best contact number? Required

What is your email address? Required

Does your organisation currently have any outstanding acquittals due for previous Council Community Grants? Please note: Applicants with outstanding acquittals from previous funding rounds are ineligible to apply. (Select 1 option)

- Yes
- No

About your project

Which category best suits your project? (Select 1 option) Required

- Arts and Culture
- Diversity and Harmony
- Events
- Health and Wellbeing
- Other

Please describe your project and tell us how the grant will help you. Required

Please upload letters of support from other organisations (optional).

Please attach all files to the end of this form before submitting it.

What is the total value of your project? Required

How much funding are you requesting ($1,000 maximum)? Required

How much funding is your organisation contributing? (you may include in-kind contributions) Required

If you are getting funding from other organisations, please tell us how much you are receiving and who from.

Please upload a breakdown of the budget for the funding amount you are requesting. If you have any quotes, please attach them.

Please attach all files to the end of this form before submitting it.

Project timeline

When will your project commence? Required

When will your project end? Required

You are required to submit your final report and aquittal and provide it to us within 60 days of project completion.

Tell us about key milestones and dates during the project.

Acknowledging our contribution

How will you acknowledge our contribution? Required

Bank account details for payment of grant funds

Pease provide the organisation's bank account details for the payment of the grant, if successful. Please ensure the bank account details are accurate to avoid delays in the payment process.

Account holder's name (if your project is supported by an auspiced organisation, please provide the bank account details for that organisation instead): Required

Bank name: Required

BSB number: Required *Don't include the dash.*

Account number: Required

Ready to submit?

Please return your completed form to mail@hay.nsw.gov.au or in person at your local Council office. Applications close at 5 pm on Friday XXXX 2026.

If successful in securing funding, your organisation agrees that your organisation or your auspiced organisation meets this criteria: (Select 1 or more options)

- [ ] Is a constituted, non-profit organisation, preferably incorporated. If not incorporated, the organisation must be auspiced by an incorporated association. Required
- [ ] Is based in our servicing the Hay Shire Council Local Government Area. Required
- [ ] Has public liability insurance
- [ ] Practices equal opportunity and non-discriminatory practices. Required
- [ ] Can demonstrate it is meeting a clear need in the community and not duplicating an existing service (sporting organisations excluded). Required
- [ ] Can demonstrate the capacity to make a contribution toward the cost of the project either financially or in-kind, such as through the contribution of volunteer time. Required
- [ ] Will acknowledge Hay Shire Council on media and promotional material Required
- [ ] Will complete the final report (or acquittal) for the funded project within 60 days of the project's completion. Required
- [ ] Will return unspent funds greater than 10% to council. Required
- [ ] Does not support gambling, drugs, alcohol or smoking. Required

Please sign here Required

Privacy Statement: The personal information collected on this form is used solely to provide you with the requested services and manage council activities. By submitting this form, you consent to the collection, use, and disclosure of your personal information as described in our Privacy Statement. For any privacy concerns, please contact Council's Privacy Officer.

Contact us:

(02) 6990 1100

mail@hay.nsw.gov.au

PO Box 141 Hay NSW 2711

End of form

Don't forget to attach all files before submitting this form

Community Grants Acquittal Form

The Acquittal Form provides a summary of your project, including an outline of project costs and supporting evidence of expenditure.

It consists of three components:

- **Project Evaluation Report**
- **Project Financial Statement**
- **Project Receipts**

To fulfil the requirements of the Hay Shire Council's Community Assistance Grant, you must submit the completed Project Evaluation Report, Project Financial Statement, and all relevant receipts to Hay Shire Council **within two months** of the project's completion.

Name of Project	
Grant Amount Received	
Project Commencement Date	
Project Completion Date	
Name of Organisation	
Contact Person	
Position within Organisation	
Postal Address	
Contact Numbers	W AH
Email	
Signed	
Date	

NOTE

- **Recipients of grants will not be able to apply for further funding until all outstanding grant monies are financially acquitted and reports completed.**
- **The grant money will not be used for any other purpose other than that for which the grant is awarded, unless written permission has been obtained from Hay Shire Council.**

Project Evaluation Report

Please complete answers to the following questions. If you need more space for your answers, please attach a separate sheet.

Did the project achieve its aims and objectives?

Were there any issues in relation to the time frame?

In what ways did the project benefit the community?

How did the project benefit the participants involved?

Ideally, what is your vision for this project in the future?

As the project organiser/s, what did you learn from running this project?

Project Financial Statement

Please supply details of your actual expenditure, as per grant monies received.

Financial Statement

Item	Cost	Subtotal
Total		

- For your acquittal to be complete, **it is essential to provide all project receipts as proof of expenditure.**
- Where possible please attach photos of your completed initiative

Please return completed acquittal to mail@hay.nsw.gov.au

Hay Shire Council
11 JUN 2026

BOOLIGAL SHEEP RACES

Hay shire
David webb
134 Lachlan Street
Hay N.S.W 2711

Hello

The Booligal Sheep Races committee give our thanks for your support towards our 2025 event.

Last years event was a massive success and a wonderful day was had by all involved and attending. The winner of the 2025 Sheep races was Ben 10 – raced by Ben with a time of 6.66 seconds. 0.16 seconds faster than last years winner.

We raised $13,500 to put back into our community and to donate to charities. We chose to donate to Cancer council, Can assist Hay branch, RFDS, Booligal community hall, Booligal community church and ICPA. We put majority of our profit towards the purchase of 4 split systems to be installed into the Booligal Hall. Which was complete in March 2026.

We have set the date for our next event to be Saturday 3rd of October 2026.

We would be very grateful for any sponsorship. If you have any enquires please don't hesitate to contact any of the committee members listed below.

Many Thanks

Whitney Robinson
Secretary
0458434850

Kimberley Gibbs
Treasurer/Secretary
0428476826

Neil Robinson
President
0402929759

Ed Crossley
Vice President
0427095362

Email : booligalsheepraces@outlook.com
Find us on facebook and our website

SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES 2026

GOLD SPONSOR

$500 and above in Cash or product Value

- Company Logo on flyer and website
- Naming rights to a race
- Company mentioned in all BSR media releases
- Display signage
- Auction sheep in your business name
- Free entry ticket for up to 5 people
- Free BSR stickers
- Free meal tickets for up to 5 people

SILVER SPONSOR

$200 - $499 in cash or product value

- Company logo on flyer and website
- Company mentioned in all BSR media releases
- Display signage
- Free entry for 2 people
- Free BSR sticker
- Free meal tickets for 2 people

Cheques can be made payable to Booligal Sheep Races. Please send to

Kimberley Gibbs,
Booligal Sheep Races,
386 Leonard Street
Hay N.S.W 2711

OR

Direct Deposit
BSB 633-000
ACC 1570 709 13

David Webb

From: Julie Lawrence <julielawrence100@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, 23 June 2026 6:49 PM
To: Hay Shire Council
Subject: Hay Amateur Theatre Group

To
The Hay shire Council General Manager The Mayor and Councillors,

The Hay Amateur Theatre Group have started organising the next town play which we plan to perform mid February '27.
The Play is called "The Outback Debutante Ball" and involves a town hall in the script, so the Theatre Group would like to hold this play at the Memorial Hall!
We would be looking at having rehearsal practises there once a week commencing after auditions which will be held in July.
Would there be a fee to hire the hall or would you consider that as this is an event to benefit the community the fee could be wavered?
Alternatively, depending on profits, could the Hay Amateur Theatre Group make a donation towards the hall?
How would the Theatre group be situated for insurance, would this be covered by the Shire?
How do we go about acquiring a liquor licence for BYO on the performance night?
Also, are we able to utilise the kitchen for food preparation on the night?
Look forward to hearing from you
Kind regards
Julie Lawrence
Hay Amateur Theatre Group

This email has been scanned for spam and viruses by Proofpoint Essentials. Click here to report this email as spam.

From: David Webb
To: Hay Show
Cc: Hay Shire Council; Kirstyn Thronder; Kerry McRae
Subject: RE: Hay Show Sponsorship
Date: Sunday, 12 July 2026 1:02:00 PM

Hi Jill,

Thanks for your email.

Your request will be discussed with Council, and I will advise outcome in due course.

Thank you.

David Webb
General Manager

Hay Shire Council
134 Lachlan Street
Hay NSW 2711

Ph: 02 6990 1100 **Mobile:** 0429 693 499
Values - Integrity • Openness • Responsiveness • Quality of Service

www.hay.nsw.gov.au **www.visithay.com.au**
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Views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of the Hay Shire Council.

From: Hay Show <hayshow@outlook.com>
Sent: Monday, 6 July 2026 11:14 AM
To: David Webb <DWebb@hay.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Hay Show Sponsorship

Good morning David.

A while back I dropped in a Show Sponsorship prospectus to the front counter.

I am just enquiring whether the Council had considered being a sponsor this year.

The schedule is almost ready to be printed and the committee is keen to ensure that all sponsors are recognised.

David, I would also like to ask whether it is possible to get the schedule printed at the Shire, I believe the committee did this in 2024.
The schedule is A4 size and will be 32 pages (8 A3 pages)
If this is acceptable can you please indicate a price please.

Kind regards

Jill Chapman
Secretary
0429 930691

President: Geoff Chapman 0428 930691
Treasurer: Carol Oataway
Pavilion Managers:
Felicity Maynard 0429 934028 & Heather Jackson 0439 580040

Rainbow ON THE PLAINS FESTIVAL
12-15 NOVEMBER

Dear General Manager

Welcome to a 2026 Rainbow on the Plains Festival!

Get ready for an unforgettable celebration of inclusion and diversity as the **2026 Rainbow on the Plains Festival** takes place from **12th to 15th November 2026** in the vibrant rural community of Hay, NSW.

This year, we celebrate the people who stand beside us through every chapter of our lives. We are proud to announce the theme for 2026: FAMILY.

Family is more than those we are born to, it is also the people we choose, the communities we build, and the connections that uplift and support us. This theme honours both blood and chosen families, recognising the love, acceptance, strength, and belonging they provide. Together, we celebrate the bonds that help us thrive, the allies who walk beside us, and the diverse family networks that make our community stronger.

This year's festival is set to be our biggest and most exciting yet! As we continue to explore new ideas, experiences, and opportunities to enhance the program, we're delighted to welcome back the much-loved events and attractions that have become festival favourites:

- Educational Workshops
- Launch Event
- Street Parade
- Fair Day
- Dance Party
- Pride Cup

We invite you to be a part of this journey as a sponsor or partner. Supporting the Rainbow on the Plains Festival isn't just about showcasing your brand, it's about standing alongside a powerful mission to promote love, awareness, and rural LGBTQIA+ diversity.

Here's why partnering with us is a valuable investment:

- **Direct Access to Emerging Markets**: Engage with a passionate and growing audience.
- **Community Goodwill**: Be seen as a champion of inclusion and acceptance.
- **Enhanced Brand Visibility**: Build your profile in a meaningful and impactful way.
- **Collaborative Growth**: Tailored sponsorship packages to meet your corporate goals.

Rainbow ON THE PLAINS FESTIVAL
12-15 NOVEMBER

By joining us, you'll be contributing to a festival that creates lasting memories and fosters a sense of unity and pride in the community.

The sponsorship and partnership package details, along with customisable options to meet your needs, are outlined in the accompanying document.

With your support, we can continue to educate, celebrate, and inspire through the Rainbow on the Plains Festival.

Let's make 2026 our brightest and most impactful year yet, together.

Warm regards, *The Rainbow on the Plains Team*

Support us to educate and celebrate diversity by promoting inclusion and acceptance in rural Australia!

CORPORATE SPONSOR

Investment: $19,000

- Festival naming rights
- Corporate experience - Corporate catering and seating where applicable
- Premium promotion on all social media, website and printed media
- Premium promotion - Media wall, banners and posters
- VIP launch event invitation - 10 tickets
- Meet & greet with performers
- Fair Day stall site
- Accommodation - 5 rooms (Twin share) up to 10 people
- Parade entry
- 20 tickets to all Rainbow on the Plains held events

PLATINUM SPONSOR

Investment: $10,000

- Saturday night hosting and naming rights
- Premium promotion on all social media, website and printed media
- Premium promotion - Media wall, banners and posters
- VIP launch event invitation - 8 tickets
- Meet & greet with performers
- Fair Day stall site
- Accommodation - 3 rooms (Twin share) up to 6 people
- Parade entry
- 10 adult tickets and unlimited kids tickets to all Rainbow on the Plains held events

GOLD SPONSOR

Investment: $5,000

- Elevated promotion on all social media, website and printed media
- Elevated promotion - Media wall, banners and posters
- VIP launch event invitation - 2 tickets
- Meet & greet with performers where possible
- Fair Day stall site
- Accommodation - 2 rooms (twin share) up to 4 people
- Parade entry
- 4 tickets to all Rainbow on the Plains held events

SILVER SPONSOR

Investment: $3,000

- Promotion on all social media and website
- Promotion - Media wall, banners and posters
- VIP launch event invitation - 2 tickets
- Fair Day stall site
- Parade entry
- 2 tickets to all Rainbow on the Plains held events

BRONZE SPONSOR

Investment: $1,900

- Promotion on all social media and website
- Promotion - Media wall, banners and posters
- Fair Day Stall Entry
- Parade Entry
- 2 tickets to Saturday night event

COMMUNITY SPONSOR

Investment: $500

- Promotion on all social media and website
- Promotion - Media wall, banners and posters

C2 – Swimming Pool Management

REPORTING OFFICER	General Manager
ATTACHMENTS	- Nil

INTRODUCTION

Report on the management of the swimming pool for the upcoming season.

COMMENTARY

As reported to the October 2025 meeting, the construction of the new John Houston Memorial Swimming Pool was progressing well and opened December 2025. The new facility is most definitely the jewel in the crown for the community.

The new pool, while largely automated, still requires daily supervision, maintenance and attention. It has been found that chemical use and manhours is more than anticipated, however, electricity use and water consumption is less than expected. While the pool has a winter run mode, it still requires regular care.

The cost to run the pool for the upcoming season is budgeted for $382,000. This is in line with the final cost from the 2025/26 year.

Council is required to determine how it wishes to manage the swimming pool for the upcoming season.

As reported in 2022, Council has, for quite some time, managed the pool with its own staff. The last time this was reviewed prior to 2022 was in 2012 where Council resolved to continue managing the pool with its own staff. Experience has shown that this may not be the most cost-effective solution. In addition, Council has had difficulty in obtaining casual pool staff. This is a common problem across rural LGA's with many councils' reporting difficulty in attracting staff or contractors to manage their local pools. For the 25/26 season, Council operated the pool in-house with its own staff.

The John Houston Memorial Swimming Pool is free of charge and operated the following supervised hours last season:

Tuesday - 3pm to 6pm
Other Weekdays - 3pm to 7pm
Saturday and Sunday - 12pm to 7pm

There is no plan to reduce the opening hours or implement an entry fee for the upcoming season.

With the new pool build having heating, it is proposed that the pools be open for six months (26 weeks). Accordingly, any retainer for a contractor is recommended to be set at $80,000 for the season. It is suggested, weather permitting, the pool opens at the October 2026 long weekend (Saturday 3rd October 2026) and closes Easter 2027 (Monday 29th March 2027).

Last season the staff ran a booking system for swimming lessons, and this seemed to work well.

Regardless of whether the pool is operated in-house or by contract, other than employing pool lifeguards, there are other activities that would need to be managed include:

- Cleaning of the pools
- Testing/monitoring/backwashing of the pool water
- Cleaning of the amenities and site
- Mowing of the site

Having the management and lifeguarding back in house requires a minimum of 60 hours/week of staff time. Allowing for casual lifeguards, supervision and mowing, its is estimated that it would cost Council $190,000 for the season, in lieu of $80,000 for a contractor.

Towards the end of the 25/26 season, staff had the unsupervised entry system operational. This was well received by the community. For the John Houston Memorial Swimming Pool, the unsupervised 7am to 7pm seven days a week, with lifeguards on duty (supervision) as follows:

3pm to 7pm – Monday to Friday; except Tuesdays being 3pm to 6pm

12pm to 7pm – Saturday and Sunday, school holidays and public holidays (except Christmas Day and Boxing Day)

Staff are required to be on site 6am to 8am, as well as 7pm to 8pm each day for cleaning and water monitoring, as well managing the splash park facility. The mowing and other activities would occur during the day during the unsupervised periods, with the new robotic mowers certainly improving the efficiency. The pools would be available to morning swimmers from 7am unsupervised.

It is proposed to run the unsupervised pool entry system as was at the end of last season.

Options for the swimming pool management to consider are:

1. Employ staff to manage the pool complex as it has in the past, where a minimum of three casuals is typically required to service the season.
2. Advertise an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a contractor to manage the complex during the season (this could be a local family or group/organisation).
3. Have the pool unsupervised. This would be at a high risk, and Council would still need to undertake the cleaning of the pools & amenities, water testing and control, and mowing.
4. Combination of Options 1 or 2 above with Option 3. Staff feel this would be the preferred option and provide an increased availability of the new pools to the public.

It should also be noted that failure to attract either a contractor or staff could result in the pool not opening at the commencement of the upcoming season.

Additionally, Council leased the pool canteen to Mara On Food last season, which was a great success. It is recommended that Mara On Food be given a two-year lease (2026/27 and 2027/28 seasons), on the same commercial arrangement as last season, to provide some continuity of service to the community.

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Social** 1.2 Recreational, Civic Spaces, and Infrastructure that meet community needs 1.2.1 Enhance public recreation areas and facilities 1.2.2 Placemaking with purpose 1.2.3 Deliver infrastructure that are responsive to the community's needs

	1.2.4 Create a safe, inclusive, and resilient community where all members feel secure, supported, and empowered to thrive **Environmental** 2.1 Council is resilient and adaptive 2.1.1 Council considers climate change resilience in our services, and the maintenance and management of our buildings, public spaces and infrastructure. 2.1.2 Foster sustainable energy solutions and practices to reduce Council's footprint. 2.1.3 Climate change risks and opportunities are embedded in our decision making process. 2.3 Celebrate and Promote our unique natural environment 2.2.3 Implement sustainable and eco friendly tourism initiatives 2.4 Enhance the built environment 2.4.1 Maintain and beautify urban areas. 2.4.3 Provision of sustainable infrastructure that is adaptive to changing needs, suitability, betterment and funding levels. **Economic** 3.2 Our community values its history and tourism 3.2.1 Increase tourism and visitor spend 3.2.4 Showcase our open space, recreation and cultural facilities **Civic Leadership** 4.1 Our Council leads by example 4.1.1 Implement and promote best practice governance 4.1.2 Monitor and evaluate Council's strategic planning documents 4.1.3 Be environmentally responsible in decision making 4.1.4 Council will seek to continuously improve 4.2 Our community is supported by a strong and resilient Council that is responsive to its needs 4.2.1 Provide an advocacy role on behalf of the community 4.2.2 Inform and empower community input into decision making 4.2.3 Our community has access to Council information, services and facilities 4.3 Our Council is inclusive and sustainable 4.3.1 Enable an engaged workforce with suitable skills, available in the right place at the right time 4.3.2 Build a strong, collaborative, and supportive team culture 4.3.3 Ensure a financially sound Council that is responsible and sustainable
FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	Moderate -- Council's adjusted pool operations and maintenance budget for 2025/26 is $389,000, which included pre-opening staff expenses - Council's pool operations and maintenance budget for 2026/27 is $382,000 - Cost per day to keep open - $1,800
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Local Government Act 1993

POLICY IMPLICATION	Asset Management Policy and Strategy John Houston Memorial Swimming Pool Master Plan Risk Management Policy Signs as Remote Supervision Policy
ASSET IMPLICATION	Major – the new swimming pool complex will be one of Council's largest single assets
RISK IMPLICATION	Moderate – reputational and safety

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

(a) Notes the information provided in the report;

(b) Determines if it wishes to manage the swimming pool for the 2026/27 season internally (own staff) or externally (contractor); and

(c) Awards the lease of the pool canteen for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 seasons to 'Mara On Food' and authorises the General Manager to execute the lease accordingly.

C3 - Circulars and other Government Correspondence

REPORTING OFFICER	General Manager
ATTACHMENTS	*(i) Letter from LPO Group, dated 24th July 2026 + TOR – Senate Inquiry Australia Post retail network + Council submission to the inquiry, dated 5th August 2026* *(ii) LGNSW Member Message – Royalties for Renewables, dated 29th July 2026 + Clean Energy Council Report – Renewables Resources Payments* *(iii) Atom Consulting – Hay Shire Council Strategic Planning Gap Analysis Report, August 2026* *(iv) Paper – Depreciation: The difference between looking sustainable and being sustainable; Mr Terry Todds, General Manager, Balranald Shire Council; dated July 2026* *(v) Media Release – Minister Aitchison: Draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan, dated 28th July 2026 + Draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan + Council submission on the draft Plan, dated 14 August 2026* *(vi) NSW Legislative Council – Final Report – Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in NSW, dated July 2026* *(vii) Letter from NSW Government Local Government Remuneration Tribunal, dated 3rd August 2026* *(viii) NSW DPHI – State Land Use Plan, dated August 2026* *(ix) Letter from Minister Hoenig – Joint Organisation Framework, received 18th August 2026 + Copy of Council's submission dated 27th February 2026* *(x) Submission from Balranald Shire Council – Asset Valuation, Depreciation and Financial sustainability in NSW Local Government, dated 17th August 2026 + Copy of Council's submission dated 27th July 2026* *(xi) Submission from Balranald Shire Council - Government's proposed reforms to Australia's disaster management system, dated 17th August 2026 and Council's submission, dated 17th August 2026 and Disaster Management Reform Team response.* *(xii) OLG Circular 26-15 – Elections for mayors, dated 19th August 2026* *(xiii) OLG Circular 26-16 - New privacy protections under the Electoral Funding Act 2018, dated 19th August 2026*

INTRODUCTION

Update on various Office of Local Government (OLG) Circulars and other Government advice.

COMMENTARY

Various Office of Local Government (OLG) Circulars and other NSW Government advice have been recently provided to Council:

(i) Letter from LPO Group, dated 24th July 2026 + TOR – Senate Inquiry Australia Post retail network + Council submission to the inquiry, dated 5th August 2026

Council received correspondence from LPO Group advising of the Senate inquiry into the Australia Post retail network, including matters concerning the future sustainability and accessibility of Australia Post's Licensed Post Office (LPO) network, particularly in regional and rural communities.

The correspondence highlighted concerns regarding the ongoing viability of LPOs and the important role these businesses play in providing essential postal, banking and other services to communities where alternative service providers may not be readily available. The inquiry provides an opportunity to consider the broader impacts of changes to Australia Post's retail network on regional and rural communities.

LPO Group encouraged local councils to make submissions to the inquiry, recognising that councils are well placed to identify the community impacts associated with changes to local postal services.

In response, Council made a submission to the Senate inquiry (copy attached), supporting the importance of maintaining accessible and sustainable Australia Post retail services in regional communities. The submission highlighted the essential role of postal services in supporting residents, businesses, government services and community connectivity, particularly in communities such as Hay where there are limited alternative service options.

Council also emphasised that decisions regarding the Australia Post retail network should consider the specific circumstances of regional and rural communities and should not be based solely on population or transaction volumes. Maintaining an accessible local postal service is important to regional liveability, economic activity and social connection.

Council thanked LPO Group for bringing the inquiry to Council's attention and for providing the opportunity for local government to contribute to the review.

(ii) LGNSW Member Message – Royalties for Renewables, dated 29th July 2026 + Clean Energy Council Report – Renewables Resources Payments

Council has received a Local Government NSW (LGNSW) Members Message regarding the Royalties for Renewables campaign and the Clean Energy Council's report calling for a renewable resources payment to ensure regional communities benefit from the transition to renewable energy.

The Clean Energy Council has advocated for the establishment of a renewable resources payment to provide a direct and ongoing financial return to regional communities hosting renewable energy infrastructure. The proposal recognises that regional communities accommodate significant renewable energy developments and associated infrastructure, while also experiencing impacts associated with construction, increased freight movements, land use, roads and other local infrastructure.

The report argues that a dedicated payment mechanism would provide greater certainty that the economic benefits of renewable energy development are shared with the communities hosting these projects. It also identifies the need for investment in regional infrastructure and community priorities to support the long-term sustainability and liveability of renewable energy regions.

The issue is particularly relevant to Hay given the significant renewable energy development occurring within and surrounding the South West Renewable Energy Zone. Council continues to advocate for appropriate funding and benefit-sharing arrangements that recognise the infrastructure demands and cumulative impacts experienced by host communities.

(iii) Atom Consulting – Hay Shire Council Strategic Planning Gap Analysis Report, July 2026

The NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) engaged Atom Consulting, in partnership with Stantec, to assess the maturity of how Local Water Utilities (LWUs) in Western NSW plan for water and sewerage services.
This project supports the broader work being progressed by DCCEEW in response to the Productivity and Equality Commission's (PEC) 2024 review of funding models for LWUs. Both the PEC and DCCEEW have highlighted that robust, evidence-based strategic planning is important for managing risk and supporting targeted funding decisions.
As part of this work, a strategic planning gap analysis was completed for Hay Shire Council (HSC). The gap analysis assessed the maturity of HSC's strategic planning for water supply and sewerage services against Section 3 of the Regulatory Assurance Framework (RAF), which sets out DCCEEW's expectations for effective strategic planning by LWUs.
The assessment considered HSC's systems, processes and information across the 12 RAF strategic planning outcomes, taking into account HSC's operating context, scale, resources and risk profile.
This report documents the findings of the gap analysis and identifies targeted recommendations and improvement opportunities to support HSC in strengthening its strategic planning capability, with the key findings:

1. Strengths and positive findings include a sound strategic planning foundation through the Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) Strategy, supporting studies and the Local Water Utility (LWU) Strategic Plan. Council has also developed a range of supporting plans, including the Financial Sustainability Strategy, Climate Resilience Infrastructure Plan and Net Zero Plan.
2. The review recognised Council's strong operational knowledge and experience, particularly in identifying water security and water quality risks, supported by modelling and evidence-based analysis. Council's innovative use of its workforce benefit program was also highlighted as a positive example of supporting employee motivation and retention.
3. Key risks and challenges include the need to update and embed the Drinking Water Management System (DWMS), strengthen compliance tracking, and address water security given the vulnerability of the source water and absence of an alternative supply.
4. Financial sustainability remains a challenge due to future operating and infrastructure costs, a small customer base and limited capacity to achieve full cost recovery. Current user charges are insufficient to fund full lifecycle asset costs, potentially affecting the timely renewal and upgrade of infrastructure.
5. In relation to asset management, the review noted Council's strong operational understanding of asset condition but limited preventative maintenance, with some assets managed on a run-to-failure basis. Greater consideration of asset criticality, risk, service levels and whole-of-life costs would strengthen investment decisions.
6. Workforce capacity and knowledge management were also identified as challenges, particularly limited access to skilled staff and reliance on key individuals with significant undocumented operational knowledge. Strengthening knowledge capture, documentation and succession planning will help manage these risks.

Staff are engaging with the Department on addressing the gaps, which will include the recent funding received for a shared resource with Carrathool, Lachlan, Balranald and Wentworth councils.

(iv) Paper – Depreciation: The difference between looking sustainable and being sustainable; Mr Terry Todds, General Manager, Balranald Shire Council; dated July 2026

A paper has been prepared by Mr Terry Doods, General Manager of Balranald Shire Council, titled "Depreciation – The Difference Between Looking Sustainable and Being Sustainable."

The paper provides an insightful examination of the treatment and significance of depreciation within local government financial reporting and, importantly, the distinction between an organisation appearing financially sustainable and actually being financially sustainable.

The paper is particularly relevant to local government given the significant value of infrastructure assets managed by councils and the long-term financial implications of maintaining and renewing those assets. It provides an accessible explanation of how depreciation can influence reported financial performance and highlights the importance of understanding what financial statements are telling councils about the true cost of maintaining community assets over their useful lives.

The paper is considered both educational and thought-provoking, presenting a complex financial management issue in an engaging and entertaining manner. It provides useful commentary for Councillors in considering the relationship between depreciation, asset management, operating results and long-term financial sustainability.

The author supports the commentary and observations contained within the paper and considers it a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion regarding financial sustainability in local government.

(v) Media Release – Minister Aitchison: Draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan, dated 28th July 2026 + Draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan + Council submission on the draft Plan, dated August 2026

The NSW Government has released the Draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan (SRITP) for public comment. This is an important plan for Hay because the decisions made through this 20-year strategy will influence how our community connects with the rest of the region, access essential services and supports our local economy well into the future.

Hay is one of the region's significant transport hubs, located at the intersection of three highways and within the South West Renewable Energy Zone. Our agricultural industries, businesses, residents and visitors all rely on safe, reliable and efficient transport networks.

Council has prepared a detailed submission (copy attached) supporting the overall direction of the Draft Plan while seeking stronger recognition of Hay's particular needs.

One of our highest priorities is the Hay Bridge. The existing bridge is limited to approximately 68.5 tonnes and cannot accommodate High Productivity Vehicles (HPV). This creates inefficiencies for freight operators and adds to transport costs. Council has requested that upgrading the bridge to a 160-tonne HPV standard be identified as a strategic priority. This would improve freight productivity, strengthen north-south connectivity and better support both agriculture and the increasing freight task associated with the SW REZ.

We have also called for greater investment in the Sturt, Cobb and Mid-Western Highways including additional overtaking opportunities, wider sealed shoulders, improved heavy vehicle rest areas and intersection improvements. Network resilience is another important issue, particularly following the prolonged highway closures experienced during the 2022 floods.

Transport disadvantage remains a significant issue for Hay. Council supports the improved TrainLink service to Wagga Wagga but is seeking better connections south, including a day-return service between Hay and Echuca. We have also requested expanded eligibility and funding for Community Transport and consideration of restoring rail operations to Hay.

Importantly, Council has also highlighted the cumulative impact of increased heavy vehicle movements associated with the SW REZ and the need for appropriate State investment so that local communities are not left carrying the cost of this additional freight task.

(vi) NSW Legislative Council – Final Report – Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in NSW, dated July 2026

The NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee's final report into the impacts of Renewable Energy Zones is advisory in nature and does not directly implement any changes to the delivery of the South West REZ. The report makes 16 recommendations to the NSW Government aimed at strengthening governance, cumulative impact management, community consultation, local government resourcing, benefit sharing and landholder protections. Implementation of these recommendations is subject to the NSW Government's formal response and acceptance of the recommendations.

(vii) Letter from NSW Government Local Government Remuneration Tribunal, dated 3rd August 2026

Council has received correspondence from the NSW Government Local Government Remuneration Tribunal, dated 3 August 2026.

The correspondence relates to the Tribunal's ongoing responsibilities concerning the categorisation and remuneration of elected local government officials in NSW and provides information relevant to councils in relation to the Tribunal's deliberations and processes.

The correspondence is provided to Council for information and consideration.

(viii) NSW DPHI – State Land Use Plan, dated August 2026

The NSW Government has released the State Land Use Plan and Sydney Plan, which are the first plans finalised under the NSW Government's new strategic planning framework.

The State Land Use Plan establishes a new three-tier strategic planning framework for NSW, providing the overarching direction for four regional plans and, subsequently, local strategic plans. The framework has been informed by feedback from councils, industry, peak bodies and the community, with particular emphasis on recognising local priorities, providing clear implementation guidance and supporting effective governance at an appropriate scale.

The next Regional NSW Plan will be developed at a subregional scale, recognising that many planning and infrastructure issues extend across multiple local government areas. The draft Regional NSW Plan is expected to be released for public exhibition in 2027, aligned with the five-year review cycle for existing regional plans. Existing regional plans will remain in effect while the new plan is being developed.

Council staff have been involved in regular discussions and ongoing engagement with Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) staff throughout the development of the new planning framework. This has included providing input into the preparation of the Local Government Narrative for Hay Shire and discussions regarding regional priorities and potential growth and development opportunities.

DPHI has advised that further engagement with councils, government agencies and key stakeholders will occur over the coming months as the evidence base is developed and the structure and content of the draft Regional NSW Plan are refined. Council will have further opportunities to provide input and ensure the Plan appropriately reflects the circumstances, priorities and opportunities of regional communities, including those within Hay Shire.

(ix) *Letter from Minister Hoenig – Joint Organisation Framework, received 18th August 2026 + Copy of Council's submission dated 27th February 2026*

Minister Hoenig has written to Council providing an update on the review of the Joint Organisation (JO) framework. It is welcoming to read that he is considering feedback regarding the impost of ARIC's on JO's. This was included in our letter to the Minister following the February 2026 ordinary meeting resolution to rejoin RAMJO (copy attached).

(x) *Submission from Balranald Shire Council – Asset Valuation, Depreciation and Financial sustainability in NSW Local Government, dated 17th August 2026 + Copy of Council's submission dated 27th July 2026*

The Office of Local Government (OLG) has released a Discussion Paper seeking feedback on the future methodology for valuing local government assets in NSW, following the NSW Government's response to the 2024 Legislative Council Inquiry into councils' ability to fund infrastructure and services. The review will consider whether the current fair value revaluation model remains appropriate or whether councils should transition to a cost model or adopt a mixed valuation approach for different asset classes.

The review is significant for local government as asset valuations directly influence financial reporting requirements under the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting, including annual depreciation expenses.

Hay Shire Council welcomes the review. Over the past five years, Council's annual depreciation expense has increased from approximately $3 million to more than $5 million, largely as a result of increases in asset valuations. Staff consider that the current fair value methodology is not always appropriate for local government, as the majority of council infrastructure assets, particularly roads, which represent Council's largest asset class, are held to provide community services rather than for sale. As these assets cannot realistically be sold, fair value does not necessarily reflect their purpose or use.

Staff consider that a Option 3 – Mixed Approach valuation model would provide a more appropriate and practical basis for valuing local government infrastructure assets and will prepare a submission supporting this approach. Submissions from Balranald Shire Council and Council are attached for information.

(xi) *Submission from Balranald Shire Council - Government's proposed reforms to Australia's disaster management system, dated 17th August 2026 and Council's submission, dated 17th August 2026 and Disaster Management Reform Team response.*

The Australian Government is undertaking reforms to Australia's disaster management and recovery funding arrangements following findings from the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (Colvin Review), which identified increasing complexity within the current system and highlighted the growing reliance on local government to deliver disaster recovery works.

The proposed new Disaster Recovery Funding Framework (DRFF) aims to improve national consistency, simplify administrative processes, reduce duplication and better target recovery assistance. The reforms will not alter Council's direct financial responsibilities, with councils not required to contribute funding into the disaster recovery funding arrangements under either the current or proposed framework.

A key proposed change is the introduction of a 50:50 cost-sharing arrangement between the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments for eligible disaster recovery costs. Under the current arrangements, Commonwealth and State funding is generally provided on a 65:35 split (Commonwealth:State) for eligible recovery costs. The proposed shift to an equal partnership model has received significant concern and advocacy from local government, with concerns that any reduction in Commonwealth funding responsibility may place additional

pressure on State budgets and potentially flow through to local government in the form of increased administrative responsibilities or reduced support.

Other proposed changes include:

- A simplified funding threshold based on the total cost of an event across an impacted State or Territory, rather than individual Local Government Areas, allowing earlier access to Commonwealth assistance.
- Introduction of standardised assistance categories and recovery packages to improve consistency and clarity for disaster-affected communities.
- Establishment of a Resilient Infrastructure Scheme to support reconstruction of damaged essential public assets, including potential funding of up to 15% additional cost to rebuild assets to more resilient standards (build back better) where criteria are met.
- Tailored support arrangements for First Nations communities and flexibility for exceptional circumstances following severe or catastrophic events.

The Australian Government has also reaffirmed its commitment to disaster resilience and preparedness through the Disaster Ready Fund, with up to $1 billion committed over five years to 2028 for projects that reduce disaster risk and strengthen community resilience. Additional investment continues in national emergency capabilities, including aerial firefighting, bushfire intelligence, emergency information services and warning systems.

The proposed reforms may provide benefits through clearer recovery funding arrangements and streamlined administrative processes following disaster events. However, Council should remain engaged through Local Government NSW and regional advocacy channels regarding the proposed 50:50 funding model, particularly given Hay Shire's exposure to significant natural hazards, including flooding, and the importance of ensuring disaster recovery costs remain appropriately shared between all levels of government.

Any future changes should ensure local governments retain sufficient resourcing and support to undertake their critical role in disaster preparedness, response and recovery without transferring additional financial or administrative burden to rural councils.

Staff have completed the LGNSW survey and attended the online workshop. A copy of Balranald Shire council's submission is attached for information and Council echoed and agreed with Mr Dodds summation and comments, and asked that this be very carefully considered before the proposed framework is finalised.

(xii) *OLG Circular 26-15 – Elections for mayors, dated 19th August 2026*

OLG has provided a circular reminding councils to conduct the mayoral elections in September 2026, as well as for deputy mayor, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993. This will be the first order of business at the ordinary meeting to be held 22nd September 2026.

(xiii) *OLG Circular 26-16 - New privacy protections under the Electoral Funding Act 2018, dated 19th August 2026*

To protect the privacy and security of political participants, section 22 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018 (EF Act) has been amended to prohibit the NSW Electoral Commission from publishing residential addresses contained in disclosures of reportable political donations if the donor is a current or previous registered candidate or elected member of a local council or the NSW Parliament.

Councils should review the register of current disclosures of political donations maintained under section 328A of the Local Government Act 1993 (the LG Act) and published on their websites under Schedule 1 of the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018

(GIPA Regulation) to ensure it does not disclose the residential address of any registered candidate or elected member.
Councils are required under section 328A of the LG Act to keep a register of copies of current declarations of disclosures of political donations lodged with the NSW Electoral Commission by or on behalf of councillors of the council concerned. The Office of Local Government (OLG) has previously advised that councils can comply with the requirement under section 328A of the LG Act and the GIPA Regulation by publishing a link on their website to the NSW Electoral Commission's disclosures publication website.

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Civic Leadership** 4.1 Our Council leads by example 4.1.1 Implement and promote best practice governance 4.1.2 Monitor and evaluate Council's strategic planning documents 4.1.3 Be environmentally responsible in decision making 4.1.4 Council will seek to continuously improve 4.2 Our community is supported by a strong and resilient Council that is responsive to its needs 4.2.1 Provide an advocacy role on behalf of the community 4.2.2 Inform and empower community input into decision making 4.2.3 Our community has access to Council information, services and facilities 4.3 Our Council is inclusive and sustainable 4.3.1 Enable an engaged workforce with suitable skills, available in the right place at the right time 4.3.2 Build a strong, collaborative, and supportive team culture 4.3.3 Ensure a financially sound Council that is responsible and sustainable
FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	Minor
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Local Government act 1993 Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 Companion Animals Act 1998
POLICY IMPLICATION	Nil
ASSET IMPLICATION	Nil
RISK IMPLICATION	Minimal

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the information provided in the report.

LPO Group
Connecting Licensees

PO Box 4195
SHELLHARBOUR NSW 2529
www.lpogroup.com.au
1300 543 258

24 July 2026

The General Manager
Hay Shire Council
PO Box 141
Hay NSW 2711

Dear General Manager,

I am writing to you as Chair of LPO Group, the national body representing the interests of owners of Licensed Post Offices across Australia.

In 2023, your organisation made a submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee's inquiry into bank closures in regional Australia. That submission set out, in clear terms, what happens to a community when access to essential face-to-face services disappears. The same issue is now in front of the Senate again, this time in relation to Australia Post's retail network. Your local post office.

The Senate Environment and Communications References Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into Australia Post's retail network. The parallels with the bank closures inquiry are very obvious. Australia Post has decided to walk away from its history of providing community services and remake itself as a parcel carrier. That decision is being felt in communities right now. Products and services are being stripped out of post offices one by one. Full-service outlets, the ones that have offered a range of postal, government, identity and financial services in the past, are being replaced by limited-service Parcel Agents offering none of these services.

As you know, the impact falls hardest on the people who rely on that counter being there. Older Australians, people with disability, newly arrived Australians, and anyone without reliable internet lose access to face-to-face banking, government transactions and identity verification that cannot be done online. That group also includes people who do not trust their personal information or important transactions to an app or a website, and with scams and deepfakes becoming harder to detect as AI improves, that is a growing and entirely reasonable position, not a niche one. Around 1,150 post offices are already the last banking service in their community. When one of those closes, you and I know that access does not move somewhere else. It disappears. And this is no longer only a regional and remote problem. Growing outer urban areas are increasingly becoming retail service deserts of their own, losing the same face-to-face access that regional communities have been fighting to keep. This is the same story your organisation told the Committee in 2023, playing out again in a different local outlet, the Post Office.

In response, our Licensees, people who have run these businesses and lived in these communities for years, have proposed their own solution: Australia's Front Counter. This plan, created by Licensees, aims to bring vital services back to towns and suburbs that have lost them. The idea is for post offices to become the main place where people can access face-to-face services from government agencies, banks, insurers, utilities, councils, and other groups that no longer have a local presence. It builds on the post office's existing role, using the trusted buildings, trained staff, and community relationships already in place. A key part of this solution is to expand the current Bank@Post service so that it provides a more complete range of banking services, not just basic ATM functions.

Part of that plan is opening the network to third-party parcel carriers, rather than Australia Post trying to compete against them. We think of it as the NBN for parcels. Australia Post and the local post office would earn revenue from the additional parcel volume carried by other providers, instead of competing directly against them in a low-margin, high-capital-cost parcel market. It turns a race to the bottom into a growing, largely capital-free service business for

Australia Post and its Licensees. For communities, an open network also means more choice and lower delivery prices, and a trusted local outlet that stays viable because it is doing more, not less. It keeps a face-to-face service point open in places that are losing everything else.

This goes to the heart of what your submission to the bank closures inquiry was about, and it goes to the heart of what this Committee has been asked to examine. Its terms of reference specifically invite evidence on alternative business models to support the sustainability of Australia Post's retail network, and on the crucial role Licensed Post Offices play in supporting local communities.

Given the strength and relevance of your earlier submission, I would ask that you **consider making a further submission to this inquiry.** Your voice carries weight with the Committee, and the case you made in 2023 applies with equal force here.

Submissions close on 7 August 2026. I know this does not leave much time, and I am sorry for that. Further information on the inquiry, including how to lodge a submission, is available on our website at https://lpogroup.com.au/senate-inquiry-community/.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further, and to provide any information that would help in preparing a submission and can be reached at 0408 726 722.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Etherington
Chair
LPO Group

Australia Post retail network

Committee: Environment and Communications References Committee
Date referred: 24 June 2026
Submissions close: 7 August 2026
Reporting date: 12 October 2026

Terms of reference

On 24 June 2026 the following matter was referred for inquiry and report:

Management of, and plans for, Australia Post's retail network, with particular reference to:

1. Australia Post's engagement with licensees, representative bodies, shareholder ministers and other stakeholders about these plans;
2. the governance, transparency and decision-making processes underpinning those plans;
3. the crucial role that licensed post offices play in delivering services to support local communities, particularly in regional, rural and remote Australia;
4. alternative business models to support the sustainability of Australia Post's retail network;
5. the adequacy of Australia Post's evidence to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee at the 2026-27 Budget estimates' hearing on 27 May 2026;
6. and any other related matters.

Committee Secretariat contact:

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Phone: +61 2 6277 3526
ec.sen@aph.gov.au

- Environment and Communications

Track Inquiry

Inquiry Status

Accepting Submissions

Upload Submission

How to make a submission

The committee invites individuals and organisations to send in their opinions and proposals in writing (submissions)

- Preparing a submission to an inquiry

Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring that everyone who wishes to can participate in the Committee's inquiry. If you have accessibility requirements, please contact the Committee Secretariat.

Further information regarding accessibility can be found at www.aph.gov.au/Help/Accessibility
Top

Australia Post Retail Network

Hay Shire Council

Submission

5th August 2026

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: Via Online Portal Australia Post retail network – Parliament of Australia
ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Re: Senate Inquiry – Australia Post Retail Network

Dear Committee Secretary,

Hay Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications inquiry into the management of, and plans for, Australia Post's retail network.

1. Hay Shire Council Introduction

The Hay Shire is a rural community with a population of approximately 3,000 people, comprising the township of Hay and the villages of Booligal and Maude. The Shire is located on the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Rivers and is surrounded by extensive dryland and irrigated agricultural industries.

Council has a strong interest in maintaining access to essential face-to-face services for regional communities. The experience of regional Australia following the withdrawal of banking services provides a clear example of the social and economic impacts that occur when trusted local service points disappear. The same concerns now apply to the future sustainability of Australia Post's retail network.

Council makes comment on the current extent of Australia Post's retail network, with particular reference to:

(a) Australia Post's engagement with licensees, representative bodies, shareholder ministers and other stakeholders about these plans;
(b) the governance, transparency and decision-making processes underpinning those plans;
(c) the crucial role that licensed post offices play in delivering services to support local communities, particularly in regional, rural and remote Australia;
(d) alternative business models to support the sustainability of Australia Post's retail network

2. Australia Post's engagement with licensees, representative bodies, shareholder ministers and other stakeholders

Council encourages the Committee to examine the effectiveness and adequacy of Australia Post's engagement with Licensed Post Office (LPO) operators, representative bodies, shareholder Ministers, local communities and other stakeholders regarding proposed changes to the retail network.

Licensed Post Offices are the primary face of Australia Post in many regional, rural and remote communities. LPO operators have extensive local knowledge and a strong understanding of the needs of their communities and should be recognised as key stakeholders in decisions that affect the future sustainability and accessibility of the network.

Any proposed changes to service models, product availability or outlet classifications should be subject to genuine, timely and meaningful consultation with those directly affected. Engagement should extend beyond informing stakeholders of decisions already made and should provide an opportunity for LPO operators, communities and representative organisations to contribute to the development of sustainable solutions.

Council is concerned that reducing the role of full-service outlets without comprehensive consultation risks overlooking the broader community value provided by LPOs, including their role in supporting vulnerable residents, local businesses and government service delivery.

A collaborative approach between Australia Post, LPO operators, government and communities is required to ensure future reforms strengthen the network, maintain accessibility and recognise the important social infrastructure role performed by local post offices.

3. Governance, transparency and decision-making processes

Council encourages the Committee to consider whether the governance arrangements, transparency and decision-making processes supporting Australia Post's retail network plans adequately reflect the organisation's broader community service obligations.

While Council acknowledges Australia Post operates within a changing commercial environment, including increased competition in parcel delivery and changing consumer behaviours, decisions regarding the retail network should not be based solely on short-term financial considerations. The social and economic impacts on communities, particularly regional, rural and remote communities, must also be considered.

The evidence, analysis and assumptions underpinning proposed changes should be transparent and clearly communicated to affected stakeholders. This should include information regarding the anticipated impacts on service accessibility, vulnerable community members, regional economies and the long-term viability of Licensed Post Offices.

Council supports decision-making processes that incorporate independent assessment of regional impacts and consideration of alternative business models before reducing or removing local services. Any changes should demonstrate that Australia Post has considered options to improve sustainability while maintaining essential face-to-face services.

Licensed Post Offices represent significant community infrastructure, built over many years through trusted relationships, local knowledge and established facilities. Governance processes should ensure

these assets are protected and that decisions balance commercial sustainability with Australia Post's important role in supporting communities across Australia.

4. The crucial role of Licensed Post Offices in regional communities

The Hay Post Office provides a critical community service well beyond traditional postal functions. It is a trusted local service point that provides residents, businesses and community organisations with access to banking services, identity verification, passport services, government transactions and other essential face-to-face services.

Following the closure of Westpac in Hay, Council has experienced first-hand the consequences of reduced local banking services. Council staff attend the Hay Post Office on a regular basis to undertake banking transactions associated with Council operations. This demonstrates that Australia Post's retail network is not only important for individuals and households but also for local businesses, community organisations and government agencies.

The withdrawal of face-to-face services disproportionately impacts vulnerable members of the community, including older Australians, people with disability, people with limited digital literacy, newly arrived Australians and residents without reliable internet access. For these groups, online alternatives are often not a practical replacement.

Digital services are an important tool; however, they should complement rather than replace accessible face-to-face services. Digital connectivity, affordability and confidence using technology are not evenly distributed across Australia, particularly in regional and remote communities.

5. Impact of reducing Australia Post retail services

Council is concerned that reducing the range of services available through Licensed Post Offices risks creating another form of regional service desert, similar to the impact experienced following bank branch closures.

When a bank branch closes or essential services are removed from a community, access does not simply relocate, it disappears. Residents are often required to travel significant distances, rely on family or friends, or attempt to navigate increasingly complex online systems without adequate support.

For older and vulnerable residents, the ability to speak with a trusted person face-to-face is essential. Identity verification, government transactions, banking assistance and other services frequently require confidence, support and human interaction that cannot be replicated through an app, website or automated service.

6. Australia Post's engagement and future business model

Council encourages the Committee to closely examine Australia Post's engagement with Licensed Post Offices, representative bodies, shareholder Ministers and affected communities when considering future changes to the retail network.

The future sustainability of Australia Post should not be considered solely through the lens of parcel delivery and commercial efficiency. Licensed Post Offices represent an established community network with trusted staff, existing infrastructure and strong local relationships.

Council supports consideration of alternative business models that maintain and expand the role of Licensed Post Offices as community service hubs. The proposal for "Australia's Front Counter", developed by LPO Group, provides a practical opportunity to build on existing infrastructure by enabling post offices to deliver a broader range of government, banking, insurance, utility and community services.

Expanding the role of services such as Bank@Post would also provide greater access to banking services in communities where traditional bank branches have withdrawn.

Further, consideration should be given to opening the postal network to third-party parcel providers. Allowing Licensed Post Offices to service a broader parcel network could improve community access, increase local viability and provide Australia Post with additional revenue opportunities without requiring significant additional infrastructure investment.

7. Conclusion

Australia Post's retail network is a vital component of Australia's social and economic infrastructure. Licensed Post Offices provide much more than postal services; they provide connection, accessibility, trust and essential face-to-face support for communities.

For regional communities such as Hay, maintaining a viable local post office is critical to ensuring residents, businesses and vulnerable community members continue to have equitable access to essential services.

Council urges the Committee to recognise the important role Licensed Post Offices play in regional communities and to support future models that strengthen, rather than reduce, their capacity to deliver essential services.

Thank you for considering Council's submission. Should the Committee require any further information, please contact me on email dwebb@hay.nsw.gov.au or telephone (02) 6990 1100.

Yours faithfully,

David Webb
General Manager
Hay Shire Council

David Webb

From: LGNSW Media <media@lgnsw.org.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 29 July 2026 10:48 AM
To: David Webb
Subject: Momentum builds for royalties from renewables

LOCAL GOVERNMENT NSW

MEMBER MESSAGE

MEDIA ALERT

Momentum builds for royalties from renewables

Dear Mr Webb,

As part of our ongoing advocacy, we have issued the below media release regarding support for councils in Renewable Energy Zones.

This statement has been shared with media outlets and reflects our position on behalf of the Local Government sector.

Kind Regards,
The LGNSW Team

Media Release

Local Government NSW President Darcy Byrne has welcomed the Clean Energy Council's call for the creation of a national Renewable Resources Payment scheme.

The proposal, announced yesterday at the Australian Clean Energy Summit by CEO Jackie Trad, would see a national scheme established to require standard payments to councils from all renewable energy projects in the regional communities hosting infrastructure.

Mayor Darcy Byrne, President of LGNSW, said the proposal recognised the fundamental need for communities hosting renewable energy projects to receive a fair share of the benefits.

"Councils want renewable energy to succeed, but host communities must see real, lasting benefits from the infrastructure in their backyards," Mayor Byrne said.

"A national payment scheme would help build trust, strengthen local support and ensure rural and regional areas share in the value created by these projects.

"It's not every day you see an industry proposing a royalty on itself, but this is the right call to build trust and confidence in the renewables sector.

"Regional councils are used to getting left behind by big agencies and utilities, so locking in a simple system of financial contributions directly paid to local government would help overcome the cynicism that they are feeling about the renewables roll out.

"Local councils in the bush know their communities best and will invest any royalties collected from wind and solar projects in the infrastructure local people need.

"The shift to renewable energy must be managed in genuine partnership with councils and their communities, including those impacted by storage and transmission infrastructure.

Mayor Byrne said the transition to renewable energy and the development of renewable energy infrastructure networks was an important sustainability issue currently facing rural and regional local governments and their communities.

"Nearly 200 renewable energy projects are currently progressing through the NSW planning system.

"The cumulative impact of this rapid development is significantly affecting the local labour market, housing, infrastructure, water, essential services, emergency response and transport routes.

"At the same time, councils recognise that transition presents opportunities through economic diversification, investment and creation of highly skilled, well-paid jobs.

"Getting this right will help shape the long-term prosperity and wellbeing of communities across NSW, particularly within and around the state's five Renewable Energy Zones."

Image: Bren Barnes, via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 2.5)

QUESTIONS?

Feel free to send us an enquiry.

CLEAN ENERGY COUNCIL

News and resources

Clean Energy Council calls for renewable resources payment to put regional communities first

28 Jul 2026

The Clean Energy Council has called for the creation of a national Renewable Resources Payment scheme that would provide a permanent funding stream for the regional communities hosting Australia's clean energy infrastructure.

In a keynote address to the Australian Clean Energy Summit in Sydney today, Clean Energy Council Chief Executive, Jackie Trad, said Australia needed a new compact with regional Australia, arguing the industry's biggest challenge was no

in the places where we build: regional and rural Australia," Ms Trad said.

Under the proposal, every megawatt-hour of renewable electricity would attract a legislated payment, paid directly to the local councils hosting the infrastructure for the life of the project. The national scheme would replace today's patchwork of community benefit funds, grants and negotiated payments with a permanent, transparent system, built on the same principle that has long applied to Australia's coal and gas industries.

"Scrap the patchwork. Replace it with something simple, permanent and public, the same way coal and gas pay royalties," Ms Trad said.

"Regional Australia is being asked to host the machinery of our energy security. The least we can do is make sure the towns that host it share squarely in the wealth it creates."

Under the proposal, local councils hosting the projects would receive the payments and determine how they are spent, recognising they are best placed to understand the priorities of their communities.

"A mayor knows whether the town needs a pool, a childcare centre, doctor's rooms or a decent road. And if the money is spent badly, there is a reckoning every four years at the ballot box," Ms Trad said. The Clean Energy Council said the detail of the scheme, including the rate and implementation, would be developed in consultation with stakeholders and regional communities.

ENDS

FULL SPEECH BELOW:

Thank you, Will — and I join Will in acknowledging the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land we gather on today, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

I want you to picture a grain grower on the Darling Downs. This autumn, he went to order fertiliser for his winter crop — wheat, barley, chickpeas. The same

Hay Shire Council

STRATEGIC PLANNING GAP ANALYSIS

REPORT

NSW DCCEEW and Hay Shire Council

August 2026

4.0

Document control

Document status:	Version:	4.0		
Document history:	*Status*	*Version*	*Date*	*Comments*
	Internal draft	1.0	10/07/2026	Checked by: Charlie Hickson Reviewed by: Patrick Schnelle
	Draft for DCCEEW review	2.0	17/07/2026	Reviewed by: Patrick Schnelle
	For issue	3.0	24/07/2026	Updated to incorporate DCCEEW review comments. Report issued to Hay Shire Council for comment. Reviewed by: Natalie Crawford
	For issue	4.0	13/08/2026	Reviewed by: Natalie Crawford
Author:	Natalie Crawford, Charlie Hickson			
Contact:	Atom Consulting 401 / 71-73 Archer Street Chatswood NSW 2067 info@atomconsulting.com.au 02 9488 7742			
File name:	DCW2509 strategic planning gap analysis Western NSW LWUs report Hay v4.0			

This report reflects a point-in-time assessment using a maturity framework piloted with NSW DCCEEW and supporting materials developed for this project. The approach is anticipated to evolve over time, and future applications or refinements may change the assessment method, guidance, and interpretation of results.

Executive summary

Project background

The NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) engaged Atom Consulting, in partnership with Stantec, to assess the maturity of how Local Water Utilities (LWUs) in Western NSW plan for water and sewerage services.

This project supports the broader work being progressed by DCCEEW in response to the Productivity and Equality Commission's (PEC) 2024 review of funding models for LWUs. Both the PEC and DCCEEW have highlighted that robust, evidence-based strategic planning is important for managing risk and supporting targeted funding decisions.

As part of this work, we completed a strategic planning gap analysis for Hay Shire Council (HSC). The gap analysis assessed the maturity of HSC's strategic planning for water supply and sewerage services against Section 3 of the Regulatory Assurance Framework (RAF), which sets out DCCEEW's expectations for effective strategic planning by LWUs.

The assessment considered HSC's systems, processes and information across the 12 RAF strategic planning outcomes, taking into account HSC's operating context, scale, resources and risk profile.

This report documents the findings of the gap analysis and identifies targeted recommendations and improvement opportunities to support HSC in strengthening its strategic planning capability.

Key observations

Strengths and areas of positive findings

Based on the gap analysis, HSC demonstrates a number of key strengths that provide a solid foundation for strategic planning and service delivery.

Strategic planning foundations

- IWCM strategy and supporting options studies lay a good foundation for ongoing strategic planning processes.

Plans and systems

- LWU Strategic Plan is a good approach to documenting and tracking strategic priorities, appropriate to Council's context.
- Several key studies and plans have been developed that broadly cover and demonstrate a number of strategic planning requirements (including the Financial Sustainability Strategy and the Climate Resilience Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan).

Operational knowledge and experience

- Strong operational knowledge.
- Clear identification of water security and water quality as key risks, supported by modelling and evidence-based analysis.

Resourcing and workforce planning

- Innovative practices, such as use of the workforce benefit program were highlighted as a positive case study in increasing employee motivation and staff retention.

Risks and challenges

Based on the gap analysis, the following key risks and challenges have been identified for HSC.

Water quality and security

- The Drinking Water Management System (DWMS) is not current or embedded. Not all compliance obligations are being tracked or implemented (noting that Council is currently working to update the DWMS with support from NSW Health).
- Source water is vulnerable to contamination events, and there is currently no alternative supply source.

Funding and financial constraints

- Risk to ongoing financial stability considering future operating and infrastructure costs.
- A small and socioeconomically constrained customer base limits pricing flexibility and the ability to achieve full cost recovery, constraining long-term financial sustainability.
- User charges are insufficient to fund full lifecycle costs, which may delay or prevent essential renewals and upgrades, increasing the risk of asset failure and declining service levels.

Asset management

- While Council demonstrates an operational understanding of asset condition, limited preventative maintenance works are undertaken in practice, with many assets managed on a run-to-failure basis. The rationale for this approach is not consistently supported by a clear assessment of asset risk and criticality, service level impacts, or whole-of-life investment considerations.
- Absence of granular asset criticality data (i.e. at the asset component level) limits the ability to prioritise maintenance, investment and manage service risks. We note that the LWU Strategic Plan identifies asset criticality and asset condition as a known gap.

Workforce and knowledge management

- Limited availability of skilled staff required for service delivery.
- Reliance on key individuals and undocumented operational knowledge increases the risk of knowledge loss and inconsistent practices.

Strategic planning outcomes maturity assessment

Generally, HSC's strategic planning maturity was on the edge of the developing and maturing ranges. For HSC, strategic planning maturity is highest in the risk, solutions and strategic decisions outcomes, which partially reflects ongoing Council processes (e.g. Council meetings and business papers) and development of key strategic documentation and reports. Lower maturity is evident in outcomes that rely on more integrated management systems (e.g. DWMS and asset management systems), such as the system capacity and capability and water quality outcomes.

Figure i-i. Strategic planning maturity across the RAF strategic planning outcomes

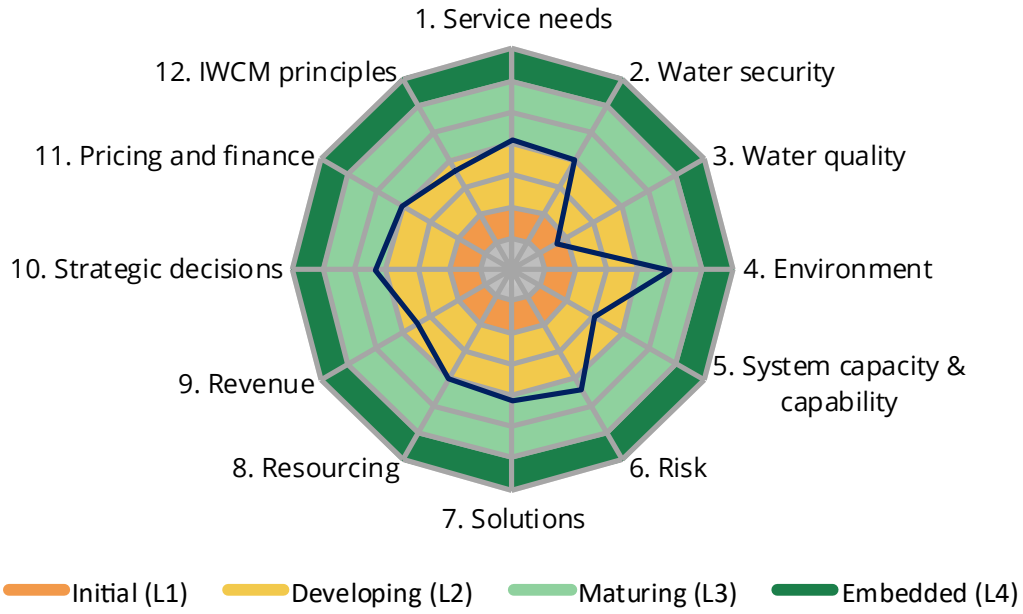
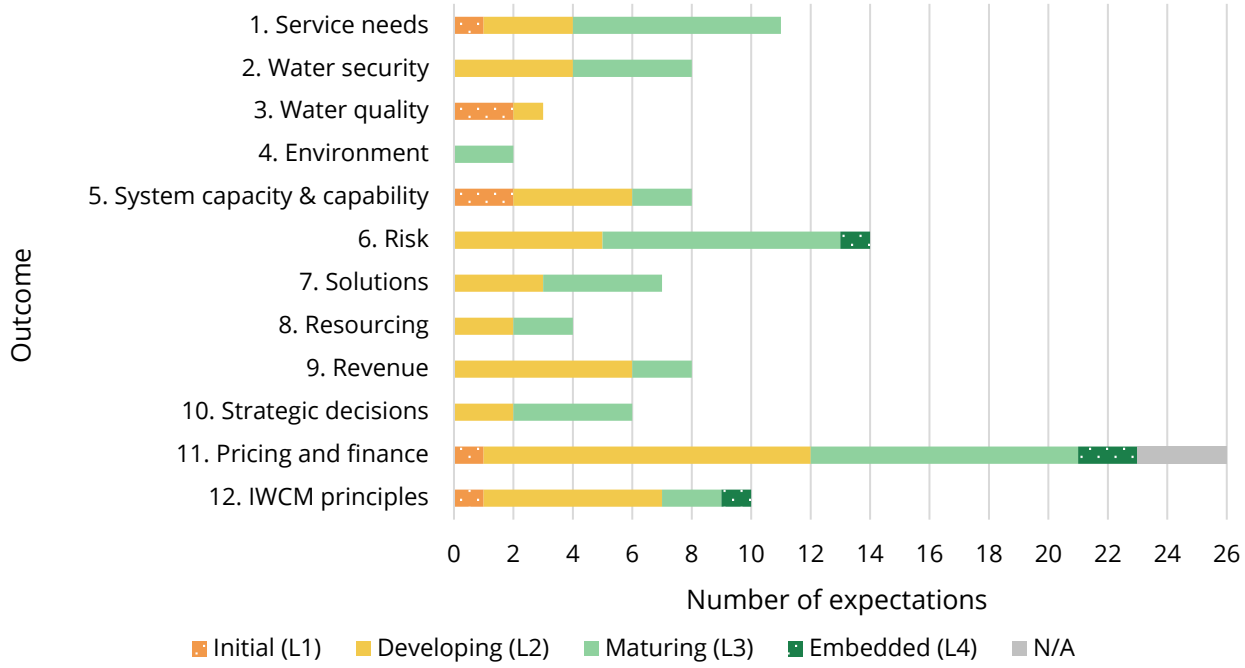


Figure i-ii. Number of expectations at each maturity level across the 12 strategic planning outcomes



Recommendations and improvement actions

The NSW Government response to the PEC report supports in principle a more targeted approach to future LWU funding, focusing on LWUs unable to recover efficient costs from their own revenue sources. In preparing for potential changes, HSC should focus on demonstrating efficient expenditure and maximising own-source revenue within affordability limits.

Strong strategic planning, asset lifecycle management, and a clear view of efficient costs remain essential for managing risk, maintaining regulatory confidence, and delivering safe, reliable services.

Recommendations are summarised in Table i-i. Primary actions (see Section 4.1) detail how these recommendations could be implemented.

Recognising that HSC is operating in a resource constrained environment, additional prioritised actions are included in Section 4. These actions are expected to deliver value across a range of future regulatory and operating scenarios.

Table i-i. Summary of key recommendations

Aspect	ID	Recommendation
Regulatory compliance	1	Develop a legislative compliance register that incorporates all obligations, and clearly links requirements to responsibilities, controls, monitoring and reporting processes.
Water security	2	Strengthen long-term water security through proactive planning and demand management.
Water quality	3	Review and implement structured DWMS processes through risk assessments, regular review cycles and continuous improvement practices.
Asset management	4	Improve asset data and the asset management system to support risk-based planning, maintenance and long-term investment decisions.
Risk and resilience	5	Strengthen the integration of water and sewerage risk and resilience considerations within enterprise risk systems, including alignment with climate and emergency planning.
Knowledge management	6	Improve processes for capturing operational knowledge.
Financial management	7	Strengthen financial planning, pricing and cost recovery frameworks by determining efficient costs, maximising own-source revenue where possible, and clearly quantifying the true funding gap to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
Strategic decisions	8	Embed a monitoring and review cycle as part of a continual improvement approach to strategic planning.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full form
AMP	Asset management plan
AOS	Advanced operational support program
ASAE	Standard on assurance engagements
BCP	Business Contingency Plan
BPM	Best practice management for water supply and sewerage
CAPEX	Capital expenditure
CCPs	Critical control points
CPI	Consumer price index
CSO	Community service obligation
DCCEEW	NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DMA	District metered area
DWMS	Drinking water management system
EPL	Environment Protection Licence
FTE	Full time equivalent
HBT	Health Based Targets
HSC	Hay Shire Council
IP&R	Integrated planning and reporting
IWCM	Integrated water cycle management
LoS	Levels of service
LTFP	Long term financial plan
LWU	Local water utility
NSW	New South Wales
OPEX	Operating expenditure
PEC	Productivity and Equality Commission
RAF	NSW Regulatory and Assurance Framework
RFI	Request for information
SAMP	Strategic asset management plan
SPA	Strategic planning assurance
SPS	Sewage pump station
STP	Sewage treatment plant
TRB	Typical residential bill
WTP	Water treatment plant

01
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

This project was delivered as part of broader work being progressed by the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) in response to the Productivity and Equality Commission's (PEC) 2024 review of funding models for Local Water Utilities (LWUs).

The PEC found that many Western NSW LWUs are unlikely to sustain services on a commercial basis without external support. In this context, both the PEC and DCCEEW have highlighted that robust, evidence-based strategic planning is important for demonstrating need, prioritising investment, and supporting targeted funding decisions.

As part of this broader reform context, DCCEEW engaged Atom Consulting, in partnership with Stantec, to undertake a strategic planning gap analysis for Western NSW LWUs. DCCEEW invited 20 Western NSW LWUs to participate, with 14 LWUs opting in, including Hay Shire Council (HSC).

We assessed strategic planning maturity against Section 3 of the Regulatory and Assurance Framework (RAF) for LWUs (see Section 1.3). Outputs include individual LWU reports (this document) and a separate consolidated regional summary.

1.1.1 Future funding context and strategic planning implications

While the future LWU funding model is still being developed, it is expected to move towards a more targeted approach. Under this model, in principle, where efficient costs cannot be recovered from customers, developers, or prudent borrowing, state government funding would cover both capital and operating costs, linked to defined service outcomes.

A key requirement of this approach is the ability to demonstrate efficient expenditure over time, supported by clear linkages between service levels, assets, risks, and financial planning. Meeting this requirement will depend on strategic planning that is evidence-based and integrated across business functions (see Section 2.2.1).

The PEC found that current planning practices do not provide a sufficiently robust basis for assessing funding needs or prioritising investment. Improving the quality and consistency of strategic planning is important for managing current business risks and supporting readiness for more targeted future funding approaches.

1.2 Document purpose

This report documents the findings from the LWU strategic planning gap analysis of Hay Shire Council (HSC). This includes background and contextual material, observations and findings, and recommendations and improvement opportunities.

1.3 Regulatory and assurance framework

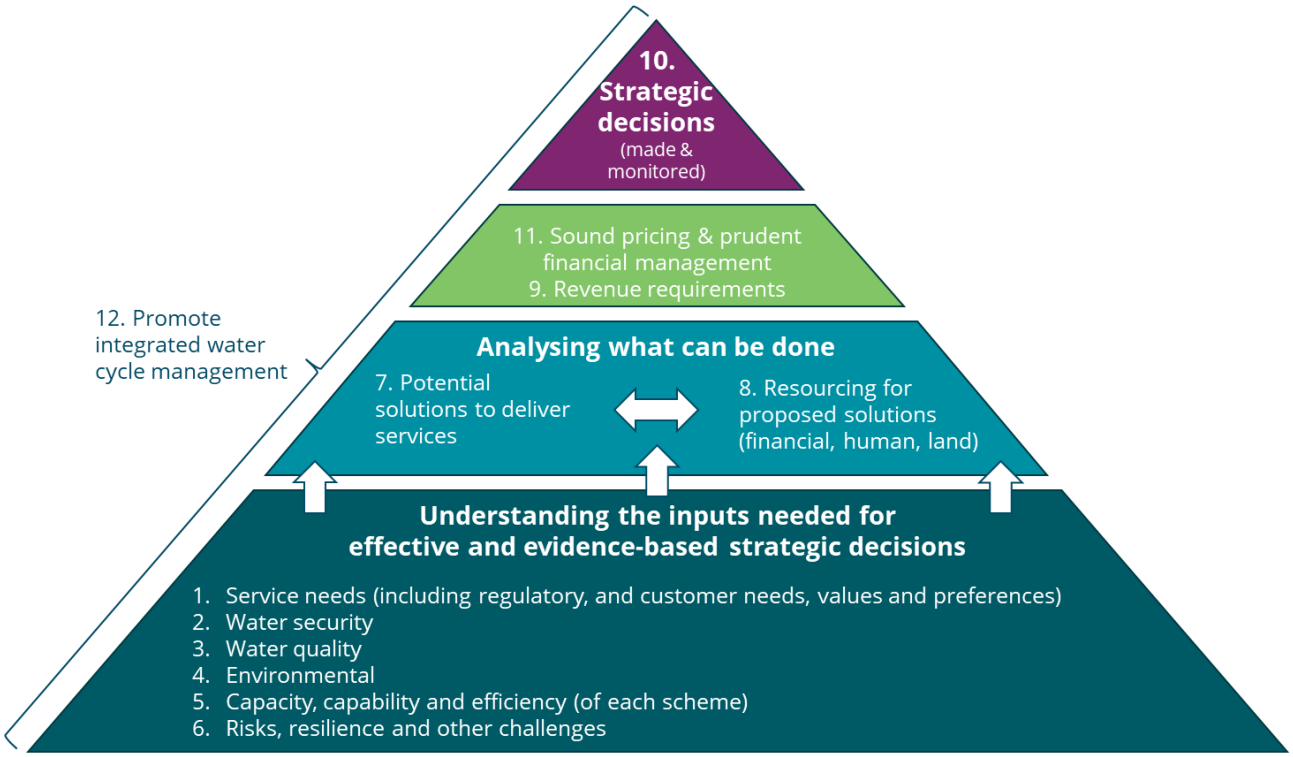
The RAF is the NSW Government's policy that sets out DCCEEW's expectations for how LWUs plan, manage and assure their water and sewerage services. Introduced in July 2022, the RAF replaced the Best Practice Management for Water Supply and Sewerage (BPM) Framework,

including Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) Strategies and IWCM Issues Papers, with an outcomes-focused approach to effective, evidence-based strategic planning.

1.3.1 Strategic planning outcomes and core questions

Section 3 of the RAF sets out 12 strategic planning outcomes that DCCEEW expects LWUs to achieve to demonstrate effective, evidence-based strategic planning. Figure 1-1 illustrates how these outcomes progress from foundational inputs, through options analysis and resourcing, to financial planning and decision-making, and ultimately to implementation and monitoring. This reflects the RAF's adaptive intent, in which planning is iterative and updated as conditions change.

Figure 1-1. 12 strategic planning outcomes of the RAF



Adapted from NSW DCCEEW (2025)

The 12 strategic planning outcomes are comprised of 107 expectations. For guidance purposes, the strategic planning outcomes are supported by 41 core questions.

Core questions for RAF strategic planning outcomes

Understanding service needs

- What are customers' needs, values, and preferences?
- What current and future demands are placed on water supply and sewerage systems?
- How will the local water utility consider and address objectives, priorities and evidence of other relevant state or regional strategic planning, including the NSW Water Strategy and regional water strategies?

Understanding water security

- What is the local water utility's access to current and potential water supply sources?
- How will the local utility address current and future risks around continuity and reliability of access to water supply sources?

Understanding water quality

- How will the local water utility address current and future water quality risks?
- How will the local water utility meet relevant regulatory standards, such as on drinking water quality management and fluoridation?

Understanding environmental impacts

- How will the local water utility address current and future environmental impact risks in its sewerage systems?
- How will the local water utility meet relevant regulatory standards, such as licence requirements set by the environmental regulator?

Understanding system capacity, capability and efficiency

- How will the local water utility understand the capacity and capability of systems to deliver water, and collect and treat sewage (and future capacity and capability needs)?
- How will the local water utility consider water efficiency in its systems?

Understanding other key risks and challenges

- How will the local water utility address other key risks in its systems now and into the future?
- How will the local water utility meet relevant regulatory standards?
- How has the local water utility considered climate risks?
- How is the local water utility planning for drought?
- How is the local water utility planning and preparing for incidents, emergencies, and extreme events and ensuring continuity of service?

Understanding solutions to deliver services

- How are options for delivering services and managing risks analysed?
- How are assets managed over their life cycle to ensure service levels are met?
- How are the preparedness and resilience management during extreme events considered?
- How are supply and demand-side options for water supply identified and evaluated?

Understanding resourcing needs

- What resourcing is needed to deliver services and manage risks?
- What are the life-cycle costs of managing assets?
- What are the technical and operational skills needed to deliver services and manage risks and how does the local water utility do workforce planning?

Understanding revenue sources

- What are the revenue sources available to fund the delivery of services?
- What is the customers' ability to pay for services?
- What is the customers' willingness to pay for services?

Make and implement sound strategic decisions

- Expectations of local water utilities when making and implementing sound strategic decisions.

Implement sound pricing and prudent financial management

- Prices should recover the efficient costs of providing water supply and sewerage services to customers.
- Prices are cost reflective, fair and equitable, and structured to promote efficient investment and consumption decisions, including the efficient and sustainable provision and use of water supply and sewerage services.
- Prices are reasonably stable over time and consider affordability and impact on customers.
- Dividend payments.
- 'Ring-fencing' of the water supply and sewer business funds from the council's general-purpose fund.

Promote integrated water cycle management

- How are urban water cycle outcomes including water security, public health, environmental and urban amenity and liveability identified, achieved and funded?
- How does the utility consider opportunities and methods to increase resource efficiency and recovery in urban water management?
- How is the local water utility supporting customers to increase water literacy and support water efficiency measures?

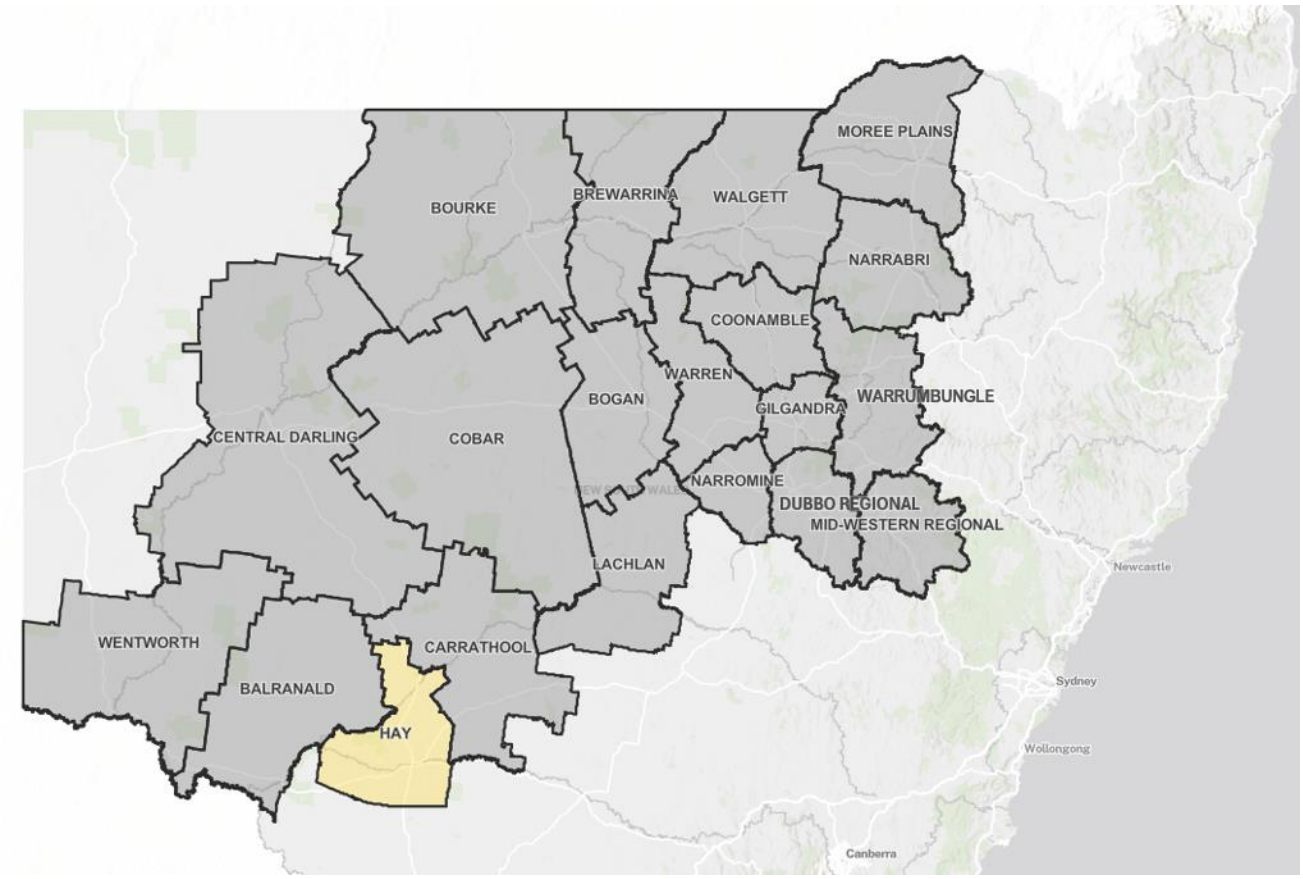
1.3.2 Strategic planning assurance

Strategic Planning Assurance (SPA) is a voluntary formal assessment undertaken by DCCEEW to determine whether an LWU's planning meets the 12 strategic planning outcomes to a reasonable standard. The maturity assessment undertaken for this gap analysis differs from a formal SPA assessment.

1.4 Council location and context

HSC is located in the Riverina area of south-western NSW (Figure 1-2), and includes the localities of Hay, Booligal and Maude.

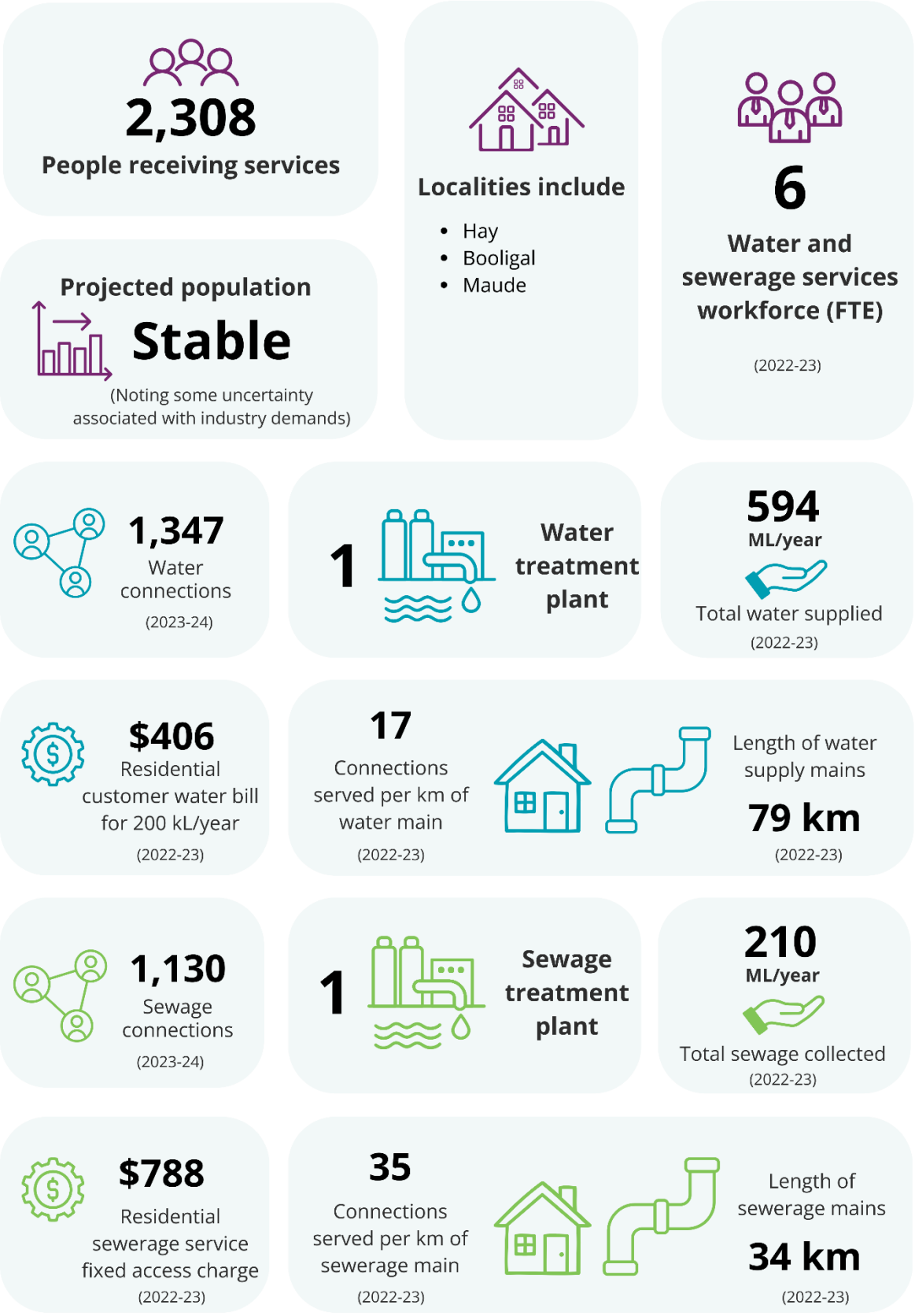
Figure 1-2. Location of Hay Shire Council



Source: NSW Government, 2026

A snapshot of HSC's context is shown in Figure 1-3. Compared with the 20 western NSW LWUs, HSC has the third lowest total volume of water supplied and the fifth lowest total volume of sewage collected. HSC's residential customer water bill is well below the median of the 20 western NSW LWUs, while HSC's residential sewerage service fixed access charge is above the median of the 20 western NSW LWUs.

Figure 1-3. Hay Shire Council context



Source: NSW Water Utility Performance Dashboard (DCCEEW) (reporting year FY22/23 – 23/24), IWCM Strategy

02

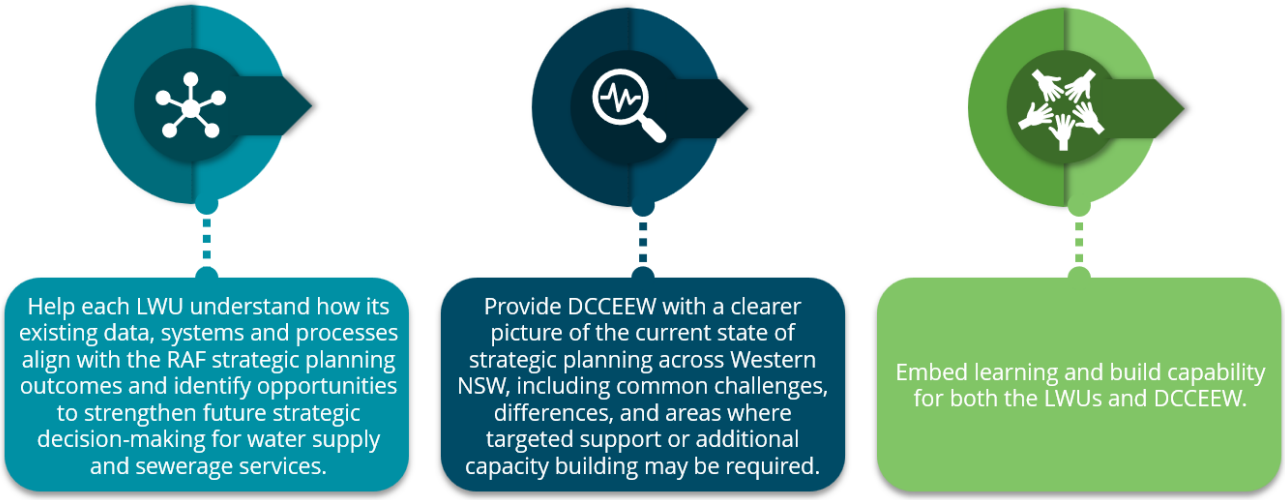
SCOPE AND CRITERIA

The gap analysis scope and criteria are outlined in this section. The process and standards are set out in Appendix A.

2.1 Objectives

The key objectives of the strategic planning gap analysis are outlined in Figure 2-1.

Figure 2-1. Gap analysis objectives



2.2 Gap analysis scope and details

The scope for the gap analysis was the maturity of HSC's strategic planning systems, processes and information against Section 3 of the RAF (see Section 1.3). The gap analysis was conducted on a sample basis using a representative subset of evidence (see Appendix A).

The gap analysis was undertaken with reference to HSC's specific context, recognising its local operating environment, challenges and resource constraints. We undertook a site visit to HSC to interview key stakeholders and ground-truth information through site inspections. The site visit details are provided in Appendix B.

2.2.1 LWU functional areas and strategic planning enablers

The strategic planning outcomes defined in the RAF are broad and span multiple business functions (Figure 2-2).

Figure 2-2. Functional areas related to strategic planning

For the purposes of this project, a maturity assessment approach was trialled to assess a LWU's capability against the RAF strategic planning outcomes and associated expectations. This approach differs from the RAF SPA process, which assesses whether a LWU's strategic planning achieves each outcome to a reasonable standard (see Section 1.3.2).

To determine the level of strategic planning maturity, the gap analysis examined how well strategic planning enablers (Figure 2-3) are established and how well strategic planning is integrated into broader business activities. Where these enablers are fragmented or applied inconsistently, planning outcomes become less reliable and more difficult to demonstrate. Strengthening of strategic planning enablers supports more consistent, transparent and integrated planning, with clearer links between evidence, decision-making and objectives. Well established and effectively integrated enablers provide greater confidence that outcomes will continue to be achieved over time.

Figure 2-3. Summary of strategic planning enablers

Note: An artefact is a tangible output or document created to capture, communicate, or support elements of the strategic planning process.

2.3 Maturity assessment

The maturity assessment applied a structured approach to assess how well the strategic planning enablers (Section 2.2.1) are developed and embedded across each of the 12 different strategic planning outcomes. A maturity approach recognises that capability develops over time and is influenced by resource constraints.

2.3.1 Maturity levels and descriptors

Grades were assigned using the maturity levels and descriptors summarised in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1. Summary of strategic planning maturity levels and descriptors

Aspect	What are we looking at?	Maturity levels			
		Level 1 – initial	Level 2 – developing	Level 3 – maturing	Level 4 – embedded
Summary	How artefacts, data, information, management and technical systems, analysis processes, integration and governance support effective evidence-based strategic planning.	• Projects and activities are reactive and undertaken without a strategic basis. • There is no common or shared approach, and planning outcomes rely heavily on individual effort and experience rather than established practices.	• Strategic planning exists, but it is incomplete and inconsistently applied. • Frameworks exist but have not yet been adopted consistently.	• Strategic planning generally supports decision-making. • Processes are mostly documented, and evidence-based approaches are becoming established, though integration remains uneven across the LWU.	• Strategic planning is consistent and applied LWU-wide. • Planning routinely informs decisions and supports reliable, repeatable outcomes.
Artefacts, data, and information	The quality, currency, alignment, accessibility and validation of data and artefacts, and how reliably they inform evidence-based planning.	• Data is limited, outdated, inconsistent, or unreliable. • Documentation and artefacts are missing or maintained informally. • Significant reliance on individual knowledge.	• Data remains fragmented, limiting confidence in analysis and planning. • Foundational artefacts exist but are incomplete, inconsistently updated or unvalidated.	• Data quality is improving, accessible and knowledge is captured. • Evidence-based information informs planning, although gaps remain across datasets and systems.	• Data is current, trusted, routinely updated and quality-assured. • Data is integrated across systems and routinely used to inform strategic decisions. • Artefacts are comprehensive, aligned and provide a single source of truth.

Aspect	What are we looking at?	Maturity levels			
		Level 1 – initial	Level 2 – developing	Level 3 – maturing	Level 4 – embedded
Management systems, technology systems, and analysis processes	How well systems and methods support planning through consistent processes, integrated tools, and lifecycle, risk, cost and review-based analysis.	• No consistent method or shared language for gathering inputs. • Systems and processes are disconnected or unreliable. • Analysis is reactive, unstructured and highly variable.	• Basic systems and processes exist but are inconsistently applied. • Analysis occurs but is often informal and data-limited. • Early lifecycle and risk considerations appear, but analysis is inconsistently applied.	• Enabling systems and planning processes are more consistently documented and largely in place. • Analysis is increasingly structured and informed by improving data. • Lifecycle, risk and cost considerations are present but not fully integrated. • Review cycles or triggers exist but are not yet consistent or embedded.	• Systems and processes are fully integrated and consistently informed by strategic planning. • Analysis frameworks are robust, repeatable and linked to lifecycle, risk and resource considerations. • Review cycles and triggers are well established and routinely applied.
Integration and governance	The clarity and application of governance, roles and delegations, and how well planning aligns with decisions, accountability, transparency and oversight.	• Governance arrangements are limited, unclear and not integrated with planning. • Roles, responsibilities and decision pathways are poorly understood. • Ownership of decision-making is limited.	• Planning and governance arrangements exist but are inconsistently applied. • Roles, responsibilities and decision pathways are partially understood and inconsistently applied.	• Governance processes are mostly documented and subject to periodic review. • Roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and decision pathways are understood and defined.	• Governance is strong, integrated and applied organisation-wide. • Roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and decision pathways are embedded and reviewed for relevance and currency.

03
RESULTS

The strategic planning gap analysis results are summarised in this section. A list of evidence considered as part of the review is provided in Appendix C, and detailed findings are in Appendix D.

Recommendations and improvement opportunities are provided in Section 4.

3.1 Key observations and findings

We have summarised strengths and areas of positive findings in Section 3.1.1, and risks and challenges in Section 3.1.2.

3.1.1 Strengths and areas of positive findings

Based on the gap analysis, HSC demonstrates a number of key strengths that provide a solid foundation for strategic planning and service delivery.

Strategic planning foundations

- IWCM strategy and supporting options studies lay a good foundation for ongoing strategic planning processes.

Plans and systems

- LWU Strategic Plan is a good approach to documenting and tracking strategic priorities, appropriate to Council's context.
- Several key studies and plans have been developed that broadly cover and demonstrate a number of strategic planning requirements (including the Financial Sustainability Strategy and the Climate Resilience Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan).

Operational knowledge and experience

- Strong operational knowledge.
- Clear identification of water security and water quality as key risks, supported by modelling and evidence-based analysis.

Resourcing and workforce planning

- Innovative practices, such as use of the workforce benefit program were highlighted as a positive case study in increasing employee motivation and staff retention.

3.1.2 Risks and challenges

Based on the gap analysis, the following key risks and challenges have been identified for HSC.

Water quality and security

- The Drinking Water Management System (DWMS) is not current or embedded. Not all compliance obligations are being tracked or implemented (noting that Council is currently working to update the DWMS with support from NSW Health).
- Source water is vulnerable to contamination events, and there is currently no alternative supply source.

Funding and financial constraints

- Risk to ongoing financial stability considering future operating and infrastructure costs.
- A small and socioeconomically constrained customer base limits pricing flexibility and the ability to achieve full cost recovery, constraining long-term financial sustainability.
- User charges are insufficient to fund full lifecycle costs, which may delay or prevent essential renewals and upgrades, increasing the risk of asset failure and declining service levels.

Asset management

- While Council demonstrates an operational understanding of asset condition, limited preventative maintenance works are undertaken in practice, with many assets managed on a run-to-failure basis. The rationale for this approach is not consistently supported by a clear assessment of asset risk and criticality, service level impacts, or whole-of-life investment considerations.
- Absence of granular asset criticality data (i.e. at the asset component level) limits the ability to prioritise maintenance, investment and manage service risks. We note that the LWU Strategic Plan identifies asset criticality and asset condition as a known gap.

Workforce and knowledge management

- Limited availability of skilled staff required for service delivery.
- Reliance on key individuals and undocumented operational knowledge increases the risk of knowledge loss and inconsistent practices.

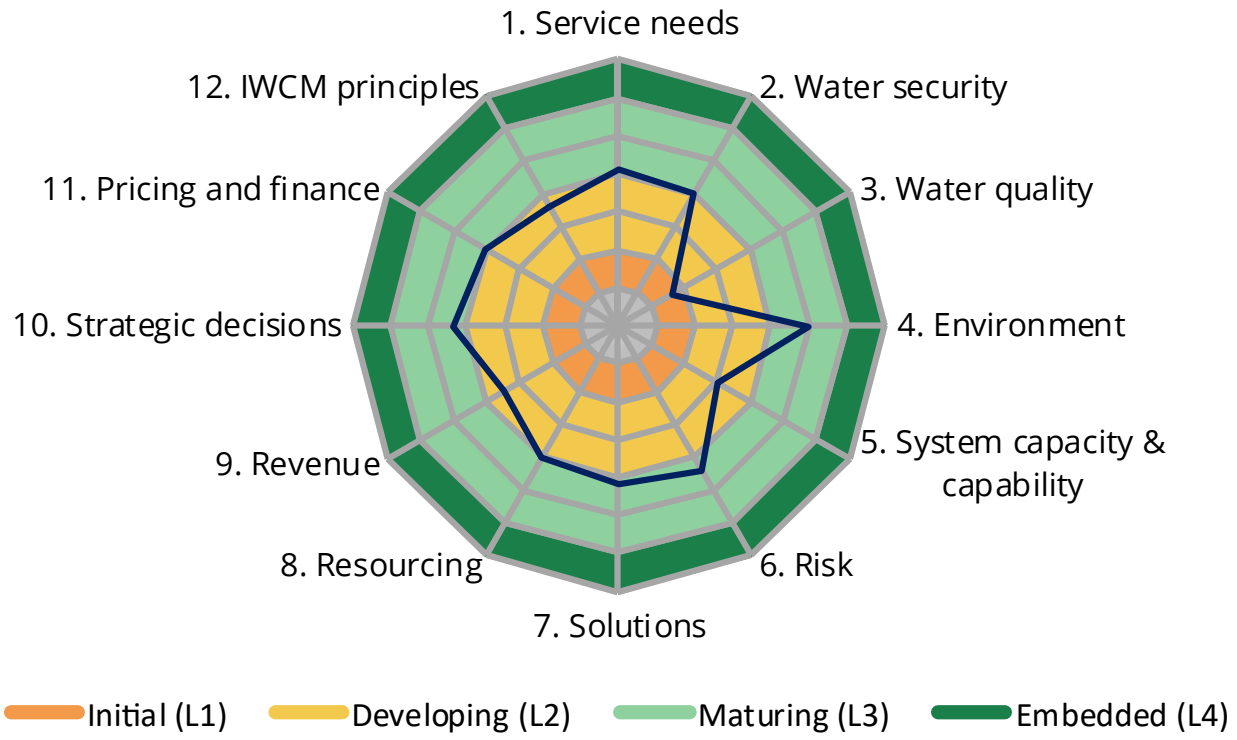
3.2 Strategic planning outcome maturity assessment

The results of the maturity assessment aligned to the strategic planning outcomes are summarised in this section. Further details are provided in Appendix D.

Figure 3-1 depicts average scores across the strategic planning outcomes and does not represent a risk-weighted assessment of performance. As outlined in Section 1.3, the strategic planning outcomes include differing numbers of expectations.

Generally, HSC's strategic planning maturity was on the edge of the developing and maturing ranges. For HSC, strategic planning maturity is highest in the risk, solutions and strategic decisions outcomes, which partially reflects ongoing Council processes (e.g. Council meetings and business papers) and development of key strategic documentation and reports. Lower maturity is evident in outcomes that rely on more integrated management systems (e.g. DWMS and asset management systems), such as the system capacity and capability and water quality outcomes.

Figure 3-1. Strategic planning maturity across the RAF strategic planning outcomes

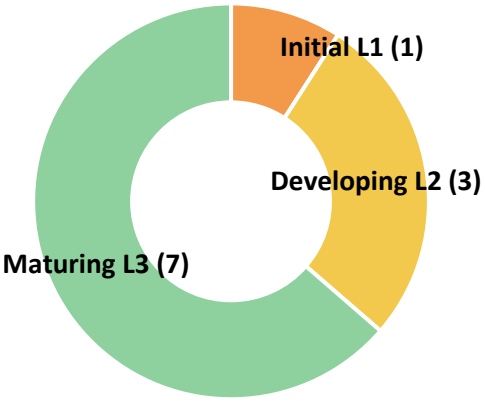


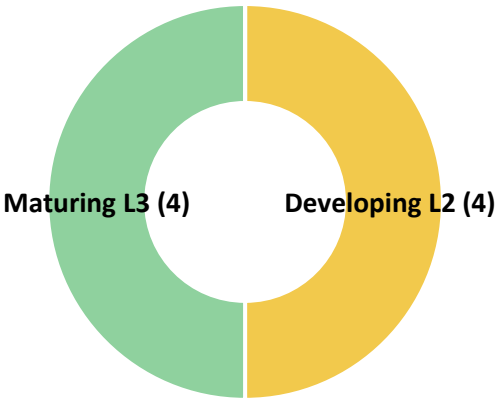
In terms of the strategic planning enablers (Section 2.2.1), HSC has some foundational artefacts in place, however, these are somewhat constrained by data gaps and formalised processes. For example, there is limited information on asset criticality at a granular level, and despite strong operational knowledge, there is a heavy reliance on key individuals and limited documentation of regulatory compliance requirements. HSC have developed several artefacts that address aspects of the RAF strategic planning requirements (e.g. LWU Strategic Plan, Asset Management Plan and the Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan and Circular Economy Strategy).

HSC, with support from NSW Health, is currently undertaking an update of its DWMS. If this project includes an updated water quality risk assessment with HBT risks incorporated, and an expanded regulatory framework, HSC should see an uplift in maturity across the water quality enablers. In addition to this, further uplift is required across system capacity and capability (see Section 4).

1. Understanding service needs

- Council has strong practical understanding of its customer base. Targeted customer engagement has occurred for water and sewer, however this was noted to be limited due to a low level of community interest. Insights are not systematically embedded in planning, limiting clear linkage to service levels, pricing and investment decisions.
- Planning is supported by credible demand and growth data, supported by operational knowledge. There is no structured forecasting process to inform demand management.
- Council appropriately contributes to regional water strategy objectives through collaboration and local implementation. Alignment is not formally documented or tracked.



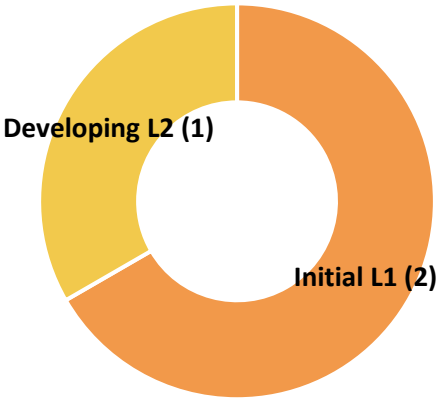


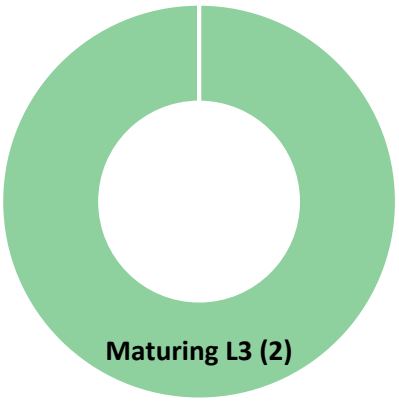
2. Understanding water security

- Council has a strong practical understanding of water sources and security risks, particularly river dependence, and are actively investigating alternative sources. The impact of climate risks to water security is not consistently documented.
- Water security risks are well understood in practice and supported by some assessment of vulnerability. However, they are not assessed through a structured, long-term framework with clearly defined service levels, triggers and scenario-based analysis to support evidence-based planning.

3. Understanding water quality

- While key operational controls are in place (such as critical control points), Council's DWMS is not current or embedded, and there was limited awareness of DWMS requirements. An improvement plan is in place and the DWMS is currently being updated as part of a NSW Health support project. While Health Based Targets (HBT) requirements are considered in the IWCM Supplementary Paper, a drinking water quality risk assessment that consider HBTs has not yet been undertaken.
- Regulatory requirements relevant to water quality are not current or consolidated into a structured framework linking obligations to controls, monitoring and verification.



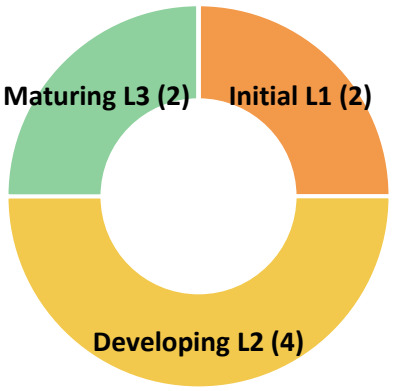


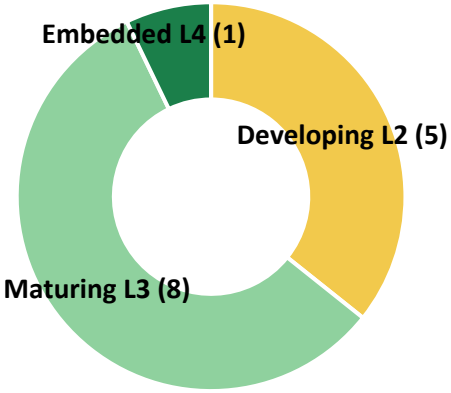
4. Understanding environmental impacts

- Council has a strong understanding of key environmental and public health risks of its sewerage system. Effluent is not discharged to any receiving water and monitoring to groundwater is undertaken.
- Licence compliance obligations are understood. Council have limited EPL conditions, as there is no discharge from the STP.

5. Understanding system capacity, capability and efficiency

- Council demonstrates a practical understanding of system capability. Council have separate water and sewerage asset management plans. Asset criticality is defined at the facility level, however, criticality is not documented at the asset or component level and there are gaps in asset data relating to condition, criticality and performance. The prioritisation of maintenance or investment for water and sewer assets is not clearly informed by a formal asset criticality framework.
- Council has an awareness of water losses supported by a water balance in the IWCM supplementary paper and are planning for a digital metering project (dependent on grant funding). However, efficiency is not underpinned by an ongoing verified water balance, structured NRW analysis or benchmarking to inform targeted improvement.



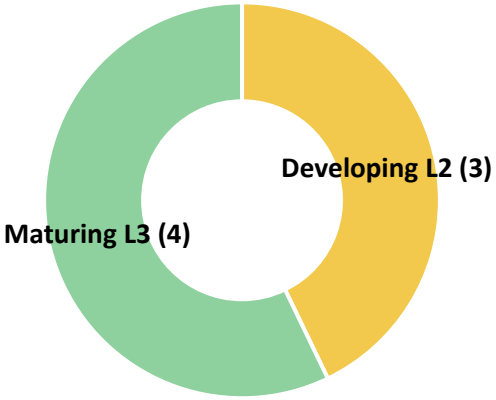


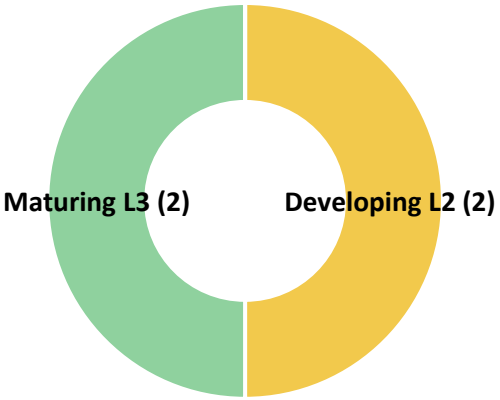
6. Understanding other key risks and challenges

- Water and sewerage servicing risks are managed alongside wider Council risks within a Council risk register. However, operational risk assessments specific to water and sewerage services are not current and integration into planning and decision-making is unclear.
- Operational regulatory requirements are generally understood at a high level, but gaps are noted in the documentation of all compliance obligations, and supporting processes are generally informal.
- Council has considered climate risks and documented risk reduction actions both taken and planned in its Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan.
- Council demonstrates awareness of operational and community impacts of drought. However, customer engagement, service levels, and the basis for drought triggers are not clear. These risks are partialy mitigated by the secure availability of water volumes.
- Council has practical capability and some documented practices for responding to incidents and emergencies. However, incident documentation is limited and lacks sufficient detail to demonstrate a comprehensive and systematic approach across prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Given Council's predominantly run-to-failure asset management approach, the availability and maintenance of critical spares, together with the ongoing currency of incident and emergency management plans and response capabilities, become increasingly important to mitigate service disruption risks.

7. Understanding solutions to deliver services

- Council clearly understands key service challenges, including water security, compliance, water quality and demands, and these issues are reflected in discussions, IWCM Strategy outputs and the LWU Strategic Plan.
- Asset data on condition, criticality and lifecycle is incomplete, limiting the reliability of an evidence-based foundation for option evaluation.
- Council considers resilience and extreme events in its Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan. Options are not systematically tested under multiple plausible futures or compound event scenarios.
- The IWCM strategy provides initial analysis of supply and demand options, and Council has done extensive work on leakage and water efficiency.



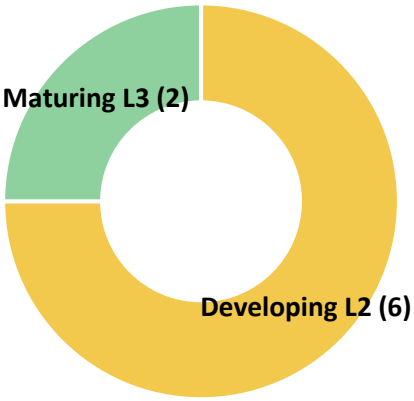


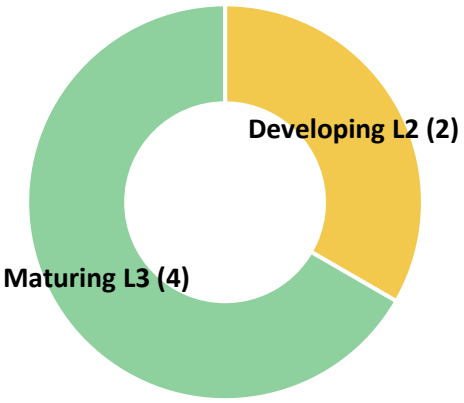
8. Understanding resourcing needs

- Resourcing is generally understood. Future gaps in funding, skills or capacity are not formally identified or reflected in the LTFP.
- Lifecycle costs are considered in strategic planning. However, it is uncertain if lifecycle analysis consistently include renewals, risk allowances, compliance costs or end-of-life disposal.
- Council have a workforce management plan, Workforce capability is well understood and challenges are identified. Council applies an adaptive, practical approach to workforce planning, proportionate to the size of its water and sewer workforce

9. Understanding revenue sources

- Council sets water and sewer prices with the intention of cost recovery. However, the methodology to define the true efficient cost is uncertain and not formalised. It is not clear that pricing and revenue settings are maximised within affordability constraints. Revenue constraints may influence Council's asset management and investment decisions, although the basis is not well formalised.
- Affordability considerations are understood through local knowledge and supported by Council's Financial Sustainability Study. Justifications for pricing below efficient cost are not explicitly documented
- While no formal willingness to pay study has been undertaken, Council's Financial Sustainability Study identified no extra capacity to pay in the community, informing the decision not to increase prices.



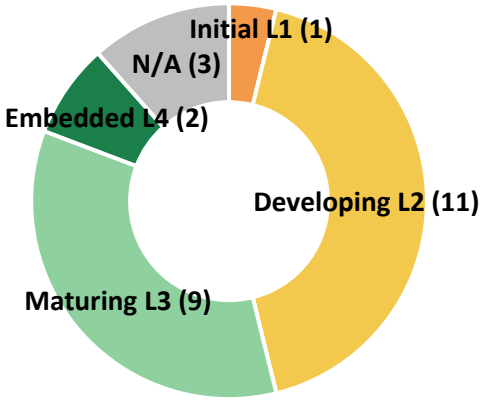


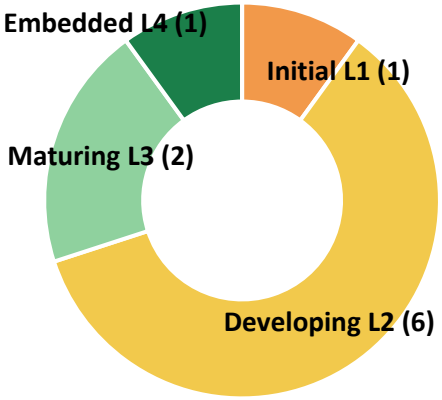
10. Make and implement sound strategic decisions

- Processes are in place for making strategic decisions. Formal documentation linking decisions to levels of service and pricing frameworks could be strengthened.
- Monitoring of implementation and tracking of benefits is not generally embedded.

11. Implement sound pricing and prudent financial management

- Council maintains separate water and sewer funds. Council applies pricing to broadly meet lower bound requirements, however it is uncertain if all required upgrades, maintenance and renewals have been adequately planned for (e.g. HBTs).
- There is limited evidence that pricing is informed by marginal cost considerations or long-run marginal cost (LRMC) analysis.
- Council does not have a 30 year LTFP for water and sewerage services
- Council considers affordability impacts but does not undertake structured customer impact analysis or formally manage price stability.
- No dividends are paid.
- Water and sewer funds are appropriately ring-fenced from general council operations. Processes are in place to ensure full operational and asset-level ring fencing.



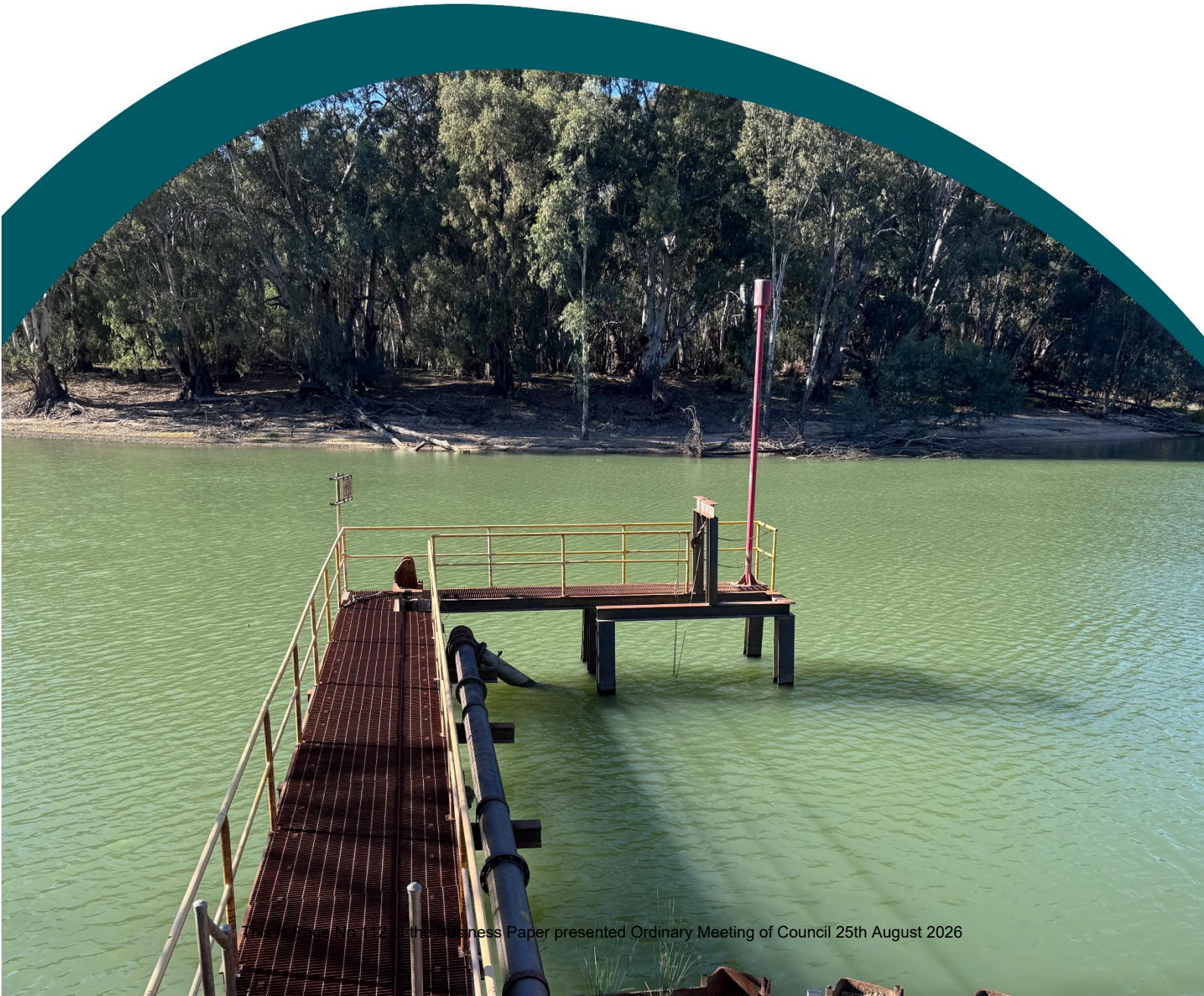


12. Promote integrated water cycle management

- Council has an understanding of core service outcomes (e.g. water security, public health and service reliability). However, the full range of urban water cycle outcomes are not documented or explicitly linked to customer values.
- Council interacts with internal and external stakeholders, however there was limited evidence of structured collaborative governance arrangements.
- Council implements energy and resource efficiency intiatives and has developed a Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan and Ciruclar Economy Strategy.
- Customer engagement supports a general awareness of efficiency, but is not part of an ongoing, structured water literacy program.

04

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



The NSW Government response to the PEC report supports in principle a more targeted approach to future LWU funding, focusing on LWUs unable to recover efficient costs from their own revenue sources (see Section 1.1.1).

In preparing for potential changes, HSC should focus on demonstrating efficient expenditure and maximising own-source revenue within affordability limits.

Future funding eligibility may consider affordability using a standardised, state-defined methodology to set affordability thresholds, consistent with approaches used by regulators such as IPART. LWUs that can show efficient costs, credible lifecycle plans, and clear cost-recovery efforts will be better placed to justify their funding needs under any new targeted funding framework.

Strong strategic planning, asset lifecycle management, and a clear view of efficient costs remain essential for managing risk, maintaining regulatory confidence, and delivering safe, reliable services. We have prioritised actions in these areas for HSC, which are expected to deliver benefit across a range of future regulatory and operating scenarios.

Recognising that HSC is operating in a resource constrained environment, priority should be given to the primary actions (Section 4.1), followed by the secondary actions (Section 4.2). The supporting actions (Section 4.3) can then be progressed over time to strengthen alignment with the requirements of the RAF strategic planning expectations. This prioritisation sequencing is shown in Figure 4-1.

Figure 4-1. Proposed action prioritisation and sequencing

The relevant strategic planning outcomes and core questions associated with each action are detailed in Appendix D. Generally, primary actions are intended to address the key capability gaps and business risks identified through the review, while secondary and supporting actions provide additional implementation guidance and examples of approaches that support alignment with the RAF strategic planning expectations.

As outlined in Section 1.3.2, the maturity assessment undertaken for this gap analysis differs from a formal SPA assessment. Should HSC wish to pursue SPA in the future, early engagement with DCCEEW may be beneficial to clarify expectations and approach.

4.1 Key recommendations and primary actions

Key recommendations for HSC's consideration are summarised below. Each recommendation is supported by a set of primary actions.

Recommendation 1 – regulatory compliance

Develop a legislative compliance register that incorporates all obligations, and clearly links requirements to responsibilities, controls, monitoring and reporting processes.

Related strategic planning outcomes: 1, 3, 4, 5

- Develop a consolidated legislative compliance register that links regulatory obligations to controls, responsibilities, monitoring and assurance processes.
- Review process for submitting DCCEEW LWU Performance Reporting data (noting that not all 23/24 and 24/25 data has been submitted)

Recommendation 2 – water security

Strengthen long-term water security through proactive planning and demand management.

Related strategic planning outcomes: 2, 6

- Implement a structured, long-term assessment framework to quantify water availability and reliability under future scenarios for current and potential water sources.
- Expand water security analysis to include scenario-based assessment of supply reliability, duration and severity of shortfalls.
- Update the drought management plan with defined stages, triggers and response actions aligned to service levels.

Recommendation 3 – water quality

Review and implement structured DWMS processes through risk assessments, regular review cycles and continuous improvement practices.

Related strategic planning outcomes: 3

- Review and update the DWMS (including the drinking water quality risk assessment).
- Ensure staff are trained in the DWMS and the legislative obligations related to their role.
- Ensure that Health Based Target risks are included within the drinking water quality risk assessment for current and potential sources.

Recommendation 4 – asset management

Improve asset data and the asset management system to support risk-based planning, maintenance and long-term investment decisions.

Related strategic planning outcomes: 5, 7

- Develop a water and sewer asset register with key attributes at a granular infrastructure level (including asset criticality, condition, capacity and performance) informed by operational and project data.
- Develop a process to maintain and validate asset data (e.g. capacity, condition, design basis) on an ongoing basis (outside of the valuation process).
- Undertake a structured asset criticality assessment based on service impacts and risk at an asset component level (e.g. WTP backwash pump).
- Use criticality to prioritise data collection, condition assessments and investment decisions.
- Identify and clearly flag critical assets within asset system and planning documents.
- Develop a documented maintenance schedule for key assets.
- Strengthen asset data (condition, criticality, risk) used in options analysis to ensure decisions are based on reliable inputs.
- Establish a clear linkage between service levels, asset risks and investment decisions (e.g. run to fail asset management approach).

Recommendation 5 – risk and resilience

Strengthen the integration of water and sewerage risk and resilience considerations within enterprise risk systems, including alignment with climate and emergency planning.

Related strategic planning outcomes: 6

- Ensure that the Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026) assessment outcomes feed into water and sewer strategic planning process.
- Review incident processes and documentation (such as the BCP) to include sufficient detail information covering prevention, preparedness, response and recovery across water and sewer services.
- Develop a drinking water quality incident and emergency response plan.
- Review currency of existing incident and emergency documentation for sewerage services (such as the PIRMP).

Recommendation 6 – knowledge management

Improve processes for capturing operational knowledge.

Related strategic planning outcomes: 5, 8

- Document key operational processes and known issues in a central, accessible format to reduce reliance on individuals.
- Develop procedures and a training plan for effective use of pressure sensors and flow meters.

Recommendation 7 – financial management

Strengthen financial planning, pricing and cost recovery frameworks by determining efficient costs, maximising own-source revenue where possible, and clearly quantifying the true funding gap to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Related strategic planning outcomes: 9, 11

- As part of the LTFP scenario analysis process, incorporate borrowing capacity and debt servicing limits into funding analysis to demonstrate prudent financing constraints.
- Extend current full cost recovery pricing model to include lifecycle costs (including renewals, and new upgrades).
- Define and document efficient operating and capital expenditure required to deliver agreed service levels, including validation through a bottom-up review of expenditure to confirm efficient costs at agreed service levels.
- Quantify a baseline funding gap position under current service levels and pricing, including sensitivity to key assumptions (demand, capital timing, cost escalation).
- Develop a 30-year LTFP for water and sewerage with key data from the AMPs (e.g. asset condition, renewals and lifecycle costs (once available)) and test key assumptions to validate long term forecasts.
- Document the methodology used to set raw water and standpipe charges, including how efficient costs are recovered.
- Identify and report community service obligations explicitly in financial documentation, including quantifying costs not recovered through prices.

Recommendation 8 – strategic decisions

Embed a monitoring and review cycle as part of a continual improvement approach to strategic planning.

Related strategic planning outcomes: 10

- As part of the LWU Strategic Plan review cycle, revisit and consider planning needs and assumptions included in the IWCM Strategy (such as issues identified around HBT shortfalls).

4.2 Secondary actions

Secondary actions identified for HSC's consideration are summarised in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. Summary of secondary actions for consideration

Aspect	Secondary actions
	Regulatory compliance *Related strategic planning outcomes: 1, 3*
	• Develop an artefact, such as a water and sewer spreadsheet or manual, that translates compliance requirements into staff activities (this could include activities, frequency and instructions). For example, this could include required monitoring, PIRMP exercises, fluoride reporting, risk assessments, DCCEEW performance monitoring.
	• Expand and validate the current regulatory framework to ensure all requirements are identified, current and linked to controls and assurance processes.

Aspect	Secondary actions
	Service needs *Related strategic planning outcomes: 1, 5*
	• As part of the next LoS update, undertake a structured internal review of LoS with relevant staff, supported by analysis of existing customer data (e.g. complaints, service requests, fault records and billing trends).
	• Embed early-stage customer engagement into project planning, ensuring engagement occurs before decisions and is scaled appropriately to the significance of the decision
	• Standardise reporting of engagement outcomes by documenting participation, key themes, analysis, and how feedback influenced decisions within Council reporting.
	• Strengthen engagement practices by documenting how feedback is analysed and used, including "you said / we did" summaries to demonstrate two-way engagement.
	• Establish a regular process to monitor and review LoS performance trends.
	Water security *Related strategic planning outcomes: 1, 2, 5, 6*
	• Document key demand assumptions (e.g. growth, climate, NRW) and define triggers to update forecasts.
	• Develop a single, maintained register of all water sources capturing key attributes (availability, reliability, entitlements, treatment requirements).
	• Link monitoring systems (e.g. SCADA, demand trends) to decision triggers for water restrictions.
	• Align drought escalation and response frameworks with broader incident and emergency management systems.
	• Develop and maintain a non-revenue analysis and water balance to quantify and improve water losses analysis on an ongoing basis.
	Water quality *Related strategic planning outcomes: 3*
	• Undertake a formal external DWMS audit or audit readiness review.
	• Document triggers for updating the DWMS and risk assessments (e.g. new risks, operational changes, major projects).
	• Implement regular reviews (such as monthly water quality meetings) to meet DWMS requirements including review of data, training, review of incidents and events, review improvement plan, and discuss upcoming works.
	Asset management *Related strategic planning outcomes: 5, 11*
	• Clearly document future capability requirements, including growth, asset degradation and climate risks, with defined timeframes.
	• Establish a consistent process to update capability assessments based on operational data and inspections.
	• Introduce a structured approach to scaling data collection and analysis based on asset importance.
	• Strengthen understanding of efficient costs beyond annual budgets, including renewals and major maintenance.

Aspect	Secondary actions
	Risk and resilience *Related strategic planning outcomes: 6*
	• Define a periodic review process to ensure risk registers remain current and supported by evidence. Ensure actions have clear timeframes
	• Establish processes for post-event debriefs and ensure outcomes are incorporated into long-term planning.
	• Review resilience (for hazards other than climate change) at a granular level, including workforce, infrastructure and system dependencies.
	Options analysis *Related strategic planning outcomes: 7, 12*
	• Assess options under a range of future scenarios, including extreme events and uncertainty, and evaluate service level impacts across multiple plausible futures, including compound events.
	• Develop an integrated portfolio of supply and demand options evaluated against a common set of objectives and metrics.
	• Develop supporting business cases for major capital investments demonstrating alignment to service levels and risk.
	• Establish a consistent methodology (e.g. through SAMP or policy) for applying whole-of-life assessment across decisions
	• Explicitly identify and assess risks and uncertainties for each option, including "do nothing" scenarios, within options analysis.
	• When undertaking options assessment, document a complete longlist of options including supply, demand and non-infrastructure options, and clearly record reasons for excluding options.
	• Document water efficiency options within options analysis and clearly compare against supply-focused investments.
	• Undertake post-implementation review of water efficiency initiatives to assess realised benefits.
	Knowledge management *Related strategic planning outcomes: 8*
	• Formalise consideration of delivery models (e.g. in-house, shared services, contractors, regional collaboration) as part of planning and decision-making.
	• Update the workforce plan to clearly identify required water and sewer specific skills, current capability gaps and future workforce needs, including requirements arising from new or upgraded assets.
	Financial management *Related strategic planning outcomes: 8, 11*
	• Establish a lifecycle costing approach for major investment and planning decisions that considers capital, operating, maintenance, renewal, compliance and end-of-life costs.
	• Ensure lifecycle cost assumptions are consistently reflected across IWCM, AMPs and LTFP
	• Document a simple and consistent cost allocation methodology for the general, water and sewer funds to improve transparency.

Aspect	Secondary actions
	• Document efficient costs required to deliver services (including operating, capital and renewal costs)
	• Establish a multi-year pricing path aligned with IWCM and the Delivery Program.
	• Expand revenue scenario analysis to assess impacts of demand variability and climate conditions.
	• Periodically review the need for trade waste charging arrangements.
	Strategic decisions *Related strategic planning outcomes: 5, 10*
	• Define triggers (e.g. time, performance decline, major investments, pricing reviews) to revisit benchmarking of efficiency against peers.
	• Consider opportunities to benchmark efficiency against peers for a broader range of items than water efficiency.
	• Introduce a simple process to track expected benefits and outcomes of major decisions and periodically evaluate whether intended outcomes are achieved.

4.3 Supporting actions

Supporting actions identified for HSC's consideration are outlined in Table 4-2. These actions can be progressed over time to strengthen alignment with the requirements of the RAF strategic planning expectations.

Table 4-2. Summary of supporting actions for consideration

Aspect	Actions
	Regulatory compliance *Related strategic planning outcomes: 1, 6*
	• Develop and maintain a clause-level regulatory obligations register mapping each requirement to controls, responsible roles, monitoring frequency and evidence of compliance.
	• Introduce a simple tracking mechanism to document Council's contribution to regional strategy outcomes to improve visibility.
	• Establish a formal process to track, assign and close out compliance actions arising from monitoring and audits.
	• Document alignment with regional and state water strategies through a simple summary showing how key priorities and risks have been incorporated into local planning.
	Service needs *Related strategic planning outcomes: 1, 2, 6, 12*
	• Integrate customer profile data into demand forecasting assumptions (e.g. residential vs industrial).
	• Consider implementing a structured customer engagement and willingness-to-pay program to inform and validate LoS and investment decisions. This should include targeted engagement (e.g. surveys, workshops, or deliberative forums) focused on key service attributes such as reliability, fault response, water pressure, and affordability trade-offs, including the needs of vulnerable customers.

Aspect	Actions
	• Develop and maintain a simple customer profile that distinguishes key segments (e.g. residential/non-residential, permanent/transient, spatial distribution) and use this to inform demand forecasts, planning assumptions, and revenue modelling.
	• Establish a process to periodically extract, analyse and report customer insights (e.g. CRM, complaints, engagement) and document how these inform planning and service decisions.
	• Undertake customer engagement to define acceptable water security levels of service, risk, and restriction impacts.
	• Translate engagement outcomes into service level definitions and restriction frameworks.
	• Undertake targeted engagement with customers on drought response measures, including restrictions and impacts.
	• Develop and implement a structured water literacy program with proactive education and behavioural messaging.
	Water security *Related strategic planning outcomes: 2, 12*
	• Establish a consistent approach to climate analysis across all sources and define triggers to update analysis (e.g. new climate data, changes in demand or supply).
	• Review system performance against defined service levels and assess the effectiveness of restriction regimes.
	• Improve documentation that the high confidence associated with Council's access to water volumes (considering uncertainty levels and climate resilience) as justification that simplified analysis is proportionate for HSC's context.
	• Document alignment of current water efficiency practices with the NSW Water Efficiency Framework.
	Sewerage services *Related strategic planning outcomes: 1, 4*
	• Formalise documentation of sewer load assumptions and influencing factors (e.g. infiltration, wet weather impacts) to complement operational knowledge and improve planning transparency and repeatability for future demand forecasting.
	• Strengthen investigative monitoring to identify emerging wastewater risks.
	• Implement a formal process to capture, assign and close out corrective actions arising from EPL monitoring and incidents, maintaining auditable records of compliance actions and evidence of closure.
	Asset management *Related strategic planning outcomes: 5*
	• Document system capability (including condition, capacity and limitations) and link this to defined service levels.
	Risk and resilience *Related strategic planning outcomes: 6*
	• Establish and document a process that links water and sewer risks to the enterprise risk framework, including defined ownership, controls, review cycles and escalation pathways.
	• Define triggers to update climate data inputs (e.g. new datasets, planning updates, major decisions).

Aspect	Actions
	• Identify and assess financial, operational and reputational risks associated with drought, and integrate drought risks into enterprise risk management.
	Options analysis and strategic decisions *Related strategic planning outcomes: 2, 10*
	• Define measurable, customer-informed levels of service (e.g. restriction triggers, reliability targets, willingness to pay), incorporate these into water security models and scenarios, and clearly demonstrate in options analysis and decision documentation how these service levels have been applied to assess and select preferred solutions.
	• Document how water security assessments (i.e. restriction triggers) are updated over time in response to demand, climate and system changes.
	• Strengthen decision documentation by explicitly linking problems, risks, objectives, options and selected solutions (e.g. through standardised decision paper templates with clear, measurable service objectives).
	Financial management *Related strategic planning outcomes: 9, 11, 12*
	• Define triggers to revisit revenue strategies where assumptions (e.g. grant funding) change.
	• Formalise the basis for not having developer charges.
	• Consider tracking evidence-based affordability indicators (e.g. arrears, hardship uptake, payment trends) to inform pricing decisions.
	• Undertake proportionate customer research and engagement to assess willingness to pay for different service levels and investment outcomes, and use the results to inform pricing and service decisions.
	• Assess cost differences between supply systems and document the rationale for maintaining uniform pricing or introducing differentiation.
	• Define triggers for updating demand forecasts used for pricing (e.g. demand changes, growth changes, major investments).
	• Document a clear dividend policy outlining preconditions for payment (financial sustainability and service outcomes).
	• Document developer servicing approach, including assumptions on growth and infrastructure cost recovery.
	• Document methodology for discharge factors and document the reasons for tailoring (or not) a customer's discharge factor for individual circumstances.
	• Document strategies to mitigate customer impacts (e.g. phased increases, support programs) and demonstrate consideration in pricing decisions.
	• Document the basis for pricing decisions, including consideration of marginal cost and augmentation needs where relevant.
	• Document the methodology used to calculate availability charges, including allocation across customer groups.
	• Document the process for the treatment of taxes and TER within revenue requirements.
	• Periodically review trade waste charges against the Liquid Trade Waste Management Guidelines for councils in regional NSW (DCCEEW) to ensure ongoing alignment.

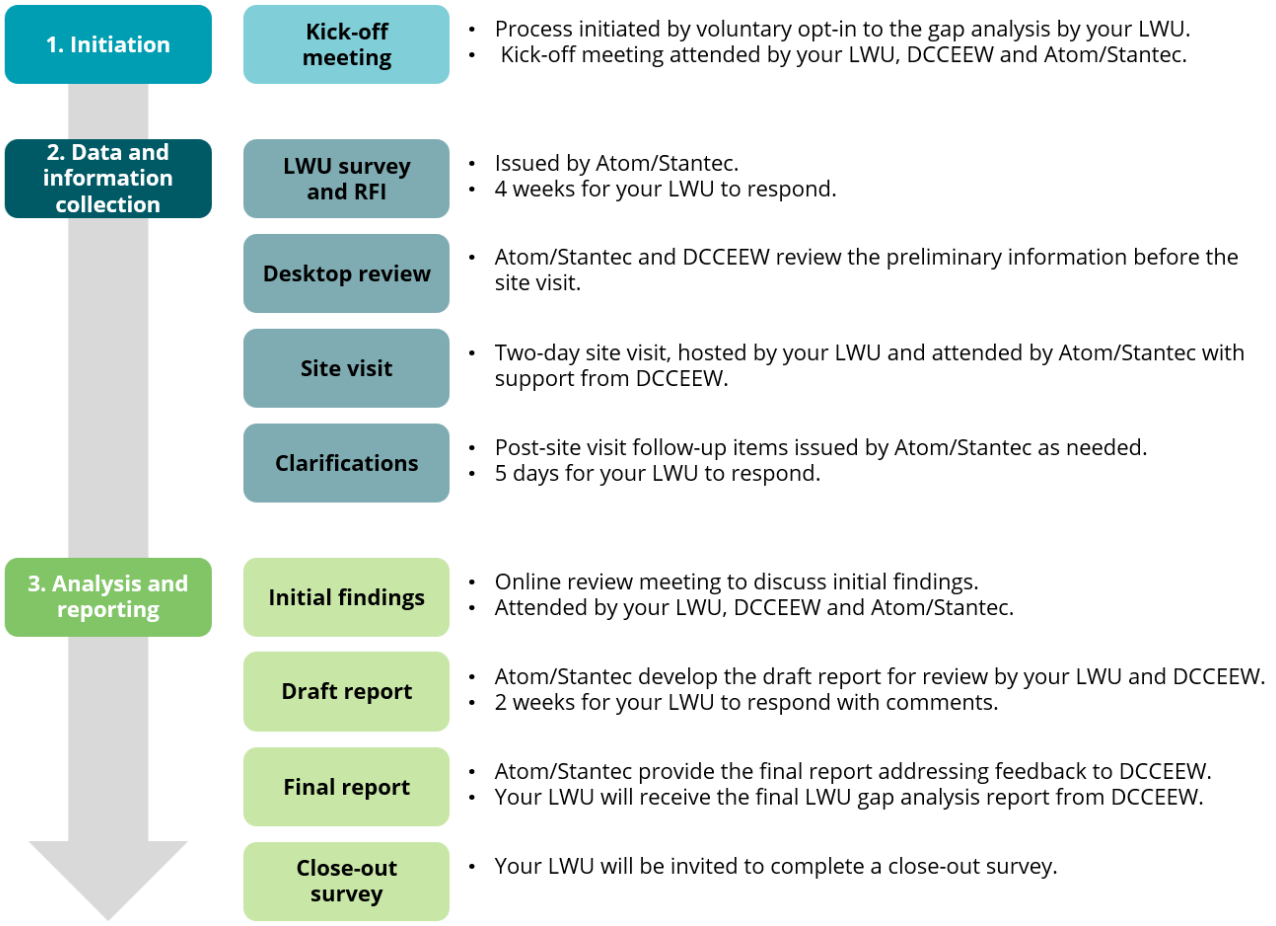
Aspect	Actions
	• Undertake structured TRB impact analysis across customer groups, including vulnerable customers.
	• Define and document funding and cost-recovery arrangements for urban water cycle outcomes, including roles of general fund and water/sewer business.
	• Undertake and document a consistent assessment of feasible resource recovery and reuse opportunities (e.g. stormwater harvesting, biosolids), including evaluation criteria, assumptions, constraints, and conclusions.
	IWCM principles *Related strategic planning outcomes: 12*
	• Define and document urban water cycle outcomes (e.g. water security, public health, environmental, amenity and liveability) and link these to community values through structured engagement.
	• Establish a process to integrate datasets and planning tools across water, sewer and stormwater systems to inform strategic decision-making.
	• Formalise governance arrangements across water, sewerage, planning, stormwater and environmental functions for both external and internal parties.
	• Map all relevant elements of the urban water cycle within the area of operations.

Appendix A
GAP ANALYSIS PROCESS AND STANDARDS

A.1 Gap analysis process

The gap analysis process is summarised in Figure A-1.

Figure A-1. Overview of the LWU strategic planning gap analysis process



A.2 Standards

In undertaking the gap analysis, the project was guided by ISO 19011:2018 – Guidelines for Auditing Management Systems, ensuring that the review was conducted in accordance with an established and recognised audit methodology.

Regard was given to the following standards, especially where these provide specific detail that are appropriate to the review.

- ASAE 3100 (2022) Compliance Engagements issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board
- ISO 17021:2015 Conformity Assessment – outlining requirements for the competence, consistency and impartiality of bodies auditing and certifying management systems)
- ISO 31000:2018 Risk management.

The gap analysis was sample-based, consistent with the assurance principles set out in ASAE 3100. Evidence was collected through a combination of methods, including:

- review of documentation
- interviews and inquiries with relevant stakeholders
- observation during the site visit.

This approach provided sufficient assurance while maintaining proportionality to the scope, context and purpose of the gap analysis.

Appendix B
SITE VISIT DETAILS

The site visit to HSC was held on 13-14 May 2026, and the site visit details are provided in this Appendix.

B.1 Purpose

The purpose of the site visit was to validate current practices and challenges, build capacity through shared understanding and discussion, and address any remaining information gaps to inform the strategic planning gap analysis.

B.2 Site inspection

A site inspection was undertaken on the 14 May 2026 to view the:

- Hay WTP
- Hay STP
- Hay storage depot and sewer pump station
- Pine St raw and potable water reservoirs
- Recent water main break
- Leonard St raw water pump station, and
- Murray St raw water pump station.

Our observations from the site inspection have informed the gap analysis findings in Appendix D. Site inspection observations and comments are provided in this section for completeness.

B.2.1 Hay WTP

During the visit of the Hay WTP and associated infrastructure, the following discussions and observations were noted:

- *Incident and operational response*:
  - During the flood event the WTP sourced water from the river and the raw water system hydrants, as well as from the private irrigation scheme, ensuring continuity of supply.
  - Key documentation such as the PIRMP (July 2023) and CCPs were displayed in the control room.
- *Operational improvements*: Council participated in the AOS project, resulting in a number of operational improvements (such as installation of valves) and identifications of additional improvement actions.
- *Asset maintenance and planning*:
  - The filter media has not previously been replaced and is contributing to filter breakthrough issues.
  - Maintenance issues were noted, including deteriorated pits around sludge outlet valves and the need to empty the sludge lagoons. It was advised that these works are planned to be bundled with other activities requiring a long-reach excavator.
  - The Operator advised that assets are generally operated on a run to failure basis with limited maintenance undertaken, noting that there was redundancy in some equipment that allowed for continued operation (e.g. dosing pump standby units).
  - A new storage shed is available on site, with spares already charged out of the depot and used on a “grab-and-go” basis without a formal stocktake process.
  - No critical spare assessment has been undertaken.

- There were no documented asset maintenance schedules.
- The chlorine supply is limited to four cylinders at a time kept on site due to cost considerations of storing additional cylinders.

B.2.2 Hay STP

The STP was constructed in 2019, replacing the end-of-life trickling filter system constructed in the 1950s.

During the visit of the Hay STP and associated infrastructure, the following discussions and observations were noted:

- *Asset maintenance and planning*:
  - Limited maintenance is undertaken. Maintenance activities primarily involve routine checks such as monitoring oil levels in bearings, maintaining gearboxes (historically problematic), mowing, and managing sludge disposal to landfill. The nearby waste facility was identified as a potential future recycled water user.
  - While there are O&M manuals provided for the site, there are no documented maintenance schedules.
  - The plant is typically attended daily, with the WTP attendance being prioritised.
- *Monitoring and regulatory requirements*: The monitoring undertaken includes quarterly piezometric sampling, which Council advised is at a greater frequency than the annual requirement.
- *Incident management*: Documentation gaps were noted, including an outdated PIRMP (2014), and uncertainties if recent PIRMP scenario test has been undertaken.

B.2.3 Depot and SPS

During the visit of the depot and SPS and associated infrastructure, the following discussions and observations were noted:

- *Asset maintenance and planning*:
  - The depot stores maintenance equipment and spares
  - Two backup generators are available on site.

B.2.4 Pine Street reservoirs

There are three raw water reservoirs and one filtered water reservoir, with the latter designed to be taller and narrower for provision of pressure.

During the visit of the Pine street reservoirs and associated infrastructure, the following discussions and observations were noted:

- *Asset maintenance and inspection planning*:
  - Reservoir inspections are not scheduled. There was uncertainty on when the last clean/inspection had been undertaken.
  - Significant sludge accumulation can occur in the raw water reservoirs.
  - The filtered water reservoir has not been drained and cleaned for a long time due to a lack of redundancy, supporting the need for an additional reservoir.
- *Levels of service and contingency planning*: Council is considering construction of a second filtered water reservoir to improve redundancy and operational flexibility.

B.2.5 Water main repair

During the visit of the water main repair, the following discussions and observations were noted:

- *Asset renewal and data*: A lack of data on valve location was noted as a constraint. A valve replacement program is in place. The raw water network consists of ageing cast iron and some asbestos pipes.

B.2.6 Leonard Street raw water pump station

During the visit of the Murray Street raw water pump station and associated infrastructure, the following discussions and observations were noted:

- *System resilience and water security*: Operational challenges arise during periods of low river levels, where silt builds up near the embankment. Retaining walls have been installed to mitigate this, and a temporary floating suction pipe can be deployed to access deeper water. Council's primary concern remains maintaining raw water supply for firefighting purposes.
- *Asset renewal*: This year's capital works program includes replacement of the gantry at the pump station to make it safer for maintenance works. A contractor has been engaged for this work.

B.2.7 Murray Street raw water pump station

During the visit of the Hay WTP and associated infrastructure, the following discussions and observations were noted:

- *Risk, resilience and asset planning*:
  - The area around the pump station was inundated for 5-6 weeks during the flood in 2022. Council is planning to construct a levee around the pump station to improve flood resilience.

B.3 Participants

Gap analysis participation is captured in Table B-1 and Table B-2.

Table B-1. Participants for gap analysis day 1

First name	Last name	Context setting	Water security, water quality and environment	Asset management (capacity, condition, capability)	Customer, community and stakeholder engagement	Workforce planning	Integrated water cycle management (IWCM) principles	Pricing and financial management	Risk management and resilience	Governance, regulation and decision making
Natalie	Crawford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Charlie	Hickson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leanne	O'Brien	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Warwick	Brown	✓	✓	✓						
David	Webb	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greg	Stewart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Matt	Romer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table B-2. Participants for gap analysis day 2

First name	Last name	Hay WTP	Hay STP	Hay depot/shed/ SPS	Pine St reservoirs	Main break	Leonard St raw water pump station	Murray St raw water pump station	Close out
Natalie	Crawford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Charlie	Hickson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leanne	O'Brien	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
David	Webb								✓
Greg	Stewart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Matt	Romer	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
David	Dunnett	✓	✓	✓					

Appendix C
EVIDENCE

Business Paper presented Ordinary Meeting of Council 15th August 2023

A summary of documentation and evidence considered as part of the gap analysis is included in this Appendix.

Evidence provided by the LWU

- App A _ Hay WTP Performance Optimisation Report Nov 2021.pdf
- App E _ Groundwater Supply Golder - Nov 2021.pdf
- App E _ Groundwater Supply Golder.pdf
- Appendix 2 Hay LGA Vulnerability Assessment Report - Golder.pdf
- BC Appendix A -2005 Water Licence.pdf
- BC Appendix B - Hay IWCM Supplementary Paper - Final - June 2022.pdf
- BC Appendix C - Hay Urban Water Metering Project-program-logic - Final.pdf
- BC Appendix D -Smart Meters Case Studies.pdf
- BC Appendix E - Household responses to water survey.pdf
- BC Appendix F - CSO Funding Application Project Management Plan- V1 - 7-02-2026.pdf
- BC Appendix G - Project Program.pdf
- BC Appendix H - Project Budget.pdf
- BC Appendix I - Project Cash Flow.pdf
- BC Appendix J.1 - Asset Management Strategy 2018-2028.pdf
- BC Appendix J.2 - Water Asset Management Plan - Version 4 - April 2025.pdf
- BC Appendix K - Cost Benefit Analysis.pdf
- BC Appendix L.1 - Project Risk Management Plan - Hay Urban Digital Water Metering Project V1 7-2-2026.pdf
- BC Appendix L.2 - Hay Shire Council - Corporate Risk Management Plan.pdf
- Community Service Obligation - Financing Model.pdf
- Draft Drainage and Flood Mitigation Asset Management Plan - Version 4 - April 2025.pdf
- Draft future Full staff structure March 2026.pdf
- Draft Report - Water and Sewer Review DW Edits 25-2-2026.pdf
- Draft Sewerage Asset Management Plan - Version 4 - April 2025.pdf
- Draft Water Asset Management Plan - Version 4 - April 2025.pdf
- Drought Management Plan.pdf
- Hay DSP (Final).pdf
- Hay IWCM Supplementary Paper - Final - June 2022.pdf
- Hay Town.pdf
- Hay WTP Performance Optimisation Report _ Final Draft.pdf
- LWU Strategic Plan V2.1 1-2-2026.pdf
- Sale (Trade) of Water Policy 2024.pdf
- Section 14 - 18 (Final Version).pdf
- Service Review Framework - V2 May 2025.pdf
- Summary Report-Hay Groundwater Investigation 11-3-2025.pdf
- V2.1 Risk-Based Drinking Water Management System Doc - Dec 2015.pdf
- WAL45772.pdf
- WAMS18743_HayShireCouncil_GW_Report_Review.pdf
- Water and Sewer June 2024.xlsx
- 13th November 2025 ERM Minutes.doc
- 19th March 2026 ERM Minutes DRAFT.doc
- Agenda February 2026.docx

- BCP & Subplans.pdf
- Climate Resilience Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan - V2 4-5-2026.pdf
- Digital Transformation Strategy - Supplementary Paper V2 February 2026.pdf
- Digital Transformation Strategy 2024-2029 V3 Final Doc.pdf
- DWMS annual report 2023.pdf
- Hay Circular Economy Strategy.pdf
- Hay DWMS-annual-report-2019 Final July 2020.pdf
- Manex annual risk report.pdf
- Risk Register update 2025.xlsx
- W S Supply Treatment of Drinking Water BCP.pdf
- W S Treatment Discharge of Sewer BCP.pdf

Files provided by DCCEEW

- 5814 - Hay Water Supply System Water Quality and Telemetry Strategy Report_Final_Issued.pdf
- Final Groundwater Supply Golder.pdf
- Hay IWCM Supplementary Paper - Final - June 2022.pdf
- Hay WTP Performance Optimisation Report _ Final Draft.pdf
- HayIWCM_Stategy-2017-Oct.pdf
- HSC IWCM Issues Paper Final with Appendix.pdf
- PS201360-WSP-NEW-REP-0001 RevA01 - Hay GW assessment.pdf
- Summary Report-Hay Groundwater Investigation 11-3-2025.pdf

Publicly available evidence

- Business Paper Tuesday 24th February 2026.pdf
- Draft Drainage and Flood Mitigation Asset Management Plan - Version 4 - April 2025.pdf
- Draft Sewerage Asset Management Plan - Version 4 - April 2025.pdf
- Draft Water Asset Management Plan - Version 4 - April 2025.pdf
- Financial Sustainability Strategy 2026.pdf
- Hay Annual Report.pdf
- Hay Asset Management Strategy.pdf
- Hay Community Engagement Strategy & Participation Plan 2019.pdf
- Hay Community Strategic Plan.pdf
- Hay Delivery Plan.pdf
- Hay Long Term Financial Plan.pdf
- Hay Operational Plan.pdf
- Hay Shire Council Annual Financial Statements 2025 (1).pdf
- Hay Shire Council Annual Financial Statements 2025.pdf
- Hay Workforce Management Plan.pdf
- hay-and-carrathool-rdr-plan.pdf
- Revenue Policy (Fees & Charges) 2024-2025.pdf

Appendix D
DETAILED FINDINGS

The detailed gap analysis findings are contained in this Appendix.

Figure D-1 depicts the gap analysis maturity assessment results at the expectation level within each strategic planning outcome, and Figure D-2 summarises the distribution of expectations at each maturity level across the strategic planning outcomes.

Figure D-1. Number of expectations at each maturity level across the 12 strategic planning outcomes

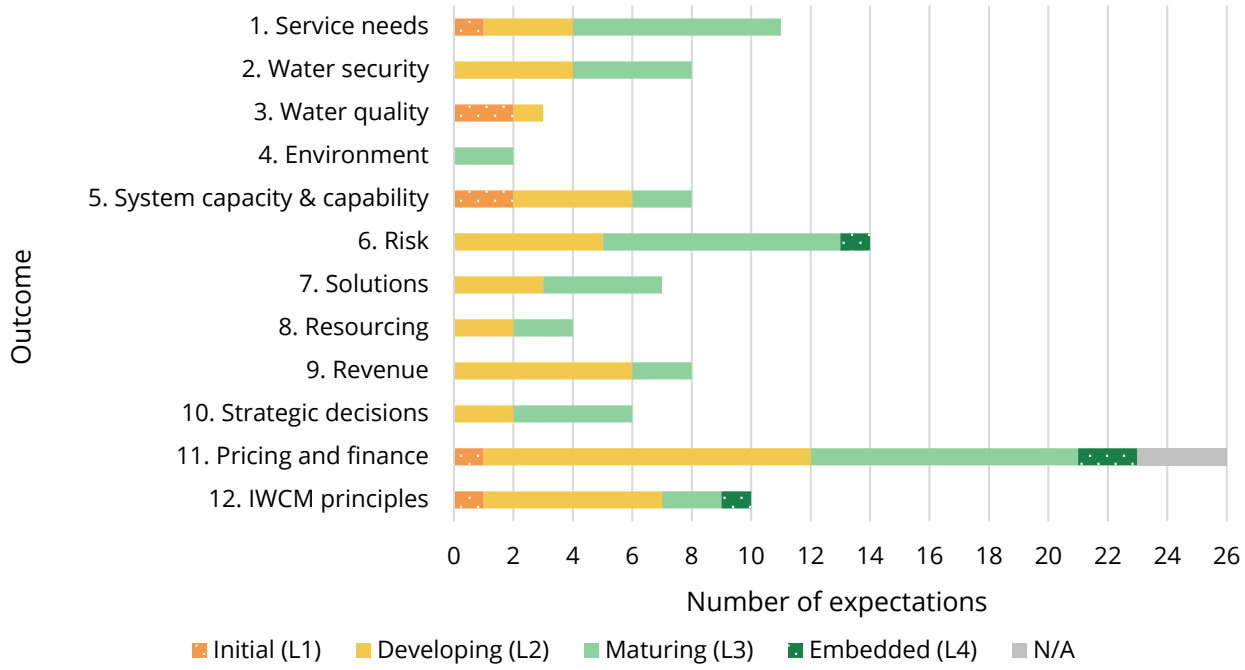
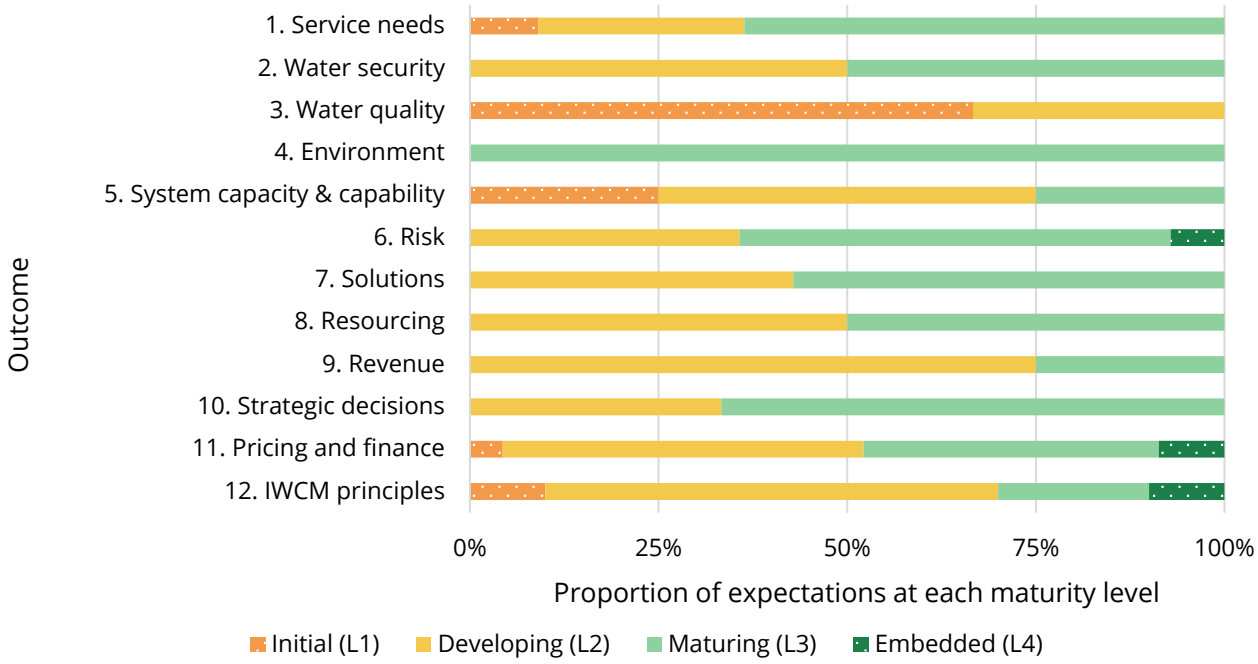


Figure D-2. Proportion of expectations at each maturity level across the 12 strategic planning outcomes



Western NSW Strategic Planning Gap Analysis

Local Water Utility	Hay Shire Council	Version	2.0
Company	Atom Consulting & Stantec		
Lead assessor	Natalie Crawford		

	Outcome	Outcome Result		Outcome	Outcome Result
1	Understanding service needs	Maturing	7	Understanding solutions to deliver services	Maturing
2	Understanding water security	Maturing	8	Understanding resourcing needs	Maturing
3	Understanding water quality	Initial	9	Understanding revenue sources	Developing
4	Understanding environmental impacts	Maturing	10	Make and implement sound strategic decisions	Maturing
5	Understanding system capacity, capability and efficiency	Developing	11	Implement sound pricing and prudent financial management	Developing
6	Understanding other key risks and challenges	Maturing	12	Promote integrated water cycle management	Developing

1 Understanding service needs

Core Questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
1.1 What are customers' needs, values and preferences?	*1.1.1*	A local water utility should have a sound understanding of, and deliver its services consistent with, the requirements and expectations of its regulators	***Developing***	Council advised there is a compliance register based on the Office of Local Government guidelines. However, the compliance register does not comprehensively pick up key obligations, such as those in the Public Health Regulation (e.g. there is a level of monitoring and reporting, but significant gaps exist as discussed in Outcome 3). There is a reliance on the department (e.g. Inspector) informing Council of any regulatory changes. This reflects a gap in artefacts and governance, with reliance on distributed systems and staff knowledge rather than a structured compliance framework. Further findings relating to water quality regulatory obligations are provided in 3.2.1.	Develop a consolidated legislative compliance register that links regulatory obligations to controls, responsibilities, monitoring and assurance processes.	Develop an artefact, such as a water and sewer spreadsheet or manual, that translates compliance requirements into staff activities (this could include activities, frequency and instructions). For example, this could include required monitoring, PIRMP exercises, fluoride reporting, risk assessments, DCCEEW performance monitoring. As part of the next LoS update, undertake a structured internal review of LoS with relevant staff, supported by analysis of existing customer data (e.g. complaints, service requests, fault records and billing trends). Embed early-stage customer engagement into project planning, ensuring engagement occurs before decisions and is scaled appropriately to the significance of the decision Strengthen engagement practices by documenting how feedback is analysed and used, including "you said / we did" summaries to demonstrate two-way engagement. Standardise reporting of engagement outcomes by documenting participation, key themes, analysis, and how feedback influenced decisions within Council reporting.	Develop and maintain a clause-level regulatory obligations register mapping each requirement to controls, responsible roles, monitoring frequency and evidence of compliance. Develop and maintain a simple customer profile that distinguishes key segments (e.g. residential/non-residential, permanent/transient, spatial distribution) and use this to inform demand forecasts, planning assumptions, and revenue modelling. Establish a process to periodically extract, analyse and report customer insights (e.g. CRM, complaints, engagement) and document how these inform planning and service decisions. Consider implementing a structured customer engagement and willingness-to-pay program to inform and validate LoS and investment decisions. This should include targeted engagement (e.g. surveys, workshops, or deliberative forums) focused on key service attributes such as reliability, fault response, water pressure, and affordability trade-offs, including the needs of vulnerable customers.
	1.1.2	A local water utility should have a sound understanding of the key characteristics of its customer base	***Maturing***	Council has a strong practical understanding of its customer base, including population, growth and socio-economics. Information is documented in the Councils IWCM Strategy. However, it is not consolidated into a formal, regularly updated customer profile that is validated against metering, billing or demographic datasets. Key characteristics such as seasonal demand drivers, customer segmentation and ability-to-pay are broadly understood but not systematically documented or linked to demand forecasting, pricing strategies or long-term planning assumptions. This reflects a gap in artefacts and data, with reliance on tacit knowledge rather than structured information.			
	1.1.3	A local water utility should have an ongoing understanding of its customers' needs, values and preferences	***Developing***	Council advise that there is limited customer engagement undertaken due to the low level of community interest. Council obtains customer feedback through mechanisms including IP&R processes and public exhibition. The Customer Service staff are kept informed of W&S issues to deal with customer complaints as necessary. Council has implemented a snap/send/solve CRM system for customers to easily report any complaints. There is limited evidence of systematic analysis, trend tracking, or translation of feedback into service planning decisions. This reflects a gap in systems and processes, with analysis largely reliant on staff local knowledge rather than structured and repeatable methods.			
	1.1.4	A local water utility's service levels should be informed by a strong understanding of its customers' needs, values and preferences, including their willingness to pay for service levels and outcomes, obtained through periodic customer engagement	***Developing***	Council strategic directions and objectives are included in the Community Strategic Plan. Levels of service for water and sewer are documented in the IWCM Strategy and Hay Shire Councils Strategic Business Plan (2009). Technical levels of service are included in the Asset Management Plan. The IWCM recommends updates to some levels of service targets. However, service levels are not clearly differentiated between regulatory and discretionary requirements. It is not clear, how customer preferences, including willingness to pay, are systematically captured or used to inform service level decisions. This reflects gaps in artefacts and governance, with incomplete frameworks that are not consistently applied.			
	1.1.5	A local water utility's customer engagement should start early and be broad and deep	***Maturing***	Council undertakes targeted customer engagement. Information about important decisions is generally published for community input prior to works, however Council advised that customer engagement is low. Council conducted a community survey in October 2024 to gain insight into public support for digital water metering. Council also engaged with community in Booligal about bringing in a water network as part of a business case to report back to Councillors. Engagement is not consistently structured or planned for all significant decisions (e.g. pricing), and depth of engagement is typically limited to consultation, reflecting gaps in processes and governance.			
	1.1.6	A local water utility's customer engagement should also be consistent with the following principles: Objective; Representative; Proportionate; Meaningful; Clearly communicated and accurate.	***Maturing***	Council's engagement approach is practical and well-suited to its local context. Council has a Community Engagement Strategy which outlines Council's methods of engagement and public exhibition periods. Council acknowledges that feedback levels are low and therefore analysis of feedback is limited. Council implements two-way communication via customer service staff and is working to add two-way communication capabilities to its recently implemented snap/send/solve CRM system. There is not demonstrable evidence of representation across the full customer base. This reflects a gap in data, limiting confidence that engagement outcomes fully reflect the diversity of customer views.			
	1.1.7	A local water utility should report on the process and outcomes of its customer engagement	***Initial***	Council reports on engagement activities through Council papers and public exhibition processes. However, there was no clear evidence of structured reporting on engagement outcomes, including who participated, key themes raised, how feedback was analysed, or how it influenced decisions. A formal "you said / we did" approach was not demonstrated, and there is limited transparency in linking customer input to outcomes or decisions. Willingness-to-pay insights are not collected or reported. This reflects gaps in data, systems and governance, with reporting not captured, consistent or linked to decision-making processes.			

Core Questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
1.2 What current and future demands are placed on water supply and sewerage systems?	*1.2.1*	A local water utility should analyse and forecast demand for services based on credible and consistent forecasts and assumptions on population and connected properties and sound knowledge of its customer characterisation and profile	***Maturing***	Council uses credible population projections and development assumptions, and applies these in demand forecasting to inform planning. The IWCM supplementary paper (2022) includes forecasts that support planning decisions. Assumptions relating to climate variability, non-revenue water and infiltration are not consistently formalised or documented within a repeatable framework, reflecting gaps in analysis processes.		Document key demand assumptions (e.g. growth, climate, NRW) and define triggers to update forecasts.	Integrate customer profile data into demand forecasting assumptions (e.g. residential vs industrial). Formalise documentation of sewer load assumptions and influencing factors (e.g. infiltration, wet weather impacts) to complement operational knowledge and improve planning transparency and repeatability for future demand forecasting.
	1.2.2	A local water utility should understand its current and future water demands and sewerage system loads, including taking account of key influencing factors on demands/loads and peak behaviour	***Maturing***	Demand is generally well understood, with average and peak water flows included in IWCM strategy. There is limited projected population growth. Forecasts consider water losses (raw and potable water supply). The STP was constructed in 2016 and has a capacity well above projected growth. Council has a good working operational understanding of impacts on network capacity and service. However, demand forecasting is largely based on historical trends and operational knowledge, with no formal demand model or structured forecasting process. This reflects a gap, with demand management not supported by a formalised processes.			
1.3 How will the local water utility consider and address objectives, priorities and evidence of other relevant state or regional strategic planning, including the NSW Water Strategy and regional water strategies?	*1.3.1*	A local water utility should be aware of, understand and consider any objective, priority and evidence set out in relevant state and regional water strategies that may impact on their service needs now and into the future, including risks to town water security	***Maturing***	The regional water strategy does not assign clearly defined delivery actions to Council, instead emphasising collaboration and local implementation through existing planning processes. In this context, Council is appropriately contributing to the intent of the strategy through its ongoing programs. While alignment is not explicitly documented, reflecting gaps in artefacts, systems and governance, Council's activities are consistent with priority actions identified in the regional strategy.			Document alignment with regional and state water strategies through a simple summary showing how key priorities and risks have been incorporated into local planning. Introduce a simple tracking mechanism to document Council's contribution to regional strategy outcomes to improve visibility.
	1.3.2	A local water utility should consider and pursue any actions in regional water strategies' implementation plans that they have committed to leading on or contributing to	***Maturing***	The regional water strategy does not assign clearly defined delivery actions to Council, instead emphasising collaboration and local implementation through existing planning processes. In this context, Council is appropriately contributing to the intent of the strategy through its ongoing programs; however, alignment is not formally documented, reflecting gaps in artefacts, systems and governance.			

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy and Supplementary Paper •Community Engagement Strategy & Participation Plan •Water metering survey •Strategic Business Plan	•DWMS •Regulatory compliance register •Snap/send/solve CRM system •Community Strategic Plan	• Regional Water Strategy • Councillor engagement with community issues • Council reporting processes • Existing IP&R framework

2 Understanding water security

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
2.1 What is the local water utility's access to current and potential water supply sources?	*2.1.1*	The local water utility should understand available water sources	***Maturing***	Council has a clear and practical understanding of its water sources. Council acknowledges that while the Murrumbidgee River is secure it is vulnerable to contamination events (such as algae). Council currently only uses about half of the WAL. Groundwater studies at two locations have been undertaken to investigate the potential for an emergency bore water source. Council also has a WAL through the private irrigation system. Actions are included in the LWU Strategic Plan to undertake an assessment on treatability of potential groundwater sources. However, water sources, access arrangements, reliability and treatment requirements are not consolidated into a single, structured dataset or planning artefact. This reflects a gap in artefacts and systems.		Develop a single, maintained register of all water sources capturing key attributes (availability, reliability, entitlements, treatment requirements).	Establish a consistent approach to climate analysis across all sources and define triggers to update analysis (e.g. new climate data, changes in demand or supply).
	2.1.2	The local water utility should understand the climate-resilience of its water sources	***Maturing***	Council's IWCM considers alternate water sources, including groundwater as an emergency or drought supply source. Council's IWCM includes modelling of increased demand considering climate change. Council's understanding of climate resilience of its source water is limited, as the source is highly reliable and investigations into alternative sources are focused around vulnerability of water quality. A Hydrogeological desktop study was completed in 2021 which included yield information for the aquifers in the area surrounding Hay to assess the feasibility of a new bore field. Linkages between climate projections, water availability, and demand assumptions are not consistently documented, limiting the line of sight in how climate risks inform water supply resilience over time. This reflects a gap in systems and analysis, with reliance on historical experience of river behaviour rather than a documented and consistent assessment of source resilience.			
2.2 How will the local water utility address current and future risks around continuity and reliability of access to water supply sources?	*2.2.1*	The local water utility should understand the long-term availability and reliability of access to water from relevant water sources and any risks to access now and into the future	***Developing***	Council demonstrates a strong understanding of risks to long-term water availability and access. While the IWCM Issues Paper incorporates climate considerations in demand modelling, it does not include climate-informed analysis of the Murrumbidgee River. As part of the development of the IWCM, Council undertook a Vulnerability Assessment Report (2021) and Hydrogeological desktop study to assess the feasibility of a new bore field (2021), considering intrusion, contamination and ecological degradation risks, as well as existing bore field yield data. However, availability and reliability of sources under climate change has not been modelled. Long-term availability and reliability are not explicitly analysed using a common, integrated modelling framework, and access risks are not systematically quantified across scenarios. This reflects a gap in systems and analysis.	Implement a structured, long-term assessment framework to quantify water availability and reliability under future scenarios for current and potential water sources. Expand water security analysis to include scenario-based assessment of supply reliability, duration and severity of shortfalls. Update the drought management plan with defined stages, triggers and response actions aligned to service levels.	Link monitoring systems (e.g. SCADA, demand trends) to decision triggers for water restrictions.	Review system performance against defined service levels and assess the effectiveness of restriction regimes. Define measurable, customer-informed levels of service (e.g. restriction triggers, reliability targets, willingness to pay), incorporate these into water security models and scenarios, and clearly demonstrate in options analysis and decision documentation how these service levels have been applied to assess and select preferred solutions. Document how water security assessments (i.e. restriction triggers) are updated over time in response to demand, climate and system changes. Improve documentation that the high confidence associated with Council's access to water volumes (considering uncertainty levels and climate resilience) as justification that simplified analysis is proportionate for HSC's context. Undertake customer engagement to define acceptable water security levels of service, risk, and restriction impacts. Translate engagement outcomes into service level definitions and restriction frameworks.
	2.2.2	To understand the water security of its supply systems, the local water utility should apply sound water security criteria and service levels	***Developing***	Council have a Drought Management Plan (2018). Council advised that the plan has not been enacted and the triggers are not appropriate to Councils current needs. The plan includes consideration of restriction activities to reduce demand for different response levels. There is limited evidence of the basis of the current triggers and their alignment to service levels. These findings reflect gaps in systems and analysis processes, limiting the ability to consistently monitor performance against defined water security objectives.			
	2.2.3	The local water utility should assess the water security of supply systems against these water security criteria and service levels taking account of availability and reliability of water access from relevant water sources, the capacity and capability of its supply systems, and the demand for water now and in the future	***Maturing***	Levels of service for water security are not clearly defined as a customer service outcome, e.g. severity and duration of water restrictions. Council has an understanding of its key water security challenges (including source vulnerability to contamination). The IWCM supplementary report includes modelling of demand against water access licence limits (including potential reductions in drought periods). However, system performance is not routinely or periodically assessed against defined water security criteria (such as LoS) and future demand scenarios using a repeatable framework. This reflects a gap in systems and analysis, with reliance on operational judgement rather than a repeatable and evidence-based security assessment process.			
	2.2.4	The local water utility's water security analysis should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the water supply system and the likelihood and consequences of supply shortfall	***Maturing***	The level of analysis applied is appropriate to the scale and complexity of Hay's system, combining IWCM inputs, operational data and experience. Council uses practical evidence to inform decisions. Council has secure access to water volumes, and understands the treatability vulnerabilities associated with the main source. However, documentation to show that the analysis is proportionate to system complexity is not formalised.			
	2.2.5	The local water utility should have an adaptive approach to responding to water security risks, understand acute risks to its water supply, and put in place contingency measures to respond to shortfall or extreme events	***Developing***	Council's Drought Management Plan (2018) includes defined triggers, response options and monitoring processes. However, this is not supported by clearly documented tactical planning, and council advised that the DMP is not current. As a result, drought response arrangements are not formally embedded.			

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
	2.2.6	A local water utility should consult with customers and community to determine the level of service and/or risk appropriate for its supply systems, including appropriate water restriction levels	***Developing***	Council advised that the Drought Management Plan (2018) is not current and has not been enacted. The water security risks are partially mitigated by Council's secure access to water volumes (see 2.2.4), although Council could consider engagement related to treatability and additional sources. There is limited evidence of targeted engagement with customers on drought responses, including restriction levels, impacts, or contingency options. As a result, drought response plans are not informed by customer feedback or understood community preferences, reflecting gaps in systems and processes			

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy •Groundwater Investiation Report	•Drought Management Plan	

3 Understanding water quality

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
3.1 How will the local water utility address current and future water quality risks?	*3.1.1*	A local water utility should understand and address water quality risks based on and through the implementation of its drinking water management system, as required by the Public Health Act 2010 and Public Health Regulation 2022	***Initial***	While key operational controls are in place (such as critical control points), council's DWMS was last updated in 2015 and is not current or embedded. Limited awareness of DWMS requirements by staff was noted. The water quality risk assessment was last completed in 2015 and requires updating. However, we note that Council has a project with NSW Health to review and update the DWMS and risk assessment. HBT assessment was undertaken as part of IWCM Supplementary Paper. Council has also completed annual DWMS review reports, that included an improvement plan with commentary on action progress. Reservoir inspections have not been scheduled or recently undertaken. SCADA upgrades (identified as a key strategic action) have recently been completed. Council have not undertaken a DWMS audit readiness review or an external DWMS audit aligned with the NSW Health Guideline for Review and Audit of Drinking Water Management Systems (2024). This reflects a gap in systems and governance, with reliance on operational practice and periodic updates rather than a fully integrated, closed-loop improvement and assurance framework.	Review and update the DWMS (including the drinking water quality risk assessment). Ensure staff are trained in the DWMS and the legislative obligations related to their role. Ensure that Health Based Target risks are included within the drinking water quality risk assessment for current and potential sources.	Undertake a formal external DWMS audit or audit readiness review. Document triggers for updating the DWMS and risk assessments (e.g. new risks, operational changes, major projects). Implement regular reviews (such as monthly water quality meetings) to meet DWMS requirements including review of data, training, review of incidents and events, review improvement plan, and discuss upcoming works.	
	3.1.2	A local water utility should consider water quality risks for any future sources of drinking water consistent with drinking water management	***Developing***	Council has some understanding of potential future water quality risks. Groundwater studies were undertaken in 2023-24 and Council are awaiting the full chemistry results of two potential bore locations that have been tested. However, risks associated with future sources are not officially documented or reflected in risk assessments. HBT assessments of current sources are documented in the IWCM Supplementary Paper, however drinking water quality risk assessment that consider HBTs have not yet been undertaken. This reflects a gap in systems and governance.			
3.2 How will the local water utility meet relevant regulatory standards, such as on drinking water quality management and fluoridation?	*3.2.1*	A local water utility should ensure that relevant legislative requirements relating to water quality are identified and addressed	***Initial***	The DWMS (2015) includes a list of regulatory instruments (Appendix D) relevant to water. However, this list is not current. For example, the DWMS regulatory table contains currency issues (e.g. reference to outdated versions of the Public Health Regulation), and Council demonstrated limited clarity on certain obligations such as requirements relating to drinking water management systems (e.g. water quality incident and emergency response planning) and planning to meet health-based targets (HBTs). In addition, there is no consolidated, clause-level register linking regulatory requirements to controls, verification activities and review cycles. This reflects a gap in systems and governance, with reliance on distributed documentation and staff knowledge rather than a centralised and systematically maintained compliance framework.	See 1.1.1	Expand and validate the current regulatory framework to ensure all requirements are identified, current and linked to controls and assurance processes.	

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Supplementary Paper •Supply System Water Quality and Telemetry Strategy Report •LGA Vulnerability Assessment Report •Groundwater Investiation Report •DWMS Annual Reports	•DWMS	• Coordination with DCCEEW and NSW Health

4 Understanding environmental impacts

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
4.1 How will the local water utility address current and future environmental impact risks in its sewerage systems?	4.1.1	A local water utility should identify, and understand how to address, any current and future impacts and risks to the natural environment (e.g. pollution and/or degradation) and any risks to human health associated with the management of wastewater generated from domestic, associated commercial and industrial premises	***Maturing***	Council's risk register includes risks related to wastewater, including public health and environmental pollution. The Hay STP was built in 2016, there is no evidence of known or emerging environmental/health risks associated with the STP. Effluent is not discharged to any receiving water and monitoring to groundwater is undertaken. There are only small amount of trade waste customers and no large industries. However, limited recent investigative sampling or condition-based monitoring beyond EPL requirements has also been undertaken.			Strengthen investigative monitoring to identify emerging wastewater risks.
4.2 How will the local water utility meet relevant regulatory standards, such as licence requirements set by the environmental regulator?	4.2.1	A local water utility should understand and address any regulatory standards and requirements imposed, or likely to be imposed, under any licences required under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997	***Maturing***	Council understands its EPL conditions, which are limited as there is no discharge from the STP. Piezometric testing is an annual requirement and is currently completed more frequently than required. Council does not undertake any additional environmental monitoring. Regular EPA inspections are conducted however these are not documented by Council. There are no planned studies or works around EPL conditions. Impacts on receiving water have not been assessed due to lack of wastewater discharge. The PIRMP located at the STP was dated prior to the construction of the STP and staff advised that there have been no PIRMP exercises completed recently. Council's EPL annual return reporting requirements do not include a requirement to report on the PIRMP.	Review currency of existing incident and emergency documentation for sewerage services (such as the PIRMP).		Implement a formal process to capture, assign and close out corrective actions arising from EPL monitoring and incidents, maintaining auditable records of compliance actions and evidence of closure.

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Supplementary Paper •PIRMP	•Piezometric sampling scheduling	• ELP reporting processes

5 Understanding system capacity, capability and efficiency

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
5.1 How will the local water utility understand the capacity and capability of systems to deliver water, and collect and treat sewage (and future capacity and capability needs)?	*5.1.1*	The utility's knowledge of the capacity of its water and sewerage systems should adequately cover its assets, be sufficiently accurate and current	***Developing***	The asset register is primarily held by the finance team and is updated based on the valuation process. Knowledge is reliant on individuals and local information sources. Critical infrastructure is defined in the Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026) at a treatment plant and pumping station level. Asset criticality is also defined in the Asset Management Plan, but no documented assessment of asset criticality has been undertaken at a granular level. Council does not maintain a consolidated, current asset register that systematically captures key attributes, nameplate capacities, or design basis information for water and sewerage assets at a granular level. This reflects a gap in artefacts and systems, with reliance on individual knowledge rather than a structured and maintained asset register.	Develop a water and sewer asset register with key attributes at a granular infrastructure level (including asset criticality, condition, capacity and performance) informed by operational and project data. Develop a process to maintain and validate asset data (e.g. capacity, condition, design basis) on an ongoing basis (outside of the valuation process). Undertake a structured asset criticality assessment based on service impacts and risk at an asset component level (e.g. WTP backwash pump). Use criticality to prioritise data collection, condition assessments and investment decisions. Identify and clearly flag critical assets within asset system and planning documents. Develop a documented maintenance schedule for key assets.	Establish a consistent process to update capability assessments based on operational data and inspections. Introduce a structured approach to scaling data collection and analysis based on asset importance. Clearly document future capability requirements, including growth, asset degradation and climate risks, with defined timeframes. Establish a regular process to monitor and review LoS performance trends.	Document system capability (including condition, capacity and limitations) and link this to defined service levels.
	5.1.2	The utility should understand the current capability of its water and sewerage systems	***Developing***	Council demonstrates a practical understanding of system capability. The IWCM includes limited documentation on asset capability (such as reservoir capacity and treatment plant condition). LoS are captured in AMP but are not linked to asset condition. The LWU Strategic Plan (2026) identifies way forward for the water supply for a "Comprehensive risk analysis be conducted on assets in relation to criticality and asset condition, particularly around watermain condition". However, this understanding is not consistently documented or supported by a formal assessment of system capability. There was limited evidence of documented information on asset condition, redundancy, and interdependencies, and no clear framework linking system capability to levels of service or performance outcomes. This reflects gaps in artefacts and systems, with capability gaps identified reactively rather than through systematic assessment, limiting forward planning.			
	5.1.3	The utility's understanding of capability should be proportionate to the criticality of assets and systems	***Initial***	Asset criticality is defined at the facility level as outlined in Section 5.1.1, however, criticality is not documented at the asset or component level. Staff advised that maintenance prioritisation is primarily informed by operational knowledge and experience, with works discussed through operational water and sewer meetings. Staff also advised that critical assets are often supported by standby assets (e.g. duty/standby pumps), with a run-to-failure approach adopted in some instances. While operationally important assets are understood, there was no evidence of a formal criticality framework at the asset component level being used to prioritise asset management approaches or guide the level of capability assessment effort. Reliance on redundancy as a primary control for critical assets without supporting documentation does not adequately account for degradation of the barrier itself or common-mode failure risks. This limits the ability to demonstrate that asset management interventions are proportionate and systematically prioritised based on asset criticality and risk. The finding reflects gaps in artefacts and systems, with limited demonstrable evidence that high-risk or high-consequence assets receive an appropriate level of analysis and attention.			
	5.1.4	The utility should anticipate the future capability of its water and sewerage systems	***Maturing***	The IWCM Strategy described the required assets within the forecast horizon to continue to provide water and sewerage services. Limited growth is forecast. The Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026) considers future climate risks. Future asset capability considering growth, degradation, and other non-climate hazards have not been considered holistically at a portfolio level, and there is limited evidence that the understanding of future capability is proportionate to the asset criticality (see 5.1.3).			
	5.1.5	The utility should understand the criticality of its water and sewerage systems	***Developing***	Critical infrastructure is defined in the Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026) at a facility (treatment plant and pumping station) level. This included assessment of assets exposure to natural hazards across council to determine criticality. There is no documented criticality assessment for water and sewerage assets or systems at an asset component level. The prioritisation of maintenance or investment for water and sewer assets is not informed by a formal criticality framework, with no systematic consideration of redundancies, interdependencies, or single points of failure. This reflects a gap in systems, with reliance on implicit knowledge rather than a structured and defensible criticality framework.			
	5.1.6	The utility should understand the performance of its water and sewerage systems	***Developing***	Some performance data is collected through routine operations and regulatory reporting, but there is no consolidated set of defined KPIs for water and sewerage system performance. Measurement methods and evaluation frequency are inconsistent, and performance is not routinely linked to levels of service or capability gaps. Trend analysis is limited, and there is no established process to use performance insights to inform investment or operational decisions.			

5.2 How will the local water utility consider water efficiency in its systems?	*5.2.1*	The utility should understand the efficiency of its water supply system	***Maturing***	Council has a good practical understanding of high water losses, supported by pressure sensors and SCADA data. Council advised that non revenue water is primarily due to meter issues and leakages. Project assessment and plans to implement digital metering across the network to increase efficiency. Council recognises the need to reduce non revenue water. Water balances were calculated as part of the IWCM Supplementary Paper. Flow meters and pressure sensors are in place and have located pipe breaks in the past. There is no procedure in place for use of pressure sensors and flow meters. However, testing for STP infiltration has not been completed and processes are and procedures are not in place to There is no structured analysis of non-revenue water including water balance calculations that Council can regularly update, and data remains fragmented across systems without consistent validation or reconciliation. This reflects a gap in processes and resources.	Develop procedures and a training plan for effective use of pressure sensors and flow meters. Review process for submitting DCCEEW LWU Performance Reporting data (noting that not all 23/24 and 24/25 data has not been submitted)	Develop and maintain a non-revenue analysis and water balance to quantify and improve water losses analysis on an ongoing basis. Define triggers (e.g. time, performance decline, major investments, pricing reviews) to revisit benchmarking of efficiency against peers. Consider opportunities to benchmark efficiency against peers for a broader range of items than water efficiency.	
	5.2.2	The utility should compare its efficiency in relation to its peers	***Initial***	Council participates in DCCEEW LWU Performance Reporting and has visibility of its performance relative to peers through this process. However, no data was available for Hay Shire Council on the database for FY23/24 and FY24/25. There is no structured analysis or use of benchmarking information to understand performance drivers, identify efficiency gaps or inform planning and pricing decisions. Peer insights are not systematically incorporated into operational or strategic decision-making. This reflects a gap in systems and analysis, with benchmarking undertaken for reporting rather than as an input to continuous improvement and planning processes.			

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy •IWCM Supplementary Paper containing water balances •Urban Digital Water Metering Project documents •Supply System Water Quality and Telemetry Strategy Report	•Asset Management Plans •Asset Management Strategy	•LWU Strategic Plan • Budgeting process (linked to IP&R) • Budget oversight through management and Council

6 Understanding other key risks and challenges

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
6.1 How will the local water utility address other key risks in its systems now and into the future?	*6.1.1*	A local water utility should identify and understand the risks and challenges relevant to its unique operating context for delivery of water and sewerage services.	***Maturing***	Council has a risk register for the entire organisation that is updated yearly that includes water and sewer risks. The enterprise risk management committee meets every 3 months with a set agenda and includes staff from every department, the risk register is reviewed on an annual basis. While risk reviews are documented and the risk review process is embedded, triggers for review are not always formally documented and actions do not have timeframes.	See 3.1.1	Define a periodic review process to ensure risk registers remain current and supported by evidence. Ensure actions have clear timeframes	Establish and document a process that links water and sewer risks to the enterprise risk framework, including defined ownership, controls, review cycles and escalation pathways.
	6.1.2	A local water utility should have in place systems for managing risks and challenges consistent with good practice	***Maturing***	The Hay Shire Council Risk Management Strategy and Plan is aligned with ISO31000 and includes processes for risk identification and management, and key roles and responsibilities. However, the drinking water quality risk assessment is out of date and there is no evidence of complaints/incident being fed into risk updates.			
	6.1.3	A local water utility's understanding of key risks and challenges should integrate with its overall approach to strategic planning and should manage key risks and challenges alongside other outcomes such as water quality and water security	***Maturing***	Water and sewer risks are managed alongside wider Council risks, with water and sewer risks included in the ERM risk register. Climate and resilience risks are also assessed in the Climate Resilience , Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026). However, the DWMS includes a risk register from a risk assessment workshop dated 2015 and is overdue for review. This reflects a gap in systems and processes.			
6.2 How will the local water utility meet relevant regulatory standards?	*6.2.1*	A local water utility should understand the scope and implications of the regulatory standards that are relevant to strategic planning for its water and sewerage services	***Developing***	Council advised that they have a compliance register based on the Office of Local Government guidelines. The compliance register does not pick up other key obligations, such as those in the Public Health Regulations. See 1.1.1 for further findings. However, gaps remain in translating these standards into detailed, clause-level requirements and clearly linking obligations to controls and effectiveness. As a result, there is some uncertainty as to whether all regulatory requirements are fully understood and consistently embedded in strategic planning, reflecting gaps in systems and governance.			See 1.1.1 Establish a formal process to track, assign and close out compliance actions arising from monitoring and audits.
	6.2.2	The local water utility has in place processes for monitoring compliance and performance against relevant regulatory standards and for implementing corrective actions when required	***Developing***	Compliance and performance are monitored through operational systems and annual reporting. Corrective actions are implemented in practice, but tracking is largely informal. There is limited evidence of consistent documentation of actions, verification of closure, or systematic review to prevent recurrence. This reflects a gap in systems and governance, with reactive compliance management rather than a closed-loop assurance framework.			
6.3 How has the local water utility considered climate risks?	*6.3.1*	A local water utility should identify and assess climate risks within its overall risk management approach while recognising the unique features of climate risks	***Maturing***	Councils have developed a Climate Resilience , Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026). The plan includes a register of disaster risk reduction actions related to climate both taken and planned, as well as a climate adaptation plan. Formal procedures for reassessment of climate risk are not yet fully documented. This reflects a gap in documented processes.	Ensure that the Climate Resilience , Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026) assessment outcomes feed into water and sewer strategic planning process.		Define triggers to update climate data inputs (e.g. new datasets, planning updates, major decisions).
	6.3.2	A local water utility should use robust data in planning to respond to climate risks	***Maturing***	AdaptNSW climate change projection have been incorporated into the recent Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026). While there is evidence that the outcomes documented in the plan align with current strategic planning objectives, due to the recent completion of this assessment (May 2026) this has not yet been incorporated in strategic planning documentation.			
	6.3.3	A local water utility should assess climate risks holistically and across its business and value chain	***Embedded***	Councils Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026) incorporates climate risks across all of core infrastructure systems and includes consultation with TfNSW for road related risks. There is evidence that this has informed councils over strategic planning, with priority actions aligning with those included in the LWU Strategic Plan. A program of installation of solar panels and batters is in place, with solar installed at the STP and is planned for other sites.			

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
6.4 How is the local water utility planning for drought?	*6.4.1*	A local water utility should undertake tactical planning to respond to drought as a component of the strategic-level approach to water security planning	***Maturing***	Council has developed a Drought Management Plan including drought triggers. Council advised that the triggers in the plan have not been enacted, due to reliability of the Murrumbidgee River. However, alignment between tactical drought responses and broader water security criteria and long-term planning is not clearly defined. This reflects a gap in systems and governance, with effective operational response not fully integrated into strategic water security planning. The risks are partially mitigated by the secure availability of water volumes.	See 2.2.2	Align drought escalation and response frameworks with broader incident and emergency management systems.	Undertake targeted engagement with customers on drought response measures, including restrictions and impacts. Identify and assess financial, operational and reputational risks associated with drought, and integrate drought risks into enterprise risk management
	6.4.2	A local water utility should engage with its customers and community to obtain feedback on its proposed responses to drought	***Developing***	Council communicates drought responses to customers through general communication channels when required. There is limited evidence of targeted engagement with customers or the community to inform drought response measures, including restriction levels or contingency options. Customer preferences and willingness to accept different levels of service during drought are not systematically assessed. The risks are partially mitigated by the secure availability of water volumes (i.e. water security is generally not considered a critical risk for Council's context).			
	6.4.3	A local water utility's planning for drought should be consistent with its planning for incidents, emergencies, and extreme events	***Developing***	Drought, incident and emergency response roles are well understood by staff, supported by strong local leadership and regular exercising of business continuity arrangements. However, formal alignment between drought planning and broader incident and emergency frameworks is uncertain. This reflects a gap in systems and governance, with parallel processes rather than an integrated emergency management framework.			
	6.4.4	A local water utility should consider risk holistically across its whole business when planning for drought	***Maturing***	Council demonstrates a sound understanding of drought impacts beyond water availability at a community level, supported by its involvement in the Hay and Carrathool Regional Resilience plan, which focuses on broader community and economic risks associated with drought. However, this understanding is less developed internally across the water and sewerage business and broader impacts for Council's business. Consideration of drought-related risks is not comprehensively or consistently documented, with limited evidence that key internal risks, such as financial impacts (e.g. revenue variability) and social licence risks, are systematically identified and managed. As a result, drought planning is not yet holistic, creating uncertainty as to whether all material business impacts are fully captured and addressed, reflecting gaps in systems and integration.			
6.5 How is the local water utility planning and preparing for incidents, emergencies, and extreme events and ensuring continuity of service?	*6.5.1*	A local water utility should understand the resilience of its infrastructure and organisation and should identify the events that could impact continuity of service	***Maturing***	Council has a Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026). The plan includes assessment of resilience (considering bushfire, heat, flood, storm/wind and power resilience) for priority components of the sewage and water assets, including assessment of hazard exposure, vulnerability, severity and mitigation measures. Assets have been assessed at a treatment plant and pump station level. However, critical infrastructure has not been identified to a more granular level for criticality, creating uncertainty as to whether continuity of service risks are fully understood and planned for hazards other than those considered in the Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan.	Review incident processes and documentation (such as the BCP) to include sufficient detail information covering prevention, preparedness, response and recovery across water and sewer services. Develop a drinking water quality incident and emergency response plan. See 4.2.1	Review resilience (for hazards other than climate change) at a granular level, including workforce, infrastructure and system dependencies. Establish processes for post-event debriefs and ensure outcomes are incorporated into long-term planning.	
	6.5.2	A local water utility should have systems and processes in place to identify, prepare for, plan for, respond to and recover from incidents, emergencies and extreme events	***Developing***	Council has water and sewerage BCP subplans, which provide a foundation for managing incidents, emergencies, and extreme events. However, incident documentation is limited (such as no drinking water quality incident and emergency response plan and currency issues noted with the STP PIRMP) and lacks sufficient depth and detail to demonstrate a comprehensive and systematic approach across prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. As a result, there is limited assurance that processes are fully developed, integrated, and consistently applied to effectively support service continuity for water and sewerage operations.			

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy •Enterprise Risk Management Committee minutes •Groundwater Investigation •Manex Annual Risk Report •LGA Vulnerability Assessment Report •Supply System Water Quality and Telemetry Strategy Report	•Corporate risk register •Water and Sewer BCP subplans •Drought Management Plan •Corporate Risk Management Plan •Supply System Water Quality and Telemetry Strategy Report •Climate Resilience Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan •DWMS	• Corporate risk framework • Regulator engagement

7 Understanding solutions to deliver services

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
7.1 How are options for delivering services and managing risks analysed?	*7.1.1*	The local water utility should base the development and evaluation of options for service delivery on its understanding of service needs – this is its service objectives	***Developing***	Council clearly understands key service challenges, including water security, compliance, water quality and demand, and these issues are reflected in discussions, IWCM Strategy outputs and the LWU Strategic Plan. However, service objectives are not consistently defined as measurable criteria or used systematically to guide option development, comparison and sequencing. This reflects a gap in analysis processes, and reduces the clarity and repeatability of options assessment processes.		When undertaking options assessment, document a complete longlist of options including supply, demand and non-infrastructure options, and clearly record reasons for excluding options. Establish a consistent methodology (e.g. through SAMP or policy) for applying whole-of-life assessment across decisions Explicitly identify and assess risks and uncertainties for each option, including "do nothing" scenarios, within options analysis.	See 1.1.4
	7.1.2	The local water utility should identify all viable options for meeting service needs	***Maturing***	Council has a well-developed IWCM strategy, supported by studies that consider options to solve identified issues. Options considered include non-infrastructure solutions (such as water loss improvements). While options are discussed and preferred options presented, the longlist of options is not always explicitly listed. Exclusion reasoning is not consistently documented, and there is limited evidence of unbiased option generation before shortlisting, reflecting a gap in analysis processes.			
	7.1.3	The local water utility should consider and, where feasible, evaluate the economic, environmental, and social costs and benefits of each option over their life cycle	***Maturing***	Council's business case for its smart metering project includes comparison of whole-of-life economic costs for multiple options (base case vs meter replacement) and environmental and social benefits of the project. It is uncertain whether costs and benefits are systematically evaluated or compared across options, reflecting a gap in analysis processes.			
	7.1.4	The local water utility's evaluation of the costs and benefits of options should identify and consider key risks	***Maturing***	Council's smart metering business case included key risks, do nothing option, sensitivity analysis on NPV and BCP for capital and indirect costs. However, the methodology for options assessments is unclear and there is no standardised process, reflecting a gap in analysis processes.			
7.2 How are assets managed over their life cycle to ensure service levels are met?	*7.2.1*	The local water utility's development and evaluation of options should be based on an asset management system that is of a reasonable standard	***Developing***	Options analysis is informed by operational knowledge of asset condition, performance and constraints, and staff experience plays a key role in identifying feasible solutions. However, this analysis is not supported by current asset data on condition, criticality and risk of failure. This reflects a gap in artefacts and systems, with reliance on practical knowledge rather than a robust and evidence-based asset management foundation for decision-making.	Strengthen asset data (condition, criticality, risk) used in options analysis to ensure decisions are based on reliable inputs. Establish a clear linkage between service levels, asset risks and investment decisions (e.g. run to fail asset management approach).	Develop supporting business cases for major capital investments demonstrating alignment to service levels and risk.	
7.3 How are preparedness and resilience management during extreme events considered?	*7.3.1*	The local water utility's options analysis should incorporate consideration of uncertainty, resilience and preparedness for extreme events	***Developing***	Some consideration is given to uncertainty and extreme events based on operational experience. Council's Climate Resilience , Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan (2026) summarises climate related risks and extreme events, with reference to the likelihood and consequence of these events in Council's context. However, options are not systematically tested under multiple plausible futures or compound event scenarios. This reflects a gap in analysis, with experiential consideration rather than structured scenario testing and resilience evaluation.		Assess options under a range of future scenarios, including extreme events and uncertainty, and evaluate service level impacts across multiple plausible futures, including compound events.	
7.4 How are supply and demand side options for water supply identified and evaluated?	*7.4.1*	The local water utility should evaluate costs and benefits of all viable supply and demand-side options in determining the best way to balance water supply and demand	***Maturing***	The IWCM strategy provides initial analysis of supply and demand options, including alternate water supplies, water recycling and options to reduce water losses. Council has done extensive work on leakage and water efficiency. A business case for smart meters was sighted. Solutions appear to focus on individual issues, and are not currently articulated with a portfolio perspective relative to a common set of metrics. This reflects gaps in analysis processes and governance.		Develop an integrated portfolio of supply and demand options evaluated against a common set of objectives and metrics.	

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy •Urban Digitial Water Metering Project	•LWU Strategic Plan	•Council decision reports

8 Understanding resourcing needs

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
8.1 What resourcing is needed to deliver services and manage risks?	*8.1.1*	A local water utility should understand its resourcing needs to deliver its services and effectively manage its risks	***Developing***	Resourcing needs for day-to-day service delivery are generally understood, with staffing, contractor support and operational budgets managed through annual processes. Council have a workforce management plan (2022-26), however the level of specific detail is limited beyond listing the provision of water and sewerage services. Costs associated with staff resources were considered as part of the Urban Digital Water Metering Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) project. Future gaps in funding, skills or capacity are not formally identified or reflected in the LTFP, reflecting gaps in artefacts, systems and governance.		Formalise consideration of delivery models (e.g. in-house, shared services, contractors, regional collaboration) as part of planning and decision-making.	
8.2 What are the lifecycle costs of managing assets?	*8.2.1*	A local water utility should understand the lifecycle costs of their assets to inform their development and evaluation of servicing options and their resourcing needs	***Maturing***	Lifecycle costs are considered in strategic planning. Evidence of lifecycle costs were provided as part of the Business Case for Digital Metering (2026). Lifecycle costs are not clearly documented within asset management plans to demonstrate how they inform implementation, option selection and asset lifecycle management, reflecting gaps in systems and analysis processes.		Establish a lifecycle costing approach for major investment and planning decisions that considers capital, operating, maintenance, renewal, compliance and end-of-life costs. Ensure lifecycle cost assumptions are consistently reflected across IWCM, AMPs and LTFP.	
	8.2.2	A local water utility's lifecycle cost analysis should consider all costs associated with the design, development, delivery and operation of assets over their lives	***Developing***	Some cost elements are considered in planning, including capital and operating costs for major projects. Council's IWCM Strategy includes NPV for water and sewerage system options. The Business Case for Digital Metering (2026) included design, construction and capital replacement costs. However, it is uncertain if all lifecycle analysis consistently include renewals, risk allowances, compliance costs or end-of-life disposal, reflecting gaps in data and governance.			
8.3 What are the technical and operational skills needed to deliver services and manage risks and how does the local water utility do workforce planning?	*8.3.1*	The Local water utility should undertake strategic workforce planning to understand the technical and operational skills needed to deliver their services and manage risks	***Maturing***	Council's Workforce Management Plan 2022-2026 identifies challenges in its workforce including key gaps and actions with time frames. Council has staffing discussions in weekly meetings and is looking into a mechanism to increase staff capability across roles where required. When a position becomes vacant Council will review whether the role is still needed. Council advised that they recognise the need for additional operational staff is a key issue as operators reach the end of their working careers. Council shares operational staff across LWUs where possible. Recently Council has gone to schools to increase interest in careers with Council and has made a number of working arrangement changes to incentivise employees. A skills register is kept however it is not comprehensive. The approach is proportionate to the size of Council's W&S workforce, and no new/complex assets are currently planned for that would largely change the skills required.	Document key operational processes and known issues in a central, accessible format to reduce reliance on individuals.	Update the workforce plan to clearly identify required water and sewer specific skills, current capability gaps and future workforce needs, including requirements arising from new or upgraded assets.	

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy •Urban Digitial Water Metering Project •Budget documentation	•Workforce Management Plan	

9 Understanding revenue sources

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
9.1 What are the revenue sources available to fund the delivery of services?	*9.1.1*	A local water utility's water and sewerage prices and developer charges should be its primary funding source to recover the costs of providing water and sewerage services	***Developing***	User charges are the primary funding source and cover operating costs, with grants used for some capital works. Developer charges are relatively low and may under-recover growth costs, however Council advised that Council is the main developer and want low developer charges to encourage growth. Costs are primarily recovered, however the Water AMP notes that there is an estimated shortfall in the LTFP (70% of the calculated renewal expenditure over the life of the LTFP), particularly around watermain renewal. Methodology to define the true efficient cost is uncertain and not formalised. It is not clear that pricing and revenue settings are maximised. The guidance emphasises that efficient costs should primarily be recovered through water and sewerage prices and developer charges. Revenue constraints influence Council's asset management and investment decisions, although the basis is not well formalised.	See 11.1.5 As part of the LTFP scenario analysis process, incorporate borrowing capacity and debt servicing limits into funding analysis to demonstrate prudent financing constraints. Extend current full cost recovery pricing model to include lifecycle costs (including renewals, and new upgrades).		Define triggers to revisit revenue strategies where assumptions (e.g. grant funding) change. Formalise the basis for not having developer charges.
	9.1.2	A local water utility should understand their revenue requirements and revenue sources for the next pricing period and over the medium and long term	***Developing***	Council sets charges annually and has visibility of operational costs through the budgeting process. The IWCM strategy, AMPs and LTFP all document the spend to maintain the water and sewer networks, which in turn infers the revenue required. However, the Water AMP notes that there is an estimated shortfall in the LTFP (70% of the calculated renewal expenditure over the life of the LTFP), particularly around watermain renewal. Revenue requirements for asset lifecycle needs are not clearly documented. This reflects gaps in cost understanding across systems, with partial rather than comprehensive revenue planning.			
9.2 What is customers' ability to pay for services?	*9.2.1*	A local water utility should understand its customers' ability to pay in proportion to any proposed price rise, and should transparently justify any instance where the ability to pay prevents full cost recovery from prices	***Developing***	Affordability considerations inform pricing discussions, with general awareness of community capacity to pay based on affordability and equity across council. See discussion in 9.2.2. However, it is uncertain if formal affordability analysis is undertaken for proposed price changes, and justifications for pricing below efficient cost are not explicitly documented. This reflects gaps in artefacts and systems, with reliance on informal judgement rather than structured affordability assessment.			Consider tracking evidence-based affordability indicators (e.g. arrears, hardship uptake, payment trends) to inform pricing decisions.
	9.2.2	A local water utility should develop ways to measure its customers' ability to pay	***Maturing***	Council Financial Sustainability Study (2026) documents the basis of the assumption that the community has limited capacity pay any increase in rates and charges. This analysis includes consideration of demographic risks, including analysis of residents receiving the pension, and median employee income between 2021 and 2024. However, there is no structured framework for measuring customers' ability to pay . This reflects gaps in documented systems.			
	9.2.3	A local water utility should periodically monitor its customers' ability to pay to understand whether there are any prevailing affordability concerns	***Maturing***	Council Financial Sustainability Study (2026) documents the basis of the assumption that the community has limited capacity pay any increase in rates and charges. The analysis was based on trending data from 2021 and 2024. However, it is not clear if these indicators are tracked systematically over time, and there is no defined process to identify trends or trigger responses to emerging affordability concerns. This reflects gaps in systems and governance, with no structured monitoring or feedback loop.			
	9.2.4	If a local water utility is considering raising prices, it should conduct a proportionate analysis of the impact on its customers and their ability to pay	***Developing***	Some consideration is given to customer impacts when price increases are proposed, informed by councillor knowledge and general community feedback. However, proportionate impact analysis across customer groups is not formally documented or used to shape pricing proposals. This reflects gaps in analysis processes and governance.			
9.3 What is customers' willingness to pay for services?	*9.3.1*	A local water utility should understand its customers' preferences and willingness to pay in certain circumstances	***Developing***	While no specific willingness to pay study has been undertaken, Council developed a Financial Sustainability Study (2026) that documents the basis of rates changes with consideration of affordability and equity across council. Willingness-to-pay evidence is not explicitly documented, and is not systematically used to inform service levels, pricing or investment decisions. As a result, decision-making is based on informed judgement rather than structured, evidence-based analysis of customer preferences and trade-offs.			Undertake proportionate customer research and engagement to assess willingness to pay for different service levels and investment outcomes, and use the results to inform pricing and service decisions.
	9.3.2	A local water utility's willingness-to-pay analysis should be proportionate to the level of cost/value involved in the decisions to be informed by WTP estimates, and follow best-practice principles	***Developing***	While no specific willingness to pay study has been undertaken, Council developed a Financial Sustainability Study (2026) that documents the basis of rates changes with consideration of affordability and equity across council. This has informed Council's decision not to increase water bills and to focus on non revenue water and efficiencies. However, no formal or proportionate willingness-to-pay assessment methods are applied, and there is no documented approach to selecting, applying or validating methods for different decision contexts. These are not used within a structured or repeatable framework. This reflects a gap in systems and analysis.			

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy •Hay Long Term Financial Plan •Annual Report •Annual Financial Statements	•Financial Sustainability Strategy • Annual pricing reviews • Budget process • Customer billing process	• Council approval of fees and charges • Public exhibition process for fees and charges

10 Make and implement sound strategic decisions

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
10.1 Expectations of local water utilities when making and implementing sound strategic decisions	*10.1.1*	The local water utility's strategic decisions should be made by councillors	***Maturing***	Strategic decisions on water and sewerage matters are made by councillors through established council meeting processes. Council have a Delegations of Authority Manual which documents financial, governance and operational delegations. This document is internally audited Council minutes record key decisions on service matters, budgets and major projects. Staff provide advice and implement decisions. The process operates consistently, though formal documentation linking decisions to levels of service and pricing frameworks could be strengthened, reflecting gaps in processes and integration.	As part of the LWU Strategic Plan review cycle, revisit and consider planning needs and assumptions included in the IWCM Strategy (such as issues identified around HBT shortfalls).	Introduce a simple process to track expected benefits and outcomes of major decisions and periodically evaluate whether intended outcomes are achieved.	Strengthen decision documentation by explicitly linking problems, risks, objectives, options and selected solutions (e.g. through standardised decision paper templates with clear, measurable service objectives).
	10.1.2	The local water utility should make, implement, monitor, and adapt strategic decisions following a sound process	***Developing***	Council follows a recognisable process for making, implementing and monitoring strategic decisions, with regular reporting to councillors. Decisions are revisited when circumstances change. The IWCM process demonstrates a structured process to undertake assessment, determine issues and develop appropriate solutions. The make→implement→monitor→adapt cycle is not formally defined, and triggers for review and adaptation are not consistently documented. This reflects gaps in systems and governance, with some processes applied in practice but not embedded as a structured and repeatable decision-making framework.			
	10.1.3	The local water utility should make strategic decisions framed by a clear set of problems and objectives	***Maturing***	Decision papers are prepared for council on significant matters, with context and recommendations provided. The draft Local Water Utility Strategic Plan (2026-2036) was provided to Council (February 2026 Business Paper Minutes). This notes that the Plan will inform Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework, including the Long Term Financial Plan, Asset Management Plans and annual Operational Plans. The plan was supported by a briefing note. The decision paper includes objectives, financial implications, risk implication and timeframes. However, there is no documented process to ensure that problem statements, objectives, and options are consistently framed in a structured format that links decisions to risks, needs, and measurable outcomes, with explicit timeframes and accountability.			
	10.1.4	The local water utility should base strategic decisions on sound evidence - that is, based on its understanding of service needs, risks, solutions, and resources to address needs and risks as gathered by achieving the strategic planning outcomes set out in the Regulatory and Assurance Framework.	***Maturing***	Councillors receive information on water and sewerage matters through reports, briefings and meeting papers, including evidence on service needs, risks and cost considerations. Options assessments help inform the evidence base. There is an opportunity to improve the lifecycle understanding, and clear linkage to risks and solutions when engaging with Councillors. This reflects gaps in analysis and governance, with evidence provided but not consistently comprehensive or comparable.			
	10.1.5	The local water utility should make, record and publish strategic decisions	***Maturing***	Strategic decisions are recorded in council minutes, and key documents are made publicly available in accordance with legislative requirements, supporting transparency and accountability. However, decision records do not consistently include structured documentation of objectives, rationale, evidence considered, option selection criteria or expected outcomes. This reflects gaps in governance and processes.			
	10.1.6	The local water utility should implement strategic decisions, monitor performance, and then evaluate and adapt them (including potentially re-making them)	***Developing***	Decisions are implemented through operational plans and budgets, with progress reported to council periodically, and performance monitored through routine reporting processes. Other ad hoc reporting occurs where there is interest from Council (e.g. Council requested feedback on the outcomes of the smart metering project). However, performance measures are not consistently defined in relation to decision intent, and triggers for reviewing or adapting decisions are informal. There is limited evidence of decisions being systematically reassessed based on performance trends or outcomes. This reflects gaps in systems and governance, with implementation partially limited by budget considerations and not supported by a structured performance and adaptation framework.			

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy •Annual Reports •Urban Digital Water Metering Project •Business papers •Council minutes •Community Strategic Plan	•LWU Strategic Plan •Delegations of Authority Manual •Operational Plan	•Council governance structure and committees

11 Implement sound pricing and prudent financial management

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
11.1 A local water utility's water and sewerage prices should recover its efficient costs of providing water and sewerage services to customers	*11.1.1*	A utility should recover all its efficient costs of providing water and sewerage services to customers through prices, with prices set at lower bound, or above	***Developing***	Council advised that pricing broadly meets lower bound requirements, however it is uncertain if all required upgrades have been identified (such as required WTP works needed for health based targets), and required maintenance and renewals have been planned for. The Water AMP notes that there is an estimated shortfall in the LTFP (70% of the calculated renewal expenditure over the life of the LTFP), particularly around watermain renewal. This pricing strategy predominantly covers the operating costs of the business, not the efficient of true cost of running the business (e.g. costs to capture costs of major repairs, renewals, replacements or enhancements). This reflects gaps in analysis processes, with limited linkage between pricing and efficient cost recovery. Methodology to define the true efficient cost is uncertain and not formalised. It is not clear that pricing and revenue settings are maximised.	Identify and report community service obligations explicitly in financial documentation, including quantifying costs not recovered through prices. Define and document efficient operating and capital expenditure required to deliver agreed service levels, including validation through a bottom-up review of expenditure to confirm efficient costs at agreed service levels. Quantify a baseline funding gap position under current service levels and pricing, including sensitivity to key assumptions (demand, capital timing, cost escalation). Develop a 30-year LTFP for water and sewerage with key data from the AMPs (e.g. asset condition, renewals and lifecycle costs (once available)) and test key assumptions to validate long term forecasts.	Strengthen understanding of efficient costs beyond annual budgets, including renewals and major maintenance. Document efficient costs required to deliver services (including operating, capital and renewal costs) Document a simple and consistent cost allocation methodology for the general, water and sewer funds to improve transparency.	Document the process for the treatment of taxes and TER within revenue requirements. Define triggers for updating demand forecasts used for pricing (e.g. demand changes, growth changes, major investments).
	11.1.2	A utility should report a community service obligation, if it's unlikely to recover costs from prices over the longer term	***Initial***	There is no clearly articulated CSO information. There is revenue for pensioner grants in financial statements. There is no formal identification, quantification, or reporting of Community Service Obligations (CSOs). Council has not undertaken an analysis to determine the true efficient cost of delivering water and wastewater services, and there is no clear documentation of the gap between prices and cost recovery.			
	11.1.3	A utility should establish separate revenue requirements for each of its services (water supply and sewerage)	***Maturing***	Pricing is separated for water and sewer, including shown separately in the IWCM strategy, AMPs and LTFP. Separate fees and charges are set for water and sewer. However, there was limited documented evidence of revenue requirements for each service. This reflects gaps artefacts and systems, as revenue requirements are not clearly defined or documented in a structured financial framework aligned to each service.			
	11.1.4	To calculate the revenue requirement for each service, the utility should identify and attribute its direct costs to its water and sewerage services and allocate common costs, consistent with the utility's cost allocation manual	***Developing***	Evidence of ringfencing of water and sewer costs and prices from normal council costs and revenue (water fund vs. general fund) was observed during the interview. General purpose costs for water/sewer activities are allocated through work orders and a management fee is charged to the water and sewer fund. Council advised that this is documented within annual budgets. However, there is no formal cost allocation manual or documented methodology for attributing direct costs and allocating shared costs across services. Allocation practices are not consistently defined or validated, reflecting gaps in systems and processes.			
	11.1.5	The revenue requirement a utility uses to set its prices should reflect the efficient costs of supplying its services to appropriate levels	***Developing***	Council considers costs in pricing and revenue planning, with budgets and financial planning processes reflecting operating expenditure and known service requirements. There is no recent bottom-up budget to confirm efficient costs at the agreed service levels. The LTFP does not fully align with the AMPs. Efficiency assumptions are not explicitly tested or benchmarked, and no structured review process exists to ensure proportionality of analysis across operating and capital expenditure. This reflects gaps in analysis processes, with limited integration between service levels, costs and revenue requirements.			
	11.1.6	The utility's revenue requirement should include allowances for taxes and tax equivalent regime (TER) payments	***Maturing***	A 25% corporate taxation equivalent is included in the 2025 financial statements for both the water and sewerage fund. However, there is no documented process to systematically identify and incorporate all relevant tax or tax-equivalent obligations into revenue requirements. This reflects gaps in processes, with tax considerations applied but not supported by a formal and consistent framework.			
	11.1.7	Demand forecasts a utility uses to set prices should come from an appropriate forecasting method	***Maturing***	Council's IWCM includes demand forecasting, and staff demonstrated awareness that non-revenue water is high. The forecast TRB is included in IWCM strategy and the description includes assumptions, connections, and other items. There is no formal documented forecasting method that demonstrates how prices are derived with consideration of demands.			
	11.2.1	A utility should implement a cost reflective, two-part tariff structure for both water and sewerage services that recovers its revenue requirements	***Maturing***	The Revenue Policy 2025/26 available online documents water and sewerage connection fees, developer charges, consumption charges and standpipe usage fees. Council applies a two-part tariff structure for water services, including fixed charges and consumption-based charges, and fixed charges for sewer services, consistent with standard pricing practice. As a result, pricing structure is appropriate and aligns with expected tariff design principles. While full cost-reflective pricing may not be achievable given local affordability constraints, there is limited evidence that pricing is set based on efficient costs or that the resulting subsidy requirement is transparently quantified and justified. This reflects gaps in systems and analysis.	Document the methodology used to set raw water and standpipe charges, including how efficient costs are recovered.	Periodically review the need for trade waste charging arrangements.	Document the basis for pricing decisions, including consideration of marginal cost and augmentation needs where relevant. Assess cost differences between supply systems and document the rationale for maintaining uniform pricing or introducing differentiation.
	11.2.2	A utility should have regard to its marginal cost of supply when setting its of water usage price	***Developing***	Council applies consumption-based charges for water, which provides a degree of linkage between usage and revenue. However, there was limited evidence that pricing is informed by marginal cost considerations or long-run marginal cost (LRMC) analysis, with pricing primarily based on historical approaches and operational cost recovery. This reflects gaps in analysis and governance, as pricing provides some efficiency signals, but does not demonstrate a robust linkage to efficient investment and demand management decisions.			Document the methodology used to calculate availability charges, including allocation across customer groups.

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
11.2 A local water utility's water and sewerage prices are cost reflective, fair and equitable, and structured to promote efficient investment and consumption decisions, including the efficient and sustainable provision and use of water and sewerage services	*11.2.3*	A utility should have regard to its marginal cost of supply when setting its sewerage prices	***Developing***	Sewer charges are applied, primarily through fixed charges, which is consistent with common practice. However, there was limited evidence that sewer pricing reflects underlying cost drivers, service levels, or system investment needs, and pricing appears to be historically determined rather than analytically derived. This reflects gaps in analysis processes, where sewer pricing is functional but not strongly cost-reflective.			Document methodology for discharge factors and document the reasons for tailoring (or not) a customers discharge factor for individual circumstances. Periodically review trade waste charges against the Liquid Trade Waste Management Guidelines for councils in regional NSW (DCCEEW) to ensure ongoing alignment. Document developer servicing approach, including assumptions on growth and infrastructure cost recovery.
	11.2.4	A utility should consider levying a single fixed sewerage service availability charge for residential customers (combining access and usage components) and apply sewerage usage prices to non-residential customers as part of a 2-part tariff	***Maturing***	The fees and charges document outlines the charges for sewer, including a fixed charge for residential sewer and discharge factor for non residential users and a fee for septic tank waste. There are no charges for trade waste. It is unclear if this pricing methodology is documented outside of fees and charges document, though it is also modelled in the IWCM strategy.			
	11.2.5	A utility should consider whether to set different prices for different areas where there are distinct supply systems that have different costs	***Developing***	Council operates multiple supply systems serving different communities, but pricing is applied uniformly rather than differentiated by area. There is informal awareness that costs may vary between systems, but no formal analysis has been undertaken to quantify cost differences or assess whether geographic price differentiation would be appropriate. The equity and practicality implications of maintaining uniform pricing versus introducing nodal pricing have not been explicitly evaluated or documented.			
	11.2.6	Water and sewerage availability charges should recover the residual revenue required	***Developing***	Availability or service charge is captured in fees and charges document and modelled in the IWCM Strategy. It's unclear if the charges recover residual revenue after usage charges. While the structure provides some differentiation, there is limited documentation of how availability charges were calculated to recover residual revenue requirements after usage-based charges. The fairness and cost-reflectivity of charges across different customer groups has not been formally assessed, and the relationship between meter size increments and capacity to demand services is not explicitly justified. This reflects gaps in artefacts and analysis, with pricing structures applied but not supported by a clear methodology.			
	11.2.7	A utility should publish its discharge factors and, where warranted, be open to tailoring a customer's discharge factor to reflect individual circumstances	***Maturing***	Council's 2024/25 Revenue policy, fees and charges include discharge factors for non-residential customers. There is no formal documentation on the method for calculating discharge factors.			
	11.2.8	Trade waste charges should be consistent with the department's trade waste guidelines	***Developing***	Council does not have trade waste fees. Given the relatively small number of trade waste generators and no large industries, Council advised that they made a decision to not charge a trade waste fee. It is unclear, how this decision has been documented. This reflects gaps in artefacts and systems.			
	11.2.9	Recycled water prices should be set consistent with NWI recycled water pricing principles	***N/A***	Council does not currently supply recycled water.			
	11.2.10	Prices for raw water supplies to customers should recover the efficient costs of supply	***Developing***	Council's 2024/25 Revenue policy, fees and charges sets raw water connection fees, developer charges, consumption charges and standpipe usage fees. Council advised that raw water prices are set with the intention of cost recovery. Analysis of TRB for the water supply combines raw and filtered water are included in the IWCM Supplementary Paper. However, it is uncertain how costs have been calculated, and the extent of any shortfall is not clearly documented. This reflects gaps in artefacts and systems.			
	11.2.11	Bulk water prices should recover the efficient costs of supply	***N/A***	Council does not supply bulk water to other utilities.			
	11.2.12	The infrastructure cost of servicing growth should be recovered as developer charges consistent with department's developer charges guidelines	***Maturing***	Council have a Developer Services Plan (2022). The plan includes a cross subsidy to reduce the developer charges by 50%, Council advised that this was so that development is not impeded by high developer charges, although this is not clearly documented. Current practice is most likely sufficient for the low growth projected.			

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
11.3 A local water utility's water and sewerage prices are reasonably stable over time and consider affordability and impact on customers	*11.3.1*	A utility should consider how to manage revenue volatility over time while maintaining a relatively stable price path	***Maturing***	Council's revenue volatility is low given the relatively fixed customer base and the stable population and customer base. Council demonstrated awareness of variance as a result of usage changes due to seasonality and conditions (e.g. fuel variances). Volatility is managed through the regular budget review meetings, e.g. delay, remove capital works.		Expand revenue scenario analysis to assess impacts of demand variability and climate conditions. Establish a multi-year pricing path aligned with IWCM and the Delivery Program.	Undertake structured TRB impact analysis across customer groups, including vulnerable customers. Document strategies to mitigate customer impacts (e.g. phased increases, support programs) and demonstrate consideration in pricing decisions.
	11.3.2	A utility should establish multi-year pricing paths (periods) for its water and sewerage services	***Developing***	Pricing is updated annually through the Fees and Charges process, rather than being set over defined multi-year periods. While the IWCM models pricing over a longer-term horizon, this is not formally translated into a structured multi-year pricing path aligned with the Delivery Program.			
	11.3.3	The utility should conduct analysis of potential effects on customers before finalising prices	***Maturing***	Customer impact analysis is limited. Engagement is primarily through Councillors and ad hoc customer interactions, with limited evidence of structured bill impact analysis across customer groups or targeted consideration of vulnerable customers. The Hay Town Water User Survey conducted for Council's smart meter project identified that a large percentage of customers have experienced "bill shock". Council developed a Financial Sustainability Study (2026) that documents the basis of rates changes with consideration of affordability and equity across council. The study identified no extra capacity to pay in the community. The assessment was based on a demographic assessment (including considerations of residents receiving the pension, and median employee income). This has informed Council's decision not to increase water bills and to focus on non revenue water and efficiencies.			
	11.3.4	The utility should consider ways to minimise the potential effect of price increases on customers	***Developing***	Council informed that there are payment plans in place for some customers, and that they are moving to an electronic version of the payment plan process to improve participation. There is a hardship application process in place. Council is prioritising leakage and non-revenue water rather than rate increases for affordability. It is unclear whether any phasing options or concessions are in place. This finding reflects gaps in analysis processes.			
11.4 The utility properly considers dividend payments	*11.4.1*	The utility may pay dividends to the owner council, if it meets certain pre-conditions	***N/A***	Council does not receive a dividend from its water and sewer operations / fund.			Document a clear dividend policy outlining preconditions for payment (financial sustainability and service outcomes).
11.5 The local water utility 'ring-fences' the water supply and sewer business funds from the council's general-purpose fund	*11.5.1*	The local water utility should 'ring-fence' the water supply and sewer business funds from the council's general-purpose fund	***Embedded***	Water and sewer funds are understood to be appropriately ring-fenced from general council funds based on advice from the council. There are job numbers for all funds. Staff charge time to job numbers and a management fee is paid to general fund.			
	11.5.2	The utility should establish and maintain accounting separation for its water services from the rest of the council's operations	***Embedded***	Council maintains separate ledgers and profit and loss statements for water, sewer and general fund operations, providing accounting separation. Cost allocation between funds is applied consistently, and internal controls support the integrity of this separation. The approach meets the core intent of separate accounting. Note, we have made findings related to ring-fencing water and sewer business finances from general council operations in 11.5.1.			

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy •Hay Long Term Financial Plan •Annual Report •Annual Financial Statements •Manex annual risk report •Community Service Obligation - Financing Model	•Development Servicing Plan •Asset Management Plan •Annual pricing reviews	•Sale (Trade) of Water Policy •Revenue Policy (Fees & Charges) •Council approval of fees and charges •Public exhibition process for fees and charges

12 Promote integrated water cycle management

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
12.1 How are urban water cycle outcomes including water security, public health, environmental and urban amenity and liveability identified, achieved and funded?	*12.1.1*	The local water utility should identify the full range of urban water cycle outcomes and the community values from all uses of water across the urban water cycle	***Developing***	Urban water outcomes are influenced by community expectations around maintenance of green spaces, and the social and mental health benefits associated with water availability. Liveability priorities are identified in the Community Strategic Plan 2035. The full range of urban water cycle outcomes are not explicitly linked to customer values. There is limited evidence of integrated water cycle or water balance modelling, and stormwater systems are not considered as part of a broader system but rather as standalone drainage infrastructure designed to manage local flooding. This reflects gaps in artefacts and systems, with fragmented understanding rather than a consolidated urban water cycle framework.			Define and document urban water cycle outcomes (e.g. water security, public health, environmental, amenity and liveability) and link these to community values through structured engagement. Map all relevant elements of the urban water cycle within the area of operations. Formalise governance arrangements across water, sewerage, planning, stormwater and environmental functions for both external and internal parties. Establish a process to integrate datasets and planning tools across water, sewer and stormwater systems to inform strategic decision-making. Define and document funding and cost-recovery arrangements for urban water cycle outcomes, including roles of general fund and water/sewer business.
	12.1.2	The local water utility should identify all parts of the urban water cycle relevant to their area of operations	***Developing***	Council demonstrates practical knowledge of key components of the water system, including water supply, wastewater treatment and natural river system behaviour, supported by operational experience and the IWCM Strategy. However, these components are not documented as part of an integrated urban water cycle, and elements such as stormwater, environmental flows and system interactions are not consistently mapped or considered together. This reflects gaps in artefacts and systems, with fragmented understanding rather than a consolidated urban water cycle framework.			
	12.1.3	The local water utility should have collaborative governance arrangements in place with all those responsible for parts of the urban water cycle	***Maturing***	Council demonstrates internal coordination between water and sewer functions and other areas of Council, including collaboration between water and sewer staff and planning functions. Council advised that they participates in external governance arrangements across the broader water system, including engagement with the EPA, DCCEEW and Fisheries. These relationships support alignment with regional water management objectives and shared decision-making across the system. However, there was limited evidence of structured collaborative governance arrangements with parties responsible for other elements of the urban water cycle, such as stormwater, land use planning, or environmental management. During the review, there was no evidence that roles and interactions across the broader water cycle were clearly defined or coordinated through formal governance mechanisms. This reflects gaps in systems and processes.			
	12.1.4	The local water utility should extend its corporate tools and management systems to enable more collaborative governance and to foster a deeper understanding of the urban planning context	***Developing***	Council is currently finalising upgrades to SCADA systems, and is actively progressing the implementation of a digital water metering program. There are pressure sensors in the system. However, there is currently no evidence of integration of operational and data systems across the urban water cycle or links to land-use planning and broader datasets. It is noted that system upgrades and progression of WTP and STP automation upgrades are included in the LWU Strategic Plan as short and medium priority actions. This reflects gaps in systems and integration, with some operational tools in place, but limited cross-domain data management.			
	12.1.5	The local water utility should establish agreed funding arrangements and cost-recovery mechanisms to achieve urban water cycle outcomes	***Initial***	Council funds water and sewer services through customer charges and external funding, including grants. The IWCM identified the option for implementation of a recycled water scheme, which council advised that they are considering progressing. However, there is no documented identification or valuation of urban water outcomes across the full water cycle, and no structured approach to linking outcomes to funding mechanisms or cost-recovery arrangements. This reflects gaps in artefacts, systems, analysis, and governance, with no framework to support integrated funding and cost allocation of urban water outcomes.			
12.2 How does the utility consider opportunities and methods to increase resource efficiency and recovery in urban water management?	*12.2.1*	The local water utility should develop an understanding of how water resources interact with other resources in their area of operations	***Embedded***	Council have implemented a program for installation solar panelling and batteries at the WTP, STP and raw water pump station, aligned with the action in the Climate Resilience, Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan and Circular Economy Strategy. Council has a resource recovery facility and advised that any concrete structures associated with water and wastewater are recycled. There are plans to add recycled water to the STP to reduce extraction from the river and increase efficiencies within Council systems.			Undertake and document a consistent assessment of feasible resource recovery and reuse opportunities (e.g. stormwater harvesting, biosolids), including evaluation criteria, assumptions, constraints, and conclusions.
	12.2.2	The local water utility should consider opportunities and methods to increase energy and waste efficiency and resource recovery	***Maturing***	Council has implemented a program for installation solar panelling and batteries at the WTP, STP and raw water pump station. Council has a resource recovery facility and Council advised that any concrete structures associated with water and wastewater are recycled. The IWCM identified the option for implementation of a recycled water scheme, which council advised that they are considering progressing. However, consideration of broader IWCM opportunities (stormwater harvesting, or resource recovery opportunities such as circular economy initiative) has not been systematic assessed.			

Core questions	Code	Expectation	Maturity Rating	Justification	Primary actions	Secondary actions	Supporting actions
12.3 How is the local water utility supporting customers to increase water literacy and support water efficiency measures?	*12.3.1*	The local water utility should support its customers to increase their water literacy	***Developing***	Council advised that they have undertaken water efficient programs in the past. Consultation with the community is undertaken as part of Community Strategic Plan. Council noted the tension between water efficiency and revenue impacts. Potable water efficiency is generally optimised, due to raw water use for customer irrigation. However, water literacy initiatives are not coordinated through a formal program, and there is no systematic tracking of reach, effectiveness or behavioural outcomes. This reflects gaps in systems and governance, with effective messaging delivered in practice but not embedded in a structured and monitored program.		Document water efficiency options within options analysis and clearly compare against supply-focused investments. Undertake post-implementation review of water efficiency initiatives to assess realised benefits.	Develop and implement a structured water literacy program with proactive education and behavioural messaging. Document alignment of current water efficiency practices with the NSW Water Efficiency Framework.
	12.3.2	The local water utility should evaluate water efficiency measures on an equal basis with other supply and demand options and implement them where it is cost effective to do so	***Developing***	Water efficiency measures are recognised as important, and some initiatives have been implemented. Improved metering supports better understanding of losses and has been supported by cost-benefit analysis and is a high priority strategic action. Evidence of business case and grant funding applications was provided. There is limited evidence of post-implementation review.			
	12.3.3	The local water utility should use the guidance in the NSW Water Efficiency Framework to work towards best-practice water efficiency	***Developing***	Council demonstrates elements of good practice (e.g. improved metering, focus on NRW), but there is no structured alignment with the NSW Water Efficiency Framework, including planning, implementation, monitoring and review cycles. This reflects gaps in the artefacts, management systems and governance and integration frameworks for alignment with the NSW Water Efficiency Framework.			

Enablers

Data and artefacts	Management systems and analytical processes	Governance and integration
•IWCM Strategy •Community Strategic Plan	•Climate Resilience Infrastructure and Net Zero Plan •Circular Economy Strategy	•Council decision reports

★ SERVING COMMUNITIES. QUESTIONING DECISIONS. DEMANDING SUSTAINABILITY. ★

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT DRIVING OFF A CLIFF

Rising depreciation, revaluations and shrinking financial flexibility leave councils on the edge.

SPECIAL RATES VARIATIONS UNDER PRESSURE

Ratepayers are tapped out. Councils need more than wishful thinking.

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AUDIT COSTS KEEP CLIMBING

More compliance, more complexity, more cost. Where does it end?

PAGE 5

WHO PAYS FOR TOMORROW'S ASSETS?

Today's underinvestment is tomorrow's bill shock.

PAGE 7

INSIDE: BIG PROMISES. TIGHT BUDGETS. TOUGH CHOICES. *It's time to get real.*

A satirical illustration of the financial pressures confronting NSW local government.

Depreciation: The Difference Between Looking Sustainable and Being Sustainable

Why the NSW local government needs clearer accounting, honest asset planning and a sustainability test that goes beyond one headline operating result.

Accounting debates are rarely accused of causing a stampede on LinkedIn, but this one matters. Changing an accounting policy will not, by itself, repair a road, replace a pipe or make a financially fragile council sustainable.

51%	$1.25b	$838m	38%
increase in depreciation expense	additional annual depreciation	estimated revaluation-driven increase	increase in operating income

The numbers can no longer be ignored...

The August 2026 edition of LG '*Debits & Credits*' contains figures that should make everyone involved in NSW local government stop and think and perhaps reach for a stronger coffee. Across the eight full financial years to 2024-25, council depreciation expense increased by 51 per cent. Employee costs increased by 42 per cent, materials and services by 46 per cent, while operating income excluding capital grants increased by only 38 per cent.

In dollar terms, annual depreciation increased by approximately $1.25 billion. LG estimates that up to $838 million of this increase may be attributable to asset revaluations flowing from the current requirement to measure infrastructure, property, plant and equipment at fair value. That is not loose change found behind the seat of the council ute. The methodology should be tested through detailed sector modelling, but the scale of the result is far too large to dismiss.

The analysis also compares real asset purchases with the growth in councils' gross asset values. Councils purchased approximately $37 billion of assets during the period, yet gross asset values increased by about $112 billion. The difference cannot be explained by cash purchases alone. Revaluations, contributed assets, improved recognition and changes in asset data will all have played a part, but revaluation policy is plainly capable of materially changing reported depreciation and operating results without changing the cash available to council. Accounting can move numbers very efficiently; graders, excavators and bridge crews remain stubbornly cash based.

> **"Changing the value of an asset changes depreciation. It does not put one extra dollar in the bank, repair one road or replace one pipe."**

Three different questions are being mixed together

Asset valuation, depreciation and renewal funding are connected, but they are not the same thing. Too often they are tipped into the same bucket, given a vigorous stir and served up as one measure of sustainability.

ASSET VALUE	DEPRECIATION	RENEWAL FUNDING
The amount recorded in the financial statements.	The non-cash allocation of an asset's depreciable amount over its estimated useful life.	The real-world plan to maintain, rehabilitate or replace the asset using rates, grants, reserves, debt or service changes.

Depreciation is not a cheque that must be written each year, and it does not create a reserve. No bank manager has yet accepted it as a deposit. But it is not meaningless. Roads deteriorate, pipes corrode, buildings age and plant wears out. A council can have enough cash to operate today while still consuming its infrastructure faster than it can maintain or renew it.

Conversely, a council can report a substantial accounting deficit because of revaluation-driven depreciation while retaining reasonable short-term cash capacity. Both things can be true. The reporting framework should show both, rather than pretending one operating result can carry the entire sustainability story.

The rural and remote reality

This distinction matters most in rural and remote NSW. The relationship between population and infrastructure responsibility is vastly different from that experienced in metropolitan councils. Previous Western NSW analysis identified indicative road burdens ranging from approximately 718 kilometres per 1,000 residents in Balranald to more than 1,300 kilometres in some remote shires.

Distance remains distance. Roads remain roads. A change in accounting policy does not shorten the network, reduce construction costs or expand the local rating base. You cannot depreciate 718 kilometres of road into becoming 71.8 kilometres, tempting though that may be. Depreciation did not create this infrastructure burden. It exposed the long-term consequences of asking small populations and thin revenue bases to support enormous networks.

A council may therefore remain technically solvent while losing unrestricted financial flexibility, falling behind on renewal, becoming increasingly dependent on tied grants and struggling to retain engineers, planners and finance professionals.

In remote councils, institutional capacity can fail well before formal financial insolvency occurs.

Historical cost would improve the result - but not the road

Moving to historical cost would reduce depreciation on many older assets. It may also reduce valuation costs, simplify parts of the audit process and make operating results appear healthier. Those are genuine benefits.

However, an old bridge that becomes cheaper in the accounts does not become cheaper to replace. The bridge does not read the balance sheet and politely agree to cost less. A road built decades ago at historical cost will still need to be reconstructed at tomorrow's labour, material, environmental and engineering standards. A pure historical-cost model could therefore create false comfort by improving the reported result without improving cash, condition or renewal capacity.

At the other extreme, continually revaluing every minor asset is difficult to justify when the work costs more than the information is worth. Not every laptop, ute and office chair needs to be treated as though it were the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Fair value information remains essential for asset management, insurance, disaster recovery, grant applications and long-term financial planning. The question is not whether councils need replacement-cost information. They do. Another question is where that information should sit, and how it should be used.

But the most important question is whether spending all the time and money to calculate anything will coerce governments to change policies prior to the renewal cost becoming so monumental that recovery is out of reach.

A practical mixed model

A more sensible model would separate financial reporting from forward asset planning and apply proportionality to the valuation task, rather than forcing councils to choose between two accounting religions:

- Retain current replacement-cost information for material buildings and core infrastructure networks.
- Use historical cost for shorter-life assets such as plant, fleet, furniture, office equipment and information technology.
- Standardise asset classes, componentisation, unit-rate methods, condition evidence and useful life methodology.
- Allow useful lives to reflect genuine differences in climate, traffic, materials, maintenance and service standards.
- Avoid forcing councils to reconstruct decades of historical records where the information does not exist or the cost exceeds the value produced.

Sustainability needs two lenses

Council reporting should present two separate but connected views:

1 FINANCIAL AND OPERATING CAPACITY	2 ASSET SUSTAINABILITY
• Operating cash flow	Depreciation and asset consumption
• Unrestricted cash and investments	Maintenance and renewal expenditure
• Debt and repayment capacity	Asset condition and backlog
• Own-source revenue	Ten-year renewal requirements
• Reliance on tied grants	Planned renewals versus available funding
• Capacity to continue services	

This enables councillors and communities to answer two straightforward questions:

- **Does the council have enough cash and revenue capacity to keep operating?**
- **Is it maintaining and renewing its infrastructure at a sustainable rate?**

Do not turn reform into window dressing

Changing depreciation may improve presentation. It may remove unnecessary valuation work and reduce audit cost and delay. Window dressing can make the shopfront look better; it does not fix the foundations. We should not kid ourselves that an accounting policy change will rescue financially stressed councils.

A lower depreciation figure does not reverse decades of cost shifting, increase Financial Assistance Grants, strengthen a council's rating base, fund the renewal backlog, retain an engineer in a remote community or pay the ongoing costs attached to a grant-funded facility. A healthier-looking operating result is welcome, but councils cannot spend an adjective.

Fingers crossed: show us the calculator

There is, however, a reason for cautious optimism. The July 2026 Labor National Conference endorsed a Federation Compact that included ongoing annual increases to Financial Assistance Grants. That is welcome. It is also the starting gun, not the finish line.

Fingers crossed, the mechanisms developed to calculate and deliver the amended policy do not become a smoke-and-mirrors exercise. An 'increase' must not simply rebadge ordinary indexation, recycle Roads to Recovery or other existing programs, redistribute the same inadequate pool, or attach new strings that shift even more risk back to councils.

For rural and remote councils, the test is straightforward: the dollars that arrive, the certainty of the pathway, and whether the formula recognises the tyranny of distance, diseconomies of scale and the actual cost of essential infrastructure. There has been enough confetti. Now show us the calculator.

Every new, gifted or grant-funded asset should come with a transparent whole-of-life funding statement covering operations, maintenance and eventual renewal. The ribbon-cutting is often the easy part; the scissors are free. The bill that follows can remain with the community for generations.

Do not solve a reporting problem by hiding the infrastructure problem.

Measure asset consumption honestly, report cash capacity separately and make the renewal funding gap impossible to miss.

About the author

Terry Dodds PSM is Chief Executive Officer of Balranald Shire Council and has more than three decades of senior local government experience, including approximately ten years as a council CEO and eighteen years as a Director of Engineering. He writes regularly on financial sustainability, infrastructure, governance and the practical realities of rural and remote local government.

Source note: Prepared from LG Solutions, LG "Debits & Credits", NSW edition, August 2026 (particularly pp. 1 and 5-18), together with prior analysis and writing by Terry Dodds on depreciation, infrastructure renewal and local government financial sustainability. The $838 million figure is an estimate presented by LG and should be read as sector analysis rather than an audited determination of causation. The Financial Assistance Grants passage also reflects the Australian Local Government Association's 25 July 2026 statement on the Federation Compact endorsed at the Labor National Conference.

Jenny Aitchison
Minister for Roads
Minister for Regional Transport

Media Release

Have your say and help us shape the future of Transport in the Riverina Murray

Tuesday, 28 July 2026

People who live, work or visit the Riverina and Murray are being invited to help shape the region's transport future, with the Minns Labor Government today releasing a draft 20-year blueprint for roads, public transport and freight.

The draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan sets out a long-term vision for the region, identifying 51 potential short, medium and long-term initiatives designed to improve safety, connectivity and transport choice while supporting future population growth and changing community needs.

For the first time in more than a decade, Riverina and Murray communities can help shape a single integrated transport plan for their region.

The draft Plan has been informed by more than 550 pieces of community feedback and over 20 written submissions. Developed in consultation with local councils, Members of Parliament and community groups, it builds on previous planning work and is now being released for broader community feedback.

The Riverina Murray SRTIP is one of nine plans being developed across regional NSW as part of the Minns Government's commitment to improving transport infrastructure and services across the state.

Key directions of the draft Plan include:

- improving access to jobs, education, healthcare, recreation and Country for Aboriginal communities
- enhancing access to local, regional, metropolitan and cross-border destinations
- upgrading transport networks and improving services to support future growth
- improving freight efficiency and productivity
- creating a safer and more resilient road network.

The Minns Government is now calling on the community to have their say.

Community members can view the draft SRITP and provide feedback until 11:59pm Friday 11 September by visiting https://www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/sritp/riverina-murray. A community survey has been designed to make it easy to provide feedback on key themes and initiatives proposed in the plan.

More detailed submissions are also welcome and can be sent to engage.sritps@transport.nsw.gov.au or posted to PO Box 484, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650.

During the consultation period, Transport for NSW representatives will visit communities across the Riverina and Murray at a series of pop-up sessions to answer questions and hear directly from locals.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Roads and Regional Transport, Jenny Aitchison:

“The people who know the Riverina and Murray best should be able to help shape its transport future, and that’s exactly what this draft Plan is designed to do.

“This is about using local knowledge to make it easier for people to get to work, school, healthcare and see family, while strengthening freight links that keep our economy moving.

“We've listened to hundreds of people already, and now we're inviting everyone across the Riverina and Murray to have their say before the plan is finalised."

Quotes attributable to Labor Spokesperson for Murray, Bob Nanva MLC:

“This is an excellent opportunity for locals in Riverina and Murray to have a say in how transport is planned and built to better service their daily lives.

“As communities change and grow, it is important that connectivity grows with them and for them, to ensure that their transport needs remain accessible.”

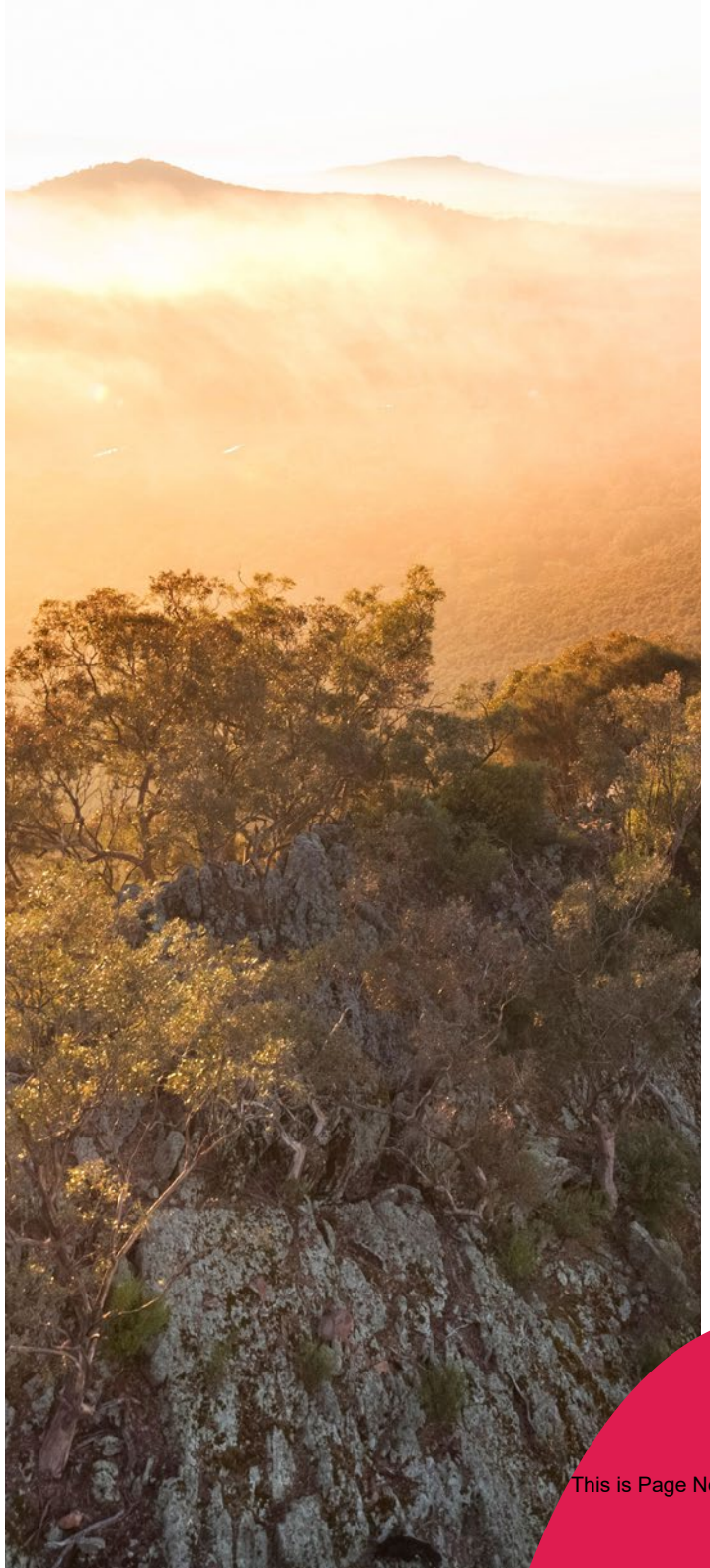
MEDIA:

Liam McGuire | Minister Aitchison | 0413 392 299

Transport for NSW

Draft Riverina Murray

Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan



Acknowledgement of Country

Transport acknowledges and pays respects to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunawal, Wolgalu, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Yita Yita and Yorta Yorta countries that make up the Riverina Murray region.

Transport acknowledges the deep and continuous relationship and connection that Aboriginal peoples have to their land, language, song, dance, art and stories for tens of thousands of years and pays respects to the cultural values of the traditional custodians and their families. Transport pays respects to ancestors that have defended, walked and managed these lands for generations and who have left a strong legacy of culture, wisdom and knowledge embedded within this Country.

Aboriginal peoples travelled, and continue to travel to, around, and beyond this region. Many of the transport routes we use today – from rail lines, to roads and water crossings – follow the traditional Songlines, trade routes and ceremonial paths in Country that our nation's First Peoples have followed for tens of thousands of years.

In preparing this Plan we acknowledge this heritage, as well as acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples who are traditional custodians of the Riverina Murray region and their ongoing cultural connection to the region.

Transport for NSW is committed to honouring Aboriginal peoples' cultural and spiritual connections to the lands, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Cover: Cycling on the Wiradjuri Trail, Wagga Wagga
© Destination NSW

The Rock Nature Reserve–Kengal Aboriginal Place
© Destination NSW

This is Page No 164 of the Business Paper presented Ordinary Meeting of Council 25th August 2026

Minister's foreword

I am pleased to present the Draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan and its vision for a connected, equitable, safe and sustainable transport network that serves the people and communities of the Riverina Murray.

The Riverina Murray is a rich tapestry of Aboriginal lands, languages and culture; with the traditional owners and custodians of Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunawal, Wolgalu, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Yita Yita and Yorta Yorta nations all sharing a unique bond to Country across the region.

The Riverina Murray region sits within the Murray–Darling Basin and stretches from the southern border of NSW with Victoria to the foothills of the Snowy Mountains to the east.

Often described as Australia's food bowl, the Riverina Murray is supported by extensive irrigation landscapes that enable some of the nation's most productive agriculture. The region is home to the nationally significant Murray and Murrumbidgee River systems and is centred around three major regional cities with strong freight connections to the eastern seaboard, including direct access to Port Melbourne, Port Kembla and Port Botany.

With deep cross-border ties, many residents live, work and access services across State boundaries, and the region's proximity to Victoria provides opportunities to strengthen these connections and support the efficient movement of people and goods across the border.

Creating a transport system that works for all our people and communities is a core pillar of this Government. For people in regional areas, particularly those with disabilities, senior citizens and young people, limited public transport options and long travel times can be barriers to the very things that improve their lives. This needs to change.

Our Draft Plan for the Riverina Murray is a blueprint for that change. Focusing on short to medium-term priorities while maintaining a long-term vision, the Draft Plan is outcome-focused and designed to reflect the diversity of communities across the region and respond effectively to changing transport needs.

As the population of the Riverina Murray grows and shifts, Transport for NSW will support the delivery of well-located homes and work closely with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to deliver more housing and enable sustainable future land use.

We will support sustainable growth by expanding active and public transport networks to improve access to local and regional services and destinations, and by providing more transport choices that foster a vibrant and liveable Riverina Murray. We will ensure people can safely travel on public or active transport and leave the car at home. Importantly, no one should be forced to stay overnight due to limited public transport options; people deserve to reach their destinations, access essential goods and services, and return home safely on the same day.

The Riverina Murray economy will also benefit from improved services that support travel to and from work both locally and regionally, while meeting the freight needs of industries operating to, from, through and within the region. Strengthening connections for visitors and the visitor economy workforce is not just good for our people, it is good for our economy.

Safety will continue to underpin everyting we do.

The Government remains committed to achieving zero trauma on the road network by 2050 and zero trauma on waterways by 2056. We cannot shy away from the scale of this challenge. It is easy to view the road toll as a statistic, but behind every number is a person, a colleague, a neighbour or a loved one. The impact of road trauma is felt across the Riverina Murray, and the only acceptable number is zero.

We will work with councils and community to identify locations with higher crash risk and develop targeted safety improvements, including infrastructure upgrades and other measures to improve road safety. We will also increase the number of heavy vehicle rest stops as part of major highway upgrades.

Our transport infrastructure must also be more resilient. The Riverina Murray has experienced significant disruptions in recent years—including drought, bushfire, the global pandemic and the floods of 2022. Climate modelling shows these events are likely to become more frequent. We must strengthen resilience in our existing network and plan for future shocks so we can minimise the impact of natural disasters on transport services.

'Prior preparation prevents poor performance' rings true. We will better maintain and upgrade ageing transport assets, ensure new assets are built with climate and hazard resilience in mind, and deploy improved technologies that support real-time emergency response.

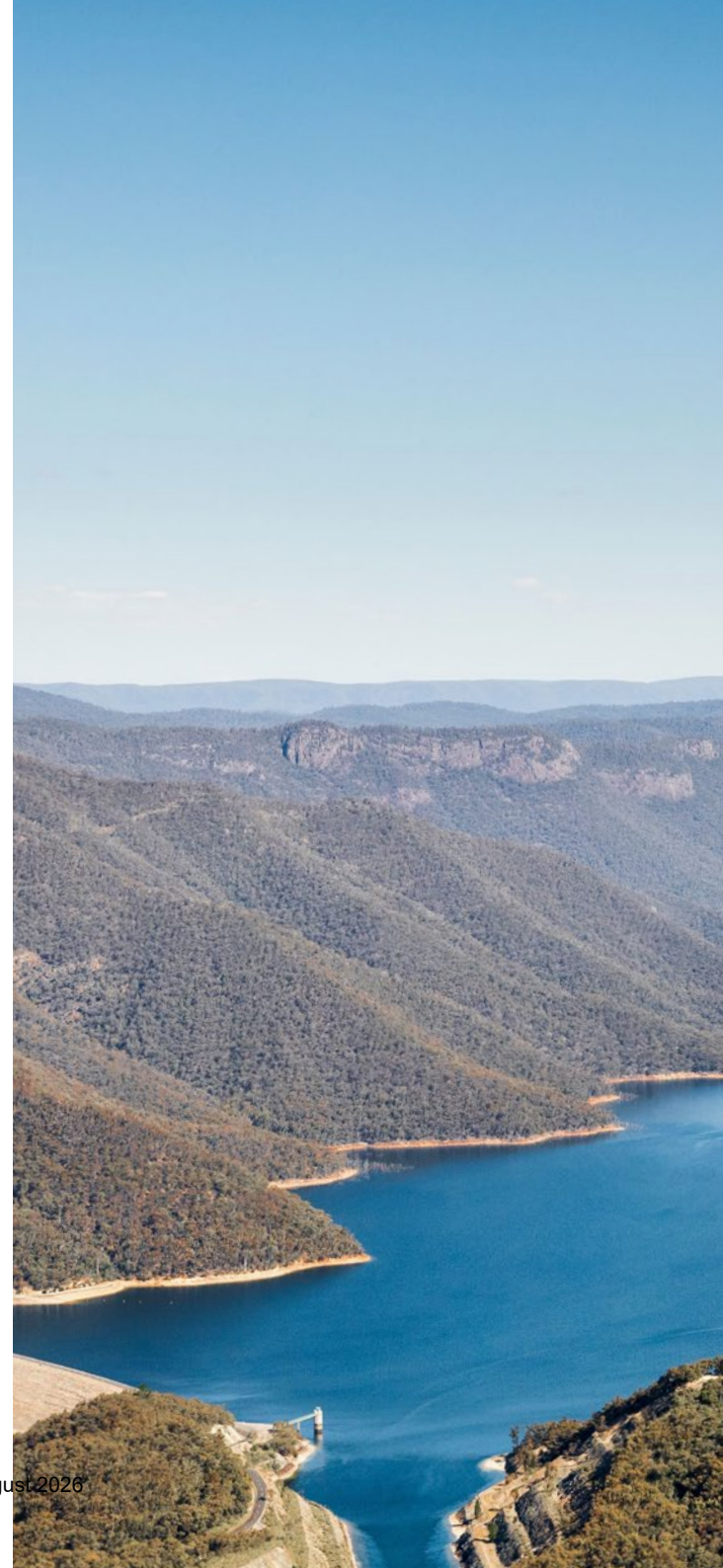
HAY SHIRE COUNCIL

I have met with and listened to the people and communities of the Riverina Murray, and I understand the complex challenges they face. Through conversations with residents, councils, Local Aboriginal land councils and community groups, we heard about the need for better travel options to access health and education services; the vital role transport plays in supporting housing; the importance of better connections between homes and local jobs; and the need to improve network resilience to respond to stress and shocks. It is clear that much needs to be done.

This Draft Plan has been shaped by early engagement, encouraging people to share their ideas, hopes and aspirations for improved connections and a stronger, more connected Riverina Murray.

As the Riverina Murray region continues to grow and evolve, a strategic and integrated approach to transport planning is essential to realising our vision: ensuring the people and communities of this beautiful and diverse region are well connected by a safe, sustainable and integrated transport network.

The Hon. Jenny Aitchison, MP
Minister for Roads and
Minister for Regional Transport



Tumut River and the Talbingo Reservoir in the Snowy Mountains Region of NSW

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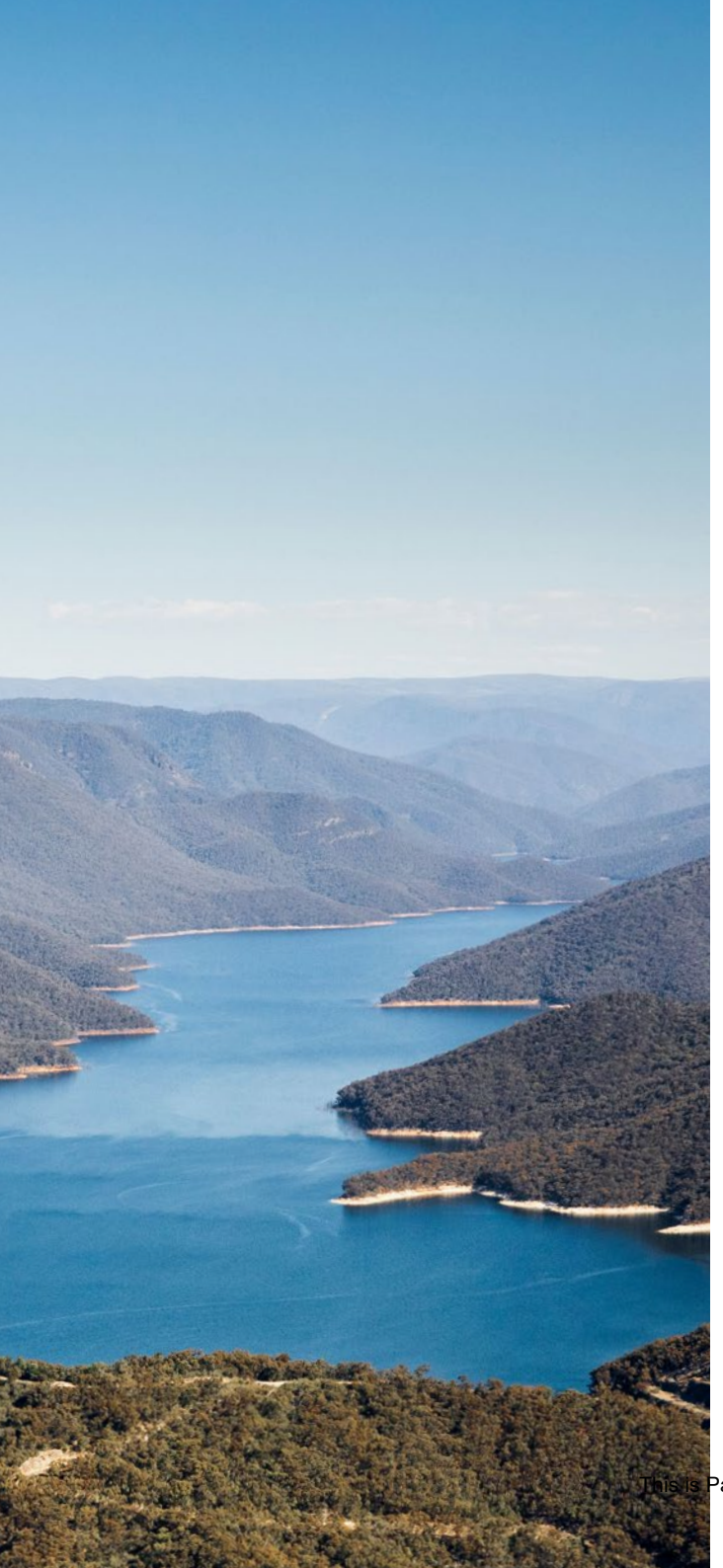


To the reader of this Draft Plan

Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans (SRITPs) are a NSW Government commitment to delivering tailored regional transport plans that contextualise the State's objectives and outline a targeted program of initiatives for each region's unique needs.

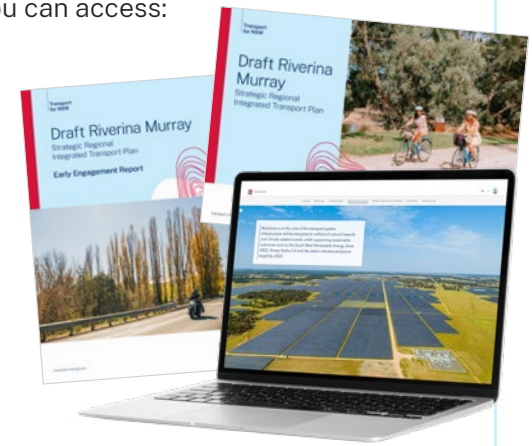
The Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan replaces the previous Draft Riverina Murray Regional Transport Plan. It is focused on outcomes and aligns with the Government's priorities.

Plans are being delivered for nine regions across NSW. The Plans are evidence based and developed in collaboration with stakeholders and the community.

In developing the Draft Plan, there has been a focus on ensuring the challenges, opportunities and initiatives are directly informed by insights and evidence gathered from data and stakeholder engagement and public consultation, with a clear connection between feedback, analysis and action. This informed our vision, outcomes and initiatives within this Draft Plan.

The Draft Plan is more than just a single document. It is a collection of resources reflecting the inputs and outputs that went into its development. To inform your feedback and submissions on the Draft Plan, you can access:

- the Draft Plan
- the Early Engagement Report
- a StoryMap
- engagement resources.



We are now checking we got it right

We are currently seeking to validate the Draft Plan before we finalise it. Your feedback is essential to helping us do this. You can access the Early Engagement Report which outlines who we talked to and what we heard.

We have also developed a StoryMap to share accessible data and insights that has been used to understand current and future transport requirements. You can share your feedback at www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/sritp/riverina-murray.

How to read the Plan

01 Starting with Country

Transport acknowledges the enduring connection of Aboriginal people to the land and their contributions to the cultural fabric of the region. Our planning principle of Starting with Country underscores the importance of integrating culturally responsive transport solutions that honour the traditions and needs of Aboriginal communities.

02 About the Plan

Understand the purpose, strategic context and geographical extent of this Plan. We talk about the role transport can play in delivering better social, educational, health and economic outcomes and how we work with all levels of government to deliver meaningful outcomes for its communities. This establishes why we are delivering the SRITP for the region.

03 Vision for the region

Transport uses a vision and validate approach to planning. The vision reflects the transport objectives and is informed by stakeholder consultation and responds to the region's long-term land use vision.

04 Understanding the region

Our planners undertake investigations and analysis, and combined with community insights, help to develop a rich picture of how people and goods move in, out and through the region. We look at current and projected growth figures and consider how these may impact the transport system.

05 The transport challenge and opportunity

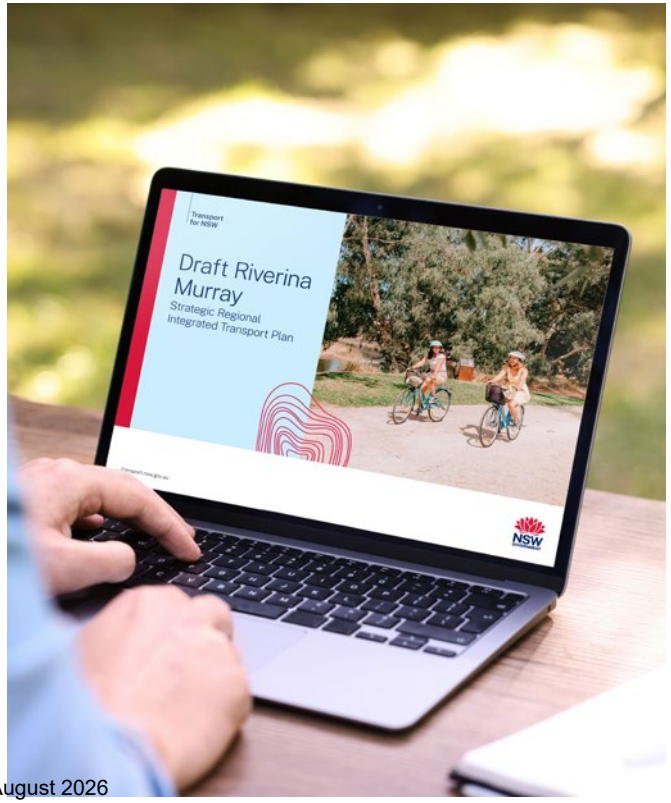
Using our objectives as a roadmap, through detailed evidence and data analysis, we outline the transport challenges and opportunities for the region as we now understand it. We use the insights we have captured through stakeholder and community engagement, data and analysis to present a pathway for how we will deliver our vision.

06 Realising the vision

With our pathway set, we now outline a suite of short, medium and longer term initiatives that Transport will undertake to realise the vision. These initiatives inform an internal implementation plan for Transport to measure and report against.

07 Next steps and implementation

We now turn our sights to how we will implement our vision for the region. We outline how we will be kept accountable through progress reporting and governance and, through continued collaboration with key stakeholders, we will identify funding opportunities and prioritise a program of work to achieve our long-term outcomes.



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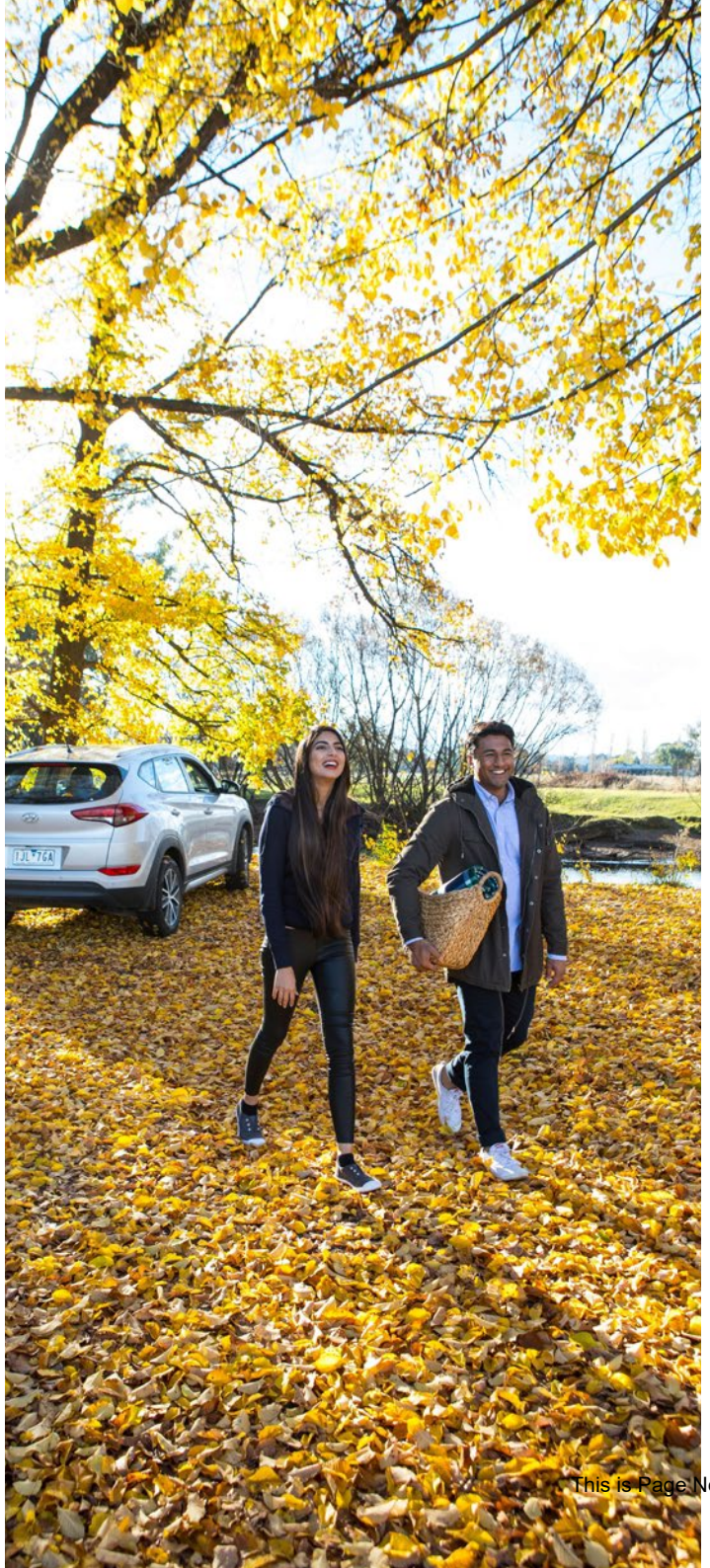

Executive summary

The Riverina Murray is a region shaped by growing regional economic activity, an increasing freight task, and ongoing network resilience challenges. Characterised by growing regional cities and distinctive riverside and inland communities, it is one of the State's most attractive places to live, work and visit.

The region is recognised as one of Australia's most productive agricultural areas and a major food bowl, producing nearly one third of NSW agricultural output through extensive irrigated and dryland farming, horticulture, viticulture, livestock and forestry industries. The region's productive landscapes support nationally significant food, fibre and timber production, underpinned by the Murray and Murrumbidgee river systems and extensive forestry plantation areas.

Population growth is concentrated in the major centres, strengthening economic activity while also increasing demands on the transport network. The region faces challenges due to increasing exposure to floods, bushfires and extreme weather, putting pressure on critical transport links.

This draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan sets a clear, practical agenda to deliver a safer, more inclusive and resilient transport network.

As it evolves, it is critical that the transport system plays its part in supporting growth, strengthening connections and enhancing social, cultural and economic wellbeing. To do so, it must be developed in a way that is strategically aligned, promotes integration, and ensures that the system is ready for the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring.

This draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan (SRITP) sets out a long-term, place-based approach to transport planning for the region. Developed in partnership with 20 local councils, industry, and communities, the Draft Plan identifies and responds to local challenges and opportunities and contextualises land use and transport objectives which have been adopted at State and regional levels.

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The purpose of this SRITP

The purpose of the Riverina Murray SRITP is to enable clear and coordinated action across departments and authorities, ensuring the region's transport system responds to needs of the people and businesses calling the Riverina Murray home.

To do this, the SRITP establishes three crucial reference points that will drive and shape the need for investment in transport in the region over the next 20 years:

1. A clear vision for the future transport network
2. A set of regionally specific transport objectives
3. A targeted, staged program of initiatives across the short and medium term.

This will allow the Riverina Murray SRITP to support the prioritisation of investment and funding decisions and give stakeholders the clarity they need to make informed, coordinated decisions with confidence.

The transport vision for the Riverina Murray

Our transport vision for the Riverina Murray is one that efficiently connects people to local, regional, metropolitan and cross-border destinations and services, while boosting freight efficiency. Residents, workers, and visitors have access to reliable, frequent, and sustainable transport choices, particularly to access jobs, healthcare, education, social and recreational opportunities, reducing reliance on private vehicles and supporting a thriving, liveable region.

Delivering this vision will ensure the Riverina Murray benefits from:

- a high-quality multimodal transport system, grounded in Country, providing safe, reliable and sustainable access for people and goods across the Riverina Murray
- a safe transport network supporting safer movement of people and goods to, through and within the region
- strong connections between population centres and key destinations including ones across the border, supporting well-located housing growth, access to jobs, health and education, and meaningful social and cultural life
- a resilient and more sustainable network that protects the natural environment, supports regional economic growth, and strengthens links to national gateways such as Sydney and Melbourne
- greater use of walking, riding and public transport for everyday trips, with reduced reliance on private vehicles to support a more liveable, sustainable region.

Understanding the Riverina Murray region

The Riverina Murray region is home to 283,000 people across 20 local government areas and 20 Local Aboriginal land councils. The region spans agricultural heartlands, river systems and national parks, sharing over 600 kilometres of border with Victoria. The region's economic growth and prosperity is strongly linked to primary industry sectors including agribusiness, forestry, and food manufacturing.

The region has strong ties to Victoria, with many towns within the region being closer to Melbourne than to Sydney with residents travelling to Victorian centres such as Bendigo and Shepparton for health and education services.

The region's demographics are shifting: by 2041, the region will see a 37 per cent increase in residents over 65, while the working-age and youth populations are expected to increase by only 13 per cent and seven per cent respectively. This shift intensifies demand for public and community transport to enable older residents to stay connected to services, shops and social life, and to age safely in place.

The region at a glance: key statistics and facts about the Riverina Murray

Population and housing

- Almost seven per cent of the region's population (about 18,900 people) identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Narrandera LGA has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people at 16 per cent (about 900 people).
- The region's population is expected to grow from about 283,000 people in 2021 to about 331,000 people by 2041. The majority of growth is projected to occur in Albury, Greater Hume and Murray River LGAs.
- The region's growth is concentrated in the over 65-year-old category, accounting for 22,000 or 46 per cent of the population growth.

Services and employment

- Employment in the Riverina Murray region is projected to increase by 33,000 jobs to 175,000 by 2041.
- Agriculture is worth over $2 billion each year, making Riverina Murray the most valuable agricultural region in NSW.
- Employment in the health and education industries is forecast to grow by 27 per cent.
- The largest concentration of timber growing and advanced timber manufacturing in Australia is located in the Snowy Valley council area.

Equity and access

- Transport inequity contributes to broader socio-economic disadvantage in parts of the region, by restricting access to employment, education and essential services.
- Highest levels of disadvantage are experienced in Junee, Narrandera and Leeton council areas.
- The region relies heavily on access to nearby Victorian centres such as Shepparton and Bendigo as well as metropolitan cities including Canberra, Melbourne and Greater Sydney.
- In 2021, about 92 per cent of people used a private vehicle to travel to work, followed by active transport at six per cent and public transport at one per cent.

Grain silo at Boree Creek

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The transport challenge and opportunity

Framed within the Plan's eight objectives, the challenges and opportunities for transport in the Riverina Murray region are explored below.

Objective 1: Starting with Country

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Riverina Murray face several transport-related challenges, with limited transport choice, inadequate public transport coverage, infrequent and unreliable services, and long travel times. These challenges constrain access to employment, education, and essential healthcare.

The key opportunity to improve Aboriginal outcomes in the region is to improve access between discrete Aboriginal communities and important local and regional destinations.

Objective 2: Reduce transport disadvantage by providing access to transport for all

Limited public transport options leave many without real choice, especially non-drivers, the aging population and people living in smaller centres and rural areas. Additionally, the lack of safe walking and cycling infrastructure such as footpaths, off-road cycleways, kerb ramps and safe crossing opportunities within town centres makes everyday access to economic, healthcare, education, social, and cultural opportunities more difficult.

Key opportunities to improve people's access lie in increasing transport choice, by providing attractive walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and services. Providing public transport services that are frequent, reliable, affordable, and inclusive supported by a well-connected active transport network is key. This could include accessible footpaths and cycling links to reach reliable day-return services to Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Albury, flexible transport options and improved connections to centres across the Victorian border.

Objective 3: Seamless borders

Limited regional cross-border connectivity between NSW and Victoria reduces regional equity, limits workforce mobility and constrains the ability of local economies to capture the full benefits of proximity to larger service centres.

A key opportunity is to improve cross-border transport connections for twin towns through public transport service alignment and improved active transport infrastructure across bridges. This could contribute to more effective road freight movements, increased social connection, and improved access to cross-border services such as education and health.

HAY SHIRE COUNCIL

Objective 4: Well-located housing and successful places

Population growth within the region and limited housing availability in centres is restricting economic growth. Housing growth should occur in well-located and accessible locations so that residents are well connected to employment opportunities, health and education services, social, cultural and recreation facilities.

The key opportunity to support well-located housing and successful places is delivering new homes within population centres that already have established transport networks and population services. In residential growth precincts, coordinating investment into walking, cycling, public transport and roads with the delivery of new housing is essential to limit car dependency, improve liveability and to create sustainable communities from the outset.

Objective 5: A thriving and diversifying economy

The region's strategic location and access to airports, ports and intermodal terminals in Victoria, NSW, Queensland and South Australia through road and rail networks highlights its economic importance. However, freight movements are increasing and diversifying, with seasonal surges, emerging industries and State significant projects such as the South West Renewable Energy Zone and Snowy 2.0 dramatically increasing the number and size of heavy vehicles. Moreover, heavy vehicle rest stops are not fit for purpose due to increasingly longer vehicles requiring decoupling zones. On the rail network, infrastructure limits train speeds, reducing efficiency and impacting efforts to increase rail's role in the freight task and public transport.

The Draft Plan aspires to deliver safer, more resilient and more productive freight networks. On the road network, opportunities are identified to reduce PBS pinch points, improve road safety, increase support for road repairs, deliver smarter disaster recovery and strengthen freight connections to reduce reliance on vulnerable road and rail assets. Rail movement could become more reliable by addressing rail pinch points such as long distances between crossing loops, steep grades, single track lines and low weight limits.

Objective 6: A safe transport network working towards zero trauma

Riverina Murray experiences a higher share of serious crashes on higher-speed roads compared to the NSW average, with over half occurring on roads posted at 90 km/h or higher. Crashes linked to speeding and fatigue are also more common in the region, and heavy vehicles are involved slightly more often than across NSW overall. These crashes are concentrated along major highways and key freight routes, particularly on the edges of urban centres and smaller towns, where traffic transitions between high-speed and local road environments.

Reducing crashes is key to improving safety in the region, particularly around regional centres and along higher-speed rural roads, including highways and key arterials. Better-defined transition zones can help drivers adjust speeds as they enter towns, improving safety for local communities and vulnerable road users. There is also opportunity to reduce heavy vehicle risks by improving the quality and availability of rest stops to better manage fatigue. Alongside this, continued focus on waterway safety through education, awareness, and cross-border collaboration remains important to reducing harm across the region.

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Objective 7: Reliable and resilient networks

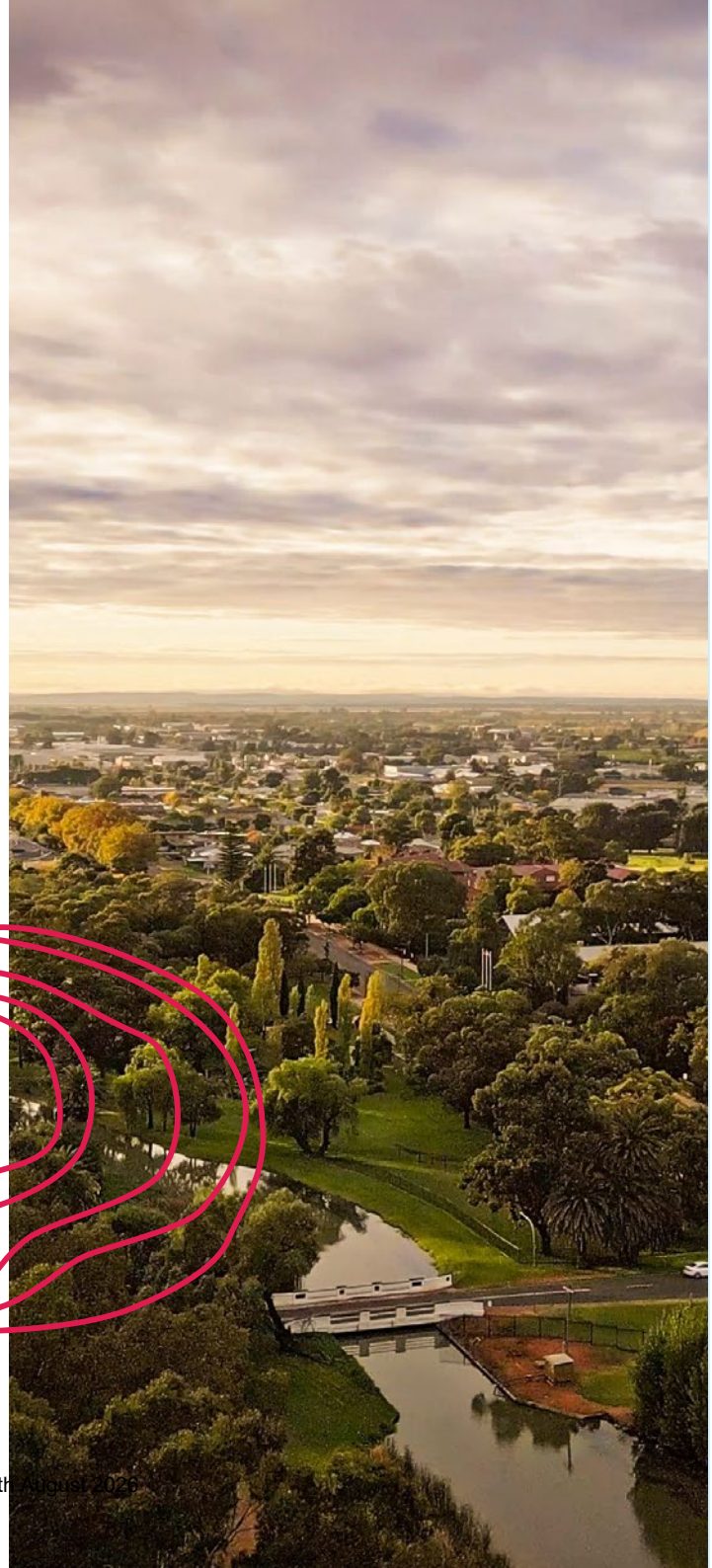
The Riverina Murray transport network is highly vulnerable to disruption, with bushfires, floods and climate change impacts regularly cutting access to communities and interrupting freight movements. When key routes are closed, freight is often diverted onto longer, less suitable roads, increasing travel times, safety risks, and road wear. The region's flat terrain, extensive river systems, and large number of bridges and irrigation structures increase exposure to flooding, while limited alternative routes, particularly at key points such as the Newell Highway near West Wyalong and the Newell–Sturt intersection near Narrandera, add to the network's vulnerability.

Opportunities exist to strengthen resilience by embedding more robust design and maintenance practices, including improved drainage and materials suited to future climate conditions. There is also potential to use technologies such as aerial imagery, drones and artificial intelligence to improve real-time monitoring and response to disruptions, alongside applying lessons from recent events.

Objective 8: Transition to net zero emissions

Transport is committed to achieving net zero emissions. Increasing freight demand, tourism, population growth and climate impacts place pressure on sensitive and biodiverse environments, including World Heritage areas.

Key opportunities for achieving net zero include the roll-out of zero emission buses, expansion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and enabling electric vehicle uptake, noting that limited availability of charging infrastructure in the region currently restricts uptake for households and businesses. Higher-productivity and zero emission freight vehicles can also reduce emissions from freight movements.



Key directions for the Riverina Murray

The Plan includes 40 short and 11 medium-term initiatives as well as several Statewide initiatives which respond to the challenges and opportunities of the region. The Plan's objectives and related challenges are set out in full in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

For the purposes of this executive summary, key initiatives are summarised below through a series of overarching directions that express the Plan's approach to secure better transport and community outcomes across the region.

Direction	Initiatives
1. Improve Aboriginal people's access to jobs, healthcare, education, social and recreational venues, and Country	• Improve transport outcomes for local Aboriginal communities: Develop local Aboriginal transport and services plans co-designed in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. • Improve connectivity to Discrete Aboriginal Communities: Support Discrete Aboriginal Communities (DACs) in ways such as improving walking and cycling connectivity between DACs and nearby essential services.
2. Enhance access to local, regional, metropolitan and cross border destinations	• Improve active transport infrastructure in centres: Work with councils and State agencies to identify challenges and opportunities to provide safe and connected active transport facilities in town centres and at key destinations such as jobs, health, education and transport precincts. • Improve rail services to increase services between Sydney–Griffith, Sydney–Albury and improve local connectivity through the region. • Investigate and progress implementation of new day-return services to Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Albury from centres across the region. • Improve key rail stations, bus interchanges and bus stops to offer passengers seamless connections between rail, coach and bus services. • Commence planning and implementation of improved public transport services to provide better connectivity for cross-border communities to access services, education, employment, recreation and other transport modes on both sides of the border.
3. Responding to growth with network and service upgrades	• Work with NSW Government agencies and local councils to support additional housing in growth areas such as Wagga Wagga, Albury, Griffith and Moama. • Continue investigating improvements to the transport network in Wagga Wagga with a focus on the Northern Growth Area and develop a roadmap identifying priority interventions across the network through completion of Wagga Wagga Northern Access Strategy. • Undertake planning for state roads with heavy vehicle freight routes to encourage freight vehicles to utilise alternative routes to main streets in centres. This will include reallocation of road space to improve safety and comfort for people walking and riding.

Direction	Initiatives
4. Move freight more efficiently	• Continue development of the Hume Highway Corridor Strategy to guide future investment and identify priority improvements that respond to growing demand, freight movement, travel efficiency, safety and asset management needs. • Continue investigating upgrade requirements and improvement options for the northbound Sheahan Bridge to allow higher productivity Performance Based Standards (PBS) vehicles to cross the Murrumbidgee River on the Hume Highway at Gundagai. • Develop a Freight Master Plan that supports the region to deliver efficient, resilient and integrated supply chains by improving connections between government agencies and industry, guiding both operational and infrastructure responses to strengthen regional productivity and market access.
5. Create a safer and more resilient road network	• Develop a prioritised Route Safety Review Program to address high-risk curves and crash hot spots across the high-speed road network including Kidman Way, Goldfields Way, Irrigation Way, Riverina Highway and Hume Highway. • Prioritise safety treatments and upgrades at key intersections to decrease incidences of fatal and serious injury crashes for all road users, particularly at intersections on high-speed rural approaches and key regional corridors. • Develop corridor plans to assess asset condition and proactively identify, prioritise and seek funding for maintenance and upgrade needs over the next 20 years, including flood immunity initiatives to reduce closures of key freight and passenger routes such as the Sturt and Newell Highways at Gillenbah. • Investigate and establish a prioritised regional program to assess and plan the upgrade or replacement of critical bridges and irrigation structures across the Riverina Murray region including critical assets such as Glenroy Bridge, Bungambrawatha Creek Bridge, Canal Bridge and Murray River crossings.

Implementing the Plan

This Plan has detailed the steps necessary to turn the identified opportunities into tangible initiatives. The processes set out below will be key to ensuring robust delivery.

- **Governance:** Transport is responsible for the implementation and ongoing management of the final Plan, with collaborative partnerships established for those initiatives that require support and input from key stakeholders like local government, relevant government agencies, Aboriginal organisations and industry and community representatives.
- **Reporting our progress:** Transport will provide status updates on the initiatives every 12 months.
- **Funding and delivery:** Transport will work collaboratively with key stakeholders to identify opportunities to fund the Plan's initiatives. As part of plan finalisation, Transport has prepared an implementation plan that costs and schedules the next steps for each short-term initiative.

This Plan represents a blueprint to help manage risks, track progress, and ensure alignment between Transport, local councils, State agencies, industry and other partners, leading to the successful delivery of the outcomes.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Active transport	Transport that requires individual physical effort to provide mobility. For personal travel, this includes walking, the use of a wheelchair or mobility aid or cycling using a bicycle or micromobility (see definition below). Active forms of transport for freight delivery include both pedal-powered and electric-power-assisted cargo bikes.
ARTC	Australian Rail Track Corporation – federal government corporation which maintains and operates freight lines, and is also in charge of building Inland Rail
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
DPHI's Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041	Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 was developed by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 sets a 20-year framework, vision and direction for strategic planning and land use to ensure the region has the facilities it needs to continue to be a vibrant place for people to live, work and visit. For more information go to this website: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/plans-for-your-area/regional-plans/riverina-murray-regional-plan-2041
Discrete Aboriginal Community	A geographic location, bounded by physical or legal boundaries that is inhabited or intended to be inhabited predominantly (greater than 50 per cent of usual residents) by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, with housing or infrastructure (power, water, sewerage) that is managed on a community basis.
Freight	Goods or cargo transported by heavy vehicles, light commercial vehicles (such as vans and utes), cycle couriers, rail, aircraft, or ship.
FSI	Fatal and serious injury
Higher productivity vehicles (HPV)	Truck and trailer combinations that provide the ability to move freight more efficiently.
Joint organisation	Joint organisations (JO) are local government entities formed under the Local Government Act 1993 for a defined area. JOs establish strategic regional priorities, provide regional leadership and identify and take up opportunities for inter-governmental cooperation on matters relating to the joint organisation area.
IMT	Intermodal terminal is an area of land used to transfer freight between at least two modes of transport. It is typically used to describe the transfer of international shipping containers from road to rail and vice versa.
LALC	Local Aboriginal land council

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Term	Definition
LGA	Local government area
Lower-impact travel modes	Transport modes that inherently reduce the cost of negative transport externalities e.g. slow-speed walking movements cause limited injuries/ trauma, human-powered modes generate limited greenhouse gases, active modes improve health and reduce longer-term Medicare costs.
Micromobility	Devices similar in size and speed to bicycles with or without a motor like a scooter or skateboard.
National Land Transport Network	The National Land Transport Network (NLTN) is a network of nationally-important road and rail infrastructure links and their intermodal connections. The NLTN is determined under the National Land Transport Act 2014.
OSOM	An oversize and/or overmass (OSOM) vehicle is a heavy vehicle that is carrying or specifically designed to carry a large indivisible item.
PBS	Performance Based Standards – a scheme that allows heavy vehicle operators to use innovative vehicle designs to achieve greater productivity, improve road safety and sustainability, without requiring significant changes in road infrastructure.
Population centre	Regional cities and centres, as defined by DPHI.
REZ	Renewable energy zones (REZ) are locations in NSW defined by NSW EnergyCo where major generation of wind and solar power can be efficiently stored and transmitted across NSW.
Risk-compensating behaviour	Behaviours resulting in a rebalancing of risk resulting in a return to individually established risk levels of comfort, such as driving faster due to anti-lock braking.
RJP	Regional Jobs Precinct. Areas of regional NSW which have been identified as potential growth areas for industry, such as in Albury.
RNEW	Regional Network East/West Uplift Program. A 10-year strategic plan and investment pipeline for regional passenger and freight rail infrastructure.
SAP	Special Activation Precinct. Precincts planned to provide dedicated industrial and commercial infrastructure in dedicated areas of regional NSW, such as in Wagga Wagga.
SRITP	Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan
ZEB	Zero emission buses (ZEB) use electric or hydrogen technology and do not release carbon emissions or pollutants at the tailpipe.

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01 Starting with Country

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1.1 Starting with Country

The Riverina Murray SRITP geographical area extending from the Murray River to the Lachlan Valley is within the traditional lands of the Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunawal, Wolgalu, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Yita Yita and Yorta Yorta. There are 20 LALCs in the Riverina Murray region straddling multiple LGAs and regional boundaries.

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.

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 Planning with Country approach can help us to meet statutory requirements to sustainably manage Aboriginal culture and heritage in the built environment.

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Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Kengal Aboriginal Place © Destination NSW

Today, the Riverina Murray remains the home for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Modelling based on the 2021 Census estimates that almost seven per cent of the region's population is of First Nations background, as shown in Figure 1.

LGA	Total population	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Albury	56,100	5%
Berrigan	8,600	4%
Bland	5,500	8%
Carrathool	2,900	11%
Coolamon	4,400	7%
Cootamundra-Gundagai	11,400	8%
Edward River	8,400	6%
Federation	12,800	3%
Greater Hume	11,100	4%
Griffith	27,200	7%
Hay	2,900	10%
Junee	6,500	11%
Leeton	11,500	9%
Lockhart	3,300	6%
Murray River	12,800	5%
Murrumbidgee	3,600	11%
Narrandera	5,700	16%
Snowy Valleys	14,900	8%
Temora	6,000	4%
Wagga Wagga	67,900	8%
Riverina Murray Region	**283,600**	7%

Source: Data by Region 2021, ABS

Figure 1. Aboriginal Population by LGA

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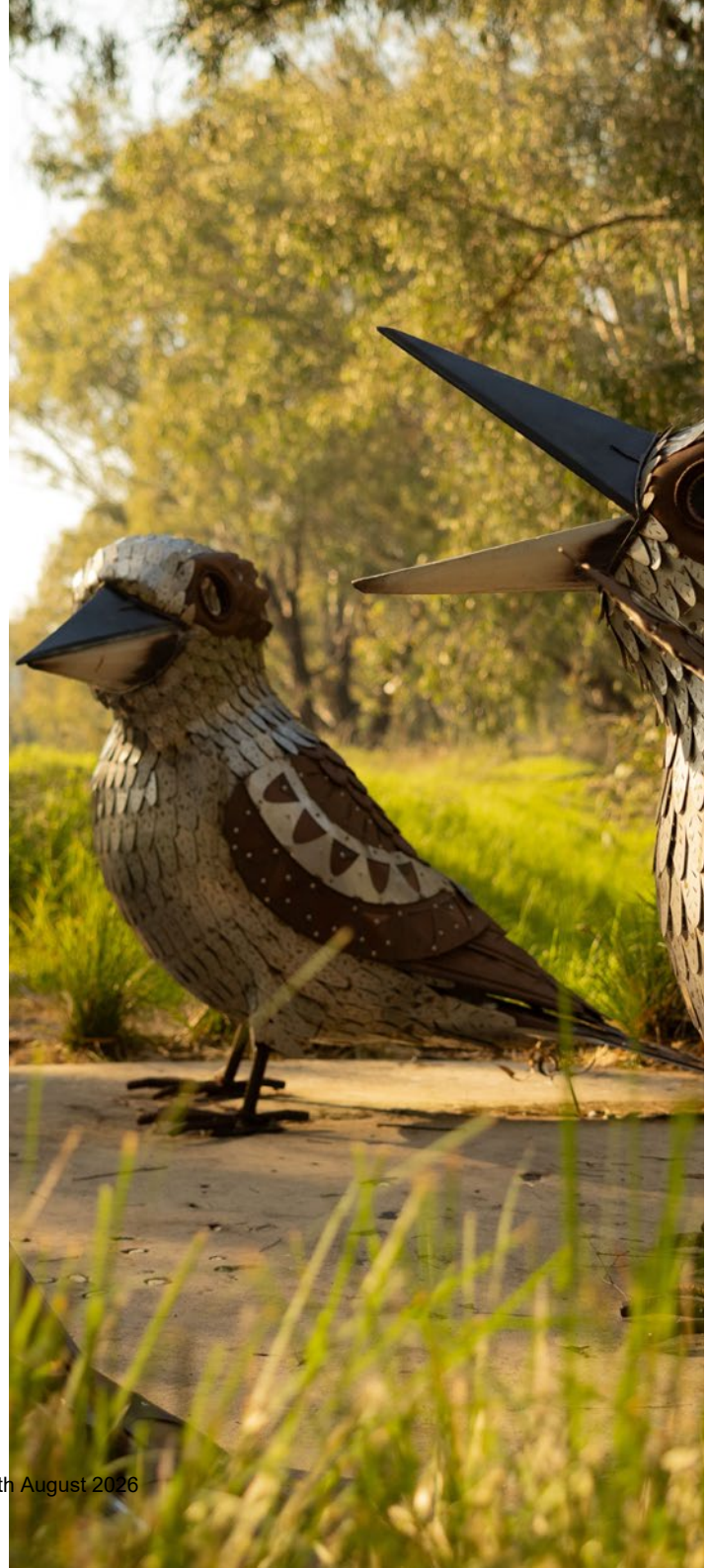
The Riverina Murray region encompasses a network of ancient traditional Songlines that connect to other locations all around Australia. These Songlines contain many layers of knowledge that can be either physical, spoken or sung between members of a community while travelling along them. Many of our modern highways and roads constructed across the region follow the same paths as these ancient walking routes.

The Transport for NSW Reconciliation Action Plan 2022–2025 acknowledges and pays respect to the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as custodians of the lands where we work. The protection of these cultural values will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage remains in the landscape for future generations to come, as it has for thousands of years.



Giilangyaldhaanygalang Wiradjuri Storytellers Sculpture Trail, Albury © Destination NSW

1.2 Aboriginal Outcomes

The NSW Government is committed to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which is underpinned by the belief that when Aboriginal people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that affect them, there are better life outcomes through five reform areas:

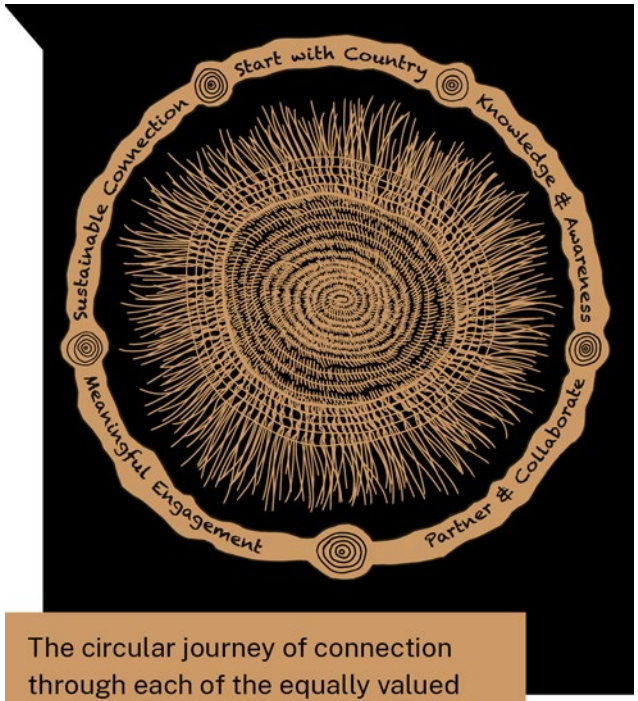
1. Formal partnership and shared decision making
2. Building community sectors
3. Transforming government organisations
4. Shared access to data and information at a regional level
5. Employment, business growth and economic prosperity.

Transport's Reconciliation Action Plan acknowledges that in the creation of our transport infrastructure and networks, we recognise and value the importance of connecting to Country, which we will monitor and report progress against as part of developing the Aboriginal Outcomes Framework. There are four key areas for transport outcomes:

- Aboriginal people are connected safely to the economy and socially, through transport solutions.
- Our Community and Country are healthy and strong through transport planning and placemaking.
- Aboriginal economic independence is supported by Transport.
- Transport drives transformative action to deliver systemic change.

Aboriginal people have been saying for a long time that there is a need for change in the way governments work with them to improve their lives. Transport values the input from Elders and other traditional knowledge holders who possess this information about Country so that it can inform strategic transport planning, while sensitively working in partnership with Aboriginal people.

This is supported by the community-led OCHRE plan, which stands for 'opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility and empowerment'. We acknowledge that, at different times, organisations may not have the resources to participate actively. This Draft SRITP was informed by formal engagement and workshops with Aboriginal representatives from across the Riverina Murray. Early collaboration with Aboriginal people is vital to the planning, procurement, design and delivery phases. Figure 2 provides a pathway to equip our practitioners with the cultural competency and tools to engage and advocate for ways that they can respond to changes and new directions in planning policy to deliver better outcomes for our Aboriginal communities across NSW through a set of guidelines with five principles.



The circular journey of connection through each of the equally valued **5 Principles of Success**, shared through the collaboration, demonstrates the combined strength and resilience of community and Country and their reliance on each other for success.

Figure 2. The woven representation of Planning with Country
© Feather Flower Creative (design by Natalia Baechtold)

02 About this Draft Plan

Women's Walkshop, part of the Safer Cities: Her Way program
© Griffith City Council

2.1 What is a Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan

2.1.1 Purpose

The Draft Plan provides a 20-year vision and transport priorities to support broader NSW strategic transport planning and land use goals.

The Draft Plan:

- provides regional stakeholders and communities with an understanding of short-term and medium-term transport priorities for the Riverina Murray
- provides a detailed evaluation of the community's transport needs now and into the future
- includes staged timing for the planning of government-led services and infrastructure responses based on the 20-year vision.

Transport plays a vital role in shaping the physical and mental health wellbeing of communities and individuals. It enables access to services such as healthcare, education, employment, social services and significant cultural locations, as well as goods that are critical for consumers, businesses and supply chains. Improving connectivity and ensuring transport is accessible, inclusive, reliable and safe within the Riverina Murray can help to reduce disadvantage and enhance overall community wellbeing.

In developing the Draft Plan, Transport has worked in partnership with the councils within the region, Local Aboriginal land councils (LALCs), industry and communities, leveraging insights heard through extensive engagement to inform the vision, priorities and outcomes for the region.

The Draft Plan is one of nine strategic regional integrated transport plans to be delivered across regional NSW.

Learn more on our Riverina Murray StoryMap

To complement and support the Draft Plan, Transport has developed an interactive story map for the Riverina Murray. This data-rich tool offers valuable data and insights that inform the vision, challenges and opportunities within the Riverina Murray.

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2.1.2 Extent

The Riverina Murray borders the Australian Capital Territory and South East and Tablelands region to the east, Central West and Orana to the north, Far West to the west and Victoria to the south.

The region has rich and diverse landscapes, shaped by the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachlan River systems, floodplains and river valleys. Alpine and sub-alpine environments are in the east, while much of the west is semi-arid plains. These environments support productive agricultural areas, wetlands, riparian ecosystems, woodlands and other native habitats, and influence how land is used and where communities are located.

The region includes a network of regional cities, towns and rural communities spread across a large area, with strong connections within NSW and across the Victorian border.

There are 20 local government areas across the region as shown in Figure 3.

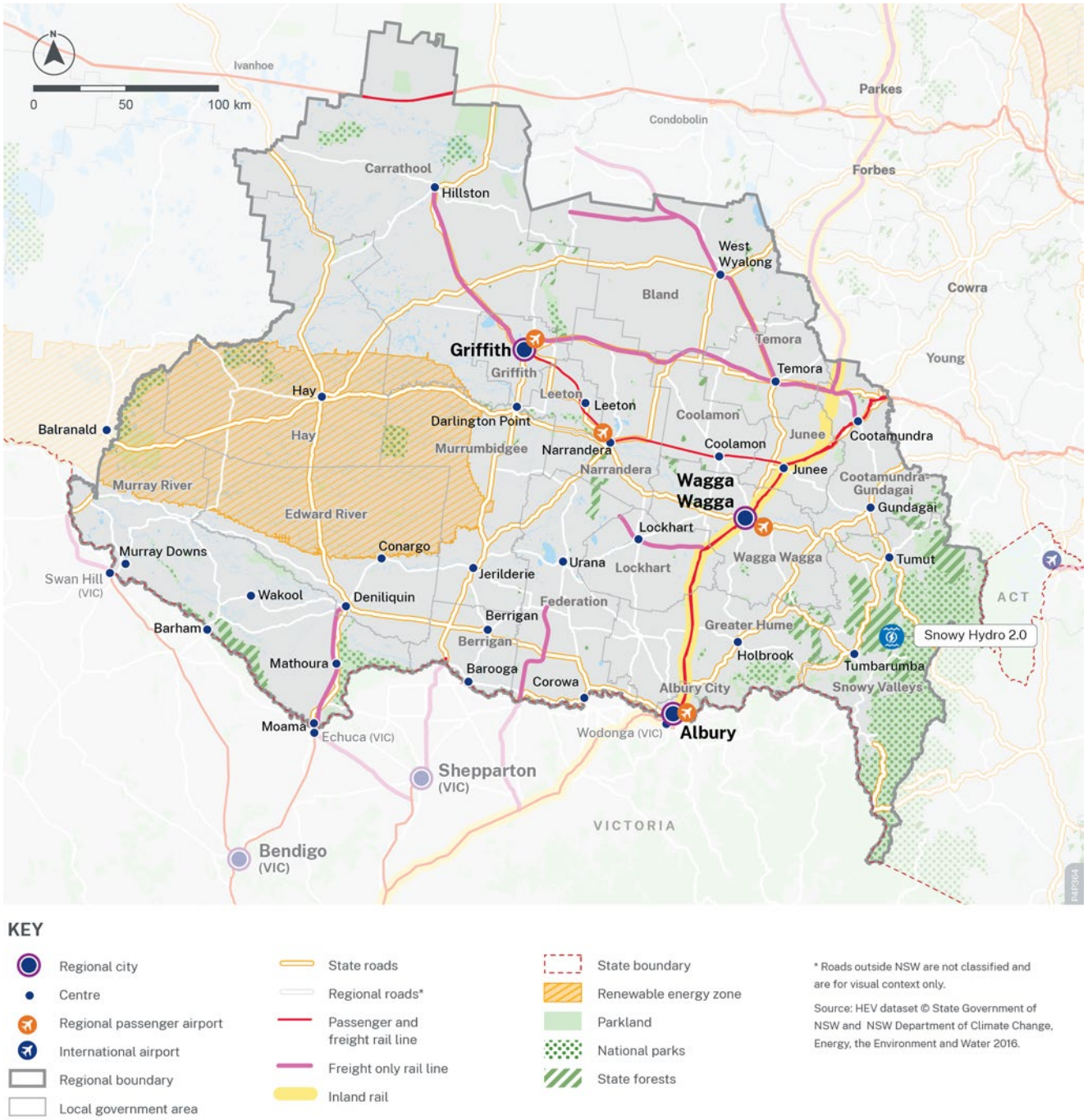


Figure 3: Riverina Murray geography

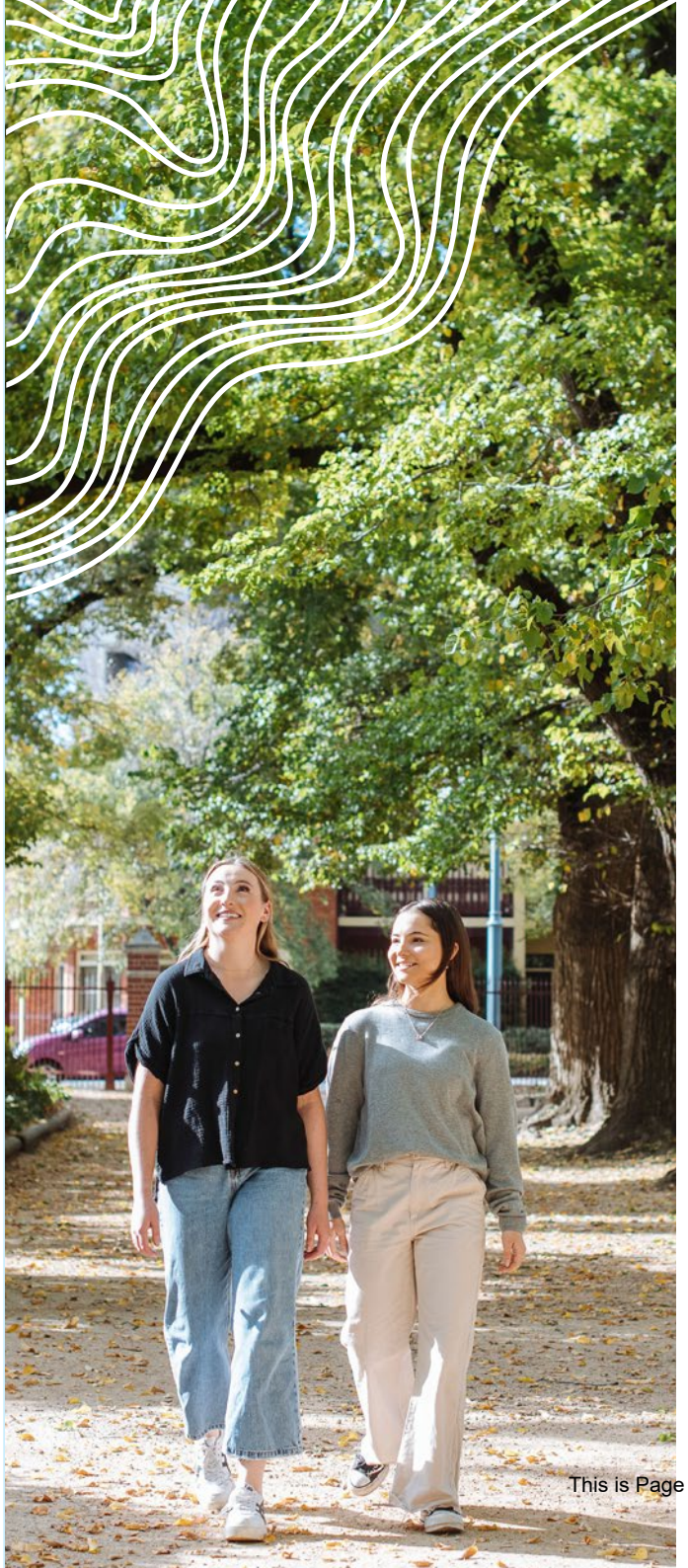
2.2 State, regional and local government planning context

NSW State agencies and local government develop plans and strategies that set priorities and strategic direction to inform planning for the future. These plans and strategies establish the context for the transport system. This includes improving connectivity, enabling multimodal mobility, providing equitable access and supporting safer journeys.

Table 1 shows the hierarchy of land use and transport policies, strategies and plans applicable to the Riverina Murray.

Table 1. Key land use and transport legislation, strategies and plans

Planning scale	Land use	Transport
State and federal	• *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* • *Local Government Act 1993* • *Heritage Act 1977* • *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* • *Federal Native Title Act 1993* • *Native Title (New South Wales) Act 1994 No 45* • *Crown Land Management Act 2016* • National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020 • Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy 2024 • *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (PEOP Act)* • *State Environmental Planning Policies and Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* • NSW Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy 2024–35 • State environmental planning policies	• *Transport Administration Act 1988* • *Passenger Transport Act 1990* • *Roads Act 1993* • 2026 Road Safety Action Plan • Connecting NSW • Net Zero and Climate Change Policy 2023 • Towards Net Zero Emissions Freight Policy • Active Transport Strategy • NSW Electric Vehicle Strategy • NSW Public Spaces Charter • Movement and Place Framework • Healthy Streets Framework • Design of Roads and Streets Manual • Road User Space Allocation Policy • Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy 2021 • Safe Systems Approach • Guide to Traffic Impact Assessment 2024 • State Infrastructure Strategy 2022 • State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021 • Heavy Vehicle Access Policy 2024



Planning scale	Land use	Transport
Regional/ cross border	• NSW and Victoria Memorandum of Understanding for Cross-Border Collaboration • Regional Drought Resilience Plan – Southern Riverina • Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 • Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO) Regional Freight Transport Plan 2023 • Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils (REROC) Regional Freight Transport Plan 2019 • Regional Economic Development Strategies • Western Riverina Regional Drought Resilience Plan	• Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan (this Plan) • Regional and Outer Metropolitan Cycling and Micromobility Plan
Local or precinct	• Local strategic planning statements (LSPS) • Place strategies and structure plans • Council-led master plans	• Transport management and accessibility plans • Local integrated transport plans • Guide to Traffic and Transport Management for Special Events • District strategies

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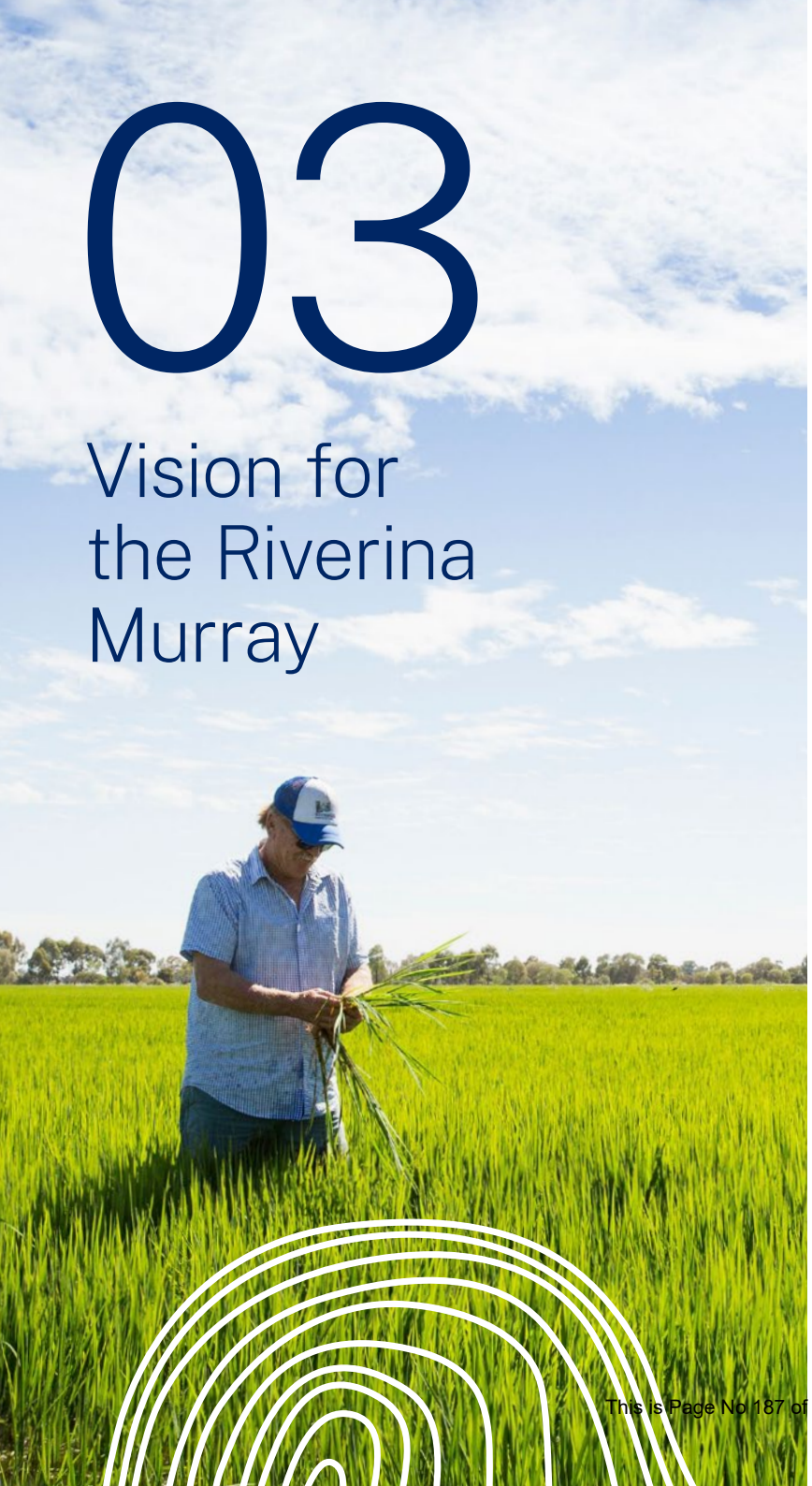
03

Vision for the Riverina Murray



Local rice grower, Deniliquin © Destination NSW

3.1 Transport vision

By 2041, the Riverina Murray transport networks will improve the wellbeing, health and productivity of residents and visitors to the region.

In our transport vision for the Riverina Murray, communities are well served by a safe, sustainable, and resilient transport system that enables people and goods to reach destinations within the region, NSW, Victoria and beyond.

Growing cities and regional centres such as Wagga Wagga, Albury, and Griffith, as well as smaller towns across the region, benefit from improved transport connectivity that enable reliable access to jobs, education, healthcare, and housing, either within centres or in nearby regional cities.

Liveability is enhanced through prioritising safe walking, cycling, and public transport options in and around key centres, while accessible, reliable and inclusive services respond to the needs of ageing and growing populations.

Connected with Country, transport infrastructure and services are planned and delivered with respect for Aboriginal culture, heritage and ongoing connections to land and water, embedding Aboriginal knowledge and values into future transport outcomes.

Border communities in twin towns can access work, education, services and other opportunities on either side of the Murray River freely and seamlessly. More options for reliable long-distance travel inside Riverina Murray and across the border further enhance opportunities for residents and businesses, supporting vibrancy and viability of tourist destinations, festivals and cultural attractions in the region.

Riverina Murray's role as Australia's food bowl and a national freight and logistics hub is strengthened by supporting efficient movement of agricultural products, forestry products, manufactured goods, and other resources to key gateways. This ensures the region's industries remain competitive and well connected to domestic and international markets.

A transport system that is resilient to shocks and stresses is key. Infrastructure is designed to withstand natural hazards and climate-related events and supports sustainability initiatives such as the South West Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), Snowy Hydro 2.0 and the State's net zero emissions target by 2050.

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How the vision was developed

The transport vision for Riverina Murray region was developed to respond to the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041, reflecting long-term land use aspirations. The vision has been developed in close collaboration with our stakeholders and leverages previous engagement, including feedback received during consultation for the Draft Riverina Murray Regional Transport Plan in 2022–23.

The vision is consistent with Australian Government land use and transport policies, NSW Government priorities and strategies and has considered Local Government plans on topics such as housing, sustainability and resilience.

How the Plan delivers on the vision

The Plan outlines the transport networks' capabilities and services needed to respond to land use change, support growth, balance customer needs and become more efficient. It considers the behavioural and policy changes needed to deliver on the vision of a more sustainable and accessible transport future.

Freight train next to Olympic Highway near Bethungra

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Objectives and outcomes

Objectives underpin strategic transport planning. When met, they articulate the realisation of the vision at the regional and local level.

The SRITPs share a common suite of objectives to ensure consistency across plans and alignment with the priorities of Connecting NSW. The objectives are tailored for each region reflecting the unique challenges, opportunities and outcomes to be achieved. The objectives for the Riverina Murray are shown in Table 2. The vision-led transport planning approach of the Draft Plan is shown in Figure 4.

The challenges and opportunities identified through wide-reaching stakeholder engagement as well as data analysis directly shape our priorities for action. A series of initiatives are identified for the short term and medium term, next to outcomes for the longer term. This will enable the program of initiatives to be actioned after the final release of each plan.

Implementation of this program will be tracked over time and reported to the community.

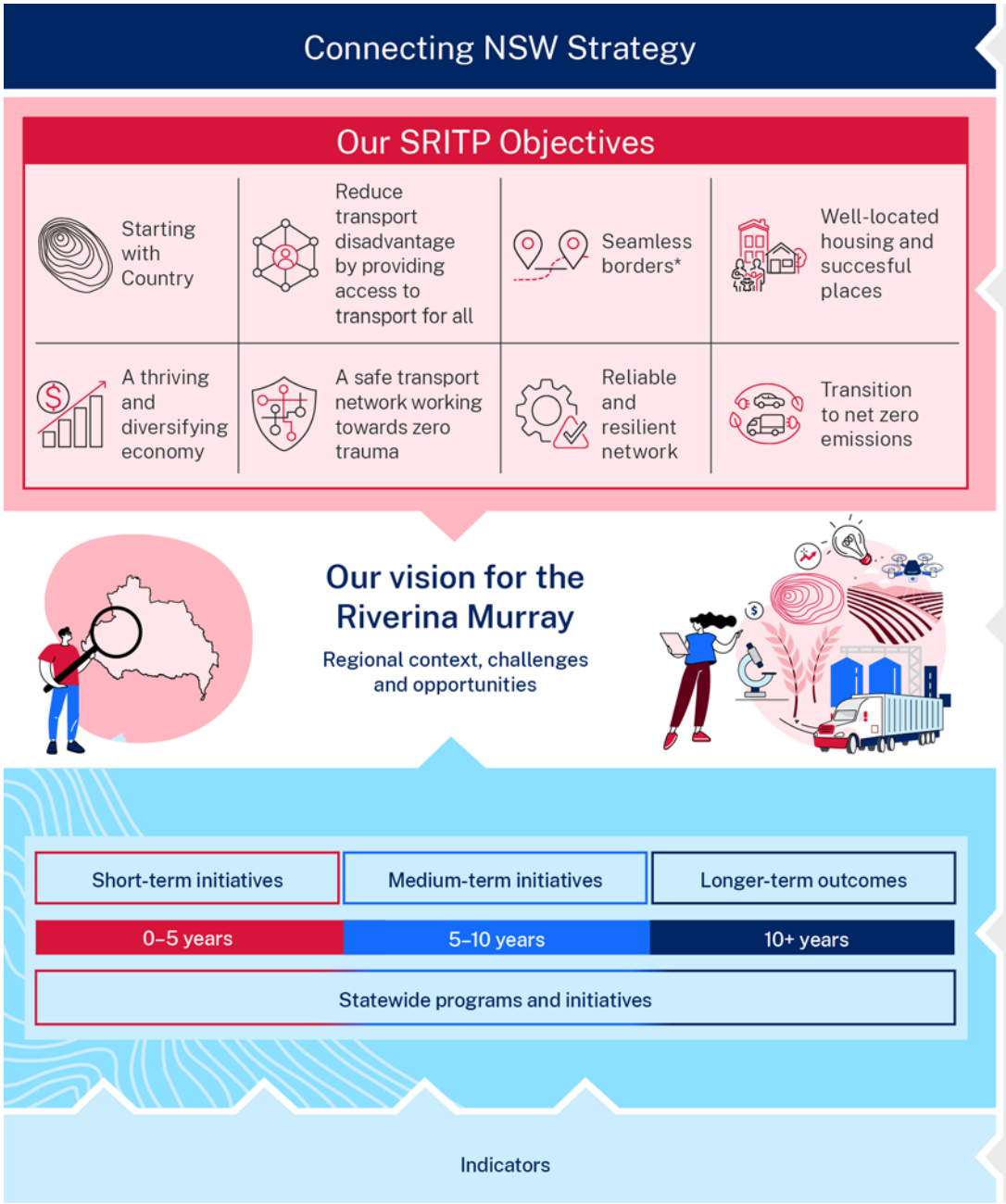

Figure 4. Objectives and outcomes approach

Table 2. SRITP objectives for the Riverina Murray

Objective		What does this mean for Riverina Murray region
Starting with Country		All investment in the transport network, services, policy and technology takes a Country-centred approach.
Reduce transport disadvantage by providing access to transport for all		A transport network that provides a range of travel choices to all people living, working in or visiting the Riverina Murray region.
Seamless borders		A transport network that supports seamless movements for the Riverina Murray residents, workers and visitors travelling to and from Victoria.
Well-located housing and successful places		Support the delivery of well-located housing and successful places through sustainable transport options to address growth and enhance the vibrancy of town centres in the Riverina Murray.
A thriving and diversifying economy		An efficient transport network to support a diversifying and growing economy, including tourism and freight movement.
A safe transport network working towards zero trauma		Reduce fatal and serious injuries on the transport network and address safety concerns for active and public transport passengers.
Reliable and resilient network		Reduce the impact of transport network shocks and stresses to service and network interruptions and proactively plan for future impacts.
Transition to net zero emissions		Contribute to achieving the emissions reductions targets and improving environmental and health outcomes for the Riverina Murray.

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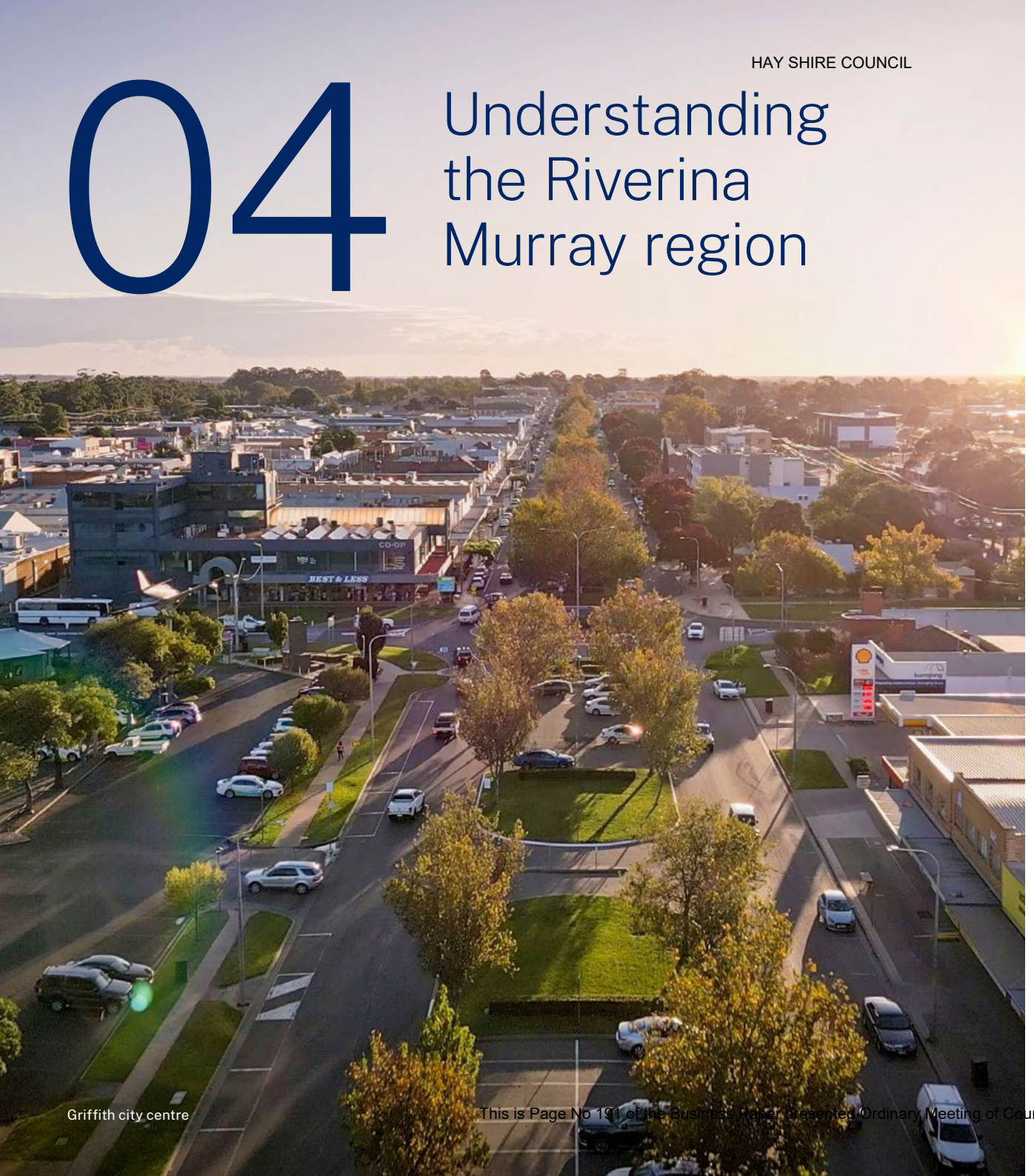
04 Understanding the Riverina Murray region



Griffith city centre

The Riverina Murray region is the second largest geographical region in regional NSW, spanning 11.5 million hectares.

Home to 283,000 residents, the three regional cities of Albury, Griffith and Wagga Wagga account for nearly half of the region's population.[1]

Located between Sydney and Melbourne, the Riverina Murray region is an attractive location for large industrial manufacturing operations, intermodal hubs and State-significant growth precincts. High volumes of road and rail freight travel through the region, connecting the ports of Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. At the centre of the Riverina Murray's growth and agricultural economy are the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers, sustaining a region that produces 34 per cent of the State's total agriculture output.

In the south, the Riverina Murray has strong relationships with Victoria, sharing a border along the Murray River. Seven cross-border twin towns along the river are intertwined economically, socially and through shared services.

The Riverina Murray region's transport networks are shaped by the diverse and dynamic landscape and settlement patterns. Major river systems, including the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachlan rivers, have shaped the location of towns, agricultural activity and key transport corridors across the region.

[1] ABS Census Data 2021, Place of Usual Residence Population

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Alpine and sub-alpine areas in the east contrast with the semi-arid plains in the west, creating different transport and access challenges across the region.

The region's environment is characterised by distinct climate and natural hazard patterns. The area experiences periods of severe drought, periodic bushfire risk and flooding. Changes in climate are projected to increase temperatures, alter rainfall patterns (notably in summer and autumn), and intensify hazard exposure across bushfire-prone lands, floodplains, and waterway margins.

4.1 People and communities of the Riverina Murray

The Riverina Murray region is home to people from a wide range of backgrounds. The population is expected to grow from 283,000 to 331,000 by 2041, with change varying across the region. Some areas are expected to grow rapidly while others may decline.

The Albury, Greater Hume and Murray River council areas are forecast to grow the most (over 20 per cent), with Albury likely to become larger than Wagga Wagga by 2041. Most other council areas are expected to grow between five and 15 per cent, while Narrandera and Hay will likely decline in population.

The region's demographic profile is also aging, with 22,000 people or 46 per cent of growth in the over 65-year-old category (see Figure 5).

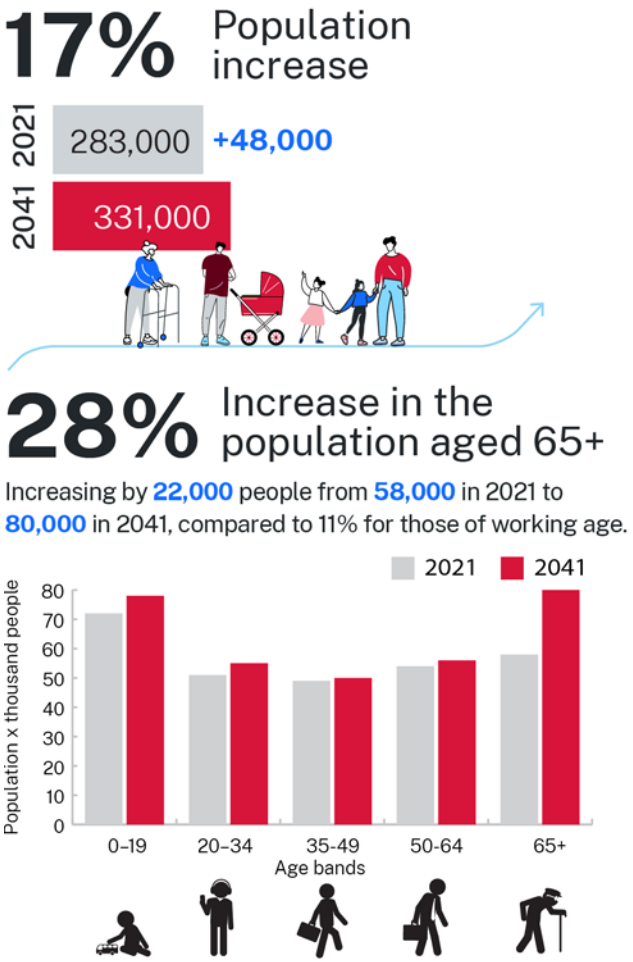

Figure 5. Riverina Murray population change 2021–41

	Projected 2041 population		Growth 2021–41 %
Albury	77,000	↗	37%
Greater Hume Shire	15,000	↗	33%
Murray River	17,000	↗	30%
Berrigan	10,000	↗	15%
Federation	15,000	↗	14%
Griffith	31,000	↗	14%
Junee	7,300	↗	14%
Temora	6,800	↗	13%
Coolamon	5,000	↗	13%
Lockhart	3,800	↗	13%
Wagga Wagga	76,000	↗	11%
Murrumbidgee	3,900	↗	9%
Carrathool	3,000	↗	6%
Leeton	12,000	↗	4%
Edward River	8,800	↗	4%
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional	12,000	↗	3%
Bland	5,700	↗	2%
Snowy Valleys	15,000	↗	1%
Narrandera	5,600	↙	-3%
Hay	2,700	↙	-5%

Sources: ABS 2021 Census [General Community Profile], Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 2024 NSW Common Planning Assumption Projections for year ending 30 June.

Retaining existing populations and attracting new residents and workers to the region supports regional businesses and provision of critical government services. Councils in the region are actively planning for this population growth through the delivery of new housing supply in step with DPHI's published forecasts.

Transport investment in infrastructure and services will support this growth and help maintain strong, vibrant communities across the region. Efficient transport networks are important to enabling movement, supporting economic activity and improving access to jobs, services and education across the region.

Open Streets
WinterGlow event
© Abury City Council

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The region is home to the Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunawal, Wolgalu, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Yita Yita and Yorta Yorta peoples, who have cared for Country for thousands of years. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up nearly six per cent of the region's population, though this varies by location—from four per cent in Berrigan to 16 per cent in Narrandera.[2]

The region is becoming more culturally diverse with almost seven per cent of residents born in non-English speaking countries.

Migration has played an important role in the development of Griffith, where this group makes up 19 per cent of the population, contributing to its cultural diversity and economic growth.

The region's ageing profile will influence transport needs to access services such as health, particularly in smaller towns and rural areas where residents often rely on private vehicles and become less mobile with age. The largest health service precinct in the region is the Wagga Wagga Health Precinct followed by the Albury Health Precinct and Griffith Health Precinct. There are also over 20 smaller health facilities across the region.[3]

Levels of advantage and disadvantage vary across the region as shown in Figure 6. This can affect how easily people can get around, especially where public transport options are limited or infrequent. This is exacerbated for households without a car such as households with older people, students and seasonal workers. Even households with access to a car may choose to travel less due to rising costs of fuel and maintenance. The Murray River council area has a relatively high level of advantage while others, including Junee, Narrandera and Leeton face high disadvantage. Even within a council area or larger centre, there are pockets with higher levels of disadvantage.

Distance is a challenge in the region. Smaller communities often have fewer services, limited public or community transport options and more barriers to accessing education and jobs. While transport cannot solve all these issues, it plays an important role in helping people reach services, work, education and care. Addressing this requires collaboration across government agencies and providers to improve quality of life and reduce inequality in the community.

2 ABS Census Data 2021, Counts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians – estimated resident population

3 Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD), Authority Info. www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/mlhd/about-us

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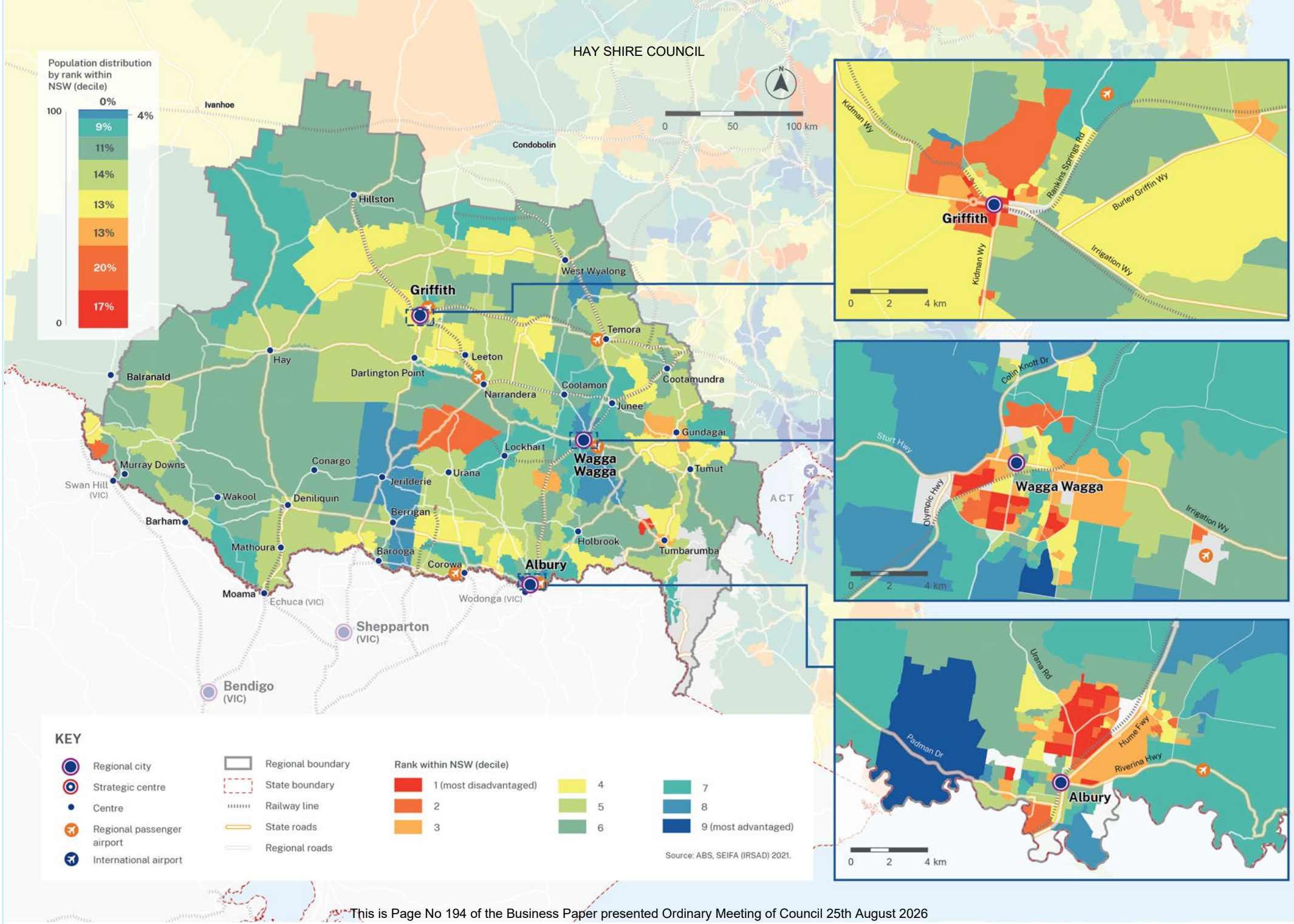

Figure 6. Riverina Murray SEIFA Index by SA1

4.2 The changing economy of the Riverina Murray

The Riverina Murray region contributes $22 billion towards the economy, or nine per cent of regional NSW's total economic output.[4]

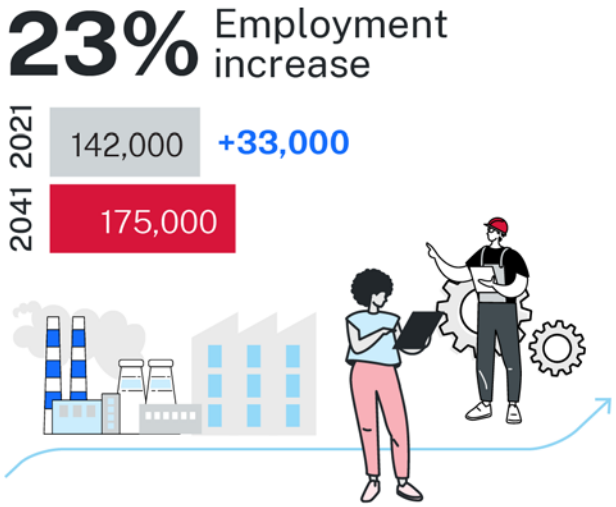

Figure 7. Riverina Murray employment projections

4.2.1 Employment

Employment in the Riverina Murray region is projected to increase by 33,000 jobs by 2041 (see Figure 7). Healthcare and social assistance account for a major share of this growth (7000 jobs) due to significant government investment into rural and regional health facility upgrades (see Figure 8). State-significant construction projects such as the Albury Regional Job Precinct, Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct and the South West REZ centred around Hay will also boost jobs in the construction industry.

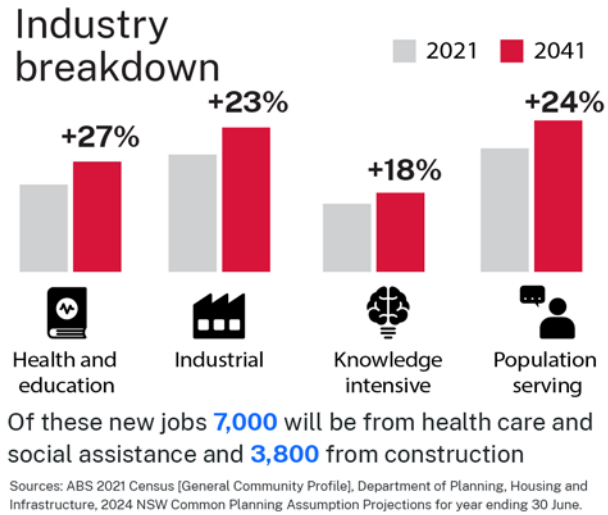

Figure 8. Riverina Murray industry breakdown

4.2.2 Agriculture

Agriculture is worth over $2 billion each year– the most valuable agricultural region in NSW which is driven by its fertile lands and rich river systems. More than 18,000 people are employed in agriculture and related manufacturing in the region.[5]

In 2020–21, the Riverina Murray region contributed approximately one-third of NSW's total gross value of agricultural production, underscoring its vital role in the State's agricultural economy. The region is a major centre for broadacre cropping, accounting for 38 per cent of NSW's total gross value in this sector. Carrathool, Bland, Federation and Murrumbidgee all generated a gross value above $1.5 billion between 2020 and 2021. In terms of sector-specific strengths, Carrathool led the region in livestock, livestock products, agriculture, fruit and nuts and broadacre crop, Murrumbidgee area recorded the highest value of vegetable production, and Greater Hume led the production of hay.[6]

4 economy.id, 2023 NIEIR State of the Regions Economic Indicators, data extracted June 2024
5 DPHI, Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041
6 ABS 2022, Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced 2020–21

4.2.3 Forestry

The Snowy Valley area is home to Australia's largest concentration of timber growing and advanced timber manufacturing, centred around softwood processing mills in Tumut and Tumbarumba.

NSW has about 175,000 hectares of softwood plantations, making up 17 per cent of Australia's total.[7] The sector contributes $3.8 billion to the regional economy and supports over 2000 direct jobs and around 9000 indirect jobs across north-east Victoria and southern NSW.[8]

This scale of forestry activity generates significant haulage requirements, with specialised transport needed to safely and efficiently move logs, machinery and processed timber across the region's road network.

4.2.4 Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector is a significant contributor to the Riverina Murray economy, generating an estimated $1.7 billion in output and supporting more than 11,600 jobs across the region.[9] Manufacturing activity is anchored in a network of well-established hubs including:

- Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct
- Albury Regional Job Precinct
- Western Riverina Connect (WR Connect) intermodal freight hub
- Griffith industrial precinct
- Deniliquin industrial precinct.

These centres are strong foundations for advanced manufacturing, value adding and supply chain growth, helping to drive regional productivity and long-term economic resilience.

4.2.5 Freight industry

The freight industry is a major driver of the Riverina Murray economy. In 2022–23, the region's freight transport and logistics sector contributed an estimated $2.3 billion in Gross Value Added and supported more than 6400 jobs, with forecasts indicating growth to $2.9 billion and around 8000 jobs by 2043.[10]

Grain and forestry are the dominant freight generating industries, with grapes, livestock, oilseeds and non-coal minerals also contributing significant demand.[11] The region's export profile is highly specialised, with most forestry exports moving through Port Botany while the majority of grain exports are directed to Port Kembla.

4.2.6 South West Renewable Energy Zone

The South West Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) is a key priority under the NSW Government's energy transition strategy. Located around Hay and extending to towns such as Balranald and Buronga, it brings together wind, solar and battery storage infrastructure.

The REZ will require well-coordinated transport arrangements to support construction and long-term operations. The scale of planned generation and storage projects means significant movement of heavy components, construction materials and workforce across regional road networks. Careful planning with local councils and other State agencies will ensure roads are maintained, upgraded where necessary and managed safely during peak construction activity.

Once operational, the REZ will continue to rely on efficient transport links. This will help protect local communities, maintain freight efficiency and ensure the zone remains a reliable contributor to the State's clean energy system in the long term.

7 Murray Region Forestry Hub, Socio-economic impacts of the softwood plantation industry: Examining a post-bushfire salvage period, 2023
8 Murray Region Forestry Hub, Optimising The Timber Freight Task 2025
9 DPHI, Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041
10 Transport for NSW, Value of Freight Model data, 2025
11 Transport for NSW, Strategic Freight Forecasts 2022

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4.2.7 Health and education

The healthcare, social services and education sectors are major drivers of the Riverina Murray economy, generating $3.8 billion and employing about 26,700 people or 22 per cent of the regional workforce[12] (see Figure 9). These sectors are supported by key facilities including Wagga Wagga Rural Referral Hospital, Albury Wodonga Health, Griffith Base Hospital, Charles Sturt University, the UNSW Rural Medical School, the University of Notre Dame Clinical School and the Murrumbidgee Clinical Teaching and Learning Centre. Additionally, the region features 18 TAFE campuses and a network of smaller hospitals and care service centres across the region.

4.2.8 Tourism and the visitor economy

The Riverina Murray is a significant tourism destination, attracting 2.2 million visitors in 2017 and generating more than half of its tourist numbers from Victoria. Tourism provides around 18,600 jobs, making it the highest-value tourism region and the largest tourism employer in Victoria. Between 2019–2020, the combined NSW and Victorian Murray tourism market was valued at $1.3 billion, highlighting its strong and sustained contribution to the regional economy.[13]

Morrisons, Moama © Destination NSW

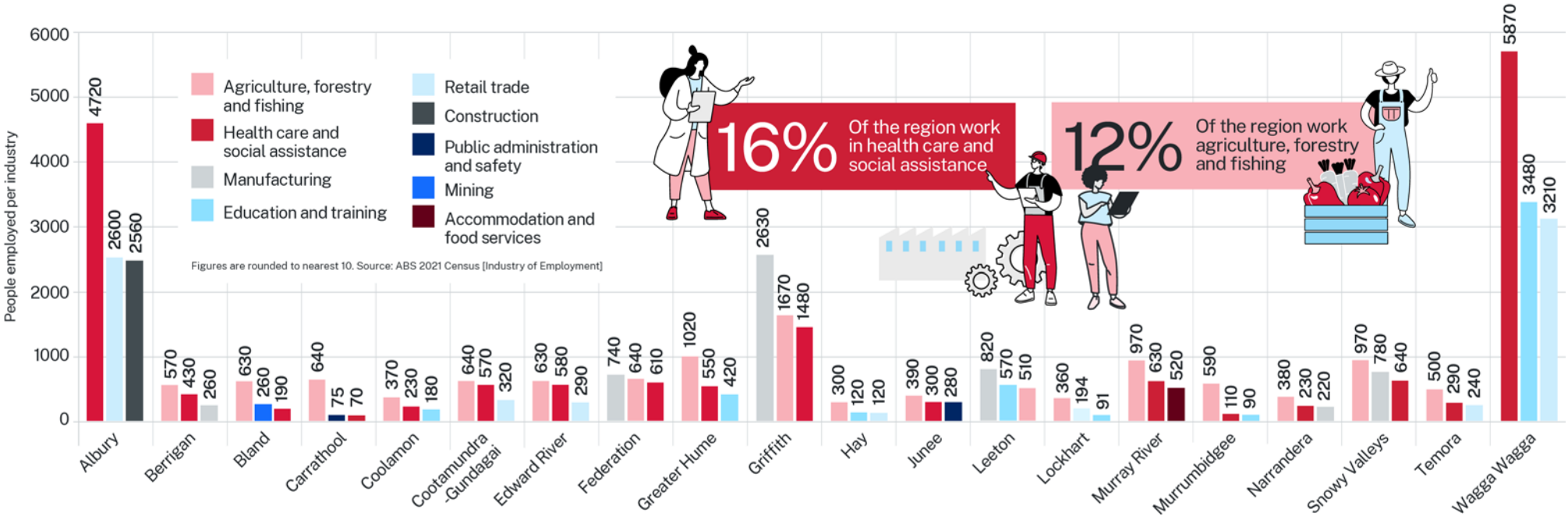

Figure 9. Employment by industry

12 DPHI, Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041
13 DPHI, Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041

4.3 Travel in the Riverina Murray region

How people access specialist healthcare, education and other essential services depends on what services are available either locally or in nearby regional centres such as Albury, Griffith, Wagga Wagga (see Figure 10). People in the region also rely on nearby Victorian centres such as Shepparton and Bendigo and to a lesser degree on metropolitan cities including Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney.

Within towns and centres, most trips are short. Although most of these short trips could be done by foot or bicycle, driving is usually the easiest option.

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Figure 10: Riverina Murray major employment destinations

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4.3.1 How people travel

The region is highly reliant on car travel, as most people travel to work by car, followed by walking or cycling and public transport (see Figure 11). Over 94 per cent of households own at least one vehicle.[14] The six per cent of households across the region who do not own a private vehicle more likely struggle to get to jobs, education, health or other services because of limited alternatives. These households experiencing transport disadvantage and are at higher risk of social isolation. For vulnerable user groups who are reliant on others to help access basic services, this is particularly acute.

High reliance on cars is often made worse by poor walking and cycling infrastructure, and a lack of public transport services at times when people want to travel.

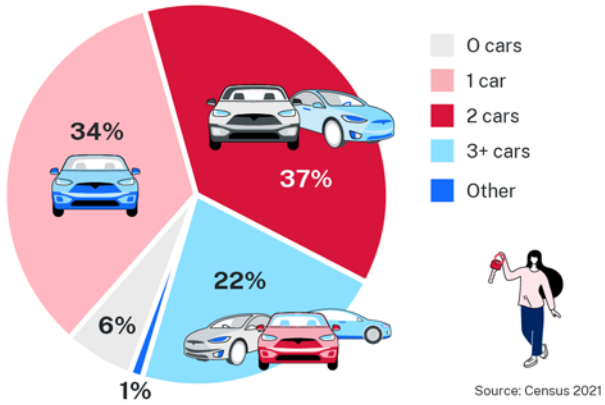
Different types of centres exhibit distinct travel patterns. Larger centres tend to have higher car use, while smaller centres have above average uptake of active transport. This may be due to shorter commute distances, less traffic and fewer public transport options. In towns such as Lockhart and Hay for example, more than 10 per cent of people walk or cycle to work (see Figure 12).

An increase in public transport frequency and coverage has increased patronage across Albury, Griffith and Wagga Wagga since the 16 Cities Bus Improvement Program. However, there are still opportunities to improve services across the region, particularly in areas where existing services do not adequately meet community needs.

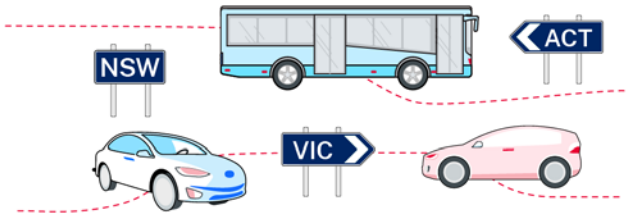
Riverina Murray border communities are regularly moving across State or territory borders for a range of reasons. For example, school children may attend school in a different State or territory and rely on public transport and school buses. Differences in travel subsidies create a system where additional financial burden and stress is placed on families, especially those with children with disabilities, and may limit access to essential services and special education.

Local bus in Griffith region

Vehicle ownership per household



Cross-border trips 2024



Over **70% of trips** leaving Riverina Murray were to Victoria and around **1% of trips** were to the ACT. Around **85% of trips** destined for Riverina Murray were from Victoria and around **2% of trips** were from ACT.

Method of travel to work

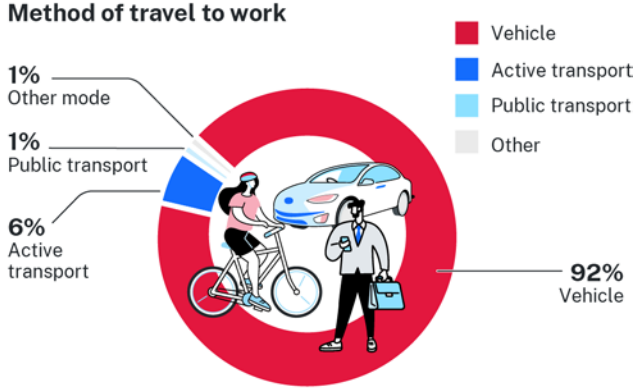


Figure 11 How people travel in the Riverina Murray

14 ABS Census Data 2021

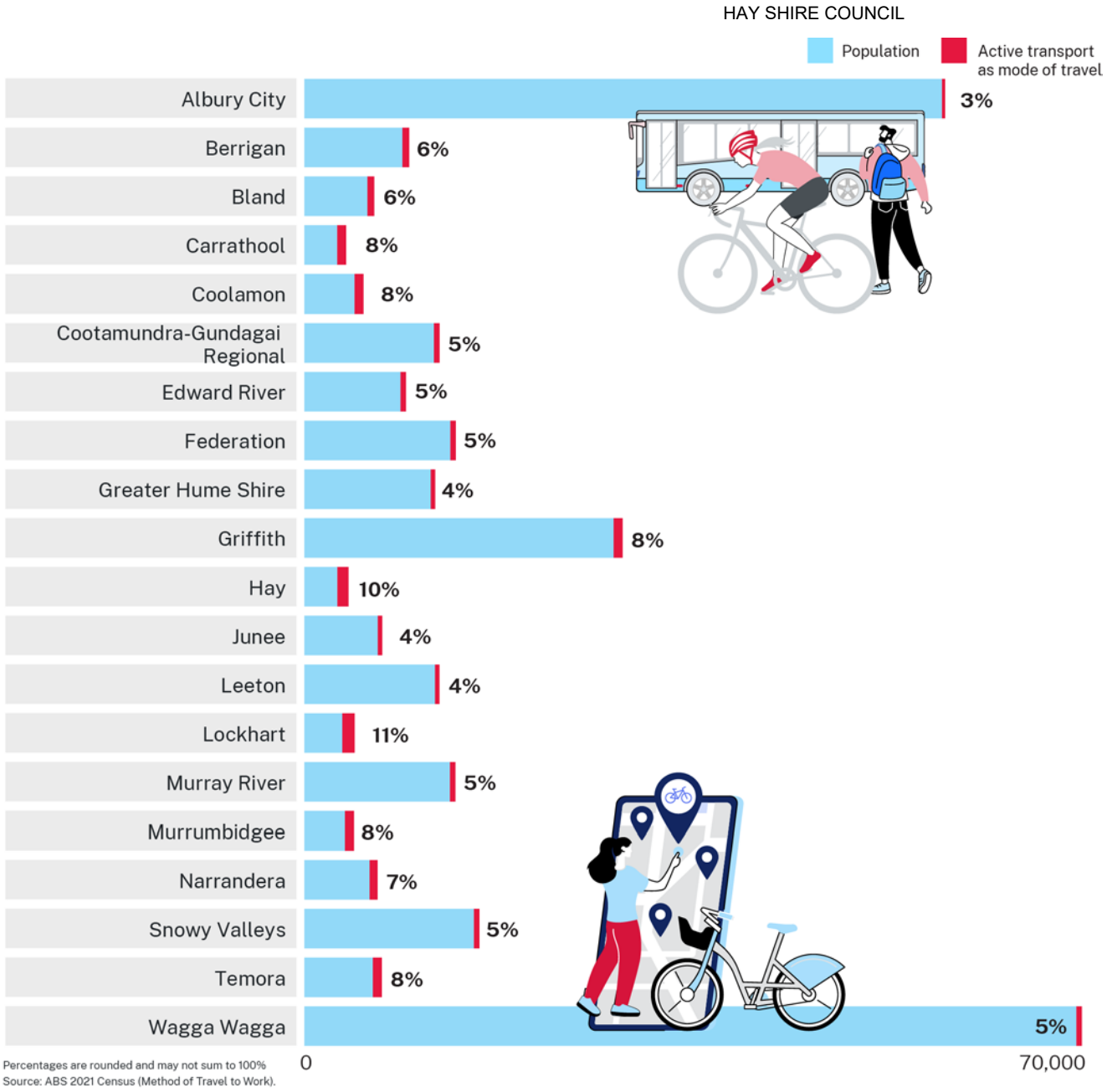


Figure 12. Active transport mode choice by LGA

4.3.2 Road network

The region features many traversing state and regional road connections, connecting to other centres within and outside NSW, including approximately 3300 kilometres of state roads and 3000 of regional roads. They play a critical role in supporting the movement of private vehicles, public transport and freight. The region depends heavily on the higher-order road network for daily travel, accessing essential services, connectivity between towns and the movement of goods.

The region includes key highways such as:

- the Hume Highway, which runs north–south through the eastern part of the region, forming part of the Sydney–Melbourne corridor and connecting major centres such as Albury and Gundagai
- the Newell Highway, which runs north–south through the central part of the region, linking Narrandera and West Wyalong and providing connections to regional centres further north and south in NSW
- the Olympic Highway, which runs north–south between Cowra and Albury, connecting Wagga Wagga, Junee and Culcairn, and providing an important inland link between the Hume and Newell Highways
- the Cobb Highway, which runs north–south along the western side of the region from Hay, connecting to Wilcannia in the Far West and providing access to remote communities and accommodating key freight movement

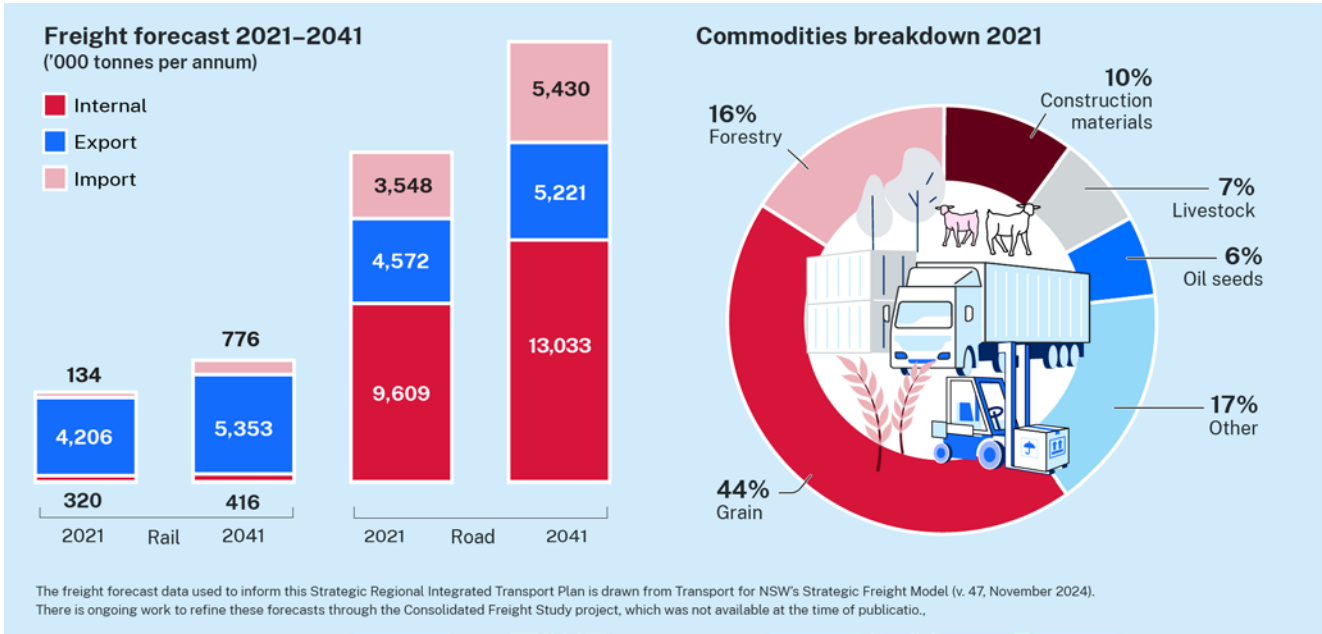
- the Sturt Highway, which runs east–west through the southern part of the region, forming part of the Adelaide–Sydney corridor and connecting Balranald, Hay and Wagga Wagga before continuing east to the Hume Highway
- the Riverina Highway, which runs east–west along the Murray River corridor, connecting Albury to Deniliquin via Corowa and Howlong
- Kidman Way, which runs north–south through the central Riverina, connecting Cobar to Jerilderie via Hillston and Griffith, providing a key freight link to agricultural areas
- Irrigation Way, which runs east–west between Narrandera and Griffith, supporting access across the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area
- Burley Griffin Way, which runs east–west through the northern part of the region, connecting Griffith and Yass linking agricultural produce from western Riverina and Murrumbidgee region to markets such as Sydney.

4.3.3 Freight network

The Riverina Murray is strategically located for freight and logistics in Australia due to its position between Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. As a result, the region plays a critical role in interstate supply chains, linking regional production zones with domestic and international markets.

Over the next 20 years, rail freight is expected to increase by 30 per cent and road freight by 34 per cent (see Figure 13). Major projects such as the South West REZ near Hay and Snowy Hydro 2.0 in the Snowy Valleys will increase the concentration of heavy vehicles to and from those LGAs. Across the region, this will have future implications such as larger road freight vehicles, increased heavy vehicle traffic and increased rates of wear on the road network.

Freight train being loaded with grain at a silo in Junee



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As shown in Figure 14, the National Land Transport Network defines the national road freight network, including the Sturt, Newell and Hume highways. Within the region, these three highways experience between 40 and 52 per cent of their traffic volume from heavy vehicles.[15] Transport also manage and maintain 21 bridges crossing the Murray River, providing vital cross-border access for both freight and the public.

The Main South Line serves as the rail freight spine for the region, linking Sydney and Melbourne via Wagga Wagga and Albury.

There are also branch lines which connect the Main South Line to grain growing regions, such as areas around Griffith, Hillston and Naradhan.

Improvements to the rail network between Victoria and Parkes will change the landscape of rail freight within the region by enhancing connectivity, boosting capacity and improving efficiency through enabling double-stacked freight trains and reducing travel times to Melbourne. The region also has one of the highest concentrations of intermodal terminals, hosting 11 facilities across the region that facilitate road to rail interchanges.

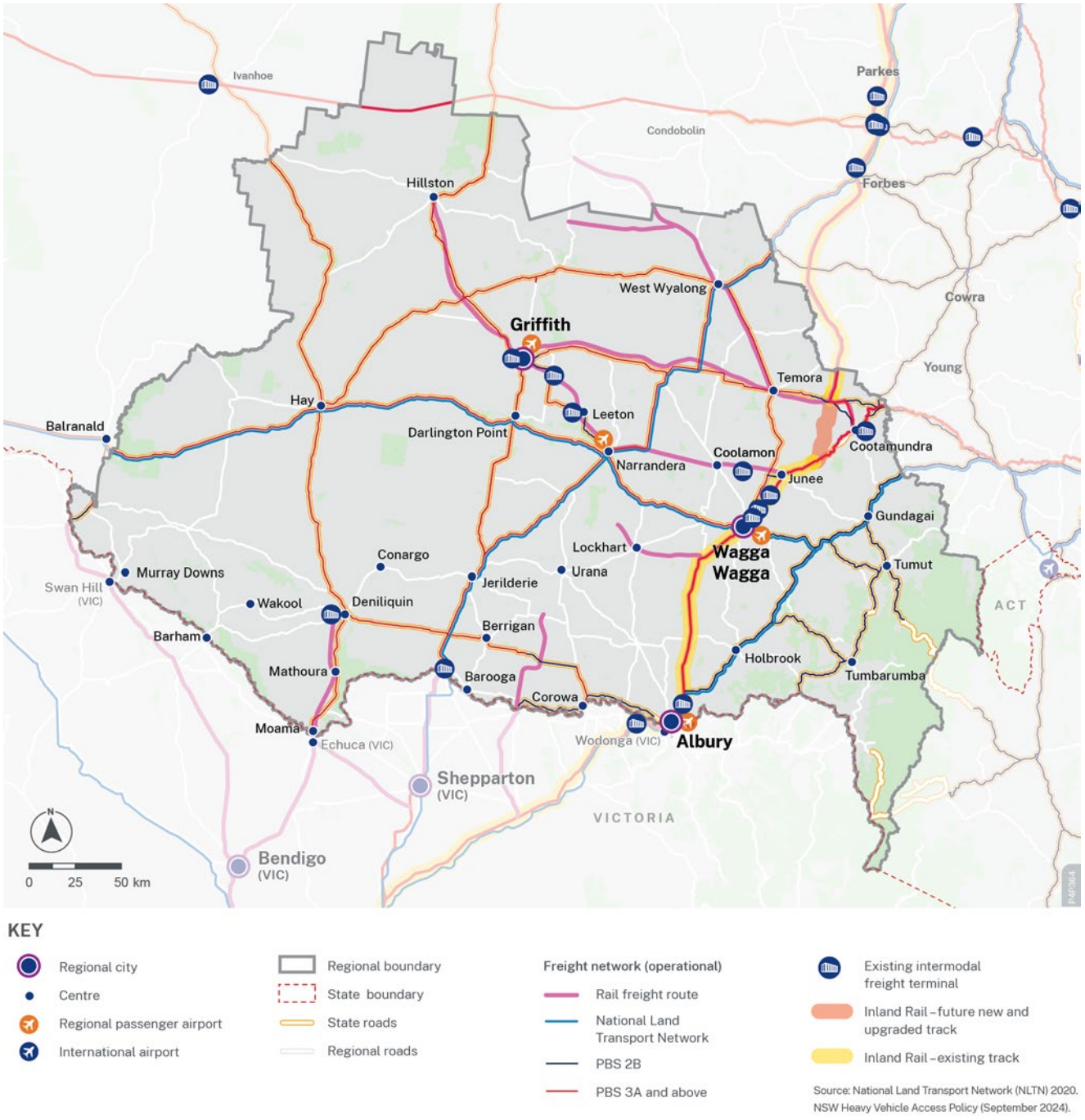

Figure 14 Riverina Murray key roads and freight

15 Transport for NSW, Traffic Volume Viewer available at maps.transport.nsw.gov.au/egeomaps/traffic-volumes/index.html

4.3.4 Public transport

Public transport is limited throughout the region. Twice-daily NSW TrainLink rail services run through the region between Sydney and Melbourne, along with a twice-weekly Griffith–Sydney service. V/Line rail services, operated by the Victorian Government, connect Albury–Wodonga, Moama–Echuca and Murray Downs–Swan Hill with Melbourne and other Victorian centres (see Figure 15).

The NSW TrainLink coach network is more far reaching but services generally only run once per day, and most are timed to connect to the daytime Sydney–Melbourne rail service for onward travel. V/Line coach services travel into the region and provide important connectivity into Melbourne and other Victorian centres.

Local bus services generally operate in larger centres, but are limited or non existent in smaller centres. On-demand services are available for day return into Albury and Wagga Wagga from surrounding towns, but can operate as infrequently as one day per week, limiting travel choice and flexibility. While some towns in the region do not have a public transport bus network, many do offer school bus services and community transport as travel options.

Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith were part of the 16 Regional Cities Services Improvement Program between 2020 and 2023 which delivered additional bus services to better meet customer travel needs and ensure more equitable access to public transport.

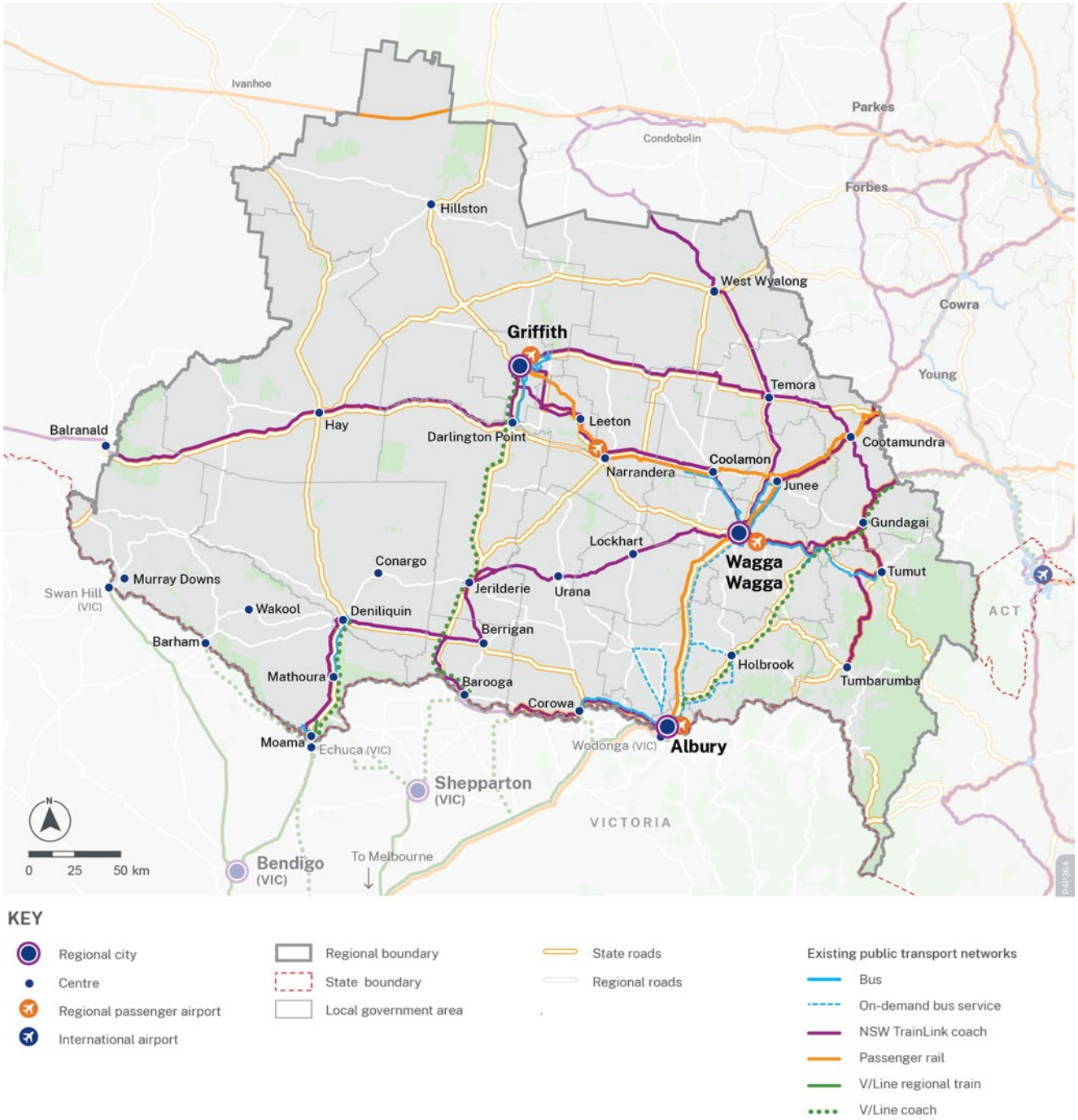

Figure 15: Riverina Murray existing public transport network

4.3.5 Active transport

Many local councils across the Riverina Murray region, such as Wagga Wagga, are driving progress in active transport through their active transport strategies and walking plans. These locally-tailored plans aim to encourage walking and cycling at the community level, improving safety, connectivity, and uptake of active transport in their respective towns and cities.

However, walking and cycling infrastructure today is starting from a low base and requires significant improvement to realise the goals of these strategies. Off-road cycleways tend to serve recreational purposes and are mostly shared with people walking, while footpaths are typically confined to town centres, leaving many residents without safe, accessible routes for walking or cycling for everyday travel. Many pathways lack shade, seating, and other amenities that make walking and cycling comfortable and appealing, especially in hot or remote areas. In addition, train stations and bus stops are frequently disconnected from walking and cycling networks, making it harder for people to complete their journeys safely and conveniently without a car.

Transport collaborates with local governments to develop and fund active transport networks through our Get NSW Active Program. It also assesses opportunities in collaboration with other government agencies to repurpose transport assets, such as disused rail corridors, into rail trails where there is a sound and sustainable business case.

Noreuil Park Foreshore, Albury © Destination NSW

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4.3.6 Aviation

Four regional passenger airports service the region including Griffith, Albury, Wagga Wagga and Narrandera–Leeton. Other nearby airports include Mildura, Bendigo which can be reached within a two-hour drive. These airports provide air connections to Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and overseas, as shown in Figure 16.

Air travel is prominent, particularly in Wagga Wagga where prior to the Covid-19 pandemic it was the second most popular method to travel to and from Wagga Wagga, after private vehicle.[16]

Wagga Wagga regional airport © Shutterstock

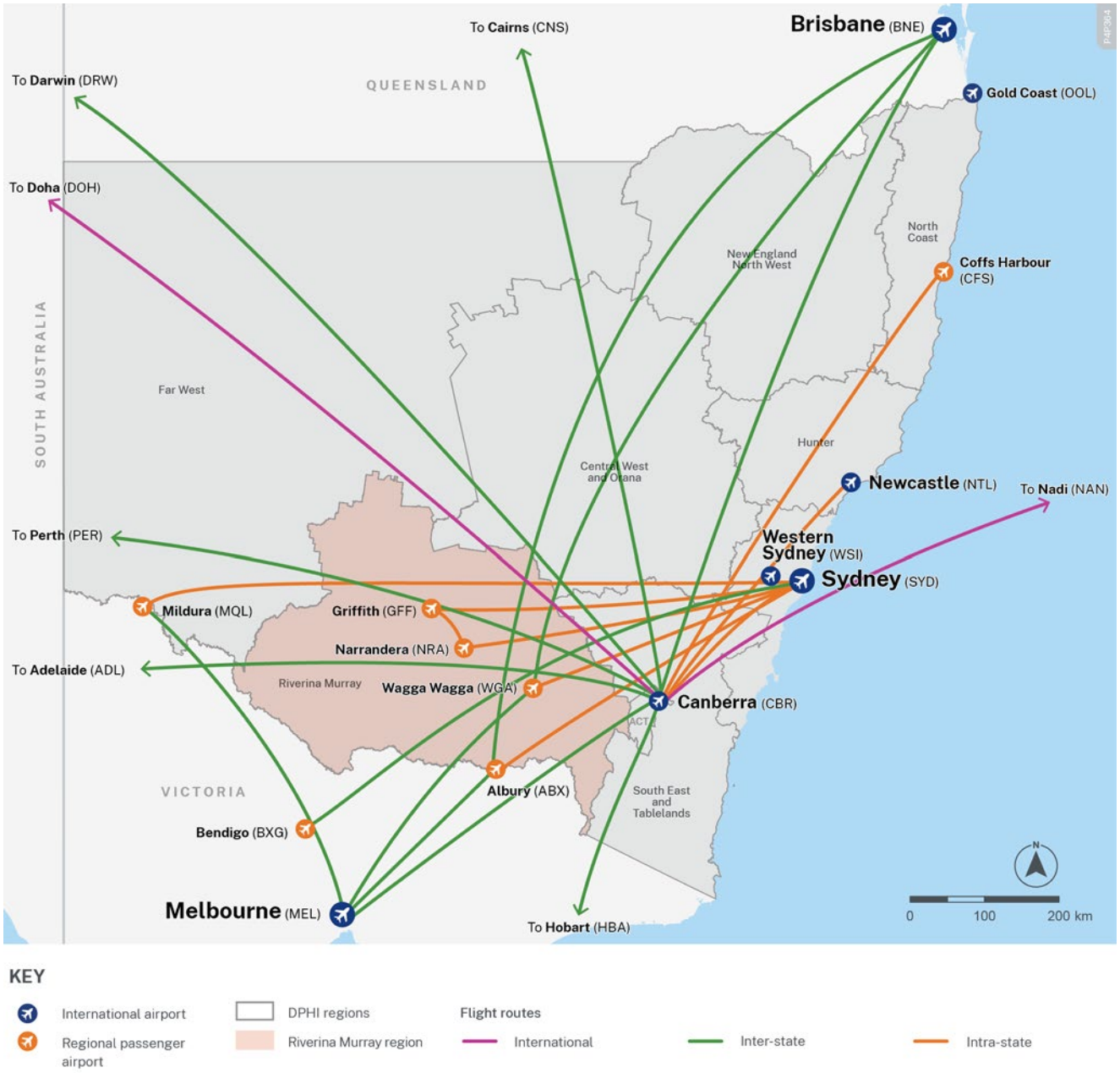

Figure 16. Aviation map of Riverina Murray

16 Transport for NSW, Wagga Wagga Transport Plan 2022

4.4 Current, planned and committed projects

As shown in Figure 17, the NSW and Australian Governments have committed funding for a range of transport infrastructure and service improvements across the Riverina Murray to maintain safe, productive and efficient travel options to service the growing population and employment opportunities of the region. Over the last five years, the focus of projects has been on bridge resilience along the Murray River, public transport service improvements in regional cities and safety upgrades along the Newell Highway. Key road projects in progress focus on improving safety along State highways, long term improvements for the Hume Highway and improving network access for PBS vehicles.

NSW Government projects occurring in the region include the Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct, the Albury Regional Job Precinct and the South West REZ. The Australian Government is also planning for a major regional and economic boost to the region through rail network improvements between Victoria and Parkes. These initiatives will increase industry and employment opportunities, while improved connectivity will support industry by enhancing access to domestic and international markets. Transport will support these projects through the planning of multimodal access to the new precincts and developing a range of projects to address identified network challenges and deliver on broader government priorities.

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Bethanga Bridge, Bellbridge © Destination NSW

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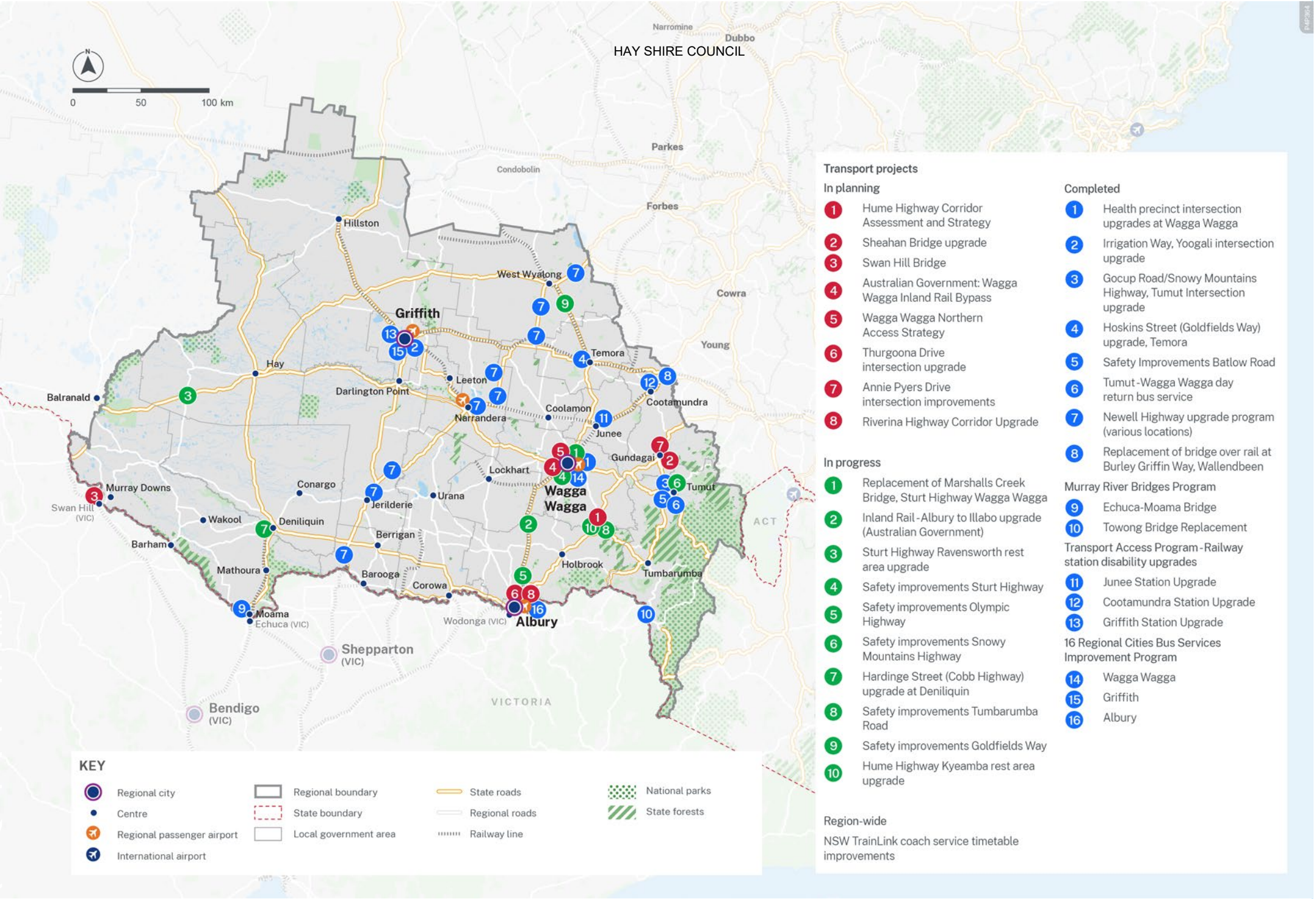

Figure 17. Riverina Murray projects

05 The transport challenge and opportunity

Cootamundra township © Destination NSW

Transport challenges and opportunities have been identified across the Riverina Murray region to guide actions that deliver on the Plan's vision and objectives.

These challenges and opportunities were identified through a combination of data analysis, technical investigations and an extensive stakeholder engagement process.

The Riverina Murray region faces a range of transport challenges associated with its dispersed settlement patterns, growing regional centres, nationally significant freight task and extensive cross-border movement with Victoria. Long travel distances between communities and limited public transport options in many areas create challenges for residents who need to access jobs, education, healthcare and other essential services, particularly those without access to a private vehicle.

The transport network must also support the daily movement of people across state borders, particularly in communities along the Murray River that straddle the NSW and Victoria border. Improving cross-border connectivity and reducing barriers to travel will be critical to supporting these communities.

The region's economy relies on the efficient movement of agricultural products, forestry products, manufactured goods and other commodities through nationally significant road and rail corridors.

Maintaining the competitiveness of these industries will require continued improvements to freight productivity, supply chain efficiency and connectivity to domestic and international markets.

An increasing demand in freight, changing travel needs and growing expectations for transport choice will place additional pressure on the network over the coming decades and require a more resilient network as well. At the same time, improving safety, reducing transport disadvantage and supporting the transition to net zero emissions will be critical to achieving the region's long-term vision.

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5.1 Starting with Country

All investment in the transport network, services, policy and technology takes a Country-centred approach.

There are five discrete Aboriginal communities in the region, each with a deep cultural, spiritual and physical connection to the land and waterways. They include the Moonahcullah, Three Ways, Cummeragunja, Wamba Wamba Reserve, Grong Grong and Brungle communities, shown in Figure 18. More than 7700 Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and 13 declared Aboriginal Places are located across the region, many of which remain significant to ongoing cultural practices and community identity.

What we heard

- Access to government services can be cumbersome and stressful due to long travel distances.
- We need to improve recognition of Country in public recreation areas and pathways where people walk and cycle.
- There are difficulties in using public transport due to experiences of racism.
- Many Aboriginal community services are located in Albury which is difficult to access without a car or driver's license.

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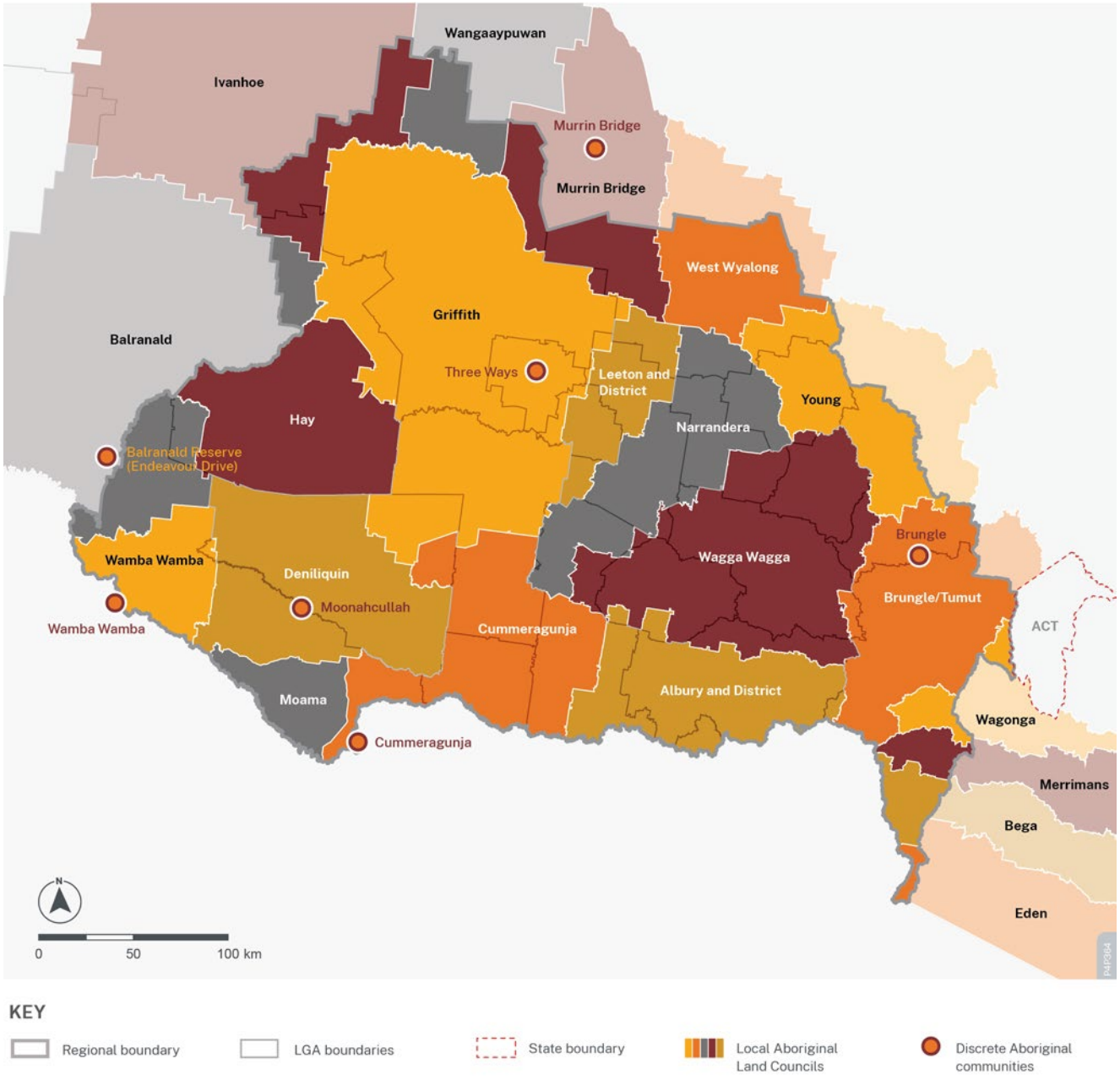


Figure 18. Local Aboriginal land councils and discrete Aboriginal communities

5.1.1 Delivering transport solutions that respect and incorporate Aboriginal community needs

Aboriginal communities in the Riverina Murray often lack transport choice, which impacts their access to a broad range of services and exacerbates social and economic inequity. Service schedules and networks rarely align with Aboriginal community priorities, including access to cultural sites, events and family networks that span large geographical areas. Local Aboriginal transport and services plans, co-designed in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, could help overcome some of these issues.

Coordinated engagement and genuine partnership with Aboriginal stakeholders is essential to understanding how Transport can better support positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the Riverina Murray region. Through ongoing dialogue and collaboration with Aboriginal communities, Transport can strengthen the way programs, grants and partnerships are developed, delivered and refined to reflect local needs and aspirations.

Aboriginal cultural land management plays a vital role in this process, drawing on the knowledge, strengths and resources of Aboriginal communities to deliver shared outcomes such as reducing the impact of bushfires on the state road network. These initiatives can also generate broader social, cultural and economic benefits. Importantly, they create space for culturally responsive approaches to community development, recognising the role of kinship systems and cultural practices in shaping how Aboriginal people live, work and engage with Country.

This Plan proposes to develop a local transport and services plan, written in partnership with local Aboriginal communities, that ensures that the right services are connecting to the right places at the right times. This process will be transparent, co-designed and identify tangible improvements.

Opportunities

Transport can deliver transport solutions that respect and incorporate Aboriginal community needs by:

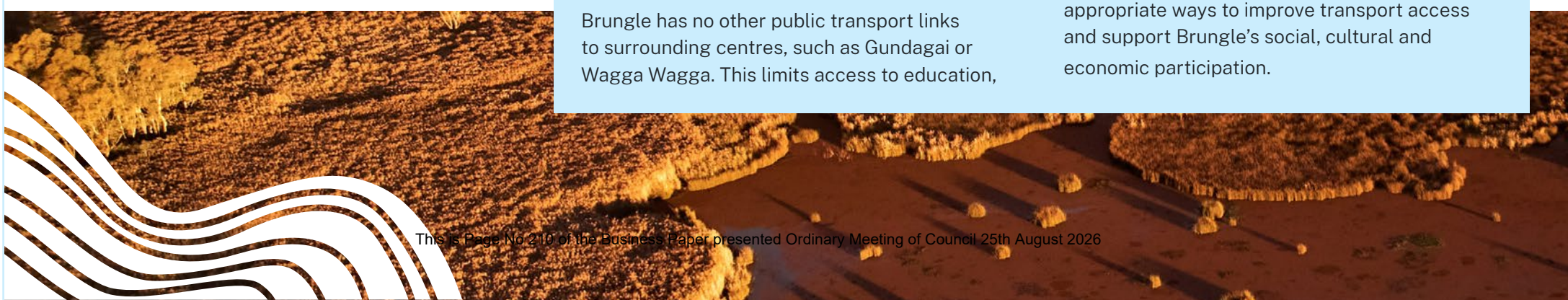
- improving engagement with Aboriginal communities by engaging with grant recipients after completion, improving grant relevancy and evaluating the impact of existing grants on social, economic, and cultural outcomes
- leveraging the strengths and listening to Aboriginal communities to continuously improve how grants, programs and partnerships are managed
- supporting greater application of Aboriginal land management practices around assets and infrastructure in collaboration with other State agencies.

Case Study: Brungle public transport

The Brungle discrete Aboriginal community is only served by a day return school bus operating to Tumut. This service is used by up to 100 fare-paying passengers per month and it's used by the wider community.

Brungle has no other public transport links to surrounding centres, such as Gundagai or Wagga Wagga. This limits access to education, employment, healthcare, shopping and cultural activities, reflecting broader challenges faced by Aboriginal communities.

Collaboration between the LALC, Transport, other State agencies and other key stakeholders could help identify practical, culturally appropriate ways to improve transport access and support Brungle's social, cultural and economic participation.



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5.1.2 Removing transport barriers for Aboriginal people and communities

Transport systems in the Riverina Murray often lack culturally safe transport environments for Aboriginal people. Limited visibility of Aboriginal identity in infrastructure, inadequate lighting and safety, and absence of spaces designed with Aboriginal community input, reduces community confidence and discourages use of the public transport system. Aboriginal people have also indicated that they do not always feel safe when travelling on public transport, including experiences of discrimination or fear of discrimination, which further discourages use.

These transport barriers also affect access to the justice system. In a weighted index measuring remoteness, socioeconomic disadvantage, public transport accessibility, demographic and proximity to key amenities such as schools, hospitals and shops, the most disadvantaged suburbs in the region were Hillston, Narrandera and Darlington Point. These suburbs are also made up of 20 to 30 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.[17]

17 Transport for NSW, 2025

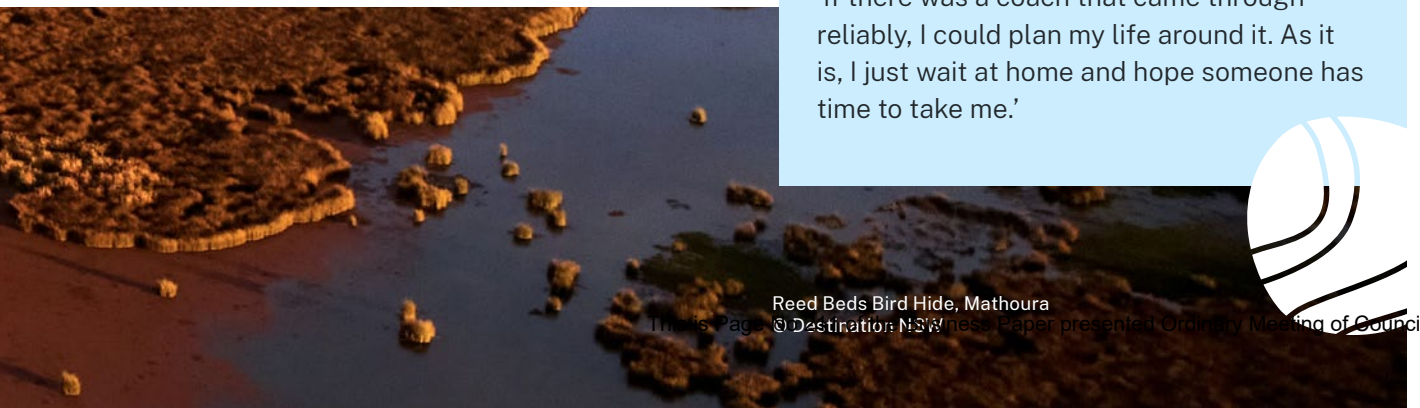
Case study: Francis – 68, retired, Hillston

Francis is 68 and lives alone in the town of Hillston, in the Western Riverina. She no longer drives due to vision issues and has mild mobility restrictions. She depends on others or community transport to get around.

Locally, there is almost no public transport. She needs to go to Griffith for specialist medical appointments, and sometimes to Wagga Wagga for more complex services. Currently, community transport via Carrathool Shire is available, but only on certain days and by booking in advance. A shopping bus runs from Hillston to Griffith roughly once a month, leaving early and returning mid-afternoon.

Francis wishes, however, for a regular coach service, with more predictable timings. Without that, she often has to wait at home for someone to drive her or miss out entirely. Her health appointments, social connections, and even grocery shopping suffer. Transport costs are high when relying on family or paying for private travel.

'If there was a coach that came through reliably, I could plan my life around it. As it is, I just wait at home and hope someone has time to take me.'



Reed Beds Bird Hide, Mathoura
© Destination NSW

Higher rates of unemployment, poorer health outcomes, increased incarceration rates, and lower levels of educational attainment compound these challenges and reinforce cycles of disadvantage. Addressing these issues requires reducing the cost burden of transport, improving coordination between transport providers and essential services, and supporting community-led transport initiatives that reflect the cultural and practical needs of Aboriginal people. With expanded access to affordable, reliable, and safe transport options, the Riverina Murray region can move toward greater equity and provide Aboriginal communities with the opportunity to participate fully in social, cultural, and economic life. In many areas, neighbouring Local Aboriginal land councils have been informally coordinating transport for their communities in the absence of regular public transport. Recognising and supporting these existing arrangements can strengthen community autonomy and ensure that essential trips are not missed due to lack of service availability.

In addition to addressing barriers related to public and active transport, enabling safe transport access and connectivity for all Aboriginal people and communities across the region also requires a focus on driver licensing and preparedness. Access to a driver licence is a critical enabler of mobility however, it is equally important to ensure that drivers are well-equipped to navigate the diverse and often challenging conditions present in the region. Given the long distances between centres and varying road conditions, providing driver training and ongoing support through the Driver Licensing Access Program (DLAP) will help to build the skills and confidence needed to safely manage varied weather conditions, protect road users and improve access to social, economic and cultural opportunities.

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Discrete Aboriginal Communities often experience significant gaps in essential services such as road maintenance, public transport servicing, and active transport infrastructure. These outcomes are shaped by current structural arrangements, including the exemption of LALCs from paying council rates. While this exemption supports LALCs by reducing financial burdens, it can result in unintended service delivery challenges where councils are not resourced to provide services in the absence of rate-based revenue.

This structural dynamic can contribute to disadvantage and inequitable access to infrastructure and services, highlighting the need for coordinated policy responses that support both community outcomes and sustainable local governance.

Cross-border girls reunion © Renae Saxby

Opportunities

The following opportunities have been identified to address challenges Aboriginal communities face in accessing transport and services:

- Deliver a holistic program to support Aboriginal people in accessing transport, including driver and boating license programs for regional and remote Aboriginal communities.
- Partner with Local Aboriginal land councils (LALC), community transport providers, and programs like the Driver Licensing Access Program to reduce systemic barriers, enabling more residents to obtain licences, access registered vehicles, and improve independence.
- Consider Aboriginal transport and access needs in all areas of public and active transport planning to enable participation for Aboriginal people.
- Provide reliable and culturally sensitive transport options, especially in relation to maintaining connections to heritage and cultural traditions.
- Coordinate transport services to healthcare or educational services, including opening times.
- Promote community-led services for transport solutions, providing a collaborative approach for flexibility and catering to the needs of the community.

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5.1.3 Improving Aboriginal outcomes

The NSW Government is committed to achieving the objective of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians. The NSW Government's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan provides a framework for delivering more equitable outcomes for Aboriginal communities and people.

Key Closing the Gap challenges that can be addressed through transport planning and programs include:

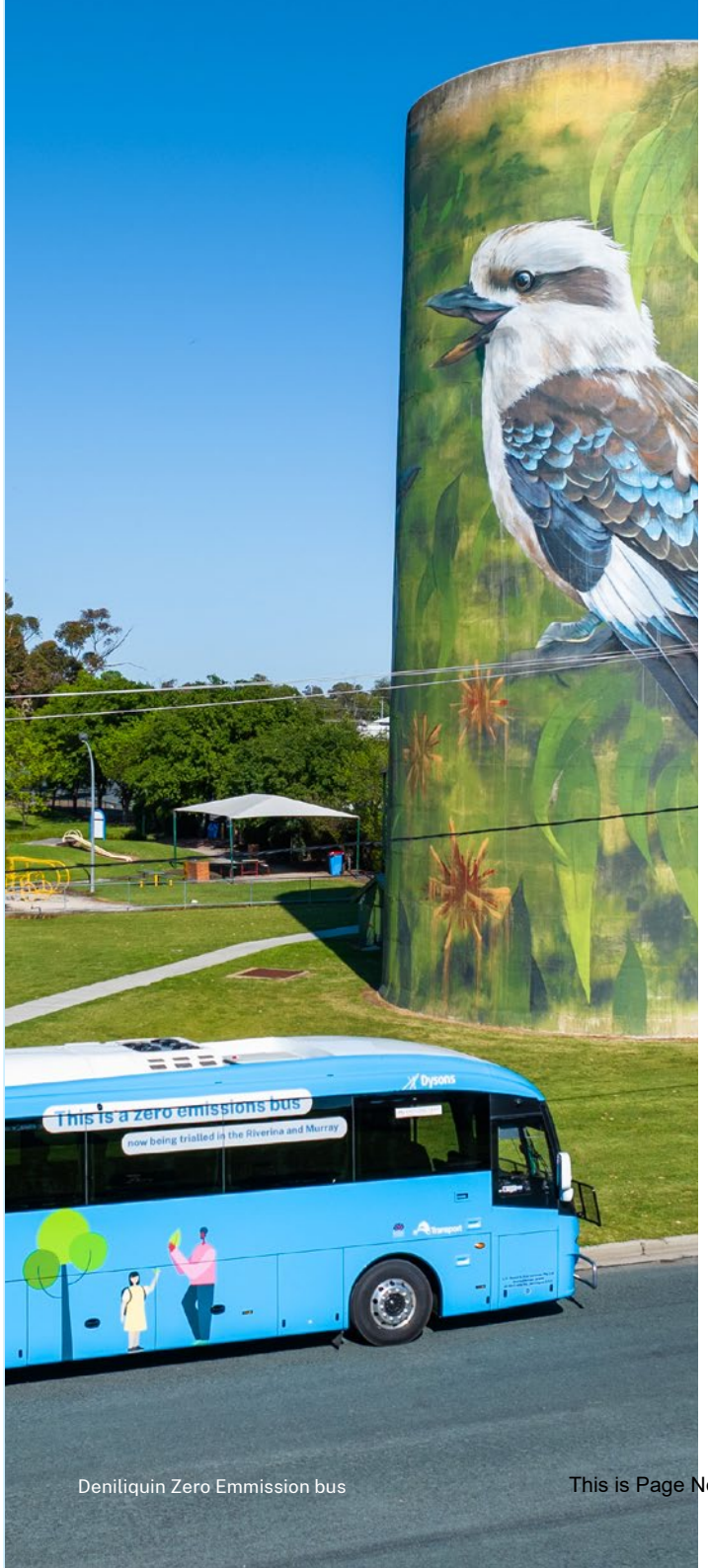
- improving Aboriginal people's access to jobs, healthcare, education, social and recreational venues, housing and Country
- effectively partnering with Aboriginal communities and businesses, including funding the development and operation of Aboriginal transport businesses. These challenges relate to the level of access Aboriginal people have to destinations and services which support improved Closing the Gap outcomes such as healthcare, education, social destinations and well-located housing.

The level of access that Aboriginal people have to key destinations and services and what this means in terms of improving transport infrastructure and service provision to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities is assessed as part of the 'Access to transport for all' objective.

Opportunities

Transport can improve Aboriginal outcomes by:

- identifying opportunities for improving access to local and more regionally important destinations and services for Aboriginal people, particularly for those living in discrete Aboriginal communities
- supporting Aboriginal communities to make decisions about Closing the Gap through shared access to data and decision-making.



Deniliquin Zero Emmission bus

5.2 Reduce transport disadvantage by providing access to transport for all

A transport network that provides a range of travel choices to all people living, working in or visiting the Riverina Murray region.

Barriers to accessing transport can significantly impact a person's ability to participate in employment, education, healthcare, social and leisure activities. Examples of those who face significant barriers include older people, residents in rural and regional areas, individuals with disabilities or temporary injuries, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, and people travelling with dependents. Improved transport access and choice can perform a transformational role in improving the wellbeing of communities across the Riverina Murray region.

Serving the needs of socio-economically disadvantaged individuals and communities is a particular consideration of this Plan. People who are reliant on public transport, walking and cycling for access to employment, education and social activities are disadvantaged in a region where many destinations are more difficult to reach without a car.

The future productivity, liveability, health and sustainability of the region depend upon a transport network that provides a range of travel choices to people, regardless of where they live or their circumstances.

What we heard

- There is poor road reliability on Thurgoona Drive, Albury and Gobbagombalin Bridge, Wagga Wagga during peak hour periods.
- There are limited footpath or shared pathways to safely access services, schools, recreational areas, and town centres from suburbs.
- More practical, consistent and timely public transport schedules would make it easier for people to plan their everyday travel.
- Poor train frequencies, nightly stops and unmanned stations create safety issues.
- Bus services are very limited on weekends and public holidays.
- Rail level crossings lack pedestrian pathways and gates.
- There is a need to improve the coach service to Albury, Griffith and Wagga Wagga from smaller towns such as West Wyalong, Temora and Hillston.
- There is a lack of community transport services for rural council areas, failing mobility-impaired and elderly people.
- People want cashless payment for buses to be available in regional areas.

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5.2.1 Access within towns

Most town centres across the Riverina Murray region are compact in form, providing many residents with potential walking access to key local destinations. However, many towns are also located alongside high-speed roads and rail lines and level crossings that limit freedom of movement. New housing estates and lower-density development are dispersed on the urban fringe and require new public transport and active transport services and infrastructure.

Active Transport

Trip containment within centres is high, with 40 per cent of trips being less than five kilometres in centres such as Coolamon, Griffith, Leeton, Wagga Wagga, Tumbarumba, Albury and Corowa (see Figures 19 and 20), demonstrating that short-distance travel is typical of daily movement across many of the centres in the region.

These travel patterns show a significant opportunity to increase walking, cycling and emerging forms of micromobility in centres where most journeys are short, reducing the need for a car.

Footpath networks across many centres in the region are incomplete or do not meet accessibility standards, creating barriers for people of all ability levels to walking, using mobility scooters, wheelchairs and other assisted mobility devices. In many locations, footpaths are missing altogether or are disconnected from key destinations such as town centres, health facilities, schools and public transport stops. Existing infrastructure often lacks compliant kerb ramps, continuous accessible paths of travel and accessible bus stop facilities.

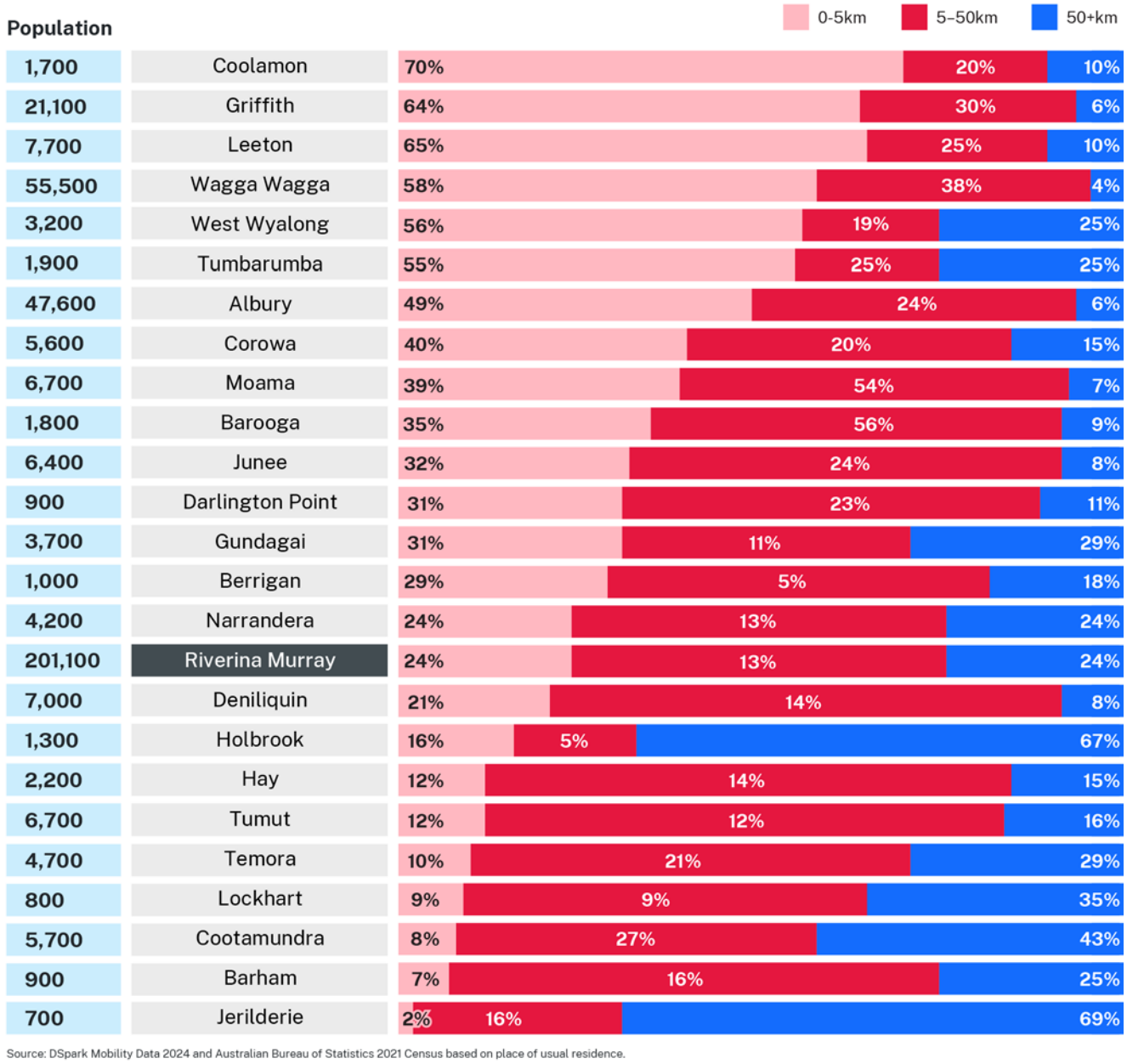

Figure 19. Length of trips starting in centres across the Riverina Murray

Cycling infrastructure in the Riverina Murray region is also typically limited in scope and functionality. Off-road cycling infrastructure mainly consists of shared paths that follow scenic corridors like rivers, and are primarily designed for recreational use, leaving commuter riders, higher-speed cyclists, and those in the 'interested but concerned' category without suitable options. Many residential areas across the region lack protected off-road cycleways that connect people to town centres, public transport hubs, and other essential destinations. On-road cycling is often hazardous, with default local street speed zones of 50 km/h and limited traffic calming measures, shaping a network that is not safe or accessible for people riding bikes of all ages and abilities.

Bike riders on active transport routes, including bicycle paths and shared paths, are more protected from crashes compared to those riding on the general road network, with only less than three per cent of crashes involving bicycles occurring on active transport infrastructure over the five years between 2019 and 2023.[18] This indicates that safe cycling infrastructure not only enhances safety through improving visibility, encouraging predictable behaviour and increasing rider confidence, but also supports broader goals of health, sustainability and community well-being.

Despite the need for better walking and cycling infrastructure, many smaller councils in the region face challenges accessing grants to make improvements. Additionally, small towns have different needs from those of larger urban centres. Their active transport priorities relate more to short, essential connections within the town rather than high volume corridors found in larger cities. Recognising these unique needs is essential to ensuring equitable access to safe, suitable and context-appropriate active transport infrastructure across the region.

It is also important to note that, these towns are facing growth of their aging population, who often rely on mobility scooters and would significantly benefit from accessible and continuous active transport infrastructure. Such infrastructure not only improves safety and mobility but also enhances the liveability and attractiveness of these towns, helping to support local vibrancy and community life.

Converting shorter trips to active transport where possible would provide multiple benefits for health, reduce greenhouse emissions and promote social cohesion. Improving walking and cycling uptake can be achieved through delivering infrastructure such as shared paths, safer crossing opportunities, improved lighting, and increased tree planting to provide shade along active transport paths. This provides options to improve the links between where people live and trip attractors such as shops, education and health facilities.

18 Transport for NSW, Road user safety data, 2019–2023

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Cr Peters presented Ordinary Meeting of Council 25th

Figure 20. Riverina Murray percentage of trips within centres

Public Transport

As regional centres across the Riverina Murray region continue to grow, public transport within centres will play an increasingly important role in meeting community access needs. Enhancing public transport within centres and between centres and their closest strategic centre will also be essential to support local connectivity, complement active transport options, and provide a viable alternative to car travel for a wider range of trips.

Currently, only the three regional cities, Wagga Wagga, Albury, Griffith, as well as Deniliquin and Moama have scheduled local bus services. While these cities are serviced by timetabled networks, usage remains low. According to ABS Journey to Work data (2021), public transport mode share is less than two per cent in Albury, Griffith and Wagga Wagga. The 16 Regional Cities Services Improvement Program (2020–2023) delivered significant service enhancements, including improved frequency, simplified routes and better integration, particularly in these cities. These upgrades have laid a strong foundation, but further work is needed to make public transport a more attractive and viable option for more people.

Ongoing network improvements, such as greater reliability, upgraded passenger facilities and better service information, will be critical to building community trust and encouraging mode shift. Expanding service coverage and addressing key system challenges such as integrated ticketing, consistent branding and improved interchange experience will help build a more convenient and user-friendly network.

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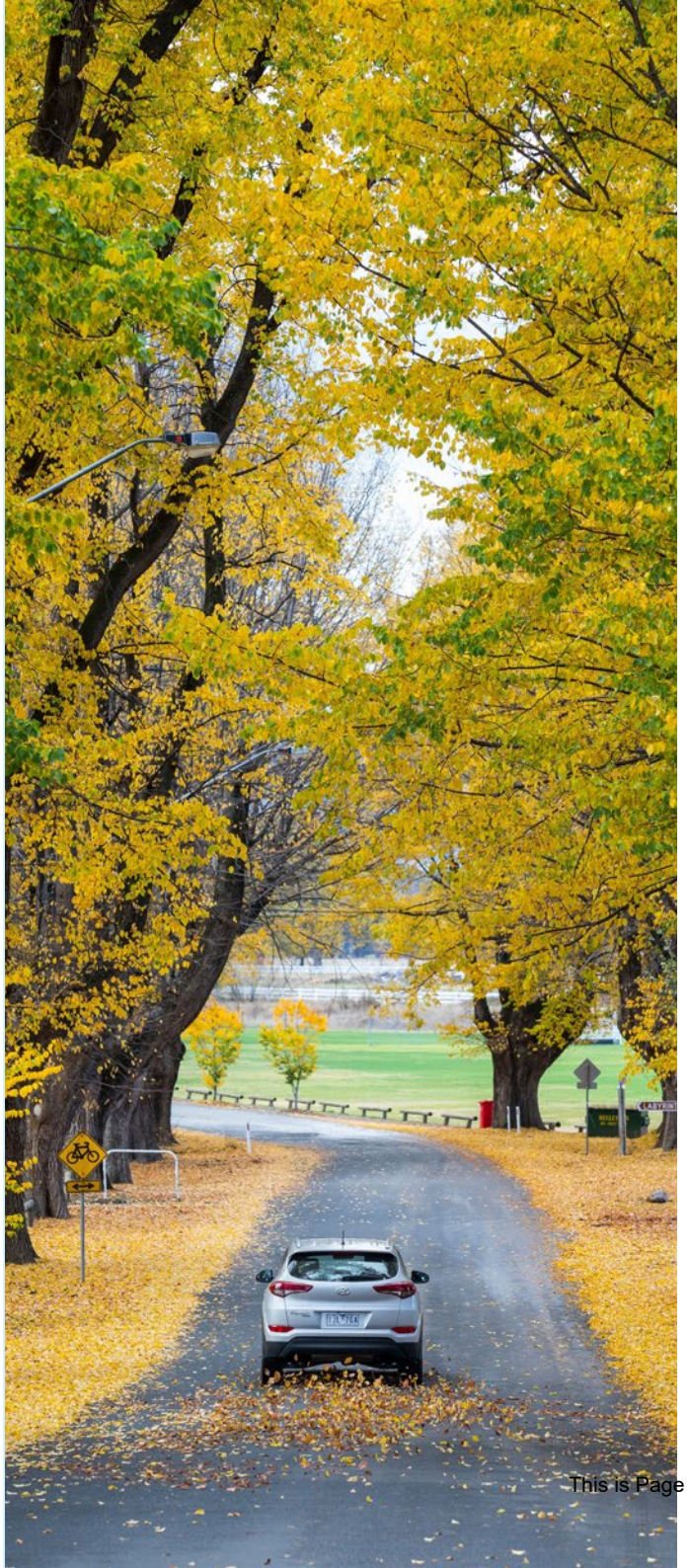

While smaller centres across the region often lack internal public transport, there is growing demand in larger towns such as Leeton, Tumut and Cootamundra, where socio-economically disadvantaged and ageing populations are expected to have reduced access to private vehicles over time.

Private vehicle use remains dominant even where public transport services are available. This is often due to the directness, speed and flexibility it offers over current public transport options. Public transport services are already competitive in places, for example, between Lavington and Albury where buses take 15 to 20 minutes depending on the time of day and run every 30 minutes on the weekday and hourly on Saturdays, compared to 10 to 15 minutes by private vehicle. However, other routes remain significantly less efficient; for instance, in Wagga Wagga, a trip from Tollard shops to the CBD takes approximately 30 minutes by bus, compared with 10 minutes by car. Future public transport service planning should seek to reduce time and convenience gaps between bus and car travel, to balance service coverage needs and support a shift in travel behaviour. Where appropriate, bus priority measures may help improve service performance and increase competitiveness. As the regional cities continue to grow, making public transport more reliable, accessible and responsive to local needs will be essential to supporting sustainable transport outcomes and growing mode share across the Riverina Murray region.

Opportunities

Transport can improve access within population centres by:

- working with DPHI, councils and service providers to align land use and transport planning, helping reduce travel distance and improve access to everyday destinations and essential services
- improving walking and cycling connections within towns, including safer and more accessible infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities, to support short local trips without reliance on private vehicles
- supporting councils to plan and deliver footpaths, cycleways and other active transport infrastructure that improves local access to shops, schools, services and public transport
- enhancing the safety and amenity of town centres through safer crossings, improved street design and changes to parking layouts where appropriate to support walking, cycling and access to local businesses and community spaces
- improving the quality and accessibility of bus stops, interchanges and pedestrian infrastructure including shelters, lighting, seating, crossing and compliant access for people with disability and reduced mobility.

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5.2.2 Access to service centres, regional cities and metropolitan cities

Public transport access to regional cities

Some centres across the Riverina Murray region act as key service hubs for much larger catchments than their local populations would suggest. The region's dispersed settlement pattern, particularly in the north-west, combined with the centralisation of services in Deniliquin, West Wyalong, Griffith, Hay and Swan Hill–Murray Downs, means many people are required to travel long distances to reach their nearest service centre. Residents from neighbouring towns and centres often travel to one of these regional cities to obtain essential services. Many communities along the Murray River also rely on services located across the border in Victoria such as Echuca or Wodonga.

Day-return travel by public transport is considered feasible if residents can spend at least three hours in the city before returning home on the same day. This type of service is particularly important for those who cannot drive or do not have access to a private vehicle. Reliable day-return options reduce the additional costs associated with overnight stays and lessen reliance on family and friends for transport.

Despite the existing need, providing public transport services to small and geographically dispersed communities is challenging. Low and scattered demand, high operating costs, limited funding and the need to align timing with demand all contribute to the complexity of delivering consistent and reliable day-return options. These factors make it difficult to scale services efficiently, often leaving many centres without viable public transport access to regional cities.

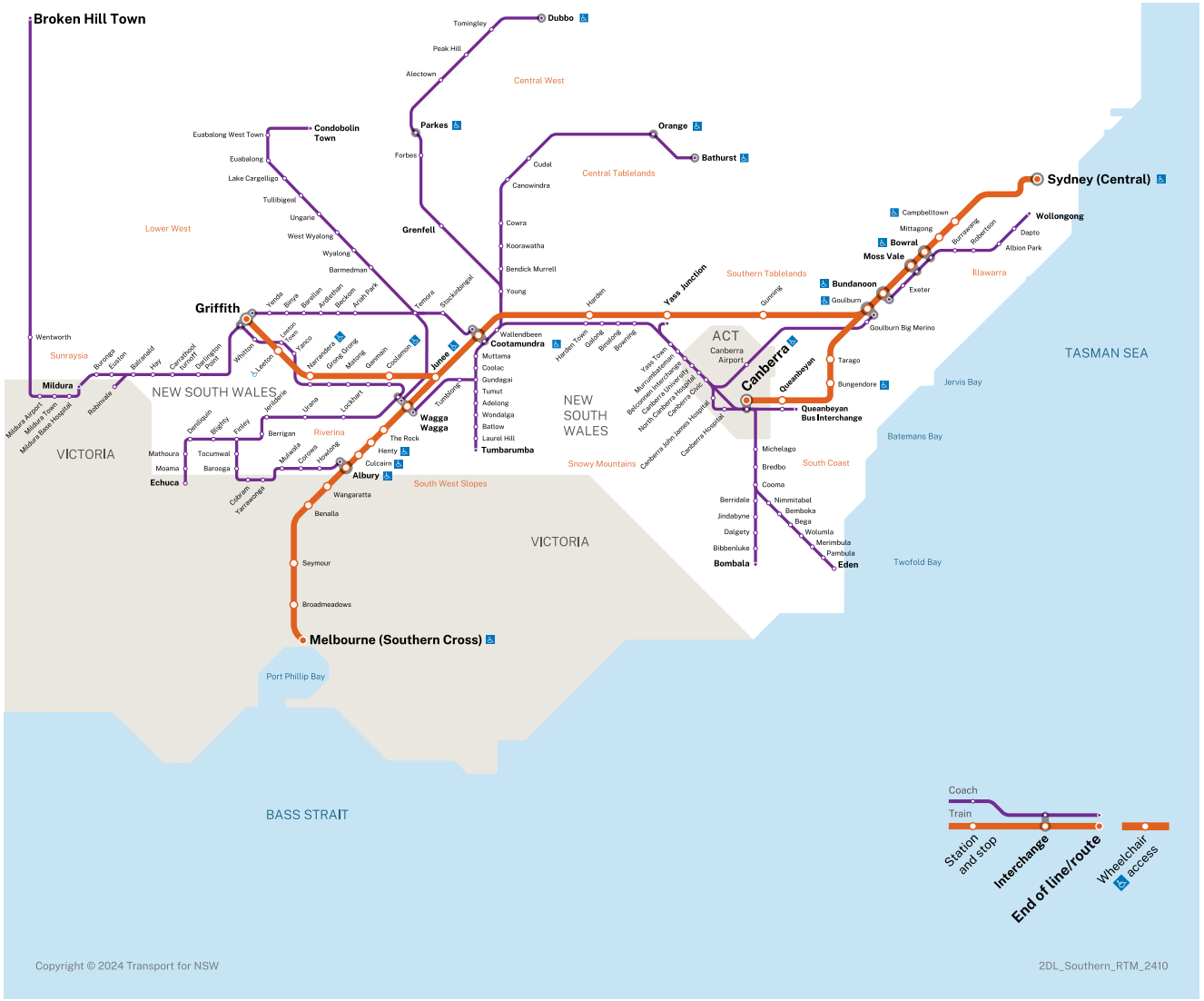

Figure 21 Riverina Murray rail and coach network

As shown in Figure 21, only 22 out of the 30 centres within the region can access a regional city at least one day a week, leaving eight centres without a scheduled and consistent day return service (excluding school bus services and ad-hoc community transport) to either Griffith, Wagga Wagga, Albury–Wodonga, Bendigo, Echuca, Shepparton, or Melbourne.

There are, however, opportunities to improve transport access across the region. With targeted investment, better coordination, and innovative service models, improvements can be made to the reliability, frequency and speed of day-return services. Enhancing public transport access will not only improve equity and inclusion, but also support better health, education and economic outcomes for residents across the Riverina Murray

Access for dispersed and remote population

While providing public transport options across the broader region remains important, it is unlikely that traditional public transport will be able to effectively service all communities, particularly those in remote areas. Emerging technologies and on-demand transport may help to improve access in the future, but for now the focus must remain on ensuring residents can travel safely and reliably by road and access community transport when private vehicle is no option. The maintenance, resilience and safety of the road network that facilitates these journeys is therefore treated as key and is addressed under each of those challenges detailed through this Plan.

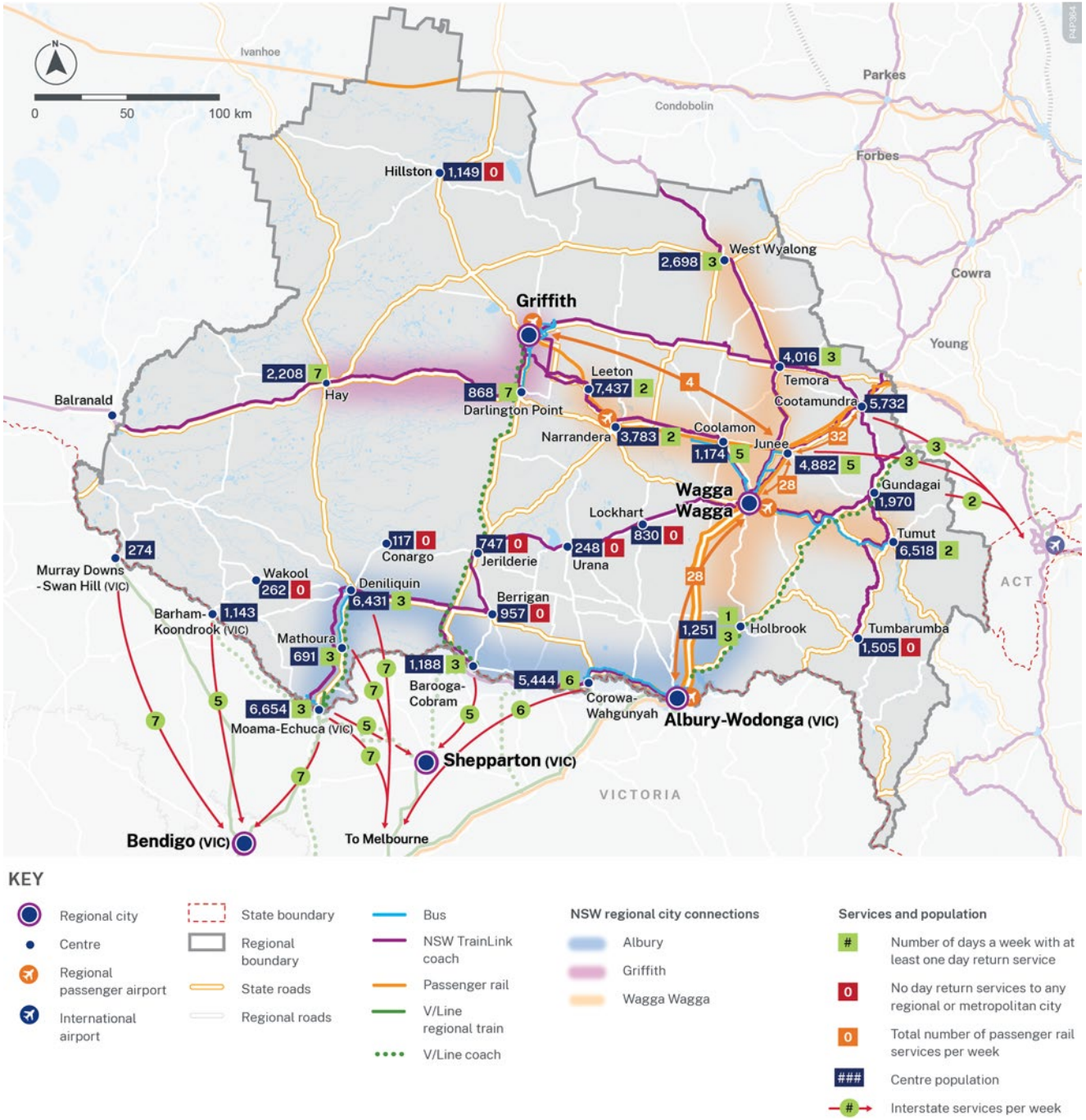

Figure 22. Riverina Murray day return services

Private vehicle access

Parts of Riverina Murray, such as the northwest, do not have access to any public transport and are reliant on private vehicles, including when accessing regional centres. Figure 22 illustrates driving travel times for residents to access regional centres.

Residents accessing regional centres by private vehicle require accessible parking, safe pedestrian access and transport connections within towns, to support those who have travelled significant distances to meet their essential needs. More generally, ongoing performance of the road network is critical to maintain access to essential services for rural communities.

Access to Sydney and Melbourne

Residents travel to metropolitan cities such as Sydney and Melbourne for a range of reasons including higher level health services, education, employment and business, as well as visiting friends and family.

Passenger rail in the Riverina Murray is primarily provided via the Sydney to Melbourne XPT service, which operates twice daily in each direction. While this service is scheduled for convenience at the departure and arrival cities, its timing often does not meet the needs of regional communities along the route. Riverina Murray centres are often served by train services in the middle of the day or night, making the service unsuitable for same day return travel.

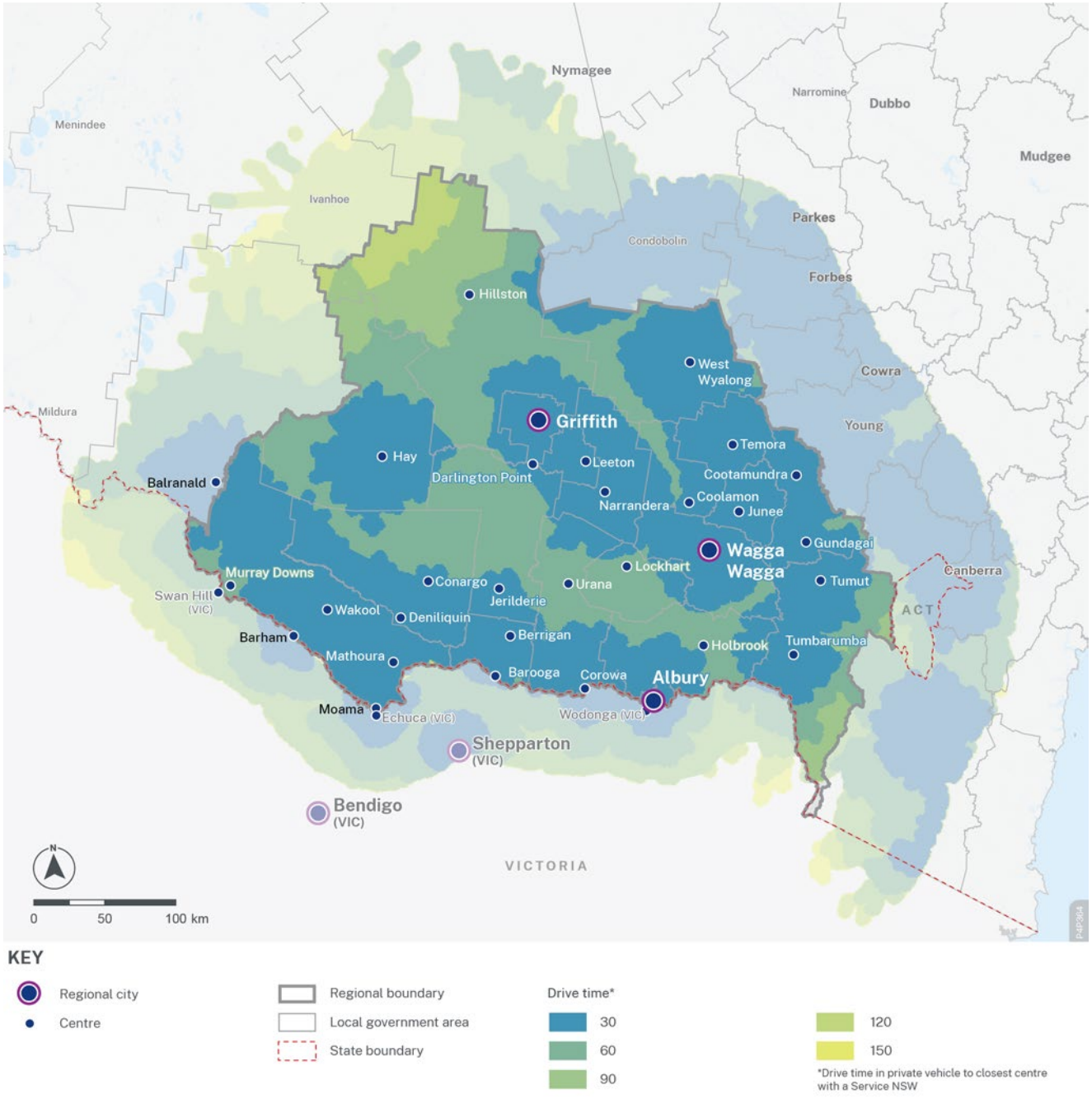

Figure 22. Riverina Murray driving access to centres

The Griffith to Sydney train service, which operates only twice a week, offers limited travel flexibility for passengers. On days when the train does not operate, travellers must connect via a train coach service through Wagga Wagga. This results in longer journey times and places additional pressure on the Sydney to Melbourne XPT.

There is a growing challenge of limited passenger capacity on the Sydney to Melbourne XPT train. Seat availability has declined in recent years, largely due to an increase in end-to-end travel between Sydney and Melbourne. This has made it difficult for Riverina Murray passengers to secure seats at short notice. This issue affects communities across the region, including those not directly located on the rail line, as the coach network is designed to connect into the XPT for onward journeys.

Interstate travel from the Riverina Murray to Victoria and the ACT is also supported by NSW TrainLink and V/Line coach services, which extend across the border and provide vital links for communities where direct rail access is limited. These link communities with Canberra, Melbourne and other Victorian centres.

Aviation is outside the remit of this Plan. However, the availability and suitability of air services have a direct influence on demand across other transport networks. While air travel provides the fastest option for travel to Sydney or interstate, high airfares, parking costs, and limited public transport access to airports reduce its viability for many people living in the region. In addition, commuters travelling to Sydney or Melbourne can face inconsistent flight schedules, with limited early-morning and evening services. These constraints increase reliance on road and rail networks, placing additional pressure on those transport modes.

Opportunities

Transport can improve access to the region's service centres and regional cities as well as metropolitan cities outside the region by:

- providing fast and reliable day return services between the region's centres and regional cities – Griffith, Wagga Wagga, Albury – to increase public transport access to higher order services like hospitals
- providing meaningful day-return services between villages and towns to enable access to higher-order services
- increasing the frequency, speed and reliability of passenger rail services connecting the Riverina Murray to Sydney and Victoria
- improving integration of aviation with the broader transport system to help enhance the frequency, reliability and accessibility of air services to Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Albury.

XPT train passing through regional NSW

Albury Botanic Gardens © Destination NSW

5.2.3 Equitable access to transport for people of all ages and abilities

The Riverina Murray region is expected to experience gradual demographic change over coming decades, including population growth and ageing. An ageing population will see more residents with limited ability to drive, amplifying the need for affordable, reliable and accessible public and community transport options. Promoting seniors' health through active mobility offers significant benefits, helping older adults maintain physical and mental wellbeing as they age. The integration of connected footpaths to multimodal transport hubs expands the opportunities to complete longer and more comfortable journeys. Supporting ageing in place through accessible infrastructure as driving becomes less viable for many is essential for maintaining independence and accessing essential services.

Promoting safe and independent travel for school-aged children is both a challenge and an opportunity for the region. Enabling students to walk, ride, or scoot to school or their local bus stop helps build lifelong active transport habits, reduces traffic congestion around schools, and promotes physical health and independence. Creating safe walking and cycling routes to school and public transport stops, supported by priority crossings, is essential to make active travel a practical and appealing choice for families in the Riverina Murray region.

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For people living with disability, transport disadvantage is compounded by physical and systemic barriers. Incomplete or narrow footpath networks, poor quality pram ramps, and inaccessible bus stops limit independent mobility, even where vehicles themselves meet accessibility standards. For these residents, community transport plays a critical role, particularly in centres with older populations. Integrating disability and aged care transport services with existing or future public transport networks can increase flexibility, efficiency and access for vulnerable groups.

Socio-economic disadvantage further restricts access to public transport. High costs are a significant barrier, particularly where private vehicle ownership is unaffordable and alternatives are limited. Safety concerns such as poor lighting, limited passive surveillance and a lack of inclusive public spaces further deter people from using public or active transport, particularly women, children, Aboriginal people and people with disability. In regional NSW, over two-thirds of women report feeling unsafe in public spaces after dark, reinforcing reliance on private vehicles or reducing participation in community life altogether.

Opportunities

Transport can improve equitable access to the transport network for people of all ages and abilities by:

- working with councils and public transport service providers, including on-demand public transport providers, to ensure vehicles, infrastructure and services are accessible for people of all ages and abilities, and address the needs of transport disadvantaged communities across the entire journey
- prioritising active and public transport connections in areas with high socio-economic disadvantage and limited public transport access, including lower-density and remote communities
- improving active transport infrastructure along state roads to support safer, more accessible movement for all users.

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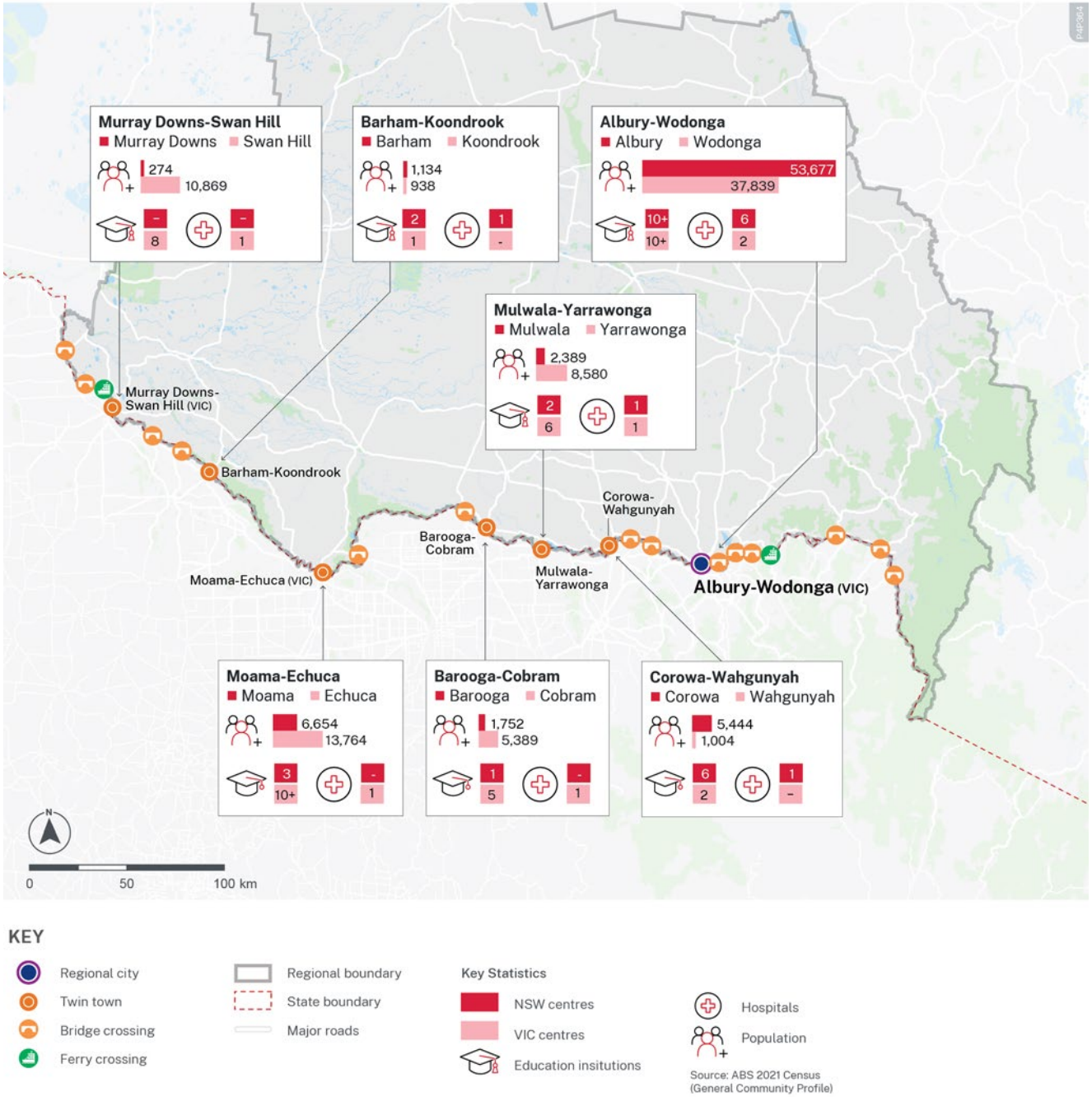
5.3 Seamless borders

A transport network that supports seamless movements for the Riverina Murray residents, workers and visitors travelling to and from Victoria.

The Riverina Murray region shares a border with Victoria along the Murray River for approximately 600 kilometres. There are seven twin towns along the Victorian–NSW border with the largest being Albury and Wodonga. Twin towns along the Murray River generally operate as single communities, where services, employment, education and retail are provided on one or both sides of the river, with residents moving between states to access work, school, shopping, and health services (see Figure 24). Around 150,000 people live in the seven twin towns adjacent to the border and more than 80 per cent[19] of the daily trips cross the Murray River.

Many Murray River communities have strong economic and social connections to communities in northern Victoria such as Shepparton and Bendigo due to being closer than the regional cities of Griffith and Wagga Wagga in NSW. A similar pattern exists with capital city connectivity, with many towns in Riverina Murray region being geographically closer to Melbourne than to Sydney, further reinforcing these cross-border linkages.



19 Dspark data analysis by Transport for NSW, 2024

Next to commuters and residents crossing the border, freight movement between Victoria and Riverina Murray is expected to grow by approximately 30 per cent[20] by 2041.

What we heard

- Cross-border bus services need to be integrated, including timetables, fares and payment method, especially between Albury and Wodonga and Moama and Echuca.
- It is difficult to access education services (e.g. TAFE and high school) on the other side of the State border without a private vehicle.
- It is difficult to navigate the different transport regulations for licensing, road rules and heavy vehicle permits.
- Some towns prefer to access services within their region rather than travelling across the border.
- There is limited connectivity for students within the region travelling to Shepparton for education.
- There are inconsistencies in funding arrangement for bridge maintenance between NSW and Victoria.
- There are opportunities for pedestrian and cycleway bridges between twin towns to enable healthy living outcomes

5.3.1 Fragmented cross-border transport connections in twin towns along Murray River

Separate NSW and Victorian systems including bus operators, timetables, ticketing, concessions, and licensing schemes can create unnecessary barriers to seamless travel. Transport limitations can constrain the region's capacity to support growth, jobs, and social cohesion for places that function as single communities despite the administrative divide of the Murray River.

In Albury–Wodonga, approximately 23 per cent of Wodonga residents work in Albury and around 28 per cent of Albury residents work in Wodonga, demonstrating the high level of daily cross-border movement for access to jobs. However, the absence of integrated bus services or ticketing makes public transport appear complicated and costly, with long travel times due to the interchanges required to access destinations away from the CBD. This discourages people from using public transport, increasing reliance on private vehicles and placing additional pressure on the road network. On the other hand, these barriers particularly affect residents without private vehicles, including older people, young people, and those with disability, who face additional obstacles due to inconsistent subsidies, taxi schemes, and accessibility supports.

Smaller twin towns like Moama–Echuca, face similar challenges. Residents in Moama rely heavily on Echuca for schools, hospitals, and shopping, but cross-border public transport does not always directly connect Moama with them.

Local bus services from Moama only stop at the Echuca Post Office before returning to NSW; they do not directly connect to key destinations such as Echuca Station or Echuca Regional Health. This creates access barriers for residents who rely on public transport for local travel.

Many river crossings along the Murray lack safe pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, restricting opportunities for active travel. Poorly-connected shared paths and missing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure on many river crossings limits residents' ability to travel independently. This increases reliance on private vehicles, disproportionately affecting those without access to a car and deepening transport disadvantage among vulnerable groups. As a result, integration between twin towns is reduced and travel remains heavily car-dependent in the absence of viable, sustainable alternatives.

Opportunities

Opportunities to address the challenges faced by border communities include:

- investigating opportunities to reallocate existing road space on river bridges in twin towns to dedicated walking and/or cycling or provide new walking and cycling bridges
- addressing cross-border inconsistencies in the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme by simplifying its structure and addressing eligibility
- integrating journey planning systems between jurisdictions.

20 Transport for NSW, 2025

5.3.2 Limited regional cross-border connectivity between NSW towns and Victoria

Beyond the twin towns, many regional communities in the Riverina Murray have strong economic and social connections with major centres in northern Victoria. This includes farming communities and rural workers who travel to the nearest towns for services. People living further north of the Murray River in Riverina Murray often cross the border for higher-order services such as hospitals, higher education, major shopping centres, and entertainment. In many cases, communities in NSW are closer to hospitals in Shepparton, Bendigo, Echuca and Swan Hill than to equivalents in NSW.

Coordinated cross border service planning

The lack of reliable, coordinated cross-border connections for surrounding communities reduces regional equity, limits workforce mobility, and constrains the ability of local economies to capture the full benefits of proximity to larger service centres.

For residents without access to a car, extra steps add to journey time, inconvenience, and inequity, reinforcing gaps in transport access across the Riverina Murray. While some Victorian public transport services extend into NSW, including V/ Line rail and coach services, coverage remains inconsistent and does not always reflect the way communities travel across the border.

As a result, many communities have limited or no public transport access to the regional centres they depend on. This creates significant disadvantage and limits access to essential services.

Differences in service planning, funding arrangements, ticketing systems and fare structures between NSW and Victoria can further complicate cross-border journeys. These inconsistencies can increase travel costs, lengthen journey times and create confusion for passengers, particularly for concession holders and those making multi-leg journeys across jurisdictions.

The lack of coordinated cross-border transport connections reduces regional equity, limits workforce mobility and constrains the ability of communities and businesses to fully benefit from their proximity to major Victorian service centres. Addressing these challenges will require greater collaboration between the NSW and Victorian Governments to better align transport planning, improve service integration and deliver public transport connections that reflect the cross-border travel needs of Riverina Murray communities.

Freight train crossing Olympic Highway near Bethungra

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Coordinated cross-border road connectivity

In addition to public transport services, reliable road connections across the Murray River are critical to regional liveability and economic growth. Bridge infrastructure, signage, and wayfinding all play a central role in enabling seamless cross-border travel for both freight and private vehicles. The resilience and reliability of these crossings are particularly important, as closures or restrictions can cause long detours, higher transport costs, and safety risks on the road network. Information sharing between NSW and Victoria during disruptions helps people make safe and informed decisions, reducing confusion and improving journey reliability.

Clear and consistent signage, wayfinding, and information sharing between NSW and Victoria can help reduce confusion for both local residents and visitors, ensuring safer and more efficient journeys. Well-placed rest stops, toilets, EV charging points, and parking areas along cross-border routes are vital for safety and convenience, particularly for longer distance trips. Well-planned cross-border road connectivity also supports tourism, strengthens freight corridors, and provides communities with reliable access to essential services located on both sides of the border.

Opportunities

Opportunities to address challenges for interstate networks include:

- collaborating with the Victorian Government on cross-border transport funding to enhance key road infrastructure projects that connect the border and surrounding localities
- removing operational complexity in bus services through shared standards for service coordination, scheduling and routing
- partnering with the Cross-Border Commissioner for NSW and Victoria and border-region councils to align strategic transport planning across State and local government.

State border of New South Wales crossing the Murray River, Barham, NSW

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5.3.3 Alignment of infrastructure to support cross-border freight access

There is a significant freight task between NSW and Victoria, with much of this movement occurring across the Murray River, which forms the border between the two states. While most freight moves via the Hume and Newell Highways and the Main Southern Railway Line, there are also 19 road bridges and three active rail crossings connecting NSW and Victoria. Since the 1936 Murray River Crossings Agreement, Transport for NSW has managed and maintained these vital cross-border connections.

To ensure crossings between NSW and Victoria continue to meet the needs of all users, the Murray Bridges Program is assessing all bridges along the Murray River border to confirm they are fit for purpose. While the program considers a range of uses, it is critical that freight access is included in this assessment, supporting a coordinated and holistic approach to cross-border freight movements.

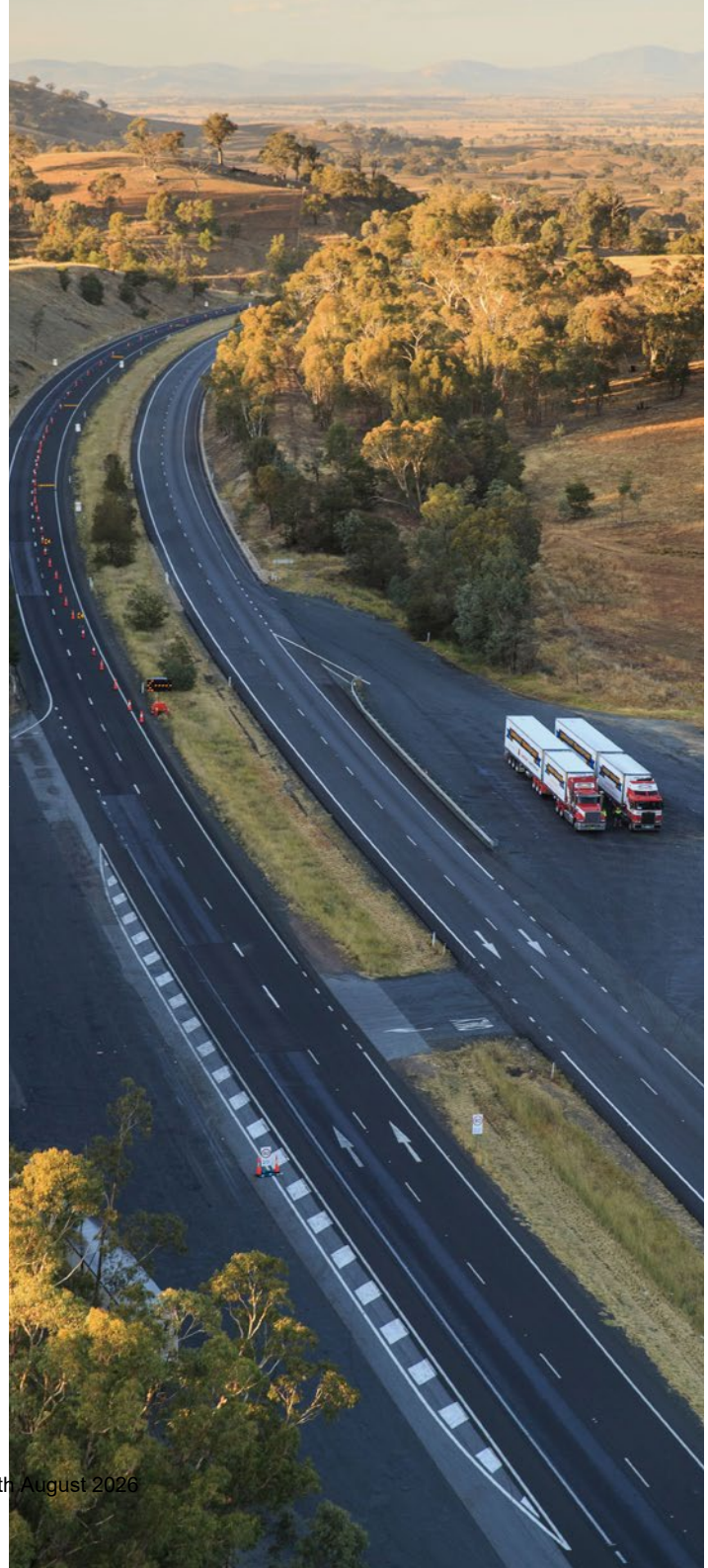
Despite these efforts, freight operators continue to face challenges. Differences in load limits between NSW and Victoria mean cross-border freight access is not coordinated. The Howlong Bridge in Federation LGA, built in 2001, is a clear example of this, as Victoria permits PBS 2b heavy vehicle access on its approach, but NSW does not. This misalignment often prevents heavy vehicles from using the most direct and efficient routes, and coupled with few crossing options, it can lead to detours, additional costs, and delays.

Agricultural and freight movements through towns such as Mulwala and Yarrawonga are also affected. Operational inefficiencies caused by inconsistent regulations and infrastructure constraints undermine productivity and reduce industry competitiveness. In the longer term, ensuring alignment of cross-border regulations, bridge capacity, and freight access planning will be essential to support economic growth and improve safety outcomes.

Opportunities

Opportunities to address the challenges faced by border communities include:

- align freight access needs on road corridors that cross both Victoria and NSW and their bridges
- addressing critical issues for major transport corridors that enhance safety, resilience, and accessibility for PBS vehicles, including improving bridges, eliminating level crossings, and improving road alignment
- working with office of the Cross-Border Commissioner to explore more consistent and user-friendly ticketing and payment options across the region, including contactless payment and better integration between NSW and Victorian services.



5.4 Well-located housing and successful places

Support the delivery of well-located housing and successful places through sustainable transport options to address growth and enhance the vibrancy of town centres in the Riverina Murray.

By 2041, the Riverina Murray region is projected to grow by 48,000 residents to approximately 331,000, particularly in the over 65-year-old category.

Housing growth locations across the region vary from being within a strategic centre, in greenfield developments on the periphery of towns, smaller centres and on rural farmland. Well-located housing is defined by these varying land use contexts and community groups they accommodate.

Well-located development ensures that residents have convenient access to local and more regionally significant destinations and services. It reduces growth in travel demand and trip distances, while providing opportunities for local walking and public transport trips. This supports active and vibrant local streets, strengthens social cohesion and enhances the viability of both new and existing businesses.

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Transport offers several policies and guides that can assist councils, landowners and businesses integrate their land use plans with transport outcomes. These include:

- Movement and Place Framework
- Road User Space Allocation Policy
- Integrated Transport Plans
- Design of Roads and Streets Manual
- Transport Management and Accessibility Plans (TMAP)
- Guide to Traffic Impact Assessment (GTIA).

Open Streets Cootamundra © Gundagai Regional Council

What we heard

- Development and housing growth is reshaping regional towns, placing pressure on local roads, services. The transport network is not designed for the scale of change at hand.
- Historically, new growth areas have not being connected with health services or other town centres such as North Wagga Wagga or Thurgoona in Albury.
- Councils seek stronger alignment between land use, transport and service planning, including support for reclassification of roads and activation of main streets.
- Some town centres lack adequate pedestrian crossings across highways or level crossings.
- Limited street lighting deters people, particularly women, children and mobility impaired people, from walking or cycling.
- Infill housing offers opportunities for new smaller-scale homes close to existing services and recreation facilities.
- There are safety and amenity concerns for towns such as Barooga, Tocumwal, Narrandra, West Wyalong and Ungarie where main streets need to accommodate heavy vehicle through traffic.
- There is a need to improve pedestrian environments around schools, particularly along busy roads.

5.4.1 Meeting the growing need of housing in well-connected centres

Across the Riverina Murray region, population growth is concentrated in the three regional cities of Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith and along the Murray River in the LGAs of Murray River, Berrigan, Federation and Greater Hume (see Figure 25).

The region is facing a changing economic landscape with long-term, large-scale projects such as the South West REZ, HumeLink and Snowy Hydro 2.0 bringing an influx of workers to the region. This has impacted towns as short-term accommodation is occupied on a long-term basis, resulting in less available accommodation for visitors and seasonal workers. In centres such as Griffith, rental vacancies are very low, and the lack of housing limits the economic growth of the town and surrounding region. Low availability in suitable housing for existing residents can result in intergenerational living which can lead to overcrowding, emotional stress, conflict and loss of privacy.

In planning for future growth with infill housing within existing centres, these developments must be complemented by improved safe, accessible options for walking, cycling, and public transport. Infill housing can provide this connectivity more cheaply and easily, supporting more diverse communities, including older residents, renters and temporary workers. New housing requires suitable freight access, and if councils pursue urban population growth, the road network must be prepared so new communities can access jobs, services and amenities.

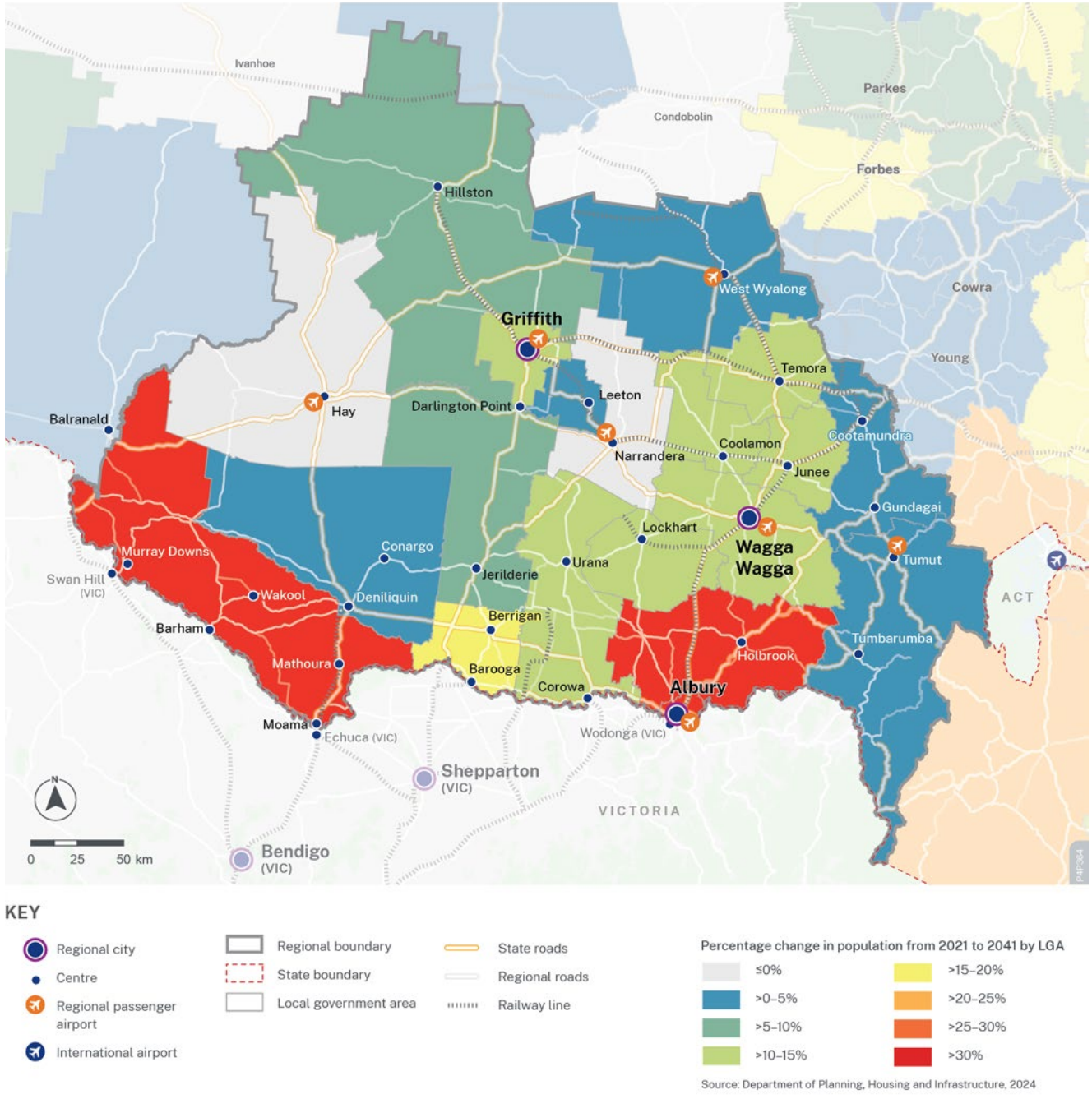

Figure 25. Riverina Murray population change 2021–2041

Development near centres increase demand for public transport, making services more efficient and cost-effective to operate and maintain, while minimising the negative impacts of private vehicle trips on Riverina Murray communities.

One of the barriers to more infill housing is the presence of disused rail lines dividing communities and distancing potential land for further development. Transport will work together with rail asset owners to determine the most appropriate way to overcome the severance impact of disused rail lines.

Through coordinated land use and transport planning, potential constraints can be turned into opportunities for sustainable growth. Growth in smaller centres will rely on increased local and day-return public transport services to access social, health, employment and educational needs. Directing new housing to existing centres generally delivers strong long-term outcomes.

Opportunities

Transport can support growing housing in existing population centres by:

- collaborating with DPHI and councils to deliver more multi-dwelling developments within towns and cities through varying built forms and densities supported by appropriate transport infrastructure and services, such that new residents can walk, cycle and catch public transport
- leveraging its property, assets, and services to support housing, renewal and densification
- investigating opportunities to reduce severance impact of currently disused rail lines.

Baylis Street Wagga Wagga © Shutterstock

5.4.2 Addressing transport access challenges in greenfield growth areas

Throughout the Riverina Murray region, main streets serve as economic and social hubs that support local access to services and enable business activity. However, where main roads are part of through routes, they often divide towns, increase conflict between heavy vehicle traffic and pedestrians, and diminish safety, raise noise levels and reduce the liveability of key community places. High volumes and speeds of through-traffic hinder the creation of welcoming town centre environments that support local businesses and community interaction. In some cases, centres include pedestrian signage in retail or commercial areas that requires pedestrians to always give way to vehicles, reinforcing a transport system that prioritises through-traffic over local access and place outcomes.

Addressing these issues requires more than a single, uniform solution. Each community faces unique challenges and has different priorities and opportunities. A tailored approach is needed to balance the safe and efficient movement of freight and people with the wellbeing, liveability, and economic vitality of local towns.

Councils across the Riverina Murray region, such as Murray River Council, have successfully delivered masterplans that prioritise local place-making and access outcomes for their main streets. Transport will continue to collaborate with councils in the region to support their planning of main streets which are on state roads to ensure consideration of each centre's unique needs.

Beyond implementing similar new main street projects, it is important that existing treatments are regularly reviewed and upgraded to enhance local place and access outcomes, supporting growth in local business activity. Potential improvements include increased street furniture, replacing angled parking with parallel parking, reducing kerb radii at intersections, more frequent pedestrian crossings, raised thresholds, table-topped intersections, additional street tree planting, and the introduction of High Pedestrian Activity Area (HPAA) speed limits where suitable.

Greenfield development is often fast-tracked to meet short-term housing and employment targets. The relatively low cost of rural land and lower levels of community resistance outside major centres can make greenfield development more attractive to developers than infill developments, particularly when the expense of new or upgraded transport infrastructure is transferred to government. However, the long-term impacts of poorly located growth on Riverina Murray communities are often underestimated, with associated costs mostly borne by the broader community.

While households may choose to live in greenfield areas for valid reasons, such as larger block sizes or more affordable housing, locating new housing outside established urban centres increases road safety risk, car dependency and poses challenges for public transport provision. To mitigate these impacts, speed limit reviews and the inclusion of segregated active transport infrastructure should be considered as part of planning for new housing in these areas. Having a range of transport options in place helps to alleviate the additional traffic on the local network.

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Wagga Wagga Northern Access Strategy

A heavy vehicle on Gobbagombalin Bridge

Population growth in Wagga Wagga is increasingly expanding north of the Murrumbidgee River, changing travel patterns, increasing travel distances, and placing additional pressure on key corridors such as the Sturt and Olympic highways.

In response to this growth, Transport is developing the Wagga Wagga Northern Access Strategy, which focuses on areas of predicted residential and industrial expansion and examines the impacts on the road network. The strategy will guide future planning priorities and investment opportunities to support a transport network that operates as safely and efficiently as possible along these key corridors.

The Wagga Wagga Northern Access Strategy aims to:

- support economic growth and future transport needs in and around Wagga Wagga while improving safety
- improve network resilience to incidents and disruptions
- plan for a high-performing, well-integrated and efficient transport network
- improve accessibility to transport infrastructure and services for all community members
- provide more reliable journeys and better-connected transport services across the city.

Transport is committed to working with local governments and stakeholders to deliver coordinated solutions that support safe, efficient and reliable journeys, while enabling Wagga Wagga's continued growth as a regional centre.

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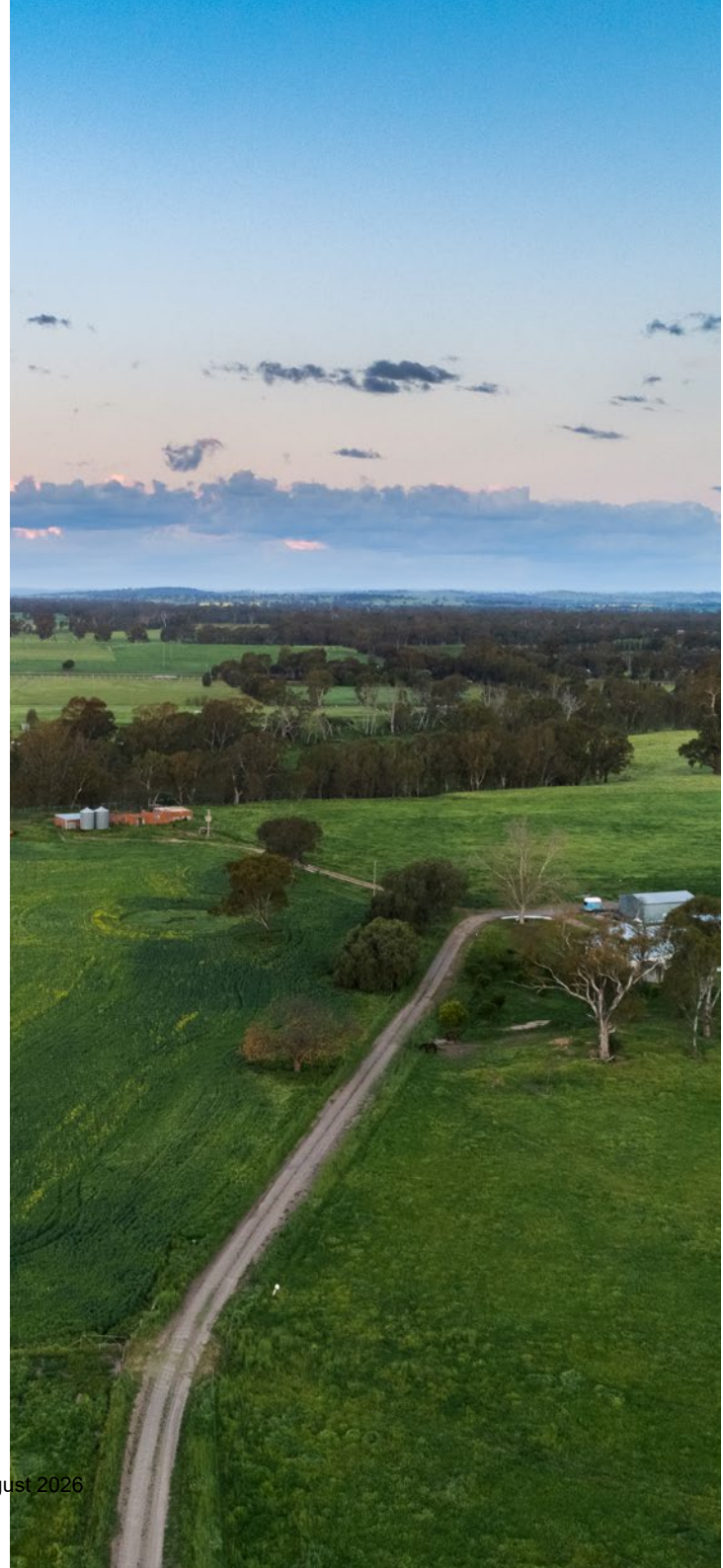
Alternatively, greenfield sites can be planned as a self-sufficient community that provides local services including schools, healthcare, businesses, recreation and social facilities, supported by high-quality public transport connections to regional centres. This approach helps to limit travel demand and reduce externalities.

In some towns within the region, fringe growth is occurring faster than upgrades to local infrastructure, services, and main streets, resulting in traffic congestion, movement conflicts, and impacts to public realm. In fast-growing fringe areas like Thurgoona in Albury, Gobbagombalin in Wagga Wagga and Estella in Moama, transport and place upgrades must keep pace to reduce reactive infrastructure responses.

Opportunities

Transport can support growing housing in existing population centres by:

- encouraging local destination and service provision in greenfield areas and improving active and public transport between greenfield and central areas
- implementing guidance such as Movement and Place Network Planning in Precincts in new greenfield developments to provide appropriate walking and cycling infrastructure to allow people to walk and cycle to nearby public transport stops which can then take them to key destinations without needing to drive
- reallocating carriageway space to enhance main streets with plazas, wider footpaths, outdoor seating, street trees, and active frontages, making centres more appealing to businesses and workers
- reducing through-traffic in town centres by reallocating road space to improve safety and amenity, while protecting the function of regional bypasses.



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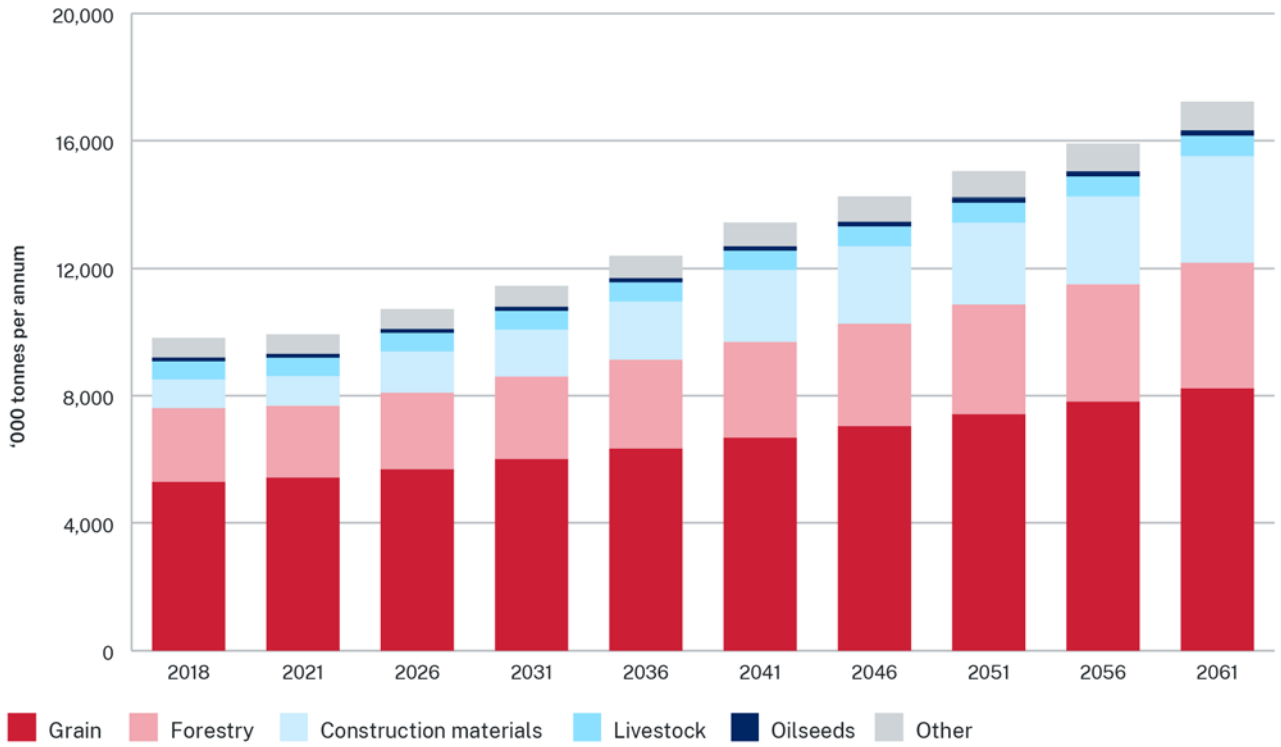
5.5 A thriving and diversifying economy

An efficient transport network to support a diversifying and growing economy, including tourism and freight movement.

As one of NSW's most significant primary production areas, the region's freight task is diverse and highly specialised. The freight network across the Riverina Murray region therefore faces a range of complex and evolving challenges. Agricultural producers require reliable farm gate access, while the forestry and mining sectors place added demand on local road infrastructure. Major national investments, such as the Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct (SAP) and the Albury Regional Jobs Precinct (RJP), are reshaping freight and logistics activity in the region.

The Riverina Murray region connects to key Australian ports and markets, including Sydney, Melbourne, west to Adelaide and Perth and north to Brisbane. Notably, over half of all freight movements remain within the region, underscoring the importance of local freight and connectivity. Figure 26 illustrates the total freight volume generated in Riverina Murray.



Source: Transport for NSW Strategic Freight Model (SFM) v47.

Figure 26. Riverina Murray total freight volume by sector

Corridor planning and implementation is required across the state, regional and local road and rail networks. This includes the Hume Highway Corridor Strategy, committed Inland Rail investments south of Parkes, and rail improvement programs such as Regional Network East West (RNEW), which will enhance connectivity between the Riverina Murray and key hubs such as Sydney and Melbourne.

Upcoming infrastructure upgrades will further elevate the strategic importance of the Wagga Wagga SAP, a logistics hub located within 12 hours of 80 per cent of Australia's population. Similarly, the Albury RJP is well positioned to leverage its proximity to the Hume Motorway.

Figure 27. Freight movements originating from the Riverina Murray 2021–2041

Freight volumes in the Riverina Murray are forecast to increase by nearly 30 per cent by 2041, with grain remaining the region's main export, as shown in Figure 27. Griffith, Albury–Murray, Wagga Wagga and the Lachlan Valley[21] SA3 areas will continue to be the most significant origin for freighted goods, moving goods within the region as well as to Sydney, Victoria and Queensland. As freight volumes increase, so too do the challenges of enabling efficient freight movement. To fully realise the benefits of current and planned investments, coordinated support and targeted action will be required to ensure the freight network remains efficient, resilient and fit for the future.

What we heard

- Freight movements are increasing and diversifying, with larger vehicles and emerging industries placing pressure on regional road networks and freight routes.
- The industrial precincts in Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Albury and Temora continue to have a strong offering of agribusiness, stock yards, manufacturing and logistics.
- Inland Rail will increase rail freight capacity across the region.
- The South West Renewable Energy Zone will see an increasing number of oversize and overmass heavy vehicle movements during construction.

- Forestry in the Snowy Valley and Greater Hume areas generates 5.5 to 5.7 million tonnes per annum and 260 truck movements a day into one facility. It contributes $3.83 billion a year to regional economic value and employs over 11,000 people.
- Connections to airports at Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Albury are important for business and tourism.
- Local regional roads have network gaps for higher mass limits. Bridges form constraints due to load limits.
- Holbrook is the midpoint between Sydney and Melbourne. Many trucks use back streets and service stations as changeover and rest points.
- Councils have a desire for fit-for-purpose rest stops, decoupling zones, and safer intersections to accommodate high productivity vehicles (HPVs) and local access needs.
- Councils emphasise the importance of local knowledge in identifying network pinch points, guiding investment and supporting long-term economic resilience in the region.
- Peak tourism occurs in summer particularly along the Murray River and in Kosciuszko National Park.

5.5.1 Enable a vibrant local economy

Throughout the Riverina Murray region, main streets serve as economic and social hubs that support local access to services and enable business activity. In many towns, however, these streets also function as key movement corridors, including nationally significant freight routes.

This dual role can divide communities, increase heavy vehicle traffic, and affect safety, noise, and overall amenity. The need to accommodate larger freight vehicles to support regional economic activity can conflict with local place and access functions, particularly in town centres, where creating safe, attractive, and people-friendly environments is a priority.

Treatments that prioritise traffic flow over local place and access outcomes can lead to increased traffic, noise, and pollution, which may undermine efforts to create vibrant, people-friendly town centres. At the same time, improving pedestrian access and local amenity, can constrain freight movement particularly for first-mile and last-mile freight.

Access to kerbside space for loading, deliveries, and service vehicles, particularly in main streets, is essential to support local businesses and the continued economic function of town centres. Balancing these competing demands presents an ongoing challenge for maintaining both economic function and place outcomes that support safe, accessible, and attractive public spaces while maintaining necessary heavy vehicle access to foster local economic growth and community wellbeing.

These challenges vary across towns, and addressing them requires tailored responses that reflect each town's unique context, balancing the efficient movement of freight and people with local liveability, wellbeing, and economic vitality.

Opportunities

Transport can support the local economy by:

- reallocating carriageway space to enhance main streets with plazas, wider footpaths, outdoor seating, street trees, and active frontages, making centres more appealing to businesses and workers.
- reducing through-traffic in town centres by reallocating road space to improve safety and amenity, while protecting the function of regional bypasses.

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5.5.2 Supporting primary industry and freight

Improve rail freight mode share by addressing key rail pinch points

As a critical 'first mile' in the supply chain, the focus in the Riverina Murray is on allowing the efficient flow of agricultural outputs between farmgate and intermodals to allow modal neutrality. To achieve this, Transport needs to ensure that connecting road infrastructure is fit for purpose and capable of accommodating appropriate vehicles, reducing bottlenecks and improving access to key terminals. Efficient freight infrastructure is critical for connecting regional producers to international, national and domestic markets. High productivity vehicles (HPVs) should be prioritised on key freight routes where they can deliver the greatest economic and safety benefits.

Rail can play a key role in moving containerised and bulk commodities, with increased rail freight delivering significant economic, environmental and social benefits. However, the current network does not provide the performance and reliability needed to make rail a more attractive option.

These performance and reliability constraints are reflected in a range of rail network pinch points, including long gaps between crossing loops on single track lines, steep grades, low weight limits on branch lines and limited connectivity to the Country Rail Network (CRN) and ARTC rail networks.

Infrastructure constraints further impact network performance and reliability, with infrastructure defects and poor track quality limiting available rail capacity. Removing speed restrictions where infrastructure allows can increase the number of available rail paths, supporting more efficient scheduling and improved service reliability.

Infrastructure such as the proposed Junee North Fork will enable direct access to key ports, including Port Botany and Port Kembla, without the need to shunt at Junee Yard. Accessing the appropriate tonne axle loads (TAL) limits to provide industry advantage will also support long-term growth and efficiency. Work underway within Transport to deliver a Regional Rail Plan will consider infrastructure improvements including TAL upgrades.

Case Study: Wumbulgul Rail Siding

The Wumbulgul Rail Siding project provides a new 1500-metre siding on the Country Regional Network between Junee and Griffith, enabling grain trains to load and unload clear of the main line. By removing loading operations that can occupy the network for up to eight hours, the siding alleviates a long-standing bottleneck and supports the shift of bulk grain movements from road to rail. This dedicated siding also removes the need for double-crewing during pull-push loading operations, improving safety and operational efficiency.

The project delivers broader benefits across the regional rail system. Reduced cycle times, by up to three hours for trains passing through Wumbulgul, create additional pathing capacity between Leeton and Griffith and support more reliable freight and passenger operations. The siding also enables potential changes to mid-week passenger timetables, including earlier arrivals into Griffith. By decreasing shunting movements in Griffith Yard, the project further enhances local amenity for the community.

Enhancing access to intermodal terminals

Enhancing intermodal connectivity provides a key opportunity to strengthen the integration of road freight with rail networks, supporting the rail freight task and promoting a more balanced, multi-modal freight system.

To optimise the movement of goods to, from and within the region, road and rail freight must operate as a seamless, integrated network. Intermodal precincts play a critical role in the efficient consolidation, storage and transfer of freight. Beyond improving the physical transfer of goods between road and rail, there is also a need to shift perceptions within what has traditionally been a truck-reliant industry. Highlighting the efficiency, reliability and cost benefits of rail transport will be essential to encouraging greater uptake and achieving long-term freight productivity gains.

The Riverina Murray region is served by 11 intermodal terminals, with key facilities located at Ettamogah within the Albury RJP and the Riverina Intermodal Freight and Logistics Hub in the Wagga Wagga SAP. Additionally, a new rail siding is being constructed at the WR Connect site at Wumbulgal in the Leeton Local Government Area.

Shifting freight from road to rail supports the shared priorities of freight operators, communities, and government. Key benefits include better safety outcomes, progress towards net zero emissions, lower transport costs, and reduced road congestion. The Riverina Murray region is well placed to capitalise on these opportunities.

Streamlining and harmonising heavy vehicle permit processes across jurisdictions will further support industry by providing clarity and consistency. Protecting freight access through strategic land-use planning is also critical, helping to safeguard existing corridors and prevent future constraints on terminal operations. In parallel, continued government engagement with freight supply chain operators must be strengthened.

Increase road freight productivity

Ensuring continuous access for HPVs along identified priority routes is essential. Current access disconnects often force freight operators to use couple/decouple sites, breaking larger vehicles into smaller combinations or use smaller combinations for the entirety of the task. This process reduces operational efficiency, adds costs, and limits the potential benefits of HPVs.

There is a need to improve access along the Riverina Murray's nationally significant corridors such as the Hume to meet Transport Heavy Vehicle Access Policy targets.

These improvements need to consider alignment to localised access to freight orientated developments within the region to support the safe, sustainable and productive movement of goods.

Case Study: Sheahan Bridge

The northbound Sheahan Bridge at Gundagai sits on the Hume Highway, one of Australia's most important freight corridors linking Sydney and Melbourne. With freight volumes forecast to exceed 15 million tonnes in each direction by 2040, the bridge is the final constraint preventing full access for High Productivity Vehicles under Performance Based Standards (PBS) Level 3. Its current structural limitations and need for regular essential maintenance present risks to freight efficiency, safety and the resilience of the broader network.

Replacing the northbound bridge will enable end-to-end PBS Level 3 access, delivering a nationally significant productivity uplift of up to 30 per cent. A new structure would provide a 100-year service life, meet contemporary safety standards and improve long-term reliability for freight operators. This investment strengthens a key national corridor and supports the safe, efficient movement of goods across the country.

Sheahan Bridge over the Murrumbidgee River

Sustainable Heavy Vehicle Access on Local Roads

Maintenance of the public road network is the responsibility of Transport for state roads and local councils for regional and local roads. While many councils have opened their local networks to HPVs, access remains fragmented because not all councils have provided access.

Increased use of heavier vehicles places additional wear and tear on roads, creating pressures on council maintenance budgets. Balancing access for HPVs with available resources and maintenance requirements is critical to sustaining local infrastructure. This will require improved use of the network's capability and capacity to accommodate vehicles that are best suited to the freight task on the existing network, for example, targeting PBS 3 access for the Hume Highway and Olympic Highway. By responding to these opportunities, the region can improve connectivity and support the ongoing development of its vital industries.

These pressures are compounded by ongoing concerns with heavy vehicle weight compliance. In many cases, councils have limited visibility of what operators are using their local road network for. This challenge is particularly evident where operators seek permits to use local roads as through-routes, and councils have no practical mechanism to confirm or enforce whether they have a destination on the requested route.

The limitations of funding sources such as only allowing like-for-like replacements and the lack of coordination between funds for access, resilience, maintenance, safety, and other needs often lead councils and Transport to replace damaged infrastructure with identical versions.

This can occur even when the original infrastructure's standard, design, location, or quality is no longer suitable for current freight needs.

Case Study: The Blue Cut Bridge at Bombowlee Creek Road

Following the 2019–20 bushfires, wood fibre for major processors in Tumbarumba and Tumut is now primarily sourced from Bondo State Forest, requiring at least 500,000 tonnes of logs per year to cross a single, constrained bridge. The bridge's narrow width and steep, winding approaches create significant safety risks for heavy vehicles and general road users, despite operators coordinating movements. Its inability to safely accommodate dual-lane traffic heightens the risk of conflicts, particularly for motorists unfamiliar with local freight activity.

The bridge is also not accredited for Higher Mass Limits, forcing trucks to operate under capacity and increasing the number of required vehicle movements. This results in reduced freight efficiency, higher transport costs and additional pressure on the surrounding road network. Addressing these constraints would improve safety, enable optimal loading, reduce truck movements, and strengthen the reliability of the regional fibre supply chain.

Logging trucks at Doctors Hill

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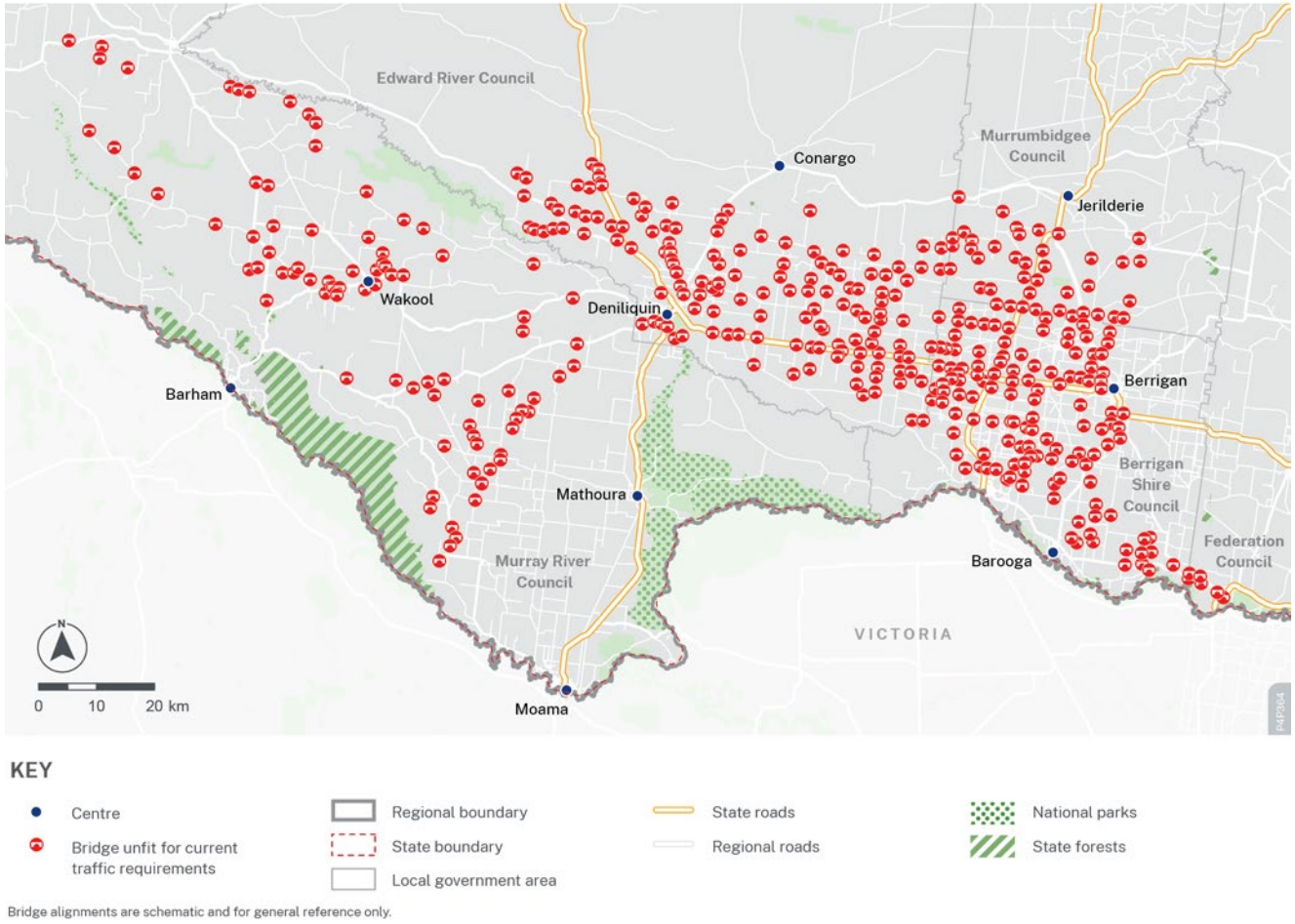


Figure 28. Riverina Murray bridges unfit for current traffic requirements

This region contains a significantly higher number of culverts than other parts of NSW, reflecting the extensive irrigation infrastructure in the area. As culverts function similarly to small bridges, they can present constraints for vehicle movements, particularly for heavy freight vehicles. Many culverts within the Murray Irrigation Scheme were constructed in the 1940s and 1950s and no longer meet contemporary freight requirements, as shown in Figure 28. Almost 75 per cent of culverts are unable to support Gross Vehicle Mass limits as of 2021, including those located on non-state roads. Assessing access also places a substantial burden on councils, which must evaluate each structure against individual vehicle combinations, resulting in considerable administrative effort.

Key constraints affecting freight include a Murrumbidgee Irrigation culvert on Irrigation Way (BN5664) west of Narrandera that restricts access for A-Double road trains and larger combinations. On the Riverina Highway east of Savernake, freight access is limited due to combined constraints from a railway level crossing and West Corurgan Irrigation culverts. These culvert-related limitations significantly reduce freight efficiency and restrict the movement of higher-productivity vehicles across the region.

Another key constraint is the current northbound Hume Highway bridge over the Murrumbidgee River at Gundagai, which was built in 1977. It limits how some types of PBS vehicles use the route. Opportunities to improve freight movement in the Riverina Murray region lie in the strategic enhancement of transport infrastructure. For example, technology has helped facilitate an innovative asset management approach to improve access northbound on the Hume Highway over Sheahan Bridge from 68.5 tonnes to 85 tonnes, while more permanent infrastructure investigations are undertaken.[22]

Supporting the energy transition

The NSW Government is firmly committed to achieving Net Zero emissions within the region and across NSW. Two of Transport's key focuses are on facilitating the construction of South West REZ near Hay and Snowy Hydro 2.0 in the Snowy Mountains. The construction and ongoing maintenance of REZ and Snowy Hydro infrastructure will require the transport of large volumes of renewable energy components, such as wind turbine components and transformers for

22 Transport for NSW, Sheahan Bridge Upgrade 2025

transmission. These deliveries will predominantly be conducted using oversize and overmass (OSOM) vehicles departing from port facilities.

At this stage, the most suitable port for these OSOM movements for the South West REZ is yet to be finalised, with options under consideration including ports in NSW, Victoria, and South Australia. Transport is actively identifying and planning necessary transport and logistics upgrades to support the freight demands of emerging industries.

Many of the OSOM movements for Snowy Hydro 2.0 will originate from outside the region, on the eastern side. However, traffic forecasts for the project still indicate a significant increase in heavy vehicle and OSOM traffic through Tumut and surrounding Snowy Valleys townships.

Collaboration with EnergyCo, industry, local government, federal and State agencies and representative groups, is a key part of this process. Through these partnerships, Transport will gain a comprehensive understanding of OSOM movement requirements and explore cross-border opportunities to facilitate the ongoing operations of renewable energy projects. Throughout this planning and implementation, minimising impacts on local communities remains a key priority.

Opportunities

- Improving rail freight mode share by addressing key network pinch points and improving reliability across the rail network.
- Improving first- and last-mile connectivity and integration between road and rail to support efficient, seamless multimodal freight movement and access to intermodal terminals.
- Enabling high productivity vehicle (HPV) access on priority freight routes to improve safety and freight efficiency outcomes.
- Streamlining and harmonising heavy vehicle access and permit processes across jurisdictions to provide greater consistency and certainty for industry.
- Transport can support primary industries and freight by supporting the construction and maintenance of renewable energy projects, including in the South West REZ, by enabling transport of key components.

Zero Emission Bus
in Riverina Murray region

5.5.3 Tourism and the Visitor Economy

Tourism is a vital contributor to the Riverina Murray economy, supporting a wide range of industries including accommodation and food services, retail, arts, and recreation. The region's visitor economy is shaped by its diverse natural landscapes, renowned food and wine experiences, and strong cultural heritage.

Key attractions include the iconic Murray River and its extensive waterways, acclaimed food and wine regions such as Griffith, major cultural and sporting events in centres like Albury and Wagga Wagga, as well as significant natural assets including the Murrumbidgee Valley and Kosciuszko National Parks. These draw a mix of domestic and international visitors, enhancing the region's profile as a premier tourism destination.

Despite its strengths, the Riverina Murray tourism demand is highly seasonal, with peak periods placing considerable pressure on transport infrastructure, town centres, and local services. Limited public transport options and reliance on private vehicles restrict visitor mobility in many areas. Issues such as road access, wayfinding, and parking capacity around key attractions can also impact visitor experience and safety. On top of the limited housing available for residents, in recent times with the increasing presence of the renewable energy industry in the region, tourism accommodation has been leased longterm to businesses. Hotels, motels, and other temporary accommodation are being booked for years in advance to house the temporary workforce.

This is expected to put pressure on the existing tourism sector in the coming years, with ageing accommodation becoming less attractive to visitors.

First-time visitors to the region often experience wayfinding difficulties. This can result in drivers following maps or GPS directions onto roads that are less safe, rather than using parallel roads that may be more appropriate. Limited mobile network coverage, variable road conditions, and emergency situations or detours can compound these challenges, affecting both visitor safety and satisfaction.

The growth of the tourism sector places increasing demand on local services and infrastructure. Enhancing connectivity through sustainable transport options presents an opportunity to support tourism development while reducing pressure on existing transport networks.

Addressing these challenges will require coordinated investment in transport access, signage, parking, and active transport links, alongside strategic planning for seasonal visitor peaks and a commitment to sustainable tourism practices. Strengthening connections between regional centres and iconic destinations will help ensure the Riverina Murray continues to flourish as a vibrant tourism region, while preserving the liveability and character of its local communities.

Cycle tourism delivers a wide range of economic and social benefits to communities and encourages travel to smaller towns and rural regions, spreading tourism benefits beyond major centres. Rail trails and recreational bike paths can also improve local amenity for local residents, enhancing liveability and supporting healthy lifestyles. Notable initiatives contributing to this growth include the Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail, which attracts visitors seeking active holidays, and the popularity of wine tours around Griffith. The Gears and Beers festival attracts around 2500 participants and visitors to Wagga Wagga each year, drawing cyclists and spectators from across NSW and interstate.

Major events such as Murrumbidgee Turf Club race days, and the Deniliquin Ute Muster further boost demand for public transport and services. Lake Albert in Wagga Wagga also remains a key recreational asset supporting the visitor economy.

Opportunities

Transport can support tourism through:

- implementing service timing and frequency improvements to NSW TrainLink train and coach services to make travel by train and coach into and around the region more attractive and useful for visitors
- aligning bus service times with flight arrival times at regional airports
- identifying opportunities for improved transport connections between regional centres and iconic destinations such as Murrumbidgee Valley and Kosciuszko National Park
- supporting the development of cycle tourism through targeted investment in cycling infrastructure and events, enhancing regional connectivity and attracting visitors to local centres and rural communities.

This is Page No 243 of the Business Paper presented Ordinary Meeting of Council 25th August 2026

5.6 A safe transport network working towards zero trauma

Reduce fatal and serious injuries on the transport network and address safety concerns for active and public transport passengers

Transport is committed to achieving zero trauma on the road network by 2050 and zero trauma on waterways by 2056. The NSW Government has adopted the internationally recognised Safe Systems approach to transport safety. This approach recognises that users and those who design, maintain and regulate the transport network share responsibility for reducing risk. It acknowledges that people make mistakes and machines can fail. It helps users reduce both the risk of incidents and the consequences when they occur.

A safe transportation network is vital for mobility across the Riverina Murray region. Transport's 2026 Road Safety Action Plan targets reducing fatalities on NSW roads by 50 per cent and serious injuries by 30 per cent by 2030 as part of the broader vision to eliminate road trauma by 2050. Transport's Maritime Safety Plan 2026 seeks to reduce waterway fatalities and serious injuries by 30 per cent by 2026, based on 2019–2021 average levels.

Road conditions, speeds, roadside hazards and the limited public transport options contribute to a greater risk and severity of a crash in regional areas. The Towards Zero Safer Roads Program is addressing key contributors to road fatalities and serious injuries on country roads. It is delivering route-based, mass action road safety treatments and targeted crash location safety treatments along with enforcement and education programs.

The NSW Government has adopted the internationally recognised safe systems approach to transport safety. This approach recognises that users and those who design, maintain and regulate the transport network share responsibility for reducing risk. It acknowledges that people make mistakes and assists users in reducing both the risk of incidents and the consequences when they occur.

What we heard

- It is difficult turning right on highway intersections where there is a 100 or 110 km/h speed limit.
- There are road safety concerns at level crossings, particularly in Wagga Wagga and Table Top with increasing frequency from inland rail freight.
- There are concerns about repair of local roads being damaged by through traffic to maintain a safe environment.
- Bridges can be too narrow for two-way traffic, and do not provide a safe connection for pedestrians and cyclists due to high-speed traffic.
- There is a lack of consistency on bridge funding along the Murray River.
- There is a low level of compliance on heavy vehicle detours, which can make movement between pedestrians, cars and heavy vehicles dangerous in town centres like Temora.
- Roads that are the trunk route for forestry, agriculture and Snowy 2.0 are difficult to navigate with lack of overtaking lanes and the driver behaviour implications of this.
- There is a dangerous road crossing at Hume Highway and Table Top Road north of Albury.
- There is a need for well-spaced and heavy vehicle rest stops with appropriate facilities.
- We need to connect key destinations, future infrastructure and land releases with an active transport option.
- Overtaking lanes are an important safety measure to provide space for safe passing and minimise conflicts between vehicles travelling at different speeds.

5.6.1 Improve the safety of all transport modes in town centres and edges

Across the region's road network, there were 146 people killed and 1022 seriously injured between 2020 and 2024.[23] These incidents occurred across a mix of urban centres, urban fringe environments and rural areas.

Town centres face road safety challenges due to the mix of pedestrians, bicycle riders, motorbike riders, local traffic, and heavy vehicles. Between 2020 and 2024, there were 42 pedestrians and 43 pedal cyclists who were killed or seriously injured in a crash. Vulnerable road users, including e-micromobility users and motorcyclists, are at greater risk due to speed differences and lack of protection. Unsafe driving manoeuvres along highways that are main streets include crossing centre lines to complete turns, vehicles being wider than the road width, navigating roundabouts and impacting power lines. As a result, state road intersections will be prioritised for improved layout and operation.

Speed is the biggest contributor to crash severity on NSW roads. As shown in Figure 29, in a crash between a pedestrian and a car travelling at 50 km/h, there is only a 10 per cent chance that the pedestrian will survive the crash. Survival rates improve dramatically as vehicle speed declines, with 60 per cent of pedestrians surviving when the car is travelling at 40 km/h and 90 per cent of pedestrians surviving when the car is travelling at 30 km/h.[24]

Measures like lowering speed limits in town centres, redesigning road carriageways and reallocating road space where feasible can help reduce crash severity and reduce overall traffic volumes. Introducing intersections and roundabouts with zebra crossings with signage can act as visual cues for drivers to slow down whilst also offering safer crossing opportunities for vulnerable road users. Additionally, the potential to divert heavy vehicles away from town centres can warrant further investigation. This would involve assessing the trade-offs between freight efficiency, such as travel time savings, and the benefits to town centre safety and amenity, weighed against the cost of constructing alternate routes or implementing additional safety measures within urban zones.

Figure 29. Speed and pedestrian survivability[25]

Bus travelling through Griffith city centre

23 NSW Crash Data 2020–2024
24 Austroads, Balance between Harm Reduction and Mobility in Setting Speed Limits: A feasibility study (2025)
25 NSW Centre for Road Safety www.transport.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety

Level crossings pose significant risks on the road network as they bring vehicles, pedestrians and trains into direct conflict. Within town centres, level crossings do not have safe crossing facilities such as a footpath for pedestrians. When trains are passing, traffic can build which becomes especially dangerous when vehicles are at a standstill on high-speed highways. Collisions can occur when drivers or pedestrians ignore warning signals, misjudge a trains speed, have long vehicle lengths, a mechanical failure or become trapped on the tracks due to congestion. To reduce these risks, several measures can be implemented such as installing automatic barriers with flashing lights, improving visibility through clear signage and vegetation control. Where traffic volumes are high, level crossings can be replaced with bridges or underpasses to eliminate the hazard. Public awareness campaigns and driver education also play a key role in encouraging safer behaviour around level crossings.[26]

Urban fringe areas on the outskirts of towns experience relatively high traffic volumes from commuters and people travelling between urban centres. These zones serve as transitional areas between rural and urban environments,. However, the risk of road trauma appears higher on the outskirts of some centres, such as Griffith, compared to large regional cities such as Albury and Wagga Wagga. This suggests that drivers may encounter smaller and medium sized urban areas more suddenly, with fewer cues to moderate speed and adjust driving behaviour. Strengthening transition zones through place-based design, speed management and gateway tretaments could help reduce crash risk and create a safer environment for local communities.

Opportunities

Transport can improve safety for all road users in population centres and urban fringe areas by:

- delivering cost-effective road safety initiatives, including reducing speed limits, reallocating carriageway space, and delivering convenient and connected walking infrastructure and separated bicycle facilities on state and regional roads in population centres
- delivering cost-effective and consistent slower speed transition zones around population centres to address crashes on the edge of centres
- identifying opportunities for population centre bypasses to reduce trauma on state and regional roads in population centres.

Level crossing over Olympic Highway, Junee

Case Study – $25 million Hume Highway upgrade at Table Top.

As part of the SRITP, the public was able to access the Have Your Say portal to submit feedback during the early engagement phase. Transport for NSW has received about 80 pins in relation to the Hume Highway intersections with Burma Road and Tynan Road, approximately 14 kilometres north of Albury. On average, about 14,000 vehicles travel along this section of the highway each day, which includes about 5000 heavy vehicles and 9000 light vehicles.

This plan recognises the difficult conditions road users face when navigating this intersection. On 12 December 2025, the NSW Government announced $25 million for major work on the Hume Highway. Road surface upgrades are being delivered in three stages, including improved road surfacing, upgraded drainage and new safety barriers along a three-kilometre stretch of the Hume. The first stage of this work has now been completed. These upgrades will reduce ongoing maintenance costs and provide motorists with a smoother and safer journey.

26 Ministerial Media Release, Delivering Better Roads for Regional NSW – Major work to start on $25 million Hume Highway upgrade at Table Top, Minister for Roads/Minister for Regional NSW (12 Dec 2025)

5.6.2 Reduce road trauma on regional highways by addressing road configuration and behavioural factors in crashes

The state road network forms the backbone of travel within the Riverina Murray region, supporting vital transport and economic activity across long distances. Road safety is a pressing concern due to the region's mix of high-speed highways, rural roads, and increasing traffic from the growth in population, agriculture, forestry and tourism. Visitors to the region can be unfamiliar with the level of heavy vehicles on the network and combined with the uptick in caravan and RV use, particularly in the Snowy Valley region, can increase the frequency of near misses and risky driving manoeuvres. Seasonal fog and unmanaged roadside vegetation can impair visibility, compounding risks for road users.

As a result of the expansive nature of the region, long travel times for emergency services means that when crashes do occur, victims may wait longer for critical care, especially when the nearest hospital or trauma centre is hours away, highlighting the need for safer regional highways. Wait time can be prolonged if there are blackspots in reception which can interfere with contacting emergency services.

Crash data from 2020–2024 shows a concentration of serious incidents near eastern population centres and along the Newell, Hume, Sturt and Riverina highways. Almost half of crashes within the region are run-off road crashes, followed by head-on and rear-ends, as shown in Figure 30. Unique to the region is the high number of bridges and culverts especially within the Murrumbidgee and Murray River irrigation areas. Increasing awareness upon approaching a bridge or irrigation canal through improving site stopping distances and safety barrier protection for nearby intersections can reduce crashes with road infrastructure. The region's lack of regular overtaking lanes, unsafe merges onto highways and narrow roads for the size of vehicles, all contribute to the risks associated with driving on the network.

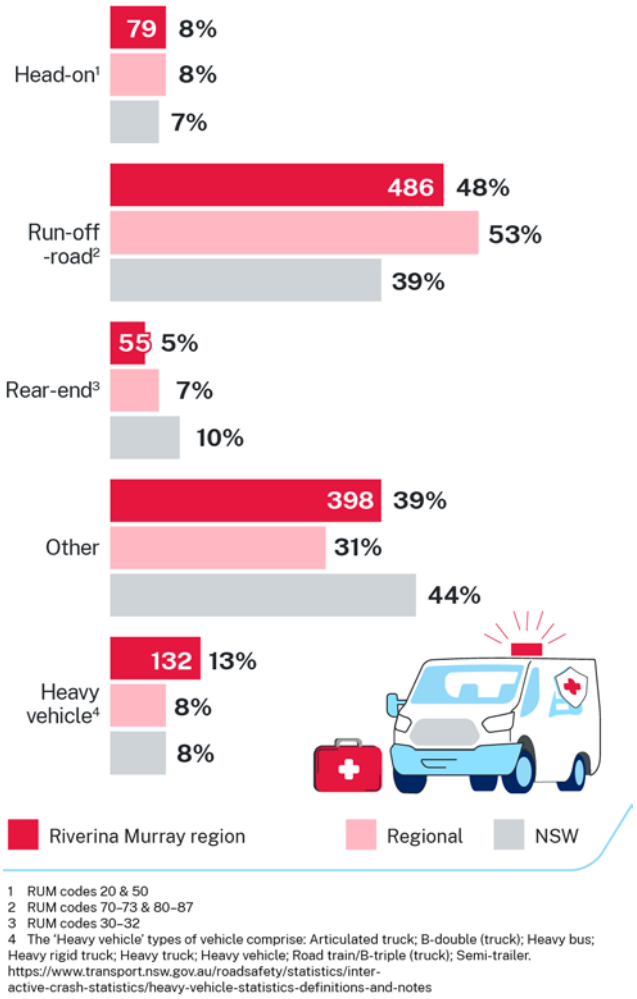


Figure 30. Riverina Murray FSI crash comparisons

Over half (54 per cent) of serious crashes in Riverina Murray occurred on roads with speed limits of 90km/h and above, significantly higher than the regional NSW average of 35 per cent which highlights the dangers of long, high speed stretches. Speeding, drink driving and not wearing a seatbelt, driving while fatigued and unsafe overtaking manoeuvres are all behavioural choices that increase the risk of serious crashes (see Figure 31). Education and advocacy campaigns help to reduce the prevalence of these types of driving choices and trauma on NSW roads.

The locations of light vehicle rest areas can be found on Transport's interactive rest areas map which highlights the amenities found at different rest areas. Travelling families can plan their trip around rest areas with facilities such as accessible toilets, playgrounds, picnic tables and food.

	Speeding[1]	Tired drivers and riders[2]	Drink driving[3]	Seatbelt non-usage[4]	Illicit drugs present
All regional NSW	43%	21%	19%	20%	24%
Riverina Murray	**45%**	**21%**	**25%**	**23%**	**19%**

1 Speeding is recorded as a contributing factor in a crash if at least one motor vehicle in the crash was speeding.
2 Fatigue is recorded as a contributing factor if at least one motor vehicle controller in a road crash was fatigued.
3 Determined by whether any of the vehicle drivers or riders in the crash had an illegal level of alcohol.
4 Vehicle occupant fatalities.

Source: Transport for NSW, 2024

Figure 31. Behavioural factors in the Riverina Murray

Opportunities:

To improve safety on the rural road network, Transport will continue to:

- reduce the frequency and severity of crashes on high-speed rural roads through the delivery of safety treatments, including audio-tactile line markings, wide centre-line treatments, and crash barriers, and targeted upgrades to intersections through the Towards Zero Safer Roads Program
- reduce behaviour-related crashes through education and advocacy campaigns focused on speeding, fatigue and driving under the influence.

Motorcyclist besides Khancoban Pondage, Snowy Mountains © Destination NSW

5.6.3 Heavy vehicles in serious crashes in the region

Crashes involving heavy vehicles account for 10 per cent of serious incidents, above the regional NSW average of eight per cent, and are concentrated along national freight routes such as the Hume, Newell and Sturt Highways and around key centres such as Wagga Wagga and Albury. Between 2020 and 2024, there were 132 serious crashes involving heavy vehicles, killing 35 and seriously injuring 97.

Whilst multi-vehicle crashes often result in greater trauma, 43 per cent of heavy vehicle serious crashes were single vehicle incidents. Most occurred when the heavy vehicle left the road on a curve (53 per cent), or on a straight section (39 per cent), pointing to issues with driver control, vehicle stability, speed management and fatigue. Speeding contributed to 47 per cent of single heavy vehicle crashes compared to 24 per cent across NSW, and 30 per cent of all heavy vehicle serious crashes compared to 16 per cent Statewide. Fatigue was a factor in 20 per cent of all heavy vehicle crashes, compared to eight per cent across NSW.

These findings highlight the need to prioritise run-off-road and cross-over prevention, speed management, and fatigue mitigation to reduce heavy vehicle crash severity and frequency.

One of the focus areas to address heavy vehicle crash risk is to improve the amenity of rest stops to manage fatigue and personal welfare. There are a high concentration of heavy vehicle rest stops along the National Land Transport Network. Figure 32 shows heavy vehicle rest stops in the Riverina Murray.

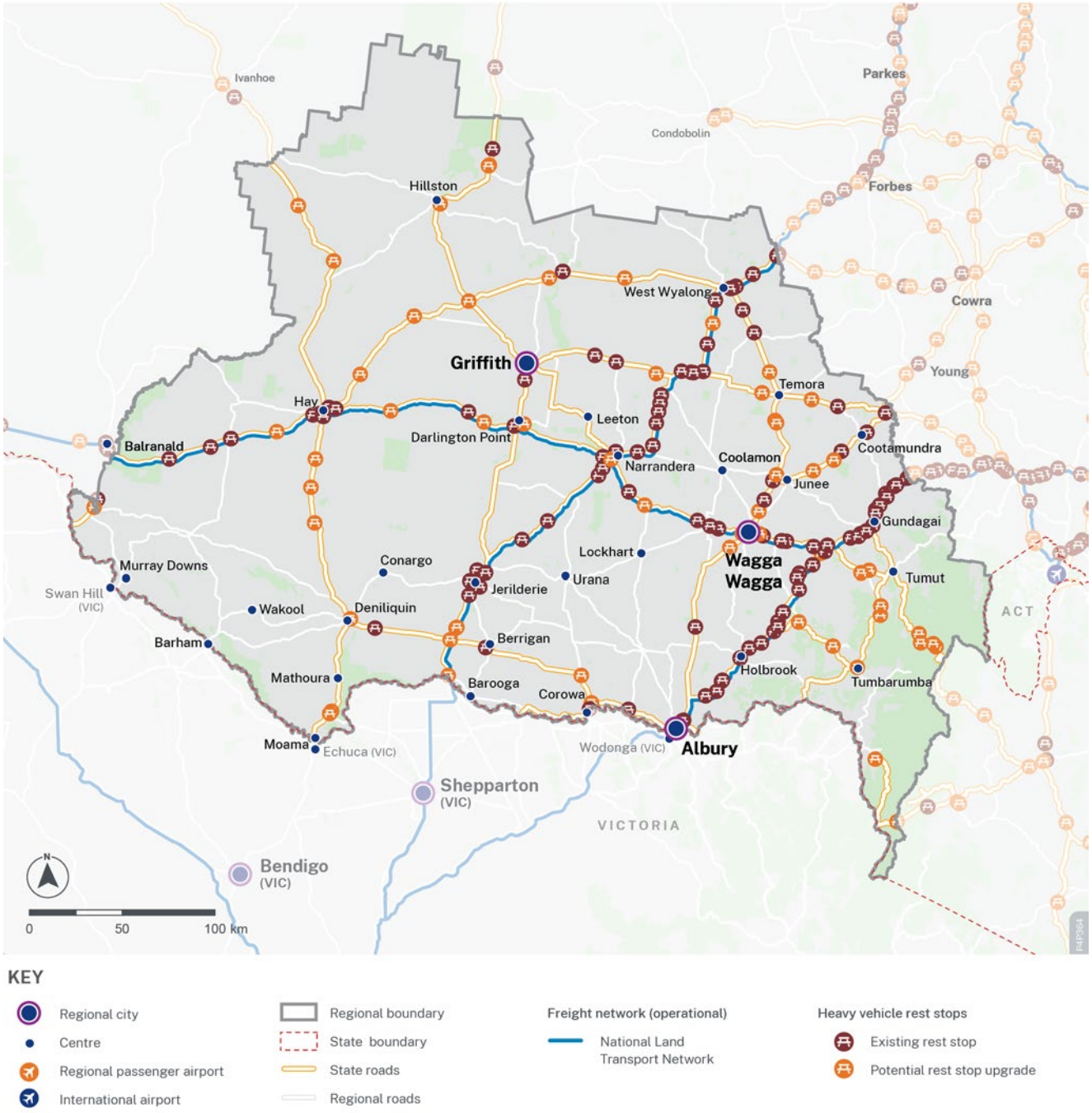


Figure 32 Riverina Murray heavy vehicle rest stops

At a minimum, major rest areas should be located at 100-kilometre intervals, on both sides of the road. Smaller existing stops with poorer facilities can be improved to have better functionality to accommodate longer vehicles, more vehicles and have facilities for uncoupling, toilets, showers and food. Gaps in heavy vehicle rest areas have been identified on the Cobb Highway, Sturt Highway, Kidman Way and Snowy Mountains Highway corridor. Where there is a lack of appropriate rest stops, drivers use the local service station and park on the road shoulder as an informal rest stop option which is not only dangerous but also not fit for purpose.

In-vehicle safety technologies have the potential to significantly reduce the frequency of run-off-road serious crashes in line with fleet renewal. However, commercial freight companies often face barriers to adopting new heavy vehicle safety technologies, including the high upfront cost of fleet renewal, limited downtime for vehicle upgrades, and uncertainty about the return on investment. Addressing these challenges through targeted incentives, regulatory support, and industry education could encourage faster uptake of modern safety systems and improve overall fleet safety performance.

Importantly, crashes on major highways in the region often cause disruption via delays and long detours due to limited alternative routes, disrupting freight movement and isolating communities. These detours can also strain alternative routes not designed for high traffic volumes, compounding safety risks. Additionally, as heavy vehicles transition towards being longer and wider, road widening improvements can be considered to increase safety and freight efficiency. Strengthening the resilience of the network through safety upgrades, better incident response and infrastructure planning is critical to maintaining connectivity and reducing the broader impact of road trauma.

Opportunities

Transport can help reduce heavy vehicle crashes by:

- increasing the availability, accessibility and quality of heavy vehicle rest stops, in collaboration with the road freight industry, through the Heavy Vehicle Rest Stop Improvement Program, targeting fatigue-related heavy vehicle crashes
- identifying, in collaboration with freight operators, opportunities to increase the speed of fleet turnover to support the uptake of improved in-vehicle safety technologies for heavy vehicle fleets.

Heavy vehicle on Sturt Highway travelling past intersection with Carrathool Road

5.6.4 Improve water safety awareness and behaviour along rivers

The Riverina Murray region is renowned for its extensive network of rivers, creeks, lakes and dams. The most well-known rivers are the Murray River along the border of NSW and Victoria and the Murrumbidgee River which runs from the Snowy Mountains before merging with the Murray River near Balranald. These waterways offer an abundance of recreational water-based activities such as swimming, boating and fishing.

Managing the State's waterways is crucial to ensuring their sustainability and the safety of people on the water. Transport recently updated the Maritime Safety Plan 2026, which outlines the strategic direction for maritime safety for the next four years. The plan aims to achieve zero fatalities and serious injuries on NSW waterways by 2056. It focuses on four priority areas:[27]

- safer lifejacket wear and equipment
- safer boating through technology
- safer waterway access and infrastructure
- growing our safety culture together.

Addressing these challenges is vital to preventing accidents and ensuring compliance with safety regulations as the region's popularity grows.

Furthermore, education on vital water safety skills and knowledge is essential to ensure all community members can enjoy the water safely. This is important for communities along both sides of the Murray River where NSW boating rules apply.

NSW regulations include the requirement to carry safety equipment on board, always wearing a lifejacket, being licensed to drive a personal watercraft such as a jet ski and only using such craft between sunrise and sunset. Many Victorian boaters may not be completely aware of NSW boating safety regulations and therefore could unknowingly be doing the wrong thing. Increasing awareness across state borders through education and signage ensures the best possible safety outcome.

There are 13 private mooring sites within the region which allows vessel owners to fasten their vessel to a buoy, marina berth or jetty.[28]

Transport has developed a Moorings Action Plan to guide policy and operational changes with the goal of fostering sustainable, safe and environmentally friendly boating and mooring practices. There are six core focus areas of the Moorings Action Plan:

- publication of best practice guidance for mooring apparatus
- effective management of end-of-life vessels
- research and guidelines on environmentally friendly moorings
- continued review and modernisation of mooring management
- ensuring certainty about mooring authorisation and planning pathways
- improving mooring management in marine parks.

Opportunities

Opportunities to improve safety on the Riverina Murray waterways include:

- improving education and awareness of key safety behaviours, such as lifejacket wear and safe speed and distance, to ensure all community members can enjoy the water safely
- addressing safety challenges and access to waterways in the region through current and future iterations of the Transports Maritime Safety Plan and the Maritime Infrastructure Plan.

Kayaking on Lake Mulwala © Destination NSW

27 Transport for NSW, Maritime Safety Plan 2026
28 Transport for NSW, Private Moorings Map available at: maps.transport.nsw.gov.au/egeomap/#/private-moorings

5.7 Reliable and resilient networks

Reduce the impact of transport network shocks and stresses to service and network interruptions and proactively plan for future impacts

Key freight and passenger routes that traverse the region – linking the Riverina Murray with South Australia, Victoria and the rest of NSW – are often constrained by topography, flood risk, and limited river crossings, making route redundancy and infrastructure durability critical.

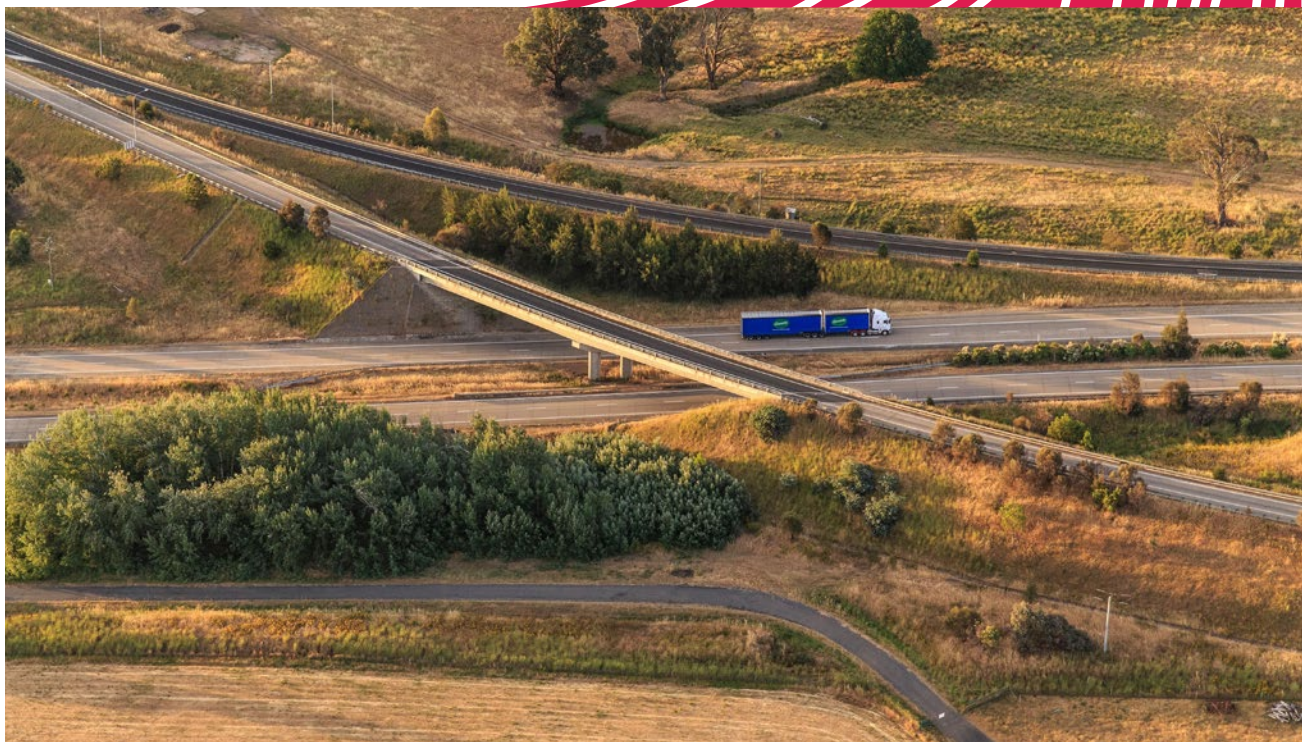
Projected climate change is expected to intensify these constraints. By 2050, the region is forecast to experience more days over 35°C, fewer cold nights, drier springs, and more frequent severe fire weather and storm events.[29] These forecast changes can affect transport assets in multiple ways, including heat-related pavement and rail stress, storm and flood damage and increased disruptions from bushfires. These impacts are particularly significant for freight reliability, emergency access, and regional connectivity, especially where infrastructure is already ageing or exposed.

Figure 33. Riverina Murray road hazards and delays

29 NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Riverina Murray Climate Change Snapshot 2024

HAY SHIRE COUNCIL

While planned disruptions can be anticipated and prepared for in advance, unplanned disruptions require a dynamic, real-time response, often leading to significant costs for response, maintenance, and network improvements. With travel on the Riverina Murray transport network increasing due to population growth, and maintenance costs rising as assets age, increased network resilience that is better able to handle unplanned disruptions is critical. Figure 33 shows roads connecting to Wagga Wagga, West Wyalong and Griffith suffer most disruption in the region.



Freight vehicle passing the Hume and Sturt Highway interchange

What we heard

- All roads within the Murray and Murrumbidgee Floodplain Management areas are vulnerable to disruption during extreme rain events.
- Newell Highway, Hume Highway and Gobbagombalin Bridge are identified as key corridors that impact the region during incidents, with the Newell Highway having no alternative routes.
- Alternative routes to main roads need to be at a quality standard where they are able to withstand extra traffic, particularly heavy vehicles. For example,existing culverts can have 12-tonne load but need to serve 40-tonne trucks.
- During flooding of the Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers and their tributaries, Burley Griffin Way becomes the east-west route, and Kidman Way becomes the north-south route.
- Designated alternative routes like Reas Lane at Narrandera should consider emergency and heavy vehicles so they remain safe and available during disruptions.
- Co-ordinated responses between road owners to flooding and other extreme weather events is necessary to support reliability and maintain road connection.

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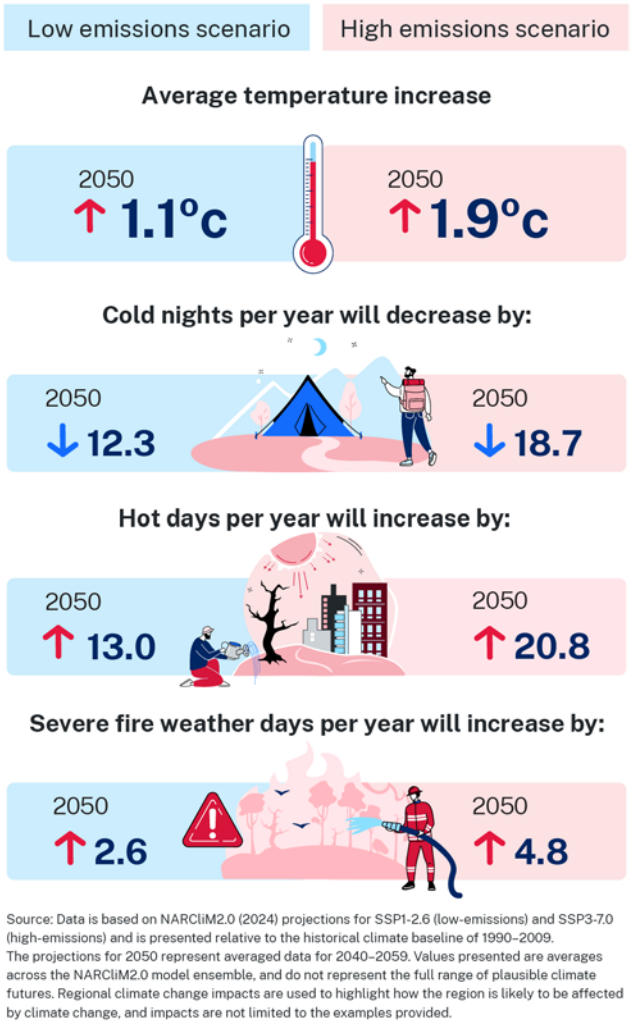
5.7.1 Vulnerability to weather events and network redundancy

The Riverina Murray transport network remains highly susceptible to disruption. Natural disasters such as bushfires and floods, combined with the increasing impacts of climate change, frequently sever access to communities, disrupt freight and passenger movements and impact economic activity across the region. Road closures also limit emergency services access, creating significant risks to community safety.

The region's topography and limited redundancy in the road and rail networks exacerbate these risks. In many areas, there are no viable alternative routes, meaning a single closure can add hours of additional travel time, particularly in remote locations. As heavy vehicles are already constrained in their available routes due to weight or size restrictions, they are often forced to take lengthy detours during disruption events.

The scale of vulnerability and reliance on our limited transport corridors was highlighted during the catastrophic bushfires of 2019–20 in Snowy Valleys and Greater Hume LGAs, as well as the widespread flooding events in 2022. The events forced the closure of the Newell and Sturt Highways, both key arterial roads. During the 2022 floods, the value of reliable infrastructure was demonstrated by the Gobbagombalin Bridge, which provided critical flood free access to northern Wagga Wagga during the seven-week closure of the Sturt Highway. In the East, routes for crossing the Great Dividing Range are limited, and roads such as the Snowy Mountains Highway are consequently vulnerable to disruption from hazards including bushfire and landslide events.



Source: Data is based on NARCliM2.0 (2024) projections for SSP1-2.6 (low-emissions) and SSP3-7.0 (high-emissions) and is presented relative to the historical climate baseline of 1990–2009. The projections for 2050 represent averaged data for 2040–2059. Values presented are averages across the NARCliM2.0 model ensemble, and do not represent the full range of plausible climate futures. Regional climate change impacts are used to highlight how the region is likely to be affected by climate change, and impacts are not limited to the examples provided.

Figure 34. Riverina Murray projected climate change

As the climate continues to change, the Riverina Murray is projected to experience temperature increases of 1.9°C (see Figure 34), more frequent extreme heat days, and heightened risks of flooding and bushfire. These changes will place increasing pressure on already ageing infrastructure. Strengthening resilience will therefore require a coordinated, multi-level response to disruption management, better contingency planning for detour routes, and the adoption of new technologies to provide real-time closure and incident information. Also, lessons learned from recent severe events must be embedded into planning to reduce future vulnerabilities and improve overall network resilience.

Opportunities

Transport can address the vulnerability of critical transport network assets and services in the region by:

- improving incident management, response times and decision-making during emergencies, and working with agencies to ensure efforts are coordinated
- ensuring the wider distribution of real-time information on disruptions to the transport network to enable customers to make timely and informed decisions about their travel
- strengthening Transport's engineering expertise to provide councils support in their response to damaged transport infrastructure following severe weather events or natural hazards
- investing in preparedness and prevention to reduce spending after natural hazards.

Newell Highway flood mitigation – West Wyalong to Forbes

The 2022 flooding of Bland Creek in the Lake Cowal catchment area inundated the Newell Highway between West Wyalong and Forbes, resulting in a closure of 49 days. This disrupted long-haul trips, particularly road freight travelling between Melbourne and Brisbane and between Sydney and Adelaide. A similar event occurred in 2016, when flooding also forced a closure of approximately six weeks.

An investment of $141 million is under way to deliver approximately 11 kilometres of flood mitigation treatments in the Marsden area. A revised option is being considered, with the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) expected to be exhibited in 2026. The proposed works include asset interventions such as large box culverts to allow water to flow under the highway, raising the road level, and laying more robust, water-resistant pavement.

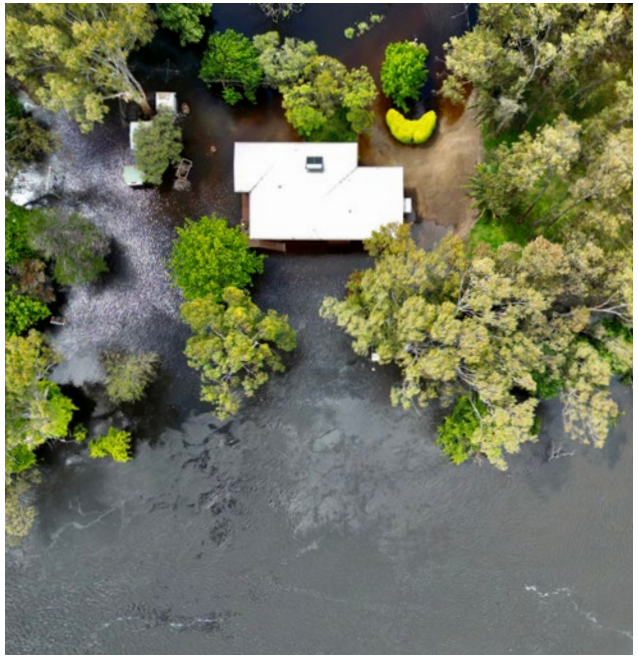
5.7.2 Increasing natural disaster impacts and maintenance funding constraints

The Riverina Murray region is experiencing more severe natural disasters with increased impacts such as floods, fires and storms, making it critical to improve the resilience of the transport network and ensure continued efficiency and reliability of freight. These disruptions affect the road and rail network, delaying freight movements and interrupting supply chains and connections to ports and airports, significantly increasing costs and reducing reliability across the network. During events, freight operators are often forced onto local roads during closures, accelerating wear and tear on infrastructure not designed for heavy vehicle volumes, increasing maintenance needs, delivery times, and safety concerns.

As freight volumes continue to grow in line with regional population and economic activity, the cost of maintaining and upgrading infrastructure is rising. The maintenance task is also becoming more complex, driven by escalating prices for raw materials and labour, the need to comply with stricter road standards, and high road reliance during harvest freight peaks. Construction work related to new roads, bypasses and adding additional lanes to existing roads adds to the maintenance burden, as projects typically receive capital funding without a commensurate increase in operational funding for ongoing upkeep.

Unplanned maintenance demands are also increasing as floods, bushfires, and other climate-related events are expected to occur more frequently and with greater severity. Major disasters create cascading impacts, as they redirect limited funding and resources to repair higher-order roads, leaving minor connections damaged for extended periods, creating severe backlogs of maintenance work across all levels of government.

Landslides typically occur with little warning. They are characteristic of the Great Dividing Range, affecting key routes such as the Snowy Mountains Highway and Kosciuszko Road, in addition to bushfire risks. In alpine areas, additional risks such as snow and extreme weather conditions complicate maintenance by constraining access.



Aerial view of flooding along the Murray River, Deniliquin

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Road maintenance funding

Improving funding mechanisms is key to improving road resilience. Funding to support routine maintenance is available from the NSW Government, councils, and the Commonwealth, and is sometimes supplemented after natural disasters. However, the process to access disaster recovery funding is complex, resource-intensive, and often slow, making it particularly challenging for smaller councils with limited staff capacity. These councils may need to divert resources from other critical areas just to secure funds. Moreover, rigid funding rules that cover only “like-for-like” replacement result in roads and bridges being rebuilt to outdated standards.

In vulnerable locations, this creates a cycle of repeated damage and repair, consuming time and money without delivering long-term resilience. Breaking this cycle will require better integration of resilience, maintenance, and safety funding programs. Embedding resilience into asset design and maintenance programs, through stronger materials, improved drainage, and proactive planning for climate impacts, will reduce the frequency and severity of future disruptions.

Opportunities

Transport can improve resilience to natural disaster impact by:

- increasing support for road network repairs and improvements
- identifying opportunities to support re-assignment of import and export freight from vulnerable shared road and rail networks to more resilient and dedicated freight rail connections linking the region.

HAY SHIRE COUNCIL

Heavy machinery on Riverina Highway construction site

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5.7.3 Resilience, communication and technology

Resilience in the transport system is not only about physical assets, but also about clear and timely communication during network disruptions between State agencies, councils, freight operators, businesses and communities, whether they are region-wide natural disaster events or unplanned traffic incidents on the network. However, gaps in mobile and internet coverage across the region make it difficult for communities and operators to access reliable information during emergencies. The lack of community awareness combined with poor coordination of information provision between emergency and traffic disruption channels such as Hazards Near Me NSW and Live Traffic, reduces the effectiveness of communication from Transport and emergency management teams to councils, transport operators, businesses and the community during incidents.

The region's transport network is extensive, comprising more than 110,000 kilometres of public roads, including state (3300 kilometres), regional (3000 kilometres) and local roads (104,000 kilometres).[30] Given this scale, assessing network damage following major events presents a significant challenge, particularly as emergency management currently relies heavily on in-person investigations. Advances in technology such as satellite imagery, artificial intelligence and drones may be capable of addressing this challenge, improving the ability of Transport, councils and other road authorities to monitor, assess and document network condition.

In the longer term, automation of monitoring and emergency management systems can further reduce the impact of network incidents by providing clear records of network damage, repair timelines and provide insight into the overall vulnerability of infrastructure and services. In addition, improving the availability of real-time information to network users could enhance resilience. For example, publishing alternate routes via an online portal or app would enhance preparedness, resilience and safety for transport operators, councils and the community during network disruptions.

Emerging advances in power generation, storage and communications technology, such as 5G, further enable Transport to investigate advanced real-time monitoring, detection and adaptive electronic signage. These systems would improve Transport's ability to identify and communicate network disruptions in near real-time, and provide timely guidance to road users.

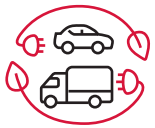
Opportunities

Transport can improve the resilience of the region's transport network by:

- supporting improved digital connectivity and communications using Transport lands and assets as well as improving coordination between transport-related emergency communication channels and other NSW emergency service platforms
- investigating the trial and use of remote monitoring technologies to improve resilience planning and operations
- proactively sharing network disruption information with councils, the community and freight operators.

30 Transport for NSW, 2025

5.8 Transition to net zero emissions



Contribute to achieving the emissions reduction targets aContribute to achieving the emissions reductions targets and improving environmental and health outcomes for the Riverina Murray.

In 2019, the transport sector was the second largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in NSW.[31] To reach net zero emissions by 2050, the transport sector will need to take responsibility in the transition to a low-emissions future.

Transport is committed to net zero emissions and contributing to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of NSW.[32] Transport has pledged to achieve a 65 per cent reduction in operational emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero for both operational and fleet emissions by 2035. In the Riverina Murray, transport currently accounts for almost 10 per cent of the total transport sector emissions of NSW, reflecting the region's reliance on private vehicles, settlement patterns, and strong freight and agricultural industries.[33]

HAY SHIRE COUNCIL

Achieving meaningful reductions in the transport sector requires not only supporting the uptake of low and zero emission vehicles but also expanding opportunities for and increasing uptake of active and public transport by regional communities.

Transport is also supporting the delivery of the South West Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), which will contribute to achieving the State's net zero target. The REZ will deliver benefits including reduced emissions through a cleaner energy sector, as well as more reliable energy from significant new renewable energy supply feeding into the energy grid.

What we heard

- Councils have limited funding for the installation and maintenance of EV chargers.
- Availability of EV chargers is important to boost visitor economy in towns and villages.
- The road network will need to accommodate freight for the South West Renewable Energy Zone.
- Items such as turbines, transmission lines, battery inverters, transformers and substations will mostly be coming from Geelong, Adelaide or Newcastle ports.
- Councils are supportive of alternative energy sources such as hydrogen and the potential of hydrogen production within the region.
- Better governance on electric vehicle installation responsibilities is required between government, private industries and councils.

31 NSW Government, Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020–2030 (2020)
32 Transport for NSW, Net Zero Climate Change Policy 2026
33 NSW EPA, Net Zero Emissions Dashboard, SEED Portal available at: https://www.seed.nsw.gov.au/net-zero-emissions-dashboard

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5.8.1 Statewide net zero emissions will require mode shift and changes to transport use in the longer term

Transport's operational emissions account for three per cent of the transport sector's emissions. Under the Net Zero and Climate Change Policy, Transport has committed to achieving a 65 per cent reduction in operational emissions by 2030 and net zero operational and fleet emissions by 2035. A breakdown of Transport's emissions is shown in Figure 35.

Besides passenger travel, zero emission buses have significant opportunity to reduce emissions in public transport

Zero Emission Buses

Transport is aiming for all buses in the region to be zero emission buses by 2047 as part of the Zero Emission Buses Transition.[34]

These buses are likely to use battery electric or fuel-cell electric technology powered by renewable energy. They would also have added benefits including contributing to better air quality, more comfortable journeys and quieter operation.

Aside from buses, a significant challenge for Transport will be to achieve net zero emissions for other modes such as non-electrified trains. Transport is continuing to partner with industry to run trials and prioritise the rollout of zero emissions technology for these operations.

Opportunities

Opportunities to reduce Transport's operational emissions include:

- a staged rollout of zero-emission buses in varied terrains and climates to help refine deployment, especially for smaller, rural-focused vehicles
- improved performance of charging locations and continued rollout of bus charging infrastructure in depots and, if required, outside them.
- working with industry to evaluate and promote the use of zero-emissions technologies for other transport modes
- implementing circular design principles in all Transport construction, maintenance and operational work.

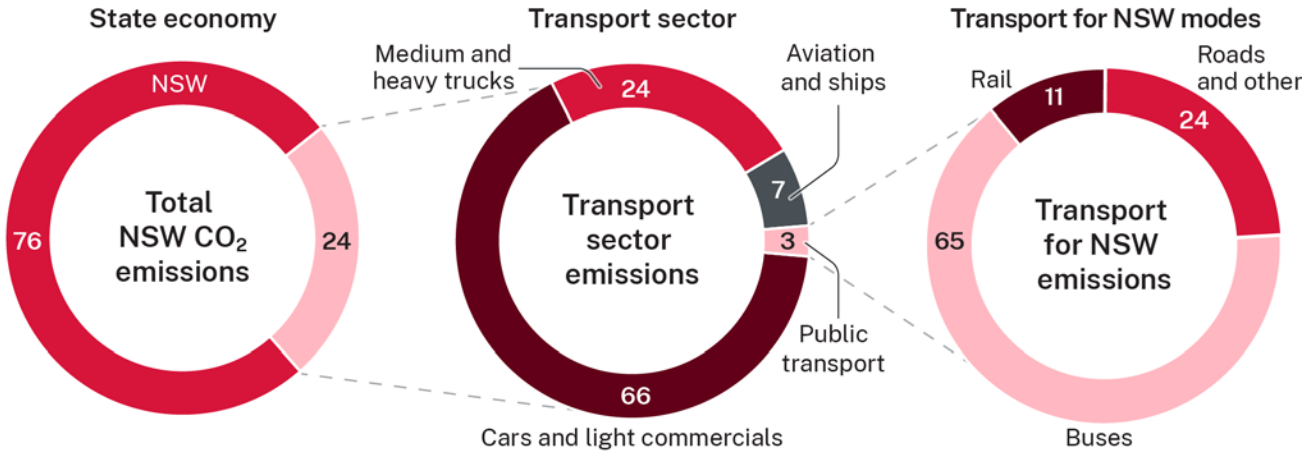

Figure 35. Transport sector emissions in NSW, Connecting NSW Strategy

34 Transport for NSW, Zero Emissions Bus Fact Sheet 2022

Cycling in Victory Memorial Garden, Wagga Wagga. © Destination NSW

5.8.2 Increasing the use of sustainable transport modes within centres

Converting short, local journeys within Riverina Murray from private vehicles to walking, cycling and public transport would reduce emissions even more than only electrifying private vehicle trips. However, increasing uptake of these more sustainable travel modes has proven difficult in the region due to a gap in the availability and attractiveness of safe active transport infrastructure.

Investment in active transport infrastructure

With 24 per cent of local trips under five kilometres, there is significant potential for increasing the uptake of walking and cycling. Boosting investment in safe active transport infrastructure will enable safer and convenient travel by foot or bike and support the increased uptake of cycling, walking, and micromobility as car-alternative transport options. This will support zero emissions growth and reduce short car trips, promoting sustainable travel within our towns and centres and lessening our reliance on cars for short distances.

To help reduce barriers to longer or more physically demanding trips, access to e-bikes and electric micromobility could be expanded. Additionally, improved access to low emissions alternatives and safer networks will enhance the appeal of active travel, helping to shift community perceptions away from private vehicles being the only source of transport for trips.

Patterns of dispersed settlement and low population density across the region create challenges for providing cost effective and competitive public transport. On-demand and flexible transport models trialled elsewhere in NSW have demonstrated strong patronage growth and could support better connectivity within Riverina Murray's cities.

Coordinating transport planning with future population growth and land use development in the region's centres will be critical to driving sustainable mode shift and reducing transport emissions over time.

Opportunities

Opportunities to increase sustainability of transport within centres include:

- decarbonising last-mile freight by electrifying delivery fleets and adopting micro-mobility solutions, such as e-cargo bikes
- working with councils to provide safer, more connected walking and cycling infrastructure
- strengthening partnerships with councils to co-design and implement behaviour change programs that encourage walking and cycling
- work with councils and operators to deliver more meaningful local bus services, including fixed line, on-demand and community transport
- identifying areas of population centres where well-located development would provide good access to a range of local and regional jobs, health, education, recreational and social destinations and services using existing walking and public transport networks.

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5.8.3 Electric vehicle uptake and low emission technologies and infrastructure

Enable access to low emission private vehicles

To support the energy transition in Riverina Murray, accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles by private owners, freight operators, fleets, and public authorities, alongside the roll out of charging infrastructure, will be critical to reducing emissions from light and heavy vehicles.

For private motorised travel, there is a particular opportunity for increasing uptake of electric vehicles for every day, repeatable travel.

The region has a low uptake of electric vehicles with less than one per cent of the NSW total of EVs registered. Out of the 20 LGAs in the region, six do not have any electric vehicles registered. The LGAs with the highest number of registrations are Albury at 284 and Wagga Wagga at 271, making up 66 per cent of electric vehicle registrations in the region.[35]

While adoption is increasing with a 36 per cent increase in registered electric vehicles in the region from 2024, regional areas such as Riverina Murray face challenges from the limited density of charging stations, particularly outside major centres and along key freight and tourism corridors.[36] Increased numbers of available chargers, higher charging speeds and having dual charging ports is important for regional communities who are already spending long amount of time on the road network.

Charging locations should prioritise placement in public areas with natural surveillance to enhance the personal security of users.

Barriers to implementing more charging stations include the limited capacity of the electricity network in regional areas. This lack of reliable coverage contributes to range anxiety and makes the transition to electric vehicles more difficult for households and businesses. Developing an electric vehicle charging map to identify priority sites across the region will help ensure equitable access to low-emission travel and guide both public and private investment.

Without sufficient access to charging stations in town centres or highway rest stops, particularly in rural and remote areas, many residents and freight operators are unlikely to switch from conventional vehicles to EVs, which hinders the region's ability to reduce emissions.

Support the freight industry move towards net zero emissions

Freight and agricultural logistics underpin the Riverina Murray economy, making the transition to HPVs as well as low emission heavy vehicles critical to achieving emissions reduction targets.

Rail freight produces 16 times less greenhouse gas emissions and is four times more fuel efficient than road freight and therefore will play a significant role in decarbonising the sector. Transport will expand the already important function that rail fulfils within freight, reducing road congestion, and improving regional connectivity.[37]

Solar panel farm © Matt Beaver/ NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

35 Transport for NSW, Registration Snapshot report accessed 1 December 2025
36 Transport for NSW, Registration Snapshot report accessed 1 December 2025
37 Connecting NSW, TfNSW 2025

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Moving more commodity types by rail will be key to supporting ongoing rail mode share and greater inter-regional freight connectivity. Through the Towards Net Zero Freight Emissions Policy, Transport will undertake further research to understand the actual emissions impact of mode shift and feasible options to create impactful and long-lasting emissions reductions.

Freight movements within centres also play an important role in decarbonisation. Opportunities exist to transition to low-emission vehicles and improve delivery efficiency, supporting broader efforts to reduce transport emissions.

To help meet the NSW Government's emissions targets, in addition to moving more freight onto rail, it is essential to transition to lower-emission heavy vehicles. However, this technology is still in its infancy and not widely used, so significant policy support is needed to help the sector grow. Transport will partner with freight companies to support an increase in uptake of these vehicles to meet the Towards Net Zero Emissions Freight Policy.

In the short term, the focus will be on improving HPV access to enable operators to move more freight with fewer vehicle movements. The Heavy Vehicle Access Policy and Freight Reform Program aim to reduce the number of trucks on the road and lower emissions by moving more freight with fewer trips. This means finding new routes for higher-productivity vehicles, upgrading ports and intermodal facilities, and transitioning to low- or zero-emission trucks.[38]

Over the longer term, efforts will centre on supporting the transition to low and zero emission vehicles across the freight task. To encourage the use of zero-emission trucks, Transport is allowing these vehicles to use the NSW state road network. However, access is limited in some areas, such as on load-limited bridges and level crossings. A two-year trial allows zero-emission trucks with a single steer axle of up to 8 tonnes and a tandem drive axle of up to 18.5 tonnes, provided the total gross vehicle mass (GVM) does not exceed 26 tonnes.[39]

The trial aims to provide greater access to support the shift to zero-emission vehicles and to collect information to improve network management. Local road managers and other asset owners currently restrict access, but plans are in place to work with them to gradually open more routes.

A key challenge will be ensuring adequate electric charging and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure along major freight routes and at intermodal hubs, as well as making sure emerging energy technologies can be facilitated. New facilities will be required along key corridors, such as the Hume and Newell highways, to support efficient freight movements.

The NSW Government's Towards Net Zero Freight Emissions Policy and partnerships with industry will play an essential role in enabling this transition and supporting a more sustainable freight network.

Opportunities

Opportunities to reduce emissions include:

- expanding the electric vehicle supercharging network, including kerbside charging staged rollout of zero-emission buses in varied terrains and climates to help refine deployment, especially for smaller, rural-focused vehicles
- supporting regional tourist locations such as motels, restaurants and attractions to purchase and install EV chargers for electric private vehicles and zero-emission trucks
- assisting NSW apartment buildings by co-funding the assessment and installation of destination chargers
- improving charge points performance and broader locational coverage of bus charging infrastructure
- working with road and bridge owners to improve their capacity to safely carry heavier vehicles, and where Transport is the owner, plan and deliver upgrades directly
- exploring opportunities and mechanisms to shift more freight from road to rail transport.

38 Heavy Vehicle Access Policy, TfNSW 2024
39 NSW zero emission heavy vehicle access trial, TfNSW 2024

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06 Realising the vision

Albury Wodonga Public Art Trail
© Destination NSW

Initiatives and longer-term outcomes of the Plan will address the challenges of the Riverina Murray region and leverage current and future opportunities.

The initiatives are organised by short term (0–5 year), medium term (5–10 year) and statewide.

This chapter presents a range of initiatives Transport will lead in response to the challenges (as described in Chapter 5) that need to be addressed to meet the Plan's objectives and achieve the NSW Government's transport vision for the Riverina Murray region. Some initiatives will require partnership with key stakeholders such as local governments and other state agencies.

Note: Initiatives will not necessarily commence or be prioritised in accordance with the numbering set out below.

- Starting with Country
- Reduce transport disadvantage by providing access to transport for all
- Seamless borders
- Well-located housing and successful places
- A thriving and diversifying economy
- A safe transport network working towards zero trauma
- Reliable and resilient network
- Transition to net zero emissions

6.1 Future Network: Public Transport

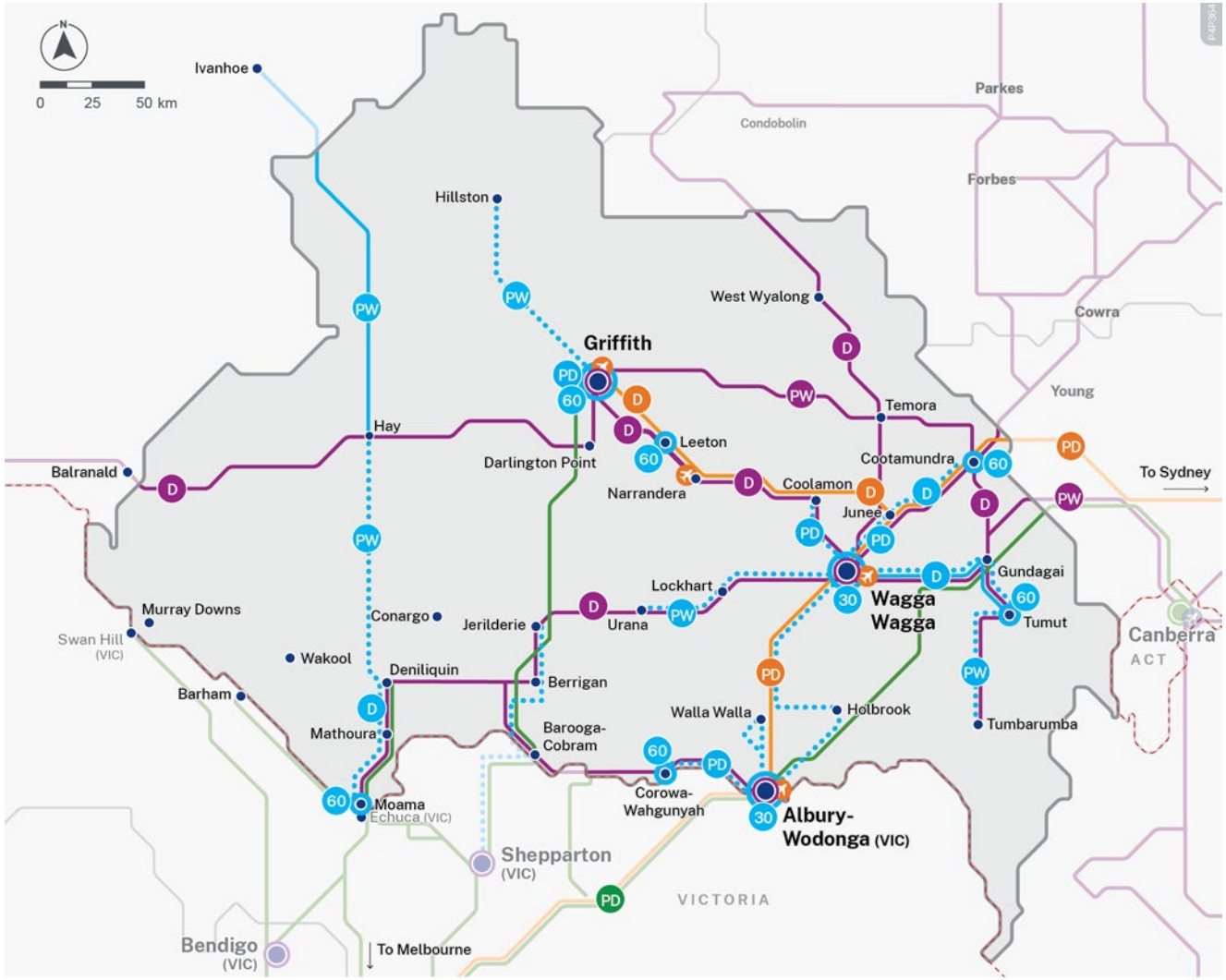

Figure 36. Riverina Murray visionary public transport map

As shown in Figure 36, the future public transport network will provide more reliable, accessible and connected travel options across the Riverina Murray region, improving access to jobs, education, healthcare and other essential services.

The network will support stronger connections between smaller towns, regional centres and metropolitan destinations, while providing greater transport choice for residents, visitors and those without access to a private vehicle. Key features of the future public transport network include:

- enhanced regional network including new day-return coach or bus services connecting communities with the regional cities of Wagga Wagga, Albury and Griffith
- improved local bus services in Albury, Wagga Wagga, Griffith and Moama providing more convenient and reliable access to employment, education, healthcare and community services
- new local public transport services in centres such as Leeton, Cootamundra, Tumut and Corowa, improving access to key destinations within these centres
- stronger cross-border public transport connections that better reflect travel patterns between NSW and Victoria and improve access to employment, education and healthcare
- enhanced regional rail services including daily passenger rail service between Griffith and Sydney
- improved regional passenger rail services including morning rail service for Albury to Sydney and afternoon service from Sydney to Albury
- improved rail travel through the region including investigating the provision for overnight sleeper services between Sydney and Melbourne that free up seats on existing services throughout the region.

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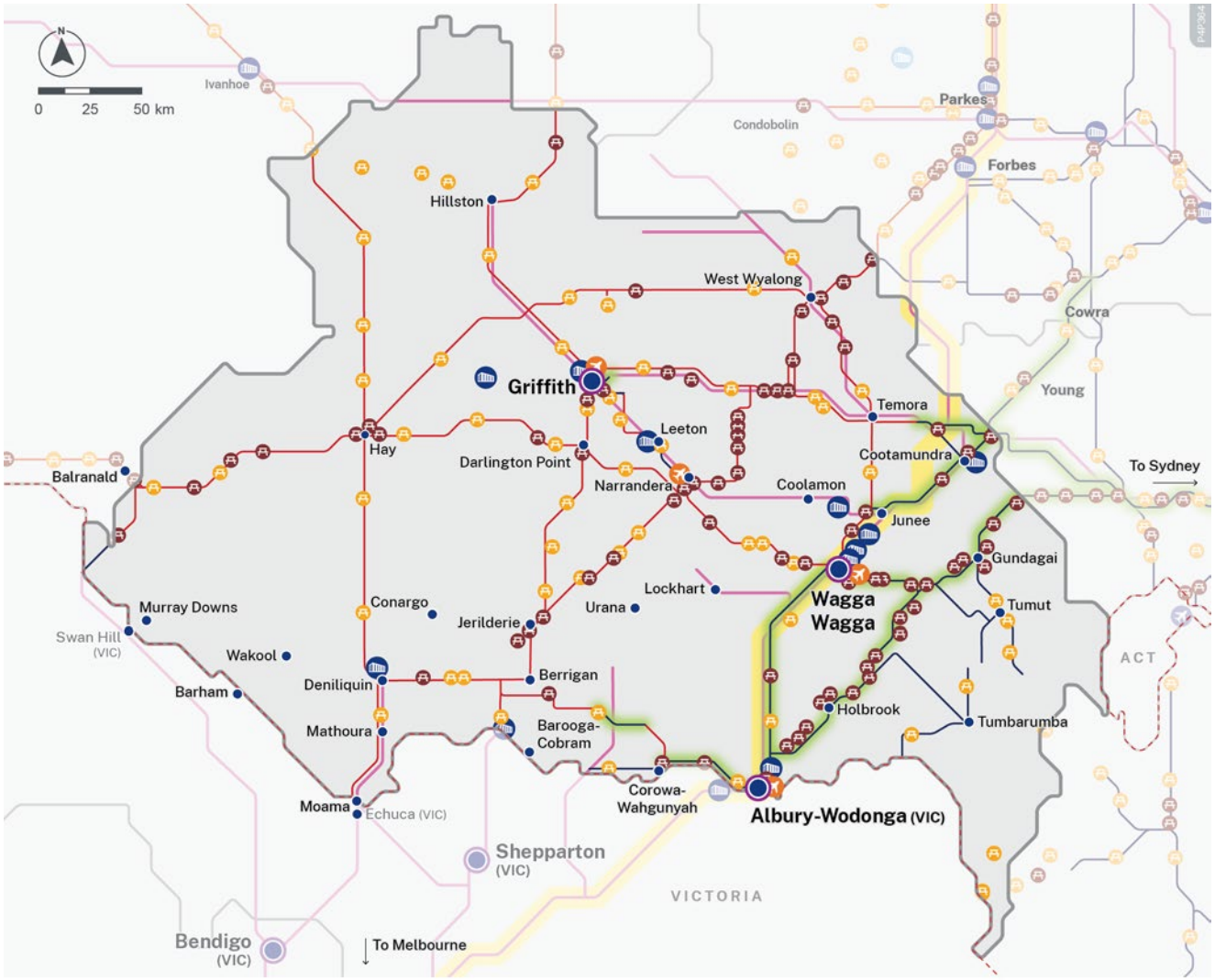
6.2 Future Network: Freight



Source: Transport for NSW, NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy (September 2024).

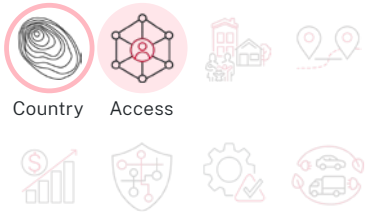
Figure 37. Riverina Murray visionary freight map

Stakeholders consistently highlighted the Riverina Murray region's critical role in the NSW economy, with agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and other freight-dependent industries relying on efficient and reliable transport connections to domestic and international markets.

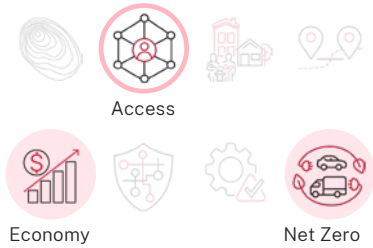
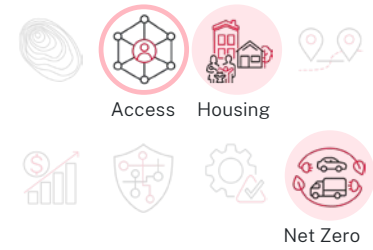
Supporting future economic growth will require a more integrated and resilient freight network that improves connectivity across road, rail and intermodal infrastructure (see Figure 37). Key features of the future freight network include:

- a more efficient and reliable rail freight network, supported by national freight rail corridor improvements and targeted investment that increases capacity, connectivity and service reliability
- an upgraded road freight network, including strategic investment in key freight corridors, improving access for PBS level 3 and higher-productivity vehicles, improving connectivity between production areas, intermodal terminals, processing facilities and major markets
- a comprehensive network of heavy vehicle rest areas and freight support facilities that improve safety, network reliability and driver amenity while supporting the efficient movement of freight within the region and beyond
- improved integration between road, rail and intermodal terminals to support greater freight productivity, supply chain resilience and opportunities for mode shift where appropriate
- a more resilient freight network capable of supporting growing freight demand while maintaining access during disruptions caused by natural hazards, extreme weather events and changing economic conditions.

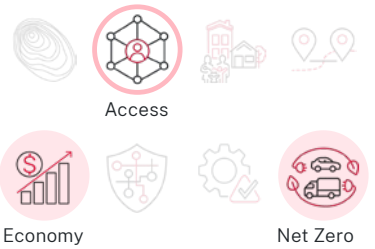
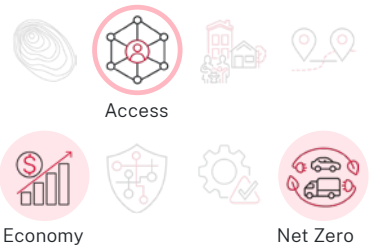
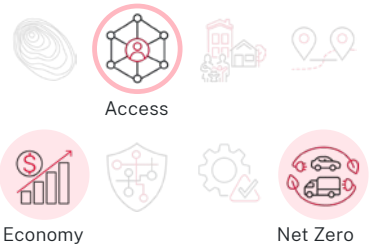
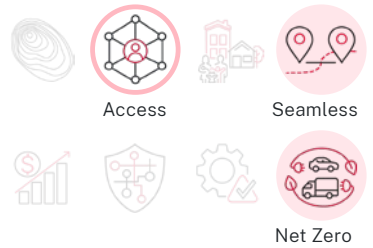
6.3 Short term initiatives (0–5 year timeframe)

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
1	All LGAs	**Planning and designing with Country:** Develop Local Aboriginal Transport Plans (LATP) through co-design with key stakeholders and Aboriginal communities for the Local Aboriginal land councils (LALCs) in the Riverina Murray region. The LATPs will identify and deliver the best fit transport services and infrastructure for Aboriginal people, to cater to all trip purposes including health, employment, education and to places of significance.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
2	Griffith Murray River Snowy Valleys	**Improve connectivity to Discrete Aboriginal Communities:** Support Discrete Aboriginal Communities (DACs) such as Three Ways to improve walking and cycling connectivity between DACs and nearby services.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
3	All LGAs	**Signposting Country signs:** Promote Aboriginal language and culture on the NSW state road network through the delivery of Signposting Country signs.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
4	All LGAs	**Improve active transport infrastructure in centres:** Work with councils and state agencies to identify challenges and opportunities to provide safe and connected active transport facilities in town centres and at key destinations such as jobs, health, education and transport precincts.	**Lead:** Councils Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	

○ Primary objective ○ Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
5	All LGAs	**Main street plans**: Identify opportunities for improved main street planning to reallocate road space to improve place outcomes, safety and comfort for people walking, riding, and making local vehicle trips. Particular focus should be applied to state roads with dual place and movement functions, such as main streets in Hay, Temora, West Wyalong and Howlong.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
6	Albury Coolamon Cootamundra–Gundagai Greater Hume Griffith Junee, Leeton Lockhart Narrandera Wagga Wagga	**Rail services improvement to Griffith and Albury:** Commence planning and implementation of the rail service improvement to increase services between Sydney–Griffith, Sydney–Albury and improve local connectivity through the region.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
7	Albury Griffith Leeton Murray River Wagga Wagga	**Local public transport improvements:** Investigate and progress implementation of improvements to local bus services across the Riverina Murray region in line with population and employment growth, including Albury, Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Moama and Leeton.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	

○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
8	Cootamundra–Gundagai Greater Hume Griffith Leeton Narrandera Snowy Valleys Wagga Wagga	**Day return public transport improvements to Wagga Wagga:** Investigate and progress implementation of new day return services to Wagga Wagga. Examples include: • Cootamundra to Wagga Wagga via Junee • Griffith to Wagga Wagga via Leeton, Yanco and Narrandera • Tumbarumba to Wagga Wagga via Batlow, Tumut and Gundagai / Brungle	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
9	Albury Federation Greater Hume	**Day return public transport improvements to Albury:** Investigate and progress implementation of new day return services to Albury from Jindera, Corowa, Howlong and Holbrook.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
10	Carrathool Griffith Leeton Narrandera	**Day return public transport improvements to Griffith:** Investigate and progress implementation of new day return services to Griffith from Hillston, Narrandera and Leeton	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
11	All LGAs	**Investigate sleeper rail services:** Investigate the provision of sleeper rail services between Sydney and Melbourne to provide an enhanced long-distance travel option and free up seating capacity on existing regional services through the Riverina Murray region	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Contactless Ticketing Program	

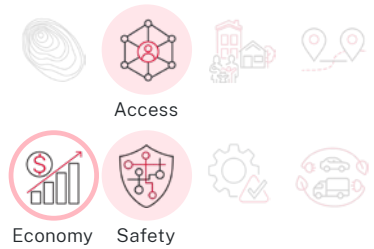
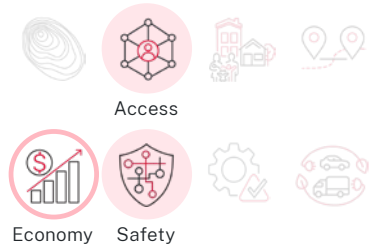
○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
12	Albury	**Albury–Wodonga Network Management:** Work with Albury and Wodonga Councils to develop a coordinated network management plan for Albury, including actions to preserve the strategic function, efficiency and resiliency of the Hume Highway corridor through Albury.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Hume Highway Corridor Strategy	
13	All LGAs	**Deliver contactless ticketing:** Deliver the Contactless Ticketing Program for all bus services in the Riverina Murray region.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Contactless Ticketing Program	
14	All LGAs	**Public Transport Information System:** Develop and deliver locally tailored public transport information that clearly explain public transport services available in each centre in collaboration with local councils and including information on Victorian services that operate into NSW.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
15	Albury Berrigan Edward River Federation Greater Hume Murray River Murrumbidgee	**Cross-border transport access, freight coordination and service integration:** Work with the Cross-Border Commissioner, Victorian Government and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) to improve cross-border transport access and enable efficient movement of people and freight across the Riverina Murray-Victoria border. Examples include improving regulatory and operational settings for rideshare and taxi services, coordinating cross-border planning and investment, and supporting efficient freight and logistics movements for border communities.	**Lead:** Office of the Cross Border Commissioner Victoria's Department of Transport and Planning Transport for NSW **Source:** Stakeholder engagement Victoria/NSW MOU for Cross-Border Collaboration	

○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
16	Albury Griffith Murray River Wagga Wagga	**Support additional housing in the Riverina Murray:** Work with NSW Government agencies and local councils to support additional housing in growth areas such as Wagga Wagga, Albury, Griffith and Moama.	**Lead:** Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Councils Transport for NSW **Source:** DPHI Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041	
17	Wagga Wagga	**Support Northern Wagga Wagga Growth Area:** Continue investigating improvements to the transport network in Wagga Wagga with a focus on the Northern Growth Area (Olympic and Sturt highways) and develop a roadmap identifying priority interventions across the network through completion of Wagga Wagga Northern Access Strategy.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Wagga Wagga Northern Access Strategy	
18	All LGAs	**Residual Transport land for housing:** Identify Transport land that can support the delivery of well-located housing or economic development, including to support freight, deliver community infrastructure or rail trails.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation	
19	Albury Cootamundra–Gundagai Greater Hume Wagga Wagga	**Hume Highway Corridor Plan:** Continue development of the Hume Highway Corridor Plan to guide future investment and identify priority improvements that respond to growing demand, freight movement, travel efficiency, safety and asset management needs.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Hume Highway Corridor Plan	

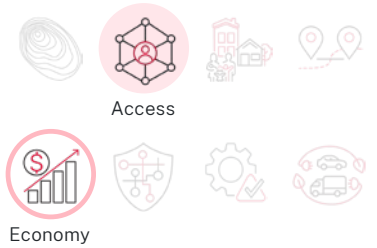
○ Primary objective ○ Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
20	Albury Cootamundra–Gundagai Wagga Wagga	**Hume Highway Priority Intersection and Interchange Upgrades:** Identify and develop a program of priority intersection and interchange improvements along the Hume Highway, including locations such as the Sturt Highway southbound approach, Thurgoona Drive Interchange and Annie Pyers Drive intersection.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Hume Highway Corridor Plan	
21	Albury Cootamundra–Gundagai Greater Hume Wagga Wagga	**Deliver Road Safety Improvements on the Hume Highway:** Deliver a prioritised program of access and at-grade intersection upgrades along the Hume Highway, including installation of road side and median barriers (full containment) and at-grade intersection upgrades to regional and local road connections, such as the Tynan Road/Burma Road intersection.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Hume Highway Corridor Plan	
22	Albury Cootamundra–Gundagai Greater Hume Wagga Wagga	**Hume Highway Asset Renewal and Infrastructure Upgrade Program:** Develop and commence delivery of a prioritised program of asset renewal and upgrade works along the Hume Highway to improve the condition and performance of key infrastructure assets, including pavements, culverts and bridges.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Hume Highway Corridor Plan Asset services plan	

○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
23	Albury Bland Carrathool Coolamon Cootamundra–Gundagai Edward River Federation Griffith Greater Hume Junee Leeton Lockhart Murray River Narrandera Temora Wagga Wagga	**Develop and implement the NSW Regional Rail Plan:** Develop and implement the NSW Regional Rail Plan, which includes the Regional Network East / West (RNEW) Program. Together, these create a comprehensive 10-year investment strategy and strategic plan for rail in regional NSW. This includes the implementation of rail network improvements between Victoria and Parkes as well as reviewing the status and future requirements of all Country Rail Network non-operational lines.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Regional Network East / West (RNEW) Program	
24	Federation Snowy Valleys Temora	**Heavy vehicle alternative freight route and bypass planning:** Assess and prioritise centres where state roads have dual place and movement functions, such as Tumbarumba, Temora, Howlong and Urana, to identify where alternative heavy vehicle freight routes, bypasses or other measures may be warranted to improve freight efficiency, safety and local amenity.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	

○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
25	Albury, Bland Carrathool Coolamon Cootamundra–Gundagai Edward River Federation Griffith Greater Hume Junee Leeton Lockhart Murray River Narrandera Temora Wagga Wagga	**Freight Mode Shift and Intermodal Connectivity:** Develop a Freight Master Plan to improve connections between road and rail and enhance access to intermodal terminals across the Riverina Murray region, including WR Connect, Ettamogah and the Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct. The plan would support a greater proportion of freight moving by rail by strengthening regional freight connectivity, improving integration between intermodal terminals, ports and export gateways, and supporting the development of more efficient and resilient NSW domestic and export supply chains.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
26	All LGAs	**Improved access for freight:** Strengthen access for PBS vehicles on key north–south and east–west freight routes within the region identified in the NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy including Hume Highway, Olympic Highway, Cobb Highway, Kidman Way, Goldfields Way, Sturt Highway, Riverina Highway, Mid-Western Highway, Lachlan Valley Way and Snowy Mountains Highway.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy	
27	Cootamundra–Gundagai	**Sheahan Bridge Northbound Upgrade:** Continue investigating upgrade requirements and improvement options for the northbound bridge to allow higher productivity Performance Based Standards (PBS) vehicles to cross the Murrumbidgee River on the Hume Highway at Gundagai.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Hume Highway Corridor Strategy	

○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
28	All LGAs	**Support delivery of South West REZ:** Investigate routes for freight and passenger vehicles that mitigate the safety and amenity impacts of heavy vehicles (including REZ oversize and overmass vehicles) on population centres.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	Economy, Net Zero
29	All LGAs	**South West REZ OSOM information sharing:** Develop alternate route guidance for freight and passenger vehicles that identifies and mitigates the impacts of OSOM movements from Port to REZ and associated projects.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	Economy, Resilient, Net Zero
30	All LGAs	**Integrated tourism mobility and vehicle routing:** Improve access to clear, vehicle appropriate route information to support safer and more efficient travel for larger vehicles, including caravans and vehicles towing trailers, while also enhancing public transport connectivity to support visitor and tourist movement across the Riverina Murray region, including improved access to key destinations and regional airports.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	Economy, Resilient
31	All LGAs	**Improve safety and amenity on main roads:** Improve safety and amenity within centres through targeted investments that support all road users. This includes identifying opportunities for new and upgraded pedestrian crossings, intersection redesigns, junction build-outs, wider footpaths, shared paths, separated bicycle infrastructure, and protected parking bays. Additional measures may include reviewing speed limits, signage and line markings to improve network legibility, accessibility and overall safety for pedestrians, bicycle riders and motorists.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Road Safety Action Plan 2026	Access, Housing, Economy, Safety

○ Primary objective ○ Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
32	Albury Berrigan Bland Carrathool Cootamundra–Gundagai Edward River Griffith Greater Hume Junee Leeton Temora Wagga Wagga	**Improved safety on higher-speed roads:** Develop a prioritised Route Safety Review Program to address high risk curves and crash hot spots across the network through widened shoulders, safety barriers, wide centre line and audio tactile markings. This includes Kidman Way, Goldfields Way, Irrigation Way, Riverina Highway and Hume Highway.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Route Safety Review Program	
33	All LGAs	**Support councils for cycling planning and promotion:** Provide guidance and assistance to councils in developing cycling plans and preparing grant applications for cycling projects, while supporting councils and advocacy groups to deliver cycling promotion programs, events, and behaviour change initiatives that encourage increased cycling uptake.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
34	All LGAs	**Implement targeted intersection safety program:** Identify and upgrade high risk intersections across the Riverina Murray region, delivering proven treatments such as roundabouts, protected turning movements, improved sight distance, and speed management measures to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes, particularly at intersections on high speed rural approaches and key regional corridors.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	

○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

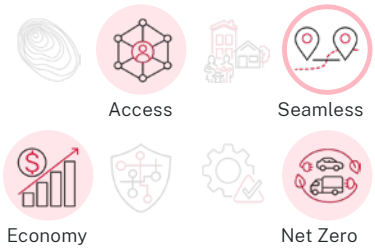
#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
35	All LGAs	**Improve safety at bridges and approaches:** Review bridge approaches and crossings on key regional corridors such as Irrigation Way and Burley Griffin Way to ensure consistent and clear delineation, including warning signs, line marking and guidance treatments, and deliver targeted upgrades where needed to improve visibility and driver awareness at intersections and roadside hazards.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
36	All LGAs	**Safer transitions into towns and centres:** Implement a regional Town Entry Gateway program to deliver consistent gateway treatments at priority locations at the urban fringe improving speed compliance and driver awareness to support safer transitions into towns and activity centres such as Junee, Finley, Hay and Cootamundra.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
37	All LGAs	**Improved rest stop opportunities:** Develop and deliver improved rest stop opportunities across the region to support the safe and efficient movement of heavy vehicles, including both heavy vehicle rest areas and green reflector sites (informal rest areas). This includes improvements on Hume Highway, Snowy Mountains Highway, Irrigation Way, Sturt Highway, Newell Highway, Mid-Western Highway, Cobb Highway, Alpine Way, Kidman Way, Riverina Highway, Goldfields Way, Burley Griffin Way, Batlow Road, Rankins Springs Road, Spring Drive, Olympic Highway and Gocup Road.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation	

○ Primary objective ○ Secondary objective

#	LGA	Draft Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
38	All LGAs	**Road safety awareness and behaviour change:** Deliver a targeted behaviour change program focused on the Riverina Murray region's leading fatal-crash behavioural contributors including communications, education materials and campaigns to promote safe road user behaviour, improve awareness of walking and cycling rules, and encourage safe sharing of the road network among all users, including drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
39	All LGAs	**Improve asset condition through better maintenance and upgrades:** Develop corridor plans to assess asset condition and proactively identify, prioritise and seek funding for maintenance and upgrade needs over the next 20 years. This includes implementing flood immunity initiatives to reduce closures of key freight and passenger routes during heavy rainfall and flood events, such as the Sturt and Newell highways at Gillenbah.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
40	All LGAs	**Corridor Resilience Planning:** Review the region's state road network to identify vulnerabilities in light of increasing extreme weather events and climate change and establish a clear pipeline of maintenance projects to improve resilience with a focus on adaptability and 'building back better' after a disruption.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	

○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

6.4 Medium-term initiatives (5–10 year timeframe)

#	LGA	Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
41	All LGAs	**Improvements to stations, interchanges and bus stops:** Investigate and implement improvements to key rail stations, bus interchanges and bus stops to offer passengers seamless connections between rail, coach and bus services. To support intuitive end-to-end journeys and enhance the passenger interchange experience across the public transport network. This may include upgraded shelters, waiting areas, seating, lighting, clearer wayfinding, real-time information and improved pedestrian access.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
42	Albury, Berrigan, Murray River, Murrumbidgee	**Improve cross-border connectivity to Victoria:** Commence planning and implementation of improved public transport services to provide better connectivity for cross-border communities to access services, education, employment, recreation and other transport modes on both sides of the border including Wodonga, Echuca and Shepparton from the border LGAs of Albury, Murray River, Murrumbidgee and Berrigan.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
43	Albury, Berrigan, Edward River, Federation, Greater Hume, Hay, Lockhart, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Wagga Wagga	**Cross-border public transport improvements:** Investigate expanding longer-distance services to connect to centres in Victoria. Routes to be identified and prioritised. Examples may include: Hay to Echuca and Jerilderie to Shepparton.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	

Primary objective Secondary objective

#	LGA	Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
44	Wagga Wagga	**Implement Northern Wagga Wagga Access Improvements:** Progress delivery of the first phase of priority transport initiatives identified through the Wagga Wagga Northern Access Strategy to support growth in the Northern Wagga Wagga Growth Area including network improvements at Pearson Street and Sturt Highway, Lake Albert Road and Sturt Highway, Olympic Highway and Travers Street, and Olympic Highway and Old Narrandera Road.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Wagga Wagga Northern Access Strategy	
45	Wagga Wagga	**Murrumbidgee River connectivity at Wagga Wagga:** Increase network capacity and connectivity for north-south trips across the Murrumbidgee River at Wagga Wagga, including increased capacity on Gobbagombalin Bridge and alternative river crossing opportunities.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Wagga Wagga Northern Access Strategy	
46	All LGAs	**Upgrade Strategic Freight Detour Routes:** Identify and upgrade key freight detour routes to improve network resilience to ensure alternative corridors can accommodate High Productivity Vehicles during closures on primary freight routes, supporting freight efficiency, supply chain continuity and safer network operations.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
47	All LGAs	**Support development of cycle tourism:** Continue to support councils to develop and expand on cycle tourism in population centres such as Moama	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	

○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

#	LGA	Initiative	Lead/Source	Objective alignment
48	All LGAs	**Improve safety on high-speed rural corridors:** Implement a corridor based program to reduce risk on high speed regional roads by addressing unsafe overtaking, speed behaviour and driver decision making through targeted infrastructure, delineation and safe passing opportunities on high speed roads such as Sturt Highway and Batlow Road.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
49	Albury	**Implement Riverina Highway corridor upgrade:** Progress delivery of priority network improvements along the Riverina Highway, including the intersections of Schubach Street and Borella Road, Keene Street and Borella Road, East Street and Borella Road, and the Borella Road interchange.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
50	All LGAs	**Regional bridge and major structure renewal program:** Investigate and establish a prioritised regional program to assess, prioritise and plan the upgrade or replacement of critical bridges and irrigation structures across the Riverina Murray region. This includes critical assets such as Glenroy Bridge, Bungambrawatha Creek Bridge, Canal Bridge and Murray River crossings, with a focus on managing safety risk, improving freight efficiency and ensuring long-term network resilience and continuity.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	
51	All LGAs	**Improve funding model for regional roads:** Investigate a more streamlined and sustainable funding approach for council road networks that supports ongoing maintenance, resilience, and better long-term value for investment.	**Lead:** Transport for NSW **Source:** Internal Transport investigation Stakeholder engagement	

○ Primary objective ● Secondary objective

6.5 Statewide initiatives

These are statewide priorities for action that will be of benefit to our customers and communities across the Far West, but do not currently have specifically identified projects within this region so are included as statewide initiatives that will be delivered over the life of the Plan.

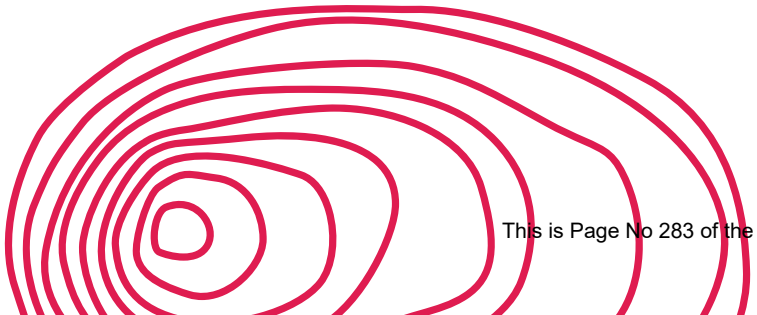
#	Objective alignment	Description	Lead	Source
i	Net Zero	Work with industry and the public research sector to support the transition of the NSW bus fleet to 100 per cent zero emission buses by 2040 for outer metropolitan regions and by 2047 for regional NSW.	Transport for NSW	Zero Emission Buses Transition Plan
ii	Safety	Deliver on the four priority safety areas of the Maritime Safety Plan to guide the delivery of actions to work towards zero fatalities and serious injuries on NSW waterways by 2056, including reducing conflicts between recreational watercraft and access to ports.	Transport for NSW	Maritime Safety Plan 2056
iii	Resilient	Real time travel information across the state.	Transport for NSW	Transport Connected Buses Program
iv	Net Zero	Work with industry to increase the number of electric vehicle charging stations within regional areas to reduce the need for the community to purchase long range vehicles.	Transport for NSW EV industry	Internal Transport investigations
v	Access	Establish an integrated ticketing solution to provide a consistent public transport payment system across the region. This is likely to require a statewide approach for an integrated system.	Transport for NSW	Internal Transport investigations
vi	Resilient	Implement consistent ways of communicating the status of network disruptions during major events and natural disasters, including real time journey information relating to disruptions.	Transport for NSW	Internal Transport Investigations Customer Coordination Centre State Disaster Mitigation Plan 2024–2026 Customer Journey Resilience Plans
vii	Net Zero	Partner with freight companies to support increased uptake of low-emissions freight vehicles.	Transport for NSW Freight industry	Towards Net Zero Emissions Freight Policy

○ Primary objective

#	Objective alignment	Description	Lead	Source
viii	Country	Support opportunities for Aboriginal organisations to have access, management and use of culturally significant lands and waterways and ensure that transport projects have considered access to cultural sites and lands, for example, provision for cultural burns along transport corridors.	Transport for NSW Councils In consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders and community, Local Aboriginal land councils	Internal Transport Investigations
ix	Safety	Partner with councils and the NSW Police Force to deliver road safety programs that aim to reduce road trauma by deterring unsafe behaviours across the road network and support police compliance activities.	Transport for NSW Councils NSW Police Force	2026 Road Safety Action Plan – Towards Zero
x	Safety	Undertake speed zone reviews and apply safer speed zone settings following the principles and guidance in the NSW Speed Zoning Standard, including for suitable local streets and state road and highway networks, to improve road safety and conditions for walking and cycling on local streets.	Councils Transport for NSW	NSW Speed Zoning Standard Movement and Place Framework
xi	Safety	Identify and address safety issues at existing private and public at-grade rail level crossings through improved management of conflict with pedestrian and motor vehicles.	Transport for NSW Rail operators	Internal Transport Investigations Stakeholder engagement
xii	Safety	Work with councils and State Agencies to improve the perception and safety of people walking, cycling and using public transport, particularly for women, girls and gender diverse people. This includes lighting and visibility improvements, infrastructure improvements, amenity at bus stops and train stations, and activating places to extend the time people spend in a place across different times of the day.	Councils Transport for NSW Other NSW Government agencies	Transport Safer Cities Survey Report July 2023 Stakeholder engagement
xiii	Access	Work with local councils to support improved access to public transport interchanges, hubs and stops through a range of safe and attractive walking, cycling and micromobility links.	Councils Transport for NSW	Connecting NSW Strategy Active Transport Strategy Regional and Outer Metropolitan Cycling and Micromobility Plan 2025–2035

6.6 Longer-term outcomes

Objective	Longer-term outcomes	How we make it happen	Triggers that would change priority
Starting with Country All investment in the transport network, services, policy and technology takes a Country-centred approach.	Planning with Country practices are embedded at every stage of planning, development and delivery to result in Country-centred design.	**Policy** • Deliver regional Aboriginal transport data through open-source dashboard sharing. • Increase the number of Aboriginal businesses on approved prequalified panels and schemes. **Services** • Improve access to education, health, employment and cultural places for Aboriginal communities.	



Objective	Longer-term outcomes	How we make it happen	Triggers that would change priority
Reduce transport disadvantage by providing access to transport for all A transport network that provides a range of travel choices to all people living, working in or visiting the Riverina Murray.	Transport disadvantage is reduced across the Riverina Murray region and people are able to access their regular destinations with a variety of transport choices for all trip purposes. Public transport and active transport are seen as a safe, reliable, convenient transport option for most journeys within as well as outside the region. A significant long-term reduction in private vehicle dependency.	**Policy** • Use the Road User Space Allocation Policy to prioritise more sustainable travel modes. • Passive surveillance at public transport stop locations. • Develop and implement behaviour change programs that highlight the benefit of walking, cycling and public transport choices. **Services** • Support better bus and coach services connecting to education and health hubs and between centres throughout the Riverina Murray region. • More day return services. • Services that support housing development. • Increased train services. • Provide public transport integrated ticketing. **Infrastructure** • Connected active transport network within the centres and throughout the Riverina Murray.	• Expanded or new primary, secondary and tertiary education campuses • Expansion or new health services • New employment precincts or shopping centres • Development of future housing growth areas • Changes to micromobility access policy • New employment precincts • Major change in population or demographics

Objective	Longer-term outcomes	How we make it happen	Triggers that would change priority
Seamless Borders A transport network that supports seamless movements across the Riverina Murray.	Cross-border public transport services are seamless for border-communities, residents, workers and visitors allowing access to key destinations, health and education hubs and employment. Freight movements across the border are integrated and regulatory frameworks are aligned to provide efficient movements enabling economic development. Personalised travel options and point-to-point services like taxis, rideshare and community transport movements are supported by equitable regulatory frameworks to deliver improved services.	**Policy** • Address priority focus areas of the Victoria – NSW Memorandum of Understanding for Cross-Border Collaboration . • Support an integrated road and rail network. **Services** • Support better services that connect across state borders. • Integrate public transport ticketing. **Infrastructure** • Interstate freight network access is aligned to allow efficient cross-border movements. • Build an active transport network linking the border communities.	• Increased cross-border freight demand • Emergency response and management for natural disasters and severe weather events • Change in legislative frameworks between Victoria and NSW jurisdictions

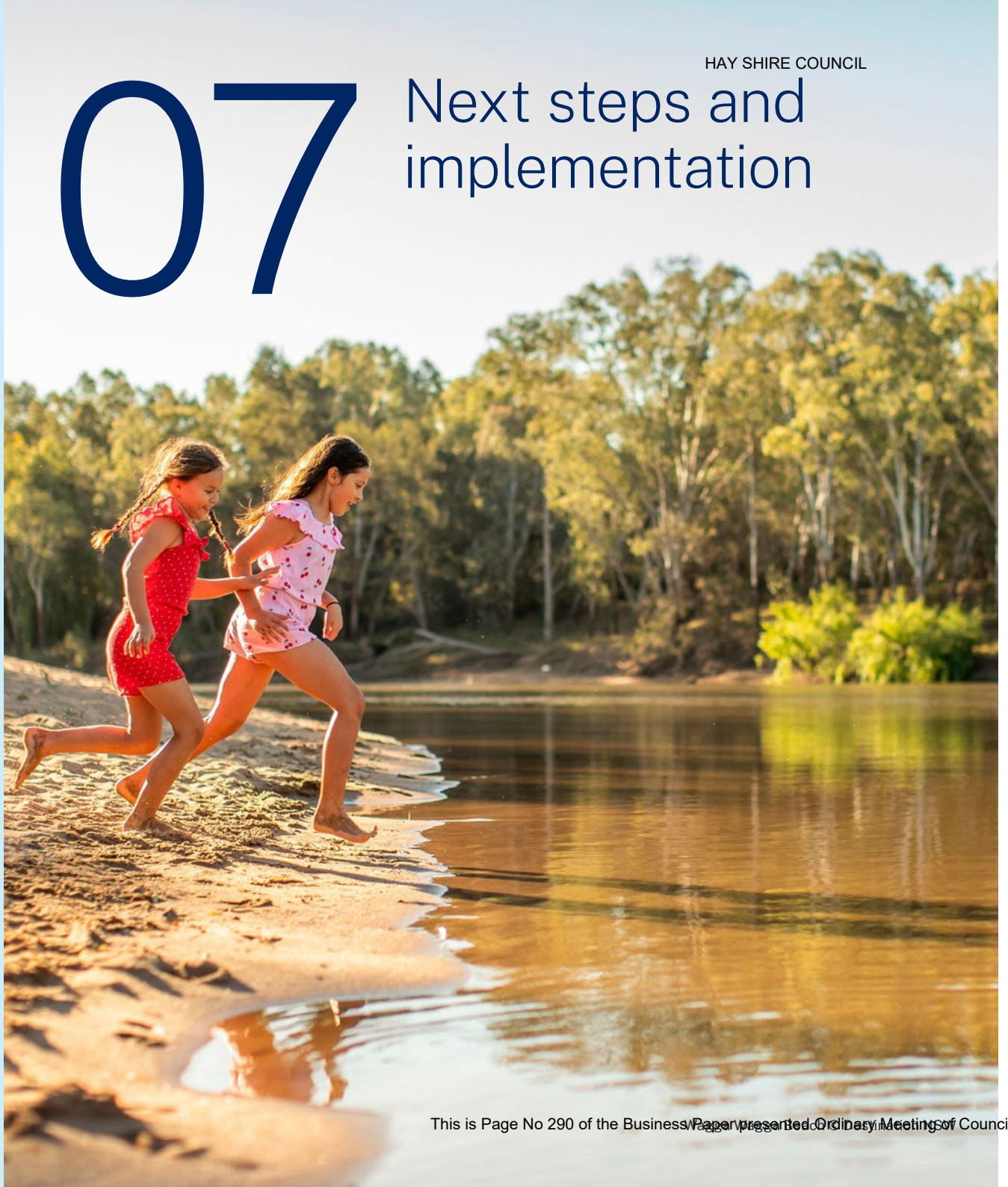
Objective	Longer-term outcomes	How we make it happen	Triggers that would change priority
Well-located housing and successful places Support the delivery of well-located housing and successful places through sustainable transport options to address growth in the Riverina Murray.	An integrated public transport network that is the first choice for people living in urban areas and a viable choice for everyone across the Riverina Murray through: • Frequent and reliable public transport services to health, education, employment and tourism locations. • Investment in buses and coaches in regional NSW. • A connected active transport and micromobility network. • Ensuring new and existing housing has access to efficient and affordable transport options. • First and last mile freight access.	**Services** • Better bus services for travel to education hubs (schools, universities and TAFE). • Increase bus and rail services across the day and week. **Road infrastructure** • Local connections as part of the development. • Connections to the critical road corridors e.g. M31 Hume Highway. • Network capacity monitoring. • Local cycleways and footpaths to support short trips sustainably. **Public transport infrastructure** • Additional stops. • Bus priority measures. • Train station and bus stop, accessibility, information and corridor crossings.	• Utility infrastructure capacity (water, sewer, energy) • Establishment of new health or education hubs

Objective	Longer-term outcomes	How we make it happen	Triggers that would change priority
A thriving and diversifying economy An efficient transport network to support a diversifying and growing economy, including tourism and freight movement.	Road and rail freight network efficiency is improved to support and enable economic growth. Freight is safe, productive and sustainable, which incorporates freight movements in and between places. Transport networks connect visitors and tourism destinations, including: • Transport that responds to seasonal demands. • Services and infrastructure that improve the uptake of public transport.	**Policy** • Support more efficient and safer freight vehicles. • Support the decarbonisation of freight. • Improve freight accessibility (vehicle type and access). • Support agribusiness. • Deliver the Heavy Vehicle Access Policy 2024, enabling high productivity vehicles on critical freight corridors across the Riverina Murray. **Services** • Public transport connections to support visitors and visitor-economy workers to access workplaces and key destinations in the region. **Infrastructure** • Provide infrastructure that enables the diversifying and growing demand for freight and heavy vehicle rest areas. • Protect land for future freight corridors. • Increase network access for higher productivity vehicles and introduce network and structure improvements to support this.	• Planning advances faster than anticipated • Increasing demand for renewable energy infrastructure movements on the road network • Steep reduction in capacity of existing aviation travel routes and establishment of new airports
A safe transport network Reduce fatal and serious injuries on the transport network and address safety concerns for public transport passengers.	Safe, more sustainable access to transport networks for safe and productive movement of goods.	**Policy** • Support safer vehicles. • Support safer drivers. • Introduce lower speed limits in targeted locations. • Promote passive surveillance measures at public transport stop locations. **Services** • Enhances onboard surveillance and safety for public transport services. **Infrastructure** • Rail level crossing safety improvements.	• Changes in crash trends • New crash clusters

Objective	Longer-term outcomes	How we make it happen	Triggers that would change priority
Reliable and resilient network Reduce the impact of network shocks and stresses to service interruptions and proactively plan for future impacts.	Transport networks are maintained and improved in a changing climate through: • Continuous improvement of asset management process. • Improved journey reliability in response to external events.	**Policy** • Continually review asset management processes. • Review asset problem identification and response procedures. • Provide community information about asset practices. **Infrastructure** • Design infrastructure for a changed climate with more extreme weather and temperatures. • Use resilience as a determinant in prioritising delivery programs (alternative routes and paths).	• Extreme weather events occur more frequently than forecast and require a reprioritisation of response

Objective	Longer-term outcomes	How we make it happen	Triggers that would change priority
Transition to net zero emissions Contribute to achieving the emissions reductions targets as outlined in the Net Zero and Climate Change Policy.	Achieving emissions reductions: • 100 per cent of transport light passenger vehicle fleet procurement is transitioned to all electric by 2030. • There is a 65 per cent reduction in Transport for NSW operational emissions by 2030 (compared to 2018–19). • Net zero in Transport's operational and fleet emissions is achieved by 2035. • Transport for NSW construction and maintenance is fossil fuel free by 2040. • Net zero in Transport annual embodied emissions is achieved by 2045. • Net zero is transport sector emissions is achieved by 2050. • Net negative transport sector emissions achieved by 2060. • Achieving net zero emissions also leads to cleaner, quieter and more liveable neighbourhoods, healthier and more resilient communities. No net loss of biodiversity for Transport's infrastructure development activities.	**Policy** • Support freight industry's moves to decarbonise. **Infrastructure** • Support EV charging infrastructure delivery across the Riverina Murray • Transition NSW public transport fleet to zero emissions (including zero emission bus fleet rollout). • Enable efficient and safe movement of renewable energy infrastructure on the transport network.	Faster uptake of electric vehicles: • E-Mobility • Cars • Buses • Trucks • New renewable energy infrastructure projects

07 Next steps and implementation



7.1 Community engagement and Plan finalisation

Transport wants to hear from communities, stakeholders, businesses and transport operators who live, work or travel through the Riverina Murray region. What we hear during engagement will influence the final Plan content. The final list of initiatives will be refined and further developed to ensure that what is shown in the Plan can be delivered in the timeframes we are working towards. If necessary, additional funding will be sought as part of Plan finalisation.

7.2 Plan governance

Establishing a transport vision for Riverina Murray and identifying priority actions to deliver the vision are the first steps in the planning process. Transport for NSW is responsible for the implementation and ongoing management of the final Plan, with collaborative partnerships established for those initiatives that require support and input from key stakeholders like local government, relevant government agencies, and industry and community representatives.

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7.3 Progress reporting

The final Plan will be a 'living' document to be continually updated as the area changes, technology evolves, legislation adjusts, and new opportunities emerge. Transport for NSW will provide status updates on the initiatives every 12 months and undertake a review of the final Plan every five years to ensure the long-term outcomes are realised. The refresh will consider progress on the initiatives, as well as identify potential new initiatives and consider triggers that may be necessary to respond to future user needs, emerging technologies, changing land uses, or new service and infrastructure commitments proposed over the next five years. The refresh will also provide an opportunity to review progress towards the long-term outcomes.

7.4 Funding and delivery

The Draft Plan comprises a total of 51 initiatives. While some initiatives are already in planning, new initiatives will require further investigation to determine their feasibility. Transport will work collaboratively with key stakeholders to identify opportunities to fund the initiatives outlined in the Draft Plan, including possible Australian Government and private sector financing. This includes ensuring private development and industry operations align with the long-term outcomes for Riverina Murray region.

Albury Botanic Gardens
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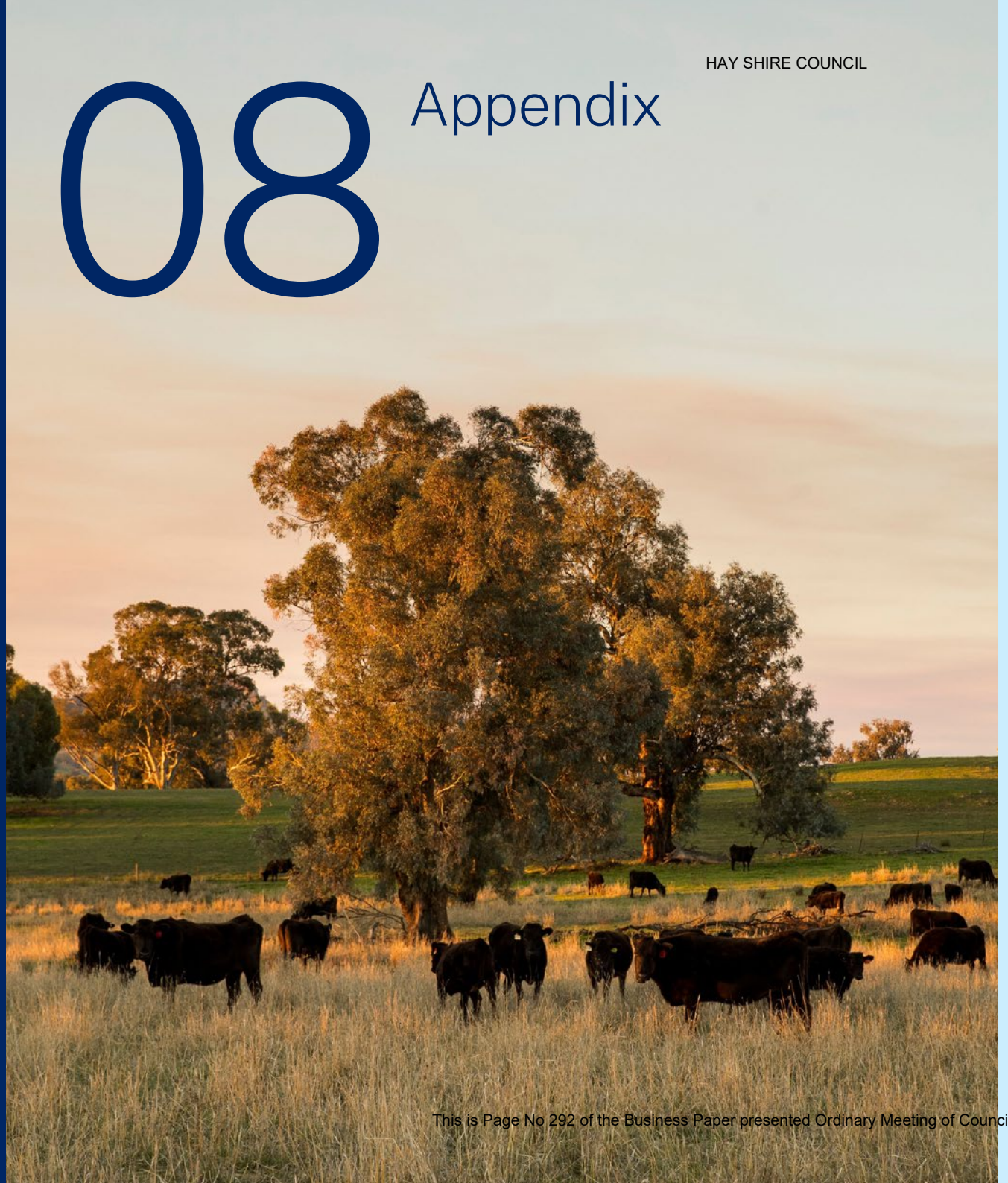
08 Appendix



Objectives and outcomes

The following tables include detail on the objectives for the Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan that address the characteristics of the region and define how the vision will be realised across the region.

The outcomes define what will be achieved if the objectives are met, and the indicators define the metric for assessing success and prioritising initiatives and actions.

Wagyu Farm Albury
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Table 3. Objectives and indicators

Objective	Outcomes	Indicators
Starting with Country All investment in the transport network, services, policy and technology takes a Country-centred approach	**Aboriginal economic independence supported by Transport** • Increase opportunities for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations ownership, access, management and use of land and waterways. • Increase the number of Aboriginal businesses on approved prequalified panels and schemes, delivering greater employment and business opportunities in communities to build a sustainable future • Achieve greater Aboriginal driver licence independence and support. **Aboriginal people are connected safely to the economy and socially, through transport solutions** • Address Aboriginal road trauma incidents occurring on NSW roads and achieve safer transport outcomes for Aboriginal communities. • Address both physical safety and psychosocial incidents occurring on public transport services, so Aboriginal people feel safe and inclusive when travelling. **Transport drives transformative action to deliver systemic change** • Deliver regional Aboriginal transport data, to spotlight where Transport needs to be improved for our Aboriginal communities. • Embed cultural awareness and inclusiveness training programs across our transport industry partners, in delivering lasting cultural change. **Our community and Country are healthy and strong, through transport planning and place making** • Aboriginal outcomes are embedded within each SRITP, supported by flexible transport solutions that prioritise improved access to education, health, employment, and cultural places for Aboriginal communities. • Embedding Aboriginal place making activities including cultural landscapes management, asset access parity, and all-encompassing transport asset Aboriginal branding that supports story telling across Transport projects.	↗ Engagement and partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and land councils ↗ Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal business on approval prequalification panels and schemes ↗ Aboriginal outcomes embedded into project initiatives as part of project scope and assessment ↗ Number of Aboriginal placemaking activities ↘ Aboriginal road trauma incidents ↗ Transport accessibility for Aboriginal communities, particularly to employment, health and education facilities ↗ Data sharing with Aboriginal communities ↗ Inclusiveness training participation for Transport staff and industry partners ↗ Aboriginal community's sense of cultural identification and representation, inclusion and safety on the transport network

Objective	Outcomes	Indicators
Reduce transport disadvantage by providing access to transport for all A transport network that provides a range of travel choices to all people living, working in or visiting the Riverina Murray.	Transport disadvantage across the Riverina Murray is minimised, with people able to easily reach their everyday destinations using a mix of accessible and convenient transport options. As choices improve, reliance on private vehicles gradually declines. The transport network adapts to support the region's growth and change, including responding to population shifts and strengthening connections to key growth areas. It is increasingly designed to meet the needs of an ageing population, particularly in major regional centres. Public transport becomes a trusted and attractive option for most trips—whether travelling within the region or to and from it—by offering improved frequency, reliability and journey times. Services are better coordinated, making them easier to use and more dependable. Walking and cycling are supported through expanded and improved infrastructure, such as footpaths, shared paths and bike routes, allowing people to move around safely and comfortably while promoting healthier travel choices. Safety across the public transport system is enhanced, ensuring customers feel secure and confident throughout their journeys.	↗ Public transport usage ↗ Public transport infrastructure and service growth, particularly in areas with population growth ↗ Frequency of services and services running during off-peak, weekend and night-time ↗ Speed and reliability of public transport ↘ Number of people with low PTAL scores throughout the day ↗ Public and active transport investment in disadvantaged areas ↗ Public transport service to population centres ↗ Active transport usage ↗ Number of students using active transport to school ↗ Length of separated bicycle paths ↗ Shared paths and footpaths connecting residential areas and key attractors such as local centres, bus stops and public transport stops ↗ Perceived safety on public transport services ↗ Public transport stops or stations with adequate lighting, wayfinding, and surveillance ↘ Personal safety and crime incidents on public transport

Objective	Outcomes	Indicators
Seamless borders A transport network that supports seamless movements for the Riverina Murray residents, workers and visitors travelling to and from Victoria.	Connections between the Riverina Murray and Victoria are efficient and reliable, supporting the smooth movement of people and goods across the state border. Transport networks enable both longer-distance journeys and frequent local trips, particularly within closely linked cross-border (twin town) communities. Planning, policy, infrastructure and service delivery are increasingly aligned across New South Wales and Victoria, creating a more consistent and seamless experience for users. This coordinated approach strengthens economic links, improves access to jobs and services on both sides of the border, and supports the day-to-day travel needs of residents who regularly move between jurisdictions.	↗ Integrated ticketing solution ↗ Speed, reliability and frequency of public transport to Sydney, Melbourne and major Victorian centres ↗ Alignment of state roads across Victoria NSW border available to Performance Based Standard (PBS) vehicles
Well-located housing and successful places Support the delivery of well-located housing and successful places through sustainable transport options to address growthand enhance the vibrancy of town centres in the Riverina Murray	Across established towns, centres and villages in the Riverina Murray, housing and employment areas are increasingly supported by a range of sustainable transport options. Public transport, along with well-connected walking and cycling networks, provides viable alternatives to private vehicle use, helping to reduce car dependency while improving access to everyday destinations. Main streets in these communities evolve to better balance their dual roles as movement corridors and vibrant local places. Improvements enhance their attractiveness and functionality, creating more active, people-friendly environments while still supporting essential transport movements. In key growth areas, transport infrastructure is delivered early to ensure new communities are well connected from the outset. Timely provision of public transport services, alongside upgrades to the road network, improves access to jobs, housing and essential services. Safe and continuous walking and cycling infrastructure is available from day one, encouraging active travel as a practical choice for residents. Together, these approaches support more connected, liveable and sustainable communities across the Riverina Murray.	↗ Number of people with improved walking and cycling connections within urban centres ↗ Number of people with 15-minute access to local destinations and services – Traffic volumes in population centres (stabilise) ↗ Vibrancy of population centres, public transport and main streets ↗ Public and active transport usage

Objective	Outcomes	Indicators
A thriving and diversifying economy An efficient transport network to support a diversifying and growing economy, including tourism and freight movement.	The transport network across the Riverina Murray supports strong connections to regional, interstate and national gateways, including key links to Victoria and major ports, airports and distribution centres. It enables the efficient movement of goods and people, underpinning the region's economic growth and competitiveness. Freight demand is proactively planned for, with the network accommodating increasing volumes of heavy and commercial vehicles that support agricultural, industrial and freight-generating activities. Key freight routes are identified, protected and enhanced to ensure they remain efficient, reliable and fit for purpose. Freight-generating precincts and employment areas, such as industrial zones, logistics hubs and agricultural processing centres—are well connected to a high-performing transport network. This ensures safe, efficient and cost-effective access for all vehicle types, including higher productivity and oversize overmass (OSOM) vehicles. The network provides sufficient capacity and appropriate infrastructure for heavy vehicles, including upgraded corridors and improved access across the region. Dedicated and compliant rest areas are available at appropriate intervals, supporting safe operations and regulatory requirements. Existing gaps, constraints and pinch points are identified and addressed to improve network performance and usability. As a result, heavy vehicle operators experience a safer, more reliable and more efficient journey across the region. Beyond freight, the transport system also improves access to employment opportunities. People can reach major job centres—such as CBDs, hospitals, education facilities, shopping centres and industrial areas—using a range of transport modes. Transport also plays a key role in supporting the visitor economy. Improved public and active transport connections make it easier for visitors and workers to access key destinations, including tourism precincts and regional centres. Clear information and better integration of transport options help tourism and employment sectors promote accessible and connected experiences across the Riverina Murray.	↗ Capacity for key freight road and rail corridors across the Riverina Murray region ↗ Length of state road available to Performance Based Standard (PBS) 2B vehicles ↗ Speed, reliability and frequency of public transport to Sydney and Newcastle ↗ Vibrancy and economic activity on main streets ↗ Heavy vehicle rest stops are sufficient to meet requirements ↗ Public and active transport access to employment lands and population centres ↗ Public and active transport journey to work mode share ↗ Multimodal access, including active and public transport, for travel to major events and tourist destinations

Objective	Outcomes	Indicators
Safe transport network working towards zero trauma Reduce fatal and serious injuries on the transport network and address safety concerns for active and public transport passengers.	In the short term, safety on the Riverina Murray transport network is improved by targeting and upgrading existing high-risk crash locations and implementing consistent safety treatments across the network. Speed limits on local and low-volume rural roads are reviewed and adjusted to safer levels, alongside efforts to increase compliance so that road users adhere to speed limits. Measures are also introduced to manage and reduce risks associated with growing heavy vehicle movements, particularly in urban areas and at key intersections, ensuring safer conditions for all road users. At the same time, personal and perceived safety for customers using public transport is enhanced. These actions contribute to medium-term improvements in road safety outcomes, including a 50 per cent reduction in fatalities and a 30 per cent reduction in serious injuries by 2030. Over the longer term, the region works toward eliminating road trauma entirely, with the goal of achieving zero fatalities and serious injuries on the road network by 2050, supported by continued safety improvements across all modes.	↘ Number of people killed and seriously injured in crashes in the region ↘ Number of people killed and seriously injured ↘ Number of people killed and seriously injured on waterways ↗ AusRAP star rating on state roads

This is Page No 297 of the Business Paper presented Ordinary Meeting of Council 25th August 2026

Objective	Outcomes	Indicators
Reliable and Resilient network Reduce the impact of transport network shocks and stresses to service and network interruptions and proactively plan for future impacts.	The resilience of the Riverina Murray transport network is strengthened by identifying areas most exposed to disruption, including the time and cost impacts associated with shocks and stresses such as extreme weather events and network failures. Vulnerabilities across critical parts of the network are systematically assessed, with risks clearly understood and prioritised. Targeted interventions are implemented to address these risks, ensuring that key corridors, particularly important regional and cross-border routes, are more robust and able to maintain reliable connections during disruptions. Transport users are better informed and equipped to respond to network disruptions, with improved access to information that helps them plan and adapt their journeys during periods of stress on the network. At the same time, ageing infrastructure is proactively managed, maintained and renewed to support consistent levels of service, ensuring reliable access and travel across the region over the long term.	↘ Likelihood and duration of road and rail network closures and disruptions due to flood events ↘ Likelihood and duration of road and rail network closures and disruptions due to bushfire events ↗ Real-time journey information is available and accessible ↗ Reliability of rail freight ↗ Reliability of passenger rail services ↘ Number of public transport service disruptions

Objective	Outcomes	Indicators
Transition to net zero emissions Contribute to achieving the emissions reductions targets and improving environmental and health outcomes for the Riverina Murray.	**There is alignment with the NSW Government Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act[40] including:** • Fossil fuel-free Transport construction and maintenance by 2040 • Net zero in Transport's annual embodied emissions by 2045 • Net zero in transport sector emissions by 2050 • Net negative transport sector emissions by 2060 • Consideration of climate change risk in all our key, relevant decisions. **Specifically for the Riverina Murray, there is:** • A reduction in transport sector emissions through increased uptake of low emissions travel modes – walking, cycling, e-bikes, shared and on-demand – on direct, continuous, well-lit networks • Increased uptake of emerging technologies that support a move to lower emissions modes • Increasing use of sustainable fuels such as battery electric, biofuels and hydrogen by freight • Rapid electrification of the NSW regional private vehicle fleet with supporting infrastructure, such as the strategic regional electric vehicle charging network • A reduction in emissions from Transport operations through zero emission buses rollout.	↗ Number of zero emission buses serving the region ↗ Public and active transport usage ↗ Percentage of government fleet as EVs ↗ Projects demonstrating carbon was a factor in options assessment ↗ Emissions reduction per tonne kilometre per modes ↗ Zero and low emission freight kilometres ↗ Availability of EV charging infrastructure for public usage ↗ Availability of EV charging infrastructure for freight

40 NSW Government, 2023, *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act*

Draft Riverina Murray
Strategic Regional Integrated Network Plan

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13th August 2026

Ms Cassandra Ffrench
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Regional Integration
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Transport for NSW

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Dear Ms Ffrench

Re: Draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan (SRITP)

Hay Shire Council appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan (SRITP).

Overall, Council strongly supports the Draft Plan, its strategic intent and the long-term vision for improving transport outcomes across the Riverina Murray region. Council considers the document to be well prepared and provides an important framework for future investment, planning and collaboration.

Council particularly welcomes the Minister's Foreword and supports the vision that:

- no one should be forced to stay overnight because of limited public transport options;
- transport networks should be resilient to natural disasters and future shocks;
- ageing transport infrastructure should be maintained and upgraded with climate resilience in mind; and
- improved transport connections are fundamental to accessing health, education, employment and housing opportunities.

These aspirations closely align with the challenges and opportunities experienced within the Hay Shire.

Council also supports the seven objectives outlined within the Draft Plan and acknowledges that the SRITP will remain a living document capable of responding to emerging priorities.

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1. General Comments

Renewable Energy Zone Freight Task
While the Draft Plan recognises the significant increase in freight associated with the South West Renewable Energy Zone (SW REZ), particularly around Hay, Council believes greater emphasis is required on the ongoing impacts of this unprecedented freight task.

Although Oversize Overmass (OSOM) vehicle movements are acknowledged, the majority of road deterioration will result from the substantial increase in conventional heavy vehicle movements transporting construction materials, equipment, aggregates and general freight. The cumulative impact on the regional road network and "business as usual" traffic must be recognised and appropriately planned for.

Council requests the Plan include stronger commitments to:

- managing pavement deterioration resulting from the SW REZ construction program;
- ensuring adequate investment in maintenance and upgrades of state highways and regional roads;
- protecting local government road networks from unfunded impacts; and
- ensuring renewable energy investment does not divert funding from existing transport priorities and funding.

Public Transport
Hay remains significantly transport disadvantaged due to its remote location.

Hay is approximately 150 kilometres from Griffith and 280 kilometres from Wagga Wagga, requiring residents to travel considerable distances to access specialist medical services, tertiary education and other essential services.

Council strongly supports the recent enhancement to the NSW TrainLink service connecting Hay with Wagga Wagga. However, additional public transport connections to southern destinations, including Victoria (such as Echuca and connections into Melbourne), would significantly improve liveability, reduce transport disadvantage and support access to health, education and employment.

Improved services would also better achieve the Minister's vision that residents should be able to travel to essential services and return home on the same day.

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Council also notes that while it operates Community Transport services, current funding and guidelines arrangements restrict eligibility. Expanding eligibility and associated funding would substantially reduce transport disadvantage across Hay Shire.

Road Safety
Council strongly supports improved safety outcomes across the regional transport network.

The Sturt Highway, Cobb Highway and Mid-Western Highway should all be included within prioritised highway safety review programs.

Council particularly supports:

- additional overtaking opportunities;
- wider sealed shoulders;
- improved heavy vehicle rest areas;
- intersection improvements; and
- initiatives aimed at reducing regional road trauma.

Network Resilience
The 2022 flood events demonstrated the vulnerability of the regional transport network, with prolonged highway closures lasting several months.

Council strongly supports investment in improving corridor resilience and requests that detailed corridor resilience plans be prepared for all major highways within the region.

Transport for NSW has already undertaken significant work identifying vulnerable locations through the CJRIP program (2023-2025), and Council recommends these findings be used to develop prioritised programs of resilience upgrades.

Hay Bridge
Council considers upgrading the Hay Bridge to be one of the highest freight priorities within the region.

The bridge is currently limited to approximately 68.5 tonnes and cannot accommodate High Productivity Vehicles (HPVs). As a result, freight operators are required to decouple vehicle combinations, reducing efficiency and increasing transport costs.

Council requests that upgrading the Hay Bridge to a 160-tonne HPV standard be included as a strategic priority within the SRITP.

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Such an upgrade would:

- improve freight productivity;
- strengthen north-south freight connectivity;
- improve supply chain efficiency; and
- better support the growing freight demands associated with agriculture and the South West Renewable Energy Zone.

Active Transport
Hay Shire Council has been unsuccessful in securing funding for active transport infrastructure despite numerous funding applications.

Council requests greater support for smaller rural councils through dedicated funding programs that recognise the limited resources available to prepare competitive applications.

Improved footpaths and cycleways are essential to improving accessibility, safety and community health.

Net Zero Transition
Council supports the Plan's initiatives supporting the transition to net zero emissions.

Planning for electric buses, electric heavy vehicles and associated charging infrastructure, as well hydrogen heavy vehicles should form part of future transport investment to ensure regional communities are not left behind during this transition.

2. Specific Comments

Council provides the following comments on individual sections of the Draft Plan.

Page 15
Include the Sturt Highway, Cobb Highway and Mid-Western Highway within the prioritised safety review program.

Page 30
Council does not agree with the projected five per cent population decline for Hay Shire.

Given the significant investment associated with the South West Renewable Energy Zone, Council anticipates a stable population or modest growth (approximately 2-3%).

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Regardless of population growth, Hay remains one of regional NSW's most significant transport hubs, located at the intersection of three highways and at the centre of the South West Renewable Energy Zone. Continued investment in transport infrastructure is therefore critical.

Page 31
Council agrees Hay is transport disadvantaged.

Improved public transport services are required to reduce social isolation and improve access to employment, healthcare and education.

Page 34
Council supports recognition of the South West Renewable Energy Zone but remains concerned regarding the impact on road infrastructure and requests stronger commitments to managing these impacts.

Page 35
Tourism is Hay's second largest industry.

Maintaining resilient transport networks is essential to supporting visitor access and protecting the local economy.

Page 36
Council is unaware of the Cowal Gold Mine being located near Hay and requests this statement be reviewed.

Pages 38-39
Greater recognition should be given to the Mid-Western Highway as an important freight corridor linking Hay with the Newell Highway through major agricultural producing regions including Carrathool and Bland.

Page 41
Council welcomes the improved TrainLink service to Wagga Wagga and supports future services extending south towards Victoria.

Page 44
Council supports:

- upgrades to the Sturt, Cobb and Midwestern Highways;
- improved public transport;
- upgrading the Hay Bridge; and
- continued highway investment.

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Council also notes that Renewable Energy Zone funding should not replace planned maintenance funding for existing highways or reduce funding available to local government.

Page 45
Council is disappointed that upgrading the Hay Bridge is not identified.

Page 52
Council supports the objective of reducing transport disadvantage.

Page 56
Council requests expanded Community Transport eligibility and greater funding support for active transport infrastructure.

Page 57
Council requests reinstatement of an operational rail service to Hay be considered as a future freight opportunity.

Pages 58-60
Council reiterates its support for improved public transport connections to southern NSW and Victoria.

Page 61
Hay experiences higher socio-economic disadvantage, an ageing population and a First Nations population significantly above the NSW average. These factors reinforce the need for equitable transport access.

Page 69
Council notes it is proactively facilitating housing development through planning reforms, including removal of minimum lot size restrictions within Hay, and continues to work collaboratively with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

Page 70
Council welcomes the acknowledgement of the importance of coordinated land use and transport planning and the need to maintain and develop efficient and effective transport corridors across the region.

Council strongly encourages Transport for NSW to continue working collaboratively with local councils when identifying, protecting, planning and developing existing and future transport corridors. Local councils possess detailed knowledge of current and

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future land use, community needs, freight movements and infrastructure constraints, making them essential partners in achieving integrated planning outcomes.

This collaborative approach is consistent with, and supports the successful implementation of, Actions 4, 5, 16, 26, 28, 33, 40 and 46 identified throughout the Draft Plan.

Pages 73-77
Council requests specific inclusion of:

- the Sturt Highway;
- the Cobb Highway;
- the Midwestern Highway;
- the Hay Bridge as a freight constraint; and
- corridor planning for these key transport routes.

Page 79
Council requests the Hay Bridge be identified as a major freight constraint requiring upgrade to a 160-tonne HPV standard.

Pages 79-80
Council requests greater recognition of the cumulative impacts of conventional heavy vehicle traffic associated with the South West Renewable Energy Zone.

Page 81
Council supports the opportunities identified for tourism.

Page 82
Council supports additional overtaking lanes, particularly on the Sturt, Cobb and Midwestern Highways.

Pages 83-84
Council supports lower speed limits within town centres together with the other identified safety initiatives.

Page 86
Council supports initiatives aimed at reducing regional road trauma.

Page 88
Council supports additional heavy vehicle rest areas and improved network resilience to minimise lengthy detours following network disruptions.

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Pages 90-93
Council strongly supports improving network resilience and requests detailed corridor resilience plans for all major highways using the vulnerability assessments already completed by Transport for NSW through the CJRIP program.

Pages 96-100
Council supports the opportunities identified to assist the transition towards net zero emissions.

Page 102
Council reiterates its support for improved public transport services.

Page 103
Council supports the proposed future freight network.

Page 106 (Action 6)
Council requests consideration of restoring rail operations to Hay.

Page 108 (Action 43)
Council welcomes the reference to improved southern public transport and requests inclusion of a day-return service between Hay and Echuca.

Page 110 (Action 23)
Council again requests consideration of reinstating rail operations to Hay.

Page 118 (Action 50)
Council requests the Hay Bridge be included within the list of bridges identified for renewal or upgrade.

3. Conclusion

Hay Shire Council congratulates Transport for NSW on the preparation of the Draft Riverina Murray Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan and supports its overall direction.

Council considers that the Plan would be strengthened by greater recognition of Hay's strategic freight role, the impacts and opportunities associated with the South West Renewable Energy Zone, improved public transport connectivity, investment in network resilience, upgrades to the Hay Bridge, and continued investment in regional highway

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safety. Council is willing to work collaboratively with Transport for NSW to provide further detail on the specific matters raised in this submission.

Council acknowledges that the SRITP is intended to be a living document and looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with Transport for NSW during its implementation and the development and refinement of associated Action Plans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Should you require any additional information regarding Council's submission, please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 6990 1100 or via email at dwebb@hay.nsw.gov.au.

Yours faithfully,

David Webb
General Manager
Hay Shire Council

NSW Legislative Council

Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW

Final report

Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

July 2026

Report 65

Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW

Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

Final report

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Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

"July 2026"

Chair: Hon Mark Banasiak MLC

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Terms of reference

That Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW inquire into and report on the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales, and in particular:

(a) current and projected socioeconomic, cultural, agricultural and environmental impacts of projects within renewable energy zones in New South Wales including the cumulative impacts

(b) current and projected considerations needed with regards to fire risk, management and containment and potential implications on insurance for land holders and/or project proponents in and around Renewable Energy Zones

(c) the historical, current and projected future financial costs associated with construction and maintenance of large scale projects within Renewable Energy Zones

(d) proposed compensation to regional New South Wales residents impacted by Renewable Energy Zone transmission lines:

  (i) adequacy of compensation currently being offered for hosting transmission lines

  (ii) adequacy of the shared benefits being offered to neighbours of large scale renewable projects

  (iii) financial impact of compensation on the state's economy

  (iv) tax implications resulting from compensation received by impacted residents

(e) adequacy, and management of voluntary planning agreements and payments made to the LGAs impacted by Renewable Energy Zones

(f) current and projected supply and demand levels of manufactured products, raw materials, and human resources required for completion of Renewable Energy Zones and their source

(g) projected impact on visitation to regional areas with renewable energy zones resulting from changes to land use

(h) suitable alternatives to traditional renewable energy sources such as large-scale wind and solar

(i) adequacy of community consultation and engagement in the development of Renewable Energy Zones, and associated projects

(j) how decommissioning bonds are currently managed and should be managed as part of large scale renewable projects

(k) the role and responsibility of the Net Zero Commission and Commissioner in addressing matters set out above, and

(l) any other related matters.

The terms of reference for the inquiry were self-referred by the committee on 30 July 2024.

Committee details

Committee members

Hon Mark Banasiak MLC	Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party	*Chair*
Hon Emma Hurst MLC	Animal Justice Party	*Deputy Chair*
Ms Abigail Boyd MLC*	The Greens	
Hon Greg Donnelly MLC	Australian Labor Party	
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* The Hon Scott Barrett MLC replaced the Hon Aileen MacDonald MLC as a substantive member of the committee from 5 February 2026.
* The Hon Aileen MacDonald MLC substituted for the Hon Scott Barrett MLC from 6 February 2026 for the duration of the inquiry.

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Talina Drabsch, Director

Chair's foreword

The committee's examination of the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales began in 2024, with the first report tabled in August 2025.

The first report focused on the Central-West Orana (CWO) REZ, as it was the most progressed, and found there was an urgent need for better consultation between the government, renewable energy developers and the Central–West Orana community. The report also highlighted the need for a range of improvements, including the provision of mental health supports, a review of the use of Social Impact Assessments, that payments for land acquisition not be taxed, and that ecological protection and restoration priorities be identified for each REZ.

Fast-forward 12 months, and the committee has now visited each of the five Renewable Energy Zones in New South Wales: New England, Hunter–Central Coast, Illawarra, South West and Central–West Orana. We saw firsthand how renewable energy infrastructure impacts various landholders and heard from rural and regional communities about the effects of the rapid implementation of the REZ. While each REZ has its own unique uncertainties, there were a number of common issues raised by many stakeholders across the REZs, including how the rapid progress of the zones has sometimes come at a cost to regional interests. The committee was also mindful of the impacts of the REZs on neighbouring communities and those hosting renewable infrastructure projects outside of the zones.

Rural and regional communities are at the heart of this inquiry. They are the ones facing significant change to their communities, environment and, for some, their livelihood. The committee is grateful to each stakeholder who took the time to participate by providing submissions and/or attending the various hearings, as well as those landholders who welcomed the committee onto their properties, so we could witness firsthand the impacts of the REZs. We agree that the energy transition should happen *with* communities and not *to* them.

However, the reality has fallen short of this. Key among the committee's findings was that the government has presided over the roll-out of REZ without a coherent, enforceable, whole-of-government planning framework resulting in predictable and avoidable harm to rural and regional communities. Indeed, we found that EnergyCo, as the REZ infrastructure planner, has failed to perform its central coordinating role, particularly in relation to cumulative impact management, sequencing of development and coordination of infrastructure and services. Its community consultation, and that of renewable energy developers, has failed to provide affected communities with the capacity to meaningfully influence outcomes. As a consequence, the social licence for REZ development has substantially eroded in the eyes of a number of stakeholders.

To ensure accountability and leadership of the REZ development, we made two direct recommendations regarding EnergyCo, including that EnergyCo be subject to formal performance and accountability requirements.

We also found that local councils have been left to manage the consequences of state-led infrastructure expansion without sufficient authority, resources, or strategic direction. We recommend that the government provide recurrent funding to local councils in each Renewable Energy Zone to assist with resourcing pressures.

Further, the committee found that the benefits of REZ development have been unevenly distributed. The committee urges the government to expand the compensation and benefit-sharing framework to address land value and insurance impacts; to publish clear eligibility criteria for all community benefit and compensation programs; and to report each year on how community benefit funding has been allocated and expended within each REZ.

While this inquiry has concluded, the energy transition in rural and regional communities is ongoing. Individuals, farmers, families and host communities will continue to be impacted. The government must be accountable for this significant transition that is being experienced by many rural and regional communities throughout New South Wales. While our first report signaled that urgent action is needed, the government's response to the first report was characterised by broad support 'in principle', while failing to commit to substantive structural reform, indicating a gap between acknowledgment and action. This response is unsatisfactory, as it is devoid of clear timelines, deliverables and accountability mechanisms, which undermine confidence in its implementation and the government's commitment to ensuring rural and regional communities are part of the energy transition.

We urge the government to carefully consider its response to this report and have accordingly recommended that the government publish a detailed implementation plan for all accepted recommendations of this report within three months, as part of its response to this report. The plan should set out relevant timelines, responsible agencies and measurable outcomes, with the government reporting to New South Wales Parliament every six months on the progress of its implementation plan.

I thank my committee colleagues for their thoughtful engagement and contributions throughout this inquiry. I also thank the secretariat for their professional assistance.

Hon Mark Banasiak MLC
Committee Chair

Findings

Finding 1 **54**
Given Renewable Energy Zones are an essential part of New South Wales' energy transition, the NSW Government must find a way to deliver the Renewable Energy Zone rollout as a matter of urgency, while ensuring regional communities are meaningfully consulted, adequately supported through the transition, and able to share in its benefits.

Finding 2 **56**
The Renewable Energy Zone model, as implemented in New South Wales, has prioritised the rapid implementation of REZs, sometimes at a cost to regional interests. However, it is important to continue these measures to ensure the economic benefits, reliability and climate benefits.

Finding 3 **56**
The NSW Government has presided over the rollout of Renewable Energy Zones without a coherent, enforceable, whole-of-government planning framework, resulting in predictable and avoidable harm to rural and regional communities.

Finding 4 **56**
Renewable energy development poses a long-term change for some regional communities. There are challenges and opportunities to manage as a part of this to ensure that, on balance, it is a positive change with long lasting benefits.

Finding 5 **56**
While there are strong coordination and community benefit measures within REZ boundaries there are improvements that could be made to planning, appropriate safeguards, and demonstrated community benefits.

Finding 6 **57**
That Renewable Energy Zones development poses challenges for local services such as housing, road infrastructure, water security, waste, emergency services, and local economies. Some of these impacts can be addressed through individual planning consents and others require strategic coordination.

Finding 7 **58**
EnergyCo, as the infrastructure planner for the Renewable Energy Zones has failed to perform its central coordinating role, particularly in relation to:

- cumulative impact management
- sequencing of development
- coordination of infrastructure and services.

Finding 8 **59**
Local councils have been left to manage the consequences of state-led infrastructure expansion without sufficient authority, resources, or strategic direction.

Finding 9 **60**

The NSW Government has failed to adequately address known risks relating to agricultural productivity, land value impacts, and insurance availability, leaving landholders exposed to ongoing uncertainty.

Finding 10 **60**

The benefits of Renewable Energy Zone development are unevenly distributed, while the burdens are concentrated on host communities, resulting in structural inequity.

Finding 11 **62**

That the consultation process undertaken by EnergyCo, government agencies, and renewable energy developers has at times been procedural in nature and did not always provide affected communities with the capacity to meaningfully influence outcomes.

Finding 12 **62**

The consultation model could be improved by:

- whole of area rather than project-by-project engagement
- reducing information asymmetry
- earlier engagement before key decisions are made.

Finding 13 **62**

The State Significant Development framework, as applied to Renewable Energy Zone projects, systematically privileges proponents over affected communities and does not provide equitable procedural rights to landholders.

Finding 14 **63**

That the widespread use of non-disclosure agreements and individualised negotiations has actively undermined transparency, fragmented communities, and exacerbated social division.

Finding 15 **63**

Some witnesses felt that as a direct consequence of the failures in consultation and community engagement, social licence for Renewable Energy Zone development in affected regions has been materially eroded.

Finding 16 **65**

Social Impact Assessments need more consistency of application and adequate scoping, and are incapable of capturing cumulative and intangible impacts. These issues should be addressed via cumulative impact studies.

Finding 17 **67**

The extension of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW to renewable energy infrastructure has not provided a sufficient mechanism for resolving disputes arising from Renewable Energy Zone development.

Finding 18 **67**
The role of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW is currently inadequate for addressing the scale and complexity of Renewable Energy Zone-related grievances due to insufficient:

- enforcement powers
- systemic oversight capability
- capacity to address cumulative or cross-project issues.

Finding 19 **67**
That the NSW Government's reliance on the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW as a primary dispute resolution mechanism reflects that it has not established robust, proactive protections for affected communities.

Finding 20 **106**
The proposed economic benefits from Renewable Energy Zones are not consistent with the lived experience of some rural and regional communities.

Finding 21 **107**
That the land acquisition process in relation to renewable energy development is inadequate.

Finding 22 **108**
Decommissioning bonds are a necessary part of any significant infrastructure as they provide reassurance to the community regarding long-term environmental and economic impacts.

Finding 23 **109**
The Renewable Energy Zones and related infrastructure have caused significant concern in the community regarding fire risk and uncertainty around emergency service planning and responses.

Finding 24 **111**
The response of the NSW Government to the first report is characterised by broad support 'in principle' while failing to commit to substantive structural reform, indicating a gap between acknowledgment and action.

Finding 25 **111**
The response of the NSW Government to the first report lacked clear timelines, deliverables, and accountability mechanisms, undermining confidence in its implementation and the commitment to ensuring rural regional communities are part of the energy transition.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 **57**

That the NSW Government review each Renewable Energy Zone and the impacts on each regional community affected while each zone is rolled out.

Recommendation 2 **58**

That the NSW Government seek to amend the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* to expand and clarify EnergyCo's statutory mandate to include explicit responsibility for cumulative impact management, cross-agency coordination, and regional infrastructure and service planning, with enforceable obligations.

Recommendation 3 **58**

That the NSW Government ensure that EnergyCo is subject to formal performance and accountability requirements including:

- statutory reporting on cumulative impacts in each Renewable Energy Zone
- public reporting on mitigation measures and outcomes
- independent audit of its coordination role.

Recommendation 4 **59**

That the NSW Government require all relevant agencies to operate under a coordinated Renewable Energy Zone delivery framework, led by EnergyCo, with:

- defined roles and responsibilities
- mandatory data sharing
- joint planning obligations.

Recommendation 5 **59**

That the NSW Government provide recurrent funding to local councils in each Renewable Energy Zone to assist with resourcing pressures.

Recommendation 6 **61**

That the NSW Government expand the compensation and benefit-sharing framework to:

- include non-host neighbours
- address land value and insurance impacts
- ensure the equitable distribution of benefits
- publish clear eligibility criteria for all community benefit and compensation programs
- provide annual public reporting on the allocation and expenditure of community benefit funding within each Renewable Energy Zone.

Recommendation 7 **64**

That the NSW Government seek to find ways to ensure the consultation process where possible:

- occurs prior to key planning decisions
- demonstrates measurable influence on project design
- includes independent auditing of engagement outcomes
- requires proponents to publish a response explaining how community feedback has influenced project design or, where it has not, the reasons why.

Recommendation 8 **64**

That the NSW Government review the use of non-disclosure agreements in renewable energy project negotiations as they restrict community-wide transparency and inhibit effective consultation.

Recommendation 9 **64**

That the NSW Government review the State Significant Development framework with a view to:

- consider landholder rights
- ensure consultation timeframes are adequate
- consider independent peer review of impact assessments.

The review should specifically consider:

- cumulative impact assessment across multiple projects within a Renewable Energy Zone
- opportunities for earlier strategic planning prior to project assessment
- procedural fairness for directly affected landholders and neighbouring properties
- consistency in assessment requirements across Renewable Energy Zone projects.

Recommendation 10 **65**

That the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure review the Social Impact Assessment process so assessments are standardised, independently verified, and expanded to include consideration of:

- cumulative impacts
- social cohesion
- long-term regional effects.

Social Impact Assessments should be completed before transmission corridors and Renewable Energy Zone boundaries are finalised and should be updated as projects progress through the planning system.

Recommendation 11 **66**

That the NSW Government seek to establish a statutory Community Advocate for Renewable Energy Zone regions to:

- represent landholders
- provide independent advice
- participate in planning and assessment processes.

Recommendation 12 **67**

That the NSW Government undertake an urgent review of the role of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW in renewable energy infrastructure with a view to significantly expand its powers regarding:

- binding dispute resolution
- systemic investigations
- proactive monitoring.

The review should include an assessment of the effectiveness of cumulative impact management, community engagement, regional economic outcomes, housing impacts and the delivery of community benefit commitments.

Recommendation 13 **107**

That the NSW Government seek to strengthen the land acquisition process by:

- applying the principles of the Private Agreement Guideline so:
  - agreements are tailored to the specific landholder and project
  - agreements are fair, reasonable, and written in plain language
  - reasonable landholder costs associated with entering into or understanding the agreement are paid for by the applicant.
- developing a suite of standard documents, prescribed by regulations, that are required to initiate and complete the acquisition process
- providing an urgent update regarding the review of the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*
- including minimum standards for:
  - independent legal advice funded by proponents
  - valuation processes
  - mediation prior to compulsory acquisition
  - transparent compensation principles.

Recommendation 14 **108**

That the NSW Government reconsider their position regarding decommissioning bonds and consider applying mandatory bonds to new renewable energy developments including requirements for periodic review of financial assurance to reflect actual costs.

Recommendation 15 **110**

That the NSW Government provide additional funding to the local Aboriginal land councils in each Renewable Energy Zone to assist with complex land analysis and negotiations with large-scale developers together with requirements for early engagement in strategic planning, cultural heritage assessment and route selection before project locations are finalised.

Recommendation 16 **111**

That the NSW Government publish a detailed implementation plan for all accepted recommendations of this report within three months. The plan should set out relevant timelines, responsible agencies and measurable outcomes, with the government reporting to New South Wales Parliament every six months on the progress of its implementation plan. The implementation plan should:

- identify the lead agency responsible for each recommendation;
- specify implementation timeframes;
- include measurable performance indicators;
- provide annual public progress reports until implementation is complete.

Conduct of inquiry

The terms of reference for the inquiry were self-referred by the committee on 30 July 2024.

The committee received 157 submissions and one supplementary submission.

The committee held seven public hearings: two at Parliament House in Sydney, one in Dubbo, one in Armidale, one in Singleton, one in Wollongong and one in Hay.

The committee also conducted site visits to:

- the property of Mr Nigel Roberts, in the Central-West Orana region
- the property of Mr and Mrs James and Amanda Bowman, in the Central-West Orana region
- ACEREZ site in Merotherie, located in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone
- ACEN Australia site in Uralla, located in the New England Renewable Energy Zone
- a property in Uralla in the New England region
- Waratah Super Battery Project site in Colongra, located in the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone
- Hunter Zero Manufacturing Centre of Excellence in TAFE NSW Tighes Hill Campus, located in the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone
- the property of Mr Michael Holz in Mitchell's Flat, located in the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone
- Dinawan sub-station in Bundure, located near the South West Renewable Energy Zone
- the property of Mr Tom Hooke in Wanganella, located in the South West region.

Inquiry related documents are available on the committee's website, including submissions, hearing transcripts, tabled documents and answers to questions on notice.

Glossary

AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
CIS	Cumulative Impact Studies
CoREM	Coalition of Renewable Energy Mayors
CWO	Central-West Orana
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EnergyCo	Energy Corporation of NSW
EWON	Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
GW	Gigawatt
HCC	Hunter-Central Coast
KV	Kilovolt
IPC	Independent Planning Commission
LTESA	Long Term Energy Service Agreements
NE	New England
NEM	National Energy Market
NDA	Non-disclosure agreements
OSOM	Oversize and overmass
P2R	Port to REZ
REZ	Renewable Energy Zones
SBP Scheme	Strategy Benefit Payments Scheme
SEAR	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Report
SEPP	State Environment Planning Policy
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SSD	State Significant Development
SSI	State Significant Infrastructure
SW	South West
TfNSW	Transport for NSW
VPA	Voluntary Planning Agreement

Chapter 1 Developments since the first report

The energy transition in New South Wales is underway, with the government focused on moving from coal-fired power stations to renewable energy sources. The Renewable Energy Zones (REZ), established in 2020, are presented as a key part of this transition. This inquiry examines the impact of REZs on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales. The initial report focused on the state's first REZ - Central-West Orana, whereas this final report considers all five Renewable Energy Zones in New South Wales. It complements the first report and references issues or terms from it as relevant.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the first report and the government's response to its findings and recommendations. It then provides an update for all five REZs, including outcomes of the government's Regional Major Infrastructure Studies and other relevant information that was not included in the first report.

First report

1.1 The inquiry was established to examine the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales. Following initial hearings in mid-2025, including a hearing held in the Central-West Orana REZ (CWO REZ), the committee tabled the first report on 21 August 2025.[1] The first report focused on the unfolding situation in the CWO REZ due to it being the most progressed REZ compared to the other zones.

1.2 The first report included an overview of the planned path to energy transition in New South Wales which resulted in the creation of the five REZs, namely the Central-West Orana, New England, Hunter-Central Coast, Illawarra and South West REZs. It outlined the key policies, legislative frameworks and organisations that underpin and will support this transition.

1.3 The first report also contained an overview of:

- the five REZs, including details of their proposed energy output and associated energy projects
- the distinction between network capacity and generation capacity
- proposed economic and social benefits for the REZs
- other infrastructure and related government services.

1.4 The first report made six findings and five recommendations. It specifically addressed key concerns that had been raised by inquiry participants in relation to the CWO REZ, including: the negative impacts of the CWO REZ on the region;

[1] Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025).

the inadequacy of consultation between the government, renewable energy developers and the CWO community; and the need for a cumulative impact study.

1.5 Some of the other findings and recommendations addressed the following issues.

- Concerns regarding the uncertainty of numerous projects currently in the planning system in the CWO REZ and its cumulative impacts.
- Concerns about the potential impact on the CWO REZ's agricultural industry, with calls for the government to continue to monitor any impacts.
- Landowners who neighbour renewable energy developments and are anxious about the suitability of, and ability to access, public liability insurance for their properties.
- Calls for the government to review its use of Social Impact Assessments.
- Calls for the government to investigate options to ensure payments for land acquisition are not taxed.
- Delivery of mental health support to landowners who are affected by the CWO REZ.
- Identifying ecological protection and restoration priorities for each REZ and encouraging developers to contribute to nature positive environmental regional outcomes.

Government response

1.6 The government responded to the committee's first report on 24 November 2025. In its response, the government advised that 'it supports or supports in principle' all five recommendations of the committee's first report. The government specifically noted its support for:

- the importance of assessing and mitigating cumulative impacts within and surrounding the state's REZs, adding that Regional Major Infrastructure Studies have been conducted for the CWO REZ and the New England REZ (NE REZ) (an overview of these studies is provided in the next section)
- delivering mental health support for all landholders affected by property acquisition
- working with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions to explore solutions to improve outcomes for impacted landholders to ensure that payments for land acquisition are not taxed
- addressing ecological protection and restoration priorities for each REZ through its Conservation Investment Strategies for the CWO and Hunter-

Central Coast REZ and actively engaging with renewable energy proponents to align with these strategies.[2]

1.7 In addition to the government's response, Energy Corporation of NSW, otherwise known as EnergyCo, provided a further update as part of their evidence at the final Sydney hearing on 31 March 2026. As outlined in the first report, EnergyCo is the statutory authority responsible for the delivery and coordination of all REZs and priority transmission projects. They oversee investment for the network infrastructure and lead community and stakeholder engagement activities to support delivery of the REZs.[3]

1.8 Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo informed the committee that the following government measures address some of the concerns regarding community benefits that had been raised in the first report:

- the announcement of $66 million in community employment benefits
- $20 million towards critical water infrastructure in Coolah and Dunedoo (towns located in the CWO REZ)
- $11 million for worker housing in Mudgee (located in the CWO REZ)
- additional mental health support for both landholders and other members of the community in REZs.[4]

Progress of the Renewable Energy Zones

1.9 The first report included an overview of the five Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) across the state: Central-West Orana, New England, Hunter-Central Coast, Illawarra and South West.[5] The location of each REZ is shown in Figure 1 below.

[2] Correspondence from the Hon Penny Sharpe, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, to the Clerk of the Parliaments, providing government response to the inquiry into the Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report, 21 November 2025.

[3] Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), p 8.

[4] Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 56.

[5] Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), pp 13-16.

Figure 1 Renewable Energy Zone locations

Source: EnergyCo, Renewable Energy Zones Locations (25 March 2026) https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/living-in-a-renewable-energy-zone/what-is-a-rez/renewable-energy-zone-locations.

1.10 This section provides a project update for each of these REZs since the first report was published. Key issues regarding the planning and development of the REZs and potential opportunities are discussed later in this report.

Background and key terms

1.11 One of the key recommendations of the first report was that the NSW Government should urgently conduct an independent cumulative impact study on the CWO REZ and ensure identified impacts are addressed.[6]

1.12 This section will discuss the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies (the Studies) that have been completed for the CWO and NE REZ. At the time of writing, no Studies have been completed for the remaining REZs.

1.13 The Studies aim to provide 'a point in time analysis' of the potential impacts and opportunities associated with proposed major infrastructure projects from a range of sectors including energy, mining, manufacturing and national

[6] Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), recommendation 1.

infrastructure, in consultation with local councils, government agencies and industry.[7]

1.14 The CWO REZ Studies were completed by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Water Group, with the assistance of EnergyCo.[8] The NE REZ Studies were completed by EnergyCo.[9]

1.15 'Generation capacity' and 'network capacity' are terms used throughout this report and were outlined in the first report.[10] 'Network capacity' refers to how much electricity the network can carry and is the maximum load the system can handle without overloading. On the other hand, 'generation capacity' describes how much electricity is produced, especially from renewable energy sources such as solar and wind. EnergyCo likened network capacity to 'how wide the pipes are that transport water'[11] whereas generation capacity is like 'water flowing from a tap—the more you open the tap, the more water you get'.[12] In its community update fact sheet, EnergyCo explained that as renewable energy is variable, generation capacity is larger than network capacity, adding that not all sources run at once, and some energy is stored in the REZ.[13]

Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone

1.16 This section will provide a brief update on the CWO REZ region regarding key projects, outcomes from the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, and relevant government financial support since the publication of the first report in August 2025.

1.17 According to EnergyCo's community update in November 2025, construction of the CWO REZ transmission project is underway with progress towards key infrastructure milestones for 2026. These projects include 'stringing between

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7 NSW Climate and Energy Action, *Regional Major Infrastructure Study – Central West Orana* (2026), https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/major-state-projects/electricity-transition/Regional-Major-Infrastructure-Study.

8 Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 65.

9 Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 65.

10 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), pp 16-17.

11 EnergyCo, *Community Update Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone*, November 2025, p 3.

12 EnergyCo, *Community Update Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone*, November 2025, p 3

13 EnergyCo, *Community Update Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone*, November 2025, p 3.

towers', that is the installation of overhead powerlines onto transmission towers, and the delivery of synchronous condensers, which are large rotating machines that help stabilise the electricity grid.[14] In April 2026, the construction of the first transmission tower in the REZ was completed.[15]

1.18 As mentioned in the first report, EnergyCo has granted access rights to 10 generation development projects, allocating 7.15 gigawatt (GW) of the 7.7 GW generation capacity available in the region.[16] At the time of writing, no other projects have been granted access rights.

Regional Major Infrastructure Studies – Central-West Orana

1.19 The Regional Major Infrastructure Studies for the CWO REZ identified three areas of focus:

- population, workforce, housing and accommodation
- water
- waste management.

1.20 Table 1 sets out a sample of potential impacts for the region, noting that the Studies indicated that these are based on an assumption that all proposed major projects (including non-energy related projects) will be delivered.

Table 1 Impacts identified by the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies – Central-West Orana[17]

Focus area	Potential impacts
Population, workforce, housing and accommodation	• Temporary population in the region to increase to 6,372, with short-term worker accommodation required.

[14] EnergyCo, *Community Update Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone*, November 2025, p 3. For further information about synchronous condensers, see: NSW Climate and Energy Action, *System strength,* https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/regulation-and-policy/system-strength#:~:text=Synchronous%20condensers%20are%20large%20rotating,voltage%20control%20and%20fault%20recovery, 2026.

[15] EnergyCo, *Landmark moment for Australia's first renewable energy zone*, Media release, 02 April 2026. See also: EnergyCo, *Community Update Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone*, November 2025, p 2.

[16] Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), p 27. See also: EnergyCo, *Community Update Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone*, November 2025, p 6.

[17] NSW Government, *Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, Central West Orana*, Fact Sheet (December 2025), pp 2-4.

	• Sufficient housing is available in some areas such as Dubbo and Gulgong. However additional housing will be needed in Mudgee.
Water	• Many local water utilities have limited capacity to provide potable, or drinkable, water and wastewater servicing to projects. As such, developers will need to treat their own water and wastewater on-site rather than use local water facilities operated by councils. • There is likely to be enough water entitlement[18] in the region to meet anticipated requirements for water, but developers are required to confirm availability in the water sources closest to their projects and to plan for dry periods.
Waste management	• The peak periods of construction activity (2026-2031) could see waste volumes rise to more than 340,000 tonnes per year across area, with 70,000 tonnes attributed to renewable energy projects. This increase will be driven primarily by construction and demolition waste, organic waste from land clearing, and packaging materials. • Existing waste infrastructure is not evenly distributed across the region and is not located near project sites in some instances. Developers will need to consider this during the development assessment phase.

1.21 In response to the Studies, the government indicated that it is already taking action in response to the issues raised including:

- funding $128 million for the upgrade of roads and intersections from the Port of Newcastle to the Central West
- awarding the first $66 million of $128 million in grants under the Community and Employment Benefit Program to improve liveability and community amenity in the CWO REZ
- investigating and planning worker accommodation to house new workers

[18] Water entitlements are rights to an ongoing share of water within a system: Department of Planning and Environment, 'Water trading in coastal NSW', Fact Sheet, July 2022, p 3.

- developing future chapters of the *Waste and Circular Infrastructure Plan*[19] to understand the barriers regional communities are facing and to address their unique waste and landfill needs
- working with the Commonwealth and other states and territories on a national solar panel recycling scheme.[20]

New England Renewable Energy Zone

1.22 The committee visited the New England Renewable Energy Zone (NE REZ) and held a hearing in Armidale in July 2025. This section provides an overview of project updates regarding the NE REZ and outcomes from the relevant Regional Major Infrastructure Studies.

1.23 Since the first report, a key focus of the government has been the network infrastructure project. Some developments are noted below.

- Early-stage assessment of a new network infrastructure project, noting that some infrastructure will need to be developed outside the NE REZ boundary to enable connection to the main transmission network.
- Completion of updates to the transmission corridor between Bayswater Power Station near Muswellbrook (Hunter–Central Coast region) and the Central South Hub (substation, a facility where electricity is converted from one voltage level to another[21]) near Walcha (within the NE REZ).
- Finalisation of the community feedback process for the transmission corridor update.
- Delivery of a competitive procurement process to appoint a network operator for the NE REZ network infrastructure project. As explained in the first report, the network operator designs, constructs, finances, operates and maintains new transmission lines and related infrastructure, such as energy hubs (substations), that will connect the REZ to the state's grid.[22]

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19 The Waste and Circular Infrastructure Plan is a planning document by the NSW Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) that guides the government's decision-making and investment in critical waste infrastructure including energy from waste. Source: NSW EPA, *Waste and Circular Infrastructure Plan,* https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/Your-environment/Waste/waste-and-circular-infrastructure-plan, 2026.

20 NSW Government, *Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, Central West Orana*, Fact Sheet (December 2025), p 2.

21 EnergyCo, *What are electricity infrastructure projects?*, 2 June 2026, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/electricity-infrastructure-projects#:~:text=Substations%20and%20switching%20stations%20are,safety%20features%20and%20control%20systems.

22 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), p 27. See also: EnergyCo, *New England REZ*

Regional Major Infrastructure Studies - New England

1.24 The Regional Major Infrastructure Studies for the New England Renewable Energy Zone identified five areas of focus:

- training and skills
- workforce accommodation
- water and wastewater
- waste and circular economy
- local supply chains.[23]

1.25 Table 2 sets out a sample of potential impacts of the REZ in relation to the New England region, should all proposed major projects (including non-energy related projects) be delivered.

Table 2 Potential impacts of the NE REZ as identified by the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies[24]

Areas of focus	Potential impacts
Training and skills	• While the NE REZ is expected to bring more than 6,000 full-time construction jobs and 2,000 ongoing operational jobs, the capacity of the existing regional workforce is limited, with low rates of unemployment across the region.
Workforce accommodation	• Accommodation is required for about 4,800 non-local construction workers at peak construction, as a significant proportion of workers will travel to the region. • Rental vacancy rate is low therefore temporary workforce accommodation will be needed to accommodate additional workers and help minimise pressure on existing housing and short-term accommodation.
Water and wastewater	• Water is required for the construction of REZ related infrastructure, including workforce accommodation.

network infrastructure project, 2026, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne#-next-steps-.

[23] NSW Government, *Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, New England*, Fact Sheet (December 2025), pp 1-4.

[24] NSW Government, *Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, New England*, Fact Sheet (December 2025), pp 1-4.

	• Construction activities will also produce wastewater which will need to be managed and treated. • Developers will need to provide solutions to address increased water needs and additional water treatment infrastructure may be required in local government areas with more development.
Waste and circular economy	• Most waste will be generated during construction of major projects in and around the REZ. Renewable energy-specific waste streams (such as solar panels, wind turbine blades and batteries) will contribute a smaller proportion of total waste but present greater management challenges due to their complexity and recycling opportunities. • Without intervention, the volume of waste generated from major projects may exceed the existing capacity of local waste infrastructure, such as landfills, which are typically set up to manage residential waste. • Local waste systems may need to be upgraded to manage expected volumes and types of waste, especially during peak construction.
Local supply chains	• Demand for goods and services, including construction services, transportation and plant and equipment hire, is expected to increase and local industries in key supply chains are well placed to support the delivery of the REZ. However, some specialist skills and equipment will be needed from outside the region. • While there are some challenges, materials businesses are well placed to adapt to supply major infrastructure projects. However, without additional support, small businesses may not be equipped to service new large-scale projects in addition to existing clients.

1.26 According to the government, government agencies will use the findings of the Studies to develop the NE REZ in a way that supports growth and sustainable demand for skills, services and infrastructure across the region in the years to come.[25] A sample of the potential opportunities and ways to ensure they are realised, as outlined in the Studies, is below.

[25] NSW Government, *Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, New England*, Fact Sheet (December 2025), p 1.

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- Developing new courses at existing training facilities like the University of New England and TAFE.
- Building workforce accommodation to help provide for future growth by providing homes that can later become permanent residences for the community or providing utilities connections for future development.
- Continuing to ensure that community benefit schemes are providing legacy benefits to regional communities including improving water treatment capacity.
- Developing a regional waste facility database and a digital system to track project waste and recovery and coordinate waste planning across the region.
- Supporting small and medium businesses to partner and tender for work on large-scale projects.[26]

Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone

1.27 In September 2025, the committee conducted site visits in the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone (HCC REZ) and held a hearing in Singleton.

1.28 The HCC REZ will be the first Renewable Energy Zone in Australia to upgrade existing distribution poles and wires. According to the government, this approach 'significantly reduces the impacts on surrounding communities and the environment'.[27]

1.29 As mentioned in the first report, the HCC REZ's intended network capacity is one GW. Further information regarding the HCC REZ and its intended network capacity is noted below.

- The initial intended network capacity would be sufficient to cater for the expected generation in the area given the variable nature of wind and solar energy generation.[28]

[26] NSW Government, *Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, New England*, Fact Sheet (December 2025), pp 2-4.

[27] EnergyCo, *Upgrades to existing network proposed for Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone network infrastructure project*, 17 December 2025, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/news/major-energy-infrastructure-upgrade-approved-hunter.

[28] EnergyCo, *Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/hunter-central-coast-rez, 24 June 2025.

- The network capacity of the HCC REZ is likely to increase over time with the retirement of coal-fired power stations, re-purposing of mining land and the growth of offshore wind.[29]
- The intended network capacity does not include the Hunter Transmission Project (HTP), which would deliver up to eight GW of additional transfer capacity from inland REZs to support the decarbonisation of existing industries (such as Tomago Aluminium located in the HCC region) and the growth of emerging technologies (such as hydrogen).[30]

1.30 The HTP is a major infrastructure project in addition to the REZs. Located primarily in the HCC REZ, the HTP is designed to carry electricity from the CWO and NE REZs to the rest of the state.[31]

1.31 At the time of writing, other network project updates in the HCC REZ include:

- the building of two new energy hubs (substations)
- upgrades to 85 km of sub-transmission lines
- augmentations to existing infrastructure.[32]

1.32 In addition, as mentioned in the first report, there are several state road intersections that involve the movement of oversize and/overmass vehicles from the Port of Newcastle to the CWO and NE REZ.[33] These routes use roads within the HCC REZ.[34]

Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone

1.33 The Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone, known as the state's first 'urban REZ', has an intended network capacity of one GW. However, the capacity of the Illawarra

[29] EnergyCo, *Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/hunter-central-coast-rez, 24 June 2025.

[30] EnergyCo, *Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/hunter-central-coast-rez, 24 June 2025.

[31] EnergyCo, *Our Projects*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects, 24 March 2026.

[32] EnergyCo, *Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone Network Infrastructure Project*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/hunter-central-coast-rez/network-infrastructure-project, 11 December 2025.

[33] Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), p 22. See also: Submission 44, NSW Government, p 19.

[34] Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 3.

REZ may increase over time with the growth of emerging industries such as green hydrogen and green steel manufacturing.[35]

1.34 According to the government, the Illawarra REZ will integrate consumer energy resources such as rooftop solar systems, home batteries and community-scale batteries. In addition, spare government land and commercial roof space will be used to minimise impacts on surrounding communities and the environment.[36]

1.35 Further, it is noted that the Illawarra REZ will underpin the growth of new low carbon industries that could service both domestic and export markets as the world decarbonises and shifts towards green manufacturing.[37]

1.36 The committee held a hearing in Wollongong in October 2025. During the hearing, a number of stakeholders discussed the impact of the development of floating offshore wind as a source of renewable energy in the region.[38] This issue will be discussed in the following chapters.

South West Renewable Energy Zone

1.37 The South West REZ (SW REZ) has an intended generation capacity of 3.56 GW, in which four renewable energy and storage projects have been granted access rights.[39] In addition, the SW REZ will include two transmission lines: Project Energy Connect and Victoria NSW Interconnector West, connecting the electricity grids in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.[40]

1.38 In February 2026, the committee conducted site visits in the SW REZ and held a hearing in Hay.

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35 EnergyCo, *Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/illawarra-rez, 16 March 2026.

36 EnergyCo, *Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/illawarra-rez, 16 March 2026.

37 EnergyCo, *Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/illawarra-rez, 16 March 2026.

38 See for example: See for example: Submission 43, Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc, pp 2-11; Evidence, Mr Mark Horne, Individual, 29 October 2025, pp 10-11; Evidence, Ms Madeleine Holme, Good for the Gong, 29 October 2025, p 21; Evidence, Ms Yael Stone, Founding Director, Hi Neighbour, 29 October 2025, p 21.

39 EnergyCo, *South West Renewable Energy Zone Access Scheme*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/industry/access-schemes/south-west-rez-access-scheme, 23 April 2025.

40 Tabled document, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC, *Transgrid and Elecnor Australia - EnergyConnect Community Newsletter - dated Q4 2025*, p 1; Submission 121, Murrumbidgee Council, p 2.

First Nations community engagement initiatives

1.39 In addition to other community engagement activities that were outlined in the first report, the government highlighted their commitment to genuine and meaningful engagement with local Aboriginal communities as part of the energy transition.[41]

1.40 Under section 4 of the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (EII Act) (discussed in the first report), the Minister is required to issue guidelines about consultation and negotiation with the local Aboriginal community in relation to relevant projects for the purposes of increasing their employment and income opportunities.[42] The Minister for Energy and the Consumer Trustee (ASL, previously called AEMO Services)[43] must take the First Nations Guidelines into account when exercising their functions under the EII Act.[44]

1.41 The First Nations Guidelines consist of two parts: General First Nations Guidelines and the Region-specific First Nations Guidelines. The General First Nations Guidelines aim to:

- ensure the economic benefits of the energy transition under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (discussed in further detail in the next section) are shared with local Aboriginal businesses and communities
- provide support for Aboriginal people and communities to build skills and capacity to take advantage of opportunities into the future
- provide details about best practice approaches to consultation and negotiation with local Aboriginal communities.[45]

1.42 The Region-specific First Nations Guidelines provide details about local engagement protocols, and identify the goals and aspirations of the local Aboriginal community and their preferred method of engagement with project proponents and the government.[46] The Region-specific Guidelines aim to inform workforce development and job opportunities for local Aboriginal communities and develop pathways for local Aboriginal businesses to access tendering

41 Submission 44, NSW Government, pp 12-13.

42 *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020,* s 4(1).

43 For further information regarding the Consumer Trustee, please see Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), p 12.

44 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 13. See also s 4 (1) of the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 (EII Act)*.

45 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 13.

46 NSW Climate and Energy Action (NSW Government), *First Nations Guidelines* (17 May 2024), https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/major-state-projects/electricity-infrastructure-roadmap/first-nations.

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opportunities and secure work packages within the development and operation of the REZs.[47]

1.43 At the time of writing, region-specific Guidelines for the CWO, HCC and SW REZs have been published. Planning for the development of Guidelines for the NE REZ has commenced. [48]

1.44 Further, the government advised that they engage and collaborate as part of REZ coordination and delivery through stakeholder forums such as the First Nations Group.[49] A First Nations Outcomes team was established within EnergyCo to work with First Nations stakeholders, such as local Aboriginal land councils and communities, to ensure benefits of the energy transition are secured for First Nations people.[50]

Legislative and policy updates

1.45 The first report included an overview of the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (the Roadmap), which set out the government's plan for the state's energy transition.[51] Since the Roadmap was published in 2020 there have been further reviews examining the state's progress in its energy transition. This section sets out some of these and includes key policy and legislative updates relevant to this inquiry, including the *Energy Legislation Amendment Act 2025*.

1.46 In 2023, the independent report, *Electricity Supply and Reliability Check Up*, was published. The report aimed to help the government understand how the energy market and policy landscape has evolved since the Roadmap. Following the Check Up, the government implemented several recommendations including delivery of the first round of grants under the Community and Employment Benefit Program in the CWO REZ (as discussed in paragraph 1.8); amendments to the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017 to introduce a new biodiversity offsetting pathway for major energy transition projects; and publishing the Transmission Planning Review.[52]

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47 NSW Climate and Energy Action (NSW Government), *First Nations Guidelines* (17 May 2024), https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/major-state-projects/electricity-infrastructure-roadmap/first-nations.

48 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 13. See also: NSW Climate and Energy Action (NSW Government), *First Nations Guidelines* (17 May 2024), https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/major-state-projects/electricity-infrastructure-roadmap/first-nations.

49 Submission 44, NSW Government, pp 12-13.

50 Submission 44, NSW Government, pp 12-13.

51 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), p 1.

52 NSW Climate Energy and Action [NSW Government], *Electricity Supply and Reliability Check Up* (2026), https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-

1.47 The 'Transmission Planning Review' was commissioned by the government and was finalised in September 2025. The Review considered the best way to coordinate transmission planning between Transgrid,[53] EnergyCo, Australian Energy Market Operator,[54] and ASL.[55] The government published its response in October 2025. A key aspect to implementation of the Review's recommendations was the *Energy Legislation Amendment Act 2025* which passed Parliament on 21 November 2025. The next section discusses the aims of the Act in more detail.

Energy Legislation Amendment Act 2025

1.48 The *Energy Legislation Amendment Act 2025* (ELA Act) amended six pieces of legislation.[56] This section discusses the context leading to the creation of the ELA Act and key objectives in relation to this inquiry.

1.49 According to the Hon Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister of Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, the Transmission Planning Review (the Review) found that the current planning and approval arrangements for REZs were 'overly complex, creating uncertainty for investors, project proponents and host communities. This leads to delay and, in the end, higher costs for New South Wales electricity consumers'.[57]

progress/regulation-and-policy/electricity-supply-and-reliability-check. See also: Environment and Heritage, *About strategic offset delivery agreements*, https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity-offsets-scheme/strategic-offset-delivery-agreements/about-strategic-offset-delivery-agreements, 2026.

53 Transgrid is the manager and operator of the high voltage electricity transmission network in New South Wales and is part of the National Electricity Market (NEM). See also: Farrier Swier Consulting Pty Ltd, (appointed by the Minister for Energy under section 21(2)(b) of the *Energy and Utilities Administration Act 1987*), *NSW transmission planning review Final Report*, 8 September 2026, pp 31-32.

54 Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) is the national agency which administers and operates the gas and electricity markets and power systems within the NEM: AEMO, 'Who we are', (2025), https://aemo.com.au/about/who we-are.

55 NSW Climate and Energy Action, *NSW Transmission Planning Review 2025,* https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/regulation-and-policy/nsw-transmission-planning-review-2025, 2026.

56 The *Energy Legislation Amendment Act 2025* amends the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020*, the *Electricity Supply Act 1995*, the Electricity Supply (General) Regulation 2014, the *Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992*, the *National Electricity (New South Wales) Act 1997* and the *Residential (Land Lease) Communities Act 2013*.

57 The Hon Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister of Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, Second reading speech: Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, 14 October 2025.

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1.50 The Review made a number of recommendations for immediate reform. In her second reading speech for the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill, Minister Sharpe emphasised that the bill aimed to implement some of these so as to:

- streamline authorisation of Renewable Energy Zone network infrastructure projects to reduce delays and give project proponents the certainty they need to invest
- strengthen the regulatory arrangements governing how new networks connect to existing networks
- clarify who is responsible for planning and delivering system strength in Renewable Energy Zones in New South Wales.[58]

1.51 Further, Minister Sharpe indicated that the bill would deliver on 'these important reforms to give the certainty needed for new renewable energy zones to proceed'.[59]

1.52 The Minister also acknowledged this committee's inquiry during her second reading speech, emphasising that the legislation would address some of the concerns about the adequacy of consultation processes and pressures on regional development that were raised in the first report:

> The bill furthers the Government's efforts to date to ensure that communities who are supporting the energy transition are properly recognised and supported. This bill expands eligibility and supports delivery of benefit sharing programs so that communities and landholders adjacent to new infrastructure and renewable energy zones can benefit. The bill also allows investment in local employment, skills and training across impacted regions, not just for workers directly affected by the transition but for anyone seeking new skills or job opportunities.[60]

1.53 In addition, the bill expanded the types of infrastructure covered by Long-Term Energy Service Agreements[61] and provided more flexibility regarding the types of landowners who can receive payments through the Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme.[62]

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58 The Hon Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister of Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, Second reading speech: Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, 14 October 2025.

59 The Hon Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister of Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, Second reading speech: Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, 14 October 2025.

60 The Hon Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister of Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, Second reading speech: Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, 14 October 2025.

61 For more information see: Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), p 5.

62 For more information see: Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales - First report* (2025), p 19.

1.54 The bill passed Parliament on 21 November 2025.

Committee comment

1.55 The purpose of the committee's first report was to focus on the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (CWO REZ) as it is the most progressed zone. The committee visited the CWO REZ in May 2025, conducting site visits and holding a hearing in Dubbo. The first report considered the key issues reported by stakeholders from the region including local councils, landowners, farmers, residents, community organisations and renewable energy developers. The first report included six findings and five recommendations.

1.56 The government responded to the first report in November 2025 and acknowledged that it is committed to continuous improvement and will continue to work with communities across all REZs.

1.57 The committee has subsequently travelled to each of the four remaining Renewable Energy Zones. This report continues the committee's important work of collating the evidence received from rural and regional communities across the other REZs. This introductory chapter provided brief project updates for each REZ, including the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies and other relevant information regarding the government's progress towards the energy transition. The next chapters will address issues raised across the REZs collectively, whereby issues regarding the planning and development of the REZs and their potential opportunities are examined.

1.58 The committee recognises that the transition to a more diverse and secure energy system presents significant opportunities for New South Wales. Renewable Energy Zones have the potential to support investment, improve energy reliability, create employment, strengthen regional economies and contribute to the state's long-term energy security and emissions reduction objectives. Realising these benefits, however, depends upon effective planning, genuine community engagement and a coordinated whole-of-government approach that ensures regional communities share in the opportunities created by the transition.

1.59 The committee notes that the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies represent an important step in identifying cumulative pressures associated with Renewable Energy Zones. However, stakeholders questioned whether the measures identified through those studies have been implemented consistently or at sufficient scale to address the impacts being experienced by regional communities.

Chapter 2 Implementation and development of the Renewable Energy Zones

The implementation and development of the Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) has transformed rural and regional communities, through rapid large-scale planning and the construction of renewable energy infrastructure across New South Wales. This chapter examines issues around the strategic planning of the REZs, including leadership and coordination of the rollout, as well as its size, scale and impact on landholders. It then considers the mixed experiences of community consultation and engagement, and the inherent power imbalances involved, before exploring ways in which these processes could be improved. Finally, this chapter discusses the cumulative impact of the zones on local services, and the particular challenges faced by local councils.

Strategic planning issues

2.1 Many stakeholders in rural and regional communities throughout the Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) acknowledged that the energy transition is underway.[63] However, the importance of this transition being in partnership with rural and regional communities was stressed, with one stakeholder advocating for it to occur 'with us, not to us'.[64]

2.2 Mr Brett Stonestreet, Interim Executive Officer, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, a network comprised of local councils in the South West region, emphasised the integral role of regional communities in the energy transition. He declared that it is 'regional New South Wales that is essentially providing the key to the door to have renewable energy introduced to the state and to the nation'.[65]

2.3 Stakeholder concerns included a perceived lack of strategic planning in the implementation and ongoing management of the REZs, particularly in relation to:

- the leadership and coordination of the REZs roll-out
- the size, scale and gaps in REZ development
- the impact on landholders.

2.4 These are explored in this section.

[63] See for example: Evidence, Ms Annette Killar, Convenor, Climate Action Armidale, Sustainable Living Armidale, 17 July 2025, p 23; Evidence, Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance, 17 July 2025, p 30; Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2026, p 4; Evidence, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, 18 February 2026, p 2.

[64] Evidence, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, 18 February 2026, p 2.

[65] Evidence, Mr Brett Stonestreet, Interim Executive Officer Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, 18 February 2026, p 11.

Leadership and coordination of the rollout

2.5 As mentioned in the first report, various agencies are responsible for the implementation and management of the state's energy transition in relation to the REZs.[66] Nonetheless, the role of Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is significant as it is the statutory authority responsible for leading the delivery of REZs and Priority Transmission Infrastructure Projects.[67]

2.6 Under the *Energy Infrastructure Investment Act 2020*, EnergyCo serves as the infrastructure planner for all five REZs. Its responsibilities include:

- leading the planning, technical design, delivery and coordination of REZs and priority transmission projects
- contracting and overseeing the suppliers delivering the REZ transmission network infrastructure
- leading community and stakeholder engagement activities to support REZ delivery.[68]

2.7 When asked whether shared responsibility for delivery of the REZs dilutes accountability, the government emphasised that 'roles are clearly defined'.[69] They also advised that regulatory oversight and governance fosters accountability at each stage. Relevant agencies also participate in multi-agency forums to ensure the effective delivery of the 'Roadmap', that is, the state's plan for the energy transition.[70]

2.8 Despite this, stakeholders spoke of government leadership and coordination being 'absent'[71] or 'inconsistent'[72] in the implementation and management of the REZs.[73]

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66 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, pp 7-12.

67 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 5.

68 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, p 8.

69 Answers to supplementary questions, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 1 May 2026, p 3.

70 Answers to supplementary questions, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 1 May 2026, p 3.

71 Evidence, Ms Emily Sims, Strategic Planning Officer, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 5.

72 Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 3.

73 See for example: Evidence, Ms Emily Sims, Strategic Planning Officer, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 5; Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 3; Evidence, Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group, , 18 February 2026 pp 17-18.

2.9 For instance, Councillor Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha likened the situation in the New England REZ (NE REZ) to the Central-West Orana REZ (CWO REZ), describing it as 'building an aeroplane when flying'[74] and that 'the communities that [he] represent[s] are sitting in that plane and actually flying without staff … and everybody else is sitting and watching'.[75]

2.10 Another inquiry participant, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council expressed that the lack of leadership and coordination of the NE REZ had 'squandered' the opportunity for his region.[76] Councillor Coupland argued that the NE REZ could 'represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity' but instead 'the reality has fallen far short of this'.[77] He added that this was due to the following:

- the absence of an integrated strategy for identifying the potential barriers and impacts of the creation of the REZ
- 'a distinct lack of leadership about how to roll out the REZ'
- no meaningful community benefits.[78]

2.11 Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Tamworth Regional Council further argued that the current approach for REZ planning was 'retrospective' and lacked the typical planning process.[79] He maintained that they 'were not convinced that … the typical planning occurred' when the REZ was established, elaborating that if local councils attempted to rezone in the same fashion, it would be subject to further scrutiny.[80] At the hearing, Mr Lobsey described how the REZ planning process occurred without the usual level of scrutiny resulting in confusion, concern and mistrust:

> In a normal rezoning planning proposal process, council would be required to address essential infrastructure and service capacity issues to ensure that the right outcome can be achieved. If council had attempted to rezone land in the fashion in which the REZ was adopted, it would have received a very strongly worded letter from the department requesting more

74 Evidence, Councillor Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha Council, 17 July 2025, p 10. See also: Evidence, Mr Murray Wood, Chief Executive Officer, Dubbo Regional Council, 16 May 2025, p 3; Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, p 31.

75 Evidence, Councillor Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha Council, 17 July 2025, p 10.

76 Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 2.

77 Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 2.

78 Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 2.

79 Evidence, Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Tamworth Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 10.

80 Evidence, Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Tamworth Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 10.

> information. The current approach here, however, we believe is retrospective and causing the confusion, the angst and some of the mistrust.[81]

2.12 According to Dr Sanaz Alian, Convenor, Renewable Energy, Education, Advocacy and Community Health, Sustainable Living Armidale and Lecturer in Urban and Regional Planning, University of New England, the planning for the REZs, particularly for the CWO and NE REZ, occurred subsequent to their announcement by the government. This resulted in accelerated planning, where REZ locations and some developments appear 'fragmented and rushed, lacking in good governance and community engagement process'.[82]

2.13 Other participants highlighted how varying decision-making processes across agencies exacerbate the impact of an absence of leadership in the coordination of REZ related projects and collaboration with regional communities.[83]

2.14 As such, a number of inquiry participants called for a 'whole-of-government' approach to lead and coordinate the development of the REZs and related projects, to ensure that regional communities are supported as part of the transition.[84] Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, stressed the importance of all levels of government being involved:

> What the transition … require[s] is a coordinated approach from Federal, State and local governments to ensure that our communities are protected and supported through this transition. We require a whole-of-government approach to ensure that the infrastructure needs of these communities are met, that the impacts are mitigated and that the benefits flow into the communities directly impacted. We need support to ensure that the opportunities available are realised. We need all agencies, from EnergyCo to Transport for NSW, to engage early and often and to

[81] Evidence, Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Tamworth Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 10.

[82] Evidence, Dr Sanaz Alian, Convenor, Renewable Energy, Education, Advocacy and Community Health, Sustainable Living Armidale and Lecturer in Urban and Regional Planning, University of New England, 17 July 2025, pp 23-24. See also: Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2026, p 3.

[83] See for example: Evidence, Ms Emily Sims, Strategic Planning Officer, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 5; Evidence, Councillor Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha Council, 17 July 2025, p 10; Evidence, Ms Annette Kilarr, Convenor, Climate Action Armidale, Sustainable Living Armidale, 17 July 2025, p 23.

[84] Evidence, Ms Emily Sims, Strategic Planning Officer, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 5. See also: Evidence, Councillor Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha Council, 17 July 2025, p 10; Evidence, Ms Annette Kilarr, Convenor, Climate Action Armidale, Sustainable Living Armidale, 17 July 2025, p 23; Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2026, p 8.

acknowledge the critical role that local government plays as a lead agency in these communities.[85]

Size, scale and gaps

2.15 Many stakeholders identified issues relating to the size and scale of REZs, as well as gaps in their development. As mentioned in Chapter 1, each REZ is currently at a different stage of development. Accordingly, while there may be similar issues across the REZs, the specific context of each zone should also be taken into account.

Size and scale of the REZ development

2.16 For instance, in the New England REZ (NE REZ), some stakeholders were concerned by what they considered to be the disproportionate size and scale of some of the proposed generation and transmission developments and accordingly called for a reduced gigawatt (GW) capacity within their region.[86]

2.17 According to Mr Mark Robinson, Engineering Manager, Wild Rivers Engineering, who is based in the NE REZ, EnergyCo is 'documenting' up to 20.1 GW of generation infrastructure despite initially announcing eight GW of network capacity.[87] To illustrate his point, Mr Robinson argued that this equated to 4,500 turbines, 450 square kilometres of solar panels across 5,200 square kilometres, a third of the size of the NE REZ.[88]

2.18 In addition to generation capacity concerns, Mr Damien Timbs from Voice for Walcha, a community group comprised of residents in Walcha, highlighted that the size and scale of EnergyCo's central south energy hub (substation) means that it has the capacity to connect 4,000 megawatts of projects. Mr Timbs emphasised that this is almost the same scale of development as for the entire CWO REZ yet is concentrated on Walcha, a town with a population of 3,000 people.[89]

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85 Evidence, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, 18 February 2026, p 2. See also: Evidence, Mr Jack Bond, Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council, 18 February 2026, p 3.

86 See for example: Evidence, Mr Stuart Grills, Property Owner and Grazier, 17 July 2025, p 46; Evidence, Mark Fogarty, Director, Bushtricity and Member, ReD4NE, 17 July 2025, p 47; Submission 151, Mr Tony Menkens, p 6.

87 Evidence, Mark Robinson, Engineering Manager, Wild Rivers Engineer, 31 Mach 2026, p 23. See also: Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, p 31.

88 Evidence, Mark Robinson, Engineering Manager, Wild Rivers Engineer, 31 Mach 2026, p 23.

89 Evidence, Mr Damien Timbs, Member, Voice for Walcha, 17 July 2025, p 31.

2.19 With this in mind, some inquiry participants called for a reduction of the NE REZ generation capacity from eight GW to three GW.[90] For example, Mr Stuart Grills, Property Owner and Grazier, explained how reducing the GW capacity in New England would lessen the impact on landholders, highlighting that the average size of a property is around 500 to 1,000 acres.[91]

2.20 As discussed in Chapter 1, network and generation capacity represent distinct measures and reflect different aspects of the energy system. In response to some of the concerns about the size and scale of the NE REZ, EnergyCo clarified that the eight GW refers to network capacity for the region.[92]

2.21 Furthermore, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, noted that the generation capacity for the region has 'various projections' and is currently at six GW network capacity to support 12 GW of generation capacity.[93]

2.22 While some stakeholders advocated for a reduction in the scale of Renewable Energy Zone development, other evidence received by the committee focused on improving strategic planning, sequencing, infrastructure coordination and community benefit arrangements to better manage impacts associated with the energy transition.

2.23 As mentioned in the first report, an access scheme helps govern the volume and quality of projects that may be granted the right to connect.[94] However, evidence was received that the Hunter-Central Coast REZ (HCC REZ) may not get an access scheme.[95]

2.24 Nonetheless, Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, observed that 'some of these [generation] projects are just popping out of nowhere'.[96] Mr Fitzpatrick-Barr, advocated for a strategic approach to identifying suitable locations for generation infrastructure. He noted that some renewable energy developers attempt to establish projects before access to the network is

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90 Evidence, Mr Tony Menkens, Beef Cattle Producer and Chair, Batting for Boorolong Community Group, 17 July 2025, p 46; Evidence, Mr Stuart Grills, Property Owner and Grazier, 17 July 2025, p 46.

91 Evidence, Mr Stuart Grills, Property Owner and Grazier, 17 July 2025, p 46.

92 Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 64.

93 Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 64.

94 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, p 4.

95 Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 15.

96 Evidence, Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 6. See also, Submission 40, Singleton Council, pp 4-5.

confirmed. This can cause unnecessary angst in the community, 'when a project may never get up'.[97]

2.25 Further, Mr Fitzpatrick-Barr considered that the HCC REZ may not be suitable for categorisation as a REZ as it will 'primarily be a transmission zone for renewable energies with limited output from generators'.[98] He stated that most of the generation projects would be in the CWO and NE REZ.[99]

2.26 Another inquiry participant, Mr Michael Holz, a HCC REZ resident and representative of Singleton Solar Standoff community group, also argued for generation developments to be constructed in the 'right location' within the local government area so they do not impact on either rural residential communities or productive farming land. In the case of the HCC REZ, Mr Holz argued that other locations would be better suited to such developments, including mining, industrial and army bases.[100]

2.27 Mr Andrew Abbey, Policy Director, NSW Minerals Council, similarly gave evidence that former mine sites provide a significant opportunity to locate large-scale renewable energy projects with minimal land use conflict. Previously disturbed and rehabilitated land, including voids, could be used and existing mine infrastructure, including transmission lines, could be repurposed, thereby minimising new or additional impacts elsewhere.[101]

Other related issues

2.28 The issues identified so far in this chapter are not necessarily confined to REZ-bound communities, with similar concerns also voiced by some inquiry participants who reside outside the REZs.[102]

2.29 For example, the committee heard that the South West REZ (SW REZ) 'has been poorly planned',[103] with key infrastructure projects located outside the REZ and impacting communities beyond the zone itself. Bundure District Landholders

97 Evidence, Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 6. See also: Evidence, Mr Michael Holz, Resident and representing Singleton Solar Standoff community group, 25 September 2025, p 45.

98 Evidence, Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, pp 12-13.

99 Evidence, Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, pp 12-13.

100 Evidence, Mr Michael Holz, Resident and representing Singleton Solar Standoff community group, 25 September 2025, p 45.

101 Evidence, Mr Andrew Abbey, Policy Director, NSW Minerals Council, 13 May 2025, p 63.

102 See for example: Evidence, Mrs Selena Sylvester, Hills of Gold Preservation Inc, 17 July 2025, p 38; Submission 156, Voice for Cabonne Committee, pp 1-2; Submission 51, Temora Shire Council, p 2.

103 Evidence, Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group, 18 February 2026, p 23.

Group, a community group comprised of farmers who neighbour generation and transmission infrastructure near the SW REZ, highlighted that projects, such as the Dinawan substation and 14 per cent of approved renewable infrastructure, sit outside the SW REZ.[104]

2.30 In the Illawarra REZ, stakeholders had a variety of views on the potential impact of offshore wind farms on the region, from its effect on the fishing industry to repercussions for community cohesion in the region, while others voiced concerns about possible environmental risks.[105]

2.31 Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter, a community organisation based in the Illawarra REZ, expressed strong concerns about the impact of the proposed floating offshore wind projects.[106] They emphasised that they are not anti-renewable but seek a credible, sustainable energy transition.[107] Concerns included the lack of transparent and effective community consultation, risks presented by offshore wind infrastructure to marine environments and local fisheries, and the economic viability of offshore wind and green hydrogen.[108]

2.32 Moreover, Mr Alex O'Brien, President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter, contended that the Illawarra REZ is dependent on floating offshore wind and green hydrogen technologies, but these are 'unproven at commercial scale, not currently viable and would drive prices up dramatically'.[109] On this basis, he called for a 'pause on this project'[110] pending an independent cost and environmental analysis, improvement in the consultation process and local buy-in before proceeding with large-scale projects.[111]

2.33 Local lobster fisherman, Mr Mark Horne on behalf of Mr Scott Westley, was also concerned about the impact of offshore wind farms on the lobster fishery industry. He noted that the location of the proposed wind farms could impact the

104 Submission 152, Bundure District Landholders Group, p 2.

105 See for example: Submission 43, Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc, pp 2-11; Evidence, Mr Mark Horne, Individual, 29 October 2025, pp 10-11; Evidence, Ms Madeleine Holme, Good for the Gong, 29 October 2025, p 21; Evidence, Ms Yael Stone, Founding Director, Hi Neighbour, 29 October 2025, p 21.

106 Evidence, Alex O'Brien, President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter, 25 October 2025, p 12. See also: Submission 43, Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc, p 2.

107 Evidence, Alex O'Brien, President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter, 25 October 2025, p 12.

108 Evidence, Alex O'Brien, President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter, 25 October 2025, pp 12-13; Evidence, Mrs Amanda De Lore, Vice-President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter, 25 October 2025, pp 14-15.

109 Evidence, Alex O'Brien, President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter, 25 October 2025, p 12.

110 Evidence, Alex O'Brien, President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter, 25 October 2025, p 13.

111 Evidence, Alex O'Brien, President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter, 25 October 2025, pp 13.

migratory pattern of lobsters along the coast of New South Wales. He also referred to international studies that indicate potential harm to crustaceans as a result of electromagnetic fields produced by subsea power cables and related infrastructure.[112]

2.34 Mr Horne emphasised that while the industry is not against renewable energy or wind farms in general it does oppose those projects that significantly impact the 'lobster fishery, the marine environment, and our way of life'.[113] Mr Horne highlighted the potential economic repercussions for the state as well as those families who rely on the industry, should it be negatively impacted.

> At present, the New South Wales Rock Lobster Fishery is arguably the most successful fishery in the state, generating a GVP (Gross Value of Production) of around $12–14 million annually. There are 9,621 shares spread across roughly 100 businesses, with about 70 vessels actively fishing. A collapse of this fishery would bring financial ruin to hundreds of families and associated industries—and would also deprive the public of access to local, sustainably caught lobster or if able to, catch one themselves.[114]

2.35 Other stakeholders in the Illawarra REZ voiced their support of the REZ and the renewable energy transition.[115] For instance, Ms Madeleine Holme, Good for the Gong, a community group based in the Illawarra, welcomed the establishment of the REZs and the transition towards 'clean renewable power'.[116] Ms Holme highlighted the economic opportunities associated with renewable energy development such as local employment, as well as the chance to strengthen the manufacturing sector and protect the environment.[117] The economic opportunities in the Illawarra REZ are further explored in Chapter 3.

2.36 When asked about offshore wind targets in the HCC or Illawarra REZs, Mr Liam Ryan, Advising Executive Director, Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability Group, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, advised that the department is maintaining a 'watching brief' on technology developments and adopting a 'technology-agnostic' approach while monitoring overseas progress to assess the potential for New South Wales. This is due to the form of offshore wind that would be required in New South Wales, that is, floating

112 Evidence, Mr Mark Horne, individual, 29 October 2025, p 10.

113 Evidence, Mr Mark Horne, individual, 29 October 2025, p 10.

114 Evidence, Mr Mark Horne, individual, 29 October 2025, p 10.

115 Evidence, Ms Madeleine Holme, Good for the Gong, 29 October 2025, p 21; Submission 24, Hi Neighbour, p 1; Evidence, Mr Francis Vierboom, Chief Executive Officer, Rewiring Australia, 29 October 2025, p 21.

116 Evidence, Ms Madeleine Holme, Good for the Gong, 29 October 2025, p 21.

117 Evidence, Ms Madeleine Holme, Good for the Gong, 29 October 2025, p 21. See also: Submission 137, Good for the Gong, p 2.

offshore wind, still being in a nascent stage and yet to be deployed at large scale internationally.[118]

2.37 As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Illawarra REZ's intended network capacity is one GW and the REZ will integrate consumer energy resources such as rooftop solar systems, home batteries and community-scale batteries. At the time of writing, offshore wind is not featured on the Illawarra REZ webpage.[119]

Impact on landholders

2.38 Various landholders voiced concerns about the impact of the development of the REZs on agricultural productivity, land value and the cost of public liability insurance. While these themes were discussed in the first report in relation to the CWO REZ, it became clear throughout the inquiry that they were issues for the other REZs as well. These concerns are explored in this section.

Agricultural productivity

2.39 Agrivoltaics relates to the dual use of land for solar energy and agriculture.[120] Many stakeholders were apprehensive about the increasing use of agricultural land for renewable energy development.[121] Mr Peter Dawson, Property Owner, Salisbury Plains, argued that renewable energy development is incompatible with farming and voiced concerns about potential food security issues.[122]

2.40 Professor Ivan Kennedy, Professor Emeritus in Agriculture and Environmental Chemistry, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Institute of Agriculture, University of Sydney, was also troubled by the lack of environmental risk assessments under Australian field conditions in relation to renewable energy development and the potential risks for the agriculture and rural industries. Professor Kennedy highlighted his uneasiness that wind farms may dry out the landscape and voiced concerns around the toxicity of solar panels as they contain significant amounts of heavy metals such as silver. Professor Kennedy

118 Evidence, Mr Liam Ryan, Advising Executive Director, Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability Group, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 13 May 2025, p 5.

119 EnergyCo, *Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone*, 16 March 2026, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/illawarra-rez.

120 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, p 46.

121 See for example: Submission 7, Mr Ian McDonald, p 3; Submission 121, Murrumbidgee Council, p 1; Submission 139, Murray River Council, p 3.

122 Evidence, Mr Peter Dawson, Property Owner, Salisbury Plains, 17 July 2025, p 42. See also: Submission 112, Mr Peter Dawson, p 1.

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warned that sheep will not be able to be sold on the market if they are contaminated with silver from solar panels while grazing under them.[123]

2.41 While acknowledging that this would take some time to happen and that solar panels do not leak heavy metals, Professor Kennedy reiterated that environmental risk assessments of renewable wind and solar energy within the REZs are nonetheless lacking.[124] As such, he called for further research into these risks, stating that 'we have to be aware of these possibilities. We have to do research beforehand'.[125]

2.42 There were varying views as to whether the impact of renewable energy projects on agricultural productivity would be positive or negative. Ms Myree Russell, a farmer based in the HCC REZ, highlighted the impacts of the Hunter Transmission Project on farming land, including changes to the landscape and its future productivity. Ms Russell contended that 'once a transmission line is built over a piece of land, you drastically reduce its potential. If our farming capabilities are lost, we lose the ability to feed our nation and its ever-increasing population'.[126]

2.43 RE-Alliance was of the view that renewable energy projects are compatible with agricultural practices.[127] Nonetheless, they highlighted that the rollout of renewable energy within the agricultural industry should:

- incorporate regional voices, including those of farming communities to manage any conflicts and develop lasting legacy of community benefits[128]
- establish 'collaborative frameworks' to minimise conflicts between agricultural and renewable energy land uses and 'maximise synergies' and shared benefits across both sectors[129]
- develop 'further research and incentives that guide industry to work closely with farmers and graziers to work co-location into project design'.[130]

123 Evidence, Professor Ivan Kennedy, Professor Emeritus in Agriculture and Environmental Chemistry, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Institute of Agriculture, University of Sydney, 31 March 2026, p 44.

124 Evidence, Professor Ivan Kennedy, Professor Emeritus in Agriculture and Environmental Chemistry, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Institute of Agriculture, University of Sydney, 31 March 2026, pp 44-45.

125 Evidence, Professor Ivan Kennedy, Professor Emeritus in Agriculture and Environmental Chemistry, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Institute of Agriculture, University of Sydney, 31 March 2026, p 45.

126 Evidence, Ms Myree Russell, Farmer/Landowner, 25 September 2025, p 46.

127 Evidence, Ms Lu Allan, Advocacy Director, RE-Alliance, 13 May 2025, p 51. See also: Submission 64, RE-Alliance, pp 2, 10.

128 Submission 64, RE-Alliance, p 10.

129 Submission 64, RE-Alliance, p 10.

130 Evidence, Ms Lu Allan, Advocacy Director, RE-Alliance, 13 May 2025, p 51.

2.44 Andrew Locke, Farmer and Member, Farmers for Climate Action, who will host renewable energy developments on his land, considered renewable energy development to have increased the productivity of his land, as seen in the case study below.

Case study: Mr Andrew Locke, Farmer, New England REZ[131]

Andrew Locke is a farmer based in Walcha, in the heart of the NE REZ. Mr Locke is also a member of Farmers for Climate Action, a not-for-profit organisation representing farmers across Australia. He runs a grazing property with his family and, for the past fifteen years, has been one of thirty-six landholders working collectively to get Winterbourne Wind Farm approved. Appearing before the committee, he was straightforward about his reasons: this was a deliberate business decision, made by his family, for their farm.

The income from hosting would sit alongside their existing farm income. Mr Locke reflected that it 'improves our business resilience' and 'gives us drought protection', 'we're about to go into a dry season right now, so that's very front of mind'. The additional revenue would allow him to employ more people and put succession planning within reach.

On productivity, he was unequivocal: the turbines are planned for ridgelines, livestock continue to graze around them, and their footprint on a 1,500-acre grazing property is 'very, very small'. He had visited established wind farms at Wellington and Glen Innes and spoken with host landholders there; none reported lasting impacts on agricultural output. In Mr Locke's view, the development would not reduce the land's productivity, it would effectively double it: 'We're producing rural income but we're producing energy income'.

The landholders negotiated and secured a code of conduct with the developer, a decommissioning clause, and compensation for the construction period. The broader community stood to benefit too, with Walcha Shire Council set to receive '$1 million at financial close', followed by '$750,000 per year' indexed, to administer a community benefit fund.

Mr Locke did not present the transition as straightforward, having friends on both sides of the debate and describing the arrival of large-scale renewable energy as a 'big change management issue' for rural communities. In terms of additional resources to assist communities, Mr Locke considered that independent organisations like CWA or Local Land Services, could help communities manage the social impacts of the transition. He noted that local developer offices are available to the community, but they represent the developer's interests rather than being an independent source of support for community members trying to make sense of change. In his opinion, most of his fellow host landholders are 'quietly very supportive', they just 'aren't noisy' about it. In a close-knit community where the issue runs deep, some people find it easier to stay silent.

[131] Evidence, Mr Andrew Locke, Farmer, Farmers for Climate Action, 31 March 2026, pp 18-21.

2.45 The committee notes that the evidence also demonstrated that, where negotiations were undertaken in good faith and appropriate safeguards, compensation arrangements and community benefit mechanisms were established, some landholders reported more positive experiences. This highlights the importance of consistent standards and early engagement across all Renewable Energy Zone projects.

2.46 To address concerns about agrivoltaics, EnergyCo published an agrivoltaics handbook 'to help landholders navigate solar infrastructure on farmland'.[132] The handbook:

- explains how renewable energy can successfully coexist with farmland
- provides landholders and solar developers information and case studies on grazing within solar farms, growing crops and horticulture
- sets out best practice guidelines before entering contracts with solar developers.[133]

Impact on land values

2.47 Some stakeholders expressed concerns about the impact of renewable energy projects and associated infrastructure on land values.[134]

2.48 For example, Mrs Jenny Bailey, who is based in the New England region, argued that neighbouring landholders who do not host renewable energy projects may experience a decline in land values. Referring to one development in her community, she contended that 'five landholders stand to gain enormously from the income derived from hosting [a development], while 59 surrounding landholders will be negatively impacted'.[135]

2.49 Another inquiry participant similarly argued that the financial gains of a REZ and related projects benefit the host landholder while neighbouring properties do not receive any compensation despite being impacted by the developments.[136] The participant outlined how 'the financial benefits are massively skewed toward those hosting the infrastructure, while those neighbouring such facilities are exposed to all the negative impacts … yet receive a pitiful amount of recompense'.[137]

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132 Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 71.

133 EnergyCo, *Agrivoltaics Handbook,* 17 December 2025, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/agrivoltaics-handbook.

134 See for example: Submission 85, Mrs Jenny Bailey, p 4. See also, Evidence, Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance, 17 July 2025, p 30; Evidence, Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group, 18 February 2026, p 17.

135 Submission 85, Mrs Jenny Bailey, p 4.

136 Submission 79, Name suppressed, p 2.

137 Submission 79, Name suppressed, p 2.

2.50 Hosting transmission infrastructure can also reduce the value of smaller rural 'lifestyle' properties. Mr Peter Dawson, a property owner in Salisbury Plains within the NE REZ, contended that infrastructure development has a particular capital value downgrade impact on rural lifestyle blocks. According to Mr Dawson, this situation is recognised by local real estate agents yet is not acknowledged by EnergyCo:

> One other thing that EnergyCo refuses to acknowledge is the potential capital loss of rural land impacted by its transmission corridor, specifically as it applies to rural lifestyle blocks in the Salisbury Plains area. The Salisbury Plains area is comprised mainly of smaller holdings and rural lifestyle blocks. By that I mean—the rule of thumb is that any block around that 300-, 400- or 500-acre size is a rural lifestyle block. It's governed by different market dynamics so, therefore, any infrastructure development has a particular capital value downgrade impact. This is one thing that EnergyCo seems as though they refuse to acknowledge. I've spoken to various agents in the Uralla-Armidale area, and the consistent message that I've got is that, obviously, if you've got a lifestyle block, you buy it for a specific purpose. It's got a specific market structure. If you put infrastructure on there, obviously it's going to affect its market value. That impact is significant, I believe.[138]

Public liability insurance

2.51 Another issue that emerged throughout the inquiry was the potential impact of renewable energy projects on the cost and availability of public liability insurance for landholders.

2.52 As explained in the first report, the installation of renewable energy infrastructure may result in land use being reclassified as industrial rather than agricultural, with associated changes to various outgoings including council rates and insurance.[139] This may include 'prohibitive increases in public liability premiums … and limited availability of appropriate insurance cover'.[140] According to the Law Society of NSW, costs can be affected by the risk of fire damage stemming from a landholder's property, when the landholder is host to, or adjoining, renewable energy development.[141]

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138 Evidence, Mr Peter Dawson, Property Owner, Salisbury Plains, 17 July 2025, pp 40-41.

139 Submission 70, The Law Society of NSW, p 2. See also: Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, pp 48-49.

140 Submission 70, The Law Society of NSW, p 2. See also: Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, pp 48-49.

141 Submission 70, The Law Society of NSW, p 2.

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2.53 Mr Xavier Martin, President, NSW Farmers Association, explained how landholders with properties adjoining renewable energy projects face challenges in finding an insurer that will provide sufficient cover:

> I haven't found [a policy cover] yet. A typical farm pack is $20 million public liability. It's prohibitive once you start looking for multiples of that, and I'm not aware of any of the major insurers that do offer that. What I hear at meeting after meeting is members saying, "Hang on. What they're proposing next door to me is hundreds of millions of dollars. Are we all going to man the truck and the fire trailers and get there and put it out before it gets into those solar complexes or it burns one of those wind complexes?" Or vice versa—if they light the fires, who's going to get the blame and how do we know how this is all going to work? There's a massive gap in liability cover.[142]

2.54 In response to these concerns, Transgrid told the committee that insurance is covered for landholders who host their easements. Further, there are ongoing discussions between Transgrid, the community and relevant government authorities in relation to addressing the issues regarding neighbouring properties.[143]

2.55 In addition, Deputy Commissioner Ben Millington, Operational Coordination, NSW Rural Fire Service highlighted that under section 63 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, landowners and land managers, including renewable energy developers, are required to ensure that they take all steps practicable to prevent and minimise bushfire risk. Deputy Commissioner Millington further added that some developers have also engaged private firefighting or emergency response capabilities as part of their site arrangements.[144]

2.56 The relationship between fire risk and renewable energy projects and infrastructure is discussed in Chapter 3.

Community consultation and engagement

2.57 As mentioned in the first report, the renewable energy planning process is underpinned by numerous policy and legislative frameworks, as well as community consultation processes in relation to proposed developments. The government advised that they are committed to working closely with communities on the planning and rollout of REZs and associated renewable

[142] Evidence, Mr Xavier Martin, President, NSW Farmers Association, 13 May 2025, pp 58, 60. See also: Submission 50, NSW Farmers Association, pp 5-6.

[143] Evidence, Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager Community and Social Licence, Transgrid, 18 February 2026, p 30.

[144] Evidence, Deputy Commissioner Ben Millington, Operational Coordination, NSW Rural Fire Service, 31 March 2026, pp 49 & 52.

infrastructure, emphasising the role of community engagement activities in the transition.[145]

2.58 Stakeholders had varying experiences and their views differed regarding the adequacy of community consultation as conducted by renewable energy developers and relevant government agencies. While similar issues were considered in the first report, further evidence was received about the nature of community consultation for all the REZs. This section explores the concerns raised in greater detail.

Interactions between communities and key stakeholders

2.59 A number of stakeholders, particularly some local councils, noted that their relationship with EnergyCo and renewable energy developers had been improving and was better than it had been in the past.[146] The following are some reflections:

- 'In the last 12 months, [since January 2025] EnergyCo has actually really stepped up to the mark'.[147]
- 'Some of the proponents have done really good engagement more recently. I think we're seeing a shift in the way they're actually getting out there. They're acknowledging that there's a lot of work to be done with the neighbouring properties, particularly, and then the broader community. So we're absolutely seeing a change'.[148]
- 'We had troubles initially engaging with EnergyCo, around a number of the projects that were happening, but we've since formed some better relationships in the past year and have had some good, ongoing engagement there. But I will say it was difficult in the first couple of years'.[149]

2.60 On the other hand, many stakeholders, including landholders, residents, community organisations and other local councils viewed the consultation process as either inadequate or lacking in meaningful engagement. A sample of comments regarding the consultation process follows:

- 'No genuine consultation - it is obvious from our experience that the developers are purely ticking boxes when they meet with community

145 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 12.

146 See for example: Evidence, Ms Emily Sims, Strategic Planning Officer, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 4; Evidence, Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Tamworth Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 14; Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2026, p 5.

147 Evidence, Mr Jack Bond, Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council, 18 February 2026, p 2.

148 Evidence, Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Tamworth Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 14

149 Evidence, Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance, 25 September 2026, p 28.

members and the government is pushing ahead with developments, no matter how many objections and issues are raised'.[150]

- 'Trust and respect, right from the beginning. You don't build trust in the community by altering processes to suit yourself halfway through. You don't build trust in the community by being non-transparent. You don't build trust in the community by giving false information or trying to sign people up on non-disclosure agreements'.[151]
- 'The whole approach of [EnergyCo] is adversarial. If you want straightforward information about how the project is carried out, you are met with questions in turn about why we would want such information and promises to provide it later—a later that never eventuates. … They do not talk openly and honestly with us, and these are missed opportunities, as we know the land'.[152]
- 'EnergyCo has been appalling with their consultation and so-called leadership and have now firewalled themselves by using subcontractors and labour hire at information sessions to communicate with the community. The renewable energy proponents have tried to bully and intimidate our members into signing neighbour agreements well before a scoping report or the placement of the project on the NSW Planning Portal'.[153]

2.61 In addition, many stakeholders were critical of EnergyCo's change of approach from town hall meetings to community 'pop-up meetings', advising that they were not fit for purpose when engaging with regional communities.[154] In particular, Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance, a community-based organisation in the NE REZ, highlighted how EnergyCo's town hall style meetings transitioned to 'pop-up meetings' as they were unprepared for handling community feedback:

> We had a community meeting in Tamworth, where there would have been 80 people at it, I think, and it was a very, very emotional meeting. EnergyCo was unprepared at that meeting and didn't handle it very well at all … We had another meeting … It was, to put it bluntly, a disaster. I mean, there were a lot of very angry and unhappy people there. EnergyCo didn't handle it very well. They were again unprepared … From that moment on, they've refused to have a group community meeting with us because it doesn't suit their narrative to see what the community wants. They want to do what they want to do. They don't want to hear what the community wants.

150 Submission 85, Mrs Jenny Bailey, p 5.

151 Evidence, Mrs Karen Zirkler, Regenerative Agriculture Grazier, Kentucky District, 17 July 2025, pp 42-43.

152 Evidence, Ms Kathy Morris, Landowner, 13 May 2025, p 38.

153 Evidence, Mr Tony Menkens, Beef Cattle Producer and Chair, Batting for Boorolong Community Group, 17 July 2025, p 46.

154 See for example: Evidence, Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance, 17 July 2025, p 33; Evidence, Mr Michael Holz, Resident and representing Singleton Solar Standoff community group, 25 September 2025, p 51; Evidence, Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group, 18 February 2026, p 18.

> When you've got an angry community, they think that it's not to their benefit, so they don't have it. Now they have pop-up meetings. We have two pop-ups in our community—well, not in our community. The pop-up meetings are 30 kilometres away or 150 kilometres away. We had one pop-up meeting for our transmission lines at Gunnedah. It's 150 kilometres away. What good is that?[155]

2.62 The case study below illustrates some of the difficulties experienced by community groups when attempting to engage with renewable energy developers.

Case study - Mr Antony (Tony) Menkens, New England REZ[156]

Tony Menkens runs a beef cattle operation near Armidale, on land that sits directly in the path of a proposed wind project. Mr Menkens is also the Chair of Batting for Boorolong (B4B) Community Group, a group of over 160 residents in the area. Four wind projects were announced for the area, proposing up to 300 turbines across a corridor starting twelve kilometres from where he farms.

Mr Menkens and the B4B group were quick to recognise that the New England Renewable Energy Zone (NE REZ) was on its way and decided that the most productive approach would be to work with developers and government to secure the best outcomes possible for local people, farms, businesses, and communities.

B4B spent weeks developing thirteen requirements to be met by the wind project before the community would support it, consulting along the way with Indigenous groups, wildlife experts, aerial firefighting contractors, and legal advisers. They presented the list in September 2023.

Nearly two years later, little had been addressed. Every meeting between B4B and the proponents had been initiated by the community. Mr Menkens expressed his frustration that 'We have been stonewalled and rejected every step of the way'.

Mr Menkens described how representatives of the wind project approached households directly and pressured people to sign neighbour agreements before any scoping report had been submitted, warning them that 'if you don't sign this neighbour agreement, you're going to miss out on the money'.

Alongside the problematic consultation process, Mr Menkens raised the question of scale. The concentration of four large wind projects in a single area, he argued, had never been properly assessed in terms of its combined effect on roads, water, construction materials, and agricultural land. Much of the NE REZ has been mapped as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land, among the most productive soils in New South Wales, representing just 3.5 per cent of the state's total land area. In his view, that designation had not been taken seriously, 'It's all-encompassing and it's massive. They should have started on this five years ago'.

[155] Evidence, Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance, 17 July 2025, p 33.

[156] Evidence, Mr Tony Menkens, Chair, Batting for Booroolong Community Group, 17 July 2025, pp 46-50. See also: Submission 151, Mr Tony Menkens.

The inherent power imbalance between individuals and developers

2.63 Another concern raised in relation to the adequacy of community consultation was the inherent power imbalance between individuals and developers, with many stakeholders highlighting that the planning or negotiation process favoured developers.

2.64 As explained in the first report, the planning process involves complex policy and legislative requirements. Most renewable energy projects are classified as State Significant Developments[157] and are subject to a rigorous development assessment process managed by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI). Furthermore, individual generation, storage and transmission developments within REZs must also undertake their own impact assessments, which are in turn assessed and approved by the department.[158]

2.65 Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group, a community group of farmers based near the SW REZ, described his experience of dealing with renewable energy developers and the power imbalance that can exist. In particular, he drew attention to the following characteristics of the relationship between landholders and developers.

- Energy companies fail to acknowledge the hidden costs, stresses and concerns about the unknown experienced by those who neighbour their developments.
- The inclusion of unacceptable demands indicates a lack of respect in the negotiation of individual neighbour agreements.
- Compensation varies greatly from one project to another.
- Landholders are burdened with navigating these agreements with no support.
- Landholders are pressured to sign agreements and lose any right to object to unforeseen detrimental effects that may occur at a later time.
- Planning guidelines are used by some developers to minimise their commitment to a negotiated agreement.[159]

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157 Under the EP&A Act, projects can be declared State Significant Development (SSD) if they are important to the state for economic, environmental or social reasons. A development is considered significant to the state if it is over a specific size, is in an environmentally sensitive area or will exceed capital investment value. Source: Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, pp 5-6.

158 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, pp 5-6.

159 Evidence, Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group, 18 February 2026, p 17.

2.66 In a similar vein, other inquiry participants commented on how local community groups are required to review 'thousands' of pages of documents as part of the consultation process.[160] For example, Mrs Selena Sylvester, Hills of Gold Preservation Inc, a community group representing landholders that share boundaries with the CWO, NE and HCC REZs, highlighted the difference between the resources behind developers compared to that of local groups and individuals:

> Throughout this process, our community has experienced what can only be described as the Wild West of planning. We have faced highly resourced developers, supported by consultants and lawyers, and a government intent on fast-tracking renewables, while our rural community was left to navigate thousands of pages of technical documents with no meaningful support.[161]

Impact on social cohesion and wellbeing

2.67 Many stakeholders also raised concerns about the negative impact of the consultation process on social cohesion and wellbeing in rural and regional communities.[162] For instance, Ms Karen Zirkler, Regenerative Agriculture Grazier, Kentucky District, which is located in the NE REZ, described the work involved in preparing a submission to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as part of the planning process and the impact it had on her community. Ms Zirkler highlighted how the substantial workload was detrimental to her community's wellbeing:

> The work we did during this period put another amount of significant strain on mental health and community members and their families. As you've heard, EIS documents are thousands and thousands of pages long. We had 28 days to digest it all, get advice, prepare submissions. Because no-one else was prepared to do it, our group members volunteered to help other community members—those people who were less able because they were older, they didn't have internet access or not even a computer—to submit.[163]

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160 Evidence, Mrs Selena Sylvester, Hills of Gold Preservation Inc, 17 July 2025, p 38. See also: Evidence, Mr Michael Holz, Resident and representing Singleton Solar Standoff community group, 25 September 2025, p 48; Evidence, Mrs Myree Russell, Farmer/Landowner, 25 September 2025, p 48; Evidence, Mrs Karen Zirkler, Regenerative Agriculture Grazier, Kentucky District, 17 July 2025, pp 39, 40.

161 Evidence, Mrs Selena Sylvester, Hills of Gold Preservation Inc, 17 July 2025, p 38.

162 See for example: President, Valley Alliance, 17 July 2025, p 30; Evidence, Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group (BUNDL), 18 February 2026, pp 17, 21; Submission 140, Mr Michael Holz, p 5.

163 Evidence, Mrs Karen Zirkler, Regenerative Agriculture Grazier, Kentucky District, 17 July 2025, p 39.

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2.68 Some communities were 'divided' as a result of the REZs.[164] For example, Tamworth Regional Council observed that there can be conflict between supporters and opponents of renewable projects.[165] Indeed, Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Tamworth Regional Council, was of the view that this has long term consequences, whereby a 'couple of years of division is 20 years of trying to fix those problems'.[166]

2.69 Similarly, Ms Yael Stone, Founding Director, Hi Neighbour, described the impact of community division in the Illawarra REZ following debates about offshore wind and reflected on the long-term outcomes for her community:

> We've been disturbed and directly affected by some of the community division around offshore wind. It's been really upsetting, on a personal level and a community level, to see that sort of social tear happen and continue. We haven't been able to come back together.[167]

2.70 The committee also heard that social cohesion had been affected in the HCC REZ, notwithstanding its history and acceptance of the presence of other significant energy infrastructure. Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, outlined the particular impact of renewable energy development on a mining community:

> Our communities up here have been open to large, State-significant projects for a lot of decades—we've got mine sites around us everywhere, both here and in Muswellbrook—very supportive. We see the benefits of all this, and the flow-on benefits over the decades. What we're seeing with renewable energy, though, and the way it's being rolled out is potentially going to have a negative impact on a community that's already supported energy production. They're seeing renewables as having further impact on a community that's already been impacted by large mine sites.[168]

2.71 Mr Fitzpatrick-Barr continued:

> The fact that a community then has to go through significant gatherings and protests and stuff—have placards up on farmland fences and whatever—for a project that may never, ever eventuate is just not fair on this community, who has already experienced decades worth of impact from being in a power generation zone. I think, in hindsight, you'd probably approach it in a different way, but certainly it's not fair on communities to actually put them through the angst for them to find out later on that the

164 See for example: Evidence, Councillor Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha Council, 17 July 2025, p 15; Evidence, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce, Member for New England, Parliament of Australia, 17 July 2025, p 17; Submission 71, Mr John Benjamin, p 2.

165 Submission 69, Tamworth Regional Council, p 2.

166 Evidence, Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Tamworth Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 15.

167 Evidence, Ms Yael Stone, Founding Director, Hi Neighbour, 29 October 2025, p 21.

168 Evidence, Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 13.

> project may have never got up anyway because it relied on 14 kilometres of road reserve, or it doesn't even have access to the network.[169]

The impact of non-disclosure agreements

2.72 Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) between developers and landholders can prevent plans for properties from being discussed beyond the parties involved, leaving neighbours and the broader public unaware of future plans for development. In this context, several stakeholders claimed that the use of NDAs increased tensions within local communities by reducing the transparency of the process.[170]

2.73 The President of NSW Farmers described NDAs as an 'extraordinarily corrosive component' in rural communities.[171] He explained that secrecy around individual landholder agreements and compensation exacerbates social cohesion issues, leading to distrust and division:

> Some of my members are realising now that contracts were signed two or three years ago for their neighbours. To find out all of a sudden that—not only do you have this complex next door, but it changes all the hydraulics, all the water flows off those lands, in the case of solar … All those things create so much distrust and dysfunction in the community.[172]

2.74 Blueprint Institute, an independent think tank, suggested that developers should be open to negotiating with landholders collectively and refrain from 'imposing' NDAs to address the power imbalance between landholders and developers.[173] The Institute advised that such an approach 'promotes transparency in negotiations and mitigates potential conflicts arising from perceived inequalities'.[174]

Improving the quality of community consultation

2.75 There have been attempts to improve the consultation process. Mr Timothy Jarratt, Group Executive, Market Development and Strategy, Ausgrid advised that Ausgrid has been active in responding to concerns about the quality of community consultation, particularly in the HCC REZ, ensuring that their

169 Evidence, Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 13.

170 See for example: Evidence, Mr Xavier Martin, President, NSW Farmers, 13 May 2025, pp 60-61; Evidence, Ms Karen Zirkler, Regenerative Agriculture Grazier, Kentucky District, 17 July 2025, p 42; Evidence, Ms Susan Newey, Chair, ReD4NE, 17 July 2025, p 49.

171 Evidence, Mr Xavier Martin, President, NSW Farmers, 13 May 2025, p 60.

172 Evidence, Mr Xavier Martin, President, NSW Farmers, 13 May 2025, pp 60-61

173 Submission 53, Blueprint Institute, p 3.

174 Submission 53, Blueprint Institute, p 3.

approach is not a 'box-ticking exercise'.[175] To this end, the committee heard that Ausgrid's strategies include:

- increasing new staff as part of their engagement strategy and having a base in the local communities[176]
- proactively engaging with local councils, resident groups and local businesses
- holding one-on-one conversations with landholders, including door knocking exercises to reach out to the community
- including operational and project management staff in conversations with landholders and residents to address technical issues
- attending various community events and hosting online forums.[177]

2.76 Likewise, Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager, Community and Social Licence, Transgrid commented that Transgrid is committed to the REZ regions where its infrastructure is based and has been collaborating with all stakeholders.[178] During his evidence to the committee, Mr Johnson emphasised that Transgrid's engagement strategy includes:

- prioritising face-to-face engagement with stakeholders and maintaining a strong local community presence
- building relationships with landholders and emphasising the application of their code-of-conduct when interacting with key stakeholders
- being transparent in the decision-making process to ensure that the community understands the reasons for a project, from its construction-phase to its ongoing operation and maintenance.[179]

2.77 The government also responded to concerns raised in relation to community engagement. Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, advised that EnergyCo has improved the way in which they engage with the community and listened to the community's concerns. They have introduced measures such as:

- 'bolstering' their community engagement teams

175 Evidence, Mr Timothy Jarratt, Group Executive, Market Development and Strategy, Ausgrid, 25 September 2025, p 17.

176 Evidence, Mr Daniel Sartor, Head of Major Projects, Ausgrid, 25 September 2025, p 19.

177 Evidence, Mr Timothy Jarratt, Group Executive, Market Development and Strategy, Ausgrid, 25 September 2025, pp 17-18.

178 Evidence, Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager, Community and Social Licence, Transgrid, 25 September 2025, pp 17-18; Evidence, Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager, Community and Social Licence, Transgrid, 18 February 2026, p 24.

179 Evidence, Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager, Community and Social Licence, Transgrid, 25 September 2025, pp 19-20. See also: Evidence, Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager, Community and Social Licence, Transgrid, 18 February 2026, p 24.

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- reviewing their engagement process during the land acquisition process
- introducing new ways to engage with landholders such as early engagement and having a single point of contact
- coordinating a mix of 'drop-in' sessions and town hall style meetings when requested.[180]

Use of Social Impact Assessments

2.78 As discussed in the first report, Social Impact Assessments (SIAs) are required for all state significant projects, including renewable energy developments, to identify and assess likely social impacts and recommend ways to reduce negative effects and enhance benefits.[181]

2.79 While the first report highlighted evidence from Dr Richard Parsons, a social research practitioner specialising in SIAs and community engagement,[182] his views regarding SIAs were not specific to the CWO REZ and apply to all communities impacted by state significant projects, including those within the other REZs.[183]

2.80 Dr Parsons noted that, when used effectively, SIAs can help communities feel more involved and supported. Nonetheless, there are 'shortcomings' around how these assessments are used by the state's planning system, due to limited engagement, insufficient attention to impacts such as noise and dust, and a lack of focus on social cohesion. He suggested the process could be improved by strengthening resourcing within the DPHI to better oversee and assess social impacts.[184]

2.81 A key recommendation of the first report was for DPHI to review its SIAs.[185] In response, the government advised that they support the recommendation 'in principle', noting that 'DPHI will explore options to improve the use of SIAs for

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180 Evidence, Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, pp 63-64.

181 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, p 44.

182 Dr Richard Parsons, is a social research practitioner, specialising in social impact assessment SIA and community engagement. He was previously employed as an internal SIA specialist for the then Department of Planning and Environment from 2016 to 2022. Dr Parson provided evidence at the hearing on 13 May 2025 in a personal professional capacity and not representing any organisation. See also: Evidence, Dr Richard Parson, Social Researcher, 13 May 2025, p 32.

183 Evidence, Dr Richard Parsons, Social Researcher, 13 May 2025, p 32.

184 Evidence, Dr Richard Parsons, Social Researcher, 13 May 2025, p 32.

185 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, pp x, 46.

state significant renewable energy infrastructure projects considering feedback from the inquiry'.[186]

Pathways for improving engagement

2.82 Various pathways for improving engagement and community consultation were identified by stakeholders, such as increased awareness of the role of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW, and proactive coordination of individuals, community groups, local councils and renewable energy developers.

The role of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW

2.83 The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) is an independent, not for-profit, industry-based ombudsman that investigates and resolves complaints between individuals and energy sector industry members.[187]

2.84 According to EWON, the first year of their expansion into managing complaints about renewable energy infrastructure was 'significant', as community engagement and outreach across the state increased awareness of their role.[188] Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, EWON, emphasised that the Ombudsman seeks to facilitate 'fair and reasonable outcomes' in the resolution of complaints and 'bring parties together so they actually achieve what they want.'[189]

2.85 However, renewable generation and storage such as solar, wind and large-scale battery storage remain outside EWON's jurisdiction if generation and storage developers are not members of EWON.[190] Nonetheless, EWON reported that 29 per

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186 Correspondence from the Hon Penny Sharpe, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, to the Clerk of the Parliaments, providing government response to the inquiry into *the Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 21 November 2025, p 1.

187 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, p 11. See also: Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), *Renewable Energy Infrastructure*, https://www.ewon.com.au/page/customer-resources/renewable-energy-infrastructure; Evidence, Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 31 March 2026, p 2.

188 Tabled document, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), Renewable Energy Infrastructure Impact Report - Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW, 31 March 2026, p 1. See also: Evidence, Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 31 March 2026, p 2.

189 Evidence, Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 31 March 2026, p 4.

190 Evidence, Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 31 March 2026, p 2; Answers to supplementary questions, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 1 May 2026, p 4.

cent of the complaints received under their renewable energy infrastructure function is in relation to generation and storage developments. However, EWON advised that they are limited in their ability to address these complaints and can only assist the community and landholders by:

- providing independent information about community consultation guidelines, the planning process and where they can access information
- providing assistance on how to raise a complaint with the developer directly
- referring complaints to the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, who has independent oversight of generation and storage development in Australia.[191]

2.86 To enhance their work in the renewable energy development space, Ms Young advocated for implementation of the following:

- that renewable energy infrastructure entities be directed to promote their openness to complaints from landholders and community members and, if they are not satisfied, to inform them of their right to contact EWON
- that the government introduce legislation or a licencing scheme requiring renewable energy generation and storage developers to be members of EWON thus ensuring that complaints are within EWON's jurisdiction
- that a single narrative be promoted by the energy sector and government about 'the why, where, what and how of energy transition and the benefits that are available to regional communities'.[192]

2.87 EWON advised that it has power within its jurisdiction to make a binding decision or determination to resolve complaints that cannot be conciliated. EWON can direct an entity 'to do something, to stop doing something or to start doing something', provided that the total cost is under $100,000.[193] Ms Young described how this can look in practice:

> If there's a customer impact, I can say—and the customer provides substantiation of that impact. For example, if someone left a gate open and some prized cattle got out and there was evidence of that, we could say, "Provide restitution to that landholder for what the loss is," capped at $100,000.[194]

[191] Answers to supplementary questions, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 1 May 2026, p 4.

[192] Evidence, Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 31 March 2026, p 2.

[193] Evidence, Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 31 March 2026, p 9.

[194] Evidence, Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 31 March 2026, p 5.

2.88 However, Ms Young advised that EWON has yet to make a binding decision, highlighting that EWON has a 'good conciliation approach to resolving complaints'.[195] She maintained the view that EWON has the 'the right powers' within their jurisdiction, noting that if a complaint is received that is outside of EWON's jurisdiction, the landholder is referred to the appropriate authority.[196]

2.89 EnergyCo is a member of EWON and gave evidence that they actively promote EWON to the community and industry. Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, described how EnergyCo has positively responded to and actioned EWON's request that they engage with generation and storage developers to highlight the benefits of joining EWON as industry members.[197]

Agreed set of principles or code of conduct

2.90 Some inquiry participants gave evidence of the ways in which communities can proactively approach their engagement with renewable energy developers. These include developing an agreed set of principles or preparing a code of conduct for use in negotiations.

2.91 As an example, Hay Shire Council (located in the South West REZ) developed a principles document in consultation with the community, that sets out the expectations of the local community regarding roads, water and waste management.[198] Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, highlighted that having this set of principles prior to engaging with renewable energy developers 'firms' the council's ability to negotiate.[199]

2.92 Another stakeholder, Mr Andrew Locke, Farmer and Member, Farmers for Climate Action (as featured in the case study at paragraph 2.44), described how his community has approached dealing with developers. As a potential host of a renewable energy development, he and other landholders in his community put together a code of conduct that they negotiated with the developer, 'so that, if

195 Evidence, Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 31 March 2026, p 9.

196 Evidence, Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), 31 March 2026, p 7.

197 Evidence, Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 67.

198 Evidence, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, 18 February 2026, p 2; Submission 87, Hay Shire Council, pp 4-5.

199 Evidence, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, 18 February 2026, pp 2, 4-5.

there are any issues, we've got pathways for resolution and … compensated for that interruption in productivity for that two-year construction phase'.[200]

2.93 Further, Clean Energy Council, the peak industry body for the clean energy sector in Australia, gave evidence that they have developed a Best Practice Charter setting out commitments that signatories[201] agree to uphold in the development of current and new clean energy projects.[202] Examples of commitments include:

- engaging early and respectfully with local communities
- providing timely information and being accessible and responsive to community feedback
- minimising the impacts on agricultural land and exploring opportunities to integrate agricultural production.[203]

Cumulative impact on local services

2.94 Echoing the first report, a significant number of inquiry participants highlighted the adverse impact of Renewable Energy Zones on the capacity of local services, including housing, road networks, infrastructure (in particular water security and waste management), and emergency services. Local councils can experience significant resourcing pressures as a result. The need to consider these cumulative impacts in detail, and whether the Regional Infrastructure Studies have sufficiently done so, was a common theme throughout the inquiry.

Repercussions for local services

2.95 The key impacts on local services throughout the REZs are summarised below.

- **Available housing**: the influx of temporary workers for renewable energy developments (both from transmission and generation projects) impacts the availability of affordable housing in the regions and in some instances has increased rental prices.[204]

200 Evidence, Mr Andrew Locke, Farmer and Member, Farmers for Climate Action, 31 March 2026, pp 18 & 21.

201 Signatories include ACEN Australia, Akaysha and Origin, renewable energy developers who have a presence in the REZs. Source: Clean Energy Council, *Best Practice Charter*, https://cleanenergycouncil.org.au/advocacy/best-practice-charter, 2026.

202 Clean Energy Council, *Best Practice Charter*, https://cleanenergycouncil.org.au/advocacy/best-practice-charter, 2026. See also: Evidence, Mr William Churchill, Chief Policy and Impact Officer, Clean Energy Council, 31 March 2026, pp 30, 36.

203 Clean Energy Council, *Best Practice Charter*, https://cleanenergycouncil.org.au/advocacy/best-practice-charter, 2026.

204 See for example: Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, pp 5-6; Submission 62, Armidale Regional Council, pp 4-5; Submission 40, Singleton Council, p 3; Submission 87, Hay Shire Council, p 3; Submission 50, NSW Farmers, p 11.

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- **Local road networks:** greater use of oversize and/or overmass (OSOM) vehicles[205] on local roads to transport equipment or construction materials for renewable energy projects impacts traffic and road conditions.[206] Some stakeholders highlighted that local roads may not be suitable for these vehicles and need to be upgraded before projects are approved.[207]
- **Water security:** some local councils cautioned that their regions face 'high water security risk', as the current storage and treatment capacity is insufficient for accommodating additional usage.[208]
- **Waste:** renewable energy projects generate substantial waste during commissioning, operation, and decommissioning, which can increase pressures on rural and regional waste processing facilities, shorten landfill lifespans and trigger the need for new or expanded sites.[209] The issue of decommissioning will be discussed in Chapter 3.
- **Greater pressure on emergency services (such as hospitals and police):** similar to housing, the influx of temporary workers adds to pressure on local emergency services, especially where those services are already limited. This can be particularly acute in rural communities.[210]
- **Long-term impacts on local economies:** while some local councils acknowledged the opportunities for economic diversification and investment including increased employment, they also noted the risks associated with infrastructure strain and limited long-term employment

205 Oversize and/or overmass vehicles are heavy vehicles with loads that are more than 2.5 metres wide, 19 metres long and 4.6 metres high. For further information, see Transport for NSW, *Renewables Transportation – Oversize and/or overmass (OSOM) loads*, https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/renewables-transportation-%E2%80%93-oversize-andor-overmass-osom-loads#:~:text=Oversize%20and%2For%20overmass%20(OSOM)%20loads%20are%20a%20common,the%20Heavy%20Vehicle%20National%20Law, 7 August 2024.

206 See for example: Submission 69, Tamworth Regional Council, p 2; Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 4; Submission 121, Murrumbidgee Council, p 1; Submission 4, Mrs Julia James, p 1; Evidence, Mr Cameron Greig, Member, Voice for Walcha, 17 July 2025, p 35.

207 Evidence, Mr Derek Finnigan, General Manager, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 7.

208 See for example: Answers to supplementary questions, Armidale Regional Council, 19 August 2025, pp 1-2; Submission 40, Singleton Council, p 3; Evidence, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, 18 February 2026, p 2.

209 See for example: Submission 54, Country Mayors Association, p 3; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 16; and Submission 139, Murray River Council, pp 9-10.

210 Evidence, Mr Cameron Greig, Member, Voice for Walcha, 17 July 2025, p 32. See also: Evidence, Mr Andrew Browning, Committee Member, Bundure District Landholders Group, 18 February 2026, p 21.

opportunities post-construction phase.[211] This issue will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

2.96 In this context, several stakeholders advocated for a coordinated approach by the government to ensure that REZ related infrastructure and projects are cumulatively addressed to minimise impacts to local communities.[212] For instance, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, called for the government to address these issues collectively. He contended that 'we need the government to properly assess the cumulative impacts of the REZ and work with council to either mitigate some of those problems or fund the solutions'.[213]

2.97 The government has responded to some of these concerns through the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies (discussed in Chapter 1).

Challenges for local councils

2.98 While local councils are not the approving authority for renewable energy projects, they nonetheless play a crucial role in the development assessment process and in the provision of support to the community.[214]

2.99 Many local councils across all of the REZs and also outside the REZ boundaries experience increasing pressures as they support renewable energy developments on top of maintaining their ongoing responsibilities for local community services.[215] In this context, Councillor Claire Pontin, Acting President, Local Government NSW, stressed that local councils deal with 'limited resources, having received inadequate funding and support to respond to these additional demands'.[216]

2.100 In support of this view, Mrs Maryanne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, asserted that 'councils are being

[211] See for example: Submission 87, Hay Shire Council, p 2; Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, p 3; Submission 139, Murray River Council, pp 4, 6; Submission 54, Country Mayors Association, p 2.

[212] See for example: Submission 40, Singleton Council, p 3. Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2026, pp 2-3; Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 3; Evidence, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, 18 February 2026, p 6.

[213] Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2026, pp 2-3.

[214] Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 8.

[215] See for example: Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 8; Evidence, Mr Trevor Ryan, Director, Planning and Environment, Dungog Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 9; Submission 51 Temora Shire Council, p 3; Evidence, Councillor Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha Council, 17 July 2025, p 10.

[216] Evidence, Councillor Claire Pontin, Acting President, Local Government NSW, 13 May 2025, p 45.

called upon to dedicate resources towards supporting the development of REZs'.[217] For Singleton Council, the estimated cost of council staff resources to support the implementation of renewable energy projects is $2.7 million over the next four years.[218]

2.101 Smaller local councils may face particular pressures on resourcing due to their size and not having the same expertise or resources as larger councils.[219] As an example, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, shared that the Environmental Impact Statement process is usually reviewed by up to 60 staff within a council. While she viewed this as potentially manageable for larger councils such as Dubbo, which employs around 600 staff, it places a significant burden on smaller councils like Hay, which has fewer than 60 staff.[220]

2.102 The following case study illustrates the way in which renewable energy projects can add to pressures on local councils when it comes to local roads.

Case study – Local roads in the South West REZ[221]

The sprawling size and distance of some rural and remote councils can present particular challenges. Balranald Shire Council is partly located in the South West REZ and covers 21,346 square kilometres. Its Chief Executive Officer, Mr Terry Dodds, reflected that the council has one engineer for an area that is 'bigger than 63 countries'.

The construction of a small wind farm in the region has led to an increase in oversize and/or overmass (OSOM) vehicles travelling on local roads to transport equipment and materials. Mr Dodds estimated that this could equate to over 1,700 loads of components traveling daily on local roads. However, the conditions of the unsealed roads in their area are unsuitable for this type of movement as it would take only 10 per

217 Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2026, p 2.

218 Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2026, p 2 and Evidence, Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 9. See also: Evidence, Mr Gary Stoll, Director, Planning and Infrastructure, Murrumbidgee Council, 18 February 2026, pp 7-8.

219 See for example: Evidence, Mr Trevor Ryan, Director, Planning and Environment, Dungog Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 9; Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 9; Evidence, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, 18 February 2026, p 8.

220 Evidence, Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, 18 February 2026, p 8.

221 This case study is drawn from Evidence, Mr Terry Dodds, Chair, Energy Security and Affordability Committee, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, and Chief Executive Officer, Balranald Shire Council, 18 February 2026, pp 12-13. See also: Submission 40, Singleton Council, p 7; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, 14.

cent of those loadings before the roads will become 'friable' or 'turn to bulldust' in the summer or become 'bogholes' in times of rain.

Mr Dodds added that the pressures on local councils include the need to find additional resources to fix and manage the roads, lamenting that they 'will struggle even managing people to make sure they can comply with fixing our roads'.

Under the *NSW Roads Act 1993*, the process for undertaking works within a road reserve can only be undertaken with the approval of the roads authority. For much of the REZ, the roads authority is the relevant local council and the use of road corridors for transporting OSOM and transmission infrastructure requires council approval.[222]

Various local councils across the REZs have called for careful planning of haulage routes, pre-construction infrastructure assessments, and ongoing monitoring. There is a view that any required upgrades should be funded by project proponents or government and that broader strategic investment in transport infrastructure is needed. Some propose that affected local roads should be temporarily reclassified as state roads to ensure they are appropriately funded and managed during construction.

2.103 Nonetheless, in response to these challenges, some local councils have attempted to proactively address these concerns. As Muswellbrook Council declared, 'we are committed to being proactive and shaping these changes, not just responding to them'.[223]

2.104 To contend with some of the resourcing concerns for local councils, the government has provided $250,000 to some local councils within the REZs each year for three years.[224] While local councils welcomed the payment, there were complexities around use of the funds, and attitudes towards it varied.

2.105 For instance, Mr Jack Bond, Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council, acknowledged that the payment 'has been fantastic'.[225] While noting that the process to secure the funds was 'pretty long' as funding was provided to other REZs first, Mr Bond considered that the payment created a 'big uplift for council to understand what is happening and what is on the way' and allowed additional support to assist council staff when it comes to REZ-related development assessments.[226]

2.106 Further, Mr Bond advised that Edward River Council receives a 'free leash on how we get to spend that money that comes into council', explaining that they have

222 Submission 40, Singleton Council, p 7.

223 Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 3.

224 Evidence, Mr Jack Bond, Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council, 18 February 2026, p 2; Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, p 9; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 25; Submission 121, Murrumbidgee Council, p 7.

225 Evidence, Mr Jack Bond, Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council, 18 February 2026, p 2.

226 Evidence, Mr Jack Bond, Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council, 18 February 2026, pp 2 and 4.

used the funds towards a dedicated resource to manage all approved developments from the Australian Energy Market Operator process within their council boundaries.[227] Mr Bond also shared how other councils within the South West REZ are looking to spend the funds:

> [S]ome of the other councils that might not have any proponents currently approved in their area, I think they're looking to spend that money on some studies and understanding what it might look like. We call ourselves the G7, the seven councils that are within the region, and we're looking to pool those resources together as well so that we're not duplicating the work between ourselves too.[228]

2.107 Uralla Shire Council acknowledged that the payments critically support resourcing for strategic planning and engineering project management functions within the council. Some of the funding was also directed towards developing a Local Housing Strategy. However, the council was critical of the extensive oversight and administrative requirements of the payments, which they viewed as limiting their autonomy to make decisions and creating a significant workload for staff. Uralla Shire Council described the process in practice:

> These payments are overly scrutinised and 'tied,' requiring high-level of administrative support from finance officers and undermining Councils autonomy to direct funds where it sees fit. Payments are made in arrears, quarterly, upon receipt of detailed report and invoice. Uralla shares with several other Councils, the experience of expending funds in good faith, but later being denied reimbursement or having to provide further explanatory commentary and justification. This erodes trust and again increases the burden of an already stretched staff at the cost of local Council.[229]

2.108 Further, Uralla Shire Council called for the extension of the payments due to significant delays of the projects and the expansion of 'the scope of pre-delivery work for NE REZ'.[230] The council highlighted that as the three-year funding agreement is already in its second year, it no longer aligns with project delivery timelines.[231]

2.109 Other funding structures such as benefit sharing arrangements will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

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227 Evidence, Mr Jack Bond, Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council, 18 February 2026, p 4.

228 Evidence, Mr Jack Bond, Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council, 18 February 2026, p 4.

229 Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, p 9.

230 Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, p 9.

231 Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, p 9.

Regional Major Infrastructure Studies and cumulative impacts

2.110 Throughout the inquiry, a number of stakeholders highlighted the absence of a cumulative impact study for each REZ.[232] As discussed in Chapter 1, the government published the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies (the Studies) in December 2025. These studies analyse the potential impacts and opportunities resulting from proposed major infrastructure projects, including Renewable Energy Zones. It should be noted that much of the evidence for this inquiry was received prior to the publication of the Studies.

2.111 In July 2025, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, called for stronger measures to address cumulative impacts beyond merely identifying them. He emphasised the need to implement solutions once the problems are identified, stating that 'unless [the] government is prepared to actually enact solutions, don't bother doing it'.[233]

2.112 On the other hand, at a hearing in February 2026, Mr Terry Dodds, Chair, Energy Security and Affordability Committee, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO), and Chief Executive Officer, Balranald Shire Council, advised that he 'liked the [Studies] for what it was', albeit agreeing that it did not provide solutions to address the impacts.[234] In a similar vein, Mr Brett Stonestreet, PSM, Interim Executive Officer, RAMJO considered that the Studies provided a high-level overview of the cumulative impact where 'finding the problem is the first step … before you address any potential solutions'.[235]

2.113 In response to questions regarding the Studies and their 'robustness', Ms Hannah McCaughey, EnergyCo, emphasised she is 'confident in the robustness in the studies'. When pressed further about the Studies based on assumptions, Ms McCaughey expressed that 'they are really good scenarios for a starting point', enabling the government to then work with local councils and adopt a 'whole-of-government' approach to addressing the impacts.[236] Further, Ms McCaughey defended how 'opportunities' were identified and outlined in the Studies, and was of the view that it represents a way for communities to receive significant

[232] See for example: Submission 56, Voice for Walcha, p 2; Submission 149, Mr Stuart Grills, p 1; Submission 151, Mr Tony Menkens, p 1.

[233] Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2025, pp 5-6.

[234] Evidence, Mr Terry Dodds, Chair, Energy Security and Affordability Committee, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, and Chief Executive Officer, Balranald Shire Council, 18 February 2026, p 14.

[235] Evidence, Mr Brett Stonestreet, PSM, Interim Executive Officer, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, 18 February 2026, pp 14-15.

[236] Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 66.

investment and grow their communities through jobs and other economic opportunities.[237]

2.114 EnergyCo also highlighted their commitment to local government in the delivery of the REZs. EnergyCo acknowledged that, in the early stages, they 'probably haven't got that right' but relations had improved over time, particularly with CWO REZ. They were positive about their ongoing engagement with councils across the REZs.[238]

2.115 In this context, EnergyCo advised that they meet regularly with local councils across the REZs to work through any issues, collaborating with other government agencies such as Transport for NSW when required, coordinating responses and providing relevant updates on projects.[239]

2.116 When questioned about cumulative impacts, Transgrid responded that they engage with key stakeholders early on, including local councils, to keep them informed about their projects. More specifically, in relation to the potential impact on local roads, Transgrid, advised that they address this by:

- abiding by the relevant traffic and transport management plans or development conditions[240]
- ensuring that processes are followed so that roads are maintained accordingly (including collaborating with local councils and delivery partners such as other renewable energy developers)[241]
- conducting technical studies of the impact on roads and sharing information with local councils including providing recommendations for road improvements or upgrades.[242]

2.117 Transport for NSW acknowledged that significant investment, including ongoing funding, is required across key transport corridors to ensure equipment and materials can be delivered to the REZs. Mr Anthony Hayes, Head of Regional Integration, Planning, Integration and Passenger Division, Transport for NSW, confirmed that many of these routes have not previously accommodated OSOM

237 Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 63.

238 Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 68; Evidence, Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo 31 March 2026, p 69.

239 Evidence, Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 69.

240 Evidence, Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager, Community and Social Licence, Transgrid, 18 February 2026, pp 28-29.

241 Evidence, Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager, Community and Social Licence, Transgrid, 18 February 2026, pp 28-29.

242 Evidence, Mr Nathan Menser, Community and Stakeholder Manager, Transgrid, 18 February 2026, p 29.

vehicles and stated that Transport for NSW will 'work in partnership with [the relevant local] councils' to address these challenges.[243]

Committee comment

2.118 The energy transition is underway with government policy focused on shifting electricity generation from coal-fired power stations to renewable energy sources. A key component of this transition is the establishment of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) across regional New South Wales.

2.119 The committee recognises that REZs are an essential part of New South Wales' energy transition and supports their timely implementation. The committee also acknowledges that the success of the rollout depends on regional communities being meaningfully engaged, adequately supported and able to benefit from the transition. The challenge for the NSW Government is to achieve this balance without unnecessarily slowing the urgent transition to renewable energy. The committee believes the Government can achieve this with a well-planned and properly supported rollout that will not only deliver the energy infrastructure New South Wales needs, but also strengthen community confidence in the transition and ensure its benefits are widely shared.

Finding 1

Given Renewable Energy Zones are an essential part of New South Wales' energy transition, the NSW Government must find a way to deliver the Renewable Energy Zone rollout as a matter of urgency, while ensuring regional communities are meaningfully consulted, adequately supported through the transition, and able to share in its benefits.

2.120 The people in rural and regional communities are at the heart of this inquiry. They are the ones facing significant changes to their communities, environment, everyday routines and, for some, their source of livelihood. Visiting each of the five REZs provided the committee with an invaluable opportunity to hear directly from local stakeholders, including councils, landholders, residents, and community organisations, about the unfolding impacts of each REZ and associated projects. The committee is thankful to each stakeholder who took the time to participate in the inquiry, as well as those landholders who welcomed the committee on their properties so we could witness firsthand the impacts of the REZ.

2.121 Each REZ has a distinct focus and its own unique uncertainties. The Central-West Orana REZ is the most developed REZ and was the focus of the first report. Many stakeholders in the New England REZ were concerned about the extent of

[243] Evidence, Mr Anthony Hayes, Head of Regional Integration, Planning, Integration and Passenger Division, Transport for NSW, 31 March 2026, p 69.

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generation projects that could potentially be approved, calling for a reduction in the generation capacity allocated to the zone. Projects keep 'popping-up' in the Hunter-Central Coast REZ despite limited projects having been granted access rights. Communities in the Illawarra REZ have faced division over the uncertainty of offshore wind facilities, suggesting a need for the government to clarify the role of offshore wind in the REZ. As the last REZ to roll-out, some in the South West REZ community are concerned that they have been left behind. Despite frustration about being the last in line and with broad community acceptance of the REZ still lacking, many have nonetheless used the opportunity to proactively respond to some of the issues discussed.

2.122 In addition, we are mindful that the REZs also impact communities situated outside of the zones. Some renewable energy projects are not located within a REZ yet the communities hosting this infrastructure have similar concerns to those within the zones, suggesting that the issues are not confined to REZ-bound communities.

2.123 The committee's visits to each REZ enabled us to observe how the development of the zones and related projects has changed rural and regional landscapes within a short timeframe. Agricultural land in some areas has been transformed to host an increasing number of renewable energy developments. As such, we recognise that there has been a rapid industrialisation of various regional landscapes and some communities have not had the voice they would have liked in the energy transition.

2.124 Across New South Wales, a consistent pattern has emerged of the government not delivering a coordinated, 'whole-of-government' approach to the implementation and development of the REZs. Following the REZ announcements, the government accelerated its planning process, rushing projects and creating gaps in the development of each REZ without community buy-in. Rural and regional communities are naturally uncertain about future planning, resulting in anger and mistrust of the government. This could have been avoided.

2.125 The rollout of the current REZ model has been uneven with each region at different stages. Indeed, our first report signalled the need to address the adverse impacts identified for the Central-West Orana REZ (being the most progressed REZ) in order to deal with similar concerns for the other regions.

2.126 Nonetheless, persistent issues have emerged for the other REZs pertaining to a lack of strategic planning, adverse impacts on landholders regarding land values, potential repercussions for the agricultural industry, and the erosion of social cohesion. The committee shares the concerns of a number of stakeholders that these impacts will be long-term and are not easy to fix.

2.127 Further, these persistent issues demonstrate that while there are strong coordination and community benefit measures within REZ boundaries there are

improvements that could be made to planning, appropriate safeguards, and demonstrated community benefits.

Finding 2

The Renewable Energy Zone model, as implemented in New South Wales, has prioritised the rapid implementation of REZs, sometimes at a cost to regional interests. However, it is important to continue these measures to ensure the economic benefits, reliability and climate benefits.

Finding 3

The NSW Government has presided over the rollout of Renewable Energy Zones without a coherent, enforceable, whole-of-government planning framework, resulting in predictable and avoidable harm to rural and regional communities.

Finding 4

Renewable energy development poses a long-term change for some regional communities. There are challenges and opportunities to manage as a part of this to ensure that, on balance, it is a positive change with long lasting benefits.

Finding 5

While there are strong coordination and community benefit measures within REZ boundaries there are improvements that could be made to planning, appropriate safeguards, and demonstrated community benefits.

2.128 Further, the committee is concerned that the development of the REZs poses challenges for local services such as housing, road infrastructure, water security, waste, emergency services, and local economies. Some of these impacts can be addressed through individual planning consents and others require strategic coordination. Based on evidence received, local communities and councils do not have the ability to absorb the additional demands on local services given how much they are already stretched. These pressures may be particularly acute for smaller councils with less resourcing or funding compared to bigger councils.

2.129 The first report foresaw the need for an independent cumulative impact study of the Central-West Orana REZ to properly address the compounding impacts in that region. As it is the most progressed REZ, an independent cumulative impact study could have helped address similar concerns in the rollout of other REZs.

However, we are disappointed with the way in which current Regional Major Infrastructure Studies for the Central West Orana and New England REZs focus on 'opportunities' instead of solutions that address the impacts. Indeed, at the time of writing, no further studies have been published for the other REZs.

2.130 Despite this, the committee also recognises the importance of moving towards renewable energy sources for the environment and for the benefit of regional and rural communities already experiencing the impacts of climate change. The committee therefore recommends that the government review each REZ and the impacts on each regional community affected while each REZ is rolled out.

Finding 6

That Renewable Energy Zones development poses challenges for local services such as housing, road infrastructure, water security, waste, emergency services, and local economies. Some of these impacts can be addressed through individual planning consents and others require strategic coordination.

Recommendation 1

That the NSW Government review each Renewable Energy Zone and the impacts on each regional community affected while each zone is rolled out.

2.131 Despite EnergyCo being the statutory authority responsible for leading the delivery of all five REZs and Priority Transmission Infrastructure Projects, the government has not exercised sufficient stewardship of the REZ rollout, allowing the expansion of projects without coordinated planning, effective safeguards, or demonstrated community benefit.

2.132 While EnergyCo assured the committee that they collaborate with other government agencies, such as Transport for NSW, and regularly engage with stakeholders to work through any issues, other stakeholders repeatedly told the committee that there is a continued lack of understanding of the role of EnergyCo in REZ development. The committee is sympathetic to the view that fragmented decision-making across various government agencies has created confusion in relation to responsibility.

2.133 The committee notes the role of EnergyCo in developing one of the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies. However, the Studies inadequately address the issue of cumulative impacts. As infrastructure planner, EnergyCo needs to not only deliver renewable energy projects but ensure that the community's interests are protected as part of the energy transition.

2.134 On this basis, the committee finds that EnergyCo, as infrastructure planner, has failed to perform its key function of coordinating REZ infrastructure and services. To ensure accountability and leadership of the REZ development, the committee

recommends that the government seek to amend the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* to expand and clarify EnergyCo's statutory mandate to include explicit responsibility for cumulative impact management, cross-agency coordination, regional infrastructure and service planning with enforceable obligations.

2.135 Further, while the committee notes EnergyCo's current statutory responsibilities, the formalised accountability measures and performance requirements could be strengthened. As such, the committee recommends that the NSW Government ensure that EnergyCo is subject to formal performance and accountability requirements including: statutory reporting on cumulative impacts in each REZ, public reporting on mitigation measures and outcomes, and an independent audit of its coordination role.

Finding 7

EnergyCo, as the infrastructure planner for the Renewable Energy Zones has failed to perform its central coordinating role, particularly in relation to:

- cumulative impact management
- sequencing of development
- coordination of infrastructure and services.

Recommendation 2

That the NSW Government seek to amend the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* to expand and clarify EnergyCo's statutory mandate to include explicit responsibility for cumulative impact management, cross-agency coordination, and regional infrastructure and service planning, with enforceable obligations.

Recommendation 3

That the NSW Government ensure that EnergyCo is subject to formal performance and accountability requirements including:

- statutory reporting on cumulative impacts in each Renewable Energy Zone
- public reporting on mitigation measures and outcomes
- independent audit of its coordination role.

2.136 To address concerns regarding fragmented decision making, the committee recommends that the government require all relevant agencies involved in the implementation and development of the REZs to operate under a coordinated REZ

delivery framework, led by EnergyCo, with defined roles and responsibilities, mandatory data sharing and joint planning obligations.

Recommendation 4

That the NSW Government require all relevant agencies to operate under a coordinated Renewable Energy Zone delivery framework, led by EnergyCo, with:

- defined roles and responsibilities
- mandatory data sharing
- joint planning obligations.

2.137 The committee notes that local councils are not the approving authority for renewable energy projects. However, they play a crucial role in the development assessment process and in the provision of support to the community. In light of this, it is clear to the committee that local councils have often been the ones to step up and lead their communities and manage the consequences of state-led infrastructure expansion. The weight of this is even greater for those councils that are less well-resourced in terms of staff and funding.

2.138 The committee acknowledges the work that local councils have undertaken to provide detailed submissions to this inquiry, participate in hearings and provide evidence about the cumulative impact on local services. This has afforded the committee important insight into the significant impacts of REZs on communities.

2.139 The committee acknowledges that the government has provided an additional $250,000 to some councils within the REZs to address concerns regarding resourcing. However, this measure appears to have been implemented reactively rather than proactively, in keeping with the government's lack of strategic planning in this process. Therefore, the committee recommends that the government provide recurrent funding to local councils in each REZ to assist with resourcing pressures.

Finding 8

Local councils have been left to manage the consequences of state-led infrastructure expansion without sufficient authority, resources, or strategic direction.

Recommendation 5

That the NSW Government provide recurrent funding to local councils in each Renewable Energy Zone to assist with resourcing pressures.

2.140 Many stakeholders raised concerns about the potential negative impacts of renewable energy developments on landholders in relation to agricultural productivity, decreasing land value and public liability insurance coverage. In particular, these concerns have left many landholders who earn a living from the land feeling uncertain about the future.

2.141 The committee is mindful that the government has stressed that renewable energy development is not in conflict with agricultural land use. We previously urged the government to monitor this situation. However, the committee continues to be concerned about the impacts of REZ on agricultural productivity, land values and public liability insurance given the resounding views on these issues across the state. The government should have anticipated these concerns and addressed the associated risks.

Finding 9

The NSW Government has failed to adequately address known risks relating to agricultural productivity, land value impacts, and insurance availability, leaving landholders exposed to ongoing uncertainty.

2.142 Collectively, the committee finds that the implementation and development of the REZs has resulted in an uneven distribution of benefits and impacts to host communities. It appears that the transition is happening *to* rural and regional communities rather than *with* them. Across the state, local councils are expected to manage increased planning and infrastructure demands without additional funding. Landowners, including those who do not host renewable energy infrastructure, bear the costs and disruptions to their way of life given the uncertainty of the impacts of renewable energy infrastructure on their land.

2.143 While we acknowledge that there are current funding arrangements for host communities (further explored in Chapter 3), we urge the government to expand the compensation and benefit-sharing framework to: include non-host landowners; address land value and insurance impacts; ensure the equitable distribution of benefits; publish clear eligibility criteria for all community benefit and compensation programs; and provide annual public reporting on the allocation and expenditure of community benefit funding within each Renewable Energy Zone.

Finding 10

The benefits of Renewable Energy Zone development are unevenly distributed, while the burdens are concentrated on host communities, resulting in structural inequity.

Recommendation 6

That the NSW Government expand the compensation and benefit-sharing framework to:

- include non-host neighbours
- address land value and insurance impacts
- ensure the equitable distribution of benefits
- publish clear eligibility criteria for all community benefit and compensation programs
- provide annual public reporting on the allocation and expenditure of community benefit funding within each Renewable Energy Zone.

2.144 The committee notes that the evidence received regarding consultation was not uniform across all Renewable Energy Zones or proponents. While many stakeholders described consultation as occurring too late or having limited influence over decision-making, other witnesses gave evidence that consultation practices had improved over time, particularly where early engagement, ongoing communication and stronger relationships between proponents, EnergyCo and local councils had been established. The committee considers these examples demonstrate that improved consultation practices are achievable and should inform future Renewable Energy Zone delivery.

2.145 The committee is encouraged to hear that the relationship between EnergyCo and some local councils has improved since the initial stages of the REZ roll-out. This is a step in the right direction.

2.146 However, this was not the experience for everyone. The committee heard time and again that there has been inadequate consultation between the government, renewable energy developers and the community. In particular, the committee is concerned that the consultation process may at times have been a 'tick-a-box' exercise that did not always provide affected communities with the capacity to meaningfully influence outcomes.

2.147 It is clear that the consultation process is structurally flawed. Communities are required to participate in multiple consultations as developments are worked through project-by-project, resulting in consultation fatigue and information overload. Many shared similar experiences throughout the REZs of individuals feeling pressured to sign agreements before 'scoping reports' had been done or a project was placed in the NSW Planning Portal. This has led to a situation where information asymmetry and imbalanced engagement is rife. When consultation is not conducted in a manner that meets reasonable community expectations, community trust and respect is inevitably lost and can be difficult to restore.

2.148 Further, the State Significant Development framework, as applied to renewable energy projects, creates an inherent power imbalance between individuals and developers. The committee was concerned to hear of the significant burden on some individuals who are faced with reviewing 'thousands' of pages of

documentation throughout the consultation process. This is often in stark contrast to developers (and the government) who are well-resourced, with ready access to legal advice and specialist consultants. The current process does not provide equitable procedural rights to landholders. Many individuals simply do not have the time or resources to go through this process. While we applaud the initiative of those community groups that have stepped up to volunteer and help their community work through the layers of bureaucracy, this is hardly fair.

Finding 11

That the consultation process undertaken by EnergyCo, government agencies, and renewable energy developers has at times been procedural in nature and did not always provide affected communities with the capacity to meaningfully influence outcomes.

Finding 12

The consultation model could be improved by:

- whole of area rather than project-by-project engagement
- reducing information asymmetry
- earlier engagement before key decisions are made.

Finding 13

The State Significant Development framework, as applied to Renewable Energy Zone projects, systematically privileges proponents over affected communities and does not provide equitable procedural rights to landholders.

2.149 As well as cumbersome community consultation processes, landholders also face the widespread use of non-disclosure agreements in negotiations conducted between individuals and renewable energy developers. This has actively undermined transparency of how specific areas will be impacted by developments, fragmenting communities and exacerbating social division.

2.150 These failures in consultation and community engagement have eroded social cohesion within rural and regional communities in REZs and is a source of grief for many in these regions. It has divided some communities between those that support and those that do not support the REZs. The committee is concerned that these divisions may be enduring.

Finding 14

That the widespread use of non-disclosure agreements and individualised negotiations has actively undermined transparency, fragmented communities, and exacerbated social division.

Finding 15

Some witnesses felt that as a direct consequence of the failures in consultation and community engagement, social licence for Renewable Energy Zone development in affected regions has been materially eroded.

2.151 The government must put effective measures in place to improve the consultation process for REZ developments and related projects. The committee accordingly recommends that the government seek to find ways to ensure the consultation process, where possible occurs prior to key planning decisions; demonstrates measurable influence on project design; includes independent auditing of engagement outcomes and requires proponents to publish a response explaining how community feedback has influenced project design or, where it has not, the reasons why.

2.152 Further, the committee also recommends that the NSW Government review the use of non-disclosure agreements in renewable energy project negotiations as they restrict community-wide transparency and inhibit effective consultation.

2.153 In addition, to ensure procedural fairness and address the power imbalance that can exist between individuals and developers, the committee urges the government to review the State Significant Development framework, with a view to consider landholder rights, ensure consultation timeframes are adequate and consider independent peer review of impact assessments.

2.154 The review should specifically consider cumulative impact assessment across multiple projects within a Renewable Energy Zone; opportunities for earlier strategic planning prior to project assessment; procedural fairness for directly affected landholders and neighbouring properties consistency in assessment requirements across Renewable Energy Zone projects.

Recommendation 7

That the NSW Government seek to find ways to ensure the consultation process where possible:

- occurs prior to key planning decisions
- demonstrates measurable influence on project design
- includes independent auditing of engagement outcomes
- requires proponents to publish a response explaining how community feedback has influenced project design or, where it has not, the reasons why.

Recommendation 8

That the NSW Government review the use of non-disclosure agreements in renewable energy project negotiations as they restrict community-wide transparency and inhibit effective consultation.

Recommendation 9

That the NSW Government review the State Significant Development framework with a view to:

- consider landholder rights
- ensure consultation timeframes are adequate
- consider independent peer review of impact assessments.

The review should specifically consider:

- cumulative impact assessment across multiple projects within a Renewable Energy Zone
- opportunities for earlier strategic planning prior to project assessment
- procedural fairness for directly affected landholders and neighbouring properties
- consistency in assessment requirements across Renewable Energy Zone projects.

2.155 The committee reiterates the importance of Social Impact Assessments (SIA) as they identify and assess the likely social impacts of state significant projects, including REZ-related infrastructure, as well as recommend ways to reduce any negative effects while enhancing potential benefits. In addition, when used effectively, SIAs can help communities to feel more involved and supported.

2.156 In our first report, we emphasised that the current use of SIAs is ineffective. We accordingly recommended that the government review their use. While the government noted that it 'supported in principle' the committee's recommendation, it is clear that SIAs need more consistency of application and

adequate scoping, and are incapable of capturing cumulative and intangible impacts. These issues should be addressed via cumulative impact studies.

2.157 As such, the committee recommends that the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure review the Social Impact Assessment process so assessments are standardised, independently verified, and expanded to include consideration of cumulative impacts, social cohesion and long-term regional effects. Social Impact Assessments should be completed before transmission corridors and Renewable Energy Zone boundaries are finalised and should be updated as projects progress through the planning system.

Finding 16

Social Impact Assessments need more consistency of application and adequate scoping, and are incapable of capturing cumulative and intangible impacts. These issues should be addressed via cumulative impact studies.

Recommendation 10

That the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure review the Social Impact Assessment process so assessments are standardised, independently verified, and expanded to include consideration of:

- cumulative impacts
- social cohesion
- long-term regional effects.

Social Impact Assessments should be completed before transmission corridors and Renewable Energy Zone boundaries are finalised and should be updated as projects progress through the planning system.

2.158 Despite the conduct of numerous 'consultations' between renewable energy developers and the local community, the committee considers that many are ineffective as community voices are not adequately heard. An independent representative is needed to ensure there is someone who can effectively represent those within Renewable Energy Zones. The committee thus recommends that the NSW Government seek to establish a statutory Community Advocate for REZ regions to represent landholders, provide independent advice, and participate in planning and assessment processes.

Recommendation 11

That the NSW Government seek to establish a statutory Community Advocate for Renewable Energy Zone regions to:

- represent landholders
- provide independent advice
- participate in planning and assessment processes.

2.159 While the government has attempted to improve engagement with REZ communities, the committee is particularly impressed by the work of numerous individuals, community groups and local councils that have proactively sought to coordinate their responses and improve the effectiveness of their involvement in the consultation process.

2.160 We were also heartened to learn of the work the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) has done in the last 12 months to address community complaints regarding renewable energy development. While we applaud its conciliatory approach, this is not always sufficient or effective. The committee is troubled by the gaps in the functions of EWON that inhibit its ability to properly address community concerns. Of note is its lack of jurisdiction in the area of renewable energy generation and storage development.

2.161 The committee agrees with EWON that renewable energy generation and storage developers must be members of EWON in order for it to have the ability to properly handle all complaints received. Accordingly, we encourage the government to implement a mandatory licensing scheme that requires developers with access rights in a REZ to be members of EWON.

2.162 In addition, the committee notes that while EWON primarily adopts a conciliation approach to complaints, it has the power to make binding decisions of up to $100,000. To strengthen the dispute resolution process, the government should expand EWON's powers to include stronger enforcement abilities and increase its binding decisions to a higher amount.

2.163 Finally, the increasing role of EWON in addressing disputes within the renewable energy industry must not diminish the role of the government in providing robust, proactive protections for affected communities. The committee strongly urges the government to maintain a key role in ensuring the engagement process throughout the REZs is characterised by accountability, transparency and community buy-in. Therefore, we recommend that the government undertake an urgent review of the role of EWON in renewable energy infrastructure with a view to significantly expand its powers regarding: binding dispute resolution, systemic investigations and proactive monitoring. The review should include an assessment of the effectiveness of cumulative impact management, community engagement, regional economic outcomes, housing impacts and the delivery of community benefit commitments.

Finding 17

The extension of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW to renewable energy infrastructure has not provided a sufficient mechanism for resolving disputes arising from Renewable Energy Zone development.

Finding 18

The role of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW is currently inadequate for addressing the scale and complexity of Renewable Energy Zone-related grievances due to insufficient:

- enforcement powers
- systemic oversight capability
- capacity to address cumulative or cross-project issues.

Finding 19

That the NSW Government's reliance on the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW as a primary dispute resolution mechanism reflects that it has not established robust, proactive protections for affected communities.

Recommendation 12

That the NSW Government undertake an urgent review of the role of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW in renewable energy infrastructure with a view to significantly expand its powers regarding:

- binding dispute resolution
- systemic investigations
- proactive monitoring.

The review should include an assessment of the effectiveness of cumulative impact management, community engagement, regional economic outcomes, housing impacts and the delivery of community benefit commitments.

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Chapter 3 Economic, environmental and social impacts of Renewable Energy Zones

This final chapter explores various issues relating to the economic, environmental and social impacts of the Renewable Energy Zones (REZs), as identified by various stakeholders throughout the inquiry. It begins by outlining the proposed economic impacts of REZs, including funding arrangements, issues around employment and job creation, potential economic diversification of regional communities, and the cost and financial viability of energy projects. The chapter then explores concerns about the environmental impacts of the zones, including decommissioning of renewable energy infrastructure, potential fire risks, and the repercussions of land clearing on wildlife corridors**.** Finally, the chapter concludes by considering the perspectives of First Nations stakeholders in relation to the potential benefits and challenges associated with renewable energy development.

Economic impacts

3.1 The Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) are expected to deliver economic benefits to host communities through increased investment in the region, as well as employment and other economic opportunities.[244] This section examines stakeholder views regarding the proposed benefits of the REZs, with a particular focus on:

- funding arrangements
- employment opportunities
- economic diversification of regional communities
- the cost and financial viability of renewable energy projects.

3.2 There is also potential economic risk to communities if REZs do not proceed, as noted in evidence given by stakeholders such as the Nature Conservation Council:

> There is also the economic risk of not acting and delaying the transition to renewable energy, significantly impacting not just rural and regional communities but all of Australia. New modelling shows that Australia's GDP will take a hit of $6.8 trillion between 2024 and 2050 as a result of the broad impacts of climate change, if serious action is not taken.[245]

[244] Submission 44, NSW Government, p 12. See also: Evidence, Mr Ash Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo), 13 May 2025, p 2; Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 56.

[245] Submission 32, Nature Conservation Council NSW, p 4.

Funding arrangements for host communities

3.3 As mentioned in the first report, the government advised that a number of community benefit sharing schemes 'will deliver enduring benefits to communities that host new energy infrastructure within the renewable energy zones'.[246] The table below provides a summary of these benefits, as identified by the government.

Table 3 Community benefits sharing schemes in Renewable Energy Zones[247]

Community Benefit Funds	Delivered via Voluntary Planning Agreements and set by the Benefit Sharing Guidelines (the Guidelines),[248] the Community Benefit Fund is a local revenue mechanism provided by new solar, wind and battery energy system storage developments to host communities. Further information about VPAs are noted below. Under the Guidelines, it is estimated that REZ communities will receive $414 million in benefits.[249] The Guidelines set out the applicable rates for determining the total funding value of any benefit sharing arrangements between developers and the community. These are: • $1,050 per megawatt per annum for wind energy developments • $850 per megawatt per annum for large-scale energy developments • $150 per megawatt hour per annum for battery energy storage systems in rural zones.[250] These rates are to be adjusted for inflation each year over the life of a project.

246 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, pp 17-19. See also: Submission 44, NSW Government, pp 15-16.

247 For more information, see Submission 44, NSW Government, pp 10, 15-16.

248 Further information about VPAs and the Guidelines are noted below.

249 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 10.

250 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 10.

Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme (SPB Scheme)	Established by the government to support the delivery of new major transmission projects to landowners hosting transmission infrastructure. $200,000 per kilometre is paid to eligible landowners in annual instalments over a 20-year period. This is in addition to any compensation paid under the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991.*[251]
Voluntary Planning Agreements	A legal agreement between a developer and a planning authority, such as the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, or local councils. The development contributions system operates under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).[252] Planning agreements can deliver or fund: • public amenities and services • affordable housing • transport or other infrastructure • conservation or enhancement of the natural environment.[253]
Compensation for land acquisition	Landowners hosting transmission lines are entitled to compensation for the acquisition of easements rights by Transgrid or Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) under the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*. This compensation is an upfront, one-off payment that includes the market value of the land being acquired, loss due to severance and disturbance because of the

[251] Submission 44, NSW Government, p 15.

[252] As mentioned in the first report, the EP&A Act is the state's primary land use planning legislation. Amongst other things, the EP&A Act sets out the importance of community participation in planning decisions, different types of strategic land use planning including land use zoning, and planning pathways that govern the assessment and approval of development and infrastructure. See also: Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, p 5.

[253] Planning [NSW Government], *State Voluntary Planning Agreements*, 2026, https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/plans-for-your-area/infrastructure-funding/state-voluntary-planning-agreements.

	project, and reasonable costs and expenses incurred in seeking independent advice.[254]
Community and Employment Benefit Program	Funded by developer access fees, to invest and support 'significant legacy community services and infrastructure' such as improvements to mobile phone coverage, housing and accommodation projects, drought resilience projects and other related local community projects or programs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, $128.4 million has been dedicated to the Central West Orana (CWO) REZ over the next four years. The government's submission, received in January 2025, did not indicate any Community and Employment Benefit Program funding for the remaining REZs.[255]

3.4 At the hearing in May 2026, the government further emphasised their commitment to community benefits as evidenced by a number of funding announcements applicable to host communities and significant investment in critical infrastructure. Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) highlighted the following:

- over $66 million in community employment benefits, representing significant investment in critical infrastructure needs
- over $20 million for critical water infrastructure in Coolah and Dunedoo (towns located in the CWO REZ)
- $11 million allocated to worker housing in Mudgee (located in the CWO REZ).[256]

3.5 Further to the community benefit sharing schemes, Ausgrid and Transgrid also operate funding programs that support host communities. Table 4 provides a summary of these arrangements.

[254] Submission 44, NSW Government, p 15.

[255] Submission 44, NSW Government, p 16.

[256] Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 56.

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Table 4 Additional funding by Ausgrid and Transgrid

Ausgrid	Proposed $5 million community benefits program to support local initiatives, specifically in the Hunter Central Coast REZ (HCC REZ). If approved, the program will be co-designed with the community in 2025, with funding allocated over the design and construction phase.[257]
Transgrid	The Community Partnerships Program offers grants of up to $5,000 for not-for-profit organisations that are local to their planning, operations, and major project areas. Under the program, community groups can apply twice a year for grants of up to $5,000 to contribute towards community initiatives. 382 grants totalling $1,602,698.85 have been awarded since 2023 to host communities such as the HCC REZ and the South West (SW) REZ. Initiatives include community infrastructure, workshops, and sustainability, inclusivity and accessibility projects.[258]

3.6 In response to questions about the financial benefits available to communities that host transmission infrastructure, Transgrid advised that there are both direct and indirect gains for host communities. As of January 2026, Transgrid's projects, EnergyConnect (transmission infrastructure in the SW REZ) and HumeLink (a separate transmission project outside of the REZ), had spent $832 million with local and regional businesses.[259]

3.7 In addition, Transgrid maintained that host communities receive a number of indirect financial benefits including:

- Transgrid's purchase of goods and services while Transgrid and its contractors visit the host communities for development, construction and operational phases.
- Opportunities for local businesses to participate in project activity, which could be a result of gaining direct employment on the project or securing subcontracts to provide goods/services.
- Project employment would also include a component of upskilling and training, which then flows into future economic benefits for future employment and project legacy.
- Providing support for local community groups/local organisations through community investment and benefits programs.[260]

257 Submission 36, Ausgrid, pp 3-4. See also: Evidence, Mr Daniel Sartor, Head of Projects, Ausgrid, 25 September 2025, p 24.

258 Answers to questions on questions on notice, Transgrid, 20 March 2026, p 1; Evidence, Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager, Community and Social License, Transgrid, 18 February 2026, p 26.

259 Answers to questions on questions on notice, Transgrid, 20 March 2026, p 7.

260 Answers to questions on questions on notice, Transgrid, 20 March 2026, p 7.

3.8 Furthermore, the Clean Energy Council emphasised that the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (the state's plan for the energy transition) is estimated to attract up to $32 billion of private sector investment by 2030, supporting 6,300 construction jobs and 2,800 ongoing jobs, primarily in regional NSW.[261]

Community attitudes towards the proposed funding arrangements

3.9 Stakeholders had a variety of views about the community benefit sharing schemes or 'benefit sharing arrangements' that applied to their local communities, especially in relation to some of the practical outcomes of the proposed funding arrangements.

3.10 According to Tamworth Regional Council, local communities expect to receive appropriate financial benefits and compensation as a result of hosting both generation and transmission infrastructure.[262] The financial contributions that flow from various benefit sharing arrangements were acknowledged by some councils.[263]

3.11 Nonetheless there was criticism of both the adequacy of these benefits as well as constraints associated with their use.[264] In particular, some local councils highlighted several practical considerations associated with managing funds, including:

- restrictions on how funds can be spent, with funding limited to new infrastructure rather than operational costs, resulting in calls for greater flexibility in the use of funds[265]
- depreciation and ongoing maintenance costs for new assets, which adds further pressures to councils' asset management responsibilities[266]

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261 Answers to supplementary questions, Clean Energy Council, 11 May 2026, p 1.

262 Submission 69, Tamworth Regional Council, p 2.

263 See for example: Evidence, Councillor Robert Bell, Mayor, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 3; Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 4; Evidence, Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Tamworth Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 11.

264 See for example: Submission 62, Armidale Regional Council, pp 6-7; Submission 69, Tamworth Regional Council, p 2; Evidence, Councillor Robert Bell, Mayor, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 3; Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 4.

265 See for example: Submission 54, Country Mayors Association of NSW, p 5; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 31; Evidence, Councillor Robert Bell, Mayor, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 3; Evidence, Mr Alan Butler, Acting General Manager, Walcha Council, 17 July 2025, p 11.

266 See for example: Submission 87, Hay Shire Council, p 7; Evidence, Councillor Robert Bell, Mayor, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 3; Evidence, Mr Alan Butler, Acting General Manager, Walcha Council, 17 July 2025, p 11.

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- the alignment of financial benefits with long-term economic development and legacy infrastructure outcomes[267]
- community involvement in decision-making about expenditure of the funds.[268]

3.12 To illustrate the point, Councillor Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha Shire Council, highlighted the potential financial impact of these funds on smaller rural communities as well as some practical considerations. Councillor Noakes also described the disparity between the views of developers and local communities in how these funds are best used. He argued that councils should have greater flexibility to direct community benefit funding towards long-term community needs rather than infrastructure that creates ongoing maintenance and depreciation costs:

> Most of the proponents seem to want them to represent something that represents them in the community. We need them to make our community better, and those things aren't always seen and they don't always have a big sign on them saying that "so and so wind developer did this project". They want the buildings, they want the community centres and these sorts of things or the swings and the barbeques—all these things. Councils need a better ability to direct where that money goes so that we can have the things that sustain our community. There is not much use these projects coming and pouring so many million dollars into our community and at the end of it we have just a far bigger thing to depreciate.[269]

3.13 Furthermore, some local councils informed the committee that benefit sharing arrangements for transmission projects do not apply to developments within or on public land or local road networks. As such, some councils argued that the current financial benefit arrangements are not evenly distributed across communities.[270]

3.14 To demonstrate, Singleton Council explained that transmission infrastructure located within local road reserves is excluded from both the Transmission Guideline and the SPB Scheme. In the case of Bowman Creek Wind Farm, a proposed development in the HCC REZ, Singleton Council argued that:

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267 See for example: Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, pp 8-9; Submission 139, Murray River Council, p 12; Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 4.

268 See for example: Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 31; Evidence, Councillor Robert Bell, Mayor, Uralla Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 3.

269 Evidence, Councillor Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha Shire Council, 17 July 2025, p 12.

270 Submission 40, Singleton Council, pp 7-9; Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 3. See also: Submission 121, Murrumbidgee Council, p 4; Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 15.

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- the exclusion from benefit sharing arrangements prevents Singleton and Muswellbrook councils from receiving approximately $4.2 million for 21 kilometres of transmission lines.
- the Benefit Sharing Guidelines also restrict councils from seeking alternative developer contributions under sections 7.11 and 7.12 of the EP&A Act, limiting councils' ability to mitigate development impacts.[271]

3.15 Notably, Singleton Council maintained that while transmission infrastructure benefit schemes provide financial benefits to private landholders, there will be 'downward pressures on local councils to host [transmission] infrastructure 'free of charge'.[272] Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, suggested that the guidelines be expanded in recognition of the impact on his region's local councils:

> … at this point in time the guidelines don't really offer any benefits for transmission lines in public road reserves on public land, certainly they help those private landowners in those REZs. For us, it's very unclear if there is opportunity for proponents to use our road reserves, how we benefit and what that would look like. We've obviously done some numbers based on what we believe it is worth commercially, but it would be good to have some guidelines around that.[273]

3.16 In response to these challenges, Singleton Council adopted a policy framework to guide the negotiation of planning agreements with developers. The framework comprises a planning agreements policy of 1.5 per cent of capital investment value and a contributions plan equivalent to one per cent of capital investment value.[274]

3.17 Other local councils advised that they proactively use voluntary planning arrangements to assist with the maintenance of council assets. In the case of addressing local road works (as discussed in Chapter 2), Mr Gary Stoll, Director, Planning and Infrastructure, Murrumbidgee Council, gave evidence about the gaps in funding to compensate for the impacts of renewable energy developments. Mr Stoll explained how Murrumbidgee Council intends to use voluntary planning agreements in future to ensure costs are paid:

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271 Submission 40, Singleton Council, pp 7-9.

272 Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 3.

273 Evidence, Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 15.

274 Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, p 16. See also: Answers to questions on notice, Singleton Council, 23 October 2025, p 2; Evidence, Councillor Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 15; Evidence, Mr Trevor Ryan, Director, Planning and Environment, Dungog Shire Council, 25 September 2025, p 16; Evidence, Mr Gary Stoll, Director, Planning and Infrastructure, Murrumbidgee Council, 18 February 2026, p 3.

> When the construction period is three years, we've found that we would constantly have a crew on our local roads—sometimes weekly, sometimes fortnightly but at least once a month. Those roadworks are unprogrammed, unfunded by council, so we got to the point where over the three-year period we were then trying to charge the contractors to pay for those road upgrade works. The pre- and post-condition relies upon a condition of the road assessed before work starts and at the end of the construction period, which is totally inadequate, to the point now that we've adopted our own policy whereby we'll be requiring all future renewable energy developments to sign a voluntary planning agreement for council to construct the roads applicable to the traffic volumes that they'll be putting down those roads. They'll be paying for that work and then council will be maintaining it with our crews for the life of the development.[275]

Compensation for land acquisitions

3.18 Landowners hosting transmission lines are entitled to compensation for the acquisition of easements rights by Transgrid or EnergyCo under the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* (Just Terms Act) (see Table 3, paragraph 3.3).

3.19 Many landowners expressed their concern about the land acquisition process. For instance, Mr Peter Dawson, Property Owner, Salisbury Plains (located in the New England REZ (NE REZ)), described how EnergyCo prefers to approach landowners individually, leading to division and angst in the community. He referred to their communication as 'deadline-oriented' and often 'shallow'.[276]

3.20 In addition, stakeholders who are impacted by the Hunter Transmission Project (HTP) gave evidence about their experience with EnergyCo and the land acquisition process. As noted in Chapter 1, the HTP is a major infrastructure project separate to the HCC REZ that is designed to carry electricity from the CWO and NE REZs to the rest of the state.

3.21 Ms Kathy Morris, landowner, claimed that her experience with EnergyCo was 'adversarial' and unsupportive,[277] resulting in unsatisfactory outcomes for landowners involved in the land acquisition process:

> One thing that has been made very clear to us affected residents is that the New South Wales State Government—and, by extension, its agency EnergyCo—have all the legal power to acquire land without our agreement to build infrastructure, and that the only options available to us affected landholders are a series of diminishing returns and uncertainties… At no

[275] Evidence, Mr Gary Stoll, Director, Planning and Infrastructure, Murrumbidgee Council, 18 February 2026, p 4.

[276] Evidence, Mr Peter Dawson, Property Owner, Salisbury Plains, 17 July 2025, p 41.

[277] Evidence, Ms Kathy Morris, Landowner, 13 May 2025, p 38.

> stage have we been supported and reassured that we will be taken care of.[278]

3.22 Another landowner, Mr Ben Turner, expressed similar views about EnergyCo's 'adversarial' approach to land acquisition.[279] During the hearing, Mr Turner elaborated on his experience, highlighting how EnergyCo's focus on acquisition rates minimised the difficulties experienced by landowners, including the financial and emotional cost of demonstrating whether or not compensation is reasonable:

> … what we have learnt through experience is that rather than undertaking negotiations with a view to assisting affected landowners to manage and move on from the loss of their land, acquiring authorities adopt an adversarial approach in which the affected landowner bears the evidentiary and cost burden of convincing the authority and its panel valuer of the reasonableness of its claim. This approach is not an expression of the [Just Terms Act], but simply a learned behaviour of the acquiring authority and the valuation industry generally. Acquiring authorities will often cite the acquisition rates on a project as a measure of success, but these statistics ignore the experience of landholders of a drawn-out process that is discomforting and adversarial.[280]

3.23 To illustrate further, the case study below highlights the experience of Mr Ian Barry, landowner, when dealing with EnergyCo and the HTP.

Case study: Mr Ian Barry, landowner, Hunter-Central Coast REZ[281]

Mr Ian Barry is a landowner within the vicinity of the Hunter-Central Coast REZ. Mr Barry has motor-neurone disease (MND) and views his home as his 'life-lengthening sanctuary'. His property will be affected by the Hunter Transmission Project (HTP).

Mr Barry found EnergyCo's approach to delivering the HTP to be characterised by rushed decision making with poor outcomes for landowners. EnergyCo also appeared ignorant in relation to the use of Social Impact Assessments. In particular, he highlighted their refusal to consider him 'as a terminal sufferer'.

Mr Barry claimed that the land acquisition process removes landowner rights through the imposition of restrictive easements. Engagement with communities was inconsistent, misleading, and at times coercive. Mr Barry also raised concerns about the changes being made to land use, including vegetation clearing and road works, and the reliance on incomplete surveys and outdated mapping assumptions.

The land acquisition process and his interactions with EnergyCo have negatively impacted his health. Mr Barry recounted how his doctor noted an increase in his decline

278 Evidence, Ms Kathy Morris, Landowner, 13 May 2025, p 38.

279 Evidence, Mr Ben Turner, Landowner, 13 May 2025, p 39.

280 Evidence, Mr Ben Turner, Landowner, 13 May 2025, p 39.

281 This case study is drawn from Evidence, Mr Ian Barry, Landowner, 13 May 2025, pp 37, 41 and Submission 123, Mr Ian Barry, pp 1-2.

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despite fighting MND over the last 10 years. According to Mr Barry, his doctor considered that the stress of the process 'hasn't done me all that good', and that they wrote to EnergyCo emphasising their concerns about Mr Barry but to no avail. After writing again to the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, Mr Barry eventually met the Hon Penny Sharpe MLC for a 'chat'.

Mr Barry called for improvements to the land acquisition process, so acquisitions are carried out with sympathy and empathy, with landowners paid the market value for their property. He also advocated for changes to sub-contractor processes so staff 'negotiate and not incite', and with Social Impact Assessments followed from the outset.

3.24 The Law Society of NSW raised concerns about the adequacy of compensation paid to landowners who host transmission infrastructure. They advised that the current compulsory acquisition process does not 'encourage meaningful consultation and genuine negotiation'.[282] In addition, some landowners are presented with complex acquisition agreements, containing extensive standard conditions that have not been appropriately tailored:

> Our members report that acquiring authorities have, in some cases, presented landholders with overly complex contractual documentation that is difficult for the landholder to navigate and requires expert analysis. This is reflected in legal instruments often containing multiple pages of apparently standard form special conditions and warranties that are not appropriately customised. For instance, we understand that some agreements contained provisions requiring the landholder to warrant that the portion of land to be acquired is not contaminated and that Aboriginal cultural heritage has not been found on the land. In our view, provisions of this nature are unnecessary and unreasonable where preliminary feasibility surveys have often already been undertaken, and having regard to the respective resources and bargaining power of the parties.[283]

3.25 The Law Society of NSW made the following suggestions for improving the land acquisition process.

- Apply the principles of the *Private Agreement Guideline*[284] to the land acquisition process, including a requirement that agreements are tailored to the specific landholder and project, are fair and reasonable, and written in plain language. The applicant (in this case, the acquiring authority) should bear all reasonable landholder costs associated with entering into or understanding the agreement, including costs for independent advice.
- Review the Just Terms Act and include a mechanism allowing landowners to apply for advance financial assistance to cover reasonable legal,

[282] Submission 70, Law Society of NSW, p 3.

[283] Submission 70, Law Society of NSW, p 3.

[284] The Private Agreement Guideline is a policy document that guides landowners in relation to things to consider when entering agreements with renewable energy developers: Submission 44, NSW Government, p 16.

valuation and other expert advisory costs associated with initial engagement processes. The negotiation timeframes should be updated and there should be a 'clarification of the entitlement to just terms compensation as an overriding objective of the Act'.

- Develop a suite of standard documents, prescribed by regulations, that are required to initiate and complete the acquisition process.[285]

3.26 When it comes to acquiring new easements from existing landowners, Ausgrid advised that they intend to work with individual landowners to negotiate a fair and reasonable value in line with the Just Terms Act.[286]

3.27 Transgrid advised that private landowners receive direct benefits provided through payments administered as easement compensation under the Just Terms Act and through the government's SPB Scheme (see Table 3) when the transmission line becomes operational.[287]

3.28 As mentioned in the first report, a review into the Just Terms Act is underway and recommendations from the review were anticipated to be submitted to government in 2025. At the time of writing, no further updates were available.

Employment and job creation

3.29 This section explores the issues raised regarding employment and job creation as it relates to REZ development, including whether opportunities will be long-term as well as constraints in relation to workforce availability.

3.30 There are a number of government initiatives that are designed to strengthen local economies and promote long-term employment as a part of the introduction of REZs.

- The provision of $66 million in community employment benefits, representing significant investment in critical infrastructure needs (as mentioned in paragraph 3.4).[288]
- The creation of 226 apprenticeships in relation to renewable generator projects and 90 apprenticeships for network infrastructure within the CWO REZ.[289]

[285] Submission 70, Law Society of NSW, p 3.

[286] Submission 36, Ausgrid, p 3.

[287] Answers to questions on questions on notice, Transgrid, 30 March 2026, p 7.

[288] Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 56.

[289] Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 67.

- The 'Renewables Taster Program' is a training program based in the CWO REZ for those interested in working in construction and renewable energy sectors – 70 per cent of participants found employment in the CWO REZ.[290]
- $2.9 million has been invested in energy transition education, to deliver accredited training, apprenticeships and career pathways, and strengthen local employment opportunities in host communities as part of the energy transition.[291]
- Partnering with ICN Network, a network of industry procurement and supply chain specialists which connects businesses of all sizes with projects across Australia and New Zealand, to establish an online portal for communities to access local procurement opportunities.[292]
- Developing supply chain mapping to identify local businesses capable of supplying goods and services for generator developers and network operators.[293]

3.31 The government also pointed to the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies (as discussed in Chapter 2) which identify a number of employment opportunities for regional communities in the CWO and NE REZs.

- Approximately 1,800 direct local jobs in the CWO REZ with 500 local people working on the network infrastructure project and 63 local suppliers.
- Around 2,000 direct local jobs in the NE REZ as part of the construction phase and approximately 1,000 jobs for the operational phase. In addition, 500 local people will work on the network infrastructure project.[294]

3.32 A number of unions supported the development of the REZs given their potential to contribute to regional jobs, economic growth, and a sustainable energy

290 Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 67. See also: Evidence, Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 68; EnergyCo, *Renewable Taster Program*, 2026, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/community/careers-training-business-opportunities/renewables-taster-program, Accessed on 14 May 2026.

291 Evidence, Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 68. See also: Minister for Energy and Climate Change, Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, '$2.9 million to boost regional energy workforce in Central-West Orana REZ' (Media Release, 29 August 2025)

292 Evidence, Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 68. See also: ICN Network, *Who we are*, 2026, https://icn.org.au/who-are-we/, Accessed 14 May 2026.

293 Evidence, Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 68.

294 Evidence, Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, EnergyCo, 31 March 2026, p 56.

transition.[295] When discussing possible economic benefits, they highlighted the following.

- The increase of renewable energy developments could deliver a 'just transition' to workers and communities, particularly in areas such as the HCC REZ which has historically focused on non-renewable industries.[296]
- Maximising the local workforce through targeted training programs, apprenticeships, and upskilling will be essential for building a sustainable talent pipeline in regional communities.[297]
- Regional skills shortages must be addressed, especially in electrical trades and maritime sectors, ensuring local workers benefit from REZ projects.[298]
- Strategic procurement policies should be in place to strengthen local manufacturing opportunities and secure regional jobs.[299]

3.33 Nonetheless, Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance stressed that while the REZs could be a driver of jobs and economic growth, its success depends on developing local skills and employment opportunities, supporting regional businesses and infrastructure, maintaining transparent community engagement, and strategic planning across REZs.[300]

3.34 Some stakeholders questioned whether employment opportunities in the region would be long-term, irrespective of the increase in associated renewable energy development jobs.[301] Specifically, the committee heard that a high proportion of the renewable energy workforce is expected to consist of temporary workers who 'drive in-drive out' or 'fly in-fly out'.[302] The temporary nature of employment was attributed to factors such as a skills shortage for technical roles in regional areas,

295 See for example: Evidence, Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance, 25 September 2025, p 25; Evidence, Mr Tom Edwards, Research and Policy Officer, Unions NSW, 25 September 2025, p 25; Evidence, Mr Matthew Murray, Member, Newcastle Branch Committee, Maritime Union of Australia, p 25 September 2025, p 25; Evidence, Mr James Miranda, Policy and Research Officer, Electrical Trades Union NSW and ACT Branch, 25 September 2025, p 25.

296 Evidence, Mr Matthew Murray, Member, Newcastle Branch Committee, Maritime Union of Australia, 25 September 2025, pp 25-26.

297 Evidence, Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance, 25 September 2025, p 25.

298 Evidence, Mr James Miranda, Policy and Research Officer, Electrical Trades Union NSW and ACT Branch, 25 September 2025, p 27; Evidence, Mr Matthew Murray, Member, Newcastle Branch Committee, Maritime Union of Australia, 25 September 2025, p 28.

299 Evidence, Mr Tom Edwards, Research and Policy Officer, Unions NSW, 25 September 2025, p 26 & 29.

300 Evidence, Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance, 25 September 2025, p 25.

301 See for example: Submission 62, Armidale Regional Council, pp 1, 3-5; Submission 121, Murrumbidgee Council, p 5; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, pp 9-11.

302 See for example: Submission 62, Armidale Regional Council, pp 4-5; Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, p 6; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, pp 9-11.

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high levels of employment and competition for labour in some regions.[303] Furthermore, some stakeholders raised concerns that the influx of temporary workers in local communities would place additional pressures on local services, as discussed in Chapter 2.[304]

3.35 To illustrate the point, the Country Mayors Association outlined some of the complexities around securing long-term economic benefits for communities following an increase of infrastructure projects. The Association put forward the following considerations.

- The revenue generated by a renewable energy development is rarely held within the local economy if the project is run by a company that is based outside of the community.
- The construction phase of renewable energy developments creates substantial employment in local communities. However, given the skills shortage, established businesses may be disadvantaged as projects compete for workers by offering higher wages to meet construction timeframes.
- Renewable energy projects generate an economic 'sugar hit' during the construction phase. However, once constructed, there are few local jobs available in relation to the ongoing operation of renewable energy developments such as a solar or wind farm. The jobs that are created are often casual in nature and focus on general maintenance work.
- As a result, regional communities may experience significant changes without the long-term benefits of increased local economic activity and improved public and commercial services that often accompany high employment-generating development and related urbanisation.[305]

3.36 Transgrid provided the following information regarding the number of workers for their projects in the South West REZ.

- Dinawan substation is a transmission infrastructure hub designed to transfer electricity generated within the South West REZ to the broader transmission network in New South Wales. Its total peak 'headcount' was 1,206.
- The workforce composition of the substation during the construction phase was:
  - 5 to 10 per cent were local workers (Riverina region and adjacent LGAs)
  - 25 to 30 per cent were workers from elsewhere in New South Wales

303 See for example: Submission 62, Armidale Regional Council, p 7; Evidence, Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance, 25 September 2025, p 25; Submission 54, Country Mayors Association, p 2.

304 See for example: Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, p 7; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 9-10; Submission 62, Armidale Regional Council, p 4-5.

305 Submission 54, Country Mayors Association, p 2.

- 40 to 45 per cent were interstate workers
- 30 to 35 per cent were overseas specialists (including synchronous condenser installation and commissioning).[306]

3.37 Comparable information was not received for other REZs or related projects.

Economic diversification of regional communities

3.38 As discussed below, other economic benefits enabled by REZ development include the diversification of regional industries and increased capital investment.[307] Particular opportunities may also be available to the Illawarra REZ, often referred to as 'the urban REZ'.

3.39 Hay Shire Council considered the way in which economic diversification could support primary industry in the region. The council explained that a substantial proportion of Hay's agrarian economy is reliant on primary production, including 33 per cent of employment, and is thus exposed to the impacts of a drying climate, fluctuations in export markets, and water availability. In their view, the REZ provides an opportunity to diversify the economy by integrating renewable energy with primary production.[308]

3.40 Hay Shire Council further submitted that renewable energy projects have the potential to attract other industry sectors to the region, particularly energy-intensive industries like data processing centres and 'value-add' agricultural production, leveraging Hay's low land costs and access to affordable energy.[309]

3.41 Similarly, Murray River Council acknowledged the economic opportunities associated with renewable energy projects for landholders. While acknowledging that renewable energy projects present challenges for the agricultural industry, the council accepted that these projects could potentially 'future proof' businesses and increase resilience and market volatility. Some of the opportunities identified by Murray River Council included:

- **Reliable Income in a Drying Climate**: With increasingly dry conditions and impending droughts, hosting renewable infrastructure offers landholders a stable, long-term income stream. This financial security allows farmers to sustain livestock and maintain operations even in the face of commodity price fluctuations, water restrictions, and adverse weather events.
- **Investment in Agricultural Innovation**: Long-term lease agreements with renewable energy proponents provide landowners with capital to reinvest in their farms, enabling improvements in

306 Answers to questions on notice, Transgrid, 20 March 2026, p 1.

307 See for example: Submission 87, Hay Shire Council, p 2; Submission 66, Uralla Shire Council, p 3; Submission 139, Murray River Council, p 6.

308 Submission 87, Hay Shire Council, p 2.

309 Submission 87, Hay Shire Council, p 2.

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property infrastructure, adoption of new technologies, and expansion of their workforce.

- **Informed Decision-Making**: Many host landholders are well-researched and proactive, having visited other regions with established renewable energy zones to learn about successful farming practices alongside renewable infrastructure, such as wind turbines and agrivoltaics systems.[310]

Potential opportunities for urban REZs

3.42 Several inquiry participants viewed rural and regional communities as shouldering the burden of the renewable transition, due to the development of REZs and associated infrastructure projects being located outside urban locations.[311]

3.43 Some stakeholders discussed the opportunity for urban regions to participate in the energy transition, through the uptake of smaller infrastructure projects such as rooftop solar and home and community-scale batteries in these areas.[312] Indeed, Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy, noted that 'Australia is unique in the sense that it probably has the largest take-up of rooftop solar in the world'.[313]

3.44 The Illawarra REZ is often referred to as the 'first urban REZ'.[314] Endeavour Energy is an electricity distributor that has a Memorandum of Understanding with EnergyCo that focuses on understanding the needs and opportunities of Endeavour's distribution network in the Illawarra REZ.[315] Its Chief Executive Officer, Mr Chalkley, viewed the Illawarra REZ as an ideal location for an urban REZ given its established industry in energy, port and transport infrastructure, as well as its population.[316]

3.45 Mr Chalkley explained that an urban REZ differs from traditional, large-scale transmission REZs as they integrate consumer energy resources such as rooftop

310 Submission 139, Murray River Council, p 6.

311 See for example: Submission 125, Local Government NSW, pp 31-38; Evidence, Councillor Sam Coupland, Mayor Armidale Regional Council, 17 July 2025, p 2; Evidence, Mr Brett Stonestreet, PSM, Interim Executive Officer, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, 18 February 2026, p 11.

312 See for example: Evidence, Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, p 2; Evidence, Mr Francis Vierboom, Chief Executive Officer, Rewiring Australia, 29 October 2025, p 21.

313 Evidence, Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, p 3.

314 EnergyCo, *Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/illawarra-rez, 16 March 2026, Accessed on 9 June 2026.

315 EnergyCo, *Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone*, https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/illawarra-rez, 16 March 2026, Accessed on 9 June 2026.

316 Evidence, Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, p 5.

solar, home batteries, community-scale batteries, and the use of spare government land and commercial roof space.[317] An urban REZ aims to harness distributed energy generation within urban areas, making the grid more reliable and reducing the need for major transmission investments.[318]

3.46 Ms Leanne Pickering, Chief Customer and Strategic Officer, Endeavour Energy, further elaborated on the opportunities in an urban REZ, describing it as an early stage 'grassroots' approach that reduces the cost for large-scale generation and transmission infrastructure, and addresses the social licence considerations associated with such projects.[319]

3.47 When asked about the generation capacity of an urban REZ to balance the impact of REZ development in the regional communities, Mr Chalkley reflected that an urban REZ is 'not the only solution' and 'you've got to use as many solutions as you can' as part of the energy transition.[320]

3.48 Mr Francis Vierboom, Chief Executive Officer of Rewiring Australia, an organisation 'focused on the science and engineering that underpin our energy system',[321] also highlighted the role of individual households in the energy transition, advocating for the electrification of household appliances to reduce carbon emission and household bills. In this context, Mr Vierboom described the possibilities of an urban REZ, with its denser areas and use of rooftop solar and smaller-scale battery infrastructure:

> The urban REZ that's been proposed here for the Illawarra is a great opportunity to demonstrate what renewable energy means in denser areas and not just in rural Australia. If we can maximise the solar and the battery that are on the rooftops of our homes, as well as on all of our businesses, we can run an energy system that costs less for everyone. If we can smooth out the energy that's moved across our grid throughout the day, that fundamentally lowers the cost of our energy bills.[322]

317 Evidence, Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, p 2.

318 Evidence, Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, p 2.

319 Ms Leanne Pickering, Chief Customer and Strategic Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, p 3.

320 Evidence, Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, p 3.

321 Evidence, Mr Francis Vierboom, Chief Executive Officer, Rewiring Australia, 29 October 2025, p 21.

322 Evidence, Mr Francis Vierboom, Chief Executive Officer, Rewiring Australia, 29 October 2025, p 21.

3.49 Mr Chalkley drew attention to a pilot project in the Illawarra region that focuses on electrification and renewable energy integration.[323] A snapshot of this project is presented in the case study below.

Case study: Electrify 2515[324]

Electrify 2515 is a pilot project in selected suburbs of the Illawarra region that aims to demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of electrifying homes and businesses using rooftop solar, batteries, and electrified appliances.

The project, a partnership between Endeavour Energy and Rewiring Australia,[325] involves changing appliances (e.g. hot water systems) and upgrading homes so they are fully electric. The project area was chosen due to its high levels of community engagement and support, factors considered critical to its success. An extensive consultation process was undertaken and town hall events were held to explain the concept and benefits to residents.

Learnings from the pilot will be considered before the concept is applied to other suburbs, including assessment of its suitability for lower socio-economic areas and rental properties. The intention is to first test the model in a supportive community, before it is adapted and scaled to areas with greater need or with less initial support for the concept.

3.50 Shellharbour Council, located in the Illawarra REZ, also 'recognises and supports the significant benefits for economic growth, energy affordability and environmental sustainability' that REZs can bring to its region.[326] While its submission emphasised the challenges of REZ developments and called for robust planning, policy alignment and adequate consultation (similar to issues discussed in Chapter 2), they also highlighted the following opportunities.

- **Economic Growth and Employment:** capitalising the region's skilled workforce in construction, maintenance, and renewable energy industries can lead to the creation of local employment, strengthen economies and foster economic resilience.
- **Affordable and reliable energy for socio-economic parity**: transitioning to renewable energy can significantly reduce energy costs for households and businesses, which is advantageous for low-income families who are disproportionately impacted by rising energy prices.

[323] Evidence, Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, p 2.

[324] Evidence, Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, pp 2, 5, 7; Evidence, Ms Leanne Pickering, Chief Customer and Strategic Officer, Endeavour Energy, 29 October 2025, pp 5, 7.

[325] Evidence, Mr Francis Vierboom, Chief Executive Officer, Rewiring Australia, 29 October 2025, p 21.

[326] Submission 41, Shellharbour City Council, p 1.

- **Environmental benefits:** the renewable energy transition helps achieve the state's and Australia's Net Zero targets, which can improve air-quality, support local biodiversity and enhance public health outcomes.[327]

Cost and financial viability of projects

3.51 One of the issues raised in relation to renewable energy infrastructure development is its cost for the state as well as the financial viability of projects. Mr Aidan Morrison, Director, Energy Program, Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), argued that the premise that electricity will cost less overall as a result of the state's energy transition is unsupported, stressing that there is no available analysis that demonstrates this.[328] He concluded that there is 'no credible way and no analysis in place that suggests there is ever a plausible path to having lower cost electricity through the current plan embodied in the New South Wales road map'.[329]

3.52 Mr Morrison asserted that the current regulatory framework prevents a proper cost-benefit analysis from being conducted that could show whether REZ investment actually lowers prices. According to Mr Morrison, the rollout of REZs will prove that renewable energy increases system costs.[330] The CIS submission described the development of both the CWO and NE REZs as 'fraught' with changes to transmission plans, network capacity, timelines and costs omitted from official documents. [331]

3.53 In this context, CIS argued that the actual costs of the REZ roll-out are uncertain and called for more transparency in relation to the outlay required for these projects:

> These frequent changes to the transmission corridor route, timeline, capacity and cost estimates for [New South Wales] REZs mean consumers cannot have any certainty in the costs of these projects. Given the significant cost blowouts already experienced by the [CWO] REZ, and the delays experienced by the [NE] REZ, there is a serious risk that future REZ developments will face similar issues that could inflate future financial costs associated with construction and maintenance of REZ projects far beyond what is currently assumed. More transparency on the part of EnergyCo is needed so consumers can understand the true costs of these projects.[332]

327 Submission 41, Shellharbour City Council, pp 1-2.

328 Evidence, Mr Aidan Morrison, Director, Energy Program, Centre for Independent Studies, 31 March 2026, pp 11-12.

329 Evidence, Mr Aidan Morrison, Director, Energy Program, Centre for Independent Studies, 31 March 2026, pp 11-12.

330 Evidence, Mr Aidan Morrison, Director, Energy Program, Centre for Independent Studies, 31 March 2026, p 11.

331 Submission 33, Centre for Independent Studies, pp 2-3.

332 Submission 33, Centre for Independent Studies, p 4.

3.54 At the hearing in March 2026, the government answered questions about the financial viability of some renewable energy projects. Mr Liam Ryan, Executive Director, Energy Infrastructure, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEW), confirmed that a number of projects need to reach the 'decision point', that is, critical choices to be made confirming the direction and outcomes of a project, in order to meet the legislative targets for renewable energy generation.[333]

3.55 Mr Ryan acknowledged that lack of revenue certainty was a factor in why some projects have yet to reach the decision point. However, Mr Ryan emphasised that other factors must also be considered to achieve 'financial close', that is, when all agreements and commitments are formalised:

> Project developers may not be certain about the revenues that their project will achieve in the wholesale electricity market if they don't have either a power purchasing agreement in place with a large energy consumer or one of these other underwriting agreements, so the [Long-term service agreement, LTSA] or the [Capacity Investment Scheme Agreement, CISA]. That's one element that we think is important for those projects achieving financial close. Another one is having confidence that the enabling infrastructure to construct their projects will be available so they'll actually be able to get materials from the port to their site, and that the transmission will be available as well, so that enabling infrastructure that they require to develop their project will actually be there. There's a number of factors, just to give you that example that we believe, in consultation with developers, they're still trying to lock in this year. The [LTSA and CISA] are important, but not the whole piece of what they need in order to effectively lock in the debt financing they need to construct their project and get to financial close.[334]

3.56 In answers to questions on notice, DCCEEW provided the extent of projects, in GW, required to meet the minimum objectives for generation in 2030:

> There are 6.3 GW of wind and solar power stations that are operational, in construction and commissioning or have reached financial close in [New South Wales] since 2019. This leaves around 7.1 GW of projects needed to meet the minimum objective for generation in 2030 under the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020*.
>
> The number of projects needed to reach financial close this year will depend on the technology mix as wind power stations take longer to develop than solar power stations.

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333 The minimum objective for renewable generation in 2030 under the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* is 12 GW: Evidence, Mr Liam Ryan, Executive Director, Energy Infrastructure, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 31 March 2026, p 59 and Answers to questions on notice, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 1 May 2026, pp 1-2.

334 Evidence, Mr Liam Ryan, Executive Director, Energy Infrastructure, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 31 March 2026, p 59.

> Assuming around 33 [per cent] of this capacity is wind and the remainder is solar, the Department estimates [New South Wales] needs around 2.4 GW of wind needs to reach financial close in 2026 to be operational by 2030. There are seven wind projects with 6.2 GW of access rights to [CWO and SW REZ] networks that are yet to reach financial close.[335]

Environmental impact

3.57 The environmental impacts of Renewable Energy Zones were discussed throughout the inquiry. Concerns were raised in relation to the uncertainty of the decommissioning process, fire risks associated with renewable energy developments, as well as issues around land clearing and the impact on wildlife corridors. These are explored in this section.

Uncertainty of the decommissioning process

3.58 Decommissioning refers to the removal of renewable energy infrastructure from a host site and the rehabilitation of the affected land. Mr Clay Preshaw, Executive Director, Planning System Reform, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), emphasised that the DPHI has 'clear' and 'very strong' rules and policies for assessing decommissioning, closure and rehabilitation in relation to large-scale renewable energy proposals.[336]

3.59 However, the government determined that decommissioning bonds, that is, financial assurance or a bank guarantee to cover the cost of decommissioning and land rehabilitation,[337] are best managed through commercial negotiations between landholders and industry.[338] In this regard, the government considered that the cost of decommissioning 'heavily depends on what the host landowner is willing to accept at the completion of the project'.[339]

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335 Answers to questions on notice, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 1 May 2026, p 2.

336 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 11. See also: Evidence, Mr Clay Preshaw, Executive Director, Planning System Reform, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 13 May 2025, pp 12-13.

337 Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, *Renewable Energy Transition Update* (November 2024), p 14, https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-11/NSW-RenewableEnergy-Transition-Update-20241112.pdf.

338 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 11. See also: Evidence, Mr Clay Preshaw, Executive Director, Planning System Reform, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 13 May 2025, pp 12-13.

339 Submission 44, NSW Government, p 11. See also: Evidence, Mr Clay Preshaw, Executive Director, Planning System Reform, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 13 May 2025, pp 12-13.

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3.60 As mentioned in the first report, the government advised that it had considered a 'range of models',[340] including a system of bonds, before determining its stance. Ultimately, it was explained that many factors led to the government's position, including the difference between the impact of mining and renewable energy projects on the environment as well as the distinctive regulatory systems for each sector.[341]

3.61 In response to questions about the government's position on decommissioning bonds, Mr Preshaw advised that the following tools were developed to assist landowners in understanding their obligations and opportunities during negotiations with a developer.

- A template agreement, or the *Private Agreement Guideline* (as mentioned in paragraph 3.25), helps landholders understand their potential obligations and their opportunities for the life of the project and in relation to decommissioning.
- A decommissioning calculator – an online tool that helps inform the decision-making process of landowners when considering whether to host renewable energy projects.[342]

3.62 Nonetheless, some stakeholders expressed concerns about the uncertainty of decommissioning bonds for renewable energy projects and the risk of stranded assets should a developer become bankrupt or sell the project.[343] Some advocated for implementation of a framework similar to that used for mining projects to ensure bonds are held for rehabilitation purposes.[344]

3.63 For instance, Mrs Mary Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, considered the long-term community benefits of decommissioning bonds in light of the council's experience with mining bonds.

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340 Evidence, Mr Matt Riley, Director, Energy and Resources Policy, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 13 May 2025, p 13.

341 Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW, NSW Legislative Council, *Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report*, 2025, pp 17-19. See also: Submission 44, NSW Government, p 58.

342 Evidence, Mr Clay Preshaw, Executive Director, Planning System Reform, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 13 May 2025, p 12.

343 See for example: Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, pp 14-15; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 41; Submission 54, Country Mayors Association of NSW, p 7.

344 See for example: Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, pp 14-15; Evidence, Mr Xavier Martin, President, NSW Farmers,13 May 2025, p 61; Evidence, Ms Kerry Atkins, New South Wales Policy Director, Association of Mining Exploration Companies, 25 September 2025, p 61; Evidence, Mr Michael Holz, Resident and representing Singleton Solar Standoff community group, 25 September 2025, p 46.

In her response to questions on how the government should approach decommissioning bonds, Mrs Crawford highlighted how the experience of mining bonds could easily be applied to renewable energy infrastructure:

> From Singleton's perspective, we've got a long history and experience with mining projects in particular. Decommissioning bonds are not a new thing. They're held for a whole range of different types of development. They're held to ensure that projects meet community standards and don't leave long-term legacy issues for future generations. They're not held because a landowner wants to hold a whole bunch of money. They're there to make sure that their future generations are secure and that what the developer is actually doing is making sure that their community standards are met.[345]

3.64 Mrs Crawford continued:

> From our perspective, it shouldn't be left to individual landowners to carry that risk that's associated with decommissioning. Given that decommissioning bonds are a state government policy position—they're in the Mining Act—it's not a huge leap, I don't think, to incorporate something related to decommissioning bonds in the resources and energy [State Environmental Planning Policies], for example, to help support landowners in addressing some of those more technical issues of decommissioning, like waste management, contamination, remediation and those sorts of things.[346]

3.65 The Nature Conservation Council acknowledged community concerns around the decommissioning of renewable energy projects. In their view, the government's private landholder agreement guideline and decommissioning calculators address these concerns and are 'great resources for landholders'. Nonetheless, they highlighted that communities close to renewable energy developments need more reassurance about the plans for decommissioning and suggested that decommissioning agreements should be made publicly available, providing transparency for impacted communities.[347]

3.66 The Clean Energy Council advised that a national decommissioning security framework has been developed to ensure proper land rehabilitation and financial security over the life of a project irrespective of changes in ownership, so that 'communities and landowners are not left carrying any costs'.[348] The council further emphasised that the framework 'is a direct response to community

345 Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, pp 14-15.

346 Evidence, Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, 25 September 2025, pp 14-15.

347 Submission 32, The Nature Conservation Council, p 11.

348 Evidence, Mr William Churchill, Chief Policy and Impact Officer, Clean Energy Council, 31 March 2026, pp 30, 36.

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concern, and reflects an industry that is taking full life cycle responsibilities seriously'.[349]

Fire risks associated with renewable energy developments

3.67 Echoing the first report, stakeholders in the other REZs also raised concerns about fire risks associated with the development of REZs. Key concerns centred around increased fire risks from proposed developments,[350] possible gaps in emergency service planning, and the ability to respond to fires from renewable energy developments.[351]

3.68 Some stakeholders such as Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance, and Mr Xavier Martin, President, NSW Farmers Association, raised concerns that overhead transmission lines associated with Renewable Energy Zones may be a significant fire hazard.[352] For example, Mr Martin described transmission lines as a 'special fire-lighting device' and highlighted the existence of a widespread anxiety among rural communities about increased fire risk.[353]

3.69 Voice for Walcha was similarly troubled, especially given their experience of the 2019–20 'megafires', stating that the design of REZs had failed to consider the impact of those fires.[354] They maintained that the development of industrial projects near a national park will 'increase fire risk and hamper firefighting capabilities, in particular aerial firefighting practices that are critical in this inaccessible area'.[355]

3.70 Some local councils across the REZs also shared concerns about 'gaps'[356] in emergency service planning and the ability to respond to fires resulting from renewable energy developments.[357] To illustrate the point, Murray River Council outlined the following risks associated with large scale renewable infrastructure:

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349 Evidence, Mr William Churchill, Chief Policy and Impact Officer, Clean Energy Council, 31 March 2026, p 30, 36.

350 See for example: Submission 61, Yass Landscape Guardians Inc, p 2; Submission 85, Mrs Jenny Bailey, p 2; Submission 139, Murray River Council, p 8.

351 See for example: Submission 56, Voice for Walcha, p 2; Submission 85, Mrs Jenny Bailey, p 2.

352 See for example: Evidence, Mr Tim White, President, Voice for Walcha, 17 July 2025, p 30; Evidence, Mr Xavier Martin, President, NSW Farmers, 13 May 2025, p 59.

353 Evidence, Mr Xavier Martin, President, NSW Farmers, 13 May 2025, p 59.

354 Submission 56, Voice for Walcha, p 2.

355 Submission 56, Voice for Walcha, p 2.

356 Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 23.

357 See for example: Submission 62, Armidale Regional Council, p 5; Submission 68, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, p 3; Submission 121, Murrumbidgee Council, pp 1-2; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, pp 22-23; Submission 139, Murray River Council, p 8.

- Wind turbines, battery storage, and transmission infrastructure introduce new ignition hazards in high-risk agricultural zones, where fires can spread rapidly due to dry conditions and wind exposure.
- No mandated developer insurance requirements place unfair financial liability on farmers and local councils, while landowners near SW REZ infrastructure face rising insurance costs without compensation.
- Local Rural Fire Service (RFS) lacks resources and specialised training to respond to high-risk energy-related fires, particularly chemical fires from battery storage and electrical faults from transmission lines.
- Current fire response capacity is insufficient, as RFS is volunteer-dependent, making it impractical to rely solely on local emergency crews to manage complex renewable energy fire scenarios.[358]

3.71 To address these concerns, some councils and Local Government NSW proposed improvements that could be made to emergency planning to address fire risks.

- **Review of firefighting resources:** a state-wide review of firefighting resources and gaps in each subregion, considering the scale and distance of renewable and non-renewable projects.[359]
- **Specialised training and equipment:** provide tailored training (including chemical fire response) and equipment upgrades (such as foam systems, high-reach appliances) to local RFS and volunteers in each REZ.[360]
- **Establish dedicated response teams:** create full-time professional response teams or expand existing schemes to cover renewable energy sector fire risks.[361]
- **Developer contributions:** require developers to contribute to the Emergency Services Levy and fund fire management resources.[362]

3.72 In response to these concerns, the committee heard from Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) and NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS). Both agencies are emergency service organisations that have distinct operational responsibilities. They are typically involved during the planning and assessment stages for renewable energy developments – assessing fire safety, emergency access design and risk mitigation.[363]

358 Submission 139, Murray River Council, p 9.

359 Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 24.

360 Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 24; Submission 127, Edward River Council, p 3; Submission 139, Murray River Council, p 8.

361 Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 24; Submission 127, Edward River Council, p 3; Submission 139, Murray River Council, p 8.

362 Submission 68, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, p 3; Submission 125, Local Government NSW, p 24.

363 Answers to supplementary questions, NSW Rural Fire Service, 6 May 2026, p 2; Evidence, Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM, Fire and Rescue NSW, 31 March 2026,

3.73 RFS explained that the role of emergency services in REZ planning is during the planning and assessment stages, when developers are required to address 'Planning for Bush Fire Protection' bush fire protection measures, emergency access design, and operational risk controls. As part of this assessment, emergency services assess infrastructure layouts, transmission routes, temporary worker camps and mitigation strategies before approvals are finalised.[364]

3.74 Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM, FRNSW, outlined how FRNSW is involved when it comes to potential developments:

> When [FRNSW] is advised of proposed developments, our role is to assess whether fire safety provisions are appropriate for the risk, ensure emergency services information is available for responders and confirm that effective emergency communication arrangements are in place with local emergency management partners. To do this properly, [FRNSW] requires early and reliable notification of proposed locations and the technologies to be installed. This allows emergency services to plan collaboratively, assess the operational capability that is needed and, where necessary, identify sites that may be unsuitable due to local risk factors.[365]

3.75 Commissioner Fewtrell acknowledged that the growth of REZs will change the nature of 'existing incident profiles'.[366] He noted that developments:

- are often located in bushfire-prone areas
- increase freight movements involving hazardous materials
- may introduce large temporary workforces into regional communities
- introduce new technologies which can present complex fire and hazardous materials challenges.[367]

3.76 However, when asked if REZ infrastructure increased points of ignition in rural landscapes, both FRNSW and RFS maintained that there is no current evidence indicating a notable increase in bush fire ignitions attributable to REZ infrastructure.[368] In support of their view, the RFS noted that while renewable

p 48; Evidence, Ben Millington, Operational Coordination, NSW Rural Fire Service, 31 March 2026, p 49.

364 Answers to supplementary questions, NSW Rural Fire Service, 6 May 2026, p 2.

365 Evidence, Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM, Fire and Rescue NSW, 31 March 2026, p 48.

366 Evidence, Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM, Fire and Rescue NSW, 31 March 2026, p 48.

367 Evidence, Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM, Fire and Rescue NSW, 31 March 2026, p 48.

368 Answers to supplementary questions, Fire and Rescue NSW, 1 May 2026, p 1; Answers to supplementary questions, NSW Rural Fire Service, 6 May 2026, p 2.

energy infrastructure introduces additional electrical and mechanical systems into rural areas, they are subject to safety controls and oversight:

> Renewable energy assets do introduce additional electrical and mechanical systems into rural areas, but these are subject to design standards, operational controls, and regulatory oversight intended to minimise ignition risk. Some renewable energy infrastructure such as wind turbines can contain inbuilt fire suppression systems. At present, ignition trends in rural landscapes continue to be driven primarily by established sources such as lightning, machinery, escaped burns, and human activity.[369]

3.77 Nonetheless, Commissioner Fewtrell advised that FRNSW's approach to the energy transition is from an 'energy-agnostic perspective', focusing solely on community safety.[370] Commissioner Millington, RFS, agreed with FRNSW's agnostic position, highlighting that the RFS is not the consent authority for renewable energy developments.[371]

3.78 Both agencies emphasised that, to mitigate the risks associated with new renewable energy infrastructure, it must be matched by early engagement, transparent information sharing and appropriate planning, design and investment measures.[372] Commissioner Fewtrell added that this approach will also serve to reassure the community.[373]

3.79 Further, RFS clarified that emergency services have not received dedicated or proportional funding increases directly linked to REZ development. In their answers to supplementary questions regarding the potential risks of under-resourced services, RFS indicated that there is no evidence that communities are subsidising risk and outlined the existing operational framework used to manage additional emergency response demands:

> There is no clear evidence that communities are directly subsiding risk through under resourced emergency services. In the absence of dedicated resourcing, any increased operational requirements associated with large scale energy infrastructure is generally managed through existing emergency service capacity or through bespoke arrangements such as private firefighting contractors.

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369 Answers to supplementary questions, NSW Rural Fire Service, 6 May 2026, p 2.

370 Evidence, Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM, Fire and Rescue NSW, 31 March 2026, p 48.

371 Evidence, Ben Millington, Operational Coordination, NSW Rural Fire Service, 31 March 2026, p 49.

372 Evidence, Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM, Fire and Rescue NSW, 31 March 2026, p 48; Evidence, Ben Millington, Operational Coordination, NSW Rural Fire Service, 31 March 2026, p 49. See also: Answers to supplementary questions, NSW Rural Fire Service, 6 May 2026, p 2.

373 Evidence, Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM, Fire and Rescue NSW, 31 March 2026, p 48.

> Additional funding could help improve infrastructure and equipment, but some communities may lack the resources (or people) to protect remote renewable energy facilities. In some instances, in the state's northwest, some facilities have private firefighting arrangements for onsite fires. The RFS coordinates with these private teams through emergency management plans.[374]

Land clearing and wildlife corridors

3.80 Similar to the first report, some stakeholders expressed concern about the impact of land clearing on wildlife corridors in relation to renewable energy development.[375] For example, Ms Kathy Morris, a landowner, highlighted the potential scale of wildlife displacement:

> There's going to be huge displacement of wildlife. The bare-earthing of properties blows my mind. I have been told, "Not to worry, Kathy, we will only bring down trees that grow to more than four metres." I'm like, "I don't think I have any trees that are less than four metres." Where is all the wildlife going? If I have 500 metres-ish of 140-metre-wide bare-earthed and it continues, where are they going to go? I have no words.[376]

3.81 Similarly, Mr Tim White, Valley Alliance, referred to the destruction of critical habitat for native flora and fauna, and flagged his concerns with the response from EnergyCo:

> EnergyCo basically said it would be covered in the [Environmental Impact Statement]. To put that into a little bit of context, we did a lot of work with an ecological firm up here in Armidale on koalas in our vicinity, and we had two ecologists come down to do a report, and they believe that they've found a very significant community of koalas in our area. It could be the largest inland community of koalas in New South Wales—healthy community in New South Wales. It's a significant community and it's a significant concern that we might lose them, because they're talking about bulldozing a 250-metre clear channel through the middle of it.[377]

3.82 As mentioned in Chapter 1, the government confirmed its support for addressing ecological protection and restoration priorities for each REZ through its Conservation Investment Strategies for the CWO and HCC REZ and by actively

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374 Answers to supplementary questions, NSW Rural Fire Service, 6 May 2026, p 2. See also: Answers to supplementary questions, Fire and Rescue NSW, 1 May 2026, p 2.

375 See for example: Submission 136, Mr Tim White, p 2; Evidence, Ms Kathy Morris, landholder, 13 May 2025, p 40; Evidence, Mrs Selena Sylvester, Hills of Gold Inc., 17 July 2025, p 38; Evidence, Mr Richard Coughland, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group, 18 February 2026, p 17.

376 Evidence, Ms Kathy Morris, landholder, 13 May 2025, p 40.

377 Evidence, Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance, 17 July 2025, p 32. See also: Submission 136, Mr Tim White, p 2.

engaging with renewable energy proponents to ensure they align with these strategies.[378]

First Nations perspectives

3.83 Renewable energy development presents various opportunities and challenges for First Nations peoples. These are explored throughout this section, as is the response to the government's First Nations Guidelines and community engagement practices, as well as impacts on cultural heritage.

3.84 Two councillors from the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council (NSW ALC) shared their perspective on the effects of Renewable Energy Zones. The NSW ALC is the peak statutory body representing 121 local Aboriginal land councils (LALC) across New South Wales. It should be noted that while each councillor represented the NSW ALC, they were also informed by the interests and concerns of their respective LALC, and, at times, held different views.[379]

3.85 In addition, the Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, shared their recent research involving LALCs in the CWO REZ regarding Aboriginal landholdings, land claims, renewable energy opportunities and constraints, and possible pathways for Aboriginal communities to benefit from the state's energy transition.[380]

Opportunities and challenges

3.86 The NSWALC acknowledged that the REZs present significant opportunities for Aboriginal economic participation, employment and long-term community benefit, particularly where co-ownership and partnership models are supported.[381] Councillor Leanne Hampton, Deputy Chairperson, and Councillor for

[378] Correspondence from the Hon Penny Sharpe, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, to the Clerk of the Parliaments, providing government response to the inquiry into the Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – First Report, 21 November 2025.

[379] Evidence, Councillor Leanne Hampton, Deputy Chairperson, and Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, pp 38, 40, 41; Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, pp 40-41. See also: NSW Aboriginal Land Council, *Our organisation* (2026), https://alc.org.au/our-organisation/.

[380] Submission 157, Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, p 1.

[381] Answers to questions on notice, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 13 May 2026, pp 4-5. See also: Evidence, Councillor Leanne Hampton, Deputy Chairperson, and Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 39; Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, pp 40-41.

the Wiradjuri Region, NSW ALC, emphasised that REZs 'intersect directly with regions where [ALCs] hold land or have lodged land claims. As a result, Aboriginal communities are not adjacent to this transition, we are on the ground where it is happening'.[382]

3.87 The NSW ALC noted that tangible and sustained benefits for Aboriginal communities have yet to be consistently realised across the sector.[383] Some Aboriginal communities have received short-term funding or upfront financial benefits associated with REZ developments. However, long-term legacy outcomes, including apprenticeships, qualifications, long-term employment pathways, co-ownership opportunities and ongoing land management roles are considered to be greater importance.[384]

3.88 Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW ALC, further elaborated on the impacts of 'sugar hits', or upfront payments to communities. While acknowledging that the funds contribute towards community initiatives regarding land and business plans, Councillor Lynch emphasised the need for 'more extensive coordination, to ensure long-term legacies' in local communities.[385] To demonstrate, he highlighted his community's work in ensuring the development of skills sets that are retained locally:

> I can talk specific to New England. They're really working hard to ensure that university qualifications are achieved; that we have qualified tradespersons by the end of the project; that well after the requirements of whether it be the maintenance on the REZs or so on, there are skill sets that also are held in community that advance community in other facets as well. It's the uplift within the community that longer term aspirations and goals are being set to achieve on.[386]

3.89 Councillor Hampton also acknowledged the opportunities presented by renewable energy development. However, she expressed some concerns regarding 'inconsistent' economic benefits for Aboriginal communities and the adequacy of LALC resourcing required to undertake 'complex land analysis' or negotiation with large-scale developers.[387] She called for genuine and early

382 Evidence, Councillor Leanne Hampton, Deputy Chairperson, and Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 38.

383 Answers to questions on notice, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 13 May 2026, pp 4-5.

384 Answers to questions on notice, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 13 May 2026, pp 4-5.

385 Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 39.

386 Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 39.

387 Evidence, Councillor Leanne Hampton, Deputy Chairperson, and Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 38.

engagement, adding that she would support further funding towards resourcing LALC to help build capacity in development assessments.[388]

3.90 Furthermore, in their answers to supplementary questions, NSW ALC elaborated that LALCs require greater access to technical, legal and commercial support so negotiations occur on an informed and equitable basis. According to the NSW ALC, strengthening this capability would assist in ensuring agreements more accurately reflect informed consent and long-term community interests.[389]

3.91 In its submission, the Indigenous Land & Justice Research Group highlighted the importance of collective and long-term benefits from the REZs, building on existing strengths, priorities and community-led work:

> Short-term jobs, small grants or one-off consultation processes are not enough. Communities want benefits that support housing, energy affordability, cultural centres, youth training, Aboriginal businesses, cultural heritage protection, land management, caring for Country and strong Aboriginal community controlled organisations. LALCs also emphasised that opportunities should build on the work, assets and expertise they already hold, including cultural heritage work, land management, community housing, training, local governance, community services and existing relationships with members and Aboriginal businesses. In this way, REZ benefits would not be separate from LALC priorities, but could strengthen the work LALCs are already doing for their communities.[390]

3.92 The Indigenous Land & Justice Research Group also highlighted that land holdings are 'not always suitable for large-scale renewable energy projects, particularly in densely settled and highly developed areas like the CWO [region]'.[391] They argued that LALC land parcels can be small or constrained by tenure, Native Title, biodiversity, vegetation, zoning, topography or location.[392]

3.93 In this regard, they advocated for 'careful policy curation and industry innovation **...** to ensure that LALCs are not excluded from the REZ economy' given the limited opportunities for hosting renewable energy projects on LALC land. These opportunities include biodiversity offsets, accommodation provision for

388 Evidence, Councillor Leanne Hampton, Deputy Chairperson, and Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, pp 38, 42.

389 Answers to questions on notice, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 13 May 2026, pp 2-3.

390 Submission 157, Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, p 5.

391 Submission 157, Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, p 5.

392 Submission 157, Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, p 5.

temporary workers, storage, freight, small-scale renewable energy, procurement, maintenance, decommission and land rehabilitation.[393]

First Nation guidelines and community engagement

3.94 The government advised that their engagement with Aboriginal communities as part of the REZ development is informed by formal guidelines, benefit sharing funds and contractual obligations from developers. It includes a number of initiatives.

- First Nations Guidelines (see Chapter 1): Developers are required to offer economic participation opportunities equivalent to at least 1.5 per cent of the economic value of a project, aligning with the government's procurement targets.[394]
- A dedicated Aboriginal outcomes team within EnergyCo, comprised of Aboriginal staff who work closely with local communities.[395]
- Close partnerships with community reference groups, that include representatives from Aboriginal communities, local land councils and peak Aboriginal organisations.[396]
- First Nations Fund – a specific fund dedicated to supporting projects proposed by local land councils and Aboriginal organisations. The fund focuses on business and economic development to ensure that Aboriginal communities benefit directly from the REZ.[397]

3.95 Moreover, Mr Ash Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, emphasised that they closely engage with Aboriginal communities and commitment to ensure Aboriginal voices are heard. Mr Albury further stressed that the government is 'very keen' that the targets as set out in the guidelines (as noted in paragraph 3.94) are met, and stated that, in his view, efforts should be made to exceed them.[398]

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393 Submission 157, Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, p 5.

394 Evidence, Mr Liam Ryan, Advising Executive Director, Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability Group, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), 13 May 2025, p 11.

395 Evidence, Mr Ash Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 13 May 2025, p 11.

396 Evidence, Mr Ash Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 13 May 2025, pp 4, 11. See also: NSW Government, *First Nations Fund - Central-West Orana REZ*, (2026) https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/first-nations-fund-central-west-orana-rez.

397 Evidence, Mr Ash Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 13 May 2025, p 11

398 Evidence, Mr Ash Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, EnergyCo, 13 May 2025, p 11

3.96 As mentioned in Chapter 1, guidelines (consisting of the General First Nations Guidelines and the Region-specific First Nations Guidelines) apply when consulting and negotiating with the local Aboriginal community in relation to relevant projects. The purpose of the guidelines is to increase employment and income opportunities.

3.97 When asked about improvements in benefit sharing and outcomes for Aboriginal communities from REZ developments, Councillor Lynch referred to the First Nations Guidelines and their importance, describing the guidelines as 'decision-making from a community perspective'.[399] He reflected that governance arrangements in the guidelines could be further improved by embedding it within tender and contractual arrangements, especially in relation to sub-contractors. This would ensure that agreed commitments are carried through project delivery and supply chains.[400]

3.98 Councillor Hampton expressed that the approach to the First Nations Guidelines was 'inconsistent' across the REZs due to the lack of 'wholesome' engagement and cross-community consultation among Aboriginal communities, including with relevant government departments and with each other.[401]

3.99 Councillor Lynch acknowledged that the guiding principles of both Guidelines are broadly 'similar'. For example, common principles include strong coordination, effective communication and information sharing, accountability and monitoring, co-design through Aboriginal working groups, and collaboration across multiple government agencies.[402]

3.100 However, Councillor Lynch considered that the guidelines vary when it comes to their objectives. For instance, he observed that the government approach often focused on employment and training outcomes, whereas communities 'have advanced enough to say that there's a lot more that they could be delivering on'.[403] He further maintained that the specific goals and targets of communities vary due to the unique geographic, social, and economic circumstances of each, including factors such as access to training institutions and other local opportunities.[404]

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399 Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 38.

400 Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 38.

401 Evidence, Councillor Leanne Hampton, Deputy Chairperson, and Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 39.

402 Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 39.

403 Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 39.

404 Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 39.

3.101 Beyond the Guidelines, the NSW ALC emphasised that Aboriginal communities and LALCs should be engaged at the earliest stages of project planning, prior to key decisions or project parameters being finalised. This is to ensure that Aboriginal communities have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes. While there have been positive efforts to improve engagement processes, concerns remain that consultation may occur after substantial planning decisions have already progressed.[405]

3.102 The NSW ALC explained that, in some REZs, Aboriginal stakeholders have pushed back on project timeframes to ensure key Aboriginal organisations and stakeholders, including LALCs, Native Title groups and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, are able to participate collectively in discussions, rather than consultation occurring with selected individuals or parties only.[406]

3.103 The Indigenous Land & Justice Research Group similarly advised that LALCs reported that they were often brought into the process after key decisions had already been made, limiting their ability to influence project design, cultural heritage protection and benefit-sharing:

> LALCs expressed disappointment that many decisions in relation to the REZ have already been made. There was a shared feeling that LALCs, and Aboriginal community, had been invited into the process after key decisions about project design, transmission, access, approvals and benefit-sharing had already been settled. This limited what Aboriginal communities can influence and the extent to which benefits could be achieved.
>
> A repeated message from the workshops was that consultation is not enough if Aboriginal people do not have real power in the process. Communities need to be involved early, before projects are designed and approved.[407]

Cultural heritage

3.104 Opinions varied regarding the extent to which cultural heritage had been appropriately considered in the development process. In Councillor Hampton's view, the protection of cultural heritage had been managed well, with Aboriginal knowledge and wishes respected in most cases.[408]

3.105 On the other hand, Councillor Lynch highlighted some issues with the consultation for cultural heritage assessments. Councillor Lynch informed the

405 Answers to questions on notice, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 13 May 2026, p 2.

406 Answers to questions on notice, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 13 May 2026, p 2.

407 Submission 157, Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, pp 4-5.

408 Evidence, Councillor Leanne Hampton, Deputy Chairperson, and Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 40.

committee that developers sometimes provided little or short notice to Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPS) for attending sites or walkovers. Some communities also felt that the incorrect person was 'walking on Country':

> Some comments that have been made by countrymen are that, as always, with RAPs on the ground, some people feel we have people walking on country that are not from country … I have had comments specifically about people being notified the day before a walkover. Sometimes that's just not achievable when a lot of our community members with the expertise are Elders or people that maybe not necessarily can drop everything at the drop of a hat and be onsite in a particular location with that type of notification. There has been some pressure with the delivery, in particular with the REZ in New England—it has taken a little bit more time, and that's for various reasons.[409]

3.106 Moreover, the Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group reported a recent breach of cultural heritage that occurred in the CWO REZ. The case study below outlines the incident in more detail.

Case study The destruction of the Mudgee rock shelter[410]

In May 2026, an Aboriginal heritage rock shelter on Wiradjuri Country near Mudgee was destroyed 'beyond recovery' during the construction of transmission infrastructure. ACEREZ, the network operator appointed by EnergyCo to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the CWO REZ transmission network, acknowledged that it knew of existence of the site. The site was identified in the project's planning approval, and Aboriginal representatives had raised its cultural significance before the damage occurred. However, the destruction of the rock shelter arose from internal failures in site design and on-site construction protocols.

According to the Indigenous Land and Justice Group, the incident highlights concerns about the limits of consultation. While First Nations groups may be consulted, they can lack the power or authority to prevent harm to Country once projects move into the delivery phase. The Indigenous Land and Justice Group also questioned whether industry has established adequate protocols, contract governance and onsite controls to ensure cultural heritage is protected during construction.

Mr Steve Masters, CEO, ACEREZ apologised for the damage to the site: 'We are deeply sorry. We apologise without reservation to the Traditional Owners and to the local community. The loss of this rock shelter is permanent and nothing we say can undo that'. ACEREZ advised that they have been in contact with the Traditional Owners and will work with them to determine how the site and its story can be acknowledged and honoured following the damage.

409 Evidence, Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 31 March 2026, p 40. See also: Answers to questions on notice, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 13 May 2026, pp 2-3.

410 Submission 157, Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, p 6. See also: ACEREZ, *Statement from CEO Steve Masters,* 25 May 2026, https://www.acerez.com.au/latest-news.

An investigation in relation to the destruction of the site has been launched by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

3.107 In their answers to supplementary questions about cultural heritage, the NSW ALC highlighted their concerns about existing consultation and participation frameworks, maintaining that they rely heavily on voluntary compliance and do not always contain sufficiently strong obligations or enforcement mechanisms. The NSW ALC emphasised the following key considerations when it comes to protecting cultural heritage.:

- Aboriginal cultural heritage considerations should be embedded into project planning from the outset, requiring early engagement, transparency, genuine participation by Aboriginal communities, and should not be treated as secondary to project delivery timeframes.
- Short notification timeframes significantly limit the ability of RAPs to attend sites and properly walk Country prior to works occurring. When this occurs, this undermines the effective protection of Aboriginal culture and heritage, whether intentional or not.
- Critical consideration is given to ensuring RAPs include local Aboriginal people with recognised cultural authority, who live on or maintain strong connections to Country and possess appropriate knowledge of that Country.[411]

Committee comment

3.108 The development of Renewable Energy Zones has the potential to provide a number of economic benefits for host communities and landowners. There is also economic risk to delaying the transition to renewable energy, noting evidence that Australia's GDP will reduce by $6.8 trillion between 2024 and 2050 as a result of the impacts of climate change, if serious action is not taken. The committee notes the government has significantly invested in community benefit schemes as a way of ensuring long-term economic benefits form part of the energy transition for these communities.

3.109 The committee also acknowledges the additional funding distributed by Transgrid and Ausgrid to host communities. We are grateful for their willingness to appear before the committee at the hearings held in Singleton and Hay. We are similarly thankful that Endeavour Energy and the Clean Energy Council participated in the Sydney and Wollongong hearings. Given the central role of renewable energy developers in transforming those rural and regional communities affected by the REZs, inquiry participation helps facilitate open engagement and transparency.

[411] Answers to questions on notice, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, 13 May 2026, p 3.

3.110 Nonetheless, despite significant investment, the committee shares the concerns of several inquiry participants around some of the practical implications of proposed funding arrangements. Many stakeholders were critical of both the adequacy and constraints associated with the community benefit schemes, highlighting some of the impracticalities associated with managing funds. Substantial investment achieves little if it is buried in red tape.

3.111 REZ related construction and ongoing operations present a number of employment opportunities. The government's commitment to ensuring employment in the regions is a step in the right direction. Nonetheless, we are sympathetic to the concerns of some stakeholders, such as Local Government NSW and the Country Mayors Association, that employment opportunities in the regions may not be long-term. While the construction phase of each REZ appears to increase regional employment, a high proportion of the renewable energy workforce is expected to consist of temporary workers that 'drive in-drive out' or 'fly in-fly out'. This does not equate to long-term legacy outcomes.

3.112 Therefore, we find that while REZ development is projected to deliver economic benefits, this is not consistently reflected in the lived experience of some rural and regional communities.

Finding 20

The proposed economic benefits from Renewable Energy Zones are not consistent with the lived experience of some rural and regional communities.

3.113 While the land acquisition process includes the provision of compensation to landowners, it is hard to fully account for the stress and uncertainty provoked by the potential loss of land. The committee was moved by the evidence of a number of individuals who shared their negative experiences of the government land acquisition process. We heard repeated stories of EnergyCo's 'adversarial', unsupportive, 'deadline oriented' and 'Social Impact Assessment-ignorant' approach to dealing with landowners. For Mr Ian Barry, his battle with Motor Neurone Disease was negatively affected by the process. We understand that revisiting these experiences would have been difficult and appreciate the openness and candour of these participants.

3.114 Unfortunately, these experiences remind us of similar issues explored in the first report. The land acquisition process is flawed and we are concerned that these issues will persist given the likelihood of increased land acquisition as the government continues the energy transition in rural and regional communities. Indeed, we share the concerns of the Law Society of NSW regarding the inadequacy of compensation for landowners who host transmission infrastructure, and the impediments to meaningful and genuine negotiations.

Finding 21

That the land acquisition process in relation to renewable energy development is inadequate.

3.115 In this context, we consider that the Law Society of NSW's suggestions for improving the land acquisition process would greatly assist landowners. We accordingly recommend that the government seek to strengthen the land acquisition process by:

- applying the principles of the *Private Agreement Guideline* so:
  - agreements are tailored to the specific landholder and project
  - agreements are fair, reasonable, and written in plain language,
  - reasonable landholder costs associated with entering into or understanding the agreement are paid for by the applicant.
- developing a suite of standard documents, prescribed by regulations, that are required to initiate and complete the acquisition process.

3.116 Further, we note that the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* is currently under review and recommend that the government provide an urgent update as to its progress.

3.117 We also recommend strengthening the land acquisition process by including minimum standards for: independent legal advice funded by proponents; valuation processes; mediation prior to compulsory acquisition; and transparent compensation principles.

Recommendation 13

That the NSW Government seek to strengthen the land acquisition process by:

- applying the principles of the *Private Agreement Guideline* so:
  - agreements are tailored to the specific landholder and project
  - agreements are fair, reasonable, and written in plain language
  - reasonable landholder costs associated with entering into or understanding the agreement are paid for by the applicant.
- developing a suite of standard documents, prescribed by regulations, that are required to initiate and complete the acquisition process
- providing an urgent update regarding the review of the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*
- including minimum standards for:
  - independent legal advice funded by proponents
  - valuation processes
  - mediation prior to compulsory acquisition
  - transparent compensation principles.

3.118 As foreshadowed in the first report, the committee remains concerned about the uncertainty of the decommissioning process. The committee notes the government's position that decommissioning bonds are not necessary for renewable energy projects and that the responsibility of decommissioning should be managed between the landowner and the developer. However, we recognise that concerns remain in the community regarding the risk of stranded assets should a developer become bankrupt or sell the project.

3.119 Indeed, we found Singleton Council's evidence regarding the long-term community benefits of decommissioning bonds compelling in light of their experience with mining bonds. It is clear that there is an existing and sufficient framework for decommissioning bonds that the government can apply to renewable energy developments. As such, we urge the government to revisit their position regarding decommissioning bonds so as to reassure the community about appropriately accounting for the decommissioning of renewable energy infrastructure. We accordingly recommend that the NSW Government reconsider their position regarding decommissioning bonds and consider applying mandatory bonds to new renewable energy developments including requirements for periodic review of financial assurance to reflect actual costs.

Finding 22

Decommissioning bonds are a necessary part of any significant infrastructure as they provide reassurance to the community regarding long-term environmental and economic impacts.

Recommendation 14

That the NSW Government reconsider their position regarding decommissioning bonds and consider applying mandatory bonds to new renewable energy developments including requirements for periodic review of financial assurance to reflect actual costs.

3.120 Emergency services, such as Fire & Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service, play an essential role in protecting communities, property and critical infrastructure in rural and regional areas. They are currently involved in the development assessment process through the consideration of fire safety, emergency access design and risk mitigation. We understand that they are not the consent authority for these decisions yet they are required to respond in accordance with their operational roles and responsibilities.

3.121 Fire & Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service advised that, while there is no evidence that REZ infrastructure increases fire risk in rural landscapes, it does change the nature of 'existing incident profiles'. Nonetheless, many stakeholders remain significantly concerned about the potential fire risk from proposed

developments as well the uncertainty around emergency service planning and the ability to respond quickly to fires surrounding renewable energy developments.

3.122 While there is no suggestion that emergency services are unable to perform their operational responsibilities, the committee nonetheless considers it important that emerging risks are adequately assessed and incorporated into planning.

Finding 23

The Renewable Energy Zones and related infrastructure have caused significant concern in the community regarding fire risk and uncertainty around emergency service planning and responses.

3.123 The insights provided by Aboriginal stakeholders to this inquiry have been invaluable and the committee acknowledges their cultural and spiritual connections to land within the REZs. They are key stakeholders who are experiencing the impacts of the energy transition.

3.124 We are concerned that the cultural heritage consultation process has at times lacked meaningful participation due to the short notice provided to relevant representatives as well as a failure to always engage with the recognised cultural authority. The committee considers that this approach undermines the genuine participation by Aboriginal communities and potentially hinders the effective protection of Aboriginal culture and heritage.

3.125 Moreover, we are deeply concerned by the recent breach of cultural heritage protection in the Central-West Orana REZ. This incident has caused significant distress to Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal communities, and will raise broader concerns among Aboriginal communities about whether cultural heritage protections are being properly implemented and upheld.

3.126 The committee notes that the government has established formal mechanisms to support the delivery of benefits from the energy transition to Aboriginal communities, including the use of guidelines, benefit-sharing funds and contractual obligations for developers.

3.127 However, we are of the view that further work is needed so tangible and sustained benefits for Aboriginal communities are realised. In particular, we note the evidence from the NSW Aboriginal Land Council who emphasised the need for long-term legacy outcomes, including apprenticeships, qualifications, long-term employment pathways, co-ownership opportunities and ongoing land management roles. These long-term economic outcomes are valuable and opportunities should not be limited to short-term financial benefit.

3.128 The committee also acknowledges the role of local Aboriginal land councils in representing their communities as part of the REZ process. We note that they are

required to undertake complex land analysis and negotiation with large-scale developers, often with insufficient resourcing. Local Aboriginal land councils should have greater access to technical, legal and commercial support to ensure negotiations occur on an informed and equitable basis. This would facilitate the development of agreements that more accurately reflect informed consent and long-term community interests.

3.129 On this basis, we recommend that the government provide additional funding to the local Aboriginal land councils in each Renewable Energy Zone to assist with complex land analysis and negotiations with large-scale developers together with requirements for early engagement in strategic planning, cultural heritage assessment and route selection before project locations are finalised.

Recommendation 15

That the NSW Government provide additional funding to the local Aboriginal land councils in each Renewable Energy Zone to assist with complex land analysis and negotiations with large-scale developers together with requirements for early engagement in strategic planning, cultural heritage assessment and route selection before project locations are finalised.

3.130 More broadly, the themes explored in this final report lead to the conclusion that the Renewable Energy Zones unfortunately have adverse ongoing impacts for many stakeholders in rural and regional communities across New South Wales. Since the commencement of this inquiry in 2024, the committee has observed clear indications of the direction and scale of these impacts and their implications for affected communities, yet the government has not delivered an adequate response.

3.131 Indeed, we reiterate our view expressed in the first report regarding the need to address the concerns that were already emerging for those living in the Central-West Orana REZ. It is clear that key issues such as a lack of strategic planning, inadequate community consultation, adverse cumulative impacts on local communities, and negative environmental and social impacts are persisting in the other REZs. We hoped that the government would sufficiently address these concerns in their response to the first report in order to prevent persistent issues in the roll-out of the other REZs.

3.132 However, the government's response to the first report, as outlined in Chapter 1, is characterised by broad support 'in principle', while failing to commit to substantive structural reform, indicating a gap between acknowledgment and action. This response is unsatisfactory, as it is devoid of clear timelines, deliverables and accountability mechanisms, which undermine confidence in its implementation and the government's commitment to ensuring rural and regional communities are part of the energy transition.

3.133 In order to effectively keep the government accountable throughout this significant transition that is being experienced by many rural and regional communities throughout New South Wales, we recommend that the government publish a detailed implementation plan for all accepted recommendations of this report within three months, as part of its response to this report. The plan should set out relevant timelines, responsible agencies and measurable outcomes, with the government reporting to New South Wales Parliament every six months on the progress of its implementation plan.

3.134 The implementation plan should: identify the lead agency responsible for each recommendation; specify implementation timeframes; include measurable performance indicators; and provide annual public progress reports until implementation is complete.

Finding 24

The response of the NSW Government to the first report is characterised by broad support 'in principle' while failing to commit to substantive structural reform, indicating a gap between acknowledgment and action.

Finding 25

The response of the NSW Government to the first report lacked clear timelines, deliverables, and accountability mechanisms, undermining confidence in its implementation and the commitment to ensuring rural regional communities are part of the energy transition.

Recommendation 16

That the NSW Government publish a detailed implementation plan for all accepted recommendations of this report within three months. The plan should set out relevant timelines, responsible agencies and measurable outcomes, with the government reporting to New South Wales Parliament every six months on the progress of its implementation plan. The implementation plan should:

- identify the lead agency responsible for each recommendation;
- specify implementation timeframes;
- include measurable performance indicators;
- provide annual public progress reports until implementation is complete.

Appendix 1 Submissions

No.	Author	
1	Confidential	
2	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
3	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
4	Mrs Julia James	
5	Mr Malcolm Ritter	
6	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
7	Mr Ian McDonald	
8	Dungog Shire Council	
8a	Dungog Shire Council	
9	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
10	Mr Graeme Tychsen	
11	Ms Ifeanna Tooth	
12	Mr Matthew Hasemore	
13	Mr Patrick Li	
14	Mr Brian Mason	
15	Mr Robert Richardson AO	
16	Mr Peter Coughlan	
17	Mr David Bowman	
18	Merriwa-Cassilis Alliance Incorporated	
19	Confidential	
20	Rainforest Reserves Australia	
21	Mr John Kelly	
22	Ms Emily Edwards	
23	Doctors for the Environment Australia	
24	Hi Neighbour	
25	Rainforest Reserves Australia	
26	Cassilis District Development Group	
27	Save Our Surroundings (SOS)	
28	Justice and Equity Centre	
29	Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW	
30	CWO REZist Inc.	
31	Lithgow Environment Group Inc	

No.	Author
32	National Rational Energy Network Inc.
33	The Centre for Independent Studies
34	The Nature Conservation Council NSW
35	Central NSW Joint Organisation
36	Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy, Essential Energy
37	The Australian Workers' Union
38	AMEC
39	Hunter Jobs Alliance
40	Singleton Council
41	Shellharbour City Council
42	Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance Inc
43	Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Inc
44	NSW Government DCCEEW
45	Mid-Western Regional Council
46	ReD4NE
47	Sydney Knitting Nannas
48	Net Zero Commission
49	Burrendong SOS - Community Group
50	NSW Farmers Association
51	Temora Shire Council
52	Community Power Agency
53	Blueprint Institute
54	Country Mayors Association of NSW
55	The Next Economy
56	Voice for Walcha
57	Climate Action and REEACH groups of Sustainable Living Armidale
58	Friends of the Earth Australia
59	Renew, Hunter region branch
60	Dubbo Regional Council
61	Yass Landscape Guardians Inc
62	Armidale Regional Council
63	Warrumbungle Shire Council
64	Charles Abela
65	Unions NSW
66	Uralla Shire Council

No.	Author	
67	RE-Alliance	
68	Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation	
69	Tamworth Regional Council	
70	The Law Society of New South Wales	
71	Mr John Benjamin	
72	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
73	Melissa and Leo Collins	
74	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
75	NSW Minerals Council Ltd	
76	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
77	Mr Martin Mansfield	
78	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
79	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
80	Mr Nigel Roberts	
81	Mr Rick Campbell	
82	Dr Ken Wilson	
83	Ms Ruby Hardie	
84	Name suppressed	
85	Mrs Jenny Bailey	
86	Dr Martin Scurrah	
87	Hay Shire Council	
88	Confidential	
89	Mrs Phebe Fidge	
90	Mr Brian Bowman	
91	Mrs Anne Bowman	
92	Maritime Union of Australia (MUA)	
93	Noel Hicks	
95	Mr Stephen Johnston	
94	Miss Emma Bowman	*partially confidential*
96	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
97	Colleen Wysser - Martin	
98	Mrs Rosemary Miller	
99	Confidential	
100	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
101	Confidential	

No.	Author	
102	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
103	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
104	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
105	Ms Kim Gambrill	
106	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
107	Mrs Myree Russell	
108	Mrs Sally Edwards	
109	Lake Macquarie City Council	
110	Clean Energy Investor Group Ltd	
111	Mr Stan Moore	
112	Mr Peter Dawson	
113	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
114	Ms Julie Marlow	
115	Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Community Power Agency, Hunter Jobs Alliance et al	
116	Ms Annie Marlow	
117	Mr Jason Harrop	
118	Mr Anthony Morrison	
119	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
120	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
121	Murrumbidgee Council	
122	Margaret Armstrong	
123	Mr Ian Barry	
124	Mr Colin Smith	
125	Local Government NSW (LGNSW)	
126	Business NSW	
127	Edward River Council	
128	Cotton Australia	
129	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
130	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
131	Confidential	
132	New England Greens	
133	Name suppressed	*partially confidential*
134	Wild Rivers Engineering	
135	Ms Anita O'Neil	

No.	Author
136	Mr Tim White
137	Good for the Gong
138	Lynette Lablack
139	Murray River Council
140	Mr Michael Holz
141	Lyndal McRae
142	Peter Reardon
143	Mary Noglik and Les Dywer-Gray
144	Renee Harrison
145	Confidential
146	Rob and Bill Hicks
147	Farmers for Climate Action
148	Arleen Packer
149	Stuart Grills
150	Sally Denyer
151	Antony (Tony) Menkens
152	Bundure District Landholders Group (BUNDL)
153	Dungowan Creek Alliance
154	Annette Smith
155	Mr Nathaniel Barton
156	Voice for Cabonne
157	Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group, UNSW Sydney

Appendix 2 Witnesses at hearings

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
Tuesday 13 May 2024 **Macquarie Room** **Parliament House, Sydney**	Mr Liam Ryan	Advising Executive Director, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
	Mr Ash Albury	Executive Director, Planning and Communities, Energy Corporation of NSW
	Mr Clay Preshaw	Executive Director, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
	Mr Matt Riley	Director, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
	Mr Anthony Hayes	Head of Regional Integration, Planning, Integration and Passenger, Transport for NSW
	Ms Suzie Matthews	Executive Director, Skills and Workforce Programs, NSW Department of Education
	Mr James Bolton	Deputy Secretary, Regional Development and Delivery, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
	Ms Nevenka Codevelle	Executive General Manager, AEMO Services
	Ms Melanie Koerner	General Manager – System Planning, Reporting & REZ Authorisation, AEMO Services
	Ms Janine Young *(via videoconference)*	Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
	Ms Stephanie Saill *(via videoconference)*	Head of Energy Transition, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
	Ms Meg McDonald	Interim Chair, Net Zero Commission
	Dr Will Rayward-Smith	Executive Director, Net Zero Commission
	Ms Alison Stone	NSW Agriculture Commissioner
	Dr Richard Parsons	Social Researcher
	Mr Ian Barry	Landowner
	Ms Kathy Morris	Landowner
	Mr Ben Turner	Landowner

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
	Cr Claire Pontin *(via videoconference)*	Vice President Regional/Rural, Local Government NSW
	Mr David Reynolds *(via videoconference)*	Chief Executive, Local Government NSW
	Ms Marilyne Crestias	Head of Policy and Advocacy, Clean Energy Investor Group
	Dr Brad Smith	Policy and Advocacy Director, Nature Conservation Council NSW
	Ms Eve Altman	Clean Energy Campaigner, Nature Conservation Council NSW
	Ms Lu Allan	Advocacy Director, RE-Alliance
	Mr Xavier Martin	President NSW Farmers
	Ms Rhiannon Heath	Policy Adviser, Environment, NSW Farmers
	Ms Leah Tucker	Senior Policy Manager, Energy and Infrastructure, Business NSW
	Mr Bob Hawes	CEO, Business Hunter, Business NSW
	Mr Andrew Abbey	Policy Director, NSW Minerals Council
Friday 16 May 2025 Dubbo Regional Council Chambers, Dubbo NSW	Mr Murray Wood	Chief Executive Officer, Dubbo Regional Council
	Mr Steven Jennings	Development and Environment, Dubbo Regional Council
	Mr Brad Cam	General Manager, Midwestern Regional Council
	Mr Lindsay Mason	General Manager, Warrumbungle Council
	Adjunct Prof Warwick Giblin FEIANZ, FRSN	Environmental Consultant to Warrumbungle Council
	Mr Grant Piper, AASM, DFSM	CWO REZist
	Mrs Annette Piper	Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance
	Mr Terry Conn	Landowner
	Mrs Margaret Conn	Landowner
	Ms Emma Bowman	Landowner
	Ms Sally Edwards	Landowner
	Mr Nigel Roberts	Landowner

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
	Mrs Jane Hegarty	Chair, Cassilis District Development Group
	Mrs Linda Gant	Committee member, Cassilis District Development Group
	Mr James Matthews	Executive Committee, Merriwa Cassilis Alliance
	Mr James Armstrong	Owner, Cassilis Park Merino Stud
	Mr Peter Rothwell Director	VRA Rescue
Thursday 17 July 2025 Armidale Bowling Club, Auditorium, Armidale NSW	Cr Sam Coupland	Mayor, Armidale Regional Council
	Mr Stephen Wood	Senior Strategic Planner, Armidale Regional Council
	Mr James Pryor	Senior Strategic Planner, Armidale Regional Council
	Cr Robert Bell	Mayor, Uralla Shire Council
	Ms Emily Sims	Planning Officer – Strategic, Uralla Shire Council
	Mr Jordan Kirk	Renewable Energy Project Co-ordinator, Tamworth Regional Council
	Mr Sam Lobsey	Manager, Development Division, Liveable Communities, Tamworth Regional Council
	Cr Eric Noakes	Mayor, Walcha Council
	Mr Alan Butler	Acting General Manager, Walcha Council
	The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP	Member for New England, Parliament of Australia
	Ms Annette Kilarr	Convenor, Climate Action Armidale of Sustainable Living Armidale
	Dr Sanaz Alian	Renewable Energy, Education, Advocacy and Community Health (REEACH) group of Sustainable Living Armidale
	Mr Cameron Greig	Member, Voice for Walcha
	Mr Damien Timbs	Member, Voice for Walcha
	Mr Tim White	President, Valley Alliance
	Mr Peter Dawson	Property owner, Salisbury Plains

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
	Mrs Karen Zirkler	Regenerative Agriculture Grazier, Kentucky district
	Mrs Selena Sylvester	Hills of Gold Preservation Inc.
	Mr Mark Fogarty	Director, Bushtricity – ReD4NE
	Ms Susan Newey	Chair, ReD4NE
	Mr Antony (Tony) Menkens	Beef cattle producer, Chair, Batting for Booroolong Community Group
	Mr Stuart Grills	Property owner
Thursday 25 September 2025 **Singleton Civic Centre** **Singleton NSW**	Mr Trevor Ryan	Director, Planning and Environment, Dungog Shire Council
	Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr	General Manager, Singleton Council
	Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford	Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council
	Cr Jeff Drayton	Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council
	Mr Derek Finnigan	General Manager, Muswellbrook Shire Council
	Mr Ben Maddox	Coordinator, Sustainability Strategy and Education, Maitland City Council
	Mr Timothy Jarratt	Ausgrid Group Executive Market Development & Strategy, Ausgrid
	Mr Daniel Sartor	Ausgrid Head of Major Projects, Ausgrid
	Mr Michael Johnson	General Manager, Community and Social Licence, Transgrid
	Mr Struan Wilson	Program Director – Hunter Transmission Project, Transgrid
	Mr Richard Poole	CEO, Verdant Earth Technologies
	Mr Costa Tsiolkas	General Manager, Verdant Earth Technologies
	Mr Justin Page	Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance
	Mr Tom Edwards	Research and Policy Officer, Unions NSW (via videoconference)
	Mr Matthew Murray	Member, Newcastle Branch Committee, Maritime Union of Australia
	Mr James Miranda	Policy & Research Officer, ETU NSW & ACT Branch Electrical Trades Union

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
	Dr John Shiel	Member, Renew – Hunter Region Branch
	Ms Kerry Atkins	NSW Policy Director, AMEC (Association of Mining Exploration Companies)
	Ms Paula Dell-McCumstie	NSW Policy Advisor, AMEC
	Mr Michael Holz	Resident and representing Singleton Solar Standoff community group
	Mrs Myree Russell	Farmer/landholder
Wednesday 29 October 2025 **Victory Room** **WIN Sports and Entertainment Centre** **Wollongong NSW**	Mr Guy Chalkley	Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy
	Ms Leanne Pickering	Chief Customer and Strategy Officer, Endeavour Energy
	Mr Mark Horne	Individual
	Mr Alex O'Brien	President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter
	Mrs Amanda De Lore	Vice President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter
	Mr Jim Pinkerton	Consultant Power System Engineer and Past President of Electricity Engineers Association of NSW, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter
	Ms Madeleine Holme	Good for the Gong
	Ms Yael Stone	Founding Director, Hi Neighbour
	Mr Francis Vierboom	Chief Executive Officer, Rewiring Australia
Wednesday, 18 February 2026 **The Auditorium,** **Hay Services Club** **Hay NSW**	Ms Alison McLean	Executive Manager – Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council
	Mr Jack Bond	Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council
	Mr Garry Stoll	Director, Planning & Infrastructure, Murrumbidgee Council
	Mr Steven Parisotto	Senior Planner, Murrumbidgee Council
	Mr Brett Stonestreet PSM	Interim Executive Officer, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO)

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
	Mr Terry Dodds	Chair, RAMJO Energy Security and Affordability Committee and CEO, Balranald Shire Council
	Ms Hodi Beauliv	Executive Manager, Governance & Economic Services, Balranald Shire Council
	Mr Richard Coughlan	Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group (BUNDL)
	Mr Andrew Browning	Committee member, BUNDL
	Mr Michael Johnson	General Manager Community and Social Licence, Transgrid
	Mr Nathan Menser	Community and Stakeholder Manager, Transgrid
Tuesday, 31 March 2026 Macquarie Room Parliament House, Sydney	Ms Janine Young	Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
	Ms Stephanie Saill	Head of Energy Transition, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
	Mr Aidan Morrison	Director, Energy Programs, Centre for Independent Studies
	Ms Verity Morgan-Schmidt	Acting CEO, Farmers for Climate Action
	Mr Andrew Locke	Farmers for Climate Action
	Mr Mark Robinson	Director, Wild Rivers Engineering
	Ms Saideh Kent	Program Director – Energy, The Next Economy
	Mr William Churchill	Chief Policy and Impact Officer, Clean Energy Council
	Mr Chris O'Keefe	National Spokesperson, Clean Energy Council
	Councillor Leeanne Hampton	Deputy Chairperson, NSW Aboriginal Land Council and Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council
	Councillor Charles Lynch	Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council
	Professor Ivan R. Kennedy AM FRACI CChem	Professor Emeritus in Agricultural and Environmental Chemistry, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Institute of Agriculture, University of Sydney
	Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrelll, AFSM	Commissioner, Fire & Rescue NSW

Date	Name	Position and Organisation
	Deputy Commissioner Ben Millington	Deputy Commissioner, Operational Coordination, NSW Rural Fire Service
	Chief Superintendent Laurence McCoy	Chief Superintendent and Manager Predictive Services, NSW Rural Fire Service
	Mr Ashley Albury	Executive Director, Planning & Communities, Energy Corporation of NSW
	Mr Anthony Hayes	Head of Regional Integration, Planning, Integration and Passenger Division, Transport for NSW
	Mr Clay Preshaw	, Executive Director, Planning System Reform, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
	Mr Liam Ryan	Executive Director, Energy Infrastructure, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
	Ms Hannah McCaughey	Chief Executive Officer, Energy Corporation of NSW
	Mr Chris Ritchie	A/Executive Director, Energy and Resource Assessments, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Appendix 3 Minutes

Minutes no. 23
Tuesday 30 July 2024
Portfolio Committee no. 4
Room 1034, NSW Parliament House, 4.03 pm

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak, *Chair* (via videoconference)
Ms Hurst, *Deputy Chair* (via videoconference)
Mr Donnelly
M Fang (substituting for Mrs Mitchell for the POCTAA inquiry) (via videoconference, until 4.14 pm)
Mrs MacDonald
Mrs Mitchell (via videoconference)
Mr Murphy (via videoconference)
Mr Primrose

2. Previous minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That draft minutes no. 22 be confirmed.

3. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received:

- 18 July 2024 – Email from Witness H to the secretariat providing a clarification to evidence before the committee on 18 July 2024, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*
- 19 July 2024 – Email from Witness D to the secretariat providing a clarification to evidence she gave before the committee on 18 July 2024, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*
- 21 July 2024 – Email from Witness H to the secretariat providing further observations to the committee, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*
- 22 July 2024 – Email from Ms Abigail Wiley to the secretariat querying a committee comment in the report of the inquiry into the veterinary workforce
- 23 July 2024 – Email from Mr Stephen Albin acknowledging receipt of the Chair's letter regarding the Turner allegations, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*
- 23 July 2024 – Email from Ms Amanda Gray to the secretariat requesting further information about the Turner allegations, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*
- 23 July 2024 – Letter from the Hon Sarah Mitchell, MLC, the Hon Mark Banasiak MLC and the Hon Aileen McDonald MLC requesting a meeting of Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW to consider a proposed self-reference into the impact of the phaseout of Australian live sheep exports by sea on New South Wales
- 23 July 2024 – Letter from the Hon Mark Banasiak MLC, Hon Sarah Mitchell, MLC, and the Hon Aileen McDonald MLC requesting a meeting of Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional

NSW to consider a proposed self-reference into Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ's) on Rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

- 24 July 2024 – Email from Mr Michael Sheehy, Detective Chief Superintendent – Chief of Staff, NSW Police, to the secretariat, requesting further information regarding the Turner allegations, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*
- 24 July 2024 – Email from Ms Amanda Gray, Chief Inspector, Animal Welfare League with report of inspection of property belonging to Ms Suzette Turner, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*.

Sent:

- 11 July 2024 – Email from the secretariat to Ms Suzette Turner regarding whether she would provide a written response to adverse mention of her at the hearing on 27 May 2024, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*
- 23 July 2024 – Letter from the Chair to Ms Karen Webb, NSW Police Commissioner regarding allegations made about Ms Suzette Turner during the POCTAA hearing on 27 May 2024, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*
- 23 July 2024 – Letter from the Chair to Mr Stephen Albin, CEO, Animal Welfare League regarding allegations made about Ms Suzette Turner during the POCTAA hearing on 27 May 2024, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*
- 23 July 2024 – Email from the secretariat to Ms Amanda Grey, Chief Inspector, AWL regarding the Turner allegations, for the inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979).*

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Murphy: That the committee keep confidential the following items of correspondence due to identifying/sensitive information of *in camera* witnesses:

- Emails from Witness H received 18 July 2024 and 21 July 2024
- Email from Witness D received 19 July 2024.

4. Inquiry into the operations of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)*

4.1 Correspondence from NSW Police

The committee considered the request by the NSW Police for more information about the allegations the committee had referred to NSW Police.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That the secretariat contact the *in camera* witness who provided the information to see if they would be willing for the secretariat to provide their contact details to the NSW Police.

4.2 Inquiry next steps

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Fang: that the secretariat canvass potential dates for a half day hearing after 15 August, and that the Chair report to the House an extension of the reporting date for the inquiry until 30 November 2024.

5. Consideration of terms of reference - Impact of the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea on New South Wales

The Chair tabled a letter proposing the following self-reference:

That Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW inquire into and report on the impact of the phase- out of Australian live sheep exports by sea on New South Wales, considering the

economic and social implications of such a phase-out on regional New South Wales communities, and in particular:

(a) evaluate the economic impact of phasing out live sheep exports on New South Wales sheep producers and related supply chains in regional towns, including:

  (i) transport operators

  (ii) fodder and grain producers

  (iii) other associated industries

(b) evaluate the impact on the sheep industry in New South Wales if farmers are unable to restock with animals from Western Australia (WA)

(c) evaluate the price implications on New South Wales sheep and lamb producers of having stock from WA regularly sold at our sales

(d) examine whether the phase-out of live sheep exports by sea will have any impact on NSW Government revenue and bottom line

(e) examine potential implications in demand for New South Wales mutton after the phase out of the live sheep trade

(f) examine reasons used by the Federal Government for the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea and whether the Federal Government should provide compensation to New South Wales sheep producers

(g) examine animal welfare standards relating to live sheep export including any information used in the determination to cease live sheep export by sea by the Federal Government

(h) examine the impact to local meat processors

(i) examine proven alternative markets and opportunities for New South Wales sheep producers

(j) explore the social and community impacts of income loss for New South Wales sheep producers, including the evaluation of support mechanisms for affected communities and workers

(k) analysis of potential economic losses from the phase-out and the impact on employment across regional New South Wales, including but not limited to transport, contract musterers and veterinary suppliers

(l) identify case studies of graziers in other regions or countries that have successfully transitioned from live exports, and

(m) examine alternative income streams for New South Wales sheep producers

(n) any other related matters.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That the committee adopt the terms of reference with the following amendments:

- in the first paragraph, insert 'and the animal welfare considerations relevant to the phase-out' after 'regional New South Wales communities'
- in paragraph (g), omit 'standards relating to live sheep export including any information used in' and insert instead 'concerns relevant to'
- insert after paragraph (m) the following new paragraph: 'examine community views in New South Wales of the live export industry'.

6. Conduct of the inquiry into the impact of the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea on New South Wales

6.1 Proposed timeline

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee adopt the following timeline for the administration of the inquiry:

- Submission closing date – Friday 20 September 2024
- Hearing(s) – One hearing and one reserve hearing date in October/November 2024
- Report tabling – February 2025.

6.2 Stakeholder list

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That:

- the secretariat circulate to members the Chair's proposed list of stakeholders to be invited to make a submission
- members have two days from when the Chair's proposed list is circulated to make amendments or nominate additional stakeholders
- the committee agree to the stakeholder list by email, unless a meeting of the committee is required to resolve any disagreement.

6.3 Approach to submissions

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That, to enable significant efficiencies for members and the secretariat while maintaining the integrity of how submissions are treated, in the event that 50 or more individual submissions are received, the committee may adopt the following approach to processing short submissions:

- All submissions from individuals 250 words or less in length will:
  - have an individual submission number, and be published with the author's name or as name suppressed, or kept confidential, according to the author's request
  - be reviewed by the secretariat for adverse mention and sensitive/identifying information, in accordance with practice
  - be channelled into one single document to be published on the inquiry website
- All other submissions will be processed and published as normal.

6.4 Online questionnaire

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee use an online questionnaire to capture individuals' views, and that the draft questions be circulated to the committee for comment, with a meeting on request from any committee member if there is disagreement on the questions.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That:

- the committee not accept proformas
- the media release announcing the establishment of the inquiry and emails to stakeholders note that there will be an online questionnaire to capture individuals' views
- the closing date for the online questionnaire be [date]
- the following wording be included on the committee's website:
  - **Online questionnaire**

    Contributions to the inquiry may be made via the submissions tab below. The closing date for submissions is [date].

    Individual contributors may prefer to complete an online questionnaire rather than make a submission [insert link to online questionnaire]. The closing date for the online questionnaire is [date].

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the secretariat prepare a summary report of responses to the online questionnaire for publication on the website and use in the report, and that:

- the committee agree to publication of the report via email, unless a member raises any concerns
- individual responses be kept confidential on tabling.

7. Consideration of terms of reference - Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) on Rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

The Chair tabled a letter proposing the following self-reference:

That Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW inquire into and report on the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales, and in particular:

(a) the current and projected socioeconomic, cultural, agricultural and environmental impacts of projects within renewable energy zones in New South Wales including the cumulative impacts

(b) current and projected considerations needed with regards to fire risk, management and containment and potential implications on insurance for land holders and/or project proponents in and around Renewable Energy Zones (REZs)

(c) the historical, current and projected future financial costs associated with construction and maintenance of large scale projects within Renewable Energy Zones

(d) proposed compensation to regional New South Wales residents impacted by Renewable Energy Zone transmission lines

(i) adequacy of compensation currently being offered for hosting transmission lines

(ii) adequacy of the shared benefits being offered to neighbours of large scale renewable projects

(iii) financial impact of compensation on the state's economy

(iv) tax implications resulting from compensation received by impacted residents.

(e) adequacy, and management of voluntary planning agreements and payments made to the LGAs impacted by Renewable Energy Zones

(f) current and projected supply and demand levels of manufactured products, raw materials, and human resources required for completion of Renewable Energy Zones and their source

(g) projected impact on visitation to regional areas with renewable energy zones resulting from changes to land use

(h) suitable alternatives to traditional renewable energy sources such as large-scale wind and solar

(i) adequacy of community consultation and engagement in the development of Renewable Energy Zones, and associated projects

(j) how decommissioning bonds are currently managed and should be managed as part of large scale renewable projects

(k) the role and responsibility of the Net Zero Commission and Commissioner in addressing matters set out above

(l) any other related matters.

Mrs Mitchell moved: That the committee adopt the terms of reference.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs McDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Noes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

8. Conduct of the inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ's) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

8.1 Proposed timeline

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee adopt the following timeline for the administration of the inquiry:

- Submission closing date – 31 January 2025
- Hearing(s) – That the timeline for hearings be considered by the committee following the receipt of submissions.

8.2 Stakeholder list

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That:

- the secretariat circulate to members the Chair's proposed list of stakeholders to be invited to make a submission
- members have two days from when the Chair's proposed list is circulated to make amendments or nominate additional stakeholders
- the committee agree to the stakeholder list by email, unless a meeting of the committee is required to resolve any disagreement.

8.3 Approach to submissions

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: Suggested resolution: That, to enable significant efficiencies for members and the secretariat while maintaining the integrity of how submissions are treated, in the event that 50 or more individual submissions are received, the committee may adopt the following approach to processing short submissions:

- All submissions from individuals 250 words or less in length will:
  - have an individual submission number, and be published with the author's name or as name suppressed, or kept confidential, according to the author's request
  - be reviewed by the secretariat for adverse mention and sensitive/identifying information, in accordance with practice
  - be channelled into one single document to be published on the inquiry website
- All other submissions will be processed and published as normal.

8.4 Online questionnaire

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee use an online questionnaire to capture individuals' views, and that the draft questions be circulated to the committee for comment, with a meeting on request from any committee member if there is disagreement on the questions.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That:

- the committee not accept proformas

- the media release announcing the establishment of the inquiry and emails to stakeholders note that there will be an online questionnaire to capture individuals' views
- the closing date for the online questionnaire be [date]
- the following wording be included on the committee's website:
    - **Online questionnaire**

      Contributions to the inquiry may be made via the submissions tab below. The closing date for submissions is [date].

      Individual contributors may prefer to complete an online questionnaire rather than make a submission [insert link to online questionnaire]. The closing date for the online questionnaire is [date].

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the secretariat prepare a summary report of responses to the online questionnaire for publication on the website and use in the report, and that:

- the committee agree to publication of the report via email, unless a member raises any concerns
- individual responses be kept confidential on tabling.

9. Adjournment

Adjourned at 4.27 pm, *sine die.*

Peta Leemen
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 24
Tuesday 27 August 2024
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW
Jubilee Room, Parliament House, Sydney, 9.00 am

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak, *Chair* (until 10.00 am, from 10.43 am)
Ms Hurst, *Deputy Chair*
Mr Donnelly
Ms Faehrmann (participating) (from 11.17 am until 12.48 pm, from 3.45 pm until 4.28 pm)
Mr Fang (substituting for Mrs MacDonald)
Mr Farraway (substituting for Mrs Mitchell) (until 4.36 pm)
Ms Higginson (participating)
Mr Lawrence (substituting for Mr Primrose)
Mr Murphy

2. Previous minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That draft minutes no. 21 be confirmed.

3. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 2 August 2024 – Email from Tina Flakas, office of Hon. Stephen Kamper MP, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism and Minister for Sport providing Minister Kamper's proposed amendments to the witness list for PC4 Budget Estimates hearing for his portfolios, 28 August 2024
- 2 August 2024 – Further email from Tina Flakas, office of Hon. Stephen Kamper MP, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism and Minister for Sport providing further detail about Minister Kamper's proposed amendments to the witness list for PC4 Budget Estimates hearing for his portfolios, 28 August 2024
- 7 August 2024 – Letter from the Hon Sam Farraway MLC, to Chair, requesting that the committee hold hearings in Wellington and Mudgee as part of the inquiry into Renewable Energy Zones
- 9 August 2024 – Email from Jessica Malnersic, office of Hon. Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Western New South Wales providing the Minister's proposed amendments to the witness list for the PC4 Budget Estimates hearing for her portfolios, 27 August 2024
- 12 August 2024 – Email from Phillipa Gately, Office of the Secretary, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) advising that Ms Kiersten Fishburn, Secretary, DPHI seeks leave from Budget Estimates hearing for Minister Kamper's portfolios on 28 August 2024 from 3.20 pm to 4.45 pm
- 15 August 2024 – Email from Jessica Malnersic, office of Hon. Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Western New South Wales providing a further proposed amendment of the Minister to the witness list for the PC4 Budget Estimates hearing for her portfolios, 27 August 2024
- 20 August 2024 – Email from Jessica Malnersic, office of Hon. Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Western New South Wales providing the Minister's further feedback on the witness list for the PC4 Budget Estimates hearing for her portfolios, 27 August 2024.

Sent

- 2 August 2024 – Email to Hon Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Western New South Wales inviting her to appear at PC4 Budget Estimates hearing for the Minister's portfolios and attaching witness list agreed to by the committee
- 2 August 2024 – Email to Hon Stephen Kamper MP, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism and Minister for Sport, inviting him to appear at PC4 Budget Estimates hearings for the Minister's portfolios, 28 August 2024, and attaching witness list agreed to by the committee
- 19 August 2024 – Email to Hon. Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, Minister for Western New South Wales advising that committee would like to insist on the appearance of Dr Jacqueline Tracey and Ms Harriet Whyte before PC4 Budget Estimates hearing for Minister Moriarty's portfolios, 27 August 2024.

4. Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2024-2025

4.1 Order of examination of portfolios

The committee noted that under the Budget Estimates 2024-2025 resolution:

(a) each portfolio, except The Legislature is to be examined concurrently by opposition and crossbench members only from 9.15 am to 10.45 am, 11.15 am to 12.45 pm, 2.00 pm to 3.30 pm and 3.45 pm to 5.15 pm, and, if required, by Government members only from 10.45 am to 11.00 am, 12.45 pm to 1.00 pm, and 5.15 pm to 5.30 pm.

4.2 Sequence of questions

The committee to noted that under the Budget Estimates 2024-2025 resolution, unless the committee decides otherwise, the sequence of questions to be asked at the hearing for the portfolios of Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales is to alternate between crossbench and opposition members, in that order, with equal time allocated to each.

4.3 Public hearing - Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales (Moriarty)

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted.

The Hon Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales was admitted.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding parliamentary privilege and other matters. The Chair noted that Members of Parliament swear an oath to their office, and therefore do not need to be sworn prior to giving evidence before a committee.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Steve Orr, Secretary, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Mr James Bolton, Deputy Secretary Regional Development & Delivery, Chief Executive Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Ms Rachel Connell, Deputy Secretary, Agriculture and Biosecurity, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Mr Sean Sloan, Deputy Secretary, Fisheries and Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Mr Rob Kelly, Executive Director Regional Delivery, Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Dr Adam Tyndall, Executive Director, Strategy, Media and Ministerial Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Dr Lisa Szabo, Acting Executive Director, Biosecurity and Food Safety, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Mr David McPherson, Executive Director, Forestry and Land Reform, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Dr Kim Filmer, Chief Animal Welfare Officer, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Mr Anshul Chaudhary, Chief Executive Officer, Forestry Corporation of NSW
- Ms Kate Lorimer-Ward, Chief Executive Officer, Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

The Chair declared the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales open for examination.

Mr Farraway tabled the following documents:

- Media article by James O'Doherty entitled "Border position under scrutiny: Top Not given plum role", undated, together with X (formerly Twitter) posts of the Hon Tara Moriarty MLC, dated 5 August 2023
- LinkedIn experience extraction for Dr Marion Healy PSM, undated.

The Chair left the meeting.

In the absence of the Chair, the Deputy Chair took the Chair for the purposes of the meeting.

Ms Hurst tabled the following document:

- Eight photographs of dogs in captivity.

The Chair re-joined the meeting and took the Chair.

The Minister withdrew at 12.48 pm.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined (2.00 pm):

- Mr Peter Turnell, Acting Executive Director, Fisheries, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Ms Kate Meagher, Deputy Secretary Community Engagement Group, Premier's Department
- Dr Jacqueline Tracey, Executive Director Policy, Local Land Services, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (*via videoconference*)
- Ms Harriet Whyte, Executive Director, Regional Programs and Partnerships, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 5.24 pm. The public and the media withdrew.

4.4 Tabled documents

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That the committee accept and publish the following documents tabled during the public hearing:

- Media article by James O'Doherty entitled "Border position under scrutiny: Top Not given plum role", undated, together with X (formerly Twitter) posts of the Hon Tara Moriarty MLC, dated 5 August 2023, tabled by Mr Farraway
- LinkedIn experience extraction for Dr Marion Healy PSM, undated, tabled by Mr Farraway
- Eight photographs of dogs in captivity, tabled by Ms Hurst.

5. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 5.26 pm, until Wednesday 28 August 2024, 9.00 am, Jubilee Room, Parliament House, Budget Estimates 2024-2025 – Small Business, Lands and Property, Multiculturalism, Sport (public hearing).

Emma Rogerson
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 33
Friday 21 March 2025
Portfolio Committee 4 – Regional NSW
Room 1136, Parliament House, Sydney, 9.32 am

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Ms Hurst, *Deputy Chair*
Mr Barrett (via videoconference)
Mr Donnelly
Mrs MacDonald (from 9.37 am until 9.40 am and from 9.41 am)
Mr Murphy
Mr Primrose

2. Apologies

Ms Boyd (participating)

3. Previous minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That draft minutes no. 30 be confirmed.

4. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 18 December 2024 – Letter from Mr Adam Dawes, General Manager, Wool Producers Australia, to the committee, clarifying his evidence from the public hearing on 18 December 2025 for the inquiry into the impact of the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports on New South Wales
- 27 January 2025 – Correspondence from Mr Nick Grant via the submission portal, inquiring about local wind turbines applications for the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional New South Wales
- 14 February 2025 – Email from Ms Ewa Meyer, Convenor, Hunter Region Branch, Renew, requesting to redact parts of their submission for the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional New South Wales.

The committee noted that it resolved via email to:

- publish the letter from Mr Adam Dawes, General Manager, Wool Producers Australia, to the committee, clarifying his evidence from the public hearing on 18 December 2025 for the inquiry into the impact of the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports on New South Wales, received 18 December 2024
- insert footnotes at the relevant points in the transcript noting that correspondence clarifying the evidence had been received and providing a hyperlink to the published correspondence.

5. Inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional New South Wales

5.1 Public submissions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Murphy: That the committee authorise the publication of submission nos. 4-5, 7-8a, 10-18, 20-50, 52-58, 60-71, 73, 75, 77, 80-83, 85-87, 89-93, 95, 97-98, 105, 107-112, 114-118, 121-128, 132, 134-139.

5.2 Partially confidential submissions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That the committee keep the following information confidential, as per the request of the author: names and/or identifying and sensitive information in submissions nos. 2-3, 6, 9, 72, 74, 76, 78-79, 84, 96, 99, 100, 102-104, 106, 113, 119-120, 129-130, 133.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly:

- That the committee authorise the publication of submission nos. 51 and 59, with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information which are to remain confidential, as per the request of the author.
- That the committee authorise the publication of submission no. 94, with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information which are to remain confidential, as per the recommendation of the secretariat.

5.3 Confidential submissions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Murphy: That the committee keep submission nos. 1, 19, 88, 101 and 131 confidential, as per the request of the author.

6. Inquiry into the impact of the phase-out of Australian live sheep exports by sea on New South Wales

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7. Next meeting

The committee adjourned at 10.02 am, until Tuesday 13 May 2025.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 34
Tuesday 13 May 2025
Portfolio Committee 4 – Regional NSW
Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, 8:53 am

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Ms Hurst, *Deputy Chair* (via videoconference)
Ms Boyd (participating) (via videoconference)
Mr Lawrence substituting for Mr Primrose from 9.00 am to 10.30 am
Mrs MacDonald
Mrs Mitchell from 8.57 am
Mr Murphy
Mr Primrose from 11.30 am

2. Apologies

Mr Donnelly

3. Previous minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Murphy: That draft minutes no. 33 be confirmed.

4. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 8 August 2024 – Email from the Office of Ms Abigail Boyd nominating Ms Abigail Boyd as a participating member on the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales
- August 2024 (with additional batches received in October and November 2024) – postal letters from various individuals addressed to the Hon. Paul Scully, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces regarding their objection to the New England REZ Transmission Project
- 27 March 2025 – Email from Mr Michael Holz, on behalf of the Singleton Solar Standoff Group, to the Chair offering their assistance if the committee visits the Hunter region for the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales
- 31 March 2025 – Email from Vicki and Rene Wouters to the Chair, various government organisations and the media, stating that Ausgrid's submission to the inquiry into the

impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales was incorrect and misleading
- 4 April 2025 – Email from Vicki and Rene Wouters to the committee requesting to meet to discuss the Hunter Central Coast REZ upgrades
- 29 April 2025 – Email from Ms Lisa Penson, Economic Development Coordinator, Mid-Western Regional Council declining the invitation to appear at the Dubbo hearing
- 30 April 2025 – Email from Mr Adam Kay, Chief Executive Officer, Cotton Australia declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on 13 May 2025 as key staff are on leave, and requesting to appear at a later hearing
- 1 May 2025 – Email from Ms Lisa Penson, Economic Development Coordinator, Mid-Western Regional Council accepting the invitation to appear at the Dubbo hearing
- 5 May 2025 – Email from Mr Peter Flowers, Head of Communications and External Affairs, APAC, Lightsource BP, declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Dubbo on 16 May 2025
- 6 May 2025 – Email from Ms Anne Jones, landowner, declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Dubbo on 16 May 2025
- 7 May 2025 – Email from Mr Adam Marshall, Senior Government Relations, Origin Energy declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Dubbo on 16 May 2025.

Sent
- 30 April 2025 – Email from the secretariat to Ms Lisa Penson, Economic Development Coordinator, Mid-Western Regional Council requesting Council to reconsider their decision to attend the Dubbo hearing.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs MacDonald:

- That Ms Boyd as a participating member for the duration of the inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales be provided with copies of all committee papers and that all costs associated with her participation in the inquiry be covered by the committee.
- That the committee authorise the publication of correspondence from various individuals addressed to the Hon. Paul Scully, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces regarding their objection to the New England REZ Transmission Project as one document, dated August 2024, with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information.

5. Inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

5.1 Public submissions

The committee noted that the following submission was published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: submission no. 140.

5.2 Inquiry timeline

The committee noted that, following the receipt of submissions, the committee has so far agreed via email to hold the following committee activities:

- 13 May – Sydney hearing
- 15 and 16 May – Regional visit to the Central West Orana region including site visits and a regional hearing
- 16 and 17 July – regional visit (location tbc).

5.3 Questionnaire summary

The committee noted that a summary report of the online questionnaire was published on the website under the authorisation of the resolution establishing the inquiry.

5.4 Supplementary questions

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs MacDonald: That members lodge supplementary questions with the committee clerk within five business days after receiving the transcript of 13 May hearing.

5.5 Public hearing

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs MacDonald: that the allocation of question to be asked at the hearing be left in the hands of the chair.

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted at 9.03 am.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings and other matters.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Liam Ryan, Advising Executive Director, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Mr Ash Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, Energy Corporation of NSW
- Mr Clay Preshaw, Executive Director, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- Mr Matt Riley, Director, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- Mr Anthony Hayes, Head of Regional Integration, Planning, Integration and Passenger, Transport for NSW
- Ms Suzie Matthews, Executive Director, Skills and Workforce Programs, NSW Department of Education
- Mr James Bolton, Deputy Secretary, Regional Development and Delivery, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Nevenka Codevelle, Executive General Manager, AEMO Services
- Ms Melanie Koerner, General Manager – System Planning, Reporting & REZ Authorisation, AEMO Services
- Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (via videoconference)
- Ms Stephanie Saill, Head of Energy Transition, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (via videoconference).

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Meg McDonald, Interim Chair, Net Zero Commission
- Dr Will Rayward-Smith, Executive Director, Net Zero Commission
- Ms Alison Stone, NSW Agriculture Commissioner.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Dr Richard Parsons, Social Researcher.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Ian Barry, Landowner
- Ms Kathy Morris, Landowner
- Mr Ben Turner, Landowner.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Cr Claire Pontin, Vice President Regional/Rural, Local Government NSW (via videoconference)
- Mr David Reynolds, Chief Executive, Local Government NSW (via videoconference).

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Marilyne Crestias, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Clean Energy Investor Group
- Dr Brad Smith, Policy and Advocacy Director, Nature Conservation Council NSW
- Ms Eve Altman, Clean Energy Campaigner, Nature Conservation Council NSW
- Ms Lu Allan, Advocacy Director, RE-Alliance.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Xavier Martin, President NSW Farmers
- Ms Rhiannon Heath, Policy Adviser, Environment, NSW Farmers.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Leah Tucker, Senior Policy Manager, Energy and Infrastructure, Business NSW
- Mr Bob Hawes, CEO, Business Hunter, Business NSW
- Mr Andrew Abbey, Policy Director, NSW Minerals Council.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 5.32 pm. The public and the media withdrew.

6. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 5.33 pm, until Thursday 15 May, 2025, 7.35am, Sydney Domestic Airport departure gate.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 35
Thursday, 15 May 2025
Portfolio Committee 4 – Regional NSW
Sydney Domestic Airport, 7.35 am, Thursday 15 May 2025

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak
Mrs MacDonald
Mrs Mitchell

Mr Primrose

2. Apologies

Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr, Murphy, Ms Boyd (participating)

3. Inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones in rural and regional industries and communities in New South Wales

3.1 Site visits – Central West Orana region

The committee attended Nigel Robert's property and was met by:

- Nigel & Emma Roberts, landowner.

Mr and Mrs Roberts gave a presentation on their property.

The committee conducted a tour of Mr and Mrs Robert's property, accompanied by Mr and Mrs Roberts.

The committee attended James and Amanda Bowman's property and was met by:

- James Bowman, landowner.
- Amanda Bowman, landowner.
- Kate Bowman, landowner.
- Jim Berry, farm manager.
- Emma Bowman, relative.

Mrs Amanda Bowman gave a presentation on their property.

The committee attended ACEREZ's site near Merotherie Road and was met by:

- Steve Masters, CEO, ACEREZ
- Robert Armstrong, Operations Director, ACEREZ
- Miranda Wood, Director Communications and Stakeholder Engagement, ACEREZ
- Grant Andersen, ACJV D&C Project Director, ACEREZ
- Tim Smith, ACJV D&C Project Manager, ACEREZ
- Brett Macauley, ACJV D&C Superintendent, ACEREZ
- Amer Hussein, Central-West Orana REZ Community and Place Director, EnergyCo

Mr Smith gave a presentation on the ACEREZ site.

The committee conducted a tour of the ACEREZ site, accompanied by Mr Masters, Mr Amstrong, Ms Wood, Mr Andersen, Mr Smith, Mr McCauley and Mr Hussein.

4. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 5.30 pm until Friday, 16 May 2025.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 36
Friday, 16 May 2025
Portfolio Committee 4 – Regional NSW
Dubbo Regional Council Chambers, corner of Church and Darling Streets, Dubbo, 9.15 am

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Ms Hurst, *Deputy Chair* (via videoconference)
Mrs MacDonald
Mrs Mitchell
Mr Murphy (via videoconference)
Mr Primrose

2. Apologies

Mr Donnelly, Ms Boyd (participating)

3. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 8 May 2025 – Email from Mr Peter Flowers, Head of Communication and External Affairs, APAC, Lightsource BP to secretariat, declining to host a site visit as part of the committee's visit in the Central West Orana region
- 9 May 2025 – Email from Ms Lily Habib, Project Director, Pacific Partnerships Pty Ltd, declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Dubbo on 16 May 2025.

4. Inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones in rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

4.1 Public hearing

Sequence of questions

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the allocation of questions to be asked at the hearing be left in the hands of the Chair.

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted at 9.29 am.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings and other matters.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Murray Wood Chief Executive Officer, Dubbo Regional Council
- Mr Steven Jennings Director, Development and Environment, Dubbo Regional Council
- Mr Brad Cam General Manager, Midwestern Regional Council
- Mr Lindsay Mason General Manager, Warrumbungle Council
- Adjunct Prof Warwick Giblin FEIANZ, FRSN, Environmental Consultant to Warrumbungle Council.

Mr Cam tendered the following documents:

- Golden Highway Road Corridor Business Case, Connecting Orana – Hunter and Beyond, March 2024
- Map of Proposed State Significant Development prepared by Mid-Western Regional Council, March 2025
- Document titled 'EnergyCo Community and Employment Benefit Program'.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Grant Piper, AASM, DFSM, CWO REZist
- Mrs Annette Piper, Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance

- Mr Terry Conn, Landowner
- Mrs Margaret Conn, Landowner.

Mrs Conn tendered the following document:

- Transcript of Meeting, re Valley of the Winds Wind Farm (SSD-10461) - EnergyCo & DPHI (Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure) Meeting, Independent Planning Commission, 16 April 2025.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Emma Bowman, Landowner
- Ms Sally Edwards, Landowner
- Mr Nigel Roberts, Landowner.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mrs Jane Hegarty Chair, Cassilis District Development Group
- Mrs Linda Gant, Committee member, Cassilis District Development Group
- Mr James Matthews, Executive Committee, Merriwa Cassilis Alliance
- Mr James Armstrong, Owner, Cassilis Park Merino Stud.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Mr Peter Rothwell Director, VRA Rescue.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Steve Masters CEO, ACEREZ
- Mr Robert Armstrong, Operations Director, ACEREZ
- Mr Bart Sykes, Acting Head of Community and Regional Development, Squadron Energy.

Mr Sykes tendered the following document:

- Farm Insurance and Energy Infrastructure, Insurance Council of Australia, 14 May 2024.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Stuart Hackney, Landowner
- Ms Sally Dent, Member, Three Rivers Landcare -
- Mr David Seis, Landowner and Member, Three Rivers Landcare.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 4.08 pm. The public and the media withdrew.

Tendered documents

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee accept the following documents tendered during the public hearing:

- Golden Highway Road Corridor Business Case, Connecting Orana – Hunter and Beyond, March 2024

- Map of Proposed State Significant Development prepared by Mid-Western Regional Council, March 2025
- Document titled 'EnergyCo Community and Employment Benefit Program'
- Transcript of Meeting, re Valley of the Winds Wind Farm (SSD-10461) - EnergyCo & DPHI (Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure) Meeting, Independent Planning Commission, 16 April 2025
- Farm Insurance and Energy Infrastructure, Insurance Council of Australia, 14 May 2024.

5. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 4.09 pm until Wednesday, 16 July 2025.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 39
Wednesday, 16 July 2025
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW
T3 Departure Lounge, Sydney Domestic Airport, 11.00 am

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Mrs Mitchell (from 2.50 pm)
Mr Murphy
Ms Munro (substituting for Mrs MacDonald)
Mr Primrose

2. Apologies

Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Ms Boyd (participating)

3. Inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones in rural and regional industries and communities in New South Wales

3.1 Site visits – New England region

The committee attended ACEN Australia's New England Solar Farm in Uralla and was met by:

- Mr Killian Wentrup, Head of Development
- Ms Sarah Donnan, NES Project Director in Construction and Engineering
- Mr Richard de Bruin, Site Manager – New England Solar
- Ms Robyn Doyle, WHS Advisor, Heritage and Grazing Liaison
- Mr Scott Green, Community Engagement and Communications Specialist – New England.

The committee conducted a tour of the ACEN site, accompanied by Mr Wentrup, Ms Donnan, Mr de Bruin, Ms Doyle and Mr Green.

The committee attended the properties of Dr John Peatfield and Mr Peter Dawson, off Thunderbolts Way, Uralla and was met by:

- Dr John Peatfield
- Mr Peter Dawson
- Mr Graham Heagney

- and Ms Kim Heagney.

Dr Peatfield and Mr Dawson gave a presentation on their property.

4. Adjournment
The committee adjourned at 5.45 pm until Thursday, 17 July 2025.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 40
Thursday, 17 July 2025
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW
Auditorium, Armidale Bowling Club, 92-96 Dumaresq Street Armidale, 8.50 am

1. Members present
Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Mrs Mitchell
Ms Munro (substituting for Mrs MacDonald)
Mr Murphy
Mr Primrose

2. Apologies
Mr Donnelly, Ms Boyd (participating)

3. Previous minutes
Resolved, on the motion of Mr Murphy: That draft minutes no. 34, 35, 36 be confirmed.

4. Correspondence
The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 11 May 2025 – Email from Mr Aaron Smith, advising that they can provide their negative experience with a renewable energy project to the committee
- 14 May 2025 – Email from Mr Michael Holz, on behalf of the Singleton Solar Standoff Group, to the Chair offering their assistance if the committee visits the Hunter region
- 17 May 2025 – Email from Mrs Amanda Bowman to the committee attaching her presentation to the committee during their site visit at her property
- 19 May 2025 – Email from Ms Kathy Morris to Mr Chris Dorahy, Research Advisor to the Hon. Mark Banasiak regarding her opening statement at the hearing on 13 May 2025
- 20 May 2025 – Email from Ms Sally Dent, Committee Member, Three Rivers Landcare, to the committee with photographs of the Solartop solar farm near Wellington
- 22 May 2025 – Email from Deyi Wu, Whip's Adviser, Office of the Hon. Chris Rath MLC, advising that the Hon. Jacqui Munro will substitute for Mrs MacDonald during 16 – 17 July regional visits
- 22 May 2025 – Letter from Mr Damien Timbs, Voice for Walcha, to the Chair offering their assistance to the committee's visit in the New England region
- 30 May 2025 – Letter from Mr Steve Masters, ACEREZ, CEO to the Chair responding to the Chair's letter regarding the committee's site visit at Merotherie Road and thanking the committee for the opportunity to appear at the public hearing on 16 May 2025

- 3 June 2025 – Email from Mr Mark Fogarty, ReD4NE, offering their assistance to the committee's visit in the New England region
- 8 June 2025 – Email from Mrs Margaret Conn, landowner, providing information supplementary to her appearance at the hearing on 16 May 2025
- 8 June 2025 – Email from Mr Terry Conn, landowner, providing information supplementary to his appearance at the hearing on 16 May 2025
- 12 June 2025 – Email from Ms Claudia Hodge, Community Power Agency, to the secretariat advising that they are unable to attend the hearing on 17 July 2025 and requests to attend a future hearing
- 16 June 2025 – Email from Ms Lara Lavers, Corporate Affairs and Stakeholder Functions, ACEN Australia, declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on 17 July 2025 and agreeing to host a site visit for the committee on Wednesday 16 July 2025
- 17 June 2025 – Letter from Mr Anthony Hayes, Head of Regional Integration, Transport for NSW to the committee, clarifying his evidence from the public hearing on 13 May 2025
- 19 June 2025 – Email from Mr Chris Betts, General Manager, Betts Transport to the secretariat advising that they are unable to attend the hearing on 17 July 2025 and requesting to attend a future hearing
- 24 June 2025 – Email from Mr Ryan Burton-Rae, Electorate Officer, Office of the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, advising that Mr Joyce will attend the Armidale hearing alongside Mr Aidan Morrison, Director, Energy Program, Centre for Independent Studies
- 25 June 2025 – Email from Mr Jamie Chivers, Managing Director, Someva Renewables to the secretariat advising that they are unable to attend the hearing on 17 July 2025 and requests to attend a future hearing
- 26 June 2025 – Email from Ms Caitlin Horan, Business & Operations Support, ACE Power declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on 17 July 2025
- 26 June 2025 – Letter from Mr Liam Ryan, Advising Executive Director, Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, clarifying his evidence from the public hearing on 13 May 2025
- 2 July 2025 – Email from Mr John Peatfield to the secretariat, declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on 17 July
- 4 July 2025 – Email from Mr Aidan Morrison, Director, Energy Program, Centre for Independent Studies, declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on 17 July 2025 and requesting to appear at a future Sydney hearing
- 4 July 2025 – Email from Dr Siri Gamage, Regional transport advocate to secretariat presenting a preliminary business case for the reinstatement of the Great Northern Railway Line: Armidale to Queensland Border.

Sent

- 22 May 2025 – Letter from the Chair to Mr and Mrs Roberts thanking them for hosting the committee at their property during the site visit on 16 May 2025
- 22 May 2025 – Letter from the Chair to Mrs Amanda Bowman thanking them for hosting the committee at their property during the site visit on 16 May 2025
- 22 May 2025 – Letter from the Chair to Mr Steve Masters, CEO, ACEREZ thanking them for hosting the committee at ACEREZ Merothorie Road site during the site visit on 16 May 2025.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Primrose: That the committee:

- authorise the publication of the following correspondence:
    - Ms Kathy Morris to Mr Chris Dorahy, Research Advisor to the Hon. Mark Banasiak regarding her opening statement, dated 19 May 2025

    - Mrs Margaret Conn, landowner, providing information supplementary to her appearance at the hearing on 16 May 2025, dated 8 June 2025
    - Mr Terry Conn, landowner, providing information supplementary to his appearance at the hearing on 16 May 2025, dated 8 June 2025.
- authorise the publication of the following correspondence with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information:
    - Mrs Amanda Bowman in relation to the committee's site visit at her property on 15 May 2025, dated 9 June 2025.
- authorise the publication of the following correspondence and insert footnotes at the relevant points in the transcript noting that correspondence clarifying the evidence had been received and providing a hyperlink to the published correspondence:
    - Mr Anthony Hayes, Head of Regional Integration, Transport for NSW to the committee, clarifying his evidence from the public hearing on 13 May 2025, dated 17 June 2025
    - Mr Liam Ryan, Advising Executive Director, Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to the committee, clarifying his evidence from the public hearing on 13 May 2025, dated 26 June 2025.
- keep the email from Mr John Peatfield of 2 July 2025 declining to appear as a witness confidential as it contains sensitive information.

5. Inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

5.1 Submissions

The committee noted that the following submission was published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: submission no. 141, 142, 143, 144, 146, 147.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell, that the committee authorise the publication of submission no. 149 and 151.

5.2 Confidential submissions

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Primrose, that submission no. 145 be kept confidential.

5.3 Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions

The following answers to questions on notice were published under the resolution appointing the committee:

- Answers to supplementary questions from Mr Ian Barry, landowner, received on 8 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Jane Hegarty, Chair, Cassilis District Development Group, received on 26 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Kathy Morris, landowner, received on 16 June 2025
- Answers to answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Mr Lindsay Mason, General Manager, Warrumbungle Shire Council, received on 13 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Mr Brad Cam, General Manager, Mid-Western Regional Council, received on 16 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Marilyn Crestias, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Clean Energy Investor Group, received on 17 June 2025
- Answers to questions on notice and answers to supplementary questions from Dr Will Rayward-Smith, Executive Director, Net Zero Commission, received on 19 June 2025

- Answers to questions on notice and answers to supplementary questions from Mayor Phyllis Miller OAM, President, Local Government NSW, received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman & Chief Executive Officer, Energy & Water Ombudsman received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Mr Nigel Roberts, landowner, received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Mr James Matthews, Executive Committee Member, Merriwa Cassilis Alliance, received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Rhiannon Heath, Environmental Policy Officer, NSW Farmers received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Sally Edwards, Past community representative/community development coordinator received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to question on notice and supplementary questions from Mr Daniel Newlan, EGM Corporate Relations and Community, for and behalf of Squadron Energy received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Alison Stone, Agriculture Commissioner, received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to question on notice and supplementary questions from Mr Steve Masters, CEO ACEREZ received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Emma Bowman, landowner received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to question on notice from Mr Pete Rothwell, Director, VRA Rescue, received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Mrs Annette Piper, Secretary, Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Mr Grant Piper, Secretary, Chair, CWO REZist, received on 19 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Suzie Matthews, Executive Director Skills and Workforce Programs, NSW Department of Education, received 27 June 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Mr Andrew Abbey, Policy Director, NSW Minerals Council received on 2 July 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Ms Eve Altman, Clean Energy Campaigner, Nature Conservation Council, received on 3 July 2025
- Answers to questions taken on notice and responses to supplementary questions, from NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and Energy Corporation of NSW received on 3 July 2025
- Answers to supplementary questions from Mr Steven Jennings, Director Development and Environment, Dubbo Regional Council, received on 3 July 2025
- Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure received 3 July 2025.

The committee noted that some post-hearing responses provided extensive attachments and that the secretariat has yet to properly reviewed the attachments for sensitive or identifying material, or adverse mention. As agreed to by the committee by email, the attachments remain confidential until the secretariat has reviewed them. The secretariat will advise the committee once they are ready for publication in due course. The attachments are available for members upon request.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee authorise the publication of the following correspondence with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information:

- Answers to supplementary questions from Mr Grant Piper, Secretary, Chair, CWO REZist, received on 19 June 2025.

5.4 Public hearing

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the allocation of questions to be asked at the hearing be left in the hands of the Chair.

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted at 9.00 am.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings and other matters.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Cr Sam Coupland, Mayor, Armidale Regional Council
- Mr Stephen Wood, Senior Strategic Planner, Armidale Regional Council
- Mr James Pryor, Senior Strategic Planner, Armidale Regional Council
- Cr Robert Bell, Mayor, Uralla Shire Council
- Ms Emily Sims, Planning Officer – Strategic, Uralla Shire Council.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Mr Jordan Kirk, Renewable Energy Project Co-ordinator, Tamworth Regional Council
- Mr Sam Lobsey, Manager, Development Division, Liveable Communities, Tamworth Regional Council
- Cr Eric Noakes, Mayor, Walcha Council
- Mr Alan Butler, Acting General Manager, Walcha Council.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness were sworn and examined:
- The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, Member for New England, Parliament of Australia.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Ms Annette Kilarr, Convenor, Climate Action Armidale of Sustainable Living Armidale
- Dr Sanaz Alian, Renewable Energy, Education, Advocacy and Community Health (REEACH) group of Sustainable Living Armidale.

Dr Alian tendered the following document:
- 'Renewable Energy Zones and Engagement', research project proposal as funded by the University of New England Internal Funding Scheme for Early Career Researchers.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Mr Cameron Greig, Member, Voice for Walcha
- Mr Damien Timbs, Member, Voice for Walcha
- Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance.

Mr White tendered the following document:
- 'Submission notes from the presentations made by Cameron Greig and Damien Timbs – Voice for Walcha', Armidale, dated 17 July 2025.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Mr Peter Dawson, Property owner, Salisbury Plains

- Mrs Karen Zirkler, Regenerative Agriculture Grazier, Kentucky district
- Mrs Selena Sylvester, Hills of Gold Preservation Inc.

Mrs Sylvester tendered the following document:
- Hills of Gold Preservation Inc supporting document, dated 17 July 2025.

Mrs Zirkler tendered the following documents:
- Presentation titled 'Living in an EIS environment', dated 31 August 2022
- Presentation to the NSW IPC Thunderbolt Wind Farm proposal by Neoen, dated March 2024
- Submission to the Independent Planning Commission on Thunderbold Wind Farm SSD-10807896, dated 12 April 2024.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Mr Mark Fogarty, Director, Bushtricity – ReD4NE
- Ms Susan Newey, Chair, ReD4NE
- Mr Antony (Tony) Menkens,
- Mr Stuart Grills, Property owner.

Mr Fogarty tendered the following documents:
- Document titled 'The Cumulative Effect', including a map of the New England region and a list of in progress and proposed renewable projects in the region as at 16 July 2025
- Document titled 'Is the New England REZ Broken?' by ReD4NE.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 3.05 pm. The public and the media withdrew.

Tendered documents

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Murphy:
- That the committee accept and publish the following documents tendered during the public hearing:
    - 'Renewable Energy Zones and Engagement', research project proposal as funded by the University of New England Internal Funding Scheme for Early Career Researchers
    - 'Submission notes from the presentations made by Cameron Greig and Damien Timbs – Voice for Walcha', Armidale, dated 17 July 2025
    - Hills of Gold Preservation Inc supporting document, dated 17 July 2025
    - Presentation titled 'Living in an EIS environment', dated 31 August 2022
    - Presentation to the NSW IPC Thunderbolt Wind Farm proposal by Neoen, dated March 2024
    - Document titled 'The Cumulative Effect', including a map of the New England region and a list of in progress and proposed renewable projects in the region as at 16 July 2025
    - Document titled 'Is the New England REZ Broken?' by ReD4NE.
- The committee to accept and publish the following documents tendered during the public hearing with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information:
    - Submission to the Independent Planning Commission on Thunderbolt Wind Farm SSD-10807896, dated 12 April 2024.

6. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 3.10 pm until Friday, 15 August 2025.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 42
Friday 15 August 2025
Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW
Room 1043, Parliament House Sydney at 9.02 am

1. Members present
Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Ms Hurst, *Deputy Chair*
Mr Donnelly
Mrs MacDonald
Mrs Mitchell
Mr Murphy
Mr Primrose (via videoconference)

2. Previous minutes
Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell that draft minutes 39 and 40 be confirmed.

3. Correspondence
The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received:

- 19 June 2025 – Email from Ms Emma Bowman providing additional information regarding her submission, for the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities in New South Wales
- 16 July 2025 – Email from Mr Mark Robinson, Engineering Manager, MRC Strategies & Wild River Engineering, advising that he is unable to attend the hearing on 17 July 2025 due to flight delays, for the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities in New South Wales
- 11 August 2025 – Email from Mr Edward McDougall, Office of the Hon Steve Kamper MP, responding to the committee's request that Mr Michael Tidball, Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice, attend the Budget Estimates 2025-2026 Lands and Property, Multiculturalism, Sports, Jobs and Tourism hearing on 20 August 2025.

Sent:

- 18 July 2025 – Letter from the Chair to Mr Killian Wentrup, ACEN Australia thanking them for hosting the committee at the New England Solar Farm during the site visit on 16 July 2025, for the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities in New South Wales
- 18 July 2025 – Letter from the Chair to Dr John Peatfield thanking them for hosting the committee at their property during the site visit on 16 July 2025, for the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities in New South Wales
- 18 July 2025 – Letter from the Chair to Mr Peter Dawson thanking them for hosting the committee during the site visit on 16 July 2025, for the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities in New South Wales
- 11 August 2025 – Email to Mr Edward McDougall, Office of the Hon Steve Kamper MP, advising that the committee has considered the Minister's proposed amendments to the

witness list for the Budget Estimates 2025-2026 Lands and Property, Multiculturalism, Sports, Jobs and Tourism hearing on 20 August 2025 and maintains its request that Mr Michael Tidball, Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice, appear at the hearing.

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Hurst: That the committee authorise the publication of the email from Ms Emma Bowman providing additional information regarding her submission, dated 18 June 2025, with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information.

4. Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2025-2026

4.1 Witness list – Lands and Property, Multiculturalism, Sports, Jobs and Tourism

The committee considered the appearance of Mr Michael Tidball, Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice at the Lands and Property, Multiculturalism, Sports, Jobs and Tourism (Kamper) hearing on 20 August 2025.

Mrs Mitchell moved: That Mr Michael Tidball, Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice, be required to appear at the Lands and Property, Multiculturalism, Sports, Jobs and Tourism hearing on 20 August 2025.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Noes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

5. Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

5.1 Public submissions

The committee noted that the following submissions were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: submission nos 148, 150, 152, 153.

5.2 Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions

The committee noted that the following answers to questions on notice were published under the resolution appointing the committee:

- answers to supplementary questions from Ms Leah Tucker, Senior Policy Manager, Energy and Infrastructure, Business NSW received on 10 July 2025
- answers to supplementary questions from Ms Lu Allen, Advocacy Director, Re-Alliance, received on 14 July 2025
- answers to supplementary questions from Mr Cameron Greig, Voice for Walcha received on 30 July 2025.

5.3 Attachments to supplementary questions

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee authorise the publication of the following attachments to answers to supplementary questions

- Mr Brad Cam, General Manager Mid-Western Regional Council, received 16 June 2025
- Mrs Annette Piper, Chair, Secretary, Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance, received 19 June 2025
- Ms Sally Edwards, past community representative / community development coordinator, received 19 June 2025.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee authorise the publication of the following attachments to supplementary questions with the exception of identifying/or sensitive material:

- Mr Grant Piper, Chair, CWO REZist, received 19 and 24 June 2025.

5.4 Inquiry timeline

The committee noted that the committee agreed via email to conduct a regional visit on 24 and 25 September 2025 to the Hunter and Central Coast region.

5.5 Consideration of Chair's draft interim report

The Chair submitted his draft report entitled 'The impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries – First Report', which having been previously circulated, was taken as being read.

Chapter 1

Ms Hurst moved: That the following paragraph by inserted after paragraph 1.74:

'Economic opportunities in response to environmental challenges

The Nature Conservation Council gave evidence about the economic, social and other benefits of renewable energy developments:

> 'The build of renewable energy through REZs is a once in a generation opportunity to transform rural and regional communities in [New South Wales] for the better through economic community benefits, the ability to diversify industry and income streams for farmers, and increased nature restoration and protection opportunities. Climate change poses one of the biggest risks to nature, through impacts including drought, bushfires, storms, ocean acidification, sea level rise and global warming. Many plants and animals cannot adapt to the effects of climate change. [New South Wales] has 1000 plant and animal species and ecological communities that are at risk of extinction due primarily to climate change and habitat destruction … We need to build renewable energy in a timely manner to reach our emissions reductions targets, minimise the impacts of climate change on our environment, provide reliable energy for our state, and bring down energy prices to alleviate cost of living pressures.' [FOOTNOTE: Submission 34, The Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Page 3.]

Question put and passed.

Chapter 2

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.13 be amended by omitting 'Most landowners' and inserting instead 'A significant number of landowners'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.33 be amended by omitting 'many individuals and some local councils' and inserting instead 'some individuals and local councils'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Donnelly moved: That:

(a) paragraph 2.38 be amended by omitting 'Indeed, the evidence presented by these stakeholders suggests that the CWO REZ has had widespread negative ramifications for communities in the CWO region.' and inserting instead 'The committee clearly understands that there are concerns in the community about the impact of the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone'.

(b) **Finding 1** be omitted: 'That a significant proportion of the Central-West Orana community believe the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone has negatively impacted the region.' and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'**Finding 1**
That there are concerns in the community about the impact of the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.40 be amended by inserting 'however, not all projects are guaranteed to proceed.' after '31 generation projects in the CWO REZ'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.41 be omitted: 'These concerns are well-founded, considering what appears to be the NSW Government's 'hands off' approach to managing the development and implementation of the CWO REZ. The committee concurs with the inquiry participants that the NSW Government's lack of central planning for the REZ has left smaller rural and regional communities, like the Central-West Orana, facing significant cumulative impacts on local infrastructure, such as roads, and services, like health services. Moreover, this is coupled with additional pressures, such as rising rents.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.41 be amended by omitting 'These concerns are well-founded, considering what appears to be the NSW Government's 'hands off' approach to managing the development and implementation of the CWO REZ.'

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.42 be amended by omitting: 'before further projects are approved in the region. To this end, the committee recommends that the NSW Government place an urgent moratorium on further renewable energy projects in the CWO REZ until an independent cumulative impact study on the region is complete and any identified impacts have been addressed.' after 'to address any identified impacts'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.42 be amended by inserting 'urgently' before 'address any identified impact'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.42 be amended by omitting 'before further projects are approved in the region.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Donnelly moved: That Finding 2 be omitted 'That there are 31 renewable projects in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone which is well-above the ten awarded access rights by the NSW Government, leading to community concerns about the significant cumulative impacts in the region.' and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'Finding 2

That there are 31 renewable energy projects which have applied to the planning system inside the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone. Cumulative impacts are assessed in the planning system and not all projects are guaranteed to proceed, noting that this uncertainty is causing community concern'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That recommendation 1 be omitted: 'That the NSW Government place an urgent moratorium on further renewable energy projects in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone until an independent cumulative impact study on the region is complete and any identified impacts have been addressed.' and the following new recommendation be inserted instead:

'Recommendation 1

That the NSW Government continue its work to address cumulative impacts associated with renewable energy development, including by releasing reports on cumulative impacts'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Hurst moved: That Recommendation 1 be omitted: 'That the NSW Government place an urgent moratorium on further renewable energy projects in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone until an independent cumulative impact study on the region is

complete and any identified impacts have been addressed.' and the following new recommendation be inserted instead:

'**Recommendation 1**

That the NSW Government urgently conduct an independent cumulative impact study on the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone and ensure identified impacts are addressed'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.43 be amended by inserting a new sentence at the end: 'However, others such as Mr Grant Piper, Chair of CWO REZist, described constant consultation leading to community fatigue.'[FOOTNOTE: Evidence, Mr Grant Piper, Chair, CWO REZist, 16 May 2025, p 10.]

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.50 be amended by inserting 'from some community members' after 'The committee heard'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.73 be amended by omitting 'overwhelming' before 'evidence of inadequate consultation'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.73 be amended by inserting 'that there have been cases' after 'evidence'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.74 be amended by omitting 'as there is continued angst and lack of trust from the individuals, families and the wider community regarding any their engagement process.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.74 be amended by omitting 'Moreover, this lack of trust undermines' and inserting instead 'A lack of trust can undermine'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.75 be amended by:

(a) omitting 'It is disappointing and disheartening, but not surprising, to hear' and inserting instead 'The committee notes with concern'.

(b) inserting 'some' before 'community members are experiencing'

(c) omitting 'The committee therefore recommends that EnergyCo provide mental health support to landowners who are affected the by CWO REZ.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Hurst moved: That paragraph 2.75 be amended by:

(a) omitting 'and disheartening, but not surprising'

(b) inserting 'some' before 'community members are experiencing'

(c) omitting 'often compound the poor mental health of' and inserting instead 'already increase the risk of mental health concerns for'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That Finding 3 be omitted: 'That there has been inadequate consultation between the NSW Government, renewable energy developers and the Central-West Orana community. This has had significant repercussions, including, but not limited to, impacting the mental health of community members, eroding social cohesion and undermining the social licence of renewable energy operators in the region.' and the following new finding be inserted:

'**Finding 3**

While there has been consultation with the Central-West Orana community, issues have been identified with engagement practices. A number of community members who engaged with this inquiry reported impacts to mental health and social cohesion'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Hurst moved: That Finding 4 be amended by:

(a) omitting 'real and pressing'

(b) omitting ', including the practice of agrivoltaics'

(c) omitting 'whether renewable energy development can successfully coexist with agricultural production' and inserting instead 'any impacts'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Hurst moved: That the following new paragraphs be inserted after paragraph 2.136:

'In response to concerns regarding wildlife corridors, the Nature Conservation Council gave evidence that developing regional conservation priorities for each REZ would be an effective way to ensure wildlife corridors are protected:

> 'It's a really strong impetus to develop regional conservation priorities for each REZ. If those priorities are identified, it means that developers can take them into account when they're choosing where to site their projects, which is when you can have the biggest nature impacts, reducing community impacts and so on by choosing the right site. But to choose that right site you have to know what those regional conservation priorities are, and so you have to identify where are places that would make good wildlife corridors. We strongly think that those regional conservation priorities should be identified. We think local community groups should be involved in identifying those priorities because they know their local area. [FOOTNOTE: Evidence, Dr Brad Smith, Policy and Advocacy Director, Nature Conservation Council of NSW, 13 May 2025, p 53.]'

The Nature Conservation Council further gave evidence that the best way to protect the environment is to ensure New South Wales has robust nature laws across the board:

> 'There is always a risk that any form of development can negatively impact the environment. The best way to ensure our environment is properly protected is to strengthen [New South Wales'] nature laws and reform the planning system to increase nature positive developments, as recommended in the Independent Review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. [Nature Conservation Council] has welcomed the important first step taken by the NSW Government in reforming our nature laws through the passage of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Offsets Scheme) Bill 2024, though there is still a lot more work to be done. [FOOTNOTE: Submission 34, The Nature Conservation Council of NSW, p 6.]

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That a new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.142:

> The committee heard that current support for councils includes funding for additional staff and an allocation of $11.25 million per council. [FOOTENOTE: Evidence, Mr Ash Albury, Executive Director, Planning and Communities, Energy Corporation of NSW, 13 May 2025, p 4].

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.144 be amended by omitting 'As previously mentioned, given that the NSW Government has not taken a leading role in the REZ development, we consider' and inserting instead 'The committee acknowledges'.

Question put and passed.

Mr Donnelly moved: That paragraph 2.144 be amended by omitting 'been insufficient' and inserting instead 'not met expectations'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Donnelly moved: That Finding 6 be amended by omitting: 'which have been further compounded by insufficient NSW Government support, planning and oversight.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Hurst moved: That the following new paragraph and recommendation be inserted after paragraph 2.147:

(a) In order to ensure key wildlife corridors and biodiversity are protected, the committee recommends that the NSW Government identify ecological protection and restoration priorities for each REZ and encourage developers to contribute to nature positive environmental regional outcomes.

(b) **Recommendation X**

That the NSW Government identify ecological protection and restoration priorities for each Renewable Energy Zone and encourage developers to contribute to nature positive environmental regional outcomes.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That the following new paragraph and recommendation be inserted after paragraph 2.147:

(a) The committee further recommends that the NSW Government take steps to strengthen nature laws and reform the planning system to increase nature positive developments.

(b) **Recommendation X**

That the NSW Government take steps to strengthen nature laws and reform the planning system to increase nature positive developments.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Ms Hurst.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mr Donnelly, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Question resolved in the negative.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That:

The draft report as amended be the report of the committee and that the committee present the report to the House;

The committee secretariat correct any typographical, grammatical and formatting errors prior to tabling;

The committee secretariat be authorised to update any committee comments where necessary to reflect changes to recommendations or new recommendations resolved by the committee;

Dissenting statements be provided to the secretariat within 24 hours after receipt of the draft minutes of the meeting;

The secretariat is tabling the report at Thursday, 21 August 2025;

The Chair to advise the secretariat and members if they intend to hold a press conference, and if so, the date and time.

6. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 10.08 am, until Wednesday, 20 August 2025, 9.15am, Jubilee Room, Parliament House (PC4 Budget Estimates).

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 45
Wednesday 24 September 2025
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW
Macquarie Street near security entrance, Parliament House, Sydney at 8.30 am

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak
Mr Donnelly
Mrs MacDonald
Mrs Mitchell
Mr Murphy

2. Apologies

Ms Boyd (participating)
Ms Hurst
Mr Primrose

3. Inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

3.1 Site visits

The committee attended the Waratah Super Battery Project operated by Akaysha Energy, and was met by:

- Mr Robbie Shankster, Waratah Site Manager, Akaysha Energy
- Mr Jordon Doss, Delivery Site Manager, Akaysha Energy
- Ms Jasmine Kerameas, Senior Community Engagement Manager, Akaysha Energy.

Mr Shankster and Ms Kerameas gave a presentation at the Waratah Super Battery Project site.

The committee then toured the Waratah Super Battery Project, accompanied by Mr Shankster and Mr Doss.

The committee subsequently attended the Hunter Net Zero Manufacturing Centre of Excellence, TAFE NSW Tighes Hill Campus, and was met by:

- Mr Adrian Collins, TAFE Services Manager Newcastle and Lake Macquarie
- Mr Andrew McKinnon, Head Teacher Engineering Trades, Fitting and Machining
- Mr Tim de Grauw, Teacher in Electrotechnology and Course Coordinator for TAFE NSW's Diploma of Renewable Energy Engineering.

The committee toured the Hunter Net Zero Manufacturing Centre of Excellence, TAFE NSW Tighes Hill Campus, accompanied by Mr Collins. Presentations on a summary of the courses provided to students were given by Mr McKinnon and Mr de Grauw.

The committee then attended the property of Mr Michael Holz, at Mitchell's Flat near Singleton, to learn about the potential impact of the renewable energy zone on properties in the region. The committee was met by:

- Mr Michael Holz, Resident and representing Singleton Solar Standoff community group
- Mrs Cheryl Holz, resident
- Mr Robert Martin, resident
- Mr Nigel Korff, resident.

Adjournment
The committee adjourned at 6.22 pm, until Thursday, 25 September 2025.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 46
Thursday 25 September 2025
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW
Singleton Civic Centre, Singleton at 8.46 am

1. Members present
Mr Banasiak, Chair
Ms Hurst, Deputy Chair (via videoconference)
Ms Boyd (participating) (via videoconference)
Mr Donnelly
Mrs MacDonald
Mrs Mitchell
Mr Murphy
Mr Primrose (via videoconference)

2. Previous minutes
Resolved, on the motion of Mr Murphy: That:

- page six of draft minutes no. 42 be amended to read:

  Ms Hurst moved: That Recommendation 1 be omitted: 'That the NSW Government place an urgent moratorium on further renewable energy projects in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone until an independent cumulative impact study on the

region is complete and any identified impacts have been addressed.' and the following new recommendation be inserted instead:

'Recommendation 1

That the NSW Government urgently conduct an independent cumulative impact study on the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone and ensure identified impacts are addressed'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs Mitchell.

- draft minutes no. 42, as amended, be confirmed
- the updated version of minutes no. 42 be included in the final report of the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales.

3. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received:

- 13 June 2025 – Email from ACEN Renewables to secretariat, requesting redaction of names and role titles of ACEN Australia
- 19 August 2025 – Email from Ms Kathy Morris to Chair, attaching a presentation from EnergyCo, titled 'Hunter Central Coast Regional Reference Group' dated 4 August 2025
- 9 September 2025 – Email from Ms Sharon Turkington, Unit Manager, Strategic Planning, Central Coast Council to secretariat, declining the committee's invitation to appear at the upcoming hearing in Singleton
- 10 September 2025 - Email from Mr Wesley Hain, Manager Integrated Planning, Lake Macquarie City Council to secretariat, declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Singleton scheduled on 25 September 2025
- 11 September 2025 – Email from the Lord Mayor Office, City of Newcastle to secretariat, declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Singleton scheduled on 25 September 2025
- 11 September 2025 – Email from Mr Martin Johnson, Strategic Planning, Cessnock City Council to secretariat, declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Singleton scheduled on 25 September 2025
- 11 September 2025 – Email from ACEN Renewables to the secretariat, requesting redaction of names and role titles of ACEN Australia employees
- 12 September 2025 – Email from Mr Brock Lamont, Strategy & Environment Section Manager, Port Stephens Council, declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Singleton scheduled on 25 September 2025
- 15 September 2025 – Email from Mr Chris Betts, General Manager, Betts Transport declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Singleton scheduled on 25 September 2025.

4. Inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

4.1 Correspondence from ACEN Renewables

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs MacDonald: That:

- the committee authorise the republication of submission 94, with the exception of previously redacted information as well as the names and titles of two ACEN employees, which are to remain confidential, as per the request of ACEN Renewables
- the names of the ACEN employees be redacted from the minutes.

4.2 Tendered document

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That the committee authorise the publication of the video from Mr Damien Timbs, Member, Voice for Walcha received 17 July 2025.

4.3 Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions – public

The committee noted that the following answers to questions on notice were published under the resolution appointing the committee:

- answers to supplementary questions from Mr Peter Dawson, landowner, received on 12 August 2025
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Mr Robert Bell, Mayor, Uralla Shire Council, received on 13 August 2025
- answers to supplementary questions from Mr Daniel Boyce, Chief Officer Planning and Activation, Armidale Regional Council, on behalf of Armidale Regional Council, received on 19 August 2025
- answers to supplementary questions and attachments from Ms Megan Trousdale, Secretary, Hills of Gold Preservation Inc, on behalf of Hills of Gold Preservation Inc. received on 19 August 2025
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Mr Jordan Kirk, Renewable Energy Project Coordinator, Tamworth Regional Council, received on 22 August 2025
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Ms Annette Kilarr and Dr Sanaz Alian, Climate Action and REEACH groups of Sustainable Living Armidale, received on 25 August 2025
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance received on 27 July 2025 and 6 September 2025
- answers to supplementary questions from Mr Stuart Grills, Property Owner received on 8 September 2025.

4.4 Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions – partially confidential

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee authorise the publication of answers to supplementary questions from Ms Karen Zirkler , Regenerative Agriculture Grazier, Kentucky district, received 20 August 2025 with the exception of identifying and/or sensitive information which is to remain confidential, as per the recommendation of the secretariat.

4.5 Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions – confidential

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That the committee keep the attachment to answers to supplementary questions from Mr Tim White, President, Valley Alliance received on 6 September 2025 confidential, as per the recommendation of the secretariat, as it contains sensitive information.

4.6 Inquiry timeline

The committee noted that the committee agreed via email to conduct a regional hearing on 29 October 2025 to the Illawarra region.

4.7 Public hearing

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the allocation of questions to be asked at the hearing be left in the hands of the Chair.

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted at 9.00 am.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings and other matters.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Trevor Ryan, Director, Planning and Environment, Dungog Shire Council
- Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr, General Manager, Singleton Council
- Mrs Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager, Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council
- Cr Jeff Drayton, Mayor, Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Mr Derek Finnigan, General Manager, Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Mr Ben Maddox, Coordinator, Sustainability Strategy and Education, Maitland City Council

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Timothy Jarratt, Ausgrid Group Executive Market Development & Strategy, Ausgrid
- Mr Daniel Sartor, Ausgrid Head of Major Projects, Ausgrid
- Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager, Community and Social Licence, Transgrid
- Mr Struan Wilson, Program Director – Hunter Transmission Project, Transgrid
- Mr Richard Poole, CEO, Verdant Earth Technologies
- Mr Costa Tsiolkas, General Manager, Verdant Earth Technologies.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance
- Mr Tom Edwards, Research and Policy Officer, Unions NSW (via videoconference)
- Mr Matthew Murray, Member, Newcastle Branch Committee, Maritime Union of Australia
- Mr James Miranda, Policy & Research Officer, ETU NSW & ACT Branch Electrical Trades Union.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Dr John Shiel, Member, Renew – Hunter Region Branch.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Kerry Atkins, NSW Policy Director, AMEC (Association of Mining Exploration Companies)
- Ms Paula Dell- McCumstie, NSW Policy Advisor, AMEC.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Michael Holz, Resident and representing Singleton Solar Standoff community group
- Mrs Myree Russell, Farmer/landholder.

The public hearing concluded at 3.30 pm. The public and the media withdrew.

5. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 3.31 pm until Wednesday 29 October 2025.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 47
29 October 2025
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW
Victory Room, WIN Sports and Entertainment Centre, Corner Crown and Harbour Street, Wollongong at 10.15 am

s Hurst, *Deputy Chair* (via videoconference)
Mr Donnelly
Mrs MacDonald
Mrs Mitchell
Mr Murphy (via videoconference)
Mr Primrose

6. Apologies

Ms Boyd (participating)

7. Previous minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That draft minutes no. 45 and 46 be confirmed.

8. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 16 September 2025 – Email from Mrs Myree Russell to secretariat, requesting to submit a statement to be read at the hearing scheduled on 25 September 2025 and inviting the committee to visit her property, for the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zone (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales
- 26 September 2025 – Email from the Office of Ms Abigail Boyd nominating Ms Abigail Boyd as a participating member on the 2025 inquiry into the operation of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*
- 8 October 2025 – Email from Mr David Fitzgibbon, Acting Manager City Strategy, Wollongong City Council, on behalf of Wollongong City Council, declining to appear at the hearing on 29 October 2025, for the inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales
- 9 October 2025 – Email from Professor Ty Christopher, Director, Energy Futures Network, Innovation and Commercial Research Unit, University of Wollongong, declining to appear at the hearing on 29 October 2025, for the inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales
- 9 October 2025 – Email from Ms Tania Jones, Manager – Sustainable Market Development, Green Gravity, on behalf of Green Gravity, declining to appear at the hearing on 29 October 2025, for the inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales
- 10 October 2025 – Email from Mr Jim Fraser, Environment Manager, Shellharbour City Council, on behalf of Shellharbour City Council, declining to appear at the hearing on 29

October 2025, for the inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales
- 10 October 2025 – Email from Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance to the committee, clarifying his evidence from the public hearing on 25 September 2025
- 22 October 2025 – Email from Mr Michael Donnelly, President, Animal Care Australia Inc, to the committee raising concerns about the submission timeframe for the 2025 inquiry into the operation of the approved charitable organisations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*
- 28 October 2025 – Email from Mr Frank Musumeci, Managing Director, Better Choice Fisheries, declining to appear at the hearing on 29 October 2025 for the inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales.

Sent:
- 30 September 2025 – Letter from the Chair to Mr Robbie Shankster, Site Operations Manager, Waratah Super Battery Project, Akaysha Energy, thanking Akaysha Energy for hosting the committee at the Waratah Super Battery Project on 24 September 2025
- 30 September 2025 – Letter from the Chair to Mr Adrian Collins, TAFE Services Manager Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, TAFE NSW – Newcastle, thanking TAFE NSW for hosting the committee at TAFE NSW's Tighes Hill Campus on 24 September 2025
- 30 September 2025 – Letter from the Chair to Mr Michael Holz, landowner, thanking him for hosting the committee at his property on 24 September 2025.

9. Inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

9.1 Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions

The committee noted that the following answers to questions on notice were published under the resolution appointing the committee:
- answers to supplementary questions and attachments from Ms Susan Newey, Chair, ReD4NE, received on 18 September 2025.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee authorise the publication of the answers to questions on notice provided by Ms Emma Ashton, Senior Manager Government and Stakeholder, Stakeholder Regulatory and Corporate Affairs, Transgrid, dated 23 October 2025.

9.2 Transcript clarification

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That the committee authorise the publication of the following correspondence and insert footnotes at the relevant points in the transcript dated 25 September 2025, noting that correspondence clarifying the evidence had been received and providing a hyperlink to the published correspondence:
- Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance to the committee, clarifying his evidence from the public hearing on 25 September 2025, dated 10 October 2025.

9.3 Public hearing

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs MacDonald: That the allocation of questions to be asked at the hearing be left in the hands of the Chair.

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings and other matters.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Guy Chalkley, Chief Executive Officer, Endeavour Energy
- Ms Leanne Pickering, Chief Customer and Strategy Officer, Endeavour Energy.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:

- Mr Mark Horne, Individual.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Alex O'Brien, President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter
- Mrs Amanda De Lore, Vice President, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter
- Mr Jim Pinkerton, Consultant Power System Engineer and Past President of Electricity Engineers Association of NSW, Responsible Future, Illawarra Chapter.

Mr Pinkerton tendered the following documents:

- Document titled 'BVG Associates, Figure 16 Floating offshore wind dynamic cable system'
- Photograph of offshore substation.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Madeleine Holme, Good for the Gong
- Ms Yael Stone, Founding Director, Hi Neighbour
- Mr Francis Vierboom, Chief Executive Officer, Rewiring Australia.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 3.23 pm. The public and the media withdrew.

Tendered documents

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That the committee accept and publish the following documents tendered during the public hearing:

- Document titled 'BVG Associates, Figure 16 Floating offshore wind dynamic cable system'.
- Photograph of offshore substation.

10. Next meeting

The committee adjourned at 3.24 pm until *sine die*.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 48
Tuesday 17 February 2026
Portfolio Committee 4 – Regional NSW
Sydney Domestic Airport departure gate, Terminal 3, 8.40 am

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Mrs MacDonald

Mrs Mitchell
Mr Primrose

2. Apologies

Ms Boyd
Mr Donnelly
Ms Hurst, *Deputy Chair*
Mr Murphy

3. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 6 February 2026 – Email from the Office of the Hon. Chris Rath MLC advising that Mrs Aileen MacDonald MLC will be substituting for Mr Scott Barrett MLC for the duration of the inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales.

4. Inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

4.1 Site visit – Dinawan sub-station, Bundure

The committee attended the Dinawan sub-station and adjoining workers accommodation camp and was met by:

- Michael Johnson, General Manager of Community and Social Legacy, Transgrid
- David Moore, Construction Manager, Transgrid
- Matt Hatty, Construction Manager, Transgrid
- Emma Van Bijon, Community and Stakeholder Manager – EnergyConnect, Transgrid
- Jim Hutchinson, Community and Stakeholder Lead – EnergyConnect, Transgrid
- Genny Murina, Community and Stakeholder Coordinator, Transgrid
- Nathan Menser, Community and Stakeholder Manager – VNI West, Transgrid
- Emma Ashton, Senior Manager Government Relations and Stakeholder, Transgrid
- Cameron Walters, Manager Government Relations, Transgrid
- Levi Joule, Senior Media Advisor, Transgrid
- Cliff Pistorious, Substation Construction Manager, Elecnor
- Andrew Hosi, HSE Partner, Elecnor
- Nathan Miller, Camp Coordinator, Elecnor.

The committee toured Dinawan sub-station, accompanied by the abovementioned Transgrid and Elecnor representatives, and participated in discussions about the capacity of the sub-station, as well as its impact on and contribution to the surrounding regions.

4.2 Site visit – Property of Mr Tom Hooke, Wanganella

The committee attended the property of Mr Tom Hooke at Wanganella, and was met by Mr Tom Hooke, resident. Mr Hooke provided a briefing on the potential impact of the South West REZ and related renewable energy projects on properties in the region.

5. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 6.30 pm, until 8.45 am Wednesday 18 February 2026 (public hearing for inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales).

Frances Arguelles

Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 49
Wednesday 18 February 2026
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW
Hay Services Club, Hay, 8.45 am

1. Members present
Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Mr Donnelly
Mrs MacDonald
Mrs Mitchell
Mr Murphy (via videoconference)
Mr Primrose

2. Previous minutes
Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That draft minutes no. 47 be confirmed.

3. Correspondence
The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 3 November 2025 – Email from Ms Ann Hare to the committee, requesting that the committee hold a public hearing in the South West REZ
- 3 November 2025 – Email from Ms Honey Hare to the committee, requesting that the committee hold a public hearing in the South West REZ
- 3 November 2025 – Email from Mr Gary Hare to the committee, requesting that the committee hold a public hearing in the South West REZ
- 4 November 2025 – Email from Ms Lynette LaBlack, Save our Surroundings Riverina and NREN, to the committee, requesting that the committee hold a public hearing in the South West REZ
- 21 November 2025 – Email from Mr Roydon Ng objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 22 November 2025 – Email from Ms Sonja Feil objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 22 November 2025 – Email from Jea hee Lee objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 22 November 2025 – Email from Mr Michael Stanislas objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 22 November 2025 – Email from Ms Nicole Neuss objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 22 November 2025 – Email from Ms Marie Stanislas objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue

- 24 November 2025 – Email from Ms Annie Hong objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 24 November 2025 – Email from Sam Chahrouk objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery *(previously circulated)*
- 24 November 2025 – Email from Mr Mohamed Hassan objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 24 November 2025 – Email from Ms Phebe Fidge, Research Assistant, Centre for Nature Positive Solutions, STEM College, RMIT University, advising that she was unable to attend the hearing on 29 October 2025 as she was overseas
- 28 November 2025 - Letter from Mayor Ola Hamad, Mayor of Cumberland City Council advising that Cumberland City Council resolved to seek that PC4 undertake an inquiry into Metropolitan Memorial Parks' Carnarvon Golf Course Proposal
- 30 November 2025 – Email from Mr Ian Dittman objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 30 November 2025 – Email from Mr Louise Lane objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 7 December 2025 – Email from Zita Latorre objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 11 December 2025 – Email from Ms Maria Dera objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 11 December 2025 – Email from Mr Jeffrey Tan objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 11 December 2025 – Email from Ms Patricia Tan objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Ms Amy Deng objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Bojiang Shen objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Ms Glenda Yau objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Mr Jack Nguy objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Jie Shi objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Ms Joanne Feng objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue

- 14 December 2025 – Email from Keqi Dou objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Linong Guo objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Mr Simon He objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Wenfei Cac objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 14 December 2025 – Email from Yan He objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 20 January 2026 – Email from Ross objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery
- 21 January 2026 – Email from Lang Ngo objecting to the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery and request for a parliamentary inquiry into the issue
- 28 January 2026 - Email from Ms Lisa Tibbs, Manager, Government Relations (NSW), Origin Energy declining the invitation to appear at the regional hearing in Hay on 18 February 2026
- 30 January 2026 & 2 February 2026 – Email from Ms Emma Ashton Senior Manager Government and Stakeholder, Stakeholder Regulatory and Corporate Affairs, Transgrid, to the committee suggesting site visits for the committee to visit in the South West REZ and surrounds
- 2 February 2026 – Email from Mr Bryce Kilian, Director Sustainability and Growth, Murray River Council, declining witness invitation
- 2 February 2026 – Email from Mr Garry Stoll, Director of Planning & Infrastructure, Murrumbidgee Council, requesting that Murrumbidgee Council appear at the hearing in Hay on 18 February 2026
- 2 February 2026 – Email from Ms Felicity Stening, Director of Community and Government Engagement, Someva Renewables, declining witness invitation
- 4 February 2026 – Email from Marju Tonisson, Senior Communications Manager, Spark Renewables, declining witness invitation
- 10 February 2026 – Email from Jang Kim, Head of Development, Bayware RE, declining witness invitation.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That the committee defer consideration of the issues raised in correspondence about the Carnarvon Golf Course until its next meeting.

4. Inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

4.1 Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions

The committee noted that the following answers to questions on notice were published under the resolution appointing the committee:

- answers to questions on notice from Ms Mary-Anne Crawford, Manager Development and Environmental Services, Singleton Council, received 23 October 2025
- answers to questions on notice from Ms Kerry Atkins, Director, New South Wales, Association of Mining and Exploration Companies, received 24 October 2025

- answers to questions on notice from Mr Marc Landrigan, Senior Government Relations Lead, Market Development & Strategy, Ausgrid, received 30 October 2025
- answers to questions on notice from Mr Vida Cheeseman, Head of Corporate Communications, Endeavour Energy, received 20 November 2025
- answers to questions on notice from Ms Yael Stone, Founding Director, Hi Neighbour, received 25 November 2025
- answers to supplementary questions from Ms Madeleine Holme, Good for the Gong, received 28 November 2025.

4.2 Inquiry timeline

The committee noted that it previously agreed via email on 30 October 2025 to conduct the following activities:

- 17 to 18 February 2026 – South West REZ regional activity (overnight stay)
- 31 March 2026 – one day Sydney hearing.

4.3 Public hearing

Sequence of questions

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the allocation of questions to be asked at the hearing be left in the hands of the Chair.

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted at 9.00 am.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings and other matters.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager – Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council
- Mr Jack Bond, Chief Executive Officer, Edward River Council
- Mr Garry Stoll, Director, Planning & Infrastructure, Murrumbidgee Council
- Mr Steven Parisotto, Senior Planner, Murrumbidgee Council

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Brett Stonestreet PSM, Interim Executive Officer, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO)
- Mr Terry Dodds, Chair, RAMJO Energy Security and Affordability Committee and CEO, Balranald Shire Council
- Ms Hodi Beauliv Executive Manager, Governance & Economic Services, Balranald Shire Council.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group (BUNDL)
- Mr Andrew Browning, Committee member, BUNDL.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

- Mr Michael Johnson, General Manager Community and Social Licence, Transgrid
- Mr Nathan Menser, Community and Stakeholder Manager, Transgrid.

Mrs Mitchell tabled Transgrid & Elecnor Australia, 'EnergyConnect Community Newsletter', dated Q4 2025 and EnergyConnect Project snapshot, Transgrid.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 12.09 pm. The public and the media withdrew.

Tendered documents

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee accept and publish the following documents tabled during the public hearing:

- Document titled 'EnergyConnect Community Newsletter', Transgrid & Elecnor Australia dated Q4 2025
- Document titled 'EnergyConnect Project snapshot', Transgrid.

5. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 12.10 pm until Thursday 5 March 2026 (public hearing – Budget Estimates).

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Minutes no. 52
Tuesday 31 March 2026
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW
Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney at 8.47 am

1. Members present

Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Mr Donnelly
Mr Fang (participating)
Dr Kaine (substituting for Mr Primrose from 9.00 am)
Mrs MacDonald (via videoconference)
Mrs Mitchell
Ms Suvaal (substituting for Mr Primrose until 9.00 am).

2. Apologies

Ms Boyd (participating), Ms Hurst.

3. Previous minutes

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That draft minutes no. 48 and 49 be confirmed.

4. Correspondence

The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 6 February 2026 – Email from Ms Nadia Repin, regarding the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery
- 16 February 2026 – Bundle of emails from Ms Lynette LaBlack to the committee, providing additional information in relation to the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales
- 16 February 2026 – Email from Mrs Helen Dalton MP to the Chair, responding to the Chair's email informing them of the committee's visit to their electorate as part of the inquiry

into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

- 17 February 2026 – Email from Mr Mark Abood to the committee, regarding the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery
- 5 March 2026 – Email from Mr Graeme Connors, regarding the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery
- 10 March 2026 – Email from Ms Kristy Walters, Policy & Engagement Officer, Energy Transition team, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) to the secretariat, advising that EWON intends to make a supplementary submission for the inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales and expressing interest in appearing at the upcoming hearing
- 11 March 2026 – Email from Mr Joe Abood, regarding the Metropolitan Memorial Parks' proposal to convert Carnarvon Golf Course in Lidcombe into a cemetery
- 16 March 2026 – Email from Ms Claudia Hodge, Community Power Agency to the committee, declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on 31 March 2026
- 17 March 2026 – Emails from Mr Stephen Bunney, Chair of the Abalone Industry Association, to the Chair, regarding the Budget Estimates hearing on 9 March 2026
- 18 March 2026 – Email from Ms Sonja Hewison, Policy Lawyer, The Law Society of New South Wales to the committee, declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on 31 March 2026
- 20 March 2026 – Email from Mr Tom Lunn, Director Insurance Lines, Insurance Council of Australia to the committee, declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on 31 March 2026
- 23 March 2026 – Email from Mr Douglas McCloskey, Program Director, Energy and Water Justice, Justice and Equity Centre to the committee, declining the invitation to appear at the hearing on 31 March 2026.

Sent

- 24 February 2026 - Letter from the Chair to Ms Emma Ashton, Senior Manager Government and Stakeholder, Stakeholder Regulatory and Corporate Affairs, Transgrid, thanking Transgrid for hosting the committee at the Dinawan sub-station and accommodation camp on 17 February 2026
- 24 February 2026 - Letter from the Chair to Mr Tom Hooke, landowner, thanking him for hosting the committee on his property near Wanganella on 17 February 2026.

5. Inquiry into the impact of REZ on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

5.1 Public submissions

The committee noted that the following submissions were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: nos. 154 and 155.

5.2 Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions

The committee noted that the following answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee:

- answers to supplementary questions from Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Bundure District Landholders Group (BUNDL) and Mr Andrew Browning, Committee member, BUNDL, received 8 March 2026

- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Ms Alison McLean, Executive Manager – Economic Development and Tourism, Hay Shire Council, received 19 March 2026
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Ms Emma Ashton, Senior Manager Government and Stakeholder, Stakeholder Regulatory and Corporate Affairs, Transgrid, received 20 March 2026.

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the committee authorise the publication of the answers to supplementary questions provided by Mr Terry Dodds PSM, Chair, RAMJO Energy Sub-Committee, Chief Executive Officer, Balranald Shire Council, received 24 March 2026.

5.3 Public hearing

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the allocation of questions to be asked at the hearing be left in the hands of the Chair.

Witnesses, the public and the media were admitted at 9.00 am.

The Chair made an opening statement regarding the broadcasting of proceedings and other matters.

The following witnesses were examined on their former oath or affirmation:
- Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
- Ms Stephanie Saill, Head of Energy Transition, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW.

Ms Young tendered the following document:
- 'Renewable Energy Infrastructure Impact Report', Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:
- Mr Aidan Morrison, Director, Energy Programs, Centre for Independent Studies.

Mr Morrison tendered the following documents:
- Document titled 'New England REZ transfer capacity claims'
- Submission to AEMO Draft 2024 ISP, Transgrid.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Ms Verity Morgan-Schmidt, Acting CEO, Farmers for Climate Action
- Mr Andrew Locke, Member, Farmers for Climate Action.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:
- Mr Mark Robinson, Director, Wild Rivers Engineering.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Ms Saideh Kent, Program Director – Energy, The Next Economy
- Mr William Churchill, Chief Policy and Impact Officer, Clean Energy Council
- Mr Chris O'Keefe, National Spokesperson, Clean Energy Council.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Councillor Leeanne Hampton, Deputy Chairperson, NSW Aboriginal Land Council and Councillor for the Wiradjuri Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council

- Councillor Charles Lynch, Councillor for the Northern Region, NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witness was sworn and examined:
- Professor Ivan R. Kennedy AM FRACI CChem, Professor Emeritus in Agricultural and Environmental Chemistry, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Institute of Agriculture, University of Sydney.

Professor Kennedy tendered the following documents:
- Document titled 'Evidence presented here is relevant to Terms of Reference (a), (b) and (h)'
- Bundle of articles.

The evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Commissioner Jeremy Fewtrell, AFSM Commissioner, Fire & Rescue NSW
- Deputy Commissioner Ben Millington, Deputy Commissioner, Operational Coordination, NSW Rural Fire Service
- Chief Superintendent Laurence McCoy, Chief Superintendent and Manager Predictive Services, NSW Rural Fire Service.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The following witnesses were examined on their former oath or affirmation:
- Mr Ashley Albury, Executive Director, Planning & Communities, Energy Corporation of NSW
- Mr Anthony Hayes, Head of Regional Integration, Planning, Integration and Passenger Division, Transport for NSW
- Mr Clay Preshaw, Executive Director, Planning System Reform, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:
- Mr Liam Ryan, Executive Director, Energy Infrastructure, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Ms Hannah McCaughey, Chief Executive Officer, Energy Corporation of NSW
- Mr Chris Ritchie, A/Executive Director, Energy and Resource Assessments, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

The evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 5.06 pm. The public and the media withdrew.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That the committee accept and publish the following documents tendered during the public hearing:
- Renewable Energy Infrastructure Impact Report, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
- Document titled 'New England REZ transfer capacity claims'
- Submission to AEMO Draft 2024 ISP, Transgrid
- Document titled 'Evidence presented here is relevant to Terms of Reference (a), (b) and (h)'.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That the committee accept the following documents tendered during the public hearing:
- Bundle of articles tendered by Professor Kennedy.

6. Adjournment
The committee adjourned at 5.08 pm until Thursday 2 April 2026.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Draft minutes no. 55
Thursday 23 July 2026
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW
Room 1043, Parliament House, Sydney, 10.02 am

1. Members present
Mr Banasiak, *Chair*
Ms Hurst, *Deputy Chair*
Mr Donnelly
Mrs MacDonald (via videoconference)
Mrs Mitchell
Mr Murphy (via videoconference)
Mr Primrose

2. Apologies
Ms Boyd

3. Previous minutes
Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That draft minutes no. 52 & 54 be confirmed.

4. Correspondence
The committee noted the following items of correspondence:

Received

- 1 May 2026 – Correspondence from Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman & Chief Executive Officer, Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) to the committee, clarifying her evidence from the public hearing on 31 March 2026 – see item 5.3.

5. Invitation to meet with Veterinary Specialists of Sydney

Resolved, on the motion of Mrs Mitchell: That the secretariat write to Mr Ben Gingold, Head of Surgery and Anaesthesia, Veterinary Specialists of Sydney, to suggest that he contact individual members of parliament who may be interested to discuss the reform of the veterinary complaints process in New South Wales.

6. Inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

6.1 Public Submissions

The committee noted that the following submissions were published by the committee clerk under the authorisation of the resolution appointing the committee: submissions no 156 and 157.

6.2 Answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions

The committee noted that the following answers to questions on notice were published under the resolution appointing the committee:

- answers to supplementary questions from Mr Terry Dodds, Chair, Energy Security and Affordability Committee, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation, and Chief Executive Officer, Balranald Shire Council received 24 March 2026
- answers to supplementary questions from Mr Garry Stoll, Director, Planning & Infrastructure,
  Murrumbidgee Council received 1 April 2026
- answers to supplementary questions from Professor Ivan R. Kennedy AM FRACI CChem, Professor Emeritus in Agricultural and Environmental Chemistry, School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Institute of Agriculture, University of Sydney received 27 April 2026
- answers to supplementary questions from Farmers for Climate Action received 1 May 2026
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Ms Stephanie Saill, Head of Energy Transition, EWON received 1 May 2026
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water received 1 May 2026
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Fire & Rescue NSW received 1 May 2026
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from NSW Rural Fire Service received 6 May 2026
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Mr Aidan Morrison, Director, Energy Program, Centre for Independent Studies received 6 May 2026
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from Mr William Churchill, Chief Policy and Impact Officer and Mr Chris O'Keefe, National Spokesperson, Clean Energy Council received 11 May 2026
- answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions from the NSW Aboriginal Land Council received 13 May 2026
- answers to supplementary questions from the Ms Saideh Kent Program Director, Energy, The Next Economy received 5 June 2026.

6.3 Transcript clarification

The committee noted that it previously agreed via email to:

- publish the correspondence from Ms Young, EWON, clarifying her evidence at the public hearing on 31 March 2026
- insert footnotes at the relevant points in the transcript dated 31 March 2026 noting that correspondence clarifying the evidence has been received and providing a hyperlink to the published correspondence:
    - Ms Janine Young, Ombudsman & Chief Executive Officer, EWON to the committee, clarifying her evidence from the public hearing on 31 March 2026, dated 1 May 2026.

6.4 ACEREZ statement regarding the destruction of the Mudgee rock shelter dated 25 May 2026

The Chair tabled the ACEREZ statement dated 25 May 2026 regarding the destruction of the Mudgee rock shelter.

6.5 Consideration of Chair's draft final report

The committee considered the Chair's final report, entitled 'Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales – Final report'.

Chapter 1

Mrs MacDonald moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 1.57:

'The committee recognises that the transition to a more diverse and secure energy system presents significant opportunities for New South Wales. Renewable Energy Zones have the potential to support investment, improve energy reliability, create employment, strengthen regional economies and contribute to the state's long-term energy security and emissions reduction objectives. Realising these benefits, however, depends upon effective planning, genuine community engagement and a coordinated whole-of-government approach that ensures regional communities share in the opportunities created by the transition'.

Question put and passed.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 1.57:

'The committee notes that the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies represent an important step in identifying cumulative pressures associated with Renewable Energy Zones. However, stakeholders questioned whether the measures identified through those studies have been implemented consistently or at sufficient scale to address the impacts being experienced by regional communities'.

Question put and passed.

Chapter 2

Mrs MacDonald moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.21:

'While some stakeholders advocated for a reduction in the scale of Renewable Energy Zone development, other evidence received by the committee focused on improving strategic planning, sequencing, infrastructure coordination and community benefit arrangements to better manage impacts associated with the energy transition'.

Question put and passed.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 2.43:

'The committee notes that the evidence also demonstrated that, where negotiations were undertaken in good faith and appropriate safeguards, compensation arrangements and community benefit mechanisms were established, some landholders reported more positive experiences. This highlights the importance of consistent standards and early engagement across all Renewable Energy Zone projects'.

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That the following new paragraph and finding be inserted after paragraph 2.116:

'The committee recognises that REZs are an essential part of New South Wales' energy transition and supports their timely implementation. The committee also acknowledges that the success of the rollout depends on regional communities being meaningfully engaged, adequately supported and able to benefit from the transition. The challenge for the NSW Government is to achieve this balance without unnecessarily slowing the urgent transition to renewable energy. The committee

believes the Government can achieve this with a well-planned and properly supported rollout that will not only deliver the energy infrastructure New South Wales needs, but also strengthen community confidence in the transition and ensure its benefits are widely shared.

Finding X
Given Renewable Energy Zones are an essential part of New South Wales' energy transition, the NSW Government must find a way to deliver the Renewable Energy Zone rollout as a matter of urgency, while ensuring regional communities are meaningfully consulted, adequately supported through the transition, and able to share in its benefits'.

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Hurst moved: That Finding 1 be amended by omitting: 'industrialisation of regional landscapes over the protection of rural and regional communities, demonstrating a fundamental misalignment between state policy objectives and' and inserting instead 'implementation of REZs, sometimes at a cost to'.

Mr Primrose moved: That the motion of Ms Hurst be amended by also inserting a new sentence at the end of Finding 1: 'However, it is important to continue these measures to ensure the economic benefits, reliability and climate benefits'.

Amendment of Mr Primrose put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell,.

Amendment of Mr Primrose resolved in the affirmative.

Original question of Ms Hurst, as amended, put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Original question of Ms Hurst, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 2 be omitted: 'The NSW Government has presided over the rollout of Renewable Energy Zones without a coherent, enforceable, whole-of-government planning framework, resulting in predictable and avoidable harm to rural and regional communities.' and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'The rollout of the renewable energy Zones required a whole of government planning framework that is predictable and avoids harm to rural and regional communities'.

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 3 be omitted: 'The adverse impacts of the Renewable Energy Zone development are not incidental or transitional, but structural and inherent to the current model.' and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'Renewable energy development poses a long-term change for some regional communities. There are challenges and opportunities to manage as a part of this to ensure that, on balance, it is a positive change with long lasting benefits.'

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 4 be omitted: 'The NSW Government has not exercised appropriate stewardship of the Renewable Energy Zone rollout, allowing the expansion of projects in the absence of coordinated planning, effective safeguards, and demonstrated community benefit.' and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'While there are strong coordination and community benefit measures within REZ boundaries there are improvements that could be made to planning, appropriate safeguards, and demonstrated community benefits.'

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Hurst moved: That:

a. paragraph 2.127 be omitted: 'Consequently, the committee recommends that the government impose an immediate moratorium on the approval of new generation projects across all REZs until independent cumulative impact assessments are completed for each REZ and binding mitigation measures are in place.' and the following new paragraph be inserted instead:

'Despite this, the committee also recognises the importance of moving towards renewable energy sources for the environment and for the benefit of regional and rural communities already experiencing the impacts of climate change. The committee therefore recommends that the government review each REZ and the impacts on each regional community affected while each REZ is rolled out'.

b. Recommendation 1 be omitted: 'That the NSW Government impose an immediate moratorium on the approval of new generation projects within existing Renewable Energy Zones until:

- independent cumulative impact assessments are completed for each zone
- binding mitigation measures are in place.'

and the following new recommendation be inserted instead:

'That the NSW Government review each Renewable Energy Zone and the impacts on each regional community affected while each zone is rolled out.'

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 5 be amended by omitting 'imposed acute and compounding pressures on local services such as housing, road infrastructure, water security, waste, emergency services and local economies, without corresponding investment or mitigation.' and inserting instead 'poses challenges for local services such as housing, road infrastructure, water security, waste, emergency services, and local economies. Some of these impacts can be addressed through individual planning consents and others require strategic coordination.'

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That:

a. Finding 6 be omitted: 'EnergyCo, as the infrastructure planner for the Renewable Energy Zones has failed to perform its central coordinating role, particularly in relation to:

- cumulative impact management
- sequencing of development
- coordination of infrastructure and services.' and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'EnergyCo has undertaken activities including cumulative impact studies, coordination of infrastructure, and services.'

b. Finding 7 be omitted: 'Local councils have been left to manage the consequences of state-led infrastructure expansion without sufficient authority, resources, or strategic direction.' and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'Energy development poses a challenge for councils with continued support required.'

c. Finding 8 be omitted: 'The NSW Government has failed to adequately address known risks relating to agricultural productivity, land value impacts, and insurance availability, leaving landholders exposed to ongoing uncertainty.'

d. Finding 9 be omitted: 'The benefits of Renewable Energy Zone development are unevenly distributed, while the burdens are concentrated on host communities, resulting in structural inequity.'

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, , Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Recommendation 2 be amended by omitting 'seek to amend' before 'the *Electricity Infrastructure Amendment Act* 2020' and inserting instead 'consider amending'.

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Recommendation 3 be amended by omitting 'statutory' before 'reporting on cumulative impacts'.

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Finding 8 be amended by omitting 'has failed to adequately address' and inserting instead 'has not yet adequately addressed'.

Question put and negatived.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted before paragraph 2.141:

'The committee notes that the evidence received regarding consultation was not uniform across all Renewable Energy Zones or proponents. While many stakeholders described consultation as occurring too late or having limited influence over decision-making, other witnesses gave evidence that consultation practices had improved over time, particularly where early engagement, ongoing communication and stronger relationships between proponents, EnergyCo and local councils had been established. The committee considers these examples demonstrate that improved consultation practices are achievable and should inform future Renewable Energy Zone delivery.'

Question put and passed.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 6 be amended by inserting the following dot points at the end:

- publish clear eligibility criteria for all community benefit and compensation programs
- provide annual public reporting on the allocation and expenditure of community benefit funding within each Renewable Energy Zone.

Question put and passed.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 10 be amended by omitting 'sufficiently' before 'provide affected communities' and inserting instead 'always'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 11 be omitted: 'The consultation model is structurally flawed, characterised by:

- project-by-project engagement
- information asymmetry
- late-stage engagement after key decisions are made

and has therefore failed to meet reasonable community expectations.'

and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'The consultation model could be improved by:

- whole of area rather than project-by-project engagement
- reducing information asymmetry
- earlier engagement before key decisions are made.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 12 be amended by omitting ', as applied to Renewable Energy Zone projects, systematically privileges proponents over affected communities and does not provide equitable procedural rights to landholders.' and inserting instead 'acknowledges the importance of particular developments to the state as a whole and has benefits as well as trade-offs for local engagement.'

Question put**.**

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Finding 13 be amended by omitting 'actively undermined' after 'individualised negotiations has' and inserting instead 'contributed to undermining'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mr Donnelly, Mrs Mitchell, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 13 be omitted: 'That the widespread use of non-disclosure agreements and individualised negotiations has actively undermined transparency, fragmented communities, and exacerbated social division.'

and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'That the widespread use of non-disclosure agreements and individualised negotiations has raised concerns about transparency, fragmenting communities, and exacerbating social division.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 14 be amended by inserting 'Some witnesses felt' before 'That as a direct consequence'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 7 be amended by inserting an additional dot point at the end of the recommendation:

'require proponents to publish a response explaining how community feedback has influenced project design or, where it has not, the reasons why.'

Question put and passed.

Ms Hurst moved: That Recommendation 7 be omitted: 'That the NSW Government seek to introduce legislation that requires the consultation process to:

- occur prior to key planning decisions
- demonstrate measurable influence on project design
- include independent auditing of engagement outcomes.'

and inserting instead:

'That the NSW Government seek to find ways to ensure the consultation process where possible:

- occurs prior to key planning decisions
- demonstrates measurable influence on project design
- includes independent auditing of engagement outcomes.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Recommendation 8 be omitted: 'That the NSW Government prevent the use of non-disclosure agreements in renewable energy project negotiations as they restrict community-wide transparency and inhibit effective consultation.'

and the following new recommendation be inserted instead:

'That the NSW Government consider limiting or preventing the use of non-disclosure agreements in renewable energy project negotiations.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose,.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Hurst moved: That Recommendation 8 be amended by omitting 'prevent' before 'the use of non-disclosure agreements' and inserting instead 'review'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 9 be amended by inserting the following paragraph at the end:

'The review should specifically consider:

- cumulative impact assessment across multiple projects within a Renewable Energy Zone;
- opportunities for earlier strategic planning prior to project assessment;
- procedural fairness for directly affected landholders and neighbouring properties;
- consistency in assessment requirements across Renewable Energy Zone projects.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Noes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Recommendation 9 be omitted: 'That the NSW Government review the State Significant Development framework with a view to:

- strengthen landholder rights
- extend consultation timeframes
- require independent peer review of impact assessments.'

and the following recommendation inserted instead:

'That the NSW Government consider reviewing the State Significant Development framework with a view to:

- extend consultation timeframes
- require independent peer review of impact assessments.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Hurst moved: That Recommendation 9 be amended by omitting: 'That the NSW Government review the State Significant Development framework with a view to:

- strengthen landholder rights
- extend consultation timeframes
- require independent peer review of impact assessments.'

and inserting instead:

'That the NSW Government review the State Significant Development framework with a view to:

- consider landholder rights
- ensure consultation timeframes are adequate
- consider independent peer review of impact assessments.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms. Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 15 be omitted: 'Social Impact Assessments have been inconsistently applied, inadequately scoped, and are incapable of capturing cumulative and intangible impacts, rendering them ineffective as a regulatory safeguard.'

and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'Social Impact Assessments need more consistency of application and adequate scoping, and are incapable of capturing cumulative and intangible impacts. These issues should be addressed via cumulative impact studies'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 10 be amended by inserting a new sentence at the end: 'Social Impact Assessments should be completed before transmission corridors and Renewable Energy Zone boundaries are finalised and should be updated as projects progress through the planning system.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Noes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Recommendation 10 be amended by omitting 'alter' before 'the Social Impact Assessment process' and inserting instead 'review'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Recommendation 11 be omitted: ' That the NSW Government seek to establish a statutory Community Advocate for Renewable Energy Zone regions to:

- represent landholders
- provide independent advice
- participate in planning and assessment processes.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 16 be omitted: 'The extension of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW to renewable energy infrastructure has not provided a sufficient mechanism for resolving disputes arising from Renewable Energy Zone development.'

and the following new recommendation be inserted instead:

'The extension of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW to renewable energy infrastructure has to continue to develop resolving disputes arising from Renewable Energy Zone development so that it captures more disputes arising from Renewable Energy Zone development.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 17 be omitted: 'The role of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW is currently inadequate for addressing the scale and complexity of Renewable Energy Zone-related grievances due to insufficient:

- enforcement powers
- systemic oversight capability
- capacity to address cumulative or cross-project issues.'

and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'The role of the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW struggles to address the scale and complexity of Renewable Energy Zone-related concerns, in particular:

- enforcement powers
- systemic oversight capability
- capacity to address cumulative or cross-project issues.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 18 be amended by omitting 'that it has not established robust, proactive protections for affected communities' and inserting instead: 'a common approach across many areas of industry and government where disputes may arise'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Recommendation 12 be amended by:

a) omitting 'undertake and urgent review of' and inserting instead 'assess'

b) omitting 'significantly expand' before 'its powers regarding'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 12 be amended by inserting a new sentence at the end: 'The review should include an assessment of the effectiveness of cumulative impact management, community engagement, regional economic outcomes, housing impacts and the delivery of community benefit commitments.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Noes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Chapter 3

Ms Hurst moved: That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 3.1:

'There is also potential economic risk to communities if REZs do not proceed, as noted in evidence given by stakeholders such as the Nature Conservation Council:

> There is also the economic risk of not acting and delaying the transition to renewable energy, significantly impacting not just rural and regional communities but all of Australia. New modelling shows that Australia's GDP will take a hit of $6.8 trillion between 2024 and 2050 as a result of the broad impacts of climate change, if serious action is not taken. [FOOTNOTE: Submission 32, Nature Conservation Council NSW, p 4]

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Hust moved: That paragraph 3.107 be amended by inserting a new sentence 'There is also economic risk to delaying the transition to renewable energy, noting evidence that Australia's GDP will reduce by $6.8 trillion between 2024 and 2050 as a result of the impacts of climate change, if serious action is not taken.' after ' host communities and landowners'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ms Hurst moved: That:

a. paragraph 3.111 be omitted: 'Therefore, we find that while REZ development is projected to deliver economic benefits, these do not consistently reflect the lived experience of rural and regional communities.' and the following new paragraph be inserted instead:

> 'Therefore, we find that while REZ development is projected to deliver economic benefits, this is not consistently reflected in the lived experience of some rural and regional communities.'

b. Finding 19 be amended by inserting 'some' before 'rural and regional communities'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 20 be amended by omitting: 'is inadequate.' and inserting instead 'uses a combination of voluntary and compulsory acquisitions, with the latter posing more significant challenges for landholders'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 13 be amended by inserting the following dot point at the end of the recommendation:

'include minimum standards for:
- independent legal advice funded by proponents;
- valuation processes;
- mediation prior to compulsory acquisition;
- transparent compensation principles.'

Question put and passed.

Mr Primrose moved: That Recommendation 13 be amended to by omitting 'urgent' before 'update regarding the review'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 21 be omitted: 'Decommissioning bonds are a necessary part of any significant infrastructure as they provide reassurance to the community regarding long-term environmental and economic impacts.' and the following new finding be inserted instead:

'Decommissioning bonds could provide reassurance to the community in case of unexpected insolvencies, environmental, or other economic impact.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 14 be amended by inserting the following dot point at the end of the recommendation:

'including requirements for:
- rehabilitation standards;
- restoration of agricultural capability where practicable;
- ongoing monitoring following decommissioning;

- periodic review of financial assurance to reflect actual costs.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Banasiak, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Noes: Mr Donnelly, Ms Hurst, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 14 be amended by inserting the following dot point at the end:

- 'including requirements for periodic review of financial assurance to reflect actual costs'

Question put and passed.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 15 be amended by inserting at the end: 'together with requirements for early engagement in strategic planning, cultural heritage assessment and route selection before project locations are finalised'.

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Noes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Recommendation 15 be omitted: 'That the NSW Government provide additional funding to the local Aboriginal land councils in each Renewable Energy Zone to assist with complex land analysis and negotiations with large-scale developers.' and the following new recommendation be inserted instead:

'That the NSW Government provide funding or support to the local Aboriginal land councils in each Renewable Energy Zone to assist with demands imposed by energy development.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 23 be amended by omitting 'a gap between acknowledgment and action.' and inserting instead: 'the Government's view that many of the recommendations were being addressed, if not in the specific form but across all the recommendations.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr Primrose moved: That Finding 24 be omitted: 'The response of the NSW Government to the first report lacked clear timelines, deliverables, and accountability mechanisms, undermining confidence in its implementation and the commitment to ensuring rural regional communities are part of the energy transition.'

Question put.

The committee divided.

Ayes: Mr Donnelly, Mr Murphy, Mr Primrose.

Noes: Mr Banasiak, Ms Hurst, Mrs MacDonald, Mrs Mitchell.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mrs MacDonald moved: That Recommendation 16 be amended by inserting the following sentence at the end of the recommendation: 'The implementation plan should:

- identify the lead agency responsible for each recommendation;
- specify implementation timeframes;
- include measurable performance indicators;
- provide annual public progress reports until implementation is complete.

Question put and passed.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Donnelly: That:

The draft report as amended be the report of the committee and that the committee present the report to the House;

The transcripts of evidence, tabled documents, submissions, correspondence, proformas, responses and summary report to the online questionnaire, and answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions relating to the inquiry be tabled in the House with the report

Upon tabling, all unpublished attachments to submissions and individual responses to the online questionnaire be kept confidential by the committee

Upon tabling, all unpublished transcripts of evidence, tabled documents, submissions, correspondence, proformas, responses and summary report to the online questionnaire, and answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions related to the inquiry be published by the committee, except for those documents kept confidential by resolution of the committee

The committee secretariat correct any typographical, grammatical and formatting errors prior to tabling;

The committee secretariat be authorised to update any committee comments where necessary to reflect changes to recommendations or new recommendations resolved by the committee;

Dissenting statements be provided to the secretariat within 24 hours after receipt of the draft minutes of the meeting;

The secretariat is tabling the report at 2 pm Wednesday 29 July 2026.

7. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 11.09 am until Thursday 20 August 2026.

Frances Arguelles
Committee Clerk

Appendix 4 Dissenting Statement

Hon Greg Donnelly MLC, Hon Peter Primrose MLC and Hon Cameron Murphy MLC, Australian Labor Party

The evidence seen by this inquiry has highlighted both the challenges and opportunities associated with the transformation of our energy system.

There is significant work undertaken to coordinate and deliver this generational project, including:

- Completion of the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies;
- Coordination of projects via access rights tenders;
- Financial support for resourcing within local government;
- Delivery of additional compensation to that provided under the Just Terms Act; and
- The direction of significant community benefits to host communities.

This is not to discredit evidence provided to the committee. Rather, there is substantial work done to date which is in our view not entirely reflected in the findings and recommendations.

Local Government Remuneration Tribunal

Ref: A8579462

3 August 2026

via email to Councils

Dear Mayors/General Managers,

Invitation for stage 1 submissions – Local Government Remuneration Tribunal 2027 Annual Review

As explained in the 2026 Annual Review and Determination at [19-21] and [210-225], in the 2027 review the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal intends to undertake a two-stage process.

The Tribunal will first review the categories and criteria specified in the Determination: ss 239 and 240 of the Local Government Act *1993* (NSW).

In the second stage it will finalise appropriate fees for each category adopted, having taken into account changes which have been established to have occurred over time, as well as other relevant data: s241. It will also then determine each Councils' allocation to the new category structure, it envisages will be adopted in the 2027 Determination: s239(1)(b).

The Tribunal now invites written submissions for stage 1. Noting that it has also invited the Minister for Local Government and Local Government NSW to make a submission, supported by any evidence relied on.

Stage 1 Submissions

The Tribunal invites submissions and supporting evidence about whether the framework provided in the 2026 Determination remains fit for its statutory purpose; how it should be altered in order to achieve that purpose; and the basis on which fees for any new structure adopted should be fixed.

In particular, the Tribunal seeks submissions which address matters such as:

- the appropriateness of the current categories and criteria, given the requirements of s 240 of the *Local Government Act*;
- proposed changes to the categories which it notes may include a reduction in the number of, or a change in the names of, current categories;

- proposed revised criteria, having regard to the requirements of s240(1);

- the appropriateness of the current fee structure, given:
  - the requirement that the Determination fix both minimum and maximum fees for each category: s241;
  - the differences and overlaps in fees fixed for the current categories; and
  - the current responsibilities of Mayors and Councillors and how they may have changed over time; and

- proposed minimum and maximum fees for any new category structure proposed.

Submissions should address supporting evidence relied on. Including data from publicly available information such as ABS statistics, Council budgets and records and Government documents. Statements from persons who have had experience of relevant change and practical problems sought to be addressed should explain their backgrounds and experience, as well as changes relied on.

Submissions should also analyse and clearly explain problems sought to be addressed, explain proposed changes, as well as their likely impact. Including financial or administrative.

Where proposals are likely to impact other Councils, they should be served on the affected Council, so that it can have an opportunity to consider what is proposed and if thought necessary, make a submission to the Tribunal about what is proposed. Any such submission should confirm that it has been served on the other affected Council or Councils.

The Tribunal also expects, in the usual way, that Council submissions are endorsed by the relevant Council.

Submissions and supporting evidence should be emailed to remunerationtribunals@premiersdepartment.nsw.gov.au **no later than 9 October 2026.**

Stage 2 Submissions

When the Tribunal has determined what changes should be made to the Determination's categories and criteria, it will invite further submissions about the placement of Councils into the new structure.

Final submissions about the annual adjustment of fees will then also be invited.

Proposed Timeline

The Tribunal intends to follow the following indicative timeline, which may have to be adjusted in light of unanticipated developments:

Action	Date
Commence Annual Review and invite stage 1 submissions	3 August 2026
Deadline for stage 1 submissions	9 October 2026
Stage 1 Hearings	26 to 30 October 2026
Invite stage 2 submissions	27 November 2026
Deadline for stage 2 submissions	29 January 2027
Annual Determination to be made and sent to the Minister for Local Government	On or before 1 May 2027

A copy of the Tribunal's 2026 Annual Determination can be found at the following link: https://www.remtribunals.nsw.gov.au/local-government/current-lgrt-determinations.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Submissions provided to the Tribunal may be released on application via the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.*

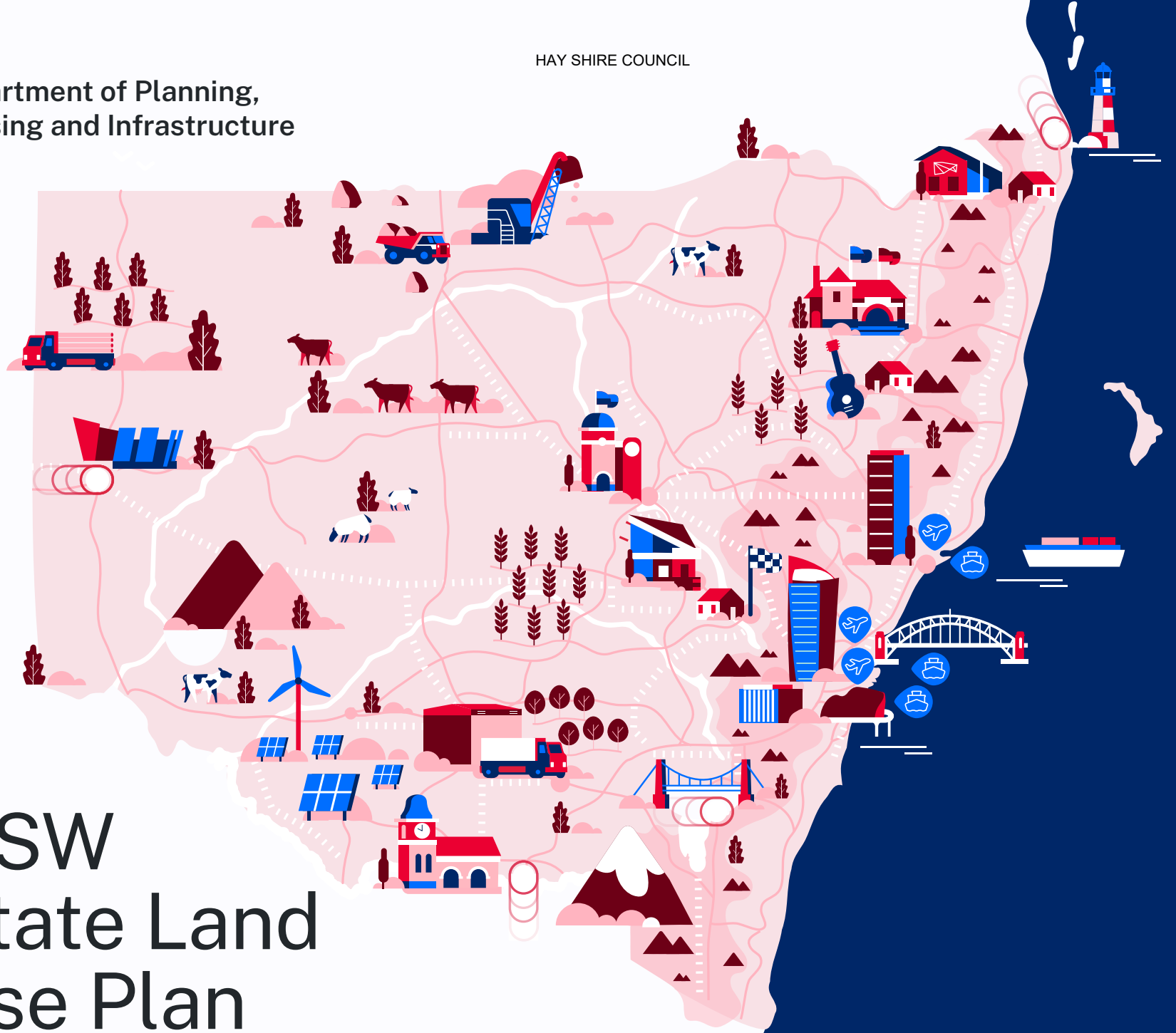
If you require any further information, please contact myself on 8226 0250 or at remunerationtribunals@premiersdepartment.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely

Joanne Nava
Remuneration Tribunal Secretariat

Department of Planning,
Housing and Infrastructure

NSW GOVERNMENT



NSW State Land Use Plan

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

Artwork by Kyara Fernando, Dunghutti (Dhanggati) artist.

Published by NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
dphi.nsw.gov.au

NSW State Land Use Plan

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Minister's foreword

New South Wales is a great state and the powerhouse of the nation. It has some of the most liveable cities, vibrant communities and extraordinary landscapes. From our coastlines and cityscapes to our regional centres and rural communities - the diversity of our great State underpins a strong, growing economy and supports our thriving communities.

In short, NSW is one of the best places in the world to live, work, and visit. As one of the best places in the world, it deserves a great plan for its future. A plan that is ambitious, that is innovative, and that is both hopeful and realistic for what we can achieve.

This Plan is the foundational element of the NSW Government's new approach to strategic planning. Previous approaches have been fragmented, complex, confusing, and inconsistent; they have not been looking at the whole picture with the future in mind. Strategic planning is at its best when it thinks in decades. It is designed to envision what the future may hold and to put in place the mechanisms to support that.

The NSW State Land Use Plan plots a new coordinated approach to planning for our State. This Plan considers our State's growth in a way that will strengthen our economy, support our communities and protect the natural environment that makes NSW so unique.

If we do not plan for this growth and evolution in a way that is flexible to change as infrastructure investments are made, population trends change and new industries occur – then we are failing to plan for our future.

As Australia's economic powerhouse, NSW continues to grow and evolve. With that growth comes increasing demand for homes, jobs, infrastructure and services, alongside the need to protect our productive lands, natural environment and cultural heritage, while continuing to recognise the enduring connection of Aboriginal people to Country.

The NSW State Land Use Plan establishes 7 state-wide priorities to provide clear direction for land use decisions across NSW.

Together with regional plans and local strategic planning, the NSW Government's new approach to state-wide land use planning provides a consistent three-tier framework to align growth with infrastructure investment. It coordinates development and helps communities have access to the housing, services, infrastructure, and the open public spaces they need to thrive.

Strategic planning at all levels can and should respond better to local opportunities. This new framework will lead the way in demonstrating how that can be done, so that every level of government is making decisions that are built for today and future-proofed for tomorrow. Planning for the future means making long-term decisions that balance competing land use needs and create lasting benefits for communities right across NSW.

The NSW State Land Use Plan provides our State with a clear and comprehensive planning framework to deliver outcomes that meets the needs of our communities today and in the future.

The Hon. Paul Scully

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

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1 How to use the plan

The NSW State Land Use Plan (the State Plan) provides the overarching direction for land use across NSW. It sets a clear and consistent strategic planning framework to guide planning decisions.

The State Plan sets a long-term vision for land use across NSW over the next 20 years, guiding how the State will grow, develop and respond to change.

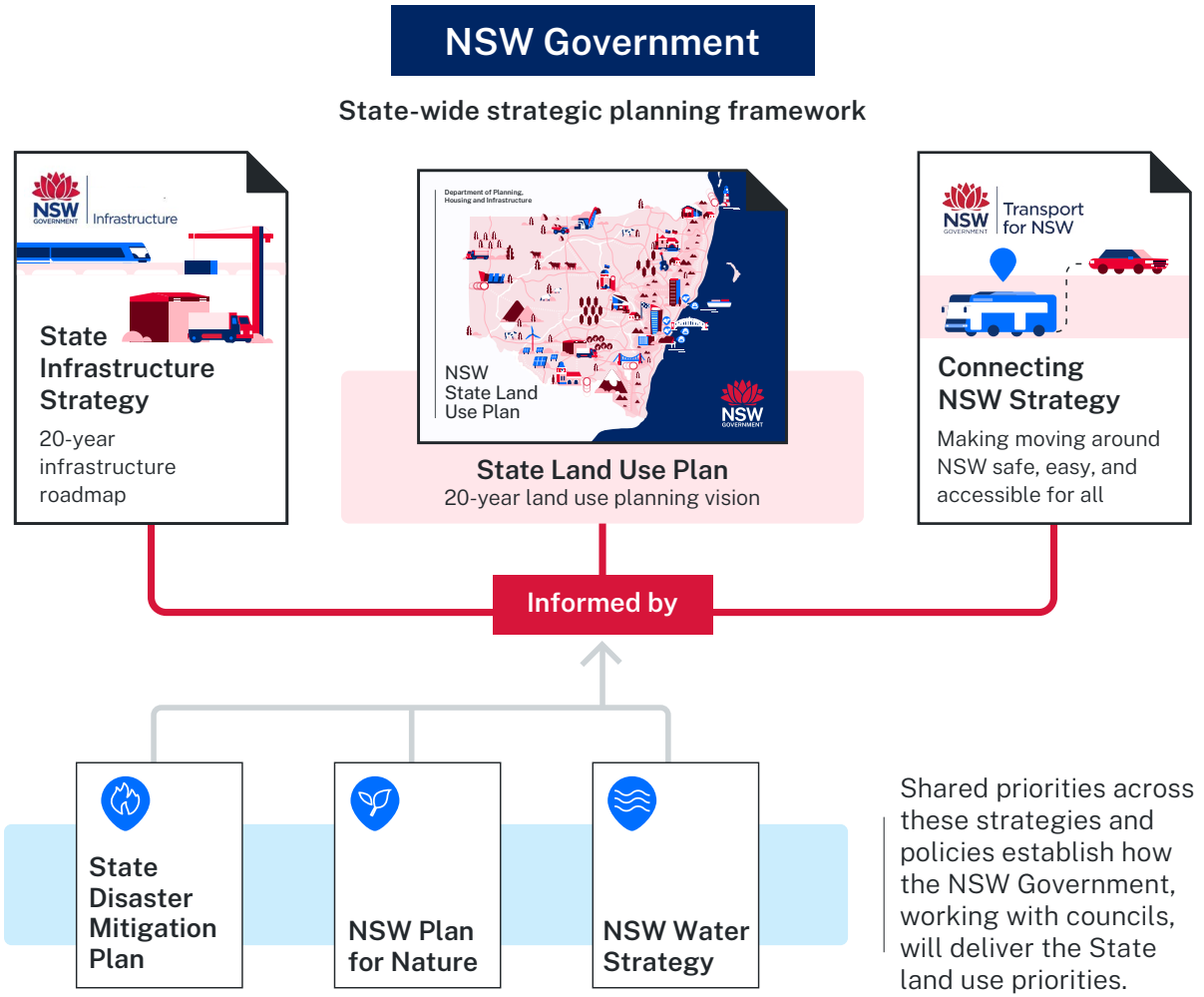
To realise the State vision, 7 State land use priorities have been set. Each priority is supported by priority statements that provide strategic direction on how the priority should be implemented across State, region and local planning. Additional guidance on how priorities are to be delivered is provided in the technical appendices.

The State Plan sits alongside other state-wide infrastructure and servicing plans, including the *NSW State Infrastructure Strategy* and the *Connecting NSW Strategy* (Figure 1).

The State Plan considers other state level policies such as the *State Disaster Mitigation Plan*, *NSW Water Strategy* and *NSW Plan for Nature*. Shared priorities across these documents establish how the NSW Government, working with councils, will implement the State land use priorities in this plan.

The State Plan is the first piece of the puzzle. Next steps for future strategic planning reform and the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation framework are identified at the end of the document.

Figure 1: Alignment with other state-wide planning and policy documents



2 State vision

Our physical landscape, natural features and attractions

NSW is known around the world for its beauty, lifestyle and extraordinary landscapes. The unique geography of our State shapes where and how people live, work and connect, from the iconic coastline stretching from Byron Bay to Eden, to the alpine landscapes of Kosciuszko, the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains and the expansive inland regions shaped by the Murray-Darling river systems. These landscapes, natural features and environments will continue to define the identity and character of NSW for generations to come, attracting people to live, work and visit from across Australia and the world. Through careful stewardship and resilient planning, our natural assets will continue to be protected, restored and accessible for future generations.

Aerial view of coastline between Merimbula and Tathra

1.8 m
more people

1.2 m
more homes

20%
more jobs

Our diverse population, rich culture and vibrant communities

By 2046, the population of NSW will have grown by over 20%, be enriched by people from diverse cultural backgrounds and be grounded in one of the world's oldest continuous cultures whose ongoing connections remain deeply rooted in the land, skies and waters of our State. A bigger NSW means planning for opportunities for everyone whether they are new to NSW or have lived here for generations.

The future of housing supply in NSW will be aligned with infrastructure, opportunity and safety. Supply will grow in places where people can live close to jobs, infrastructure, services and amenities. Housing will be more affordable and accessible and people will have greater choice from a rich mix of housing types across our cities, towns and regional communities.

A diverse NSW will continue to welcome people from all backgrounds, cultures and generations. Our communities will become increasingly diverse in culture, age and experience, shaping vibrant and inclusive places across the State. Infrastructure, services and community spaces will evolve alongside these changes, supporting connection, participation and wellbeing for people throughout all stages of life.

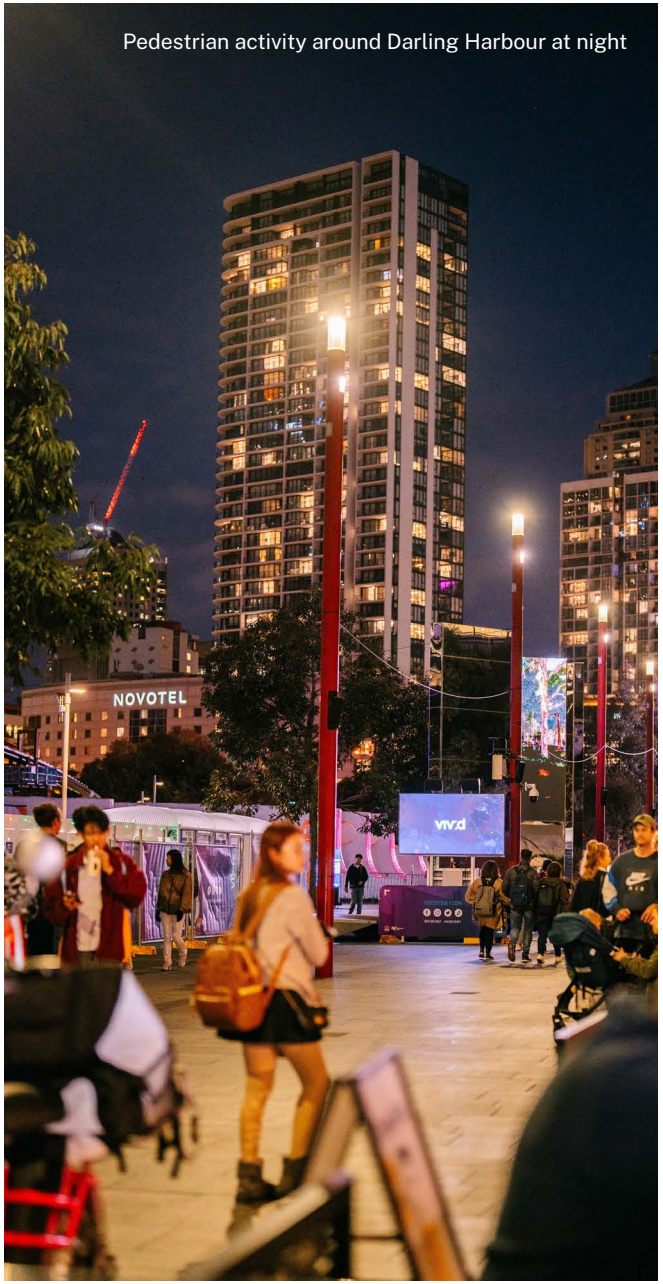
Communities will be safe, healthy, and supported by equitable and easy access to jobs, education and community infrastructure. New development and changes in land use will support growth while balancing community needs and preserving the unique cultural, social and economic fabric of our cities, towns and regions. Well-designed places will foster belonging, social cohesion and vibrant communities.

Our thriving businesses, diverse economy and local prosperity

NSW will continue to be the State of choice for businesses to grow and invest, creating shared prosperity and diverse opportunities for people to work, connect and move easily across a network of interlinked metropolitan and regional cities.

The State's economic foundations will remain among the most globally competitive in the country, enabled by our 3 international ports and a growing network of international airports. Sydney will continue to excel as Australia's global gateway city, supported by the maturing metropolises of Newcastle and Wollongong, each contributing to national and international connectivity through leading innovation, strong business and logistics infrastructure.

Economic opportunities will continue to grow across more places in NSW, creating jobs, prosperity and wellbeing for communities throughout the State. As Australia's largest and most diversified economy, NSW will be supercharged by new advancements in technology, enhanced productivity, efficient freight networks, and infrastructure.



Pedestrian activity around Darling Harbour at night

Industries across NSW will continue to drive innovation, investment and jobs. Manufacturing and new industrial precincts in the Hunter, productive agriculture across the Murray and Riverina, renewable energy and mineral resources in the Central West, and emerging industries linked to Sydney's Aerotropolis will support economic growth across the State.

Newcastle's advanced manufacturing sector, Port Kembla in Wollongong, and post-mining regions across the Hunter, Illawarra and regional NSW will continue to support innovation, investment and jobs across both metropolitan and regional communities. A focus on innovation, economic diversity and transition will ensure NSW continues to be Australia's jobs powerhouse for generations to come.

Our inclusive and equitable State

In the next 20 years, NSW will be prosperous, more diverse and a more equitable state, shaped by growth and valued for its rich culture, vibrant communities, natural beauty and enviable lifestyle. NSW will be a place where we honour and strengthen our connection to Country and support our Aboriginal communities' opportunities for greater economic self-determination.

As the State grows and diversifies, the benefits of prosperity and opportunity will be shared more equitably across communities. Our wealth per capita will continue to rank among the highest compared to leading economies around the world, supporting and enhancing our quality of life as NSW continues to grow. As one of the world's most attractive places to live, work and visit, the people of NSW will continue to be proud to call this State home.

Portside steelworks in Port Kembla, Wollongong

3 NSW strategic planning framework

The State Plan establishes a new strategic planning framework for NSW.

The framework comprises 3 core elements:

1. A simplified three-tier hierarchy of plans which establishes clear roles and responsibilities.
2. Updated planning regions to reduce duplication, reflect regional nuances and deliver consistent land use outcomes.
3. A framework designed to adapt and remain relevant.

A three-tier hierarchy of plans

The State Plan introduces a streamlined strategic planning framework built around 3 tiers of plans.

The new hierarchy describes how the State, region and local planning levels work together to guide land use decisions across NSW, providing an integrated structure for translating state-wide priorities into place-based outcomes.

This approach resolves the current system's complexity by ensuring planning documents developed under each tier have a clearly defined purpose. This will clarify responsibilities across all tiers to support more coordinated and accountable delivery, meaning implementation can be easily monitored.

Aerial view of Parramatta

Figure 2: Purpose and functions of each level of the strategic planning framework

The State Land Use Plan
Defines the state-wide overarching direction and priorities

- Sets the long-term vision for strategic land use planning in NSW.
- Establishes clear state-wide land use priorities that guide region and local plans.
- Establishes technical appendices to outline state-wide land use and systems policies for all region and local planning.
- Supports coordinated decision-making across strategic and statutory planning mechanisms.
- Establishes a monitoring and evaluation framework to support the implementation, review and continuous improvement of strategic plans.

Region Plans
Provide spatial direction and sequencing for the 4 NSW regions to establish where and when growth should occur

- Translates State land use priorities into region-based spatial strategies that reflect regional vision and context.
- Balances competing land use, infrastructure and environmental considerations at a regional scale.
- Coordinates and guides local strategic planning across the region.
- Provides strategic direction to guide the sequencing and prioritisation of land use and infrastructure.
- Identifies regional level responses to deliver state-wide land use priorities.
- Establishes technical appendices to outline region-based policies and approaches.
- Supports accountability across State agencies and delivery partners.

Local Plans
Translate state-wide priorities into local context to be delivered at a local government area scale

- Sets out how councils will implement State and regional directions in their local context.
- Translates regional directions into local priorities, with local interpretation and detail.
- Implements region plan responses, applying local vision informed by local strategic planning work and evidence.
- Identifies local infrastructure to support growth leveraging State infrastructure.
- Holds councils accountable for zoning, local planning and other planning decisions, ensuring they align with regional sequencing and infrastructure coordination.

Planning regions

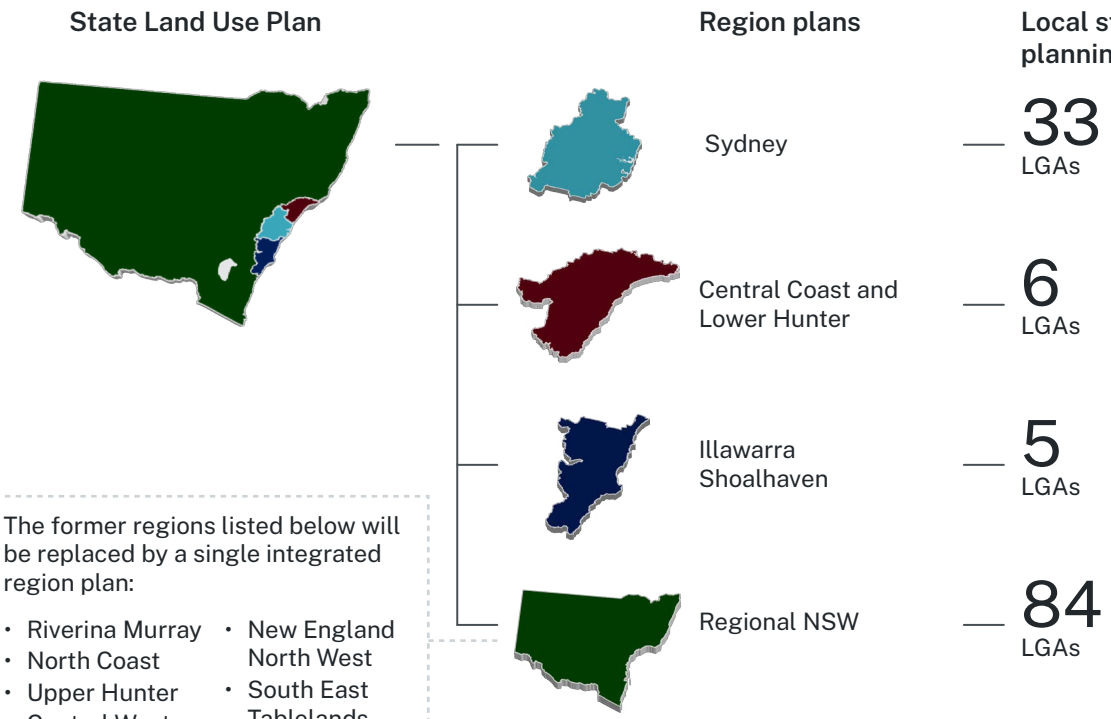
For the purposes of region planning, NSW will be defined as 4 regions:

- Sydney
- Central Coast and Lower Hunter
- Illawarra Shoalhaven
- Regional NSW.

These new planning regions define the geographies for preparing region plans. They reduce duplication, simplify the strategic planning framework, and support clearer local planning and decision making.

The planning regions reflect functional relationships and shared outcomes across administrative boundaries and enable strategic land use planning to better respond to local challenges.

Figure 3: Strategic planning regions



Sydney

The Sydney planning region remains unchanged.

Illawarra Shoalhaven

The Illawarra Shoalhaven planning region includes the Wingecarribee Local Government Area (LGA). This reflects the strong economic, environmental and community connections between Wingecarribee and the rest of the region.

Central Coast and Lower Hunter

The Central Coast and Lower Hunter planning region builds on the last 2 iterations of region plans. It responds to planned growth across the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie LGAs.

Regional NSW

The Regional NSW planning region covers the largest and most diverse regional economy in Australia. It requires a coordinated, up-to-date plan for the next 20 years.

Coordinated planning will focus growth where it is best suited, in regional cities and urban growth areas, while balancing competing priorities such as water, biodiversity, natural assets and resources, with energy and agricultural industries.

Planning for Regional NSW will respond at a subregional scale, recognising that many issues are shared across local government areas, even where they are geographically distant.

Timing

The draft Central Coast and Lower Hunter Plan and draft Regional NSW Plan will be released for public exhibition in 2027, aligning with the 5-year review cycle of region plans. NSW Government will take the additional time to continue developing the evidence base, engage further with councils, government agencies and key stakeholders and align to recent transport and infrastructure planning.

A framework designed to adapt

Division 3.1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* requires that a region plan is reviewed every 5 years after the document has been made by the Minister.

The purpose of this review is to determine whether the priorities, responses and actions remain relevant to the context in which the plan is being delivered, and whether a new region plan is required.

While this cycle of reviews is critical to ensuring plans are aligned to their broader context, NSW needs a more dynamic approach whereby plans can respond to changes without requiring full document repeal and renewal.

Under the new framework State and region plans may be updated from time to time to reflect changes in land use, policy, population and infrastructure investment.

Plans will retain a long-term vision and land use priorities, but the responses and actions of individual plan components and technical appendices may be updated. Updates to strategic plans will be undertaken selectively and only in response to major, system-wide changes that materially alter underlying assumptions.

Triggers that could require updated plans include:

- significant changes in population
- transformational region or city-shaping infrastructure investment decisions
- major external shocks
- land use changes.

In each case, plans may not need to be fully revised; instead only relevant components will be updated. Changes and updates will be communicated with stakeholders and consultation undertaken, where required.

Further information on the approach to making updates to State and region plans is provided in Appendix B: *Framework for Updates to Strategic Plans.*

Western Sydney Airport

4 A growing and changing NSW

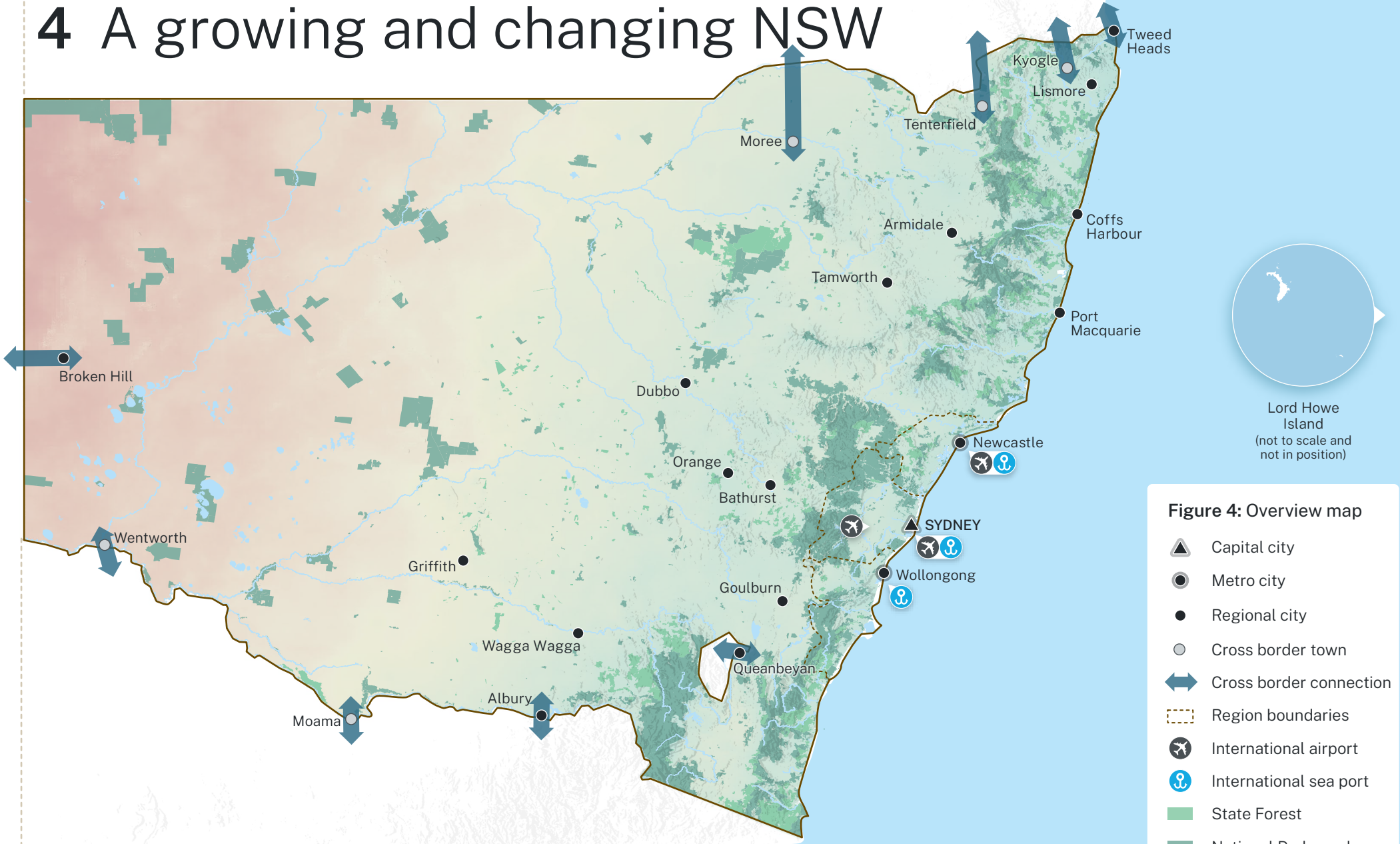


Figure 4: Overview map

Population and growth

- NSW is Australia's most populated state and it is projected to grow to 10.5 million people by 2046.
- Around one-third of Australia's Aboriginal population lives in NSW.
- The State is home to diverse communities from more than 310 ancestries.
- Population growth supports an ageing population, offsets people moving interstate, and strengthens economic productivity.

Figure 5: Population
Source: DPHI 2024

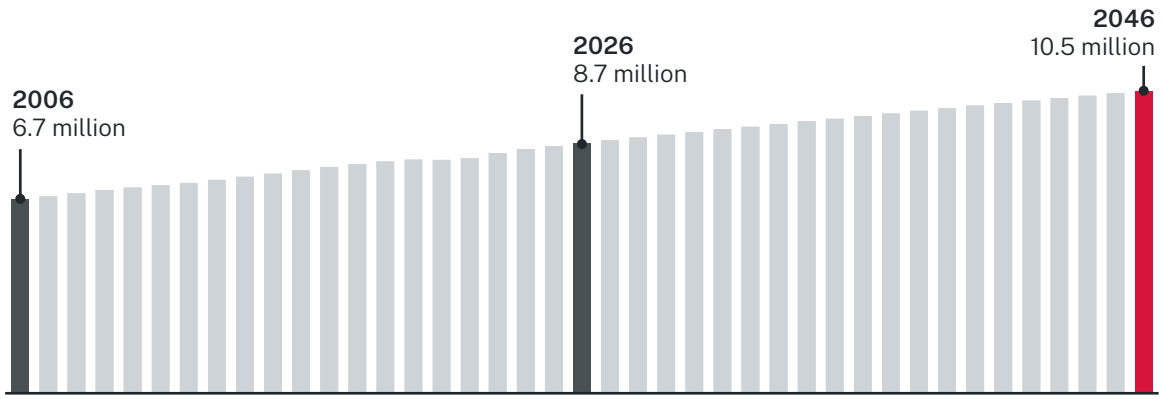
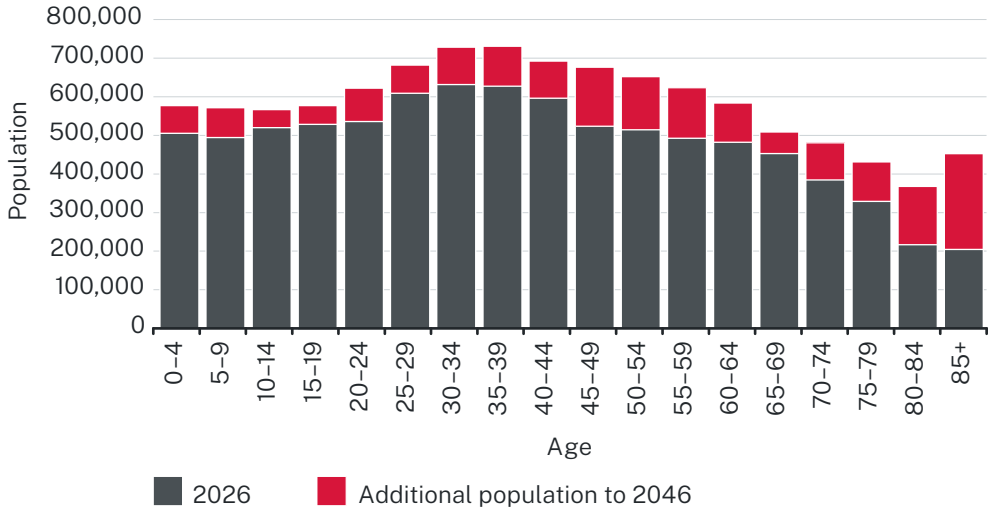


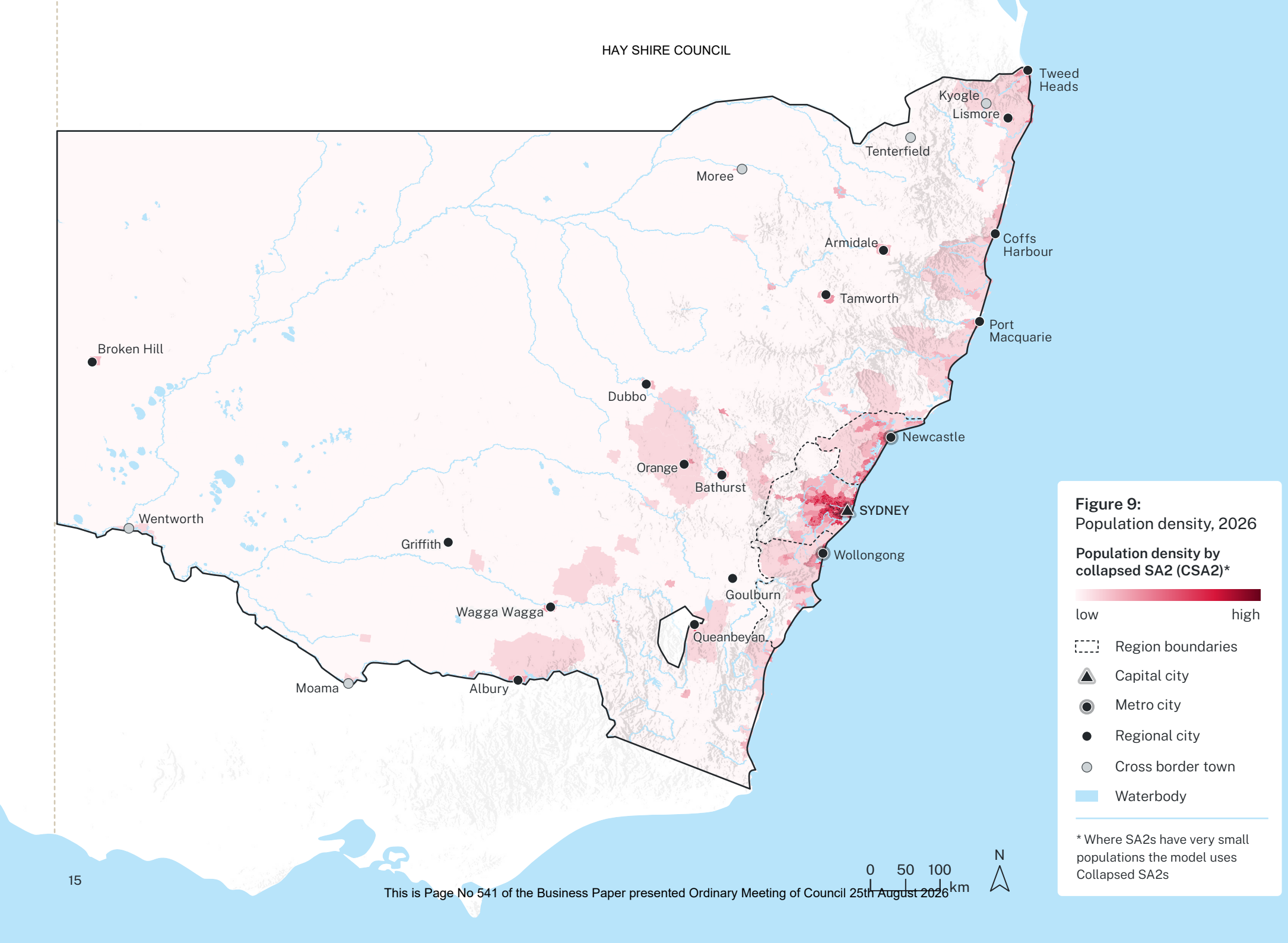
Figure 6: Population change 2026 to 2046
Source: DPHI 2024

NSW	1.8 million	
Natural change	687,000	▲
Net interstate migration	380,000	▼
Net overseas migration	1.5 million	▲
Sydney region	1.3 million	▲
Illawarra Shoalhaven region	161,000	▲
Central Coast and Lower Hunter region	233,000	▲
Regional NSW	187,000	▲

Figure 7: Median age
Source: DPHI 2024; ABS

Figure 8: Age profile
Source: DPHI 2024




HAY SHIRE COUNCIL
Tweed Heads
Kyogle
Lismore
Tenterfield
Moree
Armidale
Coffs Harbour
Tamworth
Port Macquarie
Broken Hill
Dubbo
Newcastle
Orange
Bathurst
SYDNEY
Wentworth
Griffith
Wollongong
Goulburn
Wagga Wagga
Queanbeyan
Moama
Albury
Figure 9:
Population density, 2026
Population density by collapsed SA2 (CSA2)*
low
high
Region boundaries
Capital city
Metro city
Regional city
Cross border town
Waterbody
* Where SA2s have very small populations the model uses Collapsed SA2s
0
50
100
km
N

Economy and employment

- NSW is Australia's largest state economy, contributing $855 billion in the financial year 2024–25. It is projected to reach $1.4 trillion by 2060-61.
- The economy is driven by a mix of industries and generates 4.4 million jobs. By 2046, the State's workforce is projected to grow by more than 20% additional jobs.
- Well-developed transport infrastructure supports the economy and workers.

Figure 10: Gross State Product as share of Gross Domestic Product, FY 2024-25
Source: ABS 2025

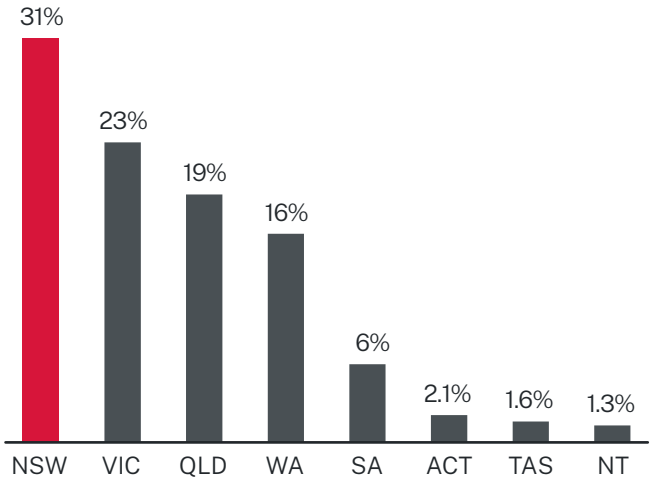


Figure 11: Additional jobs
Source: TZP 2024

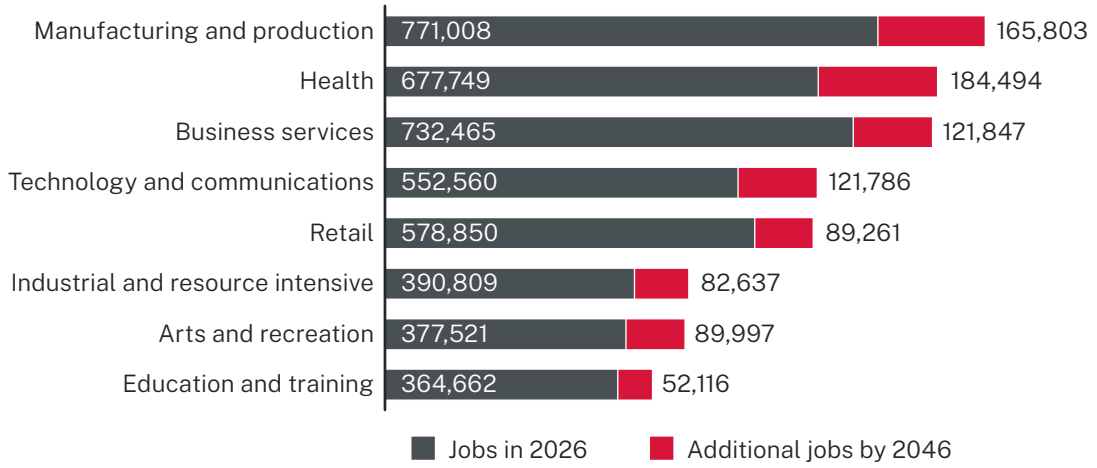
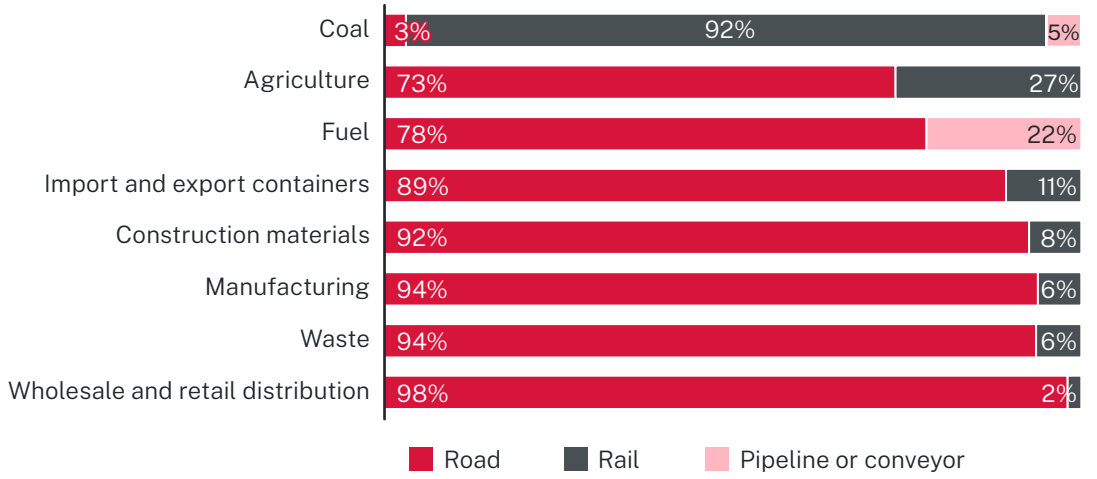


Figure 12: Movement of goods by transport type, 2026 projection
Source: SFM 2022



Housing and lifestyle

- Housing needs and lifestyle preferences are changing as the population grows and diversifies.
- Household sizes are declining, increasing demand for more diverse housing types.
- Housing has become less affordable over time.

Figure 13: Housing types
Source: ABS 2021

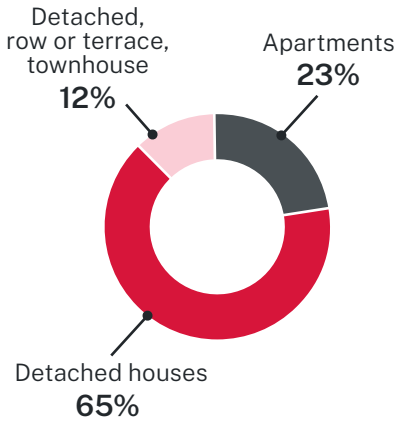


Figure 14: Number of bedrooms
Source: ABS 2021

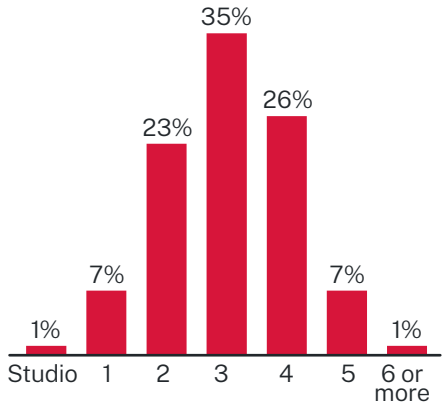


Figure 15: Persons per dwelling
Source: ABS 2021

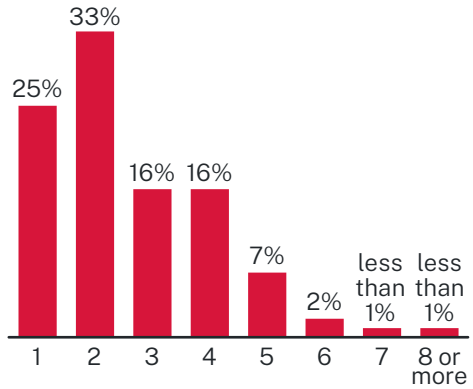


Figure 16: Household composition
Source: DPHI 2024

	2046	Change 2026–46
Couple with children	1.2 million	▲ 19%
Single person	1.1 million	▲ 33%
Couple only	1.1 million	▲ 26%
Single parent family	443,000	▲ 25%
Group household	163,000	▲ 18%
Other family	104,000	▲ 21%
Multi-family	96,000	▲ 23%

Figure 17: Average persons per household
Source: DPHI 2024; ABS

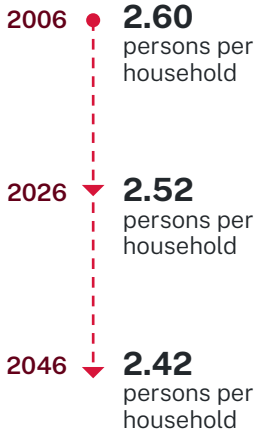
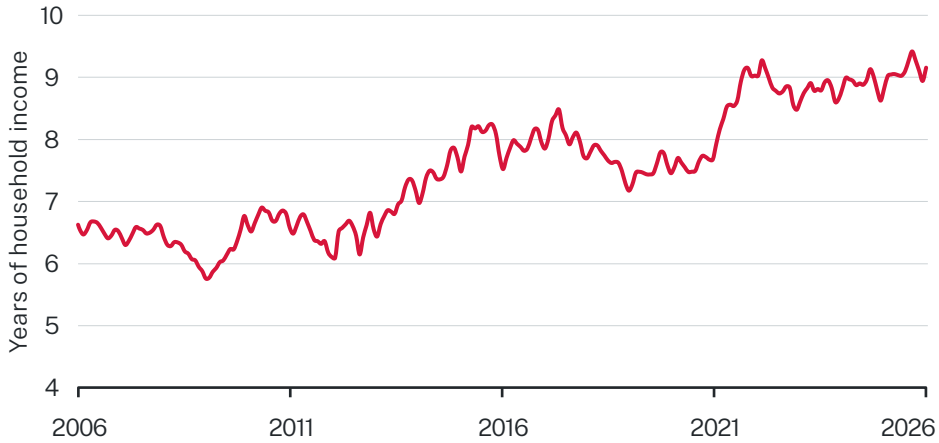


Figure 18: Dwelling price-to-annual household income ratio
Source: ABS; Cotality



Natural environment, climate and energy

- NSW's rich natural environment and biodiversity is central to the State's identity. It includes a variety of coastlines, waterways, rural areas and extensive public spaces.
- Climate change is leading to increases in temperature and hot days over 35 degrees.
- Energy, water and waste management needs will increase into the future as the State grows and changes.
- Renewables will continue to support electricity generation as the State transitions to net zero emissions.

Figure 19: Increase in average temperature
Source: NARCliM2.0

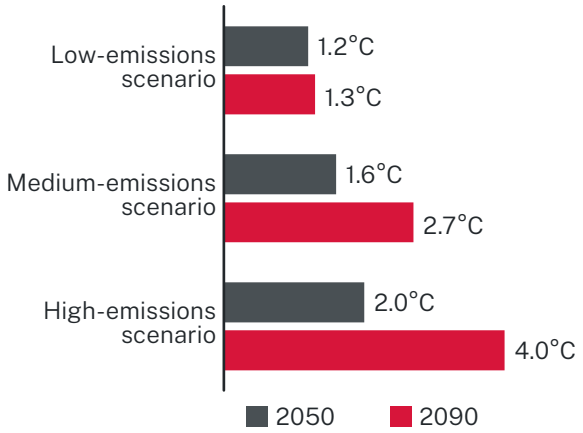


Figure 20: Increase in hot days over 35 degrees per year
Source: NARCliM2.0

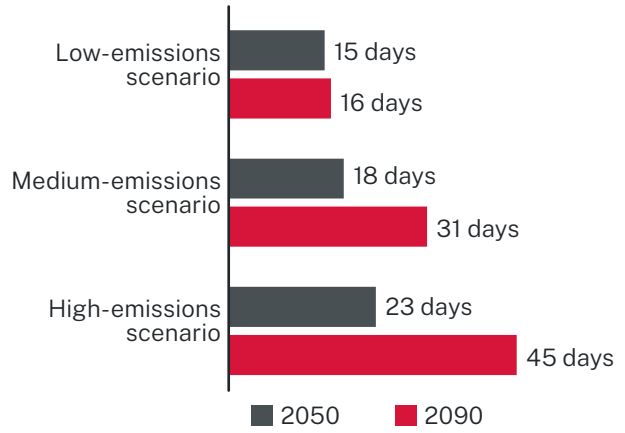


Figure 21: Electricity generation
Source: DCCEEW (Australian Government) 2025

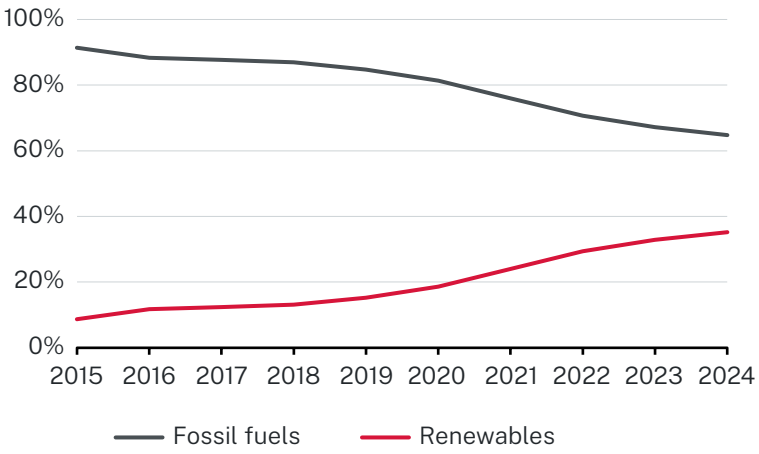


Figure 22: Total waste
Source: NSW EPA 2025

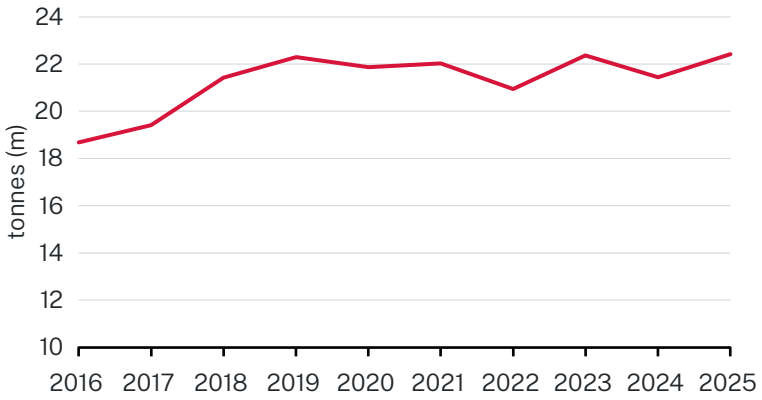
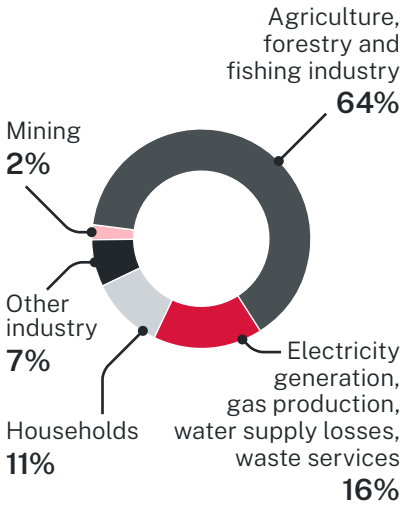


Figure 23: Water use
Source: NSW EPA 2024



5 State Land Use Planning Priorities

Delivering the State vision requires clear priorities to guide how land is planned, managed and developed. Over the coming decades, NSW will experience significant population growth, economic transformation and environmental change. These factors will increase demand for housing, employment land, infrastructure and natural resources while placing greater pressure on the natural systems and productive landscapes that underpin the State's prosperity.

Strategic land use planning will direct growth to the right locations, support economic productivity, and protect the natural and agricultural assets that sustain communities and industries across NSW.

The 7 state-wide land use planning priorities have been developed to respond to major long-term trends, opportunities and challenges shaping NSW and the future needs of the State. Together, they provide an integrated framework that balances social, economic, environmental and cultural considerations in land use planning.

The priorities translate global, national and State trends and challenges into a consistent framework for land use decision-making, aligning with broader government priorities and commitments across NSW.

They provide the strategic direction for how land use planning will be delivered, guiding decision-making across the planning system. While each addresses a distinct area, the priorities are interconnected and designed to be considered together to support balanced and sustainable development.

Each priority is supported by:

- priority statements that establish the consistent strategic direction for land use planning
- a land use planning approach that explains how the priority will be applied through strategic planning
- state-wide technical appendices that support a consistent approach to implementation.

Region and local plans will give effect to these priorities by responding to the region-specific opportunities, constraints and needs of different places across NSW.

Priorities: Aboriginal outcomes

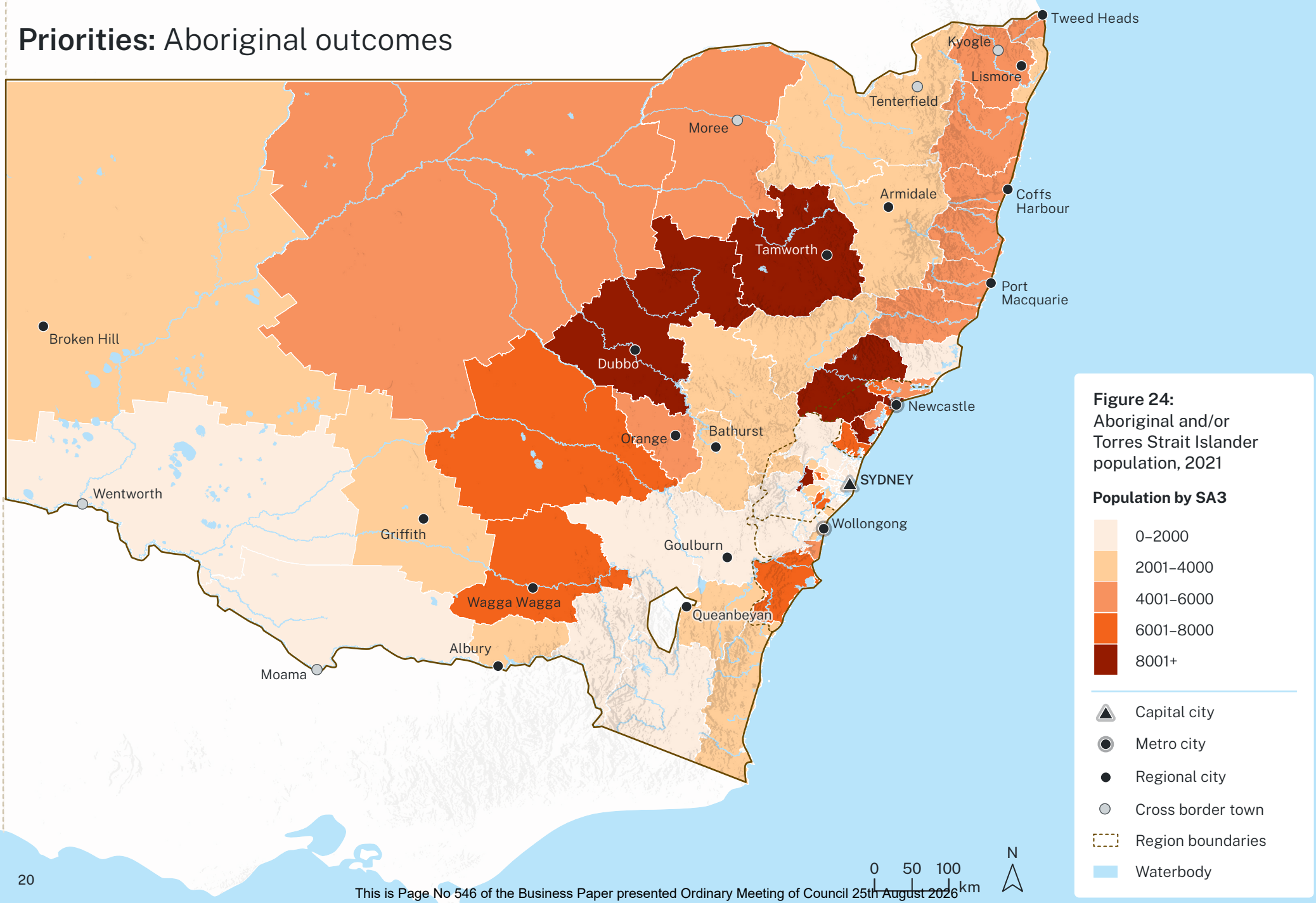


Figure 24: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population, 2021

Population by SA3

- 0–2000
- 2001–4000
- 4001–6000
- 6001–8000
- 8001+

- Capital city
- Metro city
- Regional city
- Cross border town
- Region boundaries
- Waterbody

Priorities: Aboriginal outcomes

Priority: Embedding co-design to recognise Country in planning outcomes. Success means that land use plans recognise Country and custodianship to support use and benefit opportunities for Aboriginal landowners to achieve social, cultural, environmental and economic self-determination.

NSW is home to more than one-third of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, each with distinct cultural identities, stories and deep connections to Country. Aboriginal peoples continue to care for the lands, waters and skies of NSW despite significant change through urbanisation and development.

Aboriginal cultural heritage is a living expression of connection to Country encompassing cultural landscapes, knowledge, stories, languages and practices that continue to be maintained and shared today.

Aboriginal peoples participate in land use planning as Traditional Custodians, with enduring responsibilities to care for Country and maintain cultural heritage, and as landowners, developers and delivery partners through Aboriginal organisations. Recognising these distinct but complementary roles in strategic planning is critical to supporting opportunities for Aboriginal landowners and communities to use and benefit from land in ways that advance cultural, social, environmental and economic self-determination while strengthening cultural heritage and connections to Country.

NSW has 121 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) which collectively hold a substantial and geographically diverse land base across NSW. In addition to LALCs there are other Aboriginal land managers and organisations including Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), Aboriginal Corporations (ACs), Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS), that play an important role in managing Aboriginal land under State and Commonwealth legislation.

There are also non-statutory bodies known as Aboriginal Alliances/Assemblies, which are regional governance bodies that play an important role in supporting community aspirations and facilitating engagement with the NSW Government. Across the State there are 8 Aboriginal Alliances. Both statutory and non-statutory bodies hold important cultural, social and economic responsibilities for caring for Country and maintaining cultural heritage.

The NSW Government is committed to partnering with Aboriginal communities and landowners to deliver on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap through the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO). This Plan strengthens these commitments by supporting housing development on Aboriginal community-owned land (Outcome 9) and by helping Aboriginal peoples maintain strong connections to Country (Outcome 15).

The legacy of colonisation has created enduring inequities that affect Aboriginal people's participation in, and ability to benefit from,

Tribal Warrior facilitating a cultural tour for Walking Together, Learning Together participants, Gadigal Country.

the planning system. Contemporary planning frameworks were not derived from Aboriginal systems of governance and land management, and have not always recognised Aboriginal knowledge, decision-making, cultural values or connections to Country. Many Aboriginal landowners, community organisations and Aboriginal communities operate with limited resources and face complex planning, environmental and regulatory constraints, which can act as barriers to housing delivery and economic development on Aboriginal community-owned land.

Land use planning can help address these inequities by embedding Aboriginal participation, voices and perspectives in decision-making through stronger partnerships with Aboriginal landholders, Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal communities. It can also recognise cultural heritage as a living part of Country and support Aboriginal aspirations for land, culture and self-determination by better reflecting Aboriginal rights and interests in planning decisions. With strong cultural capability and consistent frameworks in place, strategic land use planning can play a practical role in advancing Aboriginal self-determination, protecting culture and enabling equity and shared prosperity.

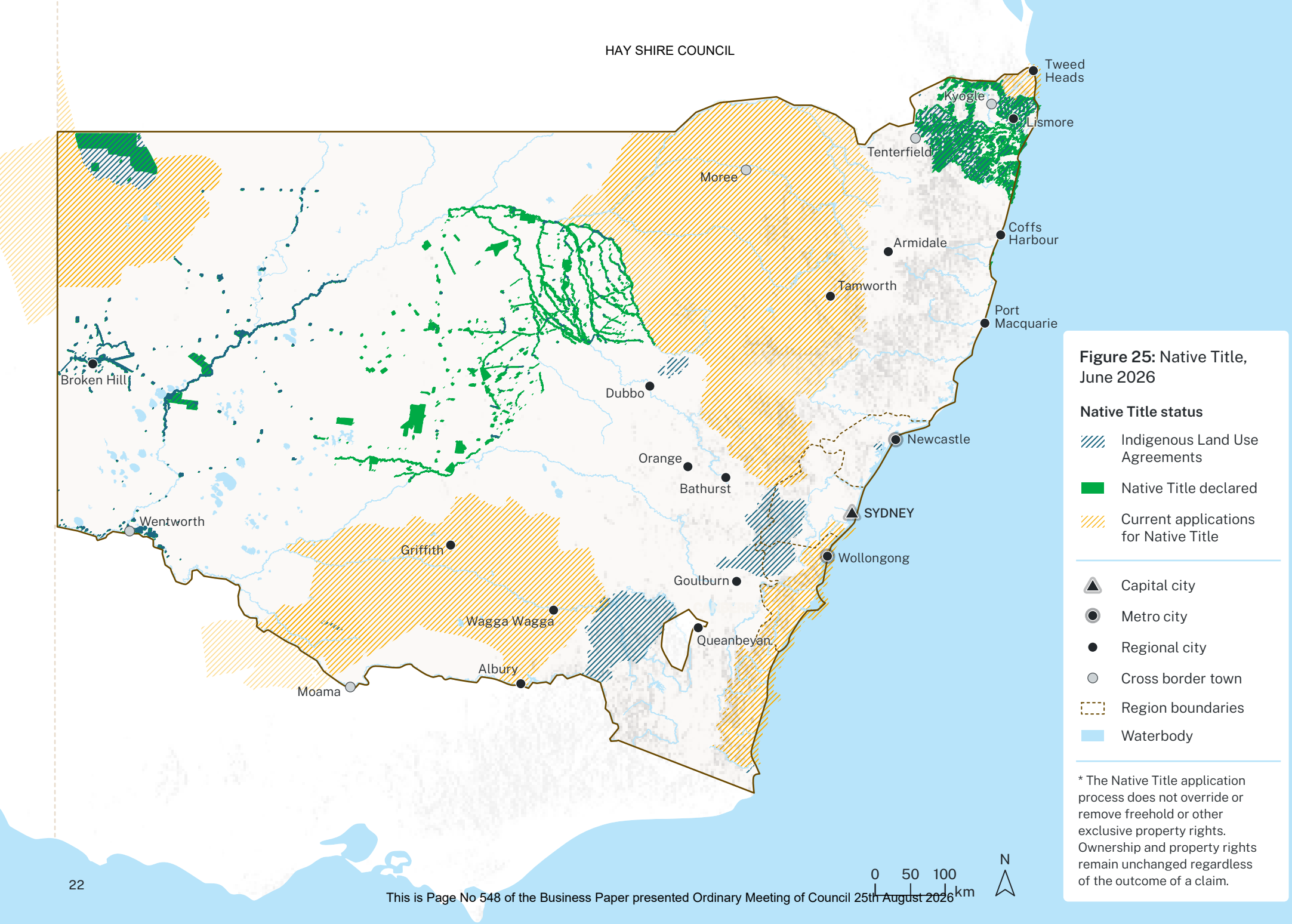


Figure 25: Native Title, June 2026

Native Title status

- Indigenous Land Use Agreements
- Native Title declared
- Current applications for Native Title

- Capital city
- Metro city
- Regional city
- Cross border town
- Region boundaries
- Waterbody

* The Native Title application process does not override or remove freehold or other exclusive property rights. Ownership and property rights remain unchanged regardless of the outcome of a claim.

Self-determination through economic empowerment enables social, cultural and environmental outcomes

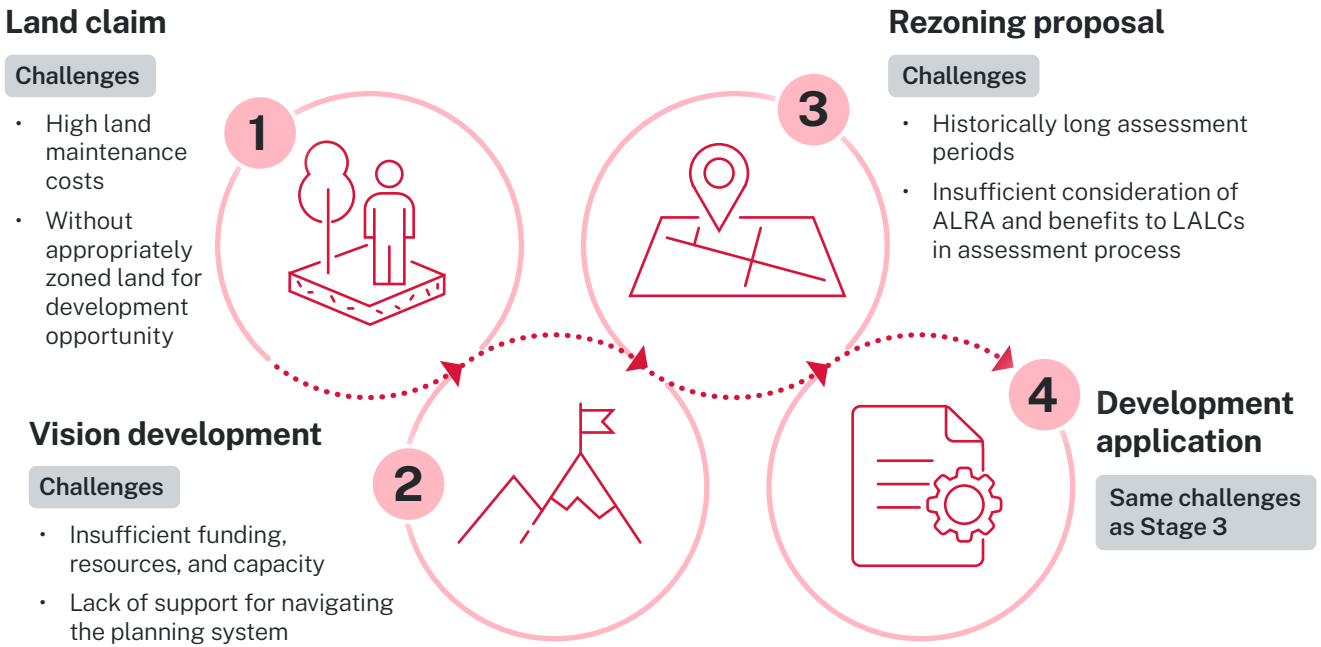
Priority statement: The planning system supports Aboriginal-led development proposals from concept through to delivery.

Land activation on Aboriginal land in NSW is shaped by a layered legislative framework that recognises land rights, native title and pathways for development.

The Aboriginal Land Planning Framework aims to align with the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (ALRA) by facilitating development and recognising the social and economic value of Aboriginal-led planning proposals. Despite this framework, land activation on Aboriginal land remains constrained by limited developable land, resource limitations, lengthy assessment processes and insufficient consideration of the ALRA in the planning system (Figure 26). These barriers can hinder housing delivery and economic development on Aboriginal Land.

Strategic planning can strengthen consistency and certainty in identifying and progressing Aboriginal land use opportunities through an improved Aboriginal Land Planning Framework. This includes streamlining assessment pathways, building capability across the planning system and supporting consent authorities to better consider the ALRA in decision making.

Figure 26: Challenges for land activation on Aboriginal Land



Aboriginal Land Planning Framework

The Aboriginal Land Planning Framework is a set of mechanisms that facilitate and support Aboriginal landholders and communities to advance their land aspirations and strengthen self-determination. Its overall intent is to align the NSW planning system with the ALRA to improve governance, strategic planning and land use.

The framework operates alongside NSW planning laws and policies and guides local councils, developers and State agencies to engage effectively with Aboriginal stakeholders, assess potential impacts on Aboriginal community-owned land, and support outcomes that respect traditional ownership and ongoing custodianship.

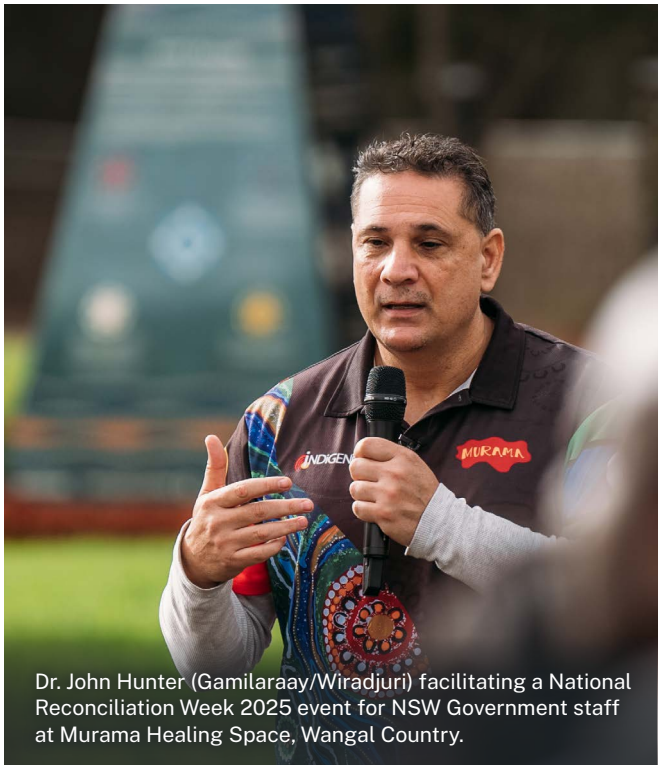
Enabling Country in planning

Priority statement: Planning decisions reflect traditional ownership and custodianship principles and embed Aboriginal knowledge of Country.

Country is ongoing, unbroken and everchanging. It encompasses lands, waters, skies, people, stories, knowledge and cultural practices. Aboriginal cultural heritage is inseparable from Country and continues through ongoing custodianship and community connection. Aboriginal knowledge systems reflect a deep understanding of interconnected landscapes and can inform more sustainable, resilient and equitable outcomes. Recognising Aboriginal peoples' enduring spiritual and physical connection to Country enables land use planning to better integrate culture, knowledge and rights into decisions about development and growth.

The planning system includes statutory and non-statutory mechanisms to identify, assess and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage. Local councils play an important role through Local Environmental Plans (LEPs), Development Control Plans (DCPs) and heritage listings, alongside due diligence requirements under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. While these mechanisms provide important safeguards, they are often applied at specific stages of the planning process. Early and ongoing co-design helps ensure Aboriginal knowledge, values and aspirations are embedded proactively rather than considered retrospectively.

Co-design is essential to culturally respectful exchange and enables Aboriginal peoples to meaningfully influence decisions that affect Country.



Dr. John Hunter (Gamilaraay/Wiradjuri) facilitating a National Reconciliation Week 2025 event for NSW Government staff at Murama Healing Space, Wangal Country.

Early engagement helps identify cultural values and aspirations before land use decisions are made. Applying this approach early supports the integration of Aboriginal aspirations across all levels of planning.

The *Connecting with Country Framework* outlines guidance on how to engage with Country when planning, designing, and delivering projects in the built environment. Adopting the framework supports objectives that recognise, protect and sustain Aboriginal culture and cultural heritage through planning and design. It promotes collaborative processes that bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge to deliver enduring cultural, social and environmental outcomes.

Applying the *Connecting with Country Framework* across State, region and local processes will support the consistent integration of Aboriginal knowledge, values and aspirations into land use planning and decision-making.

Strategic planning can help protect culturally significant places and landscapes while supporting the continuation of Aboriginal culture through future growth and development.

Legislative context

The Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA) recognises Traditional Custodians' pre-existing rights and interests in Country, shaping how land use and development can occur in areas where native title exists. Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) are voluntary agreements made under the NTA that support negotiated outcomes for land management, access and development.

The ALRA provides a statutory mechanism for LALCs, as Aboriginal landholders, to claim certain Crown land (generally unused land that is not required for an essential public purposes). This supports land restitution and forms a basis for economic, cultural and community development.

The *Crown Land Management Act 2016* (CLMA) establishes the framework for the ownership, use and management of Crown land. It requires that environmental, social, cultural heritage and economic factors be considered in decision-making.

Priorities: Housed

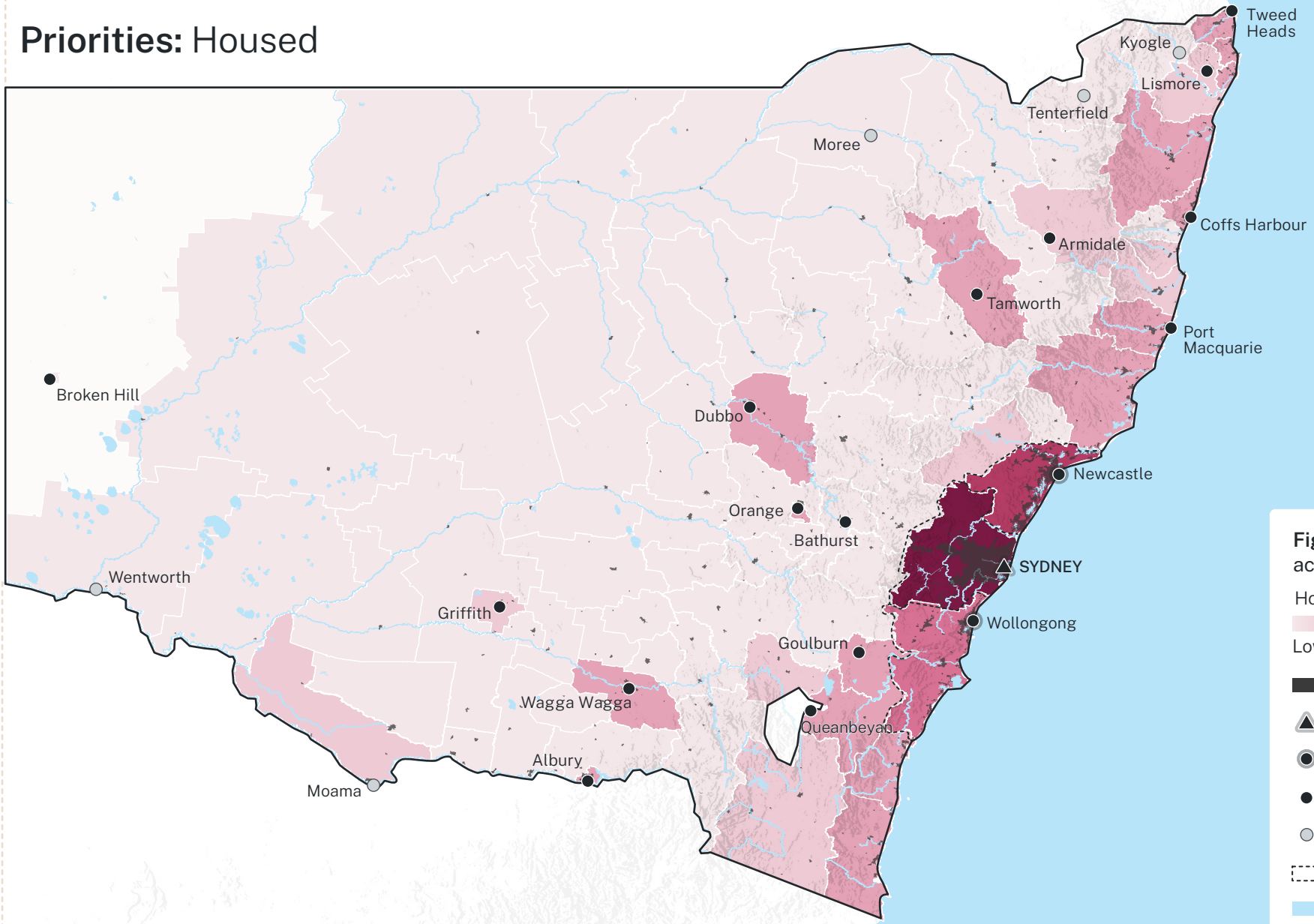


Figure 27: Future housing activity

Housing activity*

Low — High

- Urban areas
- Capital city
- Metro city
- Regional city
- Cross border town
- Region boundaries
- Waterbody

*Not all land within each LGA is suitable for or intended to accommodate housing growth

Priorities: Housed

Priority: Delivering affordable, diverse housing in accessible locations. Success means more homes are built faster, close to jobs and transport.

NSW is expected to grow to a population of 10.5 million by 2046. To meet the needs of this population, 1.2 million new homes will need to be delivered across NSW (Figure 28).

Demand for housing has grown faster than supply for many years. Population growth and smaller household sizes have increased the number of homes needed, while the delivery of new housing has consistently lagged behind demand. More recently, housing delivery has also been affected by feasibility challenges, further constraining supply (Figure 29).

One of the key drivers of this supply gap has been the limited supply of housing opportunities in well-located areas where infrastructure, services and planning settings support development. In some regional markets, these pressures are compounded by additional demand, such as the need to find housing for workers supporting the delivery of major projects.

Demographic change is also reshaping housing demand. An ageing population and changing lifestyles are increasing demand for a broader mix of housing types, including a wider range of accessible and adaptable homes in well-located areas close to services and transport.

Over time, these combined factors have created a structural imbalance between where housing is needed and where it can be delivered, contributing to rising home prices and rents, low rental vacancy rates and increasing financial pressure on households.

Strategic land use planning must support a housing supply pipeline that is well-located, diverse and affordable. While some housing challenges sit beyond the planning system, strategic land use planning plays a critical role in identifying and unlocking housing opportunities.

Figure 28: NSW 20-year housing need

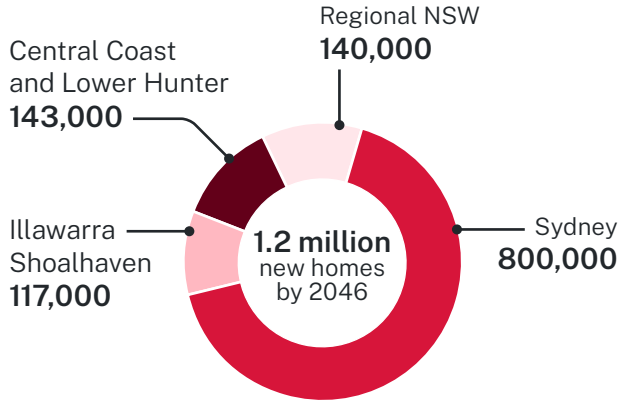
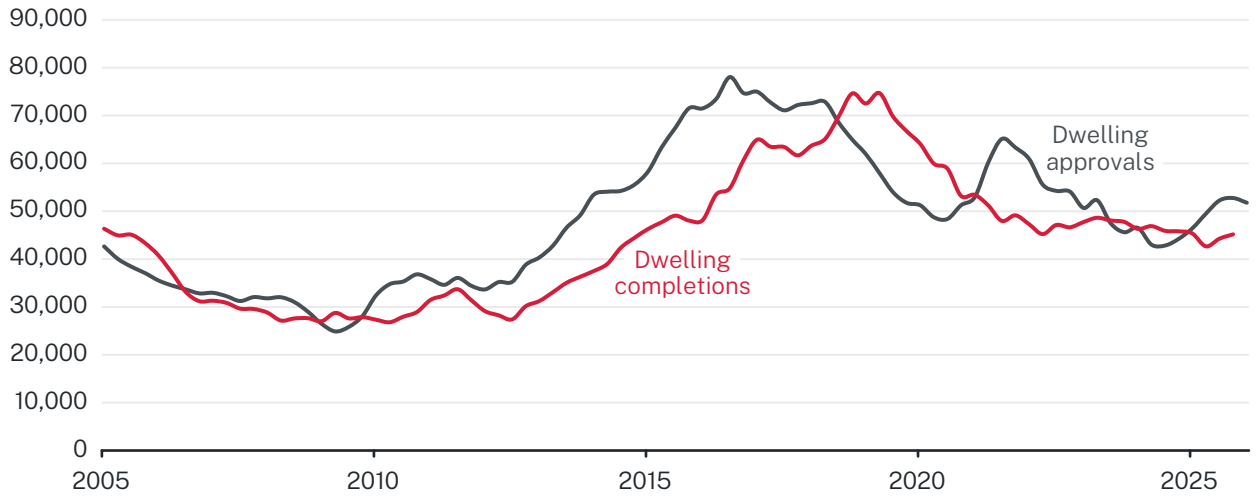


Figure 29: NSW Dwelling approvals and completions (ABS 2026)



Maintain a strong housing supply pipeline

Priority statement: Maintain 30 years of feasible housing capacity and 5 years of realisable housing capacity to support the sustained delivery of housing in line with need.

The strategic planning system is critical to enabling a strong pipeline of housing that meets demand, supports affordability and aligns infrastructure planning and delivery.

Housing completion targets guide councils and the NSW Government to plan for housing and supporting infrastructure. However, the targets alone do not ensure the system can respond to demand.

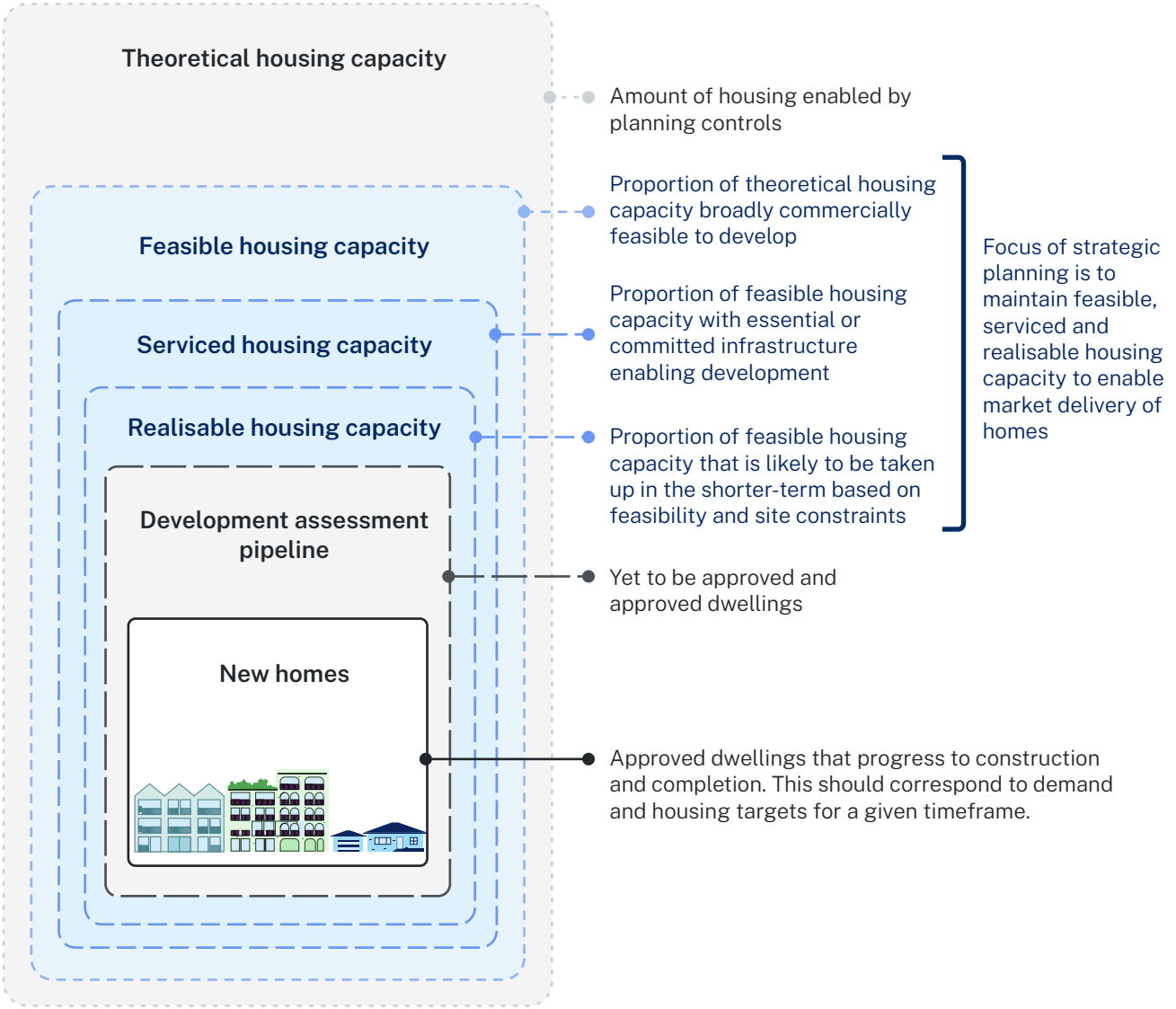
Housing supply is primarily delivered by the private sector and influenced by market conditions, including construction costs, labour availability and financing. While planning can identify housing capacity, not all zoned land is feasible or likely to be delivered. Planning for feasible and realisable capacity is critical to responding to demand (Figure 30).

Strategic planning must maintain sufficient feasible housing capacity in well-located areas to enable industry to deliver housing choice and respond to market conditions.

Region plans will give effect to this priority by identifying feasible housing capacity requirements alongside actions to set 5-year completion targets.

Appendix C: *Feasible Housing Capacity Policy* provides guidance on establishing, maintaining and measuring feasible housing capacity in region and local strategic planning.

Figure 30: Feasible housing capacity



Greater housing diversity creates more choice

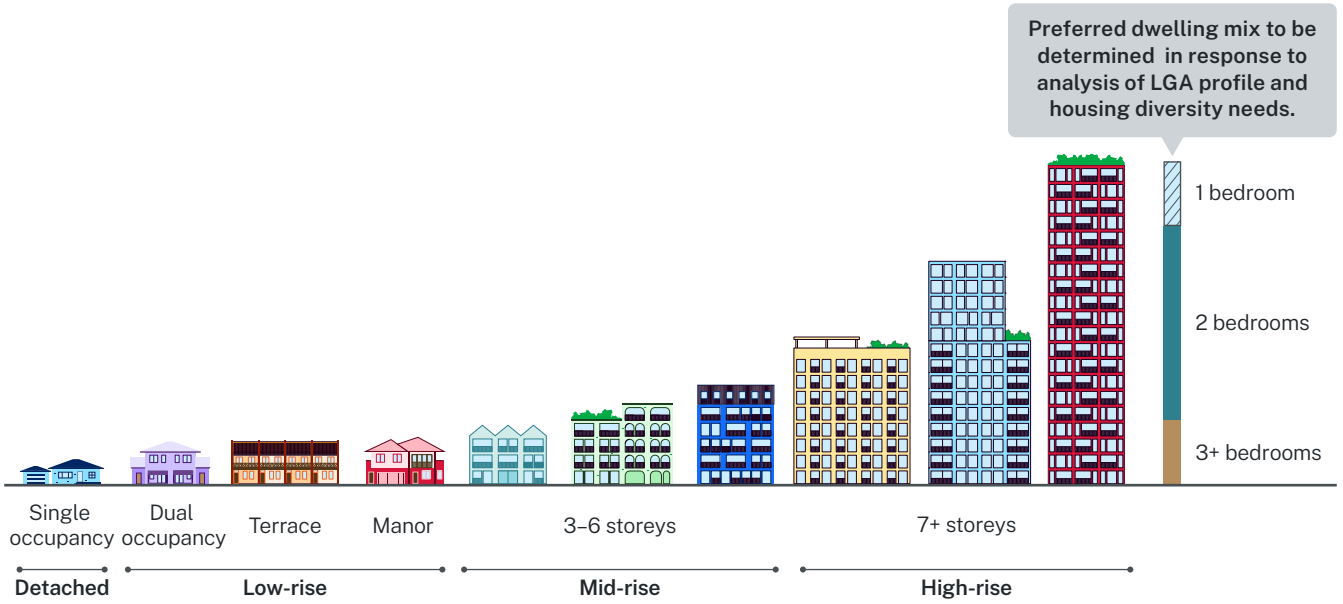
Priority statement: Plan housing capacity to enable diverse housing opportunity aligned to changing demographics and lifestyle preferences.

A robust housing system is defined not only by the number of homes in the pipeline but also the availability of diverse housing options. In NSW housing stock has not adequately kept pace with changing demographics.

Over time, the average household size has declined with more one-and two-person households, while demand for multi-generational living is also increasing. Strategic planning must respond by enabling a wider range of housing forms that reflect how people live across metropolitan and regional areas and across different stages of life.

Historically, strategic planning has focused on the overall volume of housing supply, with less attention to the mix of housing types being enabled through the planning system. While planning controls may permit a range of dwelling forms, the pipeline of housing opportunities has not consistently identified or monitored capacity for different housing types. As a result, even where overall housing capacity appears sufficient, the homes delivered may not reflect changing household needs or provide diversity across price points.

Figure 31: Types of housing diversity



Increasing housing diversity will provide more choice across different price points, supporting a wider range of household types (Figure 31). Housing diversity looks different across the State and is largely dependent on feasibility. In metropolitan areas, it includes a mix of bedrooms in apartments, townhouses and other smaller home types such as co-living near transport, services and jobs.

In regional and rural areas, it means a greater variety of lot sizes and different dwelling types within towns and serviced villages, including apartments, townhouses, dual occupancies, adaptable housing, smaller homes and options for seasonal or temporary workers. Providing different housing options also supports social inclusivity, including providing housing that meets the needs of Aboriginal people to support culturally appropriate outcomes and connection to Country.

People living near jobs, services and amenities and optimising infrastructure

Priority statement: Prioritise housing growth in well-located areas with good access to jobs, services and amenities while minimising land use conflict.

Locating housing near jobs, services and amenities improves access, reduces travel costs and supports economic productivity. Strategic land use planning can support this by directing housing growth to accessible locations and strengthening centres.

In metropolitan areas, this means prioritising renewal and infill development around existing and planned transport corridors. In regional and rural areas, strengthening housing opportunities in and around town centres, employment areas and along key transport routes supports greater access to services, education and jobs. Greenfield housing will continue to play an important role in meeting housing demand, particularly in regional areas, but it must be appropriately coordinated with infrastructure.

Planning for housing growth should also consider local context, including Aboriginal cultural values where relevant, alongside the capacity and cost of local infrastructure needed to support new communities. Early engagement with local government and infrastructure providers will help inform the location and sequencing of housing growth and support more efficient infrastructure investment and delivery.

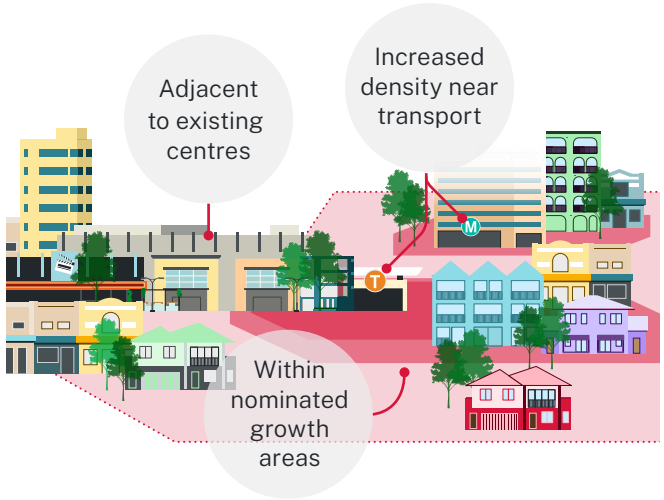
Strategic planning should also consider existing and future land uses to minimise potential conflicts and ensure housing growth is compatible with surrounding environmental, economic and infrastructure functions.

Encouraging well-located housing (Figure 32), whether through urban renewal, regional centre growth or new neighbourhoods near transport and employment helps more people live closer to where they work, learn and access essential services. Strategic initiatives such as the Low and Mid-Rise (LMR) Housing Policy and the Transport Oriented Development (TOD) Program support this approach by creating opportunities to deliver a greater variety of homes, particularly in well-located areas close to centres, transport and services.

Strategic sequencing and coordinated infrastructure delivery are critical to ensuring growth is supported by timely services and amenities. Data-driven approaches, including the Urban Development Program (UDP), will provide a consistent evidence base to identify, sequence and monitor housing growth where infrastructure can be delivered efficiently.

Region strategic plans will be updated to program and sequence growth. This will provide greater certainty to industry and the community, support more efficient infrastructure delivery, and enable housing to be delivered sooner.

Figure 32: Well-located housing



More affordable and secure housing

Priority statement: Increase the supply of well-located affordable housing through land use planning.

While greater housing choice is essential, many people across NSW cannot secure safe, affordable housing through the private market. Demand for social and affordable housing exceeds supply in both metropolitan and regional areas.

Notably, rental stress affects essential workers in health, education, emergency services and other key sectors, particularly in high-cost and fast-growing metropolitan and regional centres. Expanding well-located affordable housing can improve housing security and support essential service delivery.

Increasing the supply of affordable rental housing provides a vital safety net for households unable to meet market rents. Strategic land use planning can support this by widespread implementation of affordable housing contribution schemes, and by locating affordable and social housing close to jobs, services and transport.

A sustained, long-term approach is needed to establish a consistent pipeline of well-located, affordable rental housing state-wide.

Priorities: Prosperous

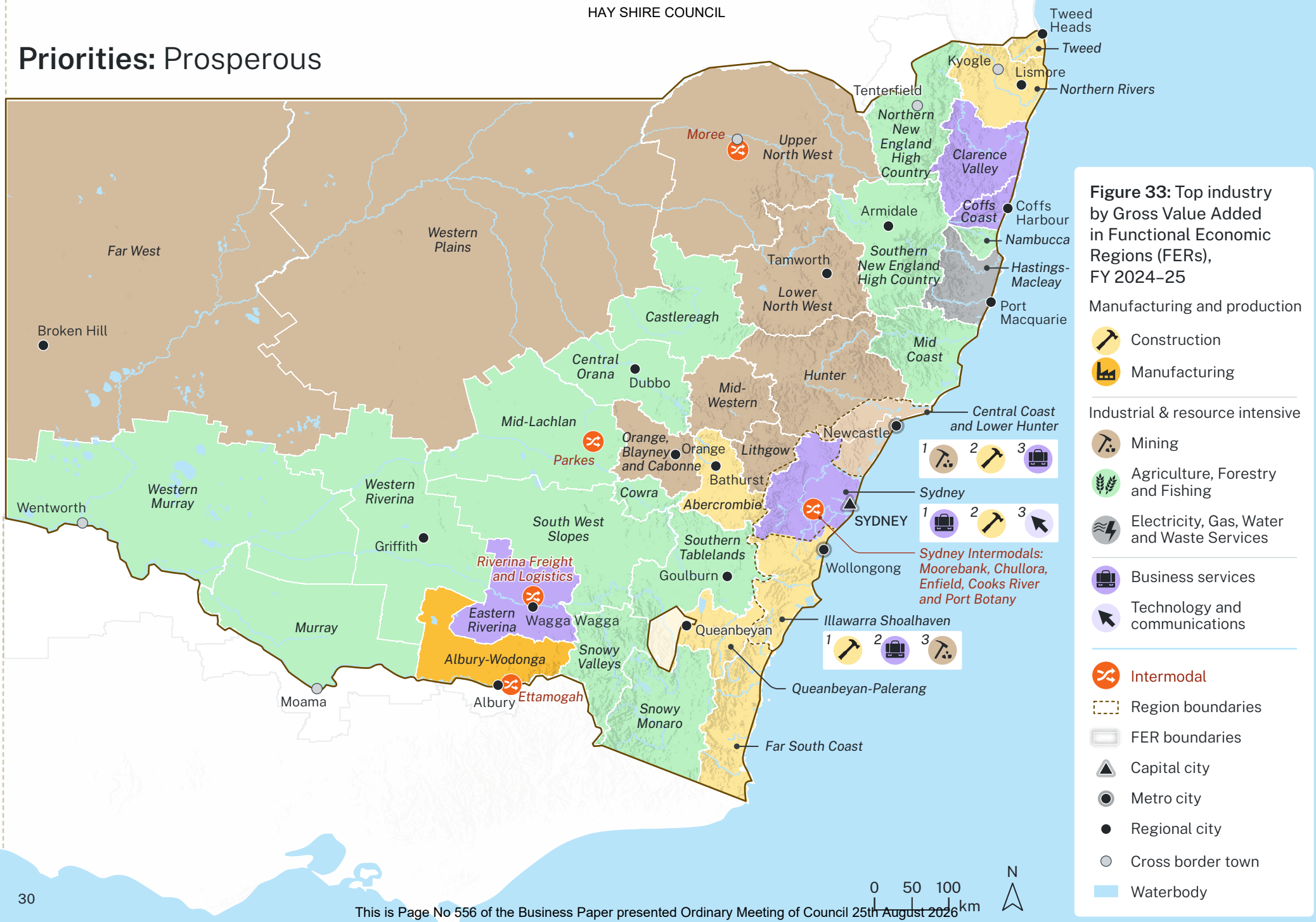


Figure 33: Top industry by Gross Value Added in Functional Economic Regions (FERs), FY 2024–25

Manufacturing and production

- Construction
- Manufacturing

Industrial & resource intensive

- Mining
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
- Business services
- Technology and communications
- Intermodal
- Region boundaries
- FER boundaries
- Capital city
- Metro city
- Regional city
- Cross border town
- Waterbody

Priorities: Prosperous

Priority: Growing resilient, innovative economies. Success means land use decisions help create jobs, supports emerging and diverse industries, and strengthens supply chains.

NSW is Australia's largest state economy, contributing around one third of national Gross Domestic Product in 2025, and will continue to attract businesses, investors and skilled workers.

A prosperous NSW is supported by an interconnected network of cities, regional centres, towns and rural communities, each contributing distinct economic strengths and employment opportunities. Strategic land use planning will support this network by providing a consistent state-wide approach to employment distribution, centres planning and industrial land management, supporting access to jobs and economic opportunity across NSW.

While the economy is diverse in nature, there has been a shift towards service-based industries over recent decades (Figure 34). This reinforces the importance of centres as key locations for jobs, productivity and innovation, while maintaining a strong and protected industrial land base to support logistics, manufacturing and essential services.

This economic strength is built on the diversity of its places and industries — from advanced services and innovation to agriculture, mining, manufacturing, tourism and renewable energy. Together, these industries position NSW as a leading destination for investment, talent and enterprise, supporting employers and high-value economic growth.

As the economy grows and becomes more diverse, and industry needs continue to evolve, demand for well-located employment land, centres and industrial areas is increasing. In many locations, land is constrained or under pressure from competing uses, particularly in high-demand metropolitan areas and key regional economies. These pressures are shaping where industries can locate, expand and access labour, infrastructure and markets, and how communities access jobs and economic opportunities.

Business location decisions are driven primarily by the private sector and influenced by factors such as access to labour, customers, suppliers, infrastructure and markets. Strategic land use planning cannot determine where industries choose to locate, but it can create the conditions that support investment by protecting appropriate land, coordinating infrastructure and enabling places to build on their comparative economic strengths.

Strategic land use planning responds to these challenges by coordinating employment land, centres, industrial areas and resource lands with infrastructure and population growth. This supports productive businesses, strengthens supply chains and enables industries to expand, innovate and create jobs across NSW.

Figure 34: Gross Value Added by industry FY 2024–25

Source: REMPLAN 2024–25

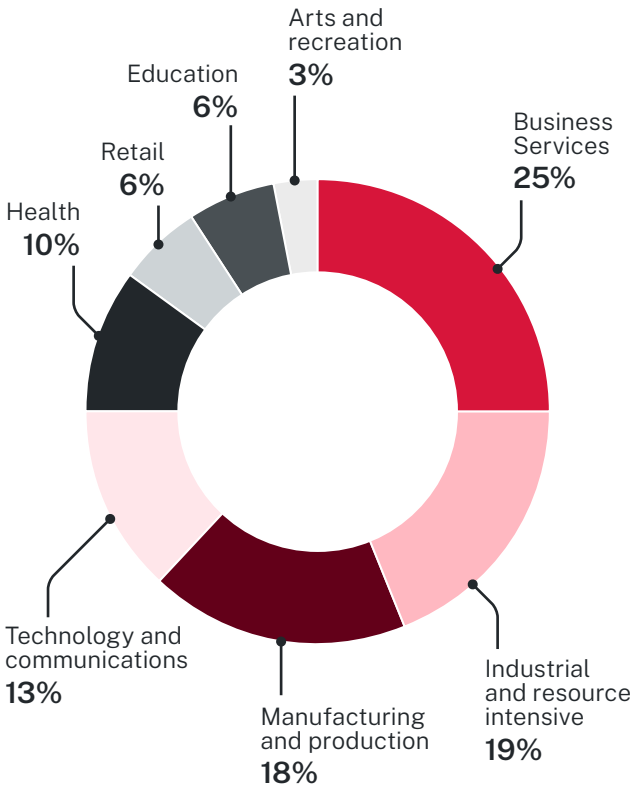


Figure 35: Top industry by jobs in Functional Economic Regions (FERs), FY 2024–25

Manufacturing and production
- Construction
- Manufacturing

Industrial & resource intensive
- Mining
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

- Health
- Arts and recreation
- Education and training
- Business services
- Technology and communications
- Retail

- Regional jobs precincts
- Intermodal
- Region boundaries
- FER boundaries
- Capital city
- Metro city
- Regional city
- Cross border town
- Waterbody

More jobs in the right places

Priority statement: Plan for employment opportunities that are close to or accessible from where people live.

NSW has over 4.4 million jobs in 2026 across a broad range of industries and locations (Figure 36). The economy will continue to evolve, with more than 20% additional jobs projected by 2046.

Planning for a growing diversity and number of jobs – across diverse industries and locations – supports economic productivity and employment opportunities. It also contributes to improved liveability, including more equitable access to jobs.

Direction for how regional strategic planning should plan for jobs growth is provided in Appendix D: *Statewide Employment Guidance*. The guidance provides an evidence-based methodology for setting jobs targets and identifies 8 broad industry categories to guide growth. Further direction is provided by the *Statewide Policy for Industrial Lands* (Appendix F) and the *NSW Centres Framework* (Appendix E).

Figure 36: Jobs by industry, 2026
Source: TZP 2024

Manufacturing and production — 17% of jobs in NSW
- Machine Operators
- Manufacturing Production Managers
- Plant Engineers

Business services — 17% of jobs in NSW
- Business Analysts
- Bankers
- Property Managers

Health — 15% of jobs in NSW
- Allied Health Professionals
- General Practitioners
- Registered Nurses

Retail — 13% of jobs in NSW
- Hairdressers and Barbers
- Sales Assistants
- Service Station Attendants

Technology and communications — 12% of jobs in NSW
- Digital Media Designers
- ICT Project Managers
- Software Developers

Industrial and resource intensive — 9% of jobs in NSW
- Bus Drivers
- Farmers
- Mining Engineers

Arts and recreation — 9% of jobs in NSW
- Musicians / Performers
- Swimming / Sports Coaches
- Zoo / Botanical Garden Keepers

Education and training — 8% of jobs in NSW
- Child Care Workers
- Primary and Secondary School Teachers
- University Lecturers

A network of centres

Priority statement: Plan a network of centres to concentrate employment and services, in line with infrastructure investment, economic growth and community needs.

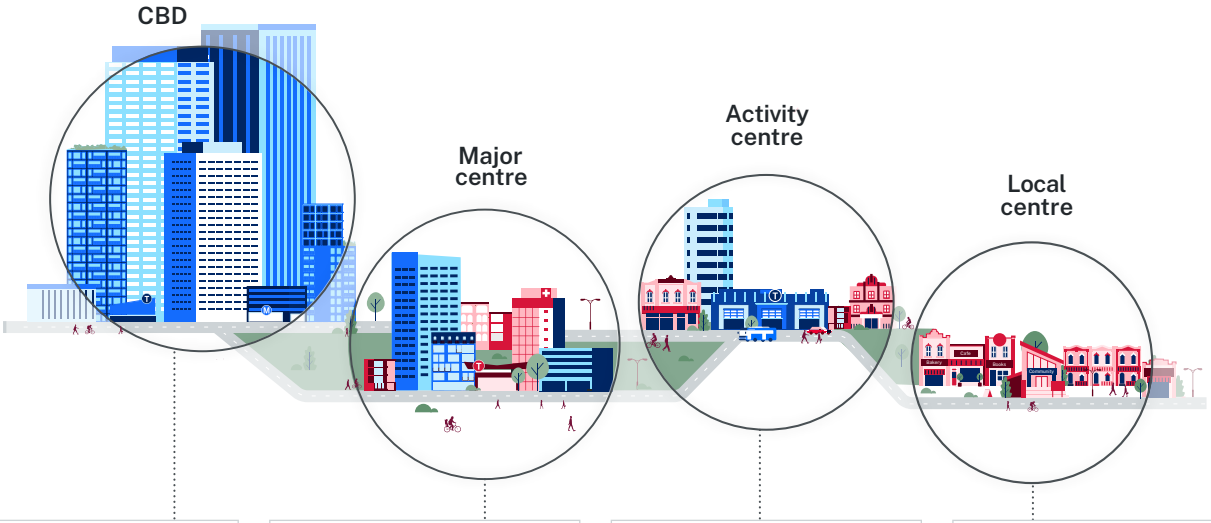
NSW's economy has shifted toward service-based industries, increasing demand for commercial space in centres where businesses benefit from proximity to customers, services and labour markets. By coordinating employment, housing and infrastructure within centres, strategic land use planning strengthens local economies, supports small and emerging businesses and improves access to opportunity. This role is increasingly important as knowledge-intensive and service industries continue to grow, concentrating employment in accessible, well-connected locations.

In Sydney, 48% of all jobs in the region are in centres, and a significant portion of jobs in regional areas are also located in centres. While the scale and function of centres differ between metropolitan and regional areas, their role in supporting communities and economic activity is consistent across the State.

Strategic land use planning will concentrate jobs and services in or near centres to encourage access via public transport and active travel, improve labour mobility, and enable businesses to benefit from agglomeration effects and improved productivity.

The *NSW Centres Framework* (Appendix E) provides a state-wide approach to defining the role and scale of centres (Figure 37). Region and local plans will apply this framework to support growth, balance land uses and support investment certainty across diverse economic contexts.

Figure 37: Centre typologies



CBDs are nationally and globally significant centres located only in metropolitan regions. They are highly accessible by mass public transport and have the highest concentration of commercial, social, cultural and civic infrastructure. They also support high-density residential and mixed-use development.

They are major hubs for knowledge-based employment and government, health, justice and education services, alongside significant commercial and retail activity.

Major centres are significant employment and service hubs with a high concentration of social, cultural, civic and transport infrastructure. They also support residential and mixed-use development.

In metropolitan areas they serve broad catchments and often specialise in functions such as health or education, supported by infrastructure investment.

In regional areas, they function as regional hubs supporting major airports, universities, major hospitals, civic and cultural infrastructure and other regionally significant infrastructure.

Activity centres bring together housing, employment, and services to meet the daily and weekly needs of large population catchments. They also support residential and mixed-use development.

Strong public transport connections support higher density development while maintaining a commercial core.

In regional areas, they support surrounding major centres with retail, commercial and community facilities, typically alongside low-to medium-density housing.

Local centres provide everyday goods, services and local employment opportunities for surrounding communities.

They have a stronger residential focus with housing that reflects the nature of the centre. They typically provide walkable access to shops, public transport and community facilities.

In regional areas, local centres often include rural villages with local shops, shared community or recreation spaces. Their mix of uses varies between centres.

Productive industrial land

Priority statement: Maintain a sufficient supply of well-located and development-ready industrial land.

Industrial land underpins trade, logistics, manufacturing and essential services relied upon by communities across NSW.

Industrial lands support processing, agribusiness, manufacturing, logistics and emerging industries that add value locally and strengthen regional economies.

There is an opportunity to strengthen downstream processing, advanced manufacturing and critical mineral value chains, supporting emerging industries and capturing greater economic value for regional communities. These industries are central to exports, local employment and the State's transition to a low-emissions economy.

The location and supply of industrial land influences business competitiveness and supply chain resilience. Maintaining a sufficient supply of well-located industrial land strengthens NSW's interconnected economic network.

Pressures on industrial land vary across NSW, including constrained supply, increasing land costs and changing industry formats driven by e-commerce, freight growth and advanced manufacturing. Many areas are facing an immediate shortfall of serviced fit-for-purpose industrial lands, which can increase operational costs that are often passed on to the consumer, affecting the price of goods, cost of construction and contributes to driving inflation.

Encroachment by residential and other sensitive uses can constrain industrial operations, limit opportunities for expansion and create land use conflict, reinforcing the need to protect appropriate interfaces around significant industrial areas.

Guidance for how regional and local planning should plan for the supply of industrial lands is provided in Appendix F: *Statewide Policy for Industrial Lands*. The policy establishes a framework for categorising industrial land as State, regionally and locally significant, and supports planning for new and intensified industrial areas (Figure 38). Implementation is supported by the Employment Lands Development Monitor, that tracks industrial land supply (Table 1); and the Employment Lands Development Program (ELDP), that identifies and maintains a pipeline of development-ready industrial land.

Table 1: State of industrial land across NSW (total hectares)

Region	Zoned	Zoned and undeveloped	Zoned, undeveloped – access to water and wastewater connections	Zoned, undeveloped – access to roads suitable for heavy vehicles	Zoned, undeveloped – access to water, wastewater, roads suitable for heavy vehicles	Average annual take-up of employment lands from 2018–24
Sydney	20,210	7,166	631	4,227	385	165
Central Coast and Lower Hunter	8,957	4,498	1,926	2,504	1,065	43
Illawarra Shoalhaven*	4,462	1,362	561	523	291	9
Regional Cities**	9,954	5,901	N/A	N/A	N/A	51 (2022–24)

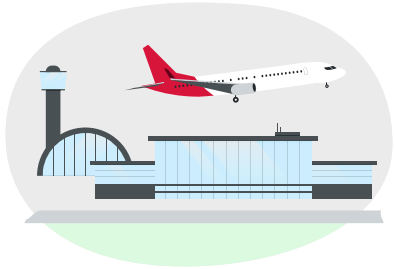
Source: Employment Lands Development Monitor data January 2025

**Figures for Illawarra Shoalhaven do not include the Wingecarribee Shire LGA.

***Regional cities data includes employment lands in the LGAs of Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Griffith, Lismore, Orange, Port Macquarie–Hastings, Tamworth, Tweed, and Wagga Wagga.

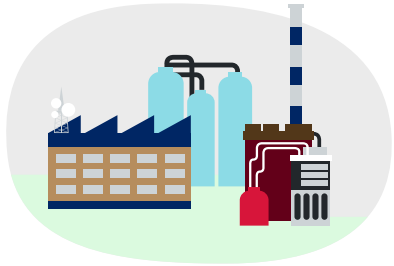
Figure 38: Industrial lands classification

State significant



Industrial lands that are critical infrastructure of State or national significance.

Regionally significant



Industrial lands that are essential to supply chains and broader city functions.

Locally significant

Industrial lands that serve the local area and support local uses and urban services such as mechanics or last-mile delivery.

The ELDP maintains a rolling 20-year pipeline of development-ready industrial land, aligned with projected demand, land suitability, and proximity to population and infrastructure. Broad development-ready land supply targets have been established for each region and will be incorporated into updated region plans. Across NSW, maintaining an average supply of around 370 hectares of development-ready industrial land each year will support a healthy long-term pipeline.

The ELDP also identifies Employment Land Investigation Areas with the potential to become development-ready through active planning and infrastructure coordination. These investigation areas form part of the long-term industrial land pipeline and will be incorporated into the updated region plans.

Natural Resources and energy for the future

Priority statement: Protect land required for current and future resource production, renewable energy and associated industries.

Priority statement: Manage land use transitions to minimise land use conflict and support the repurposing of post-mining lands.

Regional NSW has a diverse range of natural resource-based industries, including mining, Renewable Energy Zones (REZs), and critical minerals that are essential to clean energy and other technologies. These industries will continue to support regional economies and require coordinated land use planning to enable future investment and manage land use change.

As coal-fired power stations and mining activities wind down, strategic land use planning will guide the transition of these lands to new economic uses, including renewable energy, and industry and community-supporting activities. This work is supported by initiatives such as the Future Jobs and Investment Authority, which helps coordinate investment and facilitate the transition of post-mining lands. Planning for these transitions should recognise local context and support opportunities for Aboriginal communities to participate in future economic uses of post-mining land where appropriate.

Strategic planning safeguards land required for long-term resource production, manages land use conflict throughout the resource lifecycle, recognises Aboriginal cultural values and aspirations in land use transitions where appropriate, and coordinates infrastructure to support investment and orderly transition, while balancing environmental outcomes.

Agricultural growth and productivity

Priority statement: Protect productive agricultural land by preventing and managing land use conflict.

Agriculture remains central to the identity and economy of many communities across NSW, supporting food and fibre production, exports, and employment. In 2025, agriculture, forestry and fishing contributed $19 billion to the NSW economy.

Agricultural productivity also relies on healthy soils, secure water resources, pollination and other ecosystem contributors that sustain food and fibre production.

As populations grow and markets evolve, maintaining productive and resilient agricultural land will be essential to food security, economic stability and long-term prosperity.

Future productivity will be shaped by innovation, diversification and value-adding with advances in technology, data, supply chains and processing influencing how agricultural land is used and managed.

Strategic land use planning must support agricultural growth by protecting high quality agricultural land, managing land use conflict and ensuring farming operations can continue to operate efficiently. This includes limiting the encroachment of incompatible uses, supporting farm viability, enabling infrastructure and protecting the processing, freight and supply chain networks that underpin agricultural productivity.

A long-term approach to agricultural land use will ensure the sector can adapt to changing conditions, while continuing to contribute to NSW's interconnected economy and supporting resilient communities.

Visitor economy and tourism

Priority statement: Ensure tourism development occurs in locations supported by existing or planned infrastructure capacity, while responding to environmental values and community needs.

Tourism is a significant contributor to the NSW economy, generating spending across accommodation, hospitality, transport, retail, events, culture, sport and the night-time economy. In 2025, domestic and international visitors spent a combined $60 billion in NSW, with strong growth expected over the next decade across cities, regional centres and rural communities. The State's distinctive landscapes, waterways, cultural heritage and natural assets are also central to its visitor appeal.

Strategic land use planning plays a central role in enabling sustainable tourism growth by guiding the location and scale of visitor accommodation, event and cultural infrastructure, agritourism ventures, and other tourism assets, while creating opportunities for nature-based tourism and Aboriginal cultural tourism that support Aboriginal peoples' ongoing connection to Country. To achieve the NSW Government's goal of $91 billion in annual visitor expenditure by 2035, strategic planning must enable for the expansion and upgrade of tourist and visitor accommodation. Planning must balance tourism development with residential needs, infrastructure capacity and environmental constraints to ensure growth remains sustainable.

Vineyard on Mitchell Highway, south of Orange

Coordinating visitor uses within centres and along key transport and nature-based corridors supports economic resilience and manages cumulative impacts. By aligning tourism infrastructure with settlement patterns, transport networks and environmental assets, strategic land use planning contributes to a strong visitor economy across NSW.

Priorities: Connected

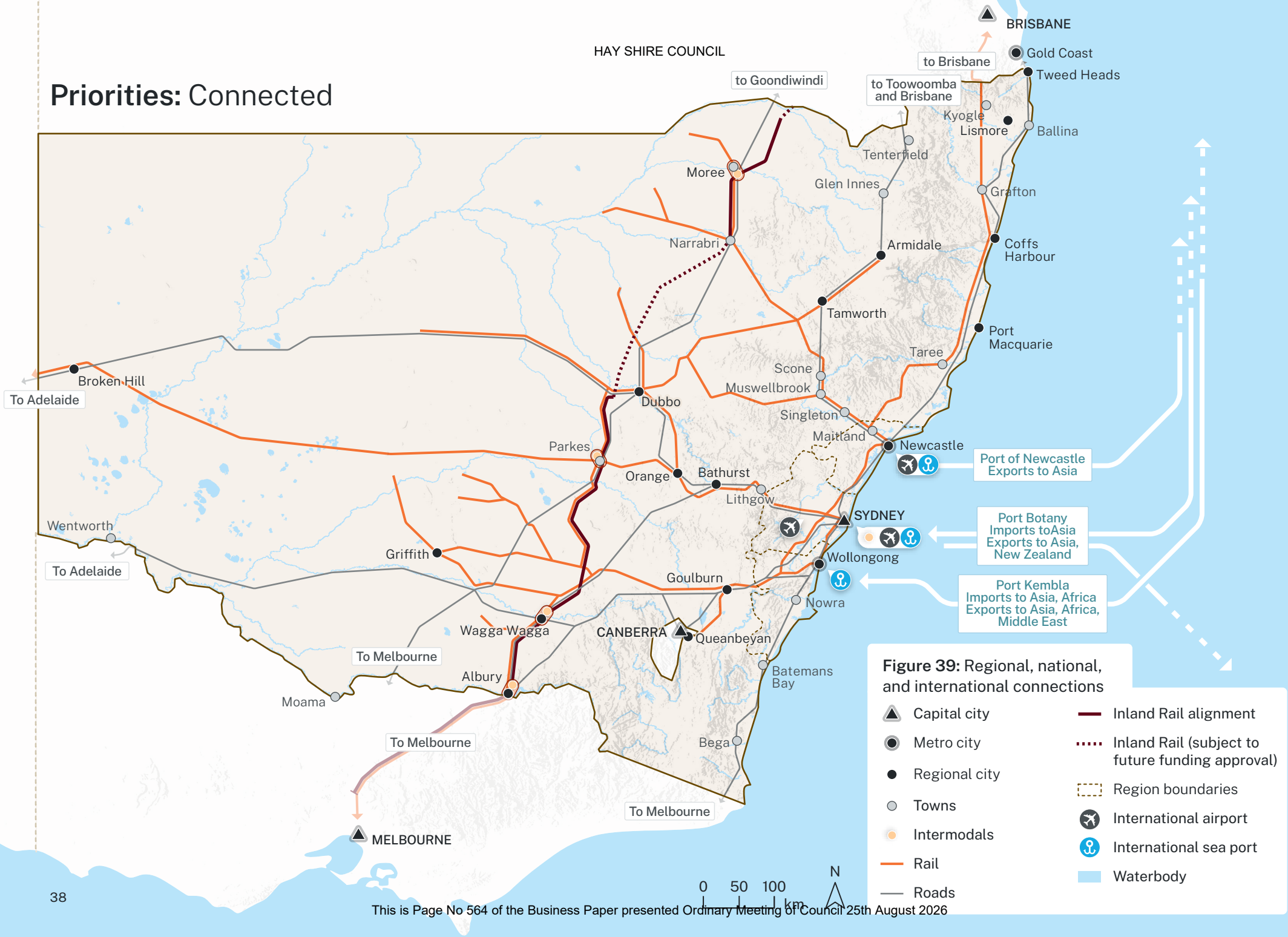


Figure 39: Regional, national, and international connections

- Capital city
- Metro city
- Regional city
- Towns
- Intermodals
- Rail
- Roads
- Inland Rail alignment
- Inland Rail (subject to future funding approval)
- Region boundaries
- International airport
- International sea port
- Waterbody

Priorities: Connected

Priority: Linking communities with safe, reliable, resilient and efficient transport systems. Success means homes, jobs, and services are easier to reach and more accessible.

Safe, reliable, resilient and efficient transport networks underpin economic productivity by facilitating access to labour markets, supporting the movement of goods and services, and connecting NSW to national and global economies.

As population and employment grow, demand on key corridors, centres and freight networks will increase. In metropolitan areas, congestion and longer travel times affect accessibility and productivity. In regional areas, dispersed settlement patterns can limit connectivity and transport choice, including access to services and freight movement. This can contribute to transport disadvantage by reducing access to jobs and services and limits the efficiency of the network.

Freight movement is critical to the NSW economy and relies on an integrated network of ports, intermodal terminals and transport corridors. Protecting these networks and their connections to industrial, employment and logistics areas is essential to support economic activity and accommodate future demand.

Strategic land use planning must align housing and employment growth with existing and planned transport infrastructure, safeguard key corridors and improve accessibility across NSW.

Maximise housing and employment opportunities around existing transport infrastructure

Priority statement: Concentrate higher-density housing and employment uses around existing and planned transport infrastructure.

Strategic land use planning can strengthen connectivity by aligning growth with key transport routes and infrastructure and reinforcing links between cities, regional centres, towns and villages. This aligns closely with the *Connecting NSW Strategy*, which supports coordinated land use and transport planning to deliver a safe, reliable, resilient and efficient transport system across NSW.

Concentrating development in well-connected locations improves access to key destinations within reasonable travel times, supports sustainable travel choices, and reduces congestion and infrastructure costs. Where growth is not aligned with transport infrastructure, it can increase travel distances, reduce accessibility and place additional pressure on existing networks.

Where capacity exists within transport networks, including rail, bus and other mass transit, centres can accommodate additional homes and jobs in accessible locations. Where capacity is constrained, coordinated investment in transport infrastructure and services can unlock new opportunities for well-located housing, employment and community facilities.

As Australia's top visitor economy, NSW welcomed 127 million domestic and international visitors in 2025. Major tourism destinations across the State rely on extensive road, rail and aviation networks. Maximising the use of existing transport infrastructure supports efficient access to major tourist destinations and strengthens the visitor economy.

Newcastle CBD and surrounds

The freight network connects to industrial lands

Priority statement: Allocate and reserve land for key freight routes and transport corridors to support the efficient movement of goods and people.

Priority statement: Preserve and intensify industrial and employment lands near key freight routes and corridors.

The freight network connects producers with domestic and international markets and underpins supply chains across NSW. The freight and logistics sector contributed around $74 billion in 2022–23 and is projected to grow to $131.5 billion by 2060.

Strategic land use planning supports productive and resilient freight networks by protecting key freight corridors and logistics precincts, maintaining appropriate separation from incompatible development, and safeguarding land needed for future freight infrastructure.

As freight demand grows, the integration of transport corridors with industrial lands will be critical to maintaining supply chain efficiency, reducing costs and supporting economic competitiveness across NSW. As cities grow, strategic planning also supports evolving urban freight and logistics needs through appropriately located industrial and logistics land.

Around 80% of non-bulky interstate freight is transported by road, placing pressure on key corridors and surrounding land uses. Effective freight movement relies on an integrated system of ports, airports, intermodal terminals and distribution hubs, supported by compatible land uses and protected corridors. These patterns highlight the importance of aligning freight infrastructure with industrial lands and port related activities.

Planning for freight networks should also consider climate change, natural hazards and network resilience to minimise disruption to communities, businesses and the movement of goods.

Coordinating land use with road and rail infrastructure helps strengthen supply chain capacity by protecting strategic freight corridors, improving connectivity and supporting the reliable and efficient movement of goods.

Strategic land use planning plays a significant role in managing this growth by safeguarding freight corridors, supporting strategically located industrial lands and minimising land use conflict.

Case study: Port Kembla

Port Kembla is well connected by road and rail to metropolitan and regional areas, enabling efficient supply chain movements. It is surrounded by extensive industrial lands that accommodate a range of freight-related activities. This alignment supports the successful operation of the largest motor vehicle import facility in NSW.

Once motor vehicle imports arrive to the purpose built terminal, pre-delivery inspections and services are provided onsite. The vehicles are then transported to off site storage facilities or delivered directly to motor vehicle dealerships across the State via the road network.

Support active transport through connected places

Priority statement: Prioritise walking and cycling networks in centres, neighbourhoods and transport corridors to support safe and convenient travel.

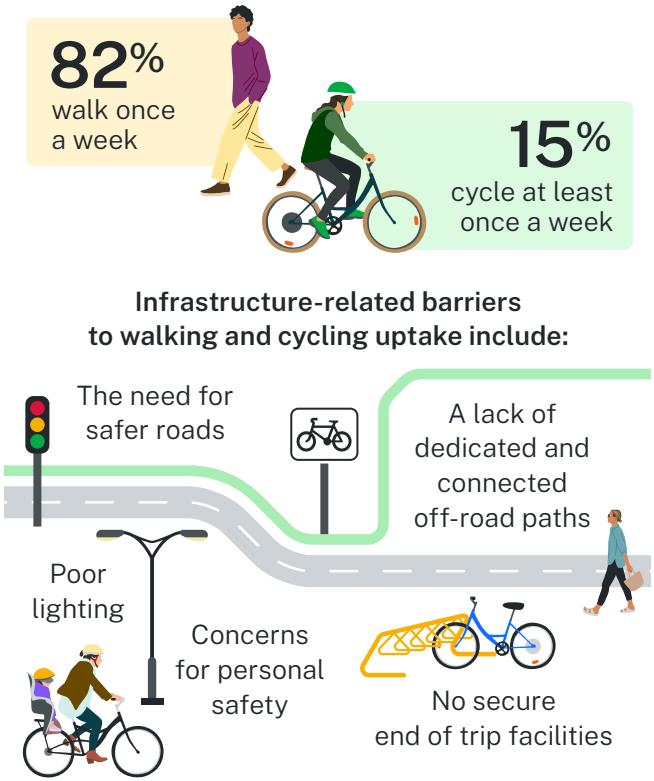
Travel patterns across NSW are dominated by private vehicle use, with a smaller proportion of trips made by public transport and active transport. Improving the safety and connectivity of walking and cycling networks can support active travel and strengthen connections to centres and public transport. Reducing reliance on private vehicles will also lower emissions, as the State transitions to net zero emissions.

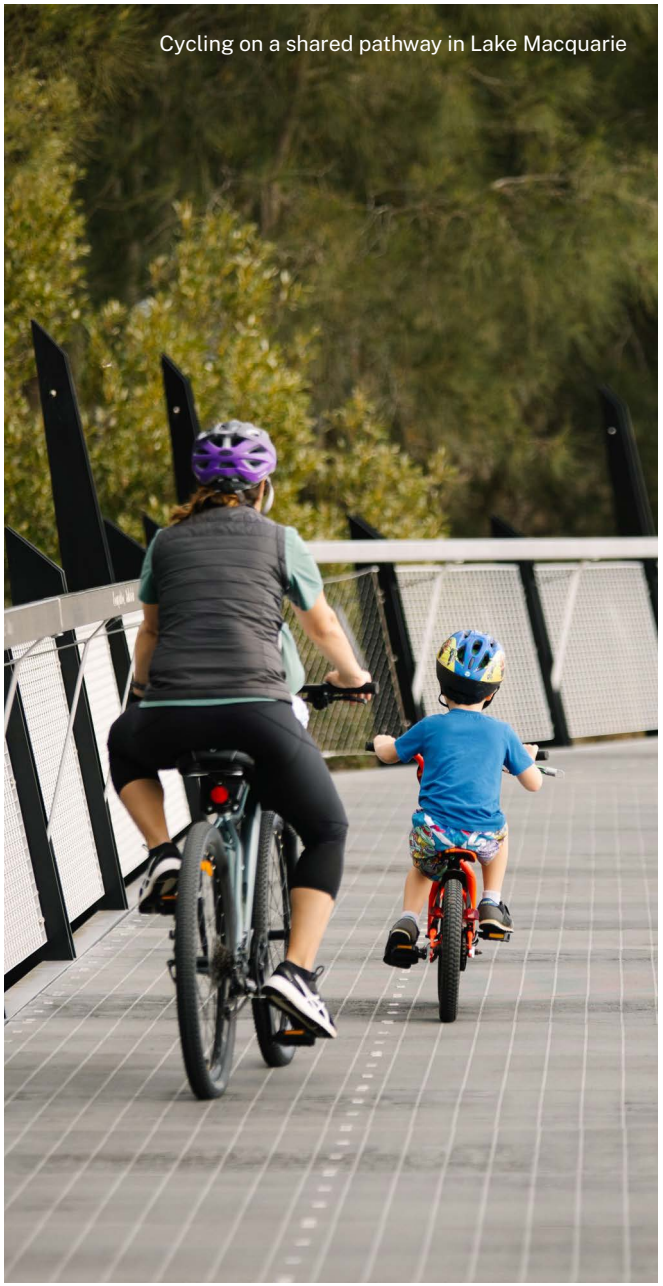
Across NSW more than 1.5 billion walking and cycling trips are made each year, but participation is often limited by a lack of safe and connected infrastructure (Figure 40). Delivering and improving safe and connected transport networks can support equitable access to jobs, services and open space, particularly for communities with limited transport options.

Strategic land use planning can encourage active travel by concentrating development in centres, improving street connectivity and integrating blue and green infrastructure to enhance local amenity. This aligns with the strategic objectives in the *Connecting NSW Strategy* to facilitate mode shift from private vehicle use to active transport across the State whilst also supporting the transition to net zero emission transport options.

In some regional towns and communities, dispersed settlement patterns and longer travel distances contribute to higher car dependence and limited public transport options. Strategic planning can support smaller-scale active transport networks that improve local access and provide alternative travel options within towns and centres.

Figure 40: National walking and cycling participation survey results
Source: CWANZ 2025




Cycling on a shared pathway in Lake Macquarie

Priorities: Resilient

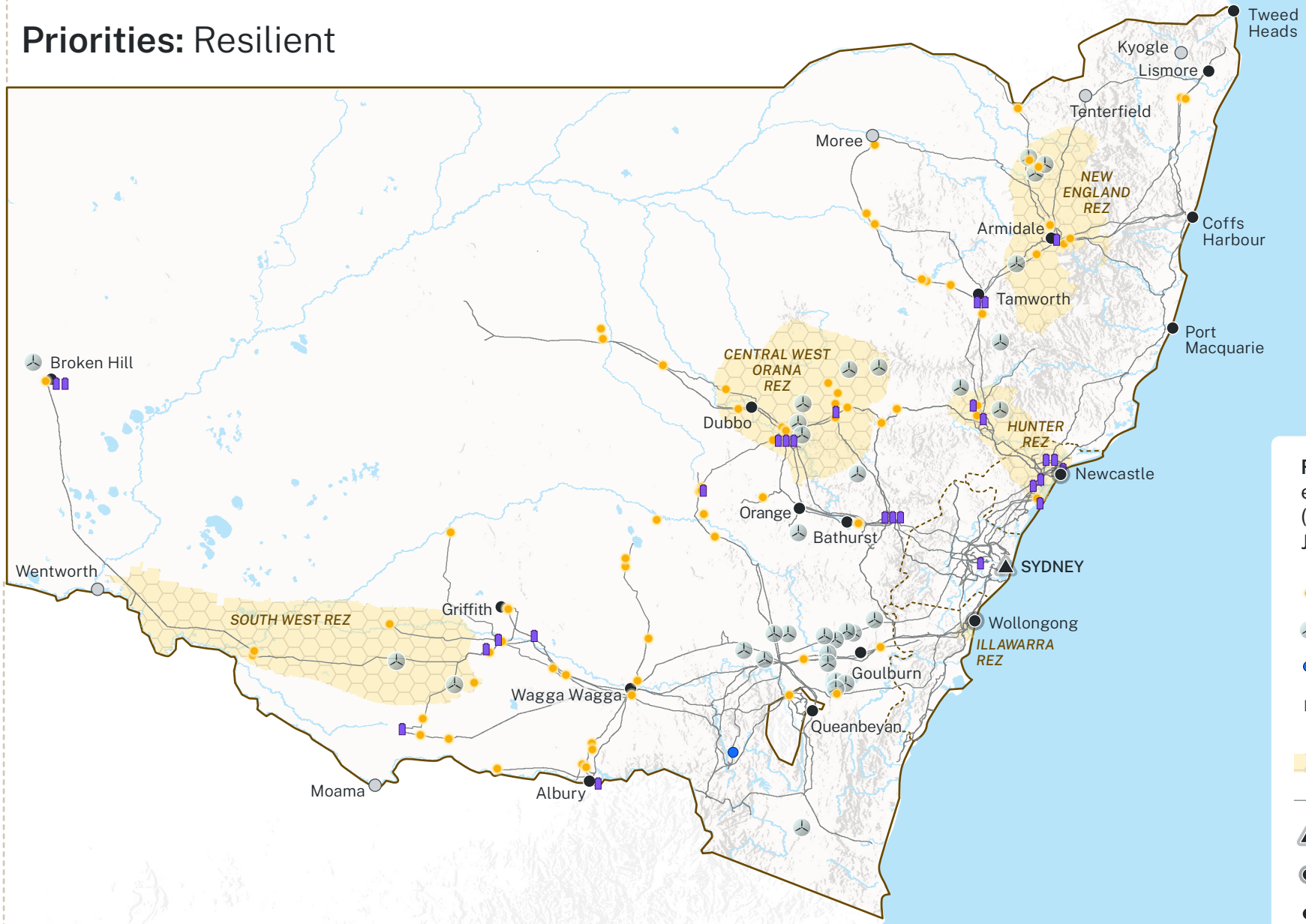


Figure 41: Renewable energy projects (operational or approved), July 2026

- Solar
- Wind
- Hydro
- Battery Energy Storage System
- Renewable Energy Zone
- Transmission lines
- Capital city
- Metro city
- Regional city
- Cross border town
- Region boundaries
- Waterbody

Priorities: Resilient

Priority: Supporting a sustainable environment and biodiversity to help achieve net zero emissions and build climate resilience. Success means communities can better withstand hazards and environmental pressures.

NSW has a diverse natural environment, from stretches of iconic coastlines, estuaries and mountain ranges through to arid landscapes. Healthy waterways, native vegetation, green spaces and biodiversity underpin the wellbeing, prosperity and resilience of current and future generations. They support Aboriginal cultural values, productive industries, healthy ecosystems and liveable communities, while helping buffer the impacts of climate change and natural hazards.

NSW has committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and to reducing future climate risks. Strategies to reach net zero emissions include the transition to low-emissions technologies, planning for compact urban centres with public transport and improving the condition of native vegetation, soil and waterways.

Climate impacts are already being felt across NSW, with increasing exposure to extreme heat, bushfire, flooding, drought and coastal hazards, such as inundation and erosion. These pressures are growing as the State develops, increasing the exposure of communities, infrastructure and assets to risk.

As NSW grows and becomes more diverse, strategic land use planning will shape how communities experience the benefits of growth equitably and safely. Managing location and exposure to natural hazard and climate risk will be critical to enabling places to adapt over time, balanced with supporting housing supply, economic opportunity, a healthy natural environment and liveability.

Population growth and economic activity will also increase demand for water, energy and waste infrastructure. Strategic land use planning must ensure these systems are efficiently located, integrated with development and capable of supporting long-term growth while reducing environmental impacts.

Aboriginal cultural knowledge and land management practices contribute to the health and resilience of Country. Respectfully incorporating this knowledge into strategic land use planning strengthens outcomes and supports Aboriginal aspirations for housing, economic participation and cultural expression.

Increase resilience to natural hazards

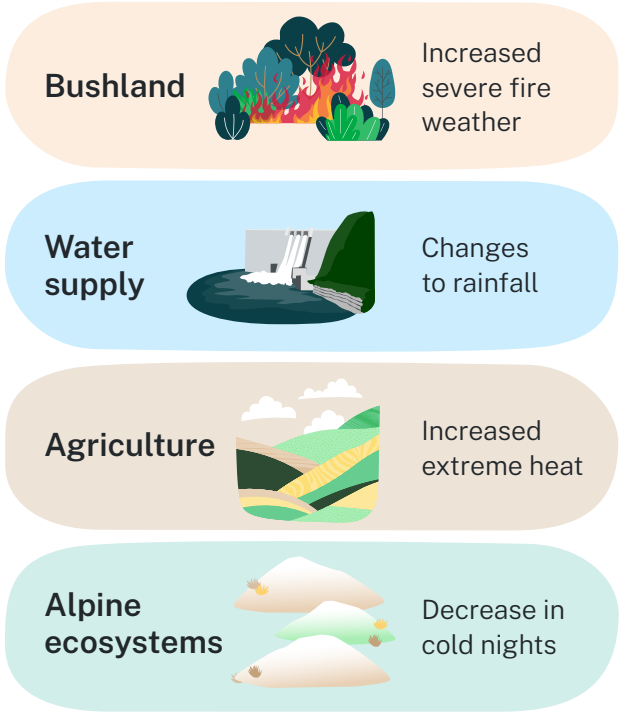
Priority statement: Direct growth to locations with lower natural hazard risk or where risks can be cost-effectively mitigated.

Priority statement: Use consistent climate change scenarios and data to assess natural hazard risk.

NSW has long-planned for natural hazards, but the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events (Figures 42, 43 and 44), and their growing economic and social consequences, have brought resilience to the forefront in strategic land use planning.

As the population grows and development expands into new areas or intensifies, more communities, infrastructure and assets are exposed to natural hazard risks, requiring strategic land use decisions that reduce exposure and build resilience.

Figure 42: Key climate change impacts in NSW
Source: NARCliM2.0 NSW: Climate change snapshot



Strategic land use planning plays a critical role in directing growth to appropriate locations, avoiding and managing exposure to risk and strengthening the capacity of places to adapt over time, while balancing other land use priorities to support sustainable growth.

Strategic land use planning also supports coordinated infrastructure investment where appropriate to improve the resilience and functioning of existing communities.

Different land areas have varying levels of vulnerability to natural hazards. In some locations, built-form controls and design responses associated with appropriate intensification can cost-effectively improve resilience, for example by managing localised flooding. In other areas, further intensification may be inappropriate due to evacuation constraints or the cumulative increase in risk to existing communities. In extreme cases, long-term adaptation approaches, including managed retreat, may be required to support community safety.

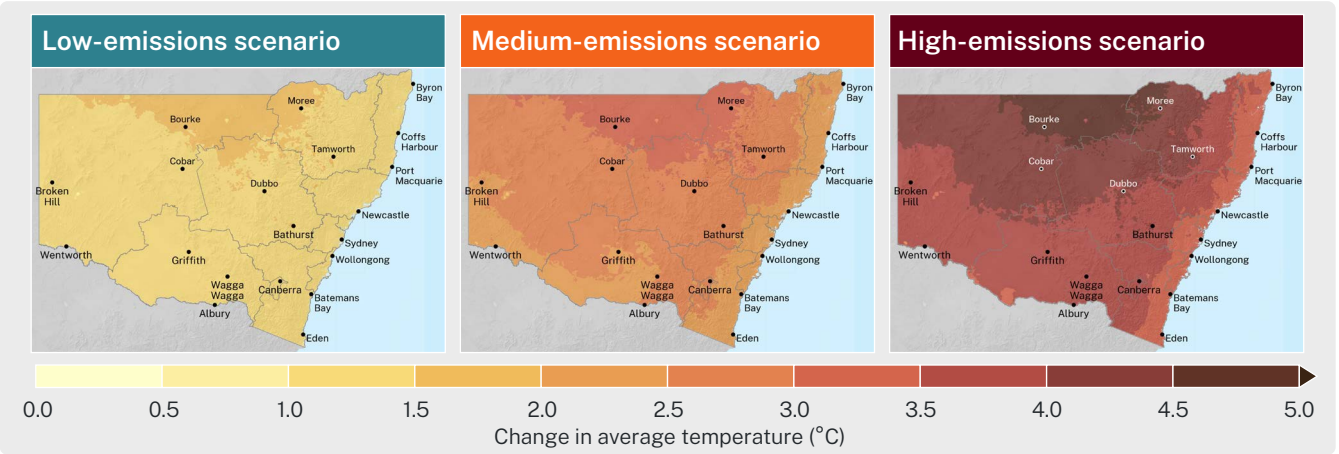
Consistent and up-to-date hazard information based on standardised climate change scenarios is essential to informed decision-making. The NSW Government is strengthening resilience in strategic land use planning through planning reforms, hazard-specific frameworks and guidance for bushfire, flooding, coastal hazards and urban heat. In more vulnerable areas, Disaster Adaptation Plans are guiding long-term responses, with strategic land use planning playing a key role in implementing these directions.

Post-disaster recovery and rebuilding will also be supported through frameworks such as Building Back Better, helping shape land use and development decisions to improve resilience over time.

Figure 43: Projected climate changes
Source: NARCliM 2.0

	Projected change (days per year)					
	By 2050			By 2090		
	Low-emissions scenario	Medium-emissions scenario	High-emissions scenario	Low-emissions scenario	Medium-emissions scenario	High-emissions scenario
Increase in hot days (where maximum temperatures ≥ 35°C)	~ +15	~ +18	~ +23	~ +16	~ +31	~ +45
Decrease in cold nights (where minimum temperatures < 2°C)	~ -9	~ -12	~ -15	~ -11	~ -19	~ -24
Increase in heatwave frequency	~ +13	~ +17	~ +22	~ +13	~ +32	~ +50
Increase in severe fire weather (where Forest Fire Danger Index > 50)	~ +3	~ +3	~ +5	~ +4	~ +7	~ +9
Increase in the longest number of days in a row with less than 1 mm of rain	~ +4	~ +5	~ +6	~ +3	~ +8	~ +7

Figure 44: Projected temperature change by 2090. Source: NARCliM 2.0



Protect and enhance natural assets and biodiversity

Priority statement: Avoid development in high biodiversity value areas and maintain connectivity by protecting and strengthening terrestrial and aquatic corridors.

Natural assets, including land, water and biodiversity, support community wellbeing, Aboriginal cultural values and economic activity. Biodiversity underpins healthy ecosystems that provide clean water, food production, pollination and other essential elements, while also helping to buffer the impacts of climate change and natural hazards.

The NSW Protected Areas Network includes over 890 terrestrial national parks and reserves, 6 marine parks, 12 aquatic reserves, and protected estuarine and oceanic habitats within national parks and nature reserves. Collectively, these areas conserve about 8.3 million hectares of land and approximately 367,000 hectares of the NSW marine estate.

NSW is home to around 905 native animal species, with over 1,000 plants and animals listed as threatened under State legislation. Around 6% of the State comprises more than 20,000 wetlands covering approximately 4.5 million hectares, supporting aquatic biodiversity, water quality, flood management and ecosystem health.

These natural assets play a critical role in supporting sustainable growth by maintaining ecosystem functions, reducing risk and enhancing the liveability of metropolitan and regional areas.

However, biodiversity and ecosystem health continue to decline under cumulative pressures from land-use change, habitat fragmentation and climate change. While the State's biodiversity is internationally significant, the capacity of native vegetation to support ecosystems has declined to around 29% of preindustrial levels.

Increasing pressure from land-use change and climate impacts reinforces the importance of protecting existing biodiversity, restoring degraded ecosystems and strengthening ecological connectivity. Identifying areas of high biodiversity value early in strategic planning and applying landscape-scale approaches that protect and reconnect ecosystems across land tenures will improve biodiversity outcomes and strengthen resilience to climate change.

Guiding development away from high biodiversity value areas while protecting and restoring natural assets will help restore and enhance biodiversity, strengthen ecosystem function and improve environmental resilience. This aligns closely with the objectives in the *NSW Plan for Nature* to put nature on a path to recovery by protecting and improving biodiversity.

Strategic land use planning plays a key role in ensuring planning decisions strengthen, rather than fragment, ecological connectivity and environmental resilience. Applying the most appropriate protection, restoration, enhancement and stewardship mechanisms in each context, including recognising Aboriginal cultural values and Traditional Ecological Knowledge where appropriate, will help ensure that growth enhances environmental resilience and that all communities benefit from cooler, greener and more liveable places.

Cycling at Lane Cove National Park, Lane Cove

Crystal Shower Falls in Dorrigo National Park, Dorrigo

Consider water early in land use planning

Priority statement: Integrate water planning into land use planning to support resilient and sustainable communities.

Water is a valuable and finite natural asset that underpins healthy communities, ecosystems and economic activity. Strategic land use planning should consider water availability, servicing, infrastructure capacity and water quality from the earliest stages of planning. This will support long term water security, sustainable growth, climate resilience and efficient infrastructure investment while avoiding future development constraints. In some locations, water availability may influence the scale, location and type of future growth, making early integration of water planning essential to strategic land use decisions.

Integrated catchment management, integrated water cycle management and water-sensitive urban design provide important frameworks for managing water across the planning, design and development process. Together, these approaches support the efficient use of potable and recycled water, wastewater and stormwater, and at the same time protect waterways, riparian corridors and water quality.

Applying these approaches through strategic land use planning and coordinated infrastructure planning will improve resilience to changes in water availability, support coordinated infrastructure investment, reduce development constraints and contribute to healthier, more sustainable and liveable communities. This aligns closely with the objectives of the *NSW Water Strategy* to secure sustainable water resources and resilient communities amid a changing climate.

Set up of Moree Solar Farm, Moree

Plan for Net Zero emissions

Priority statement: Enable renewable energy development and support co-location with compatible land uses, including agriculture.

Priority statement: Maximise renewable energy generation and storage in urban areas to support an equitable transition to net zero emissions.

Transitioning to a low-emissions economy is essential to building a resilient and prosperous NSW. However, this transition is increasing demand for land to accommodate renewable energy generation, storage and transmission infrastructure across both metropolitan and regional areas.

Strategic land use planning plays a key role in enabling the transition to net zero emissions by coordinating land use, infrastructure and investment decisions to ensure new growth supports renewable energy generation, energy-efficient development, and low-emissions infrastructure across metropolitan and regional areas.

This includes planning for emerging land-use demands such as energy infrastructure and data centres, which require reliable access to energy, water and transport networks and are becoming increasingly important to the State's economy.

Strategic land use planning will support the co-location of renewable energy with existing land uses, including agriculture, to balance energy generation with food production to support regional economies. REZs and associated transmission infrastructure will be planned in a way that responds to local context, minimises land-use conflict and addresses potential cumulative impacts.

Achieving net zero emissions is not solely the responsibility of REZs and regional areas. Metropolitan areas also have a role. Strategic planning will maximise opportunities for renewable energy generation and storage within metropolitan and regional centres, including in industrial, commercial and residential buildings. Improving access to renewable energy programs across a wider range of housing types, including apartments and rental properties, will support a more equitable transition.

Waste management and long-term water security also support the transition to net zero emissions. As waste generation grows and water security becomes increasingly linked to patterns of development, particularly in regional areas, strategic land use planning will support the appropriate siting of resource recovery infrastructure and planning for long-term water security. This will help reduce emissions, improve water security and support a circular economy.

Sustainable built environment

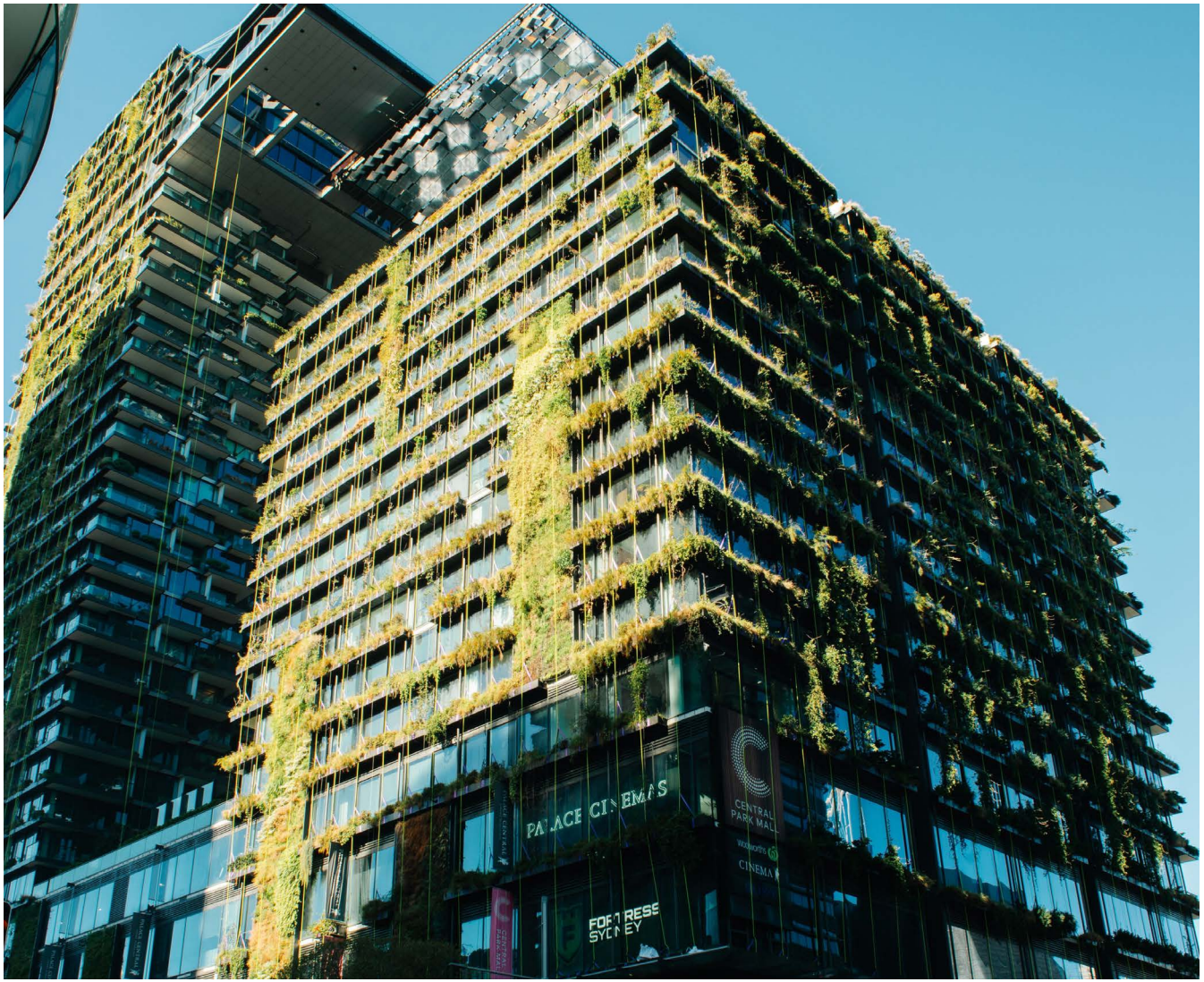
Priority statement: Plan and design the built environment to minimise emissions, improve resource efficiency, enable the circular economy and strengthen resilience to climate change impacts.

Well-designed, energy-efficient buildings, infrastructure, public spaces and precincts reduce emissions, improve amenity and strengthen resilience. They also reduce overall demand for energy, water and resources through more efficient land-use patterns and built form outcomes, while lowering household energy costs and improving cost-of-living outcomes. Locating housing and employment close to public transport and services supports sustainable travel choices and lowers the cost of transitioning to lower emissions transport networks.

Waste reduction, resource efficiency and the circular economy are integral to a sustainable built environment.

Strategic land use planning supports these outcomes by ensuring resource recovery and organics processing facilities are appropriately located and their impacts managed. It can also help protect and create the right spaces for the circular economy to grow.

Maintaining an adequate supply of appropriately located land helps support the efficient operation and long-term viability of circular economy activities. These approaches improve resource efficiency, reduce waste and help create a more resilient and sustainable built environment.



One Central Park Sustainable Buildings, Chippendale

Priorities: Liveable

The Grand Central Precinct Planning and Design Project

Image credit: Cobar Shire Council

Orange Regional Sporting Precinct

Image credit: Orange City Council

Northern Rivers Rail Trail

Image credit: Tweed Tourism Company. Northern Rivers Rail Trail, 2023

Coal River Precinct

Image credit: Destination NSW

Burwood Special Entertainment Precinct

Image credit: Destination NSW

Willandra Lakes Region

Image credit: Destination NSW

Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre

Image credit: Create NSW

Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail

Image credit: Snowy Valleys Council

Blue Mile Pathway

Image credit: Wollongong City Council

Tweed Heads
Kyogle
Lismore
Tenterfield
Coffs Harbour
Armidale
Tamworth
Port Macquarie
Broken Hill
Dubbo
Newcastle
Orange
Bathurst
SYDNEY
Wentworth
Griffith
Wollongong
Goulburn
Wagga Wagga
Queanbeyan
Albury
Moama

Figure 45: Examples of features supporting liveability

- Capital city
- Metro city
- Regional city
- Cross border town
- Region boundaries
- Waterbody

0 50 100 km

N

Priorities: Liveable

Priority: Building vibrant places that support quality of life. Success means more public spaces, better urban design, and stronger social cohesion.

The liveability of NSW is shaped by its diverse natural landscapes, culturally rich population, and strong metropolitan and regional communities. People experience the built environment through everyday life in streets, parks, neighbourhoods and community and cultural spaces.

Planning for liveable places involves creating neighbourhoods where daily needs are met locally through safe, accessible transport and high-quality public spaces, including access to nature and green spaces. It also recognises the importance of access to Country in strengthening local identity and the visitor experience.

As the population grows and becomes more diverse, with more people living in higher density environments and smaller households, the demand for housing, services and public spaces will increase. Strategic land use planning supports quality of life alongside growth, ensuring places remain accessible, inclusive and responsive to community needs.

Delivering well-designed public spaces, accessible settlements and thriving main streets and centres, supports recreation, culture and local identity. Together, these elements create inclusive and connected communities that reflect the diversity of NSW (Figure 46).

Warners Bay, Lake Macquarie

Figure 46: Well-designed neighbourhood

1. **Mixed-use development**
   Active ground floors with residential or employment uses above.
2. **Active street frontages**
   Retail and community uses that activate the public domain.
3. **High quality public transport stops**
   Sheltered, accessible stops with real-time information.
4. **Urban tree canopy**
   Street trees to enhance shade, cooling, and walkability.
5. **Accessible pedestrian networks**
   Wide, continuous, and universally accessible footpaths.
6. **Water sensitive urban design**
   Integrated stormwater, cooling, and landscape solutions.
7. **Flexible civic space**
   A multi-functional public space for events and daily activity.
8. **Public domain lighting**
   Pedestrian scale lighting to support night time safety and comfort.
9. **Community facilities hub**
   Flexible, multi-use community and cultural infrastructure.
10. **Inclusive play spaces**
    Visible play areas supporting all ages and abilities.

Support diverse and changing communities

Priority statement: Enable inclusive, mixed-use places and connected communities that support changing demographic and health needs, in locations with access to jobs, services and transport.

NSW has an increasingly diverse population, with almost one-third of residents born overseas in 2021. The population is also ageing, with more than 2.2 million people aged 65 and over projected by 2046. Internal migration is reshaping settlement patterns across NSW, including older generations and younger families moving away from capital cities to regional and coastal areas for lifestyle reasons, placing new demands on regional infrastructure, services and amenity.

Demographic changes reinforce the need for walkable, well-connected places that support ageing in place, improve access to health, education and social infrastructure and services, and enable inclusive participation in community life.

As these patterns continue, demand for housing, services and community infrastructure will increase across both metropolitan and regional areas. This will require compact, well-connected neighbourhoods and townships that integrate diverse housing, jobs, services and social infrastructure. Enabling ageing in place is a priority and can be achieved through accessible housing, universal design, and walkable neighbourhoods with nearby health, social and transport services.

Strategic land use planning must support growing and changing communities by enabling mixed-use development, locating social and cultural infrastructure in accessible centres, and designing public spaces that are inclusive, welcoming and safe for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds during the day and night. This includes recognising Aboriginal cultural values, cultural practices and local identity in the design of community facilities, supporting intergenerational interaction through shared public spaces, and ensuring places can adapt to the evolving needs of diverse communities.

Region plans will support this by identifying well-located centres for housing, jobs, services and social infrastructure, and by encouraging flexible, multi-functional public spaces that respond to changing community needs over time.

Green Square Library, Zetland

Improve access to public and open space, infrastructure and services

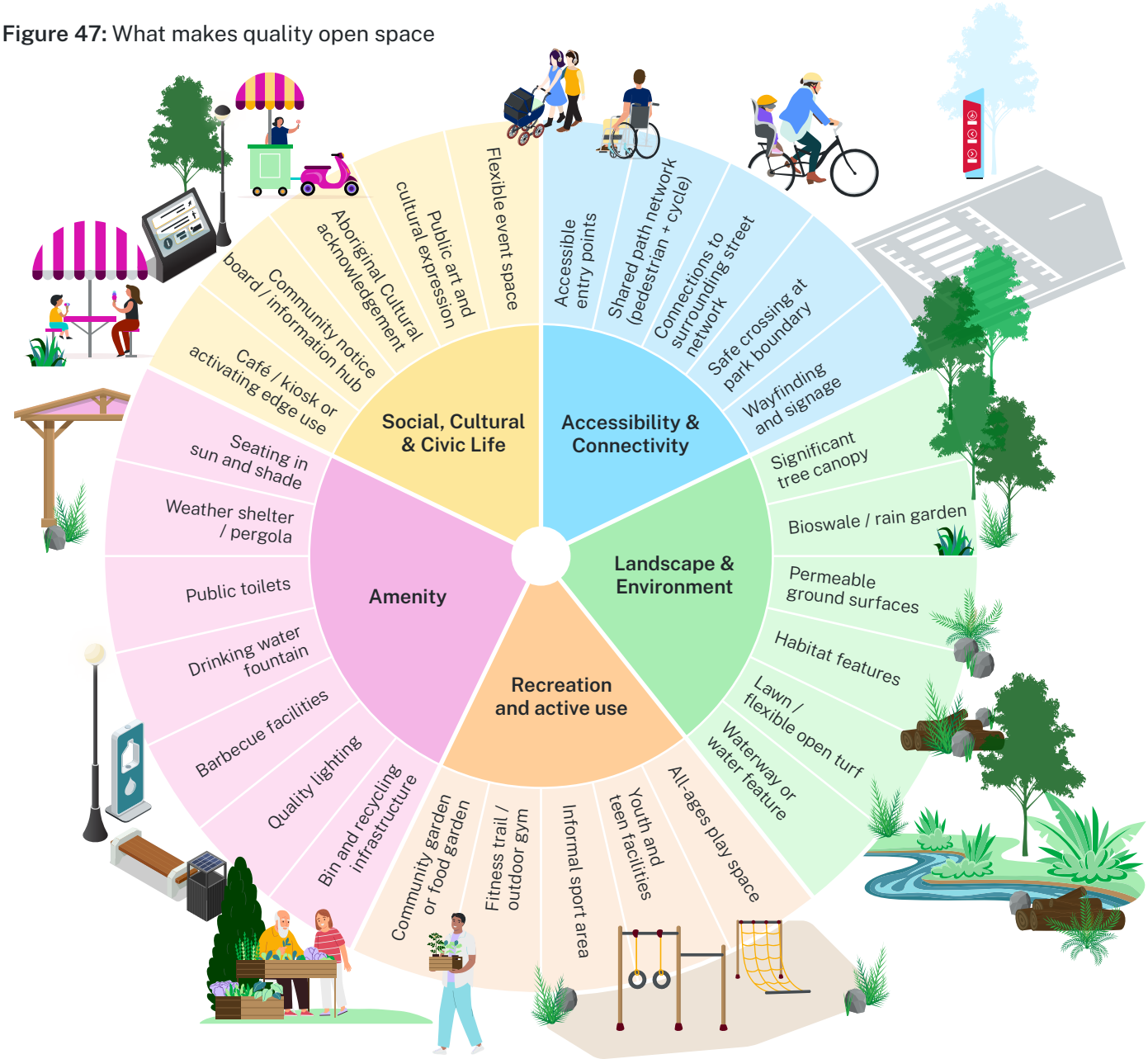
Priority statement: Locate growth to ensure access to public space, open space, infrastructure and services can be efficiently provided.

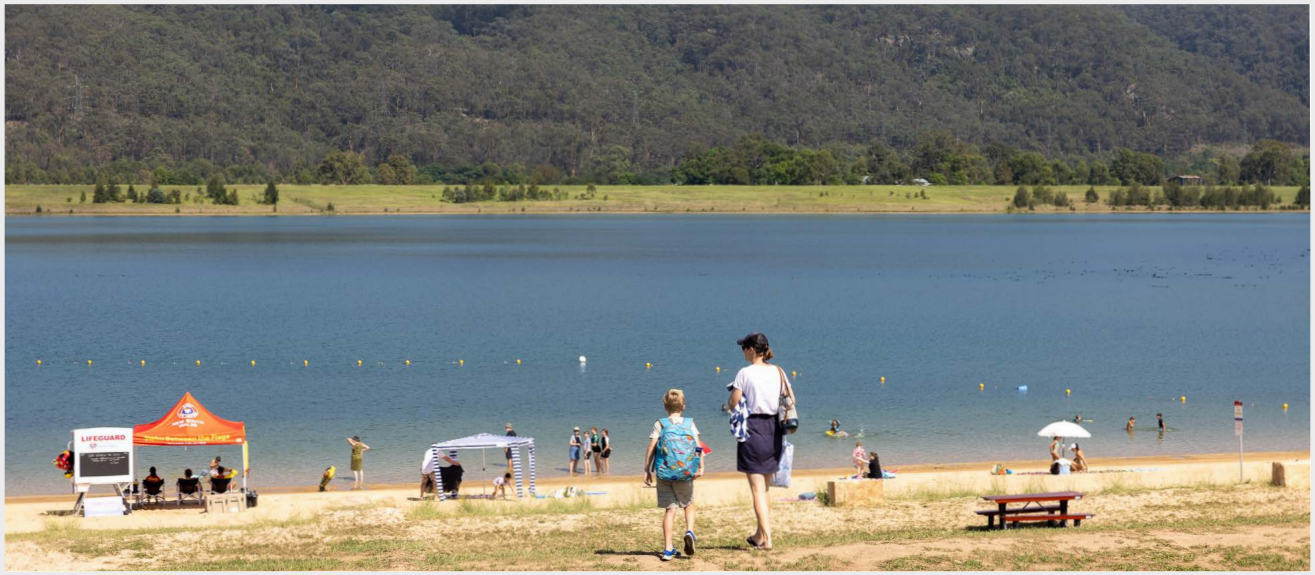
Quality public spaces, including parks, civic spaces, streets, waterways and other open spaces (Figure 47) is essential community infrastructure that supports physical and mental health, wellbeing, social cohesion, environmental amenity, tourism activity and local economies. In some areas, access to open space, services and infrastructure is limited or uneven, particularly in locations experiencing rapid growth or constraints associated with existing urban form. As NSW grows, expanding and diversifying access to open space and community services will require a coordinated approach to land use planning and infrastructure delivery.

As many cities and regional centres grow to accommodate more homes in compact forms, well-designed public spaces will play an increasingly important role in supporting everyday recreation, social connection and access to nature.

Established urban areas face land and cost constraints, making it essential to prioritise the creation, enhancement and connection of public spaces and green networks through strategic planning. Urban greening, including tree canopy, enhances the quality of public spaces by providing shade, improving comfort, supporting biodiversity and contributing to healthier, more liveable communities.

Figure 47: What makes quality open space





Places to swim

Under the *Places to Swim* initiative, NSW Government agencies and councils are improving facilities and public access to natural bodies of water including inland rivers, lakes, pools and dams, to enable more communities to connect with water-based recreation.

These upgrades are designed to ensure safe, inclusive access and broaden recreation opportunities across inland NSW.

Penrith Beach is part of the *Places to Swim* program

Major urban renewal, precinct planning and greenfield development also provide opportunities to secure new local and regionally significant open spaces that meet the needs of growing communities. This includes integrating open space into new development, linking smaller parks into continuous green networks and managing sustainable access to sensitive environmental assets. Well-managed access protects culture and environmental values while supporting growing demand for ecotourism and cultural tourism experiences.

Well-planned public open space will play an increasingly important role in supporting liveability, providing places for recreation, social connection and everyday access to nature for growing communities.

Future access to open space and services will depend on targeted investment and programs that unlock new recreation opportunities and strengthen active transport networks. Enhancing access to waterways through programs such as *Places to Swim* will broaden participation in water based recreation, where upgraded harbour, river, lake and dam access can deliver safe, inclusive public spaces.

Public spaces, including streets, plazas, parks and waterfronts, should be planned as connected networks that support recreation, social interaction and active travel.

Improved walking and cycling connections, supported by initiatives such as *Places to Roam*, will help reduce reliance on private vehicles and enable healthier travel choices. This will also increase physical activity, improve health outcomes, and generate local economic benefits by improving access to centres, trails and tourism destinations. Nearly half of all work trips in regional areas and outer metropolitan areas are under 10 km yet fewer than one per cent of people currently cycle. Improving micromobility access, end of trip facilities and expanding safe cycle trail links between towns and centres represents a significant opportunity to support active travel and strengthen visitation between destinations.

Region plans will identify opportunities to protect, enhance and expand public space and regionally significant open space networks, urban tree canopy, recreation and cultural opportunities that respond to local needs and support equitable access to services, infrastructure and recreation opportunities as communities grow.

Strengthen vibrant communities

Priority statement: Strengthen local cultural expression and community identity by protecting and enabling diverse public spaces, venues and precincts.

Centres play a critical role in creating vibrant communities as focal points where people access cultural, social, education and economic opportunities. They provide access to cultural activity and recreation, supporting daily life and community wellbeing.

In 2021–22, 64% of adults and 80% of children in NSW attended a cultural venue or event. As communities grow and become more diverse, demand for cultural spaces, events and social infrastructure will increase, requiring planning to support both community needs and maintain amenity.

Strategic land use planning supports vibrant communities by protecting cultural and creative spaces, creating well-designed places that reflect local identity, enabling compatible mixed uses, and managing the impacts of noise, activity and movement.

Places with distinctive heritage, culture and character attract residents, workers and visitors, contributing to vibrant centres, thriving local businesses and strong community identity. Strategic land use planning also plays a key role in supporting the visitor economy by ensuring destinations can accommodate increasing numbers of visitors while balancing amenity, community expectations and cultural expression.

Enmore Road Special Entertainment Precinct

The Enmore Road Special Entertainment Precinct (SEP) was established in December 2023, and is the first permanent SEP in NSW.

The precinct is supported by Inner West Council with ongoing precinct management, acoustic controls and community engagement to create a safe, walkable and culturally rich destination that celebrates live performance, local business and creative life from day to night.

Its focus includes place activation and public space improvements that build on Enmore Road's thriving arts and nightlife culture. These include curated street events, live music, outdoor dining, creative installations, neighbourhood festivals and programming that showcases the area's strong artistic identity.

Precinct planning guides activity across the strip, strengthening local culture, creativity and business while supporting improvements to lighting, safety and accessible transport options in partnership with key stakeholders.

Enmore Theatre
Image credit: Inner West Council

In metropolitan areas, multiple centres serve smaller, overlapping catchments, while regional centres often serve much larger and more dispersed populations. This makes planning even more critical, as they function as key hubs for services, culture and social connection across wide geographic areas.

Planning initiatives such as the NSW Vibrancy Reforms, including Special Entertainment Precincts, and streamlined planning pathways for place activation help provide greater certainty for cultural activity while supporting safe, active and inclusive places. By enabling diverse day-and night-time uses in centres and neighbourhoods, strategic land use planning can strengthen local economies, including the visitor economy, while supporting social connection and community resilience across NSW.

Region plans will identify cultural, open space and vibrancy opportunities that reflect local identity and support the long-term vitality of centres, precincts and communities.

Priorities: Coordinated

Priority: Aligning land use with infrastructure delivery. Success means major infrastructure investments directly support planned growth areas.

Infrastructure unlocks development by providing services such as water, waste, roads and schools, and it activates communities by delivering amenities such as open space and health services. It also supports economic productivity by enabling efficient movement of people and goods, access to jobs and services, and the functioning of key industries.

However, infrastructure delivery has not always kept pace with growth and in some areas development has occurred ahead of infrastructure. This can result in infrastructure being delivered too early, too late or in locations that do not support planned growth, affecting community wellbeing and limiting opportunities for new homes and businesses.

A coordinated approach to infrastructure delivery aligns NSW Government agencies, local government and the development industry. It makes clear how and where growth will be prioritised and supported, thereby building confidence for investors, communities, and government. It also resolves issues early, maximises the public value of infrastructure, ensuring that growth is aligned with the services and facilities needed by residents.

Strategic land use planning supports coordination by aligning land use with infrastructure planning and investment, including the sequencing and prioritisation of development.

A coordinated strategic planning framework is critical to aligning planning decisions across State, regional and local levels, and ensures that growth is supported by infrastructure, services and investment.

Maximising infrastructure capacity and use

Priority statement: Direct growth to maximise the use of existing and planned infrastructure.

A coordinated strategic planning framework enables growth to be directed to locations where infrastructure can support development efficiently and sustainably.

Development in greenfield areas usually requires substantial new infrastructure investment or extensive servicing upgrades. By contrast, infrastructure costs for infill housing are typically 2 to 4 times less than for greenfield housing because infill development can utilise, upgrade or repurpose existing infrastructure.

Many areas across NSW still have considerable capacity to provide more housing density and services within the existing urban area. In addition, intensification of employment lands, such as through increased floor space and building heights, can help accommodate changing economic needs and support jobs creation.

Strategic land use planning should prioritise development within established urban areas, where infill can make best use of existing infrastructure by minimising costs and maximising available capacity. Optimising these opportunities supports more efficient use of services, transport networks and community infrastructure. This aligns with the strategic direction in the *NSW State Infrastructure Strategy* to integrate land use, infrastructure and service planning where there is existing capacity.

Greenfield areas may also supply land for new housing and employment where required, but only where the necessary infrastructure is already in place or where it can be delivered in a sequenced and orderly manner to support growth.

A building construction site, Badgery's Creek Road, Bringelly

Coordinating infrastructure for growing communities

Priority statement: Prioritise greenfield and urban renewal areas based on existing and planned infrastructure capacity.

To enable growth, strategic land use planning, infrastructure planning and investment decisions must be aligned, recognising local context, including Aboriginal cultural values where relevant. NSW Government agencies, councils and industry must coordinate the timely provision of essential infrastructure informed by the NSW Government's UDP and ELDP.

The ELDP supports stakeholders where possible to resolve infrastructure coordination issues and support the development of zoned industrial employment land. The program continues to monitor emerging trends in the use and development of industrial employment land to position government and other stakeholders to make timely investment decisions.

The UDP aligns growth with infrastructure delivery by identifying, prioritising and sequencing State-funded infrastructure to maximise value and support growth where communities need it most. The Urban Development Committees provide a central forum for NSW Government agencies, councils, utility providers and industry to share information and resolve critical issues and delays. The program's committees operate in Sydney, Illawarra Shoalhaven, Central Coast, Lower Hunter and Greater Newcastle, and other high growth regional areas.

Infrastructure Opportunities Plans identify infrastructure projects already funded or underway, along with future infrastructure that could be delivered as works-in-kind by developers under the *Housing and Productivity Contribution Works-in-Kind Guideline.*

Beyond the UDP areas, coordination is required to identify urban growth areas to ensure infrastructure supports growth and the delivery of jobs and homes.

Infrastructure contributions are an essential tool to coordinate the delivery of infrastructure to support NSW growth and ensure equitable access to services. In NSW, infrastructure contributions include:

- The Housing and Productivity Contribution is a State-level developer charge where developers make a monetary contribution or deliver infrastructure directly. Delivering infrastructure directly is known as works-in-kind and it provides developers with the opportunity to fast-track the delivery of infrastructure and help to unlock more homes and drive economic growth.
- Local infrastructure contributions provide critical local funding. This is charged by councils when new development occurs, and it helps to fund local infrastructure delivered by councils such as parks, community facilities, local roads, footpaths, stormwater drainage, and traffic management.

Mamre Road upgrades

Woodlawn Bioreactor with wind farm in the background, Lake George.

Leveraging renewable energy investment and infrastructure

Priority statement: Align new employment and land use opportunities with renewable energy investment.

NSW is accelerating its transition to net zero emissions, by shifting towards an energy system based on renewable energy generation supported by new storage and transmission infrastructure.

Communities and businesses across NSW will play a part in, and benefit from, the shift to clean energy through new investment, funding and local jobs.

The NSW Government has identified 5 REZs that will harness wind and solar energy to assist the State's transition to clean energy. The REZs comprise: Central-West Orana, New England, Hunter-Central Coast, Illawarra, and South-West. In addition, green hydrogen projects include hubs in the Hunter Valley, Moree Plains, and Port Kembla.

It is important that strategic planning facilitates the efficient rollout of infrastructure to support this work, while also assessing and managing impacts. Impact studies will identify ways for the NSW Government to support communities and alleviate cumulative impacts on local and regional infrastructure and services. Cumulative impacts include housing and workforce accommodation, land use conflicts, social infrastructure and services, traffic and transport, visual amenity and noise, Aboriginal heritage, biodiversity, water security and waste management.

6 Implementation

The State Plan provides the overarching land use planning vision for the growth of NSW. It establishes a clear framework for strategic land use planning priorities and policies by aligning State, region and local planning.

The Plan will be implemented through a staged program of policy development, region and local planning updates, and ongoing monitoring. This staged approach will support a smooth transition to the new strategic planning framework, and provide certainty for government agencies, councils, industry and the community.

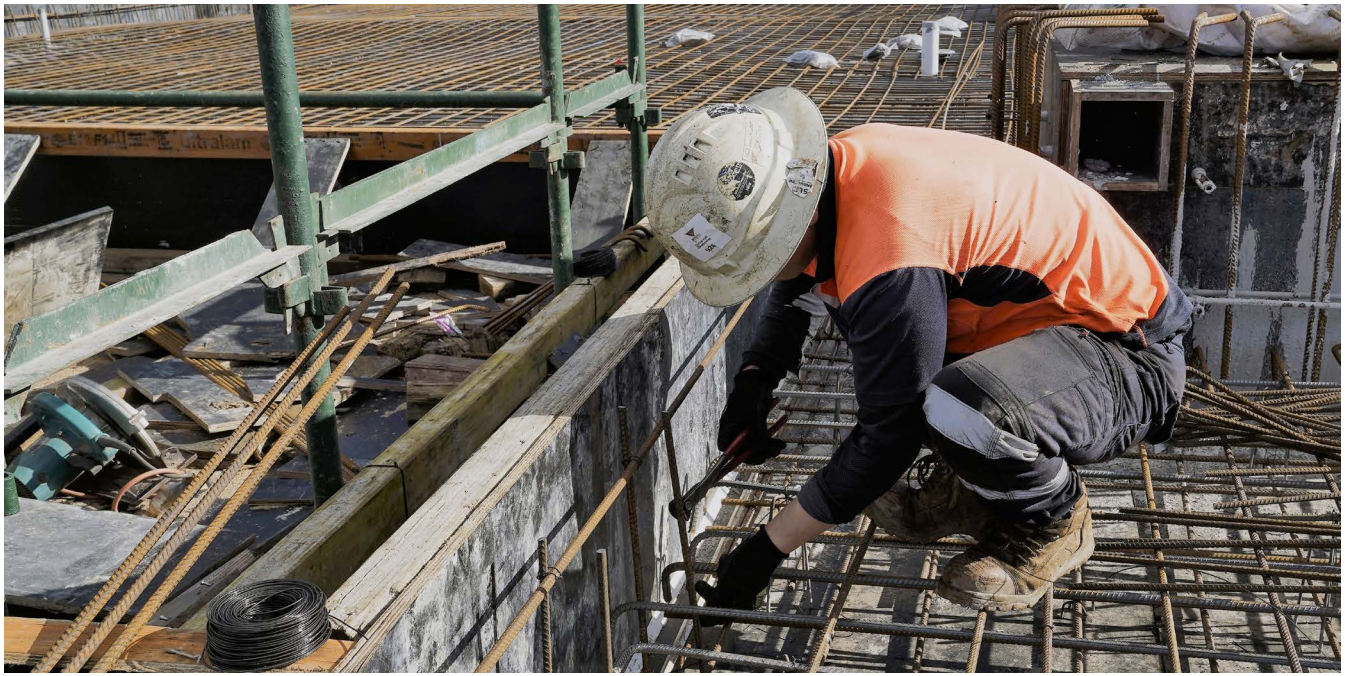
Implementation will occur across 2 stages from 2026, with actions progressively embedded into State, region and local planning processes.

The first stage focuses on embedding the State Plan into planning policy and regional strategic planning. Key activities include:

- updating region plans to align with the State Plan
- a review of Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPSs) and LSPS guidelines
- establishing monitoring, reporting and benchmarking processes to measure implementation and performance.

The second stage focuses on implementation at the local level and ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategic planning framework. Key activities include:

- councils reviewing and updating LSPSs and associated planning strategies to align with the State Plan, region plans and updated LSPS Guidelines
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation of State, region and local planning outcomes
- collection and reporting of performance data to measure progress against State land use priorities
- ongoing alignment with other government agency policies and programs such as the UDP and ELDP
- legislative and policy amendments to strengthen and refine the strategic planning framework
- ongoing review of the State Plan and supporting technical appendices to ensure they remain current and responsive.



Construction site for residential apartments, Campsie.

Monitoring and evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation framework will track the implementation of NSW's strategic land use plans, inform ongoing decision-making, and enable timely updates where required.

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure will develop the framework and publish periodic updates on its website. It will include the following components:

Monitoring

- Progress on implementation of region plan actions will be captured through an Actions Tracker.
- The Actions Tracker will be structured around 5 themes (Figure 48). These themes align with the state-wide priorities and will include metrics to measure real-world social, economic and environmental outcomes.
- Data to support monitoring will be drawn from existing programs. For example, the Council League Table tracks council performance in development assessment; the UDP tracks housing completions and residential land supply; and the Employment Lands Development Monitor tracks zoned and development-ready employment land.

Evaluation

- Monitoring will support evaluation of strategic land use plans and associated policies and identify emerging challenges and opportunities.
- Evaluation findings will inform updates to strategic land use plans.

Figure 48: Alignment between state-wide priorities and indicator themes

Indicators	Aboriginal outcomes	Housed	Prosperous	Connected	Resilient	Liveable	Coordinated
Theme 1: Diverse and affordable housing supply	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Theme 2: Strong economy and more jobs	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Theme 3: Vibrant, inclusive and connected communities	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Theme 4: Resilient built and natural environment	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Theme 5: Strategically aligned land use system	✓	✓		✓			✓

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The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP
Leader of the House in the Legislative Assembly
Vice-President of the Executive Council
Minister for Local Government

HAY SHIRE COUNCIL

Our Ref: A1009790 / MO26-0389

Her Worship the Mayor
Clr Carol Oataway
Hay Shire Council

Via email: Cr.oataway@hay.nsw.gov.au

Mr David Webb
General Manager
Hay Shire Council

Via email: DWebb@hay.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mayor and Mr Webb,

I am writing to update you on the next steps in the NSW Government's review of the Joint Organisation (JO) framework.

I thank the sector for its strong engagement throughout the review. The Office of Local Government (OLG) received over 100 submissions through the Expression of Interest (EOI) process. This provided valuable insights into how regional collaboration is working across NSW and how it can be strengthened in the future.

What we heard

Feedback from the sector was clear and consistent. There is strong support for regional collaboration, with more than 60% of councils indicating support for maintaining their current arrangements.

At the same time, several common themes were identified:

- interest from several JOs in modifying their membership
- emerging interest from some metropolitan councils in participating in JOs
- support for more predictable review cycles providing a structured way to balance flexibility with stable, long-term collaboration
- feedback from some councils and JOs that existing compliance requirements including audits and Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees, can be perceived as disproportionate to the scale and functions of JOs.

Changes being considered

In response to this feedback, the Government is progressing changes to the JO framework to ensure it is flexible, practical, and better aligned with how councils work together.

We will be:

- winding up those JO that wish to cease functioning
- processing applications from those councils that seek to join existing JOs or reconfigure JO membership
- enabling metropolitan councils to join or establish JOs
- providing certainty for when future opportunities to reconfigure JOs will occur
- improving clarity and accessibility of existing governance and reporting requirements, to support consistent and proportionate application
- updated guidance and tools to support councils through these processes.

52 Martin Place Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 5341 Sydney NSW 2001
02 7225 6150
nsw.gov.au/ministerhoenig1

I can also confirm that inactive JOs remain exempt from audit requirements while they are not undertaking any auditable activities. While the outcomes of the review are implemented and those JOs interested in dissolving do so, please contact OLG for further advice on governance and reporting obligations.

What happens next
OLG will continue engaging with councils and JOs to clarify and resolve areas of misalignment before formal decisions are made. Following this, I will consider recommendations on JO membership, formation and dissolution, informed by the EOI process and subsequent engagement.

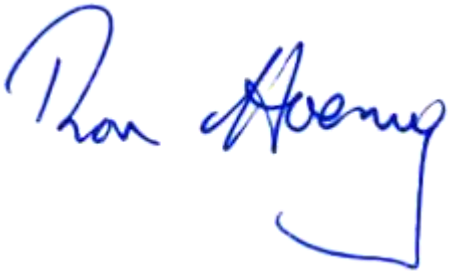
Where changes are approved, they will proceed through the formal statutory process under the *Local Government Act 1993*, including proclamation where required. OLG will work closely with affected councils and JOs to support implementation and transition arrangements.

Further information will be provided as this work progresses. The final package of recommended updates is expected to be provided to me by the end of August 2026. This will allow sufficient time for any approved changes to be progressed before the end of the year.

In the meantime, councils and JOs should engage with OLG where further clarification or support is needed and continue to operate while working with neighbouring councils to progress shared regional priorities.

Thank you again for your contribution to this important work. If you have any further questions, please reach out to your OLG Council Engagement Manager.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP
Leader of the House in the Legislative Assembly
Vice-President of the Executive Council
Minister for Local Government

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27th February 2026

The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP
Minister for Local Government
NSW Government

Email: councilengagement@olg.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister Hoenig,

Re: Joint Organisations (JO's)

I refer to your letter dated 9th February 2026 regarding Joint Organisations (JO's).

Council, at its ordinary meeting 24th February 2026, resolved to rejoin the Riverina and Murray Joint Organisations (RAMJO) from 1st July 2026.

I can confirm Council's support of regional collaboration and joint organisations. Council is concerned, however of the financial sustainability of joint organisations, with one action that could assist is the removal of the requirement for ARIC and Internal Audit. These add significant cost to the organisation, which has little to no risk. The oversight of 11 mayors, in our view, is more than adequate governance in this instance.

Thank you for your support of local government. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact either Mayor Carol Oataway or myself.

Yours faithfully

D Webb

David Webb
General Manager
Hay Shire Council

BALRANALD SHIRE COUNCIL

ALL COMMUNICATIONS MUST
BE ADDRESSED TO THE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

70 Market Street, Balranald NSW 2715
PO Box 120, Balranald NSW 2715
Tel: 03 5020 1300
ABN: 74 678 751 581
Email: council@balranald.nsw.gov.au
Web: www.balranald.nsw.gov.au

Contact: TD:CH:D26.127138

17 August 2026

Brett Whitworth PSM
Deputy Secretary
Office of Local Government
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
NSW Government

Dear Brett

RE: ASSET VALUATION, DEPRECIATION AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN NSW LOCAL GOVERNMENT

I have been giving some thought to the current asset valuation review and, more particularly, how it fits within the broader work on financial sustainability. I thought it worth putting a few practical observations to you directly, because I think there is a risk that valuation and depreciation become treated as separate accounting issues when, in the real world of a council budget, they are closely connected.

I am not an accountant and do not pretend to be one. My background is local government, engineering, infrastructure, budgets, grants and service delivery. That probably explains why I come at this from a practical direction: does the information we are producing actually help a Mayor, councillor, CEO or community understand whether a council can afford to maintain its services and look after the assets it already owns?

One point I think is important at the outset is that **AASB 116 does not require** every class of council asset to be continually revalued. The Standard allows either the cost model or the revaluation model, applied by asset class. NSW has chosen, through the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting, to require the revaluation model for the relevant asset classes. That is an important distinction, because it means there is room to consider whether the present NSW approach remains the most useful one without suggesting that accounting standards can simply be ignored.

Take a simple road example. A council may have a road with a carrying value of $2 million and, after revaluation, the estimated current replacement cost might be $20 million. There is nothing remarkable in construction costs increasing substantially; anyone buying bitumen, gravel, fuel, plant or contractor time knows that. The difficulty is in deciding what the additional $18 million on the balance sheet tells the people who must make the decisions.

The road is still in the same place, is still the same length and may be in the same physical condition as it was the day before the valuation. Council has not received another dollar, and, unlike a parcel of land, it cannot generally sell part of the road to fund the remainder. Yet Council now appears wealthier on the balance sheet and may also carry a materially higher depreciation expense through the operating result. Nothing has changed in the bank account, and nothing has changed in Council's capacity to reseal the road.

I am not arguing that depreciation has no purpose. Assets deteriorate and are consumed over time, and any sensible accounting system needs to recognise that. My concern is with the weight we sometimes place on the depreciation number when judging financial sustainability. Depreciation is an accounting allocation; it is not an amount Council physically pays each year, nor is it necessarily the amount Council needs to spend on a particular asset in any one year.

A council can have reasonable unrestricted cash, manageable debt, a sensible renewal program and infrastructure in acceptable condition, yet still report a weak operating result because depreciation is high. Equally, another council can be consuming cash, deferring maintenance and building an asset renewal problem while presenting a comparatively better accounting result. Neither result should be looked at in isolation. We need to see accounting performance, cash capacity and asset condition together.
The issue is particularly obvious in rural and remote NSW. Some councils are responsible for enormous road networks spread over very large areas, supported by very small populations and limited rate bases. A grader does not cost less because the population is small, and neither do fuel, gravel, bridges or contractors. When those infrastructure assets are revalued upward, the related depreciation can also rise, making the council appear less sustainable when the underlying problem may be a structural mismatch between the infrastructure it is expected to maintain and the revenue available to support it.

No accounting treatment will solve that structural funding problem, and nor should we expect it to. What we should avoid is allowing the accounting outcome to disguise the difference between a council that is genuinely poorly managed and one that simply has too little revenue capacity for the infrastructure and services government and the community expect it to provide.

For that reason, I think the mixed valuation model deserves serious consideration. Where an asset has a genuine market, and the current value assists decision-making, fair value makes sense. Land is the obvious example. Specialised infrastructure is different. A rural road, bridge, culvert or drainage network normally has no meaningful market and exists because Council is required to provide a service. For these classes, I think the cost model should be properly tested rather than dismissed simply because revaluation has been the NSW practice for a long time.

Moving some infrastructure classes to cost would not, in my view, justify any reduction in asset management discipline. If anything, the reverse should occur. I would rather see stronger information about physical condition, remaining service potential, maintenance needs, renewal timing, likely renewal cost, risk of failure and the funding available to undertake the work. Those are the things that help a council decide what it needs to do next. A theoretical increase in the value of an asset that cannot be sold is useful only if it adds something material to that decision.

I also think we need to be careful about separating the valuation review from the depreciation review. Administratively, I understand why the work has been divided, but the two are joined at the hip in practice. Change the value of an asset, and you change the depreciable amount; that changes depreciation expense, which can change the operating result and then the way the council's financial performance is interpreted. It would be unfortunate to settle one part of the equation in a way that unintentionally constrains the next stage of the reform.

The same applies to the Operating Performance Ratio. I think Government was right to question the role depreciation plays in that measure. The full accounting result matters, but councillors also need to know whether normal recurrent income is covering normal recurrent operating costs. A council should not be regarded as financially sound simply because it has cash while its infrastructure is deteriorating, but nor should it be labelled unsustainable because an infrastructure revaluation has materially increased depreciation without any corresponding change in cash flow, service level or physical condition.

My preference is therefore for financial sustainability to be shown through a small practical dashboard rather than relying too heavily on one or two ratios. At a minimum, I would want councillors to be able to see unrestricted cash and liquidity, recurrent operating capacity, debt and future liabilities, the condition and maintenance of key infrastructure, whether renewal is being directed to assets that genuinely need it, grant dependency, and the realism of the long-term financial plan. That would not remove depreciation from the picture; it would simply put it in its proper context.

I appreciate the argument about comparability between councils, but comparability has its limits. NSW has 128 councils, and they are not 128 versions of the same business. Geography, population, infrastructure networks, service expectations, revenue capacity and exposure to natural disasters vary enormously. We need consistent principles, but we should be cautious about assuming that applying the same formula to every council automatically produces a meaningful comparison. Sometimes it simply means we have calculated the same thing consistently, rather than the right thing usefully.

On balance, my preference would be for NSW to:

- Adopt a mixed valuation approach, with the accounting model selected according to the characteristics of the asset class.
- Retain fair value where there is a genuine market or where a current valuation materially assists decision-making.
- Properly test the cost model for roads, bridges, drainage and similar specialised, non-realisable infrastructure.
- Complete the depreciation review as a closely linked piece of work rather than treating valuation as an endpoint.
- Avoid using depreciation, by itself, as shorthand for financial sustainability.
- Give greater weight to cash capacity, asset condition, maintenance, renewal need and long-term funding capacity.
- Use the reform to remove valuation cost and complexity where the work is producing little practical benefit, while strengthening the quality of asset condition and long-term planning information.

I do not see this as an argument between accountants and non-accountants. Accounting standards matter, audit matters and consistency matters. The final test, though, should be whether the information being produced helps councillors, communities and government understand the actual financial capacity of a council and the condition of the infrastructure for which it is responsible.

At the end of the day, the questions a mayor and councillor need answered are fairly straightforward: can the council afford to keep providing the services its community expects, is it looking after the assets it already owns, and will it have the capacity to renew those assets when they genuinely need renewing?

If the reporting framework does not answer those questions clearly, then I think there is a reasonable case for changing the framework.

A road that has increased in value by $10 million has not given the council another $10 million to spend on it. That does not make the valuation irrelevant, but it does mean we should be very clear about what the number tells us, and what it does not.

I would be happy to discuss any of this with you as the work progresses.

Yours faithfully

Terry Dodds PSM
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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27th July 2026

Brett Whitworth
Deputy Secretary
Office of Local Government
NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Email: olg@olg.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Whitworth,

RE: Local Government Asset Valuation Discussion Paper

Hay Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Office of Local Government's Discussion Paper regarding the future methodology for valuing local government assets in NSW.

Council acknowledges the importance of ensuring that asset valuation methodologies support transparent, accurate and meaningful financial reporting under the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting. Council also recognises that the review is timely, given the significant impact that asset valuations have on reported financial performance, particularly through the associated depreciation expense.

Over the past five years, Hay Shire Council's annual depreciation expense has increased from approximately $3 million to more than $5 million, largely as a result of increases in asset valuations arising from the current fair value revaluation methodology. While Council acknowledges the need for appropriate asset accounting practices, the current methodology does create challenges for local government, particularly where significant valuation increases have a direct impact on reported operating results and financial sustainability indicators.

Council considers that the current fair value model is not always appropriate for local government infrastructure assets. Unlike commercial entities, councils generally hold infrastructure assets for the purpose of delivering essential community services rather than for investment or resale purposes. The majority of council infrastructure assets, particularly roads, represent long-term community service obligations and cannot realistically be sold or exchanged in an active market. As such, fair value does not necessarily reflect the purpose, function or ongoing use of these assets.

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Hay Shire COUNCIL

For Hay Shire Council, roads represent the largest component of the Council's asset portfolio. These assets exist to provide transport connectivity, support economic activity and deliver community outcomes. They are not held for commercial purposes and there is generally no realistic market value that reflects their operational purpose. A replacement cost-based approach, incorporating appropriate consideration of remaining useful life and condition, would provide a more meaningful representation of the resources required to maintain these assets and continue service delivery.

Council therefore supports **Option 3 – Mixed Approach valuation model** as outlined in the Discussion Paper. A mixed approach would provide a more practical and appropriate framework by allowing different measurement methodologies to be applied to different asset classes based on their purpose, characteristics and use.

For example, assets such as land and buildings that may have an identifiable market value could continue to be measured using a fair value approach, while infrastructure asset classes such as roads, bridges, drainage and other community service infrastructure could adopt a cost-based methodology, including replacement cost principles where appropriate.

A mixed valuation model would better align asset reporting with the operational realities of local government and provide a more accurate reflection of councils' capacity to deliver services. It would also reduce the distortion that significant valuation movements can have on reported operating results, depreciation expenses and financial sustainability measures, particularly for councils with extensive infrastructure networks and limited revenue bases.

Hay Shire Council appreciates the NSW Government's consideration of this important reform and supports a valuation framework that recognises the unique nature of local government assets and the community service obligations they support.

Council would welcome further consultation as the review progresses and appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the development of a more appropriate and sustainable asset valuation framework for NSW councils. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on mobile 0429693499 or email dwebb@hay.nsw.gov.au

Yours faithfully,

D Webb

David Webb
General Manager
Hay Shire Council

David Webb

From: DMReform <disastermanagementreform@nema.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 18 August 2026 6:40 PM
To: David Webb
Cc: tdodds@balranald.nsw.gov.au; LGNSW Advocacy Team; Brett Stonestreet; Phyllis Miller; Gary Fry; Kerry McRae; Hay Shire Council; Cr Carol Oataway; DMReform; Contact (NEMA)
Subject: RE: NSWRA modelling - detrimental impact of proposed disaster funding reforms on Balranald Shire Council [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

OFFICIAL

Dear David

Thank you for your submission in response to the proposed Disaster Recovery Funding Framework (DRFF) on behalf of the Hay Shire Council. We appreciate your consideration of the reform and the local government perspective you have provided, which as you stated, echoes the position of the Balranald Shire Council.

Your views will help inform the detailed design and implementation of the reform. We will carefully consider all feedback, including the issues raised in your submission.

Kind regards

Disaster Management Reform Team
Disaster Resilience and Recovery Group
National Emergency Management Agency

70 Northbourne Ave, (PO Box 133) Canberra ACT 2601

@nemagovau

From: David Webb <DWebb@hay.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 17 August 2026 4:30 PM
To: Terry Dodds < >; Contact (NEMA) <contact@nema.gov.au>
Cc: LGNSW Advocacy Team <policy@lgnsw.org.au>; Brett Stonestreet <brett.stonestreet@ramjo.nsw.gov.au>; Phyllis Miller <phyllisjmiller@gmail.com>; Gary Fry <admin@nswcountrymayors.com.au>; Kerry McRae <kmcrae@hay.nsw.gov.au>; Hay Shire Council <mail@hay.nsw.gov.au>; Cr Carol Oataway <cr.oataway@hay.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: RE: NSWRA modelling - detrimental impact of proposed disaster funding reforms on Balranald Shire Council

Dear NEMA Disaster Recovery Funding Framework Review Team,

Hay Shire Council would echo and agree with Mr Dodds summation and comments.

We would also ask that this be very carefully considered before the proposed framework is finalised.

Thank you.

David Webb
General Manager

Hay Shire Council
134 Lachlan Street
Hay NSW 2711

Ph: 02 6990 1100 **Mobile:** 0429 693 499
Values - Integrity • Openness • Responsiveness • Quality of Service

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Council Facebook Instagram Tourism Facebook
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Views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender, and are not necessarily the views of the Hay Shire Council.

From: Terry Dodds <tdodds@balranald.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 17 August 2026 3:25 PM
To: contact@nema.gov.au
Cc: LGNSW Advocacy Team <policy@lgnsw.org.au>; Brett Stonestreet <brett.stonestreet@ramjo.nsw.gov.au>; Phyllis Miller <phyllisjmiller@gmail.com>; Gary Fry <admin@nswcountrymayors.com.au>
Subject: NSWRA modelling - detrimental impact of proposed disaster funding reforms on Balranald Shire Council

Dear NEMA Disaster Recovery Funding Framework Review Team,

Balranald Shire Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed Disaster Recovery Funding Framework. I am writing as the CEO of a very small rural council that is regularly affected by flooding and where the financial consequences of even one damaged road can be significant.

I understand the need to review the current arrangements, and I have no issue with improving consistency or accountability. My concern is that some of the proposed changes appear likely to shift more of the financial risk from the Commonwealth to the State and, eventually, down to councils like ours. That worries me.

The modelling provided to us by the NSW Reconstruction Authority shows that Balranald has had approximately $2.808 million in relevant asset restoration expenditure across two events since 2019. On the NSWRA figures, moving from the historical Commonwealth contribution of around 64% to a 50/50 arrangement would have reduced Commonwealth funding to Balranald by approximately $393,000, or about 22%. For a large organisation, $393,000 might be absorbed somewhere in the budget. For Balranald, it is a very substantial amount of money. Our rate base is small. Our road network is large. When a flood occurs, we still must keep roads open, reconnect communities, get agricultural freight moving, deal with the damage and then somehow fund the reconstruction. There isn't a spare bucket of money sitting in a small council budget waiting for the next flood.

The proposed increase in the Small Disaster Criterion from around $240,000 to $2.7 million is therefore of particular concern. The NSWRA itself has identified the risk that geographically isolated events could be disproportionately affected by this change. That is exactly the sort of issue that worries councils like ours. A disaster can be relatively small when viewed from Sydney or Canberra but enormous when viewed from Balranald. A flood affecting one part of western NSW may not generate enough damage across the State to reach a $2.7 million threshold, yet the damage to one small council can be more than it could reasonably fund from its own resources. A disaster should not be judged simply by the number of people affected or whether enough damage has occurred elsewhere in the State to cross a threshold. There needs to be some recognition of the financial impact on the individual council and its capacity to respond.

I am also concerned about the proposed treatment of estimated reconstruction costs.

The NSWRA advice indicates that, under the proposed arrangements, legitimate expenditure above an approved estimated reconstruction cost may ultimately have to be carried by the State or council, rather than being managed through the existing broader efficiencies arrangements. Anyone who has delivered civil works in remote NSW will understand the problem with that! We don't have a deep contractor market. Plant must travel long distances. Materials must be hauled. Fuel, accommodation, mobilisation and labour all cost more. After a major disaster, we are often competing with numerous other councils for exactly the same contractors and resources. An estimate prepared early in the recovery process is just that, an estimate. It should not become an absolute financial cap where a council ends up carrying legitimate additional costs that could not reasonably have been predicted.

Betterment is another area where I believe we need to be careful.

The NSWRA information indicates that the present betterment arrangements would be replaced by a Resilient Infrastructure Scheme providing up to 15% of an asset's estimated reconstruction cost, subject to criteria that are yet to be settled. We must get away from the cycle of repairing the same infrastructure to basically the same standard, only to pay for it again after the next flood. That isn't good asset management, and I don't believe it is good use of Commonwealth money either. If spending a little more after one disaster prevents the Commonwealth, State, and council from paying for the same road again after the next flood, the betterment expenditure has paid for itself.

There is also a much wider economic impact than simply the cost recorded in Council's ledger. Road closures and damaged roads affect agricultural production, freight, access to services, emergency

response, and the ability of people to get in and out of our communities. In regional Australia, those impacts ultimately flow through to State and national productivity.

I am also uneasy about removing Category D exceptional assistance while replacing it with a concept of assistance for 'genuinely extraordinary circumstances' that, at this stage, does not appear to be clearly defined. By definition, major disasters produce circumstances that are difficult to predict. Whatever replaces the current arrangements needs enough discretion to deal with the unexpected.

From Balranald's perspective, I would ask NEMA to reconsider several elements before the new framework is finalised.

- In particular, I believe the framework should retain an ability to recognise the impact of a disaster on an individual council rather than relying solely on a State-wide threshold. It should retain a sensible mechanism for genuine cost variations, ensure betterment is based on what will actually reduce future damage rather than an arbitrary percentage, and make sure small rural and remote councils are not left carrying disaster costs they simply do not have the financial capacity to absorb.

- I would also strongly encourage NEMA to look at this from the Commonwealth's longer-term financial perspective. Reducing the Commonwealth contribution may produce a saving in one budget year, but if that leaves councils with less capacity to maintain infrastructure, delays reconstruction or prevents sensible betterment, I question whether it is a saving at all. The Commonwealth may simply end up paying considerably more when the next flood comes through.

- Lastly, the regions most exposed to flood damage are also many of the same regions producing Australia's food, fibre, minerals and other commodities. These roads aren't just local roads. They are part of the supply chain that gets that production from the farm gate, mine, or processor to market. If small councils are financially constrained to continually patch damaged infrastructure rather than properly restore and improve it, the economic consequences don't stop at the council boundary. Eventually that affects regional production, freight efficiency, and the broader Australian economy.

For a council such as Balranald, disaster recovery is not an occasional theoretical issue. Flooding is part of the environment in which we operate. We accept that responsibility and we do our best to manage it. What we cannot reasonably do is carry a substantially greater share of the financial consequences of natural disasters while maintaining a very large infrastructure network from a very small revenue base.

I ask that this be very carefully considered before the proposed framework is finalised.

Regards,

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Office of Local Government

Circular to Councils

Subject/title	Elections for mayors and elections for chairpersons of joint organisations and county councils
Circular Details	Circular No 26-15/ 19 August 2026/ A1013723
Previous Circular	23-09 September 2023 Mayoral Elections
Who should read this	Councillors / General Managers / Executive Officers / Governance staff
Contact	Council Governance Team / 02 4428 4100 / olg@olg.nsw.gov.au
Action required	Council / Joint Organisation / County Council to Implement

What's new or changing?

- Under the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act), mayors elected by councillors and chairpersons of joint organisations and county councils hold office for 2 years.
- Under section 290(1)(b) of the Act, councils that elect their mayors must hold a mid-term mayoral election in September 2026.
- The deputy mayor, (if the council has one), holds their office for the mayoral term or a shorter term specified by resolution. An election for deputy mayor must be held after the deputy mayor's term expires (usually at the same meeting as the mayoral election).
- Joint organisations and county councils must also hold an election for the chairperson at the first meeting after the chairperson's term has ended (see clause 1 of Schedule 7A and clause 1 of Schedule 8 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 (the Regulation)).

What will this mean for council?

- Elections for the mayor and deputy mayor must be conducted in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Regulation.

- Elections of chairpersons of joint organisations must be conducted in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Regulation.
- Elections for chairpersons of county councils must be conducted in accordance with Schedule 8 of the Regulation.
- Each of the Schedules prescribe three methods of election:
    - open ballot (eg a show of hands)
    - ordinary ballot, or
    - preferential ballot.
- The Office of Local Government has issued a fact sheet on conducting mayoral elections, which is available here. The guidance in the fact sheet is equally applicable to elections for chairpersons of joint organisations and county councils.

Key points

- Councillors and members of joint organisations and county councils can participate in elections using an open ballot by audio visual link but not where the other two methods of election are used.
- Ordinary and preferential ballots are secret ballots and councillors and members of joint organisations and county councils will need to attend the meeting in person to vote if the election is held using either of these methods.
- The disallowed 2025 Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils in NSW (Model Meeting Code) did not permit councillors and members of joint organisations and county councils to attend meetings by audio visual link at which there was to be an election for the mayor or chairperson. This restriction does not apply under the currently applicable 2021 Model Meeting Code.

Where to go for further information

- The Office of Local Government has issued a fact sheet on conducting mayoral elections, which is available here.
- For further information please contact the Council Governance Team on 02 4428 4100 or by email at olg@olg.nsw.gov.au.

Brett Whitworth PSM
Deputy Secretary, Local Government

Circular to Councils

Subject/title	New privacy protections under the Electoral Funding Act 2018
Circular Details	Circular 26-16/ 19 August 2026/ A1014191
Previous Circular	*N/A*
Who should read this	General Managers / Council Governance staff
Contact	Council Governance Team / 02 4428 4100 / olg@olg.nsw.gov.au
Action required	Council to Implement

What's new or changing?

- To protect the privacy and security of political participants, section 22 of the *Electoral Funding Act 2018* (EF Act) has been amended to prohibit the NSW Electoral Commission from publishing residential addresses contained in disclosures of reportable political donations if the donor is a current or previous registered candidate or elected member of a local council or the NSW Parliament.
- Historical political donation disclosure records have been removed from the NSW Electoral Commission's website to remove political participants' residential addresses before being republished. Future disclosures will not be published with political participants' residential addresses visible.

What will this mean for council?

- Councils should review the register of current disclosures of political donations maintained under section 328A of the *Local Government Act 1993* (the LG Act) and published on their websites under Schedule 1 of the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 (GIPA Regulation) to ensure it does not disclose the residential address of any registered candidate or elected member.

Key points

- General managers of councils are required under section 328A of the LG Act to keep a register of copies of current declarations of disclosures of political donations lodged with the NSW Electoral Commission by or on behalf of councillors of the council concerned (including in their capacity as candidates for election as councillors).
- Registers maintained under section 328A of the LG Act are prescribed as open access information under Schedule 1 of the GIPA Regulation and must be published on councils' websites.
- The Office of Local Government (OLG) has previously advised that councils can comply with the requirement under section 328A of the LG Act and the GIPA Regulation by publishing a link on their website to the NSW Electoral Commission's disclosures publication website (https://elections.nsw.gov.au/electoral-funding/disclosures/view-disclosures).
- OLG strongly encourages councils to maintain this practice to ensure they comply with the privacy requirements under section 22 of the EF Act.

Where to go for further information

- The NSW Electoral Commission's disclosure website is available at: https://elections.nsw.gov.au/electoral-funding/disclosures/view-disclosures.
- For further information about the new requirements under the EF Act, contact the NSW Electoral Commission via its website at https://elections.nsw.gov.au/contact-us or by telephone at 1300 135 736.
- For further information about the requirement to maintain a register under section 328A of the LG Act, please contact OLG's Council Governance Team on 02 4428 4100 or by email at olg@olg.nsw.gov.au.

Brett Whitworth PSM
Deputy Secretary, Local Government

C4 - Economic Development & Tourism July/ August 2026

REPORTING OFFICER	Executive Manager Economic Development, Tourism and Energy
ATTACHMENTS	-Nil

INTRODUCTION
Monthly update on the activities of Economic Development, Tourism and Energy

COMMENTARY

Visitor Information Centre (VIC)

The Visitor Information Centre assisted 1179 visitors during July 2026.

Statistics below reflect the percentage of Hay VIC visitors who attended Hay attractions:

- Shear Outback attracted 718 visitors in July
- 12% visited Dunera Museum with 144 visitors
- 32% visited Hay Gaol with 383 visitors
- 5% visited Bishop's Lodge with 61 visitors
- 48% of visitors were from NSW
- 28% of visitors were from Victoria.

Tap and Go

The Tap and Go (payWave) option at our museums accounted for 74% of all transactions at the Hay Gaol, Bishop's Lodge and Dunera Museum in July. This is an increase of 10% on previous months.

Cycle Hay

The Cycle Hay experience was very popular with 28 bike hires for July.

Visitors who hire the bikes are asked to provide feedback to improve the experience. Daniel from Belair provided the following feedback – *It was great to be able to use the bicycles for my kids and I to ride along the Bidgee Riverside Trail, see the river and art installations as well as use the exercise equipment.*

LOVE Hay Program

The LOVE Hay Gift card program, a spend local program supported and delivered by HSC continues to deliver with every purchase helping to support a local business. The number of cards loaded to date is 11 331 for a total value of **$758 442.**

Update on Love Hay cards for July 2026

- Number of cards sold: 98
- Total loaded on cards: $5700
- Total redemptions: 159 cards for a total of $5475

Bishops Lodge Museum:

Included in Council's Revenue Policy is the following fees:

- Bishops Lodge Museum Meeting - $145 per day
- Function with fewer than 50 guests - $250
- Function with more than 50 guests - $750

It is recommended that the 2026/27 Revenue Policy be amended to provide that, in addition to the applicable hire fee, hirers holding functions at Bishops Lodge Historic House are required to pay a refundable bond, as follows:

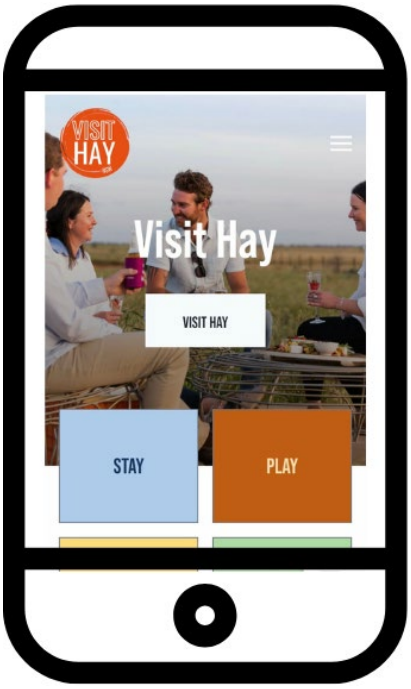
- Functions with fewer than 50 guests: $250 refundable bond
- Functions with more than 50 guests: $500 refundable bond

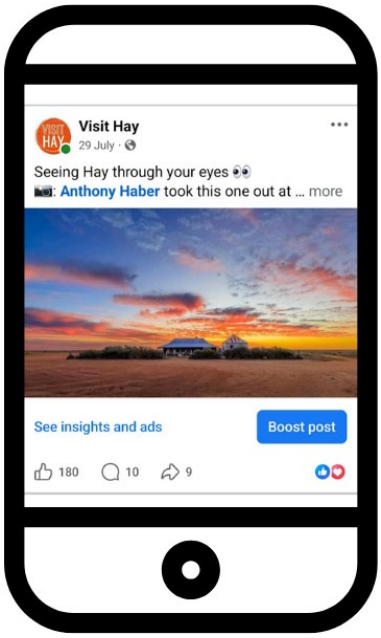
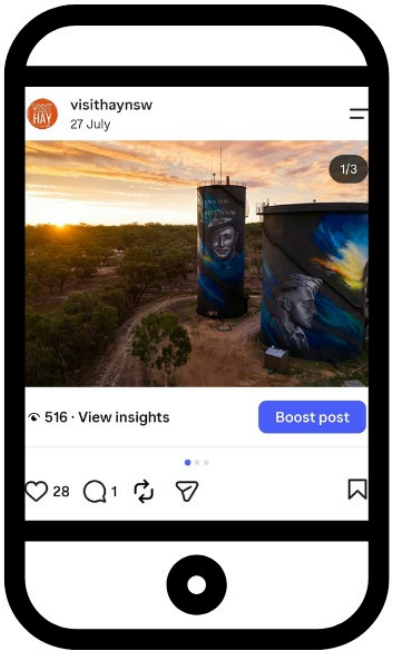
Hire includes the use of the grounds, commercial kitchen and toilets.

TED Team providing assistance/or delivery to the following events:

Upcoming Events

11/12 September	Annual Hay Show
3 October	Booligal Sheep Races
10 October	HayGlow - Neon Nights

Digital Channel	Reach	Top Content
Website	• Similar to previous month the event count for the Visit Hhay website was 29 951. • There were 4885 users of the website for the month of July, with 85.24% first time users and 2054 of them organic searches. (visitors who find our website through search queries) • Visitnsw.com continues to be a great referral for Visit Hay. We keep this strong by ensuring content is fresh and up to date. • The top landing page was the home page closely followed by the top 5.	

Digital Channel	Reach	Top Content
Facebook	• Visit Hay facebook page has increased by 51 to 5231 followers • Of the 102.3K page media views (actual facebook page views), 78 329 were unique individuals viewing the page for the month of July. • Top post for the month was a user tag of an amazing sunset over the One Tree Hotel. This post was viewed by 7284 individuals, 10 998 times. Increasing the page followers by 14, with 199 interactions including 10 comments and 9 shares.	
Instagram	• 1704 followers at the end of July, an increase of 9 with 260 engagements, including 231 likes and 11 shares and 5 re-posts for the month. • 3725 instagram accounts were reached for July with 11 734 views. • Top location for views was from Sydney again with the audience age bracket of 35-44. • Art where you least expect published July 27 was top post for the month. 516 views from 232 accounts. 30 interactions with 28 likes, 1 comment and 1 post save.	

Destination Management Plan

The Destination Management Plan was endorsed by the Council in 2021. Implementation of the Prioritised Action Plan includes:

Item Number	Outcome/Indicator	Action this month
Action 4.3	Continue to implement and promote existing events program and consider new events to expand visitor economy	For the year ending June 2026 Page followers grew 70% Unique page impressions grew 100% Instagram reach grew 326%
Action 6.2	Strengthen collaboration across LGA boundaries as well as with important stakeholders such as DNRM, DNSW and other Regional Tourism organisations	Staff attended a strategic planning day for Visit Riverina (VR) with staff joining a sub-committee to complete a three-year strategic plan to build on the work of VR over the past 12 months. It should be noted that Destination NSW have not yet confirmed funding for Destination Riverina Murray.
Action 6.4	Allocate resources to measure and interpret visitor data on an annual basis, including on numbers of visitors, spend and market segments	Based on the transaction data received in June, Hay attracted 10 300 tourists (more than 4 hours between transactions or overnight). This is a 0.2% decline compared to 2025 but a 15.8% improvement on last month.

Economic Analysis - Monthly Analysis

Expenditure Type	June 26	July 26	% Change
Resident Local Spend	1.92m	2.01m	4.48
Visitor Local Spend	2.12m	2.46m	13.82
Resident Escape Spend	2.67m	2.89m	7.61
Resident Online Spend	3.36m	3.47m	3.17

As reflected in the visitation data above, the visitor economy has shown modest signs of recovery following the fuel crisis in early April 2026. Visitor expenditure increased by 13.82% in July compared with the previous month, indicating improved visitation and consumer confidence. Despite this improvement, total visitor expenditure in the second quarter of 2026 was 22% lower than in the corresponding period in 2025.
Resident expenditure within the Hay LGA increased by 17% over the same period, while Resident Escape expenditure—spending by residents outside the LGA—increased by 3.5%. Online expenditure also continued to grow, recording an 8% increase compared with the second quarter of 2025.

South West Renewable Energy Zone
Community Employment and Benefit Program (CEBP)
Council was previously briefed on the announcement by Minister Sharp of $60 million in funding for the South West REZ Community Employment and Benefit Program (CEBP). EnergyCo have provided additional detail on the program design and community consultation.

The CEBP is funded through annual access fees paid by renewable energy projects that are granted access rights within a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ). These fees are a condition of access and are collected from generators connecting to the REZ network. The calculation is based on $2300 per MW access payment per year for 15 years.

The regional fund is coordinated by EnergyCo and governed under the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Regulation 2021. Sections 56–57 of the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Regulation 2021* prescribe the eligible community and employment purposes and minimum access-fee components. However, they do not prescribe the funding delivery model, identify specific recipients or determine the amount to be allocated to individual communities, organisations or initiatives.

The program can be delivered through three main mechanisms:

1. Grants to non-profit community organisations, councils, LALCs and other stakeholders
2. Partnerships with other NSW Government agencies
3. EnergyCo procuring or commissioning benefits projects directly.

The $60 million is a forward payment to communities to deliver legacy projects and mitigate impacts. It includes

- $44.3 million for community purposes (eg accommodation or housing, public or community services or infrastructure)
- $15.7 million for employment purposes (eg skills and training programs and associated services and facilities)

The program broadly supports

- Local community projects and infrastructure
- Jobs, training and skills
- Local economic development
- First Nations projects

EnergyCo has reviewed key strategy documents from all councils across the REZ, including Community Strategic Plans. Several key priorities have been identified including:

- Economic development and employment
- Community safety and resilience
- Health and wellbeing
- Biodiversity and environment
- Education and childcare
- Water security
- Connectivity
- Transport and mobility
- Open spaces and recreation
- Cultural and community connection
- Cost of living
- Housing

EnergyCo is currently consulting with councils, communities, First Nations groups and other stakeholders to confirm local priorities. Feedback from this consultation, together with previous engagement undertaken across the region, will help shape the future design and delivery of the program.

EnergyCo will be consulting with the community and council over the coming months through a number of mechanisms:

- Online webinar (held 3 August)
- Drop-in sessions (held 11 August, Hay War Memorial Hall)
- Facilitated workshops with community and Council (Councillor Development Session held 18 August)

- Targeted meetings (ongoing)
- Survey (open until 18 September)

EnergyCo will present a Consultation Findings Report which will outline community response to

1. What type of benefits does the community want funded through CEBP
2. What is the best way to deliver these benefits

It is expected that, once consultation and design is complete, the program will open for applications in the later half of Q4 2026.

Project update

Following is a summary table of all four projects with Access Rights (blue) granted under the REZ and projects with a footprint or impact for Hay LGA . Updates since June 2026 in red.

Project	Developer	Capacity	Status	Construction Jobs	Opex	Transport Route
Pottinger Energy Park*	Someva/AGL	831.2 MW	Approved MOD being submitted for OSOM transport Route NACAP announced Balance of Plant Operator	550	35	Towers - Geelong, Echuca, Deniliquin - Jerilderie Road (1/4 entrances) Blades - Geelong, Tocumwal, Finley, Deniliquin (1/4 entrances)
Bullawah Wind Farm *	BayWa R.E.	262.3 MW	Recommendation Referred to IPC Hearing to be held in Deniliquin on 1 September 2026	180	35	Towers and Blades - Adelaide, Euston, Balranald, Hay access via Jerilderie Road.
Yanco Delta Wind Farm *	Origin	1.5 GW	Modification lodged	850	50	Blades - Geelong, Toc, Jerilderie onto the Newell and then Kidman Towers - Adelaide, Euston, Balranald, Hay onto the Sturt then Kidman Way past Coleambally.
Dinawan Energy Hub*	Spark Renewables	1.8 GW	Assessment progressing	850	50	Towers - Port Kembla to site via Newell and Kidman (Wagga via Hume, Darlington Point via Sturt, Jerilderie via Kidman) Turbines - Adelaide, Euston, Balranald, Hay on the Sturt

Project	Developer	Capacity	Status	Construction Jobs	Opex	Transport Route
Non Access rights holders						
Hay Sun Farm	Metlen	440 mww/h BESS 100 mw Solar	Approved (2017)	130 jobs (July 26)		
Baldon Wind Farm	Goldwind	1 GW	Assessment Awaiting IPC. Granted access to existing 220 kV line	180 Stage 1 – 45 turbines	35	Towers and Blades - Adelaide, Euston, Balranald, access from Sturt Hwy (west of Hay)
Abercrombie Wind Farm	Vestas	2.5 GW	Preparing EIS	500	35	Adelaide / Portland / Geelong
Techelry Wind Farm	Neoen	577 MW	Responding to submissions	300	25	Adelaide and Newcastle via Wagga
Romani BESS	Samsung Renewable Energy	800 MW/H BESS	Responding to submissions	100		

* Final turbine numbers will be determined by during Detailed Design

Portfolio Committee
The NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee's final report into the impacts of Renewable Energy Zones is advisory in nature and does not directly implement any changes to the delivery of the South West REZ. The report makes 16 recommendations to the NSW Government aimed at strengthening governance, cumulative impact management, community consultation, local government resourcing, benefit sharing and landholder protections. Implementation of these recommendations is subject to the NSW Government's formal response and acceptance of the recommendations. A copy of the report has been provided with meeting papers.

Roadmap
The implementation phase of the Hay Economic Transition Roadmap is continuing, with the roadmap being used to inform and support key discussions and processes, including:

- applications by local businesses and industry to the NSW Sustainable Communities Business and Industry Round
- use by DPIRD to inform the development of guidelines for the next round of the Sustainable Communities Program, helping ensure funding opportunities are relevant to the needs of communities like Hay
- application to the FRRR Future Drought Fund Community Impact Program for youth leadership summits.

Action Update
**Accelerator Action*

Action		Activity
LL.1 ★	Engage a Community Facilitator/Connector over multiple years to convene, support and activate local partnerships and networks.	Funding Application Submitted for Active Regional Communities Program to fund LL1 to deliver LL2,LL3, LL7 and LL8. Expected announcement July 2026. Announcements still pending.
LL.7	Deliver community leadership and skills development programs targeting a diverse range of participants, including young people, volunteers, cultural groups and emerging leaders.	Application submitted under the FRRR Future Drought Fund Community Impact Grants to deliver two annual regional youth summits to develop leadership skills and build networks among young people so they are better equipped and connected to help the community respond to future droughts and other disruptions.
LL.8	Develop and implement a “Welcome to Hay” program to connect new residents, workers and families to local networks, services, schools, clubs and volunteering opportunities.	Hay has been added to the “Welcome Experience” program that offers a free service supporting essential workers and their families to move to regional NSW. Council is working with RDA Riverina to tailor welcome materials for Hay and promote the employment of a local welcomer.
W.3	Deliver industry aligned secondary education, VET subjects, work experience and school-based training to strengthen pathways into local education, training and employment.	The roadmap was used to inform discussions at the recent TAFE Connects community consultation with respect to key areas of training need in Hay to fill future jobs in the region.
LN.1 ★	Establish a locally-led primary production innovation network (PIN) to support information sharing, peer learning, strategic partnerships and collaboration across land-based industries.	Hay Plains Landcare EOI to the FRRR Future Drought Funds Community Impact Grants program to establish the PIN was not successful. Discussions progressing with Riverina LLS to assist in establishment of PIN.
BI.6 ★	Establish a local business concierge service acting as liaison between new industries and local businesses — programs, resources, funding access.	Discussions with EnergyCo.
BI.10	Deliver local communications, information sharing and engagement activities that ensure development is aligned with local aspirations and has local support	Meetings with industry to discuss future local manufacturing, decarbonisation opportunities and on shore fertiliser production. Ensuring that local industry are aware of grant opportunities.
H.1 ★	Engage a local housing coordinator to broker, facilitate and accelerate housing initiatives responding to rising demand over the next five years.	Discussion with EnergyCo.
TI.4 ★	Undertake a regional transport and logistics value chain analysis to identify inefficiencies and create in-region economic opportunities.	Request for community input into Transport for NSW Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plans (SRITPs) which are under development.

Youth

Youth Development
Life Ready

Driving Lessons

The youth driving lesson program with Deni Driver Training is midway through the current round. Lessons are being delivered each Thursday across eleven weeks.

Connectivity

Following an Expression of Interest process, Hay Shire Council was invited to submit a full application for the delivery of two annual regional youth summits in 2027 and 2028 under the FRRR Future Drought Fund Community Impact Program. The summits are an initiative of the Riverina Murray Youth Development Officer Network and will be planned and coordinated in partnership with youth officers from the participating councils.

Community

Community Participation

Members of the Youth Taskforce provided free facepainting to support the Hay Magpies Mini Magpies Day in August. The Taskforce will also be assisting at the upcoming Goulding Family Community Fundraiser and Hay Show.

National Youth Volunteer Week

A “Meet the Taskforce” social media campaign is currently underway to celebrate and recognise the young people of the Youth Taskforce that regularly volunteer their time for our community, while simultaneously promoting the benefits of young people volunteering and being involved in community.

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Social** 1.1 Our community is skilled and supported 1.1.1 Our community has access to a range of employment opportunities 1.1.2 Increase housing options within the community 1.1.3 Improve access to health services 1.1.4 Support local health initiatives and programs 1.4 Our youth and aged are supported 1.4.1 Advocate for greater capacity for local based child care services 1.4.2 Support youth and aged services and initiatives 1.5 Our community is inclusive and sustainable 1.5.1 Residents of all abilities and cultures have access to public facilities 1.5.2 Inclusive and Empowered Communities 1.5.3 Enhance educational pathways and opportunities 1.5.4 Promote inclusion and education of all abilities workers in community and business sector 1.5.5 Facilitate access public spaces for cultural and community events 1.5.6 Support cultural programs and initiatives, including First Nations **Environmental** 2.2 Our Community is resilient and adaptive 2.2.1 Support business with climate risk adaptation and best practice **Economic** 3.1 Our community welcomes new and innovative industry to support our future 3.1.1 Future Ready Businesses 3.1.2 Strengthen Business Support Services 3.1.3 Business Attraction and Investment Growth 3.1.4 Facilitate growth industries including workforce development and skills 3.1.5 Identify opportunities to grow the agricultural sector 3.1.6 Identify opportunities to grow the renewable energy sector 3.2 Our community values its history and tourism 3.2.1 Increase tourism and visitor spend 3.2.2 Promote events and activities 3.2.3 Actively identify, promote and enhance tourism initiatives 3.2.4 Showcase our open space, recreation and cultural facilities 3.3 Our community is resilient and adaptive 3.3.1 To proactively reduce the risk and limit the impact of disasters associated with natural hazards on our community and economy 3.3.2 Coordinated action for Climate Resilient Economic Development 3.3.3 Reimagined Care Economy
FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	Low

LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Nil
POLICY IMPLICATION	Nil
ASSET IMPLICATION	Nil
RISK IMPLICATION	Low

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

a.) Notes the information provided in the report and actions being undertaken
b.) Adjusts hire fees for Bishop Lodge Museum to include the payment of refundable bond for functions as follows:
    (i) Functions with fewer than 50 guests: $250 refundable bond
    (ii) Functions with more than 50 guests: $500 refundable bond

C5 – Corporate Performance & Community Monthly Report: August

REPORTING OFFICER	Executive Manager Corporate Performance and Community
ATTACHMENTS	- Draft Waste Management Policy, dated June 2026

INTRODUCTION

This report provides Council with information on the operations of the Corporate Performance and Community sector of Council.

COMMENTARY

Corporate Performance Monthly Report

Compliance Activities

Corporate Performance staff continued to progress a broad range of governance, compliance and strategic planning initiatives during the reporting period. Key activities included:

- Completion of Council's Annual Public Interest Disclosure reporting for 2025/26.
- Continued maintenance of the Contracts Register, which is publicly available on Council's website.
- Annual Disclosure of Interest forms and Related Party Returns have been issued to Councillors and Senior Staff for completion.

No reportable compliance breaches or other significant compliance matters were identified during the reporting period.

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) / Internal Audit

The next two meetings of Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) are scheduled for September and October 2026. The October meeting will include consideration and endorsement of Council's Annual Financial Statements prior to their presentation to the October Ordinary Meeting of Council.

Two internal audit reports have been received covering Enterprise-Wide Risk Management and Legislative, Policy and Code Compliance. The reports will be presented to the September ARIC meeting for consideration.

Council's current internal auditor has advised that he will be concluding his provision of internal audit services to the local government sector. Council is currently awaiting a proposal from a prospective internal audit provider. A report regarding future internal audit arrangements will be presented to a future meeting of Council.

Policies

The draft Waste Services Policy was placed on public exhibition, with no submissions received during the exhibition period.

Subject to Councillor feedback, it is proposed that the Waste Management Policy be adopted as presented.

Risk Management

Risk management activities continued throughout the reporting period, with a focus on strengthening workplace controls, risk identification and incident management processes. Key activities included:

- Under the guidance of Statewide Mutual, an audit of Council's sporting grounds has been completed. A risk management review of Council's ground-use agreements has also been undertaken and completed.
- Council's WHS/Risk Officer will attend the Statewide Mutual Risk Management Conference in Sydney from 19 to 21 August 2026. The conference will provide access to current industry trends, emerging risks, legislative updates and best-practice approaches, supporting the ongoing improvement of Council's risk management and WHS frameworks.
- The Statewide Continuous Improvement Pathway (CIP) will be completed during 2026 in partnership with Zurich through the MyZurich platform. The submission is due in mid-November and will subsequently be reviewed by Statewide Mutual. The submission comprises two components: Risk Improvement and Self Risk Assessment. The 2026 focus areas include light fleet vehicles (sedans) and heavy fleet vehicles (trucks). The CIP provides an additional mechanism through which Council continues to identify and manage organisational risks.

Work Health and Safety (WHS)

Routine WHS activities continued across Council's operations during the reporting period, including incident monitoring, hazard reporting, workplace consultation and safety support. Additional activities included:

- The Hay Library evacuation procedure has been reviewed and finalised. A fire drill is scheduled for September 2026.
- The Workplace Health and Safety Committee met on 18 June 2026, with the next meeting scheduled for Thursday, 27 August 2026.
- Council's WHS Induction Training has been updated and implemented for all new employees. The revised program strengthens compliance with WHS legislation, improves worker awareness of key safety responsibilities, and promotes consistent communication of Council's safety expectations to employees, contractors and volunteers.

- Procedures have been finalised for the forthcoming guided tours of the Waste Facility. A risk assessment and indemnity/consent form have been approved, with a WHS induction incorporated into the tour procedure.
- Council continues to progress outstanding actions identified through the November 2025 WHS Self-Audit. The Hazardous Noise Procedure is currently awaiting final management approval prior to submission to StateCover. Risk assessments are being undertaken across relevant work areas, with identified control measures documented in Council's Hazardous Noise Register. Development of the Falls Risk Procedure is also progressing and is expected to be completed well ahead of the November 2027 deadline.
- Arrangements have been finalised for employee skin checks to be conducted on 9, 10 and 11 September 2026 under Council's Safety and Wellbeing Incentive Program. The initiative supports Council's ongoing commitment to employee health, wellbeing and preventative care.

Training and Human Resources Activities

The Human Resources team continues to provide a comprehensive range of workforce management services, supporting Council's operational and strategic objectives through recruitment, employee relations, performance management and staff development.

During the reporting period, key activities included:

- Testing of Council's mandatory online training platform, SALT, continued during the reporting period. Final testing and refinement are underway to validate system functionality, user access and training workflows. Implementation remains on track, with the platform expected to be fully operational in September 2026.
- Internal recruitment activities resulted in the successful appointment of permanent full-time employees to the positions of Utilities Assistant and Storeperson.
- Online timesheets continue to be trialled through a pilot group. Feedback from the trial is being used to inform the broader implementation of online timesheets across the organisation.

Staff Training and Development

Council remains focused on strengthening workforce capability and ensuring employees have access to the skills, knowledge and training required to effectively meet operational and service delivery objectives.

Key training and development activities included:

- Stage 3 Child Safe in Councils training has been rolled out to employees across the HMSO, Water and Sewer, Waste Management, Parks and Gardens, and Stores work groups. Training is nearing completion, with the Outdoor Road Crew the final work group scheduled to undertake the program.

- Participation in the Local Government Professionals Aspiring Leaders Program continues, with Council's Community Services Manager scheduled to attend the next module in Wagga Wagga on 25 and 26 August 2026. The program will conclude with a final module in Sydney in October 2026, supporting the continued development of leadership capability within Council.
- Comprehensive safety and compliance training delivered by HMC Group Solutions was successfully completed during the reporting period. Training covered chainsaw operations, fire warden responsibilities and workplace first aid, strengthening workplace safety awareness and emergency response capability.
- The Community Services Manager will continue professional development through participation in Local Government NSW's *Finance for Non-Finance Managers* webcast on 24 August 2026. The program will support the development of financial literacy, budgeting knowledge and resource management capability.
- Council's Utilities Operator is scheduled to attend Part 2 Water Treatment Operations training in Nowra from 23 to 27 November 2026, following successful completion of Part 1 – Chemical Dosing Systems. The training will further support the effective operation and management of Council's water treatment facilities.
- Three employees are scheduled to attend a three-day training program at the Thurgoona Training Academy during September and November 2026. Participants will undertake nationally recognised training in *Enter and Work in Confined Spaces* and *Operate Breathing Apparatus*, supporting Council's capacity to safely undertake high-risk operational activities and meet legislative compliance requirements.
- Planning is underway for a range of additional training initiatives aimed at further enhancing workforce capability, operational effectiveness and compliance. Proposed programs include Forklift Operations, Backhoe and Loader Operations, Test and Tag, Working Safely at Heights, Asbestos Awareness, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Psychosocial Hazards, Customer Service, and Driver Safety Training for operators of large items of machinery.

Other Activities

Additional Corporate Performance activities undertaken during the reporting period included:

- Preparations for implementation of the staff application component of the Snap Send Solve platform remain ongoing. Once implemented, the platform is expected to improve internal reporting efficiency and support faster responses to operational issues and service requests.
- Council has completed the transition of *Council Snippets* to a fully digital publication model, with the final printed edition distributed during the reporting period. To support the transition, a QR code was included in recent editions to facilitate subscriptions to Council's digital newsletter. Approximately 40 subscriptions have been established to date, supporting a more streamlined and sustainable approach to community communications.

- Initial planning for the Bush Bursary Program has commenced, with preliminary discussions and preparations underway to support program delivery. Students participating in the program, which provides valuable experience in rural healthcare, are expected to undertake their placements in Hay during the first two weeks of December 2026.

LIBRARY STATISTICS – MEMBERSHIPS, LIBRARY USE AND LOANS

Membership
10 new members registered and 8 members were re-registered during the July period. As of 31st July 2026, Hay Shire library has 1818 registered members.

Total Library Visitors
Library visitation reached 3,012 during July, a 45.1% increase on the same month in the previous year, providing a strong indication that recent service improvements, expanded programming and investment in collection development are being positively received by the community. Increased activity reflects the library's continued transformation into a welcoming, relevant and accessible community space, supported by more purposeful programming, improved presentation and accessibility of collections, and resources increasingly aligned with community needs and interests.
The sustained growth in visitation also indicates increasing community confidence in the library as a service and place, with residents comfortable using the facility not only to borrow resources, but to participate in programs, learn, connect and spend time within the space. Total visitation for the period reached 29,132 individual instances of on-site engagement with the library service.

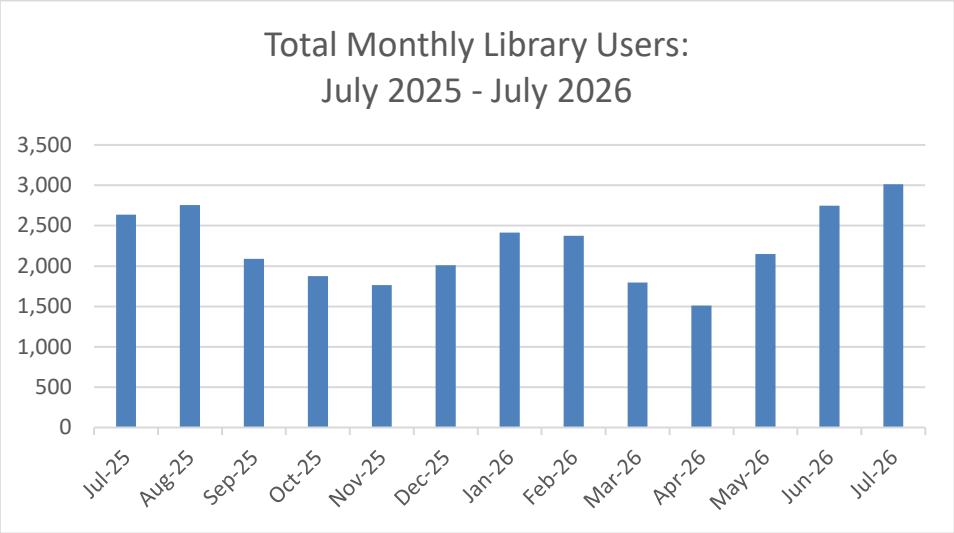


Figure 1: Total library Users data (July 2025 - July 2026)

Breakdown of Library Use
July data indicates broader and more intensive use of the library across both programmed and self-directed services. Total visitation increased from 2,748 in June to 3,012 in July, while general library use remained comparatively stable at 2,212 visits, indicating that the

overall increase was primarily driven by greater engagement with programs and digital services.

Program participation increased substantially, from 257 attendances in June to 445 in July. Adult participation rose from 106 to 147, while early childhood attendance remained broadly comparable at 113. A further 185 attendances across children's open programs reflects the expanded level of school holiday and children's programming delivered during the month. Digital access also showed notable growth, with public computer use increasing from 146 to 284 and Wi-Fi use from 37 to 67. Collectively, the figures demonstrate that increased visitation is being supported by growth across multiple areas of service delivery, rather than reliance on a single program or activity.

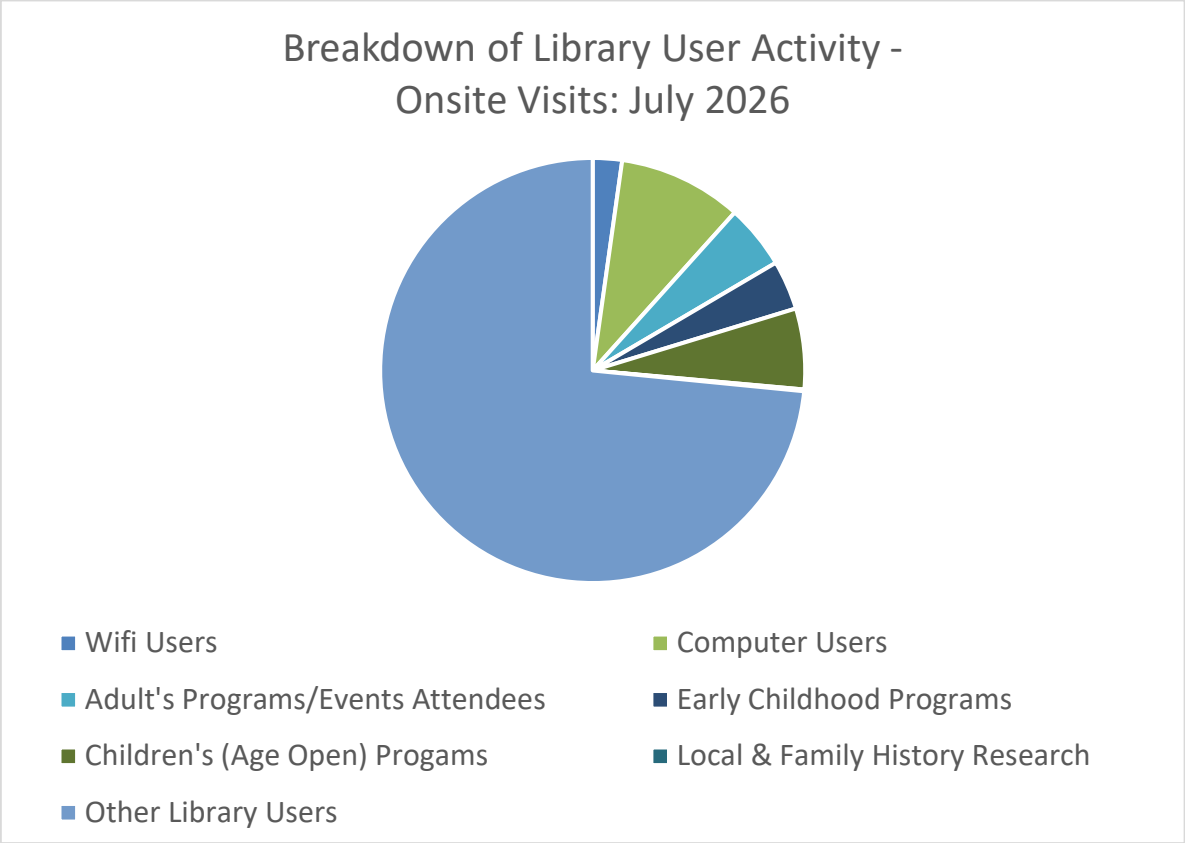


Figure 2: Breakdown of Library Users (July 2026)

Loans & Collections

A total of 1,449 items were loaned during July, including renewals, with 886 items returned and 64 reservations placed. 92 new items were added across a range of collection types and age groups, including resources for babies, children and adults, while 86 items were deleted and removed. The total physical collection as at 31st July 2026 was 19,708 items. Reporting completed on 31 July indicates 214 physical items recorded as overdue from the Hay Shire Library collection. A targeted reminder process will be undertaken to contact relevant patrons, support the timely return or renewal of items and maintain the availability and circulation of collection resources.

The number of new items added during July was lower than usual, reflecting a more judicious approach to acquisition, with purchasing focused on identified collection needs, anticipated use, member demand and achieving value for money. This is occurring alongside a systematic review of existing holdings. Since the beginning of the financial year, 1,602 items have been removed, with 43.3% originally purchased and made available for borrowing more than 20 years ago. Items identified for removal include those with very low or no recent circulation, including material not borrowed for 10 years or more, damaged or deteriorated items, superseded editions, and resources containing outdated, inaccurate or no longer relevant information.

Effective collection management requires a balance between strategic acquisition and regular evaluation of existing holdings. Decisions are not based on age or circulation alone; consideration is given to condition, currency and accuracy of content, usage, duplication, community demand, availability of newer editions, and the enduring historical, local, cultural or literary significance of individual works. This ensures material of continuing value is retained while resources that no longer contribute meaningfully to the collection are responsibly removed.

The review is also addressing overcrowding within sections of the collection, which had made effective browsing difficult and reduced the visibility of newer and high-quality resources. In some instances, recently acquired items had received little or no circulation despite their relevance, with dense shelving making them difficult for members to see or discover amongst older stock. Creating appropriate shelf capacity improves presentation and browsability, allows resources to be displayed more effectively and gives both new and existing quality material a greater opportunity to be discovered and borrowed.

This work represents a significant ongoing effort by library staff and supports a current, credible, accessible and responsive collection. Combined with more targeted purchasing, the review ensures available funding and collection space are used effectively and that the collection continues to evolve in response to identified gaps, member requests, new releases and the changing needs and interests of the community.

Borrowing patterns during July show particularly strong engagement among children and older residents. Borrowers aged 0–14 accounted for 491 loans (34% of total borrowing), including 344 loans among children aged 0–9, reinforcing the importance of the library’s early literacy and children’s collections.

Borrowing was substantially lower among teenagers and young adults, with just 32 loans recorded for borrowers aged 15–29. This remains a clear area for future collection development and engagement initiatives.

Adults aged 30–44 recorded 250 loans, while borrowers aged 60 years and over accounted for 579 loans (40% of all borrowing). Particularly strong activity was recorded among the 75–79 and 85–89 age groups.

These patterns provide useful evidence for ongoing collection development, allowing acquisitions and programming to respond to demonstrated demand while identifying age groups where further engagement may be beneficial. Staff will also continue encouraging

families to register children as individual members to improve the accuracy of age-based borrowing data.

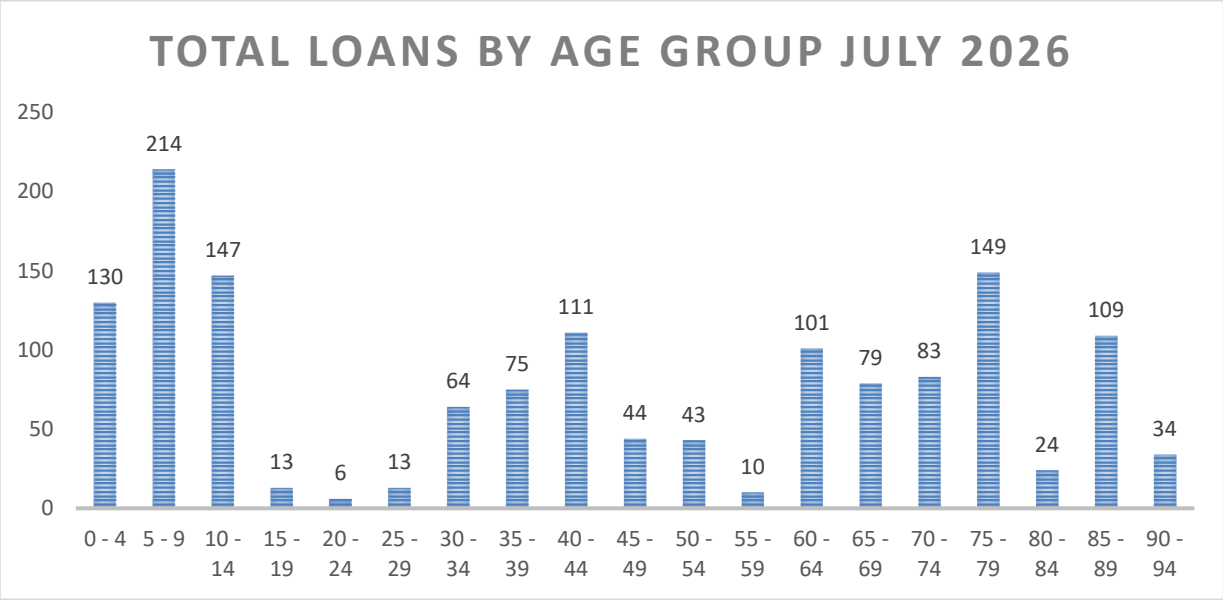


Figure 3: Total Loans by Age Group (July 2026)

Event of the Month: Cuppa & a Chat – In Conversation with Chris McClelland

July's Cuppa & a Chat welcomed 47 attendees, the highest attendance for the program to date, for a very special In Conversation with Chris McClelland – Makings of a Wildlife Artist. Chris was accompanied by his wife, Margie, who has shared many of the travels and experiences that have influenced his work.

Chris delivered a highly engaging and personal presentation, tracing an extraordinary artistic career developed without formal training. He reflected on the encouragement of early mentors, 43 years managing large sheep and cattle stations in the Australian outback, and the deep understanding of animal behaviour developed through a lifetime of close observation. A first visit to Africa in 1994 became a defining point in his artistic life, beginning a relationship with the continent that would see him return on numerous occasions and ultimately establish an international reputation for his wildlife drawings.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the presentation was Chris's discussion of seeing wildlife in its natural environment and the profound difference this made to his understanding of the animals he draws. He described observing animals largely removed from urbanisation and domestication, where their behaviour, movement, physical condition, coats and interactions can be markedly different from the versions of these species most people encounter in captivity or through conventional imagery. His experiences highlighted how easily our understanding of even the most familiar and majestic animals can be shaped by seeing them outside their natural context. For Chris, patiently observing wildlife on its own terms – its relationships, responses, movement and environment – became fundamental to capturing not simply an animal's likeness, but something of its character and natural behaviour in his work.

The presentation brought these experiences to life through photographs, video, stories and demonstrations of Chris's artistic process. Numerous framed original works were displayed throughout the library, including a recently completed drawing, providing attendees with the unusual opportunity to examine the detail of his work while hearing directly from the artist about the encounters and observations from which it developed.

Chris's career has attracted more than 40 awards, finalist selections, commendations and significant professional recognitions in Australia and internationally. Among these are winning a category of the Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize, receiving The Newcomer Award at the 50th Annual Society of Animal Artists Exhibition at the San Diego Natural History Museum, international exhibition recognition through Artists for Conservation, and invitation to become a Signature Member of the prestigious US-based Society of Animal Artists. His work has been exhibited in Australia, the United States, Africa and the United Kingdom.

For the Hay community, the morning represented a rare opportunity to hear firsthand from an internationally recognised artist in an intimate and accessible setting. Hay Shire library is extremely grateful to Chris and Margie for the generosity with which they shared their experiences, knowledge and stories, and to Chris for leaving one of his works with the library for ongoing display. The success of the morning also demonstrates the importance of recognising and showcasing the remarkable talent, knowledge and lived experience that exists within our own community. Providing a platform for local people whose achievements extend nationally and internationally allows those achievements to be celebrated at home, while giving residents access to cultural and educational experiences of a calibre more commonly associated with major galleries, institutions and metropolitan centres.

One of Chris's artworks remains on display at Hay Shire library, generously on loan from Chris and Margie, and community members are warmly encouraged to visit the library and view the work in person.

Figures 4,5,6,7,8: Cuppa & a Chat July 2026, Artwork Graciously Loaned for Display in the Hay Shire Library Sitting Area

School Holiday Activities – 'Crafternoons', Movies, PlayStation and Boardgame Drop-ins and our very first 'Youth After Dark Event'

Despite reduced staff capacity during the July school holidays, the library delivered a varied program of free activities for children and young people, recording a cumulative attendance of 185 school-aged participants across the holiday program.

Across three Crafternoon sessions, 74 attendances were recorded, demonstrating strong interest in hands-on creative holiday programming. Staff worked collaboratively to source inspiration, develop new skills and make innovative use of resources already available within the library. Activities included weaving and looming, friendship bracelets and wool-based crafts, combining creativity with practical skill development, problem-solving and learning through making.

Themed, relevant, skill-based and educational hands-on activities are now a key prerequisite in staff planning for school holiday programs. The focus is on providing activities that offer more than a one-off craft: children are introduced to a technique or skill they can understand, practise, build upon and continue independently. Programs are designed to accommodate different ages and abilities, with opportunities to extend the activity into more challenging projects as confidence and skills develop.

The Crafternoons were deliberately approached as an ongoing learning opportunity rather than activities that had to be completed within a single session. Children were encouraged to take unfinished projects home, return to a later Crafternoon, or drop into the library at any time for assistance. Those who mastered a technique were encouraged to try a more difficult challenge or expand on what they had already created. This approach supports creativity, persistence, independence and confidence, while positioning the library as a place where children can return to learn, practise and seek support outside of scheduled programs.

The program also demonstrated how engaging holiday activities can be delivered sustainably. By building staff capability and creatively using existing materials, all three sessions were delivered at nil additional program cost to Council's service.

The library also offered four free movie sessions, attracting a combined 59 children. These sessions were well attended and provided another accessible school holiday activity for families, complementing the more structured craft and learning-based programs.

The library welcomed 21 children from Hay Children's Services Vacation Care for an extended activity session. Staff developed an interactive treasure hunt taking children throughout the library and surrounding outdoor areas, incorporating literacy challenges, hands-on activities, exploration, problem-solving and teamwork. Children then remained at the library to enjoy craft, board games, reading, PlayStation and social activities, followed by a shared lunch of hot dogs and snacks.

A significant addition to the holiday program was the library's first Youth After Dark event, attracting 31 young people in Years 7–12. This was an encouraging result given that consistent engagement with this age group has historically been lower than other demographics and has been identified as a priority area for development. The library was transformed into an informal youth space for the evening, with pizza and chips provided

alongside a DJ booth, PlayStation, newly purchased age-appropriate board games and dedicated areas for games, conversation and socialising.

The event also provided an opportunity to better understand how young people want to use the library and reinforced the importance of developing the youth program and supporting collection together. Youth Fiction is currently one of the library's smallest collections and has undergone review, with damaged, outdated and no longer relevant or popular material removed and gaps identified for future acquisition. While purchasing has historically reflected demonstrated borrowing and attendance, increasing youth engagement also requires investment in contemporary and appealing resources that encourage young people to discover and use the library.

Feedback and operational learnings from the inaugural Youth After Dark event will inform future delivery. Subsequent events will incorporate pre-registration, earlier promotion, clear participation expectations and information for young people and families, with advance registration numbers allowing more effective planning of staffing, catering and activity resources.

Feedback from families throughout the holiday program also highlighted the value placed on the library continuing to provide free and accessible activities for children and young people. At a time of increased cost-of-living pressures, parents particularly appreciated that participation did not require a fee and that programs included healthy snacks, shared lunches or dinners, activity materials and take-home craft at no cost. Maintaining free participation ensures opportunities remain accessible across the community and that cost does not become a barrier to participation.

This reflects the broader role of a contemporary public library in providing equitable access to learning, creativity, recreation, technology, social connection and opportunities to develop new skills and interests. Strong participation across the holiday program demonstrates the value of continuing to provide relevant, inclusive and cost-effective activities that respond to local needs and give children and young people opportunities to learn, create, connect and participate within their community.

Figure 9: School Holiday Craft Made by Participants (July 2026)

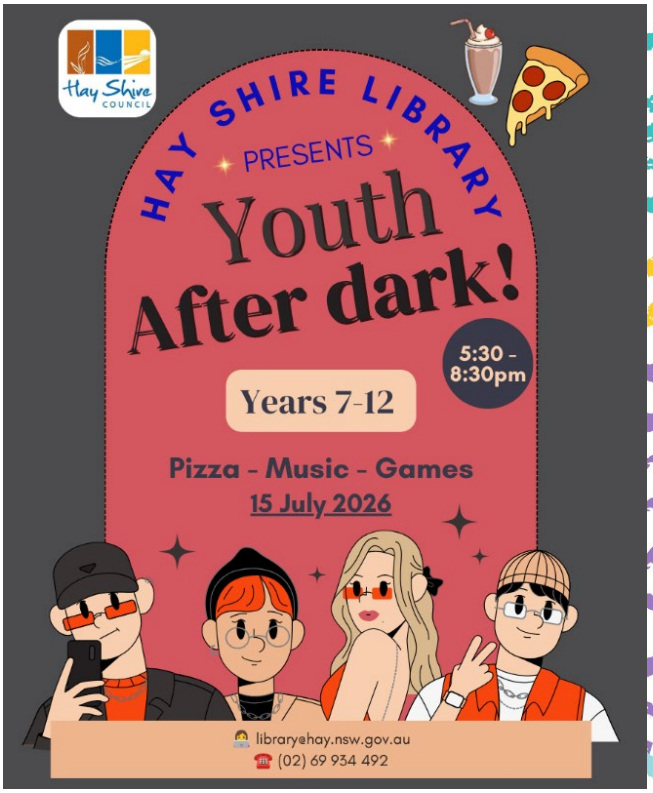


Figure 10,11: Posters for School Holiday Events

Regular Library Programming

Regular Library programs continued to attract consistent participation during July, with 260 attendances recorded across Story Time, Knitting, the Quilting Group, Cuppa & a Chat and Book Club. These established programs provide regular opportunities for literacy and lifelong learning, creativity, shared interests and social connection, while encouraging repeat visitation and ongoing engagement with the library.

Story Time continued to perform particularly strongly, recording 113 attendances across five sessions, including a dedicated visit from Hay Children's Services. July's theme, 'People and Places', provided a common thread across the month, using stories, music, movement, imaginative play and craft to introduce young children to people, places, transport and the world around them.

Each week extended the featured story into an interactive learning experience. Children travelled imaginatively to the zoo by camel, plane and train before creating colourful paper people; explored parks and then designed their own using a range of craft materials; travelled around the world through The Big Cheese and created colourful paper megaphones; and joined Mr Postmouse on his mail rounds before deciding where their own postcards should be delivered. Music, singing and movement were incorporated throughout the sessions, supporting participation and keeping early literacy activities engaging and age appropriate.

The program demonstrates how Story Time extends beyond shared reading, using books as the foundation for early literacy, language development, creativity, fine motor skills, imaginative thinking and an understanding of people and the wider world. The consistently strong attendance also provides an important opportunity for young children and their carers to become familiar and comfortable with the library from an early age and to discover the children's collection together.

Adult programs also remained well supported throughout July. Knitting & Scrabble, the Quilting Group and Book Club continued to provide welcoming, low-barrier opportunities for residents to pursue shared interests, exchange knowledge and skills, and maintain regular social connections. Their consistent attendance demonstrates the ongoing value of recurring Library programs alongside larger one-off events and activities.

Figure 12-22: Photographs from Story Time Sessions – People and Places (July 2026)

Hay Multi Service Outlet (HMSO) – July Service Overview

HMSO continued to deliver Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) services across the reporting period, supporting older residents to maintain their independence, wellbeing and connection within the community.

Development and refinement of HMSO resources, systems and supporting documentation remained a key focus during the month. Work continued across client documentation, service information, internal resources and operational processes to strengthen consistency, support contemporary service delivery and ensure HMSO remains well prepared for the changing aged care environment. This work will continue progressively as new requirements are embedded and resources are reviewed in practice.

Planning was also underway for the My Aged Care Information Seminar scheduled for 11 August 2026, to be delivered by Services Australia. HMSO is working collaboratively with Centrelink Agency staff to identify areas of particular relevance to older residents, families and carers, with the session expected to provide a valuable opportunity for the community to access clear and practical information about My Aged Care, available supports and pathways to services.

Preparations for the catered event are progressing, with a focus on creating an accessible and welcoming opportunity for community members to engage directly with Services Australia representatives, ask questions and improve their understanding of the aged care system.

Ongoing resource development and community information initiatives complement HMSO's broader focus on strengthening service delivery and ensuring older people across the Hay Shire have access to responsive, accessible and person-centred support.

Centrelink Agency – July Service Overview

Centrelink Agency services continued to be delivered in accordance with contractual requirements with Services Australia, providing local access to government services, customer assistance, information and referral support.

Planning continued for the Services Australia My Aged Care Information Seminar scheduled for 11 August 2026, including attendance by the Financial Information Service (FIS). Centrelink Agency staff worked with HMSO to identify key areas of community interest and support preparations for the event.

The initiative further strengthens Council's partnership with Services Australia and supports continued access to specialist Commonwealth information and services within the Hay community.

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Civic Leadership** 4.1 Our Council leads by example 4.1.1 Implement and promote best practice governance 4.1.2 Monitor and evaluate Council's strategic planning documents 4.1.3 Be environmentally responsible in decision making 4.1.4 Council will seek to continuously improve 4.3 Our Council is inclusive and sustainable 4.3.1 Enable an engaged workforce with suitable skills, available in the right place at the right time 4.3.2 Build a strong, collaborative, and supportive team culture 4.3.3 Ensure a financially sound Council that is responsible and sustainable
FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	Nil
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Various
POLICY IMPLICATION	Various as presented
ASSET IMPLICATION	Nil
RISK IMPLICATION	Compliance

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

(a) Notes the information provided in the report; and
(b) Adopts the draft Waste Services Policy as presented.

Hay Shire Council Policy

Title of Policy	**DRAFT - WASTE SERVICES POLICY**		
This applies to	All persons, properties, organisations and visitors accessing or utilising Council waste services		
Author	Wes Moorhouse	**Date Approved:**	
Position of Author	WHS/Risk Officer	**Authorised by:**	Council
Legislation, Australian Standards, Code of Practice.	• Local Government Act 1993 • Applicable Environmental and regulatory requirements (including EPA compliance obligations) including Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997		
Related Policies/Procedures			
Attachments	Annexure A – Hay Waste Services Procedure		
Aim	To establish a clear and consistent framework for the provision, use and management of waste services within the Local Government Area, ensuring safe, compliant and sustainable waste practices for the community.		

Version	**Details**	**Date**
Version 1	Initial Issue	June 2026

To be reviewed	Every four years, or earlier if required by legislative changes or community needs.
Superseded Policies	Mobile Garbage Bin Issue Replacement Policy adopted 28.5.24 Waste Transfer Scavenging Policy adopted 25.7.17

The Policy

1. Purpose

This Policy establishes Hay Shire Council's position on the provision, management, and regulation of waste services across the Local Government Area (LGA), ensuring consistency, compliance and sustainable waste outcomes.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all persons, properties, organisations and visitors accessing or utilising Council waste services, including kerbside collection, public bins, and waste facilities.

3. Policy Objectives

Council aims to:

- Reduce waste to landfill
- Maximise recycling and organics recovery
- Promote sustainable waste practices
- Provide clear and equitable waste services
- Ensure safe operation of waste facilities
- Minimise environmental and public health risks
- Provide efficient and affordable waste services

5. Policy Statements

4.1 Waste Service Provision

Council will:

- Provide kerbside waste collection services to eligible properties
- Supply and maintain waste bins for approved services
- Operate waste and recycling facilities within the LGA
- Provide public place waste infrastructure
- Deliver education and community engagement on waste management

4.2 Use of Waste Services

All users of Council waste services must:

- Comply with waste separation and disposal requirements
- Follow signage, directions and facility rules
- Use bins appropriately and avoid contamination
- Dispose of only approved waste types

4.3 Waste Bins (MGBs)

Council supplied bins:

- Remain the property of Council and are allocated to premises
- Must remain with the property when ownership changes
- Will be repaired or replaced in accordance with Council processes

4.4 Waste Facility Management

Council will:

- Operate waste facilities in a safe and controlled manner
- Assess waste loads and apply appropriate fees
- Refuse entry or disposal where required
- Ensure compliance with EPL licence requirements, safety and environmental standards and regulations

4.5 Prohibited Activities (Scavenging)

Scavenging at Council waste facilities is prohibited due to safety and public health risks., Council may enforce penalties under the Local Government Act 1993 for non-compliance.

4.6 Waste Charges

Council will apply waste service and facility fees in accordance with adopted Fees and Charges and legislative requirements.

4.7 Compliance and Enforcement

Council may:

- Apply penalties for breaches (including scavenging and misuse of services)
- Remove services for repeated non-compliance
- Refuse facility access where required
- Apply a surcharge for waste generated out of the Shire

4.8 Roles and Responsibilities

- Council is responsible for service provision, compliance, and enforcement
- Users are responsible for correct use and adherence to requirements

6. Review

This Policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with legislation and community needs.

Annexure A – **WASTE SERVICES PROCEDURE**

1. Waste Collection Procedures

1.1 Standard Bin Allocation

- Each eligible property will receive:
  - 240L Red (general waste)
  - 240L Yellow (recycling)
  - 240L Green (organics)

- Additional bins may be issued subject to application and fees.

1.2 Bin Ownership and Management

- All bins remain Council property and are assigned to the premises
- Must not be removed when occupants vacate
- Misuse, vandalism or defacing of bins is prohibited

1.3 Bin Presentation Requirements

Residents must ensure:

- Bins are presented kerbside by 6am or as otherwise advised
- Lids are closed and weight does not exceed 80kg
- Bins are spaced appropriately
- Only approved waste is placed in Council issued/approved bins

Failure to comply may result in non-collection.

1.4 Missed Collection Process

- Report missed collections to Council
- If compliant, collection will occur as soon as practicable
- Fee-based collection applies in certain circumstances

2. Mobile Garbage Bin (MGB) Replacement Procedure

2.1 Requests for Replacement

Landholders must notify Council where bins are:

- Lost
- Stolen
- Damaged

2.2 Replacement Conditions

- Replacement fees apply in accordance with Fees and Charges
- Replacement is free where:
  - Damage or theft is not the fault of the landholder
  - Incident is reported and evidence provided (e.g. Police report or statutory declaration)

2.3 Timeframes

- Bins to be replaced within operational service targets (e.g. 3 working days where practicable)

3. Contamination Management Procedure

3.1 Contamination Monitoring

- Council will inspect bins and identify contamination

3.2 Four-Strike Enforcement Process

1. First offence – bin not collected, contamination sticker applied
2. Second offence – warning letter issued
3. Third offence – final warning and education material provided
4. Fourth offence – the affected bin for the relevant waste stream will be removed. Reinstatement conditions will apply.

3.3 Reinstatement

- Completion of compliance form
- Payment of reinstatement fee
- Agreement to correct waste practices

4. Waste Facility Procedures

4.1 Entry Requirements

- Follow staff directions and signage
- Waste loads must be covered
- Waste must be presented for inspection

4.2 Waste Assessment

- Staff assess waste visually
- Fees applied based on type and volume as outlined in Council's Revenue Policy

4.3 Refusal of Entry

Entry may be refused where:

- Inspection is not permitted
- Directions are ignored
- Waste is non-compliant
- Prepayment and arrangement for commercial volumes or out of Shire waste has not occured

4.4 Operating Requirements

- Customers must leave before closing time
- Safety directions must be followed at all times

5. Scavenging Control Procedure

5.1 Prohibition

- Entry into waste pits or removal of waste materials is prohibited

5.2 Compliance Measures
Council will:
- Install signage stating prohibition
- Communicate rules to the community
- Enforce penalties for breaches

5.3 Penalties
Under the NSW Protection of the Environment Operations (POEO) Act 1997, unlawfully accessing and rummaging through a waste facility is treated strictly with the following penalties enforceable:

- **On-the-Spot Fines (Penalty Notices):**
  - **Individuals:** $250 to $500
  - **Corporations:** $1,000 to $2,000
- **Maximum Court Penalties:**
  - **Individuals:** Up to $250,000
  - **Corporations:** Up to $1,000,000

5.4 Exemptions
- Authorised personnel may enter restricted areas for maintenance with General Manager approval

6. Event Waste Procedures
6.1 Event Requirements
Event organisers must:
- Provide waste management requirements as part of an Event Application
- Ensure bin systems support waste separation
- Minimise contamination

6.2 Large Events
- Encourage use of recyclable materials
- Provide waste education/support staff where possible

7. Continuous Improvement
Council will:
- Monitor waste performance
- Provide education programs
- Review service delivery and infrastructure

C6 – Finances Report– August 2026

REPORTING OFFICER	Manager Finance and Council Business
ATTACHMENTS	1. Income and Expenditure Report

INTRODUCTION

This report provides Council with information on the operations of the Corporate Services Department

COMMENTARY

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

In accordance with the new Quarterly Budget Review Statement Guidelines a Monthly report must be presented to Council which as a minimum include an income statement for the month, and year to date, a balance sheet, Councils cash position and investment report and highlight material budget variances.

1. Monthly income statement by Function – annexure 1

A consolidated Income and Expenditure Statement by function is attached which included budget to actual year to dates as well as the monthly figures.

2. Cash and Investment Report

STATEMENT OF BANK RECONCILIATION

I hereby certify that the various funds of Council have been reconciled with the respective Bank Statements as at 31st July 2026 and the Reconciliation Statement has been entered in the Cash Book.

STATEMENT OF CASH BOOK BALANCES

Listed hereunder is the Statement of Cash Book Balances for all funds and accounts for the period ending 31st July 2026.

Fund	April	May	June	July
General	1,269,533.77	2,267,498.68	5,627,796.17	7,578,876.90
Water	2,400,708.65	2,447,736.12	2,798,991.07	2,689,382.82
Sewer	1,292,846.12	1,353,638.96	1,246,839.93	1,209,195.83
Total	**4,963,088.54**	**6,068,873.76**	**9,673,627.17**	**11,477,455.55**

RESERVES

Council's Reserve funds are listed below: -

	31/07/2026
GENERAL FUND *(Internally restricted)*	
Computer Replacement Reserve	31,919.75
Leave Reserve	670,474.44
Aerodrome Reserve	52,274.20
HACC	1,060,708.90
Financial Assistance Grant	4,043,041.00
Swimming Pool	6,000.00
Carry over Works	-
Capital Works	1,113,352.58
Land Development Reserve	61,168.49
Waste Services	100,000.00
Youth Services	3,014.29
Levee Bank Reserve	624,931.85
Library reserve	13,927.28
LEP reserve	3,677.22
Plant Reserve	284,147.07
Hay Gaol Museum	93,475.91
Bishops Lodge Museum	98,177.70
Dunera Museum	57,275.51
Long Paddock	7,260.00
Duval Scholarship	20,266.20
Development Contributions Section 7.12	108,331.14
Total General Fund	8,453,423.53
WATER FUND *(Externally restricted)*	
Renewals Reserve	1,034,001.80
Total Water Fund	1,034,001.80
SEWER FUND *(Externally restricted)*	
Renewals Reserve	221,600.80
Future Requirements Reserve	1,688,488.74
Total Sewer Fund	1,910,089.54
TOTAL RESERVES	11,397,514.87
Funds Invested other than Reserves	
General Working Funds (Unrestricted)	- 661,479.50
TOTAL FUNDS INVESTED	10,736,035.37

RECORD OF INVESTMENTS

Council's Current Investments are listed below:-

Financial Institution	Date Invested	Date Due	Interest Rate per Annum	No. of Days	Amount of Interest $	Amount Invested $
CBA	18-05-2026	17-08-2026	4.94	91	22,681.03	1,841,566.43
CBA	25-05-2026	24-08-2026	4.93	91	35,546.72	2,892,038.31
NAB - 164525911	28-05-2026	26-08-2026	4.93	90	10,886.76	895,574.36
NAB - 171325926	28-05-2026	26-08-2026	4.93	90	4,274.62	351,641.16
NAB - 808501318	01-06-2026	30-08-2026	4.93	90	32,686.86	2,688,911.83
I.M.B. - 48169	13-07-2026	13-10-2026	4.85	92	9,960.28	814,769.38
Bendigo - 2619308	11-06-2026	10-09-2026	4.80	91	4,669.09	390,159.81
Westpac - 146449	13-06-2026	13-09-2026	5.07	92	11,007.65	861,374.09
Total Investments						10,736,035.37

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that all investments as of 31st July 2026 have been made in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993, the Local Government Regulations and Council's Investment Policy.
Liz Fourie
Manager Finance & Council Business

3. Material Budget Changes
During the month of July, no material Budget Changes have been identified for Council consideration and information.

INFORMATION SERVICES REPORT

During the month the following activities were recorded

1. Records registered 860
2. Website hits 3,852
3. Facebook Visits 1,741
4. Facebooks Views 28,600
5. Cyber incidents 0

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Civic Leadership** 4.1 Our Council leads by example 4.1.1 Implement and promote best practice governance 4.1.2 Monitor and evaluate Council's strategic planning documents 4.1.3 Be environmentally responsible in decision making 4.1.4 Council will seek to continuously improve
FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	High Importance
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Local Government General Regulation 2005 Local Government Act 1993
POLICY IMPLICATION	Investment Policy, Asset Management Policy, Cyber security and Incident response Policy
ASSET IMPLICATION	The level of cash reserves needs to be considered in Councils asset management activities
RISK IMPLICATION	The risk is significant in relation to budget Control, information Management, Cash and Investment Management and service Delivery.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the report provided and approves the Material Budget Variances outlined in the report.

Hay Shire Council*
Council Total
Resources Details
For Period July

Resources	July Monthly Actuals	Original Budget	Revised Budget	YTD Actuals	YTD Variance
Income	**(6,963,107)**	**(20,420,578)**	**(20,420,578)**	**(6,963,107)**	**(13,457,467)**
General Manager	**(10,838)**	**(609,000)**	**(609,000)**	**(10,838)**	**(598,161)**
Tourism and Events	**(4,280)**	**(59,000)**	**(59,000)**	**(4,280)**	**(54,720)**
01910. Events Promotion Revenue	**0**	**(20,000)**	**(20,000)**	**0**	**(20,000)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	0	(20,000)	(20,000)	0	(20,000)
0146. Sales - Other General	0	(20,000)	(20,000)	0	(20,000)
01920. Tourism Revenue	**(4,280)**	**(39,000)**	**(39,000)**	**(4,280)**	**(34,720)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(4,240)	(39,000)	(39,000)	(4,240)	(34,760)
0145. Tourism Sales	(4,240)	(39,000)	(39,000)	(4,240)	(34,760)
0130. Other Income	(40)	0	0	(40)	40
0220. Other Sundry Income	(40)	0	0	(40)	40
Business and Economic Development	**(6,559)**	**(550,000)**	**(550,000)**	**(6,559)**	**(543,441)**
02170. Economic Development Revenue	**0**	**(550,000)**	**(550,000)**	**0**	**(550,000)**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(550,000)	(550,000)	0	(550,000)
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	0	(550,000)	(550,000)	0	(550,000)
02171. Youth Programs	**(6,559)**	**0**	**0**	**(6,559)**	**6,559**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	(6,559)	0	0	(6,559)	6,559
0170. Comm'th Grants & Subsidies	(201)	0	0	(201)	201
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	(6,358)	0	0	(6,358)	6,358
Corporate Services	**(3,092,006)**	**(9,404,961)**	**(9,404,961)**	**(3,092,006)**	**(6,312,953)**
Manager Corporate Service Office	**(11,753)**	**(62,500)**	**(62,500)**	**(11,753)**	**(50,748)**
01100. Corporate Services Revenue	**(11,753)**	**(62,500)**	**(62,500)**	**(11,753)**	**(50,748)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(9,795)	(7,500)	(7,500)	(9,795)	2,295
0127. Forfeiture of Bonds/Deposits	(1,250)	(500)	(500)	(1,250)	750
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(8,545)	(7,000)	(7,000)	(8,545)	1,545
0125. Reimbursements	(1,620)	(25,000)	(25,000)	(1,620)	(23,380)
0200. Reimbursements Other	(1,620)	(25,000)	(25,000)	(1,620)	(23,380)
0130. Other Income	(337)	(30,000)	(30,000)	(337)	(29,663)
0220. Other Sundry Income	(337)	(30,000)	(30,000)	(337)	(29,663)
Rates	**(3,016,671)**	**(3,065,984)**	**(3,065,984)**	**(3,016,671)**	**(49,312)**
01110. Rates Revenue	**(3,016,671)**	**(3,065,984)**	**(3,065,984)**	**(3,016,671)**	**(49,312)**
0100. Rates & Charges	(2,506,371)	(2,527,664)	(2,527,664)	(2,506,371)	(21,292)
0010. Rates - Residential	(487,189)	(486,763)	(486,763)	(487,189)	426
0011. Rates - Commercial	(306,144)	(306,191)	(306,191)	(306,144)	(47)
0012. Rates - Rural	(1,745,027)	(1,744,710)	(1,744,710)	(1,745,027)	317
0030. Rates Council Pensioner Concession	33,515	35,000	35,000	33,515	1,485
0034. Rates Interest Penalty	(1,527)	(25,000)	(25,000)	(1,527)	(23,473)
0101. Base Charge Income	(509,880)	(509,320)	(509,320)	(509,880)	560
0001. Base Charge Income	(509,880)	(509,320)	(509,320)	(509,880)	560
0105. Statutory Fees & Charges	(420)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(420)	(9,580)
0060. Rates Search/Certificate Fee	(420)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(420)	(9,580)
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(19,000)	(19,000)	0	(19,000)
0173. Contributions Received Other	0	(19,000)	(19,000)	0	(19,000)
Finance	**(7,087)**	**(5,429,377)**	**(5,429,377)**	**(7,087)**	**(5,422,290)**
01120. Financial Control Revenue	**(7,087)**	**(5,429,377)**	**(5,429,377)**	**(7,087)**	**(5,422,290)**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(5,069,377)	(5,069,377)	0	(5,069,377)
0170. Comm'th Grants & Subsidies	0	(5,069,377)	(5,069,377)	0	(5,069,377)
0121. Interest on Direct Investments	(7,087)	(360,000)	(360,000)	(7,087)	(352,913)
0190. Interest Received Banks & Other	(7,087)	(360,000)	(360,000)	(7,087)	(352,913)
Libraries	**(2,305)**	**(78,000)**	**(78,000)**	**(2,305)**	**(75,695)**
01710. Libraries	**(2,305)**	**(78,000)**	**(78,000)**	**(2,305)**	**(75,695)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(5)	(3,000)	(3,000)	(5)	(2,995)
0130. Library Fees / Fines on overdue books	(2)	0	0	(2)	2

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0134. Photocopy Charges	(3)	(3,000)	(3,000)	(3)	(2,997)
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	(2,300)	(75,000)	(75,000)	(2,300)	(72,700)
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	(2,300)	(75,000)	(75,000)	(2,300)	(72,700)
Children Youth and Family Services	**(3,654)**	**(45,100)**	**(45,100)**	**(3,654)**	**(41,446)**
01780. Children and Family Revenue	**(3,654)**	**(45,000)**	**(45,000)**	**(3,654)**	**(41,346)**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	(3,654)	(45,000)	(45,000)	(3,654)	(41,346)
0170. Comm'th Grants & Subsidies	(3,654)	(45,000)	(45,000)	(3,654)	(41,346)
01800. Other Education Revenue	**0**	**(100)**	**(100)**	**0**	**(100)**
0125. Reimbursements	0	(100)	(100)	0	(100)
0200. Reimbursements Other	0	(100)	(100)	0	(100)
Aged and Disability Care Services	**(26,388)**	**(576,000)**	**(576,000)**	**(26,388)**	**(549,612)**
01810. Aged & Disabled Revenue	**(24,363)**	**(511,000)**	**(511,000)**	**(24,363)**	**(486,637)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(1,220)	(11,000)	(11,000)	(1,220)	(9,780)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(1,220)	(11,000)	(11,000)	(1,220)	(9,780)
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	(22,803)	(480,000)	(480,000)	(22,803)	(457,197)
0170. Comm'th Grants & Subsidies	(22,803)	(480,000)	(480,000)	(22,803)	(457,197)
0125. Reimbursements	(220)	(18,000)	(18,000)	(220)	(17,780)
0200. Reimbursements Other	(220)	(18,000)	(18,000)	(220)	(17,780)
0130. Other Income	(120)	(2,000)	(2,000)	(120)	(1,880)
0220. Other Sundry Income	(120)	(2,000)	(2,000)	(120)	(1,880)
01820. Health Related Transport Revenue	**(294)**	**(35,000)**	**(35,000)**	**(294)**	**(34,706)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(294)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(294)	(9,706)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(294)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(294)	(9,706)
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(25,000)	(25,000)	0	(25,000)
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	0	(25,000)	(25,000)	0	(25,000)
01830. Meals On Wheels Revenue	**(1,732)**	**(30,000)**	**(30,000)**	**(1,732)**	**(28,269)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(1,732)	(30,000)	(30,000)	(1,732)	(28,269)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(1,732)	(30,000)	(30,000)	(1,732)	(28,269)
Community Transport	**(9,161)**	**(108,000)**	**(108,000)**	**(9,161)**	**(98,839)**
01860. Community Transport Revenue	**(9,161)**	**(108,000)**	**(108,000)**	**(9,161)**	**(98,839)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(514)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(514)	(4,486)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(514)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(514)	(4,486)
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	(8,647)	(103,000)	(103,000)	(8,647)	(94,353)
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	(8,647)	(103,000)	(103,000)	(8,647)	(94,353)
Arts and Culture	**(14,988)**	**(40,000)**	**(40,000)**	**(14,988)**	**(25,011)**
01880. Theatres & Museums Revenue	**(1,968)**	**0**	**0**	**(1,968)**	**1,968**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	(1,968)	0	0	(1,968)	1,968
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	(1,968)	0	0	(1,968)	1,968
01881. Bishops Lodge Museum	**(302)**	**(8,000)**	**(8,000)**	**(302)**	**(7,698)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(302)	(8,000)	(8,000)	(302)	(7,698)
0110. Admission Fees	(302)	0	0	(302)	302
0124. Other Facility Hire	0	(8,000)	(8,000)	0	(8,000)
01882. Hay Gaol Museum	**(2,033)**	**(22,000)**	**(22,000)**	**(2,033)**	**(19,967)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(2,033)	(22,000)	(22,000)	(2,033)	(19,967)
0110. Admission Fees	(2,033)	(22,000)	(22,000)	(2,033)	(19,967)
01883. Dunera Museum	**(686)**	**(10,000)**	**(10,000)**	**(686)**	**(9,314)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(686)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(686)	(9,314)
0110. Admission Fees	(686)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(686)	(9,314)
01890. Other Culture Revenue	**(10,000)**	**0**	**0**	**(10,000)**	**10,000**
0135. Capital Grants Received	(10,000)	0	0	(10,000)	10,000
0820. Comm'th Grants new or upgraded assets	(10,000)	0	0	(10,000)	10,000
Engineering	**(3,842,368)**	**(10,198,617)**	**(10,198,617)**	**(3,842,368)**	**(6,356,247)**
Manager Engineering Office	**(1,792)**	**(55,000)**	**(55,000)**	**(1,792)**	**(53,208)**
01200. Engineering Operations Revenue	**(1,792)**	**(55,000)**	**(55,000)**	**(1,792)**	**(53,208)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(1,712)	(18,000)	(18,000)	(1,712)	(16,288)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(1,712)	(18,000)	(18,000)	(1,712)	(16,288)
0125. Reimbursements	0	(35,000)	(35,000)	0	(35,000)
0200. Reimbursements Other	0	(35,000)	(35,000)	0	(35,000)
0130. Other Income	(80)	(2,000)	(2,000)	(80)	(1,920)
0220. Other Sundry Income	(80)	(2,000)	(2,000)	(80)	(1,920)
Parks and Reserves	**(20,332)**	**(44,945)**	**(44,945)**	**(20,332)**	**(24,613)**

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01220. Noxious Weeds Revenue	**(20,332)**	**(44,945)**	**(44,945)**	**(20,332)**	**(24,613)**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	(20,332)	(44,945)	(44,945)	(20,332)	(24,613)
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	(20,332)	(44,945)	(44,945)	(20,332)	(24,613)
Sport and Recreation Facilities	**(4,698)**	**(20,000)**	**(20,000)**	**(4,698)**	**(15,302)**
01240. Sport Grounds & Recreation Facilities Revenue	**(4,698)**	**(20,000)**	**(20,000)**	**(4,698)**	**(15,302)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(4,698)	(20,000)	(20,000)	(4,698)	(15,302)
0124. Other Facility Hire	(130)	(2,000)	(2,000)	(130)	(1,870)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(4,568)	(18,000)	(18,000)	(4,568)	(13,432)
Roads Bridges Footpaths	**(1,580,858)**	**(5,728,840)**	**(5,728,840)**	**(1,580,858)**	**(4,147,982)**
01260. Roads & Bridges Revenue	**(1,580,858)**	**(4,798,840)**	**(4,798,840)**	**(1,580,858)**	**(3,217,982)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(200)	0	0	(200)	200
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(200)	0	0	(200)	200
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	(496,084)	(966,508)	(966,508)	(496,084)	(470,424)
0170. Comm'th Grants & Subsidies	(47,726)	(966,508)	(966,508)	(47,726)	(918,782)
0820. Comm'th Grants new or upgraded assets	(448,358)	0	0	(448,358)	448,358
0135. Capital Grants Received	(1,084,574)	(3,832,332)	(3,832,332)	(1,084,574)	(2,747,758)
0820. Comm'th Grants new or upgraded assets	(1,084,574)	(3,832,332)	(3,832,332)	(1,084,574)	(2,747,758)
01300. Footpaths & Bike Track Revenue	**0**	**(30,000)**	**(30,000)**	**0**	**(30,000)**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(30,000)	(30,000)	0	(30,000)
0170. Comm'th Grants & Subsidies	0	(30,000)	(30,000)	0	(30,000)
01340. Regional Roads Revenue	**0**	**(900,000)**	**(900,000)**	**0**	**(900,000)**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(900,000)	(900,000)	0	(900,000)
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	0	(900,000)	(900,000)	0	(900,000)
Street Lighting	**0**	**(43,000)**	**(43,000)**	**0**	**(43,000)**
01390. Street Lighting Revenue	**0**	**(43,000)**	**(43,000)**	**0**	**(43,000)**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(43,000)	(43,000)	0	(43,000)
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	0	(43,000)	(43,000)	0	(43,000)
Waste Management	**(876,442)**	**(1,042,692)**	**(1,042,692)**	**(876,442)**	**(166,250)**
01410. Waste Management Revenue	**(876,442)**	**(1,042,692)**	**(1,042,692)**	**(876,442)**	**(166,250)**
0100. Rates & Charges	(871,299)	(875,892)	(875,892)	(871,299)	(4,594)
0030. Rates Council Pensioner Concession	29,497	30,400	30,400	29,497	903
0034. Rates Interest Penalty	(632)	(9,000)	(9,000)	(632)	(8,368)
0035. Rates Interest Written Off	1	0	0	1	(1)
0040. Domestic Waste Annual Charge	(696,268)	(693,656)	(693,656)	(696,268)	2,612
0041. Non Domestic Waste Annual Charge	(159,656)	(159,488)	(159,488)	(159,656)	168
0045. Tip Access Charge	(44,240)	(44,148)	(44,148)	(44,240)	92
0110. User Fees & Charges	(5,144)	(150,000)	(150,000)	(5,144)	(144,856)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(5,144)	(150,000)	(150,000)	(5,144)	(144,856)
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(16,800)	(16,800)	0	(16,800)
0173. Contributions Received Other	0	(16,800)	(16,800)	0	(16,800)
Water	**(162,194)**	**(1,537,600)**	**(1,537,600)**	**(162,194)**	**(1,375,405)**
21000. Water Revenue Fund 2	**(162,194)**	**(1,537,600)**	**(1,537,600)**	**(162,194)**	**(1,375,405)**
0100. Rates & Charges	(1)	(881,000)	(881,000)	(1)	(880,999)
0030. Rates Council Pensioner Concession	0	20,000	20,000	0	20,000
0034. Rates Interest Penalty	(1)	0	0	(1)	1
0042. Water Supply Annual Charge	0	(901,000)	(901,000)	0	(901,000)
0110. User Fees & Charges	54,468	(615,000)	(615,000)	54,468	(669,468)
0034. Rates Interest Penalty	(248)	(30,000)	(30,000)	(248)	(29,752)
0102. Water Supply Services User Charge	54,916	(575,000)	(575,000)	54,916	(629,916)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(200)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(200)	(9,800)
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	(204,462)	(11,600)	(11,600)	(204,462)	192,862
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	(204,462)	0	0	(204,462)	204,462
0173. Contributions Received Other	0	(11,600)	(11,600)	0	(11,600)
0120. Interest & Investment Income	(752)	(30,000)	(30,000)	(752)	(29,248)
0190. Interest Received Banks & Other	(752)	(30,000)	(30,000)	(752)	(29,248)
0135. Capital Grants Received	(11,448)	0	0	(11,448)	11,448
0820. Comm'th Grants new or upgraded assets	(11,448)	0	0	(11,448)	11,448
Sewer	**(1,185,128)**	**(1,323,440)**	**(1,323,440)**	**(1,185,128)**	**(138,312)**
31000. Sewerage Services Revenue Fund 3	**(1,185,128)**	**(1,323,440)**	**(1,323,440)**	**(1,185,128)**	**(138,312)**
0100. Rates & Charges	(1,171,588)	(1,185,340)	(1,185,340)	(1,171,588)	(13,752)
0030. Rates Council Pensioner Concession	22,279	22,700	22,700	22,279	421

0034. Rates Interest Penalty	(927)	(16,000)	(16,000)	(927)	(15,073)
0035. Rates Interest Written Off	0	0	0	0	0
0043. Sewer Annual Charge	(1,192,940)	(1,192,040)	(1,192,040)	(1,192,940)	900
0110. User Fees & Charges	(396)	(17,000)	(17,000)	(396)	(16,605)
0034. Rates Interest Penalty	(0)	0	0	(0)	0
0103. Sewer Service User Charge	0	(10,000)	(10,000)	0	(10,000)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(395)	(7,000)	(7,000)	(395)	(6,605)
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(11,100)	(11,100)	0	(11,100)
0173. Contributions Received Other	0	(11,100)	(11,100)	0	(11,100)
0120. Interest & Investment Income	(1,697)	(70,000)	(70,000)	(1,697)	(68,303)
0190. Interest Received Banks & Other	(1,697)	(70,000)	(70,000)	(1,697)	(68,303)
0130. Other Income	0	(40,000)	(40,000)	0	(40,000)
0220. Other Sundry Income	0	(40,000)	(40,000)	0	(40,000)
0135. Capital Grants Received	(11,448)	0	0	(11,448)	11,448
0820. Comm'th Grants new or upgraded assets	(11,448)	0	0	(11,448)	11,448
Aerodrome	**0**	**(15,000)**	**(15,000)**	**0**	**(15,000)**
01510. Aerodrome Revenue	**0**	**(15,000)**	**(15,000)**	**0**	**(15,000)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	0	(15,000)	(15,000)	0	(15,000)
0138. Rental / Lease Properties Income	0	(15,000)	(15,000)	0	(15,000)
Cemeteries	**(8,111)**	**(80,000)**	**(80,000)**	**(8,111)**	**(71,889)**
01530. Cemetery Revenue	**(8,111)**	**(80,000)**	**(80,000)**	**(8,111)**	**(71,889)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(7,787)	(80,000)	(80,000)	(7,787)	(72,213)
0014. ESPL Levy	(564)	0	0	(564)	564
0119. Cemetery/crematoria fees	(6,076)	(50,000)	(50,000)	(6,076)	(43,924)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(1,147)	(30,000)	(30,000)	(1,147)	(28,853)
0125. Reimbursements	(324)	0	0	(324)	324
0200. Reimbursements Other	(324)	0	0	(324)	324
Plant Operations	**(369)**	**(11,000)**	**(11,000)**	**(369)**	**(10,631)**
01540. Plant & Workshop Operating Revenue	**(369)**	**(11,000)**	**(11,000)**	**(369)**	**(10,631)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(369)	(11,000)	(11,000)	(369)	(10,631)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(369)	(11,000)	(11,000)	(369)	(10,631)
Private Works	**(2,445)**	**(140,000)**	**(140,000)**	**(2,445)**	**(137,555)**
01600. Private Works Revenue	**(2,445)**	**(140,000)**	**(140,000)**	**(2,445)**	**(137,555)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(2,445)	(140,000)	(140,000)	(2,445)	(137,555)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(2,445)	(140,000)	(140,000)	(2,445)	(137,555)
Recreation Sport Leisure	**0**	**(2,100)**	**(2,100)**	**0**	**(2,100)**
01720. Swimming Pool(s) Revenue	**0**	**(2,100)**	**(2,100)**	**0**	**(2,100)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	0	(2,100)	(2,100)	0	(2,100)
0120. Lease/Rent Fees Received	0	(2,100)	(2,100)	0	(2,100)
Fire Prevention and Emergency Services	**0**	**(155,000)**	**(155,000)**	**0**	**(155,000)**
02070. Fire Control Revenue	**0**	**(155,000)**	**(155,000)**	**0**	**(155,000)**
0115. Grants & Subsidies Recurrent	0	(155,000)	(155,000)	0	(155,000)
0171. State Grants & Subsidies	0	(155,000)	(155,000)	0	(155,000)
Development and Environmental Services	**(17,894)**	**(208,000)**	**(208,000)**	**(17,894)**	**(190,106)**
Buildings and Property	**(9,463)**	**(88,000)**	**(88,000)**	**(9,463)**	**(78,537)**
01490. Buildings Revenue	**(9,463)**	**(88,000)**	**(88,000)**	**(9,463)**	**(78,537)**
0105. Statutory Fees & Charges	0	(3,000)	(3,000)	0	(3,000)
0091. Other Statutory Charges (Sundry)	0	(3,000)	(3,000)	0	(3,000)
0110. User Fees & Charges	(9,463)	(85,000)	(85,000)	(9,463)	(75,537)
0124. Other Facility Hire	(8,784)	(41,000)	(41,000)	(8,784)	(32,216)
0138. Rental / Lease Properties Income	(679)	(43,000)	(43,000)	(679)	(42,321)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	0	(1,000)	(1,000)	0	(1,000)
Planning	**(6,694)**	**(82,000)**	**(82,000)**	**(6,694)**	**(75,306)**
02010. Town Planning Office Revenue	**(6,694)**	**(82,000)**	**(82,000)**	**(6,694)**	**(75,306)**
0105. Statutory Fees & Charges	(6,050)	(72,000)	(72,000)	(6,050)	(65,950)
0060. Rates Search/Certificate Fee	(497)	(7,000)	(7,000)	(497)	(6,503)
0061. Development Act Fees	(5,003)	(65,000)	(65,000)	(5,003)	(59,997)
0062. Town Planning Fees	(545)	0	0	(545)	545
0091. Other Statutory Charges (Sundry)	(5)	0	0	(5)	5
0110. User Fees & Charges	(41)	0	0	(41)	41
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	(41)	0	0	(41)	41

0125. Reimbursements	(603)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(603)	(9,397)
0200. Reimbursements Other	(603)	(10,000)	(10,000)	(603)	(9,397)
Building	**(1,187)**	**(19,000)**	**(19,000)**	**(1,187)**	**(17,813)**
01740. Halls & Community Centres Revenue	**(321)**	**(4,000)**	**(4,000)**	**(321)**	**(3,679)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	(321)	(4,000)	(4,000)	(321)	(3,679)
0125. Hall Hire	(321)	(4,000)	(4,000)	(321)	(3,679)
02020. Building Control Office Revenue	**(866)**	**(15,000)**	**(15,000)**	**(866)**	**(14,134)**
0105. Statutory Fees & Charges	(866)	(15,000)	(15,000)	(866)	(14,134)
0061. Development Act Fees	(496)	(15,000)	(15,000)	(496)	(14,504)
0063. Lodgement Fees	(120)	0	0	(120)	120
0091. Other Statutory Charges (Sundry)	(250)	0	0	(250)	250
Regulatory Services	**0**	**(14,000)**	**(14,000)**	**0**	**(14,000)**
02030. Parking & Other Ranger Services Revenue	**0**	**(10,000)**	**(10,000)**	**0**	**(10,000)**
0105. Statutory Fees & Charges	0	(9,000)	(9,000)	0	(9,000)
0077. Other Infringements Fines & Penalties	0	(2,000)	(2,000)	0	(2,000)
0083. Other Registration Fees	0	(7,000)	(7,000)	0	(7,000)
0110. User Fees & Charges	0	(1,000)	(1,000)	0	(1,000)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	0	(1,000)	(1,000)	0	(1,000)
02050. Other Law & Order Revenue	**0**	**(4,000)**	**(4,000)**	**0**	**(4,000)**
0110. User Fees & Charges	0	(4,000)	(4,000)	0	(4,000)
0143. Other User Charges (Sundry)	0	(4,000)	(4,000)	0	(4,000)
Public Health	**(550)**	**(5,000)**	**(5,000)**	**(550)**	**(4,450)**
02100. Health Administration & Inspection Revenue	**(550)**	**(5,000)**	**(5,000)**	**(550)**	**(4,450)**
0105. Statutory Fees & Charges	(550)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(550)	(4,450)
0086. Licences & Permits	(150)	0	0	(150)	150
0091. Other Statutory Charges (Sundry)	(400)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(400)	(4,600)
Expenditure	**726,983**	**26,645,952**	**26,645,952**	**726,983**	**25,918,978**
General Manager	**141,259**	**2,759,674**	**2,759,674**	**141,259**	**2,618,416**
General Manager`s Office	**34,597**	**586,700**	**586,700**	**34,597**	**552,103**
03000. General Manager's Office	**34,597**	**586,700**	**586,700**	**34,597**	**552,103**
0300. Employee Costs	14,428	437,000	437,000	14,428	422,572
0300. Salaries	14,428	437,000	437,000	14,428	422,572
0310. Staff Training	1,284	30,700	30,700	1,284	29,416
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	1,284	18,000	18,000	1,284	16,716
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	12,700	12,700	0	12,700
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0360. Professional Services	0	76,000	76,000	0	76,000
0405. Consultants Other	0	54,000	54,000	0	54,000
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	0	22,000	22,000	0	22,000
0370. Subscriptions and Memberships	18,000	27,000	27,000	18,000	9,000
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	18,000	27,000	27,000	18,000	9,000
0970. Plant Hire (Internal)	885	15,000	15,000	885	14,115
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	885	15,000	15,000	885	14,115
Elected Members	**12,877**	**195,820**	**195,820**	**12,877**	**182,944**
03020. Elected Members Expenses	**12,877**	**195,820**	**195,820**	**12,877**	**182,944**
0310. Staff Training	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	3,000	3,000	0	3,000
0330. Mayor & Elected Member Expenses	11,824	153,820	153,820	11,824	141,996
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0618. Elected Members Allowances	7,459	97,440	97,440	7,459	89,981
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	2,568	10,900	10,900	2,568	8,332
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	16,400	16,400	0	16,400
0695. Mayoral Allowance	1,797	24,080	24,080	1,797	22,283
0340. Civic Functions & Ceremonies	1,052	24,000	24,000	1,052	22,948
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	1,052	24,000	24,000	1,052	22,948
0405. Grants / Donations Paid	0	13,000	13,000	0	13,000
0622. Donations Paid	0	13,000	13,000	0	13,000
Governance	**50,513**	**518,000**	**518,000**	**50,513**	**467,487**
03050. Other Governance	**50,513**	**518,000**	**518,000**	**50,513**	**467,487**

0300. Employee Costs	21,406	395,000	395,000	21,406	373,594
0300. Salaries	20,991	395,000	395,000	20,991	374,009
0311. Other Employee Allowances	415	0	0	415	(415)
0310. Staff Training	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	9,500	9,500	0	9,500
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	5,500	5,500	0	5,500
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0601. Advertising Press	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0360. Professional Services	0	41,000	41,000	0	41,000
0405. Consultants Other	0	11,000	11,000	0	11,000
0420. Internal Audit	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
0370. Subscriptions and Memberships	29,107	66,000	66,000	29,107	36,893
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	29,107	66,000	66,000	29,107	36,893
Tourism and Events	**16,420**	**499,595**	**499,595**	**16,420**	**483,175**
03900. Area Promotion	**3,974**	**89,000**	**89,000**	**3,974**	**85,026**
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	16,000	16,000	0	16,000
0500. Stationery & Office Consumables	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0602. Advertising Other	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0396. Merchandise	3,974	43,000	43,000	3,974	39,026
0530. Goods For Sale	3,974	39,000	39,000	3,974	35,026
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	4,000	4,000	0	4,000
0405. Grants / Donations Paid	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
0623. Sponsorships Paid	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
03910. Events Staging & Promotion	**1,250**	**138,500**	**138,500**	**1,250**	**137,250**
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0500. Stationery & Office Consumables	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0460. Community Programs & Events	1,250	137,500	137,500	1,250	136,250
0300. Salaries	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0401. Contractors	0	80,000	80,000	0	80,000
0410. Other External Services	1,250	0	0	1,250	(1,250)
0506. Materials Purchased	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0602. Advertising Other	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	2,500	2,500	0	2,500
03920. Tourism Operations	**11,196**	**272,095**	**272,095**	**11,196**	**260,899**
0300. Employee Costs	10,678	213,000	213,000	10,678	202,322
0300. Salaries	10,678	213,000	213,000	10,678	202,322
0310. Staff Training	0	9,095	9,095	0	9,095
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	5,995	5,995	0	5,995
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	3,100	3,100	0	3,100
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	301	10,000	10,000	301	9,699
0500. Stationery & Office Consumables	156	4,000	4,000	156	3,844
0600. Postage	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	43	1,000	1,000	43	957
0640. Telephone Charges	102	4,000	4,000	102	3,898
0370. Subscriptions and Memberships	0	33,000	33,000	0	33,000
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	0	33,000	33,000	0	33,000
0375. Office Equipment & Furniture	135	1,000	1,000	135	865
0527. Furniture & Equip under $xxxx - Expensed	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	135	0	0	135	(135)
0460. Community Programs & Events	82	5,000	5,000	82	4,918
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0640. Telephone Charges	82	0	0	82	(82)
0970. Plant Hire (Internal)	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
Business and Economic Development	**26,853**	**959,559**	**959,559**	**26,853**	**932,707**
04160. Commercial Undertakings Operations	**0**	**14,000**	**14,000**	**0**	**14,000**
0415. Utilities	0	14,000	14,000	0	14,000
0518. Water Charges	0	14,000	14,000	0	14,000
04170. Economic Development	**2,939**	**188,860**	**188,860**	**2,939**	**185,921**
0300. Employee Costs	2,939	113,000	113,000	2,939	110,061

0300. Salaries	2,821	113,000	113,000	2,821	110,179
0311. Other Employee Allowances	118	0	0	118	(118)
0310. Staff Training	0	5,360	5,360	0	5,360
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	2,260	2,260	0	2,260
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	3,100	3,100	0	3,100
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0360. Professional Services	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0401. Contractors	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0370. Subscriptions and Memberships	0	13,500	13,500	0	13,500
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	0	13,500	13,500	0	13,500
0460. Community Programs & Events	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
0401. Contractors	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
04171. Economic Development Programs	**12,112**	**574,699**	**574,699**	**12,112**	**562,587**
0300. Employee Costs	0	524,699	524,699	0	524,699
0300. Salaries	0	524,699	524,699	0	524,699
0360. Professional Services	0	50,000	50,000	0	50,000
0401. Contractors	0	50,000	50,000	0	50,000
0460. Community Programs & Events	12,112	0	0	12,112	(12,112)
0300. Salaries	1,486	0	0	1,486	(1,486)
0301. Wages	10,211	0	0	10,211	(10,211)
0311. Other Employee Allowances	415	0	0	415	(415)
04172. Youth Programs	**11,802**	**182,000**	**182,000**	**11,802**	**170,199**
0300. Employee Costs	5,501	87,000	87,000	5,501	81,499
0300. Salaries	5,501	87,000	87,000	5,501	81,499
0310. Staff Training	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0360. Professional Services	0	38,000	38,000	0	38,000
0401. Contractors	0	38,000	38,000	0	38,000
0370. Subscriptions and Memberships	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0460. Community Programs & Events	6,301	52,000	52,000	6,301	45,700
0410. Other External Services	4,377	52,000	52,000	4,377	47,623
0620. Food & Catering Costs	808	0	0	808	(808)
0646. Travel Accommodation	1,115	0	0	1,115	(1,115)
Corporate Services	**221,531**	**2,527,617**	**2,527,617**	**221,531**	**2,306,087**
Manager Corporate Service Office	**74,853**	**427,910**	**427,910**	**74,853**	**353,059**
03100. Corporate Services Management	**74,853**	**427,910**	**427,910**	**74,853**	**353,059**
0300. Employee Costs	48,488	1,040,000	1,040,000	48,488	991,512
0300. Salaries	47,936	1,040,000	1,040,000	47,936	992,064
0311. Other Employee Allowances	552	0	0	552	(552)
0310. Staff Training	0	17,910	17,910	0	17,910
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	12,910	12,910	0	12,910
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	9,337	95,000	95,000	9,337	85,664
0500. Stationery & Office Consumables	4,794	25,000	25,000	4,794	20,206
0600. Postage	0	16,000	16,000	0	16,000
0601. Advertising Press	268	25,000	25,000	268	24,732
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	2,364	6,000	6,000	2,364	3,636
0640. Telephone Charges	1,621	21,000	21,000	1,621	19,379
0642. Internet & Other Communication Charges	290	2,000	2,000	290	1,711
0360. Professional Services	17,000	131,000	131,000	17,000	114,000
0402. Accounting Services	17,000	68,000	68,000	17,000	51,000
0405. Consultants Other	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0409. Valuation Expenses	0	53,000	53,000	0	53,000
0365. Legal & Debt Recovery Costs	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0403. Solicitors Fees	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0375. Office Equipment & Furniture	27	2,000	2,000	27	1,973
0527. Furniture & Equip under $xxxx - Expensed	27	2,000	2,000	27	1,973

0680. Depreciation	0	39,000	39,000	0	39,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	39,000	39,000	0	39,000
0980. Overheads / Internal Recharges	0	(907,000)	(907,000)	0	(907,000)
0980. Overheads Allocated	0	(907,000)	(907,000)	0	(907,000)
Finance	**1,479**	**397,207**	**397,207**	**1,479**	**395,729**
03120. Financial Control Operations	**1,479**	**233,000**	**233,000**	**1,479**	**231,522**
0380. Bank Charges	1,478	21,000	21,000	1,478	19,522
0614. Merchant Fees	1,478	21,000	21,000	1,478	19,522
0410. Insurance	0	212,000	212,000	0	212,000
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	62,000	62,000	0	62,000
0633. Public Liability Insurance	0	150,000	150,000	0	150,000
0450. Sundry Expenses	0	0	0	0	0
0691. Cashiers Rounding Adjustments	0	0	0	0	0
03121. Loan Repayments	**0**	**164,207**	**164,207**	**0**	**164,207**
0945. Loan Repayments	0	164,207	164,207	0	164,207
0701. Interest Payment on Other Loans	0	18,430	18,430	0	18,430
0945. Principal Repayments	0	145,777	145,777	0	145,777
Information Technology	**71,016**	**495,500**	**495,500**	**71,016**	**424,483**
03140. IT Services	**71,016**	**495,500**	**495,500**	**71,016**	**424,483**
0355. Computer / IT Costs	71,016	495,500	495,500	71,016	424,483
0401. Contractors	13,319	365,000	365,000	13,319	351,681
0506. Materials Purchased	0	35,000	35,000	0	35,000
0638. Software Licenses	57,698	95,500	95,500	57,698	37,802
Libraries	**19,885**	**355,800**	**355,800**	**19,885**	**335,915**
03710. Libraries	**19,885**	**355,800**	**355,800**	**19,885**	**335,915**
0300. Employee Costs	17,069	205,000	205,000	17,069	187,931
0300. Salaries	17,069	205,000	205,000	17,069	187,931
0310. Staff Training	0	4,400	4,400	0	4,400
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	3,100	3,100	0	3,100
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	1,300	1,300	0	1,300
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	310	10,000	10,000	310	9,690
0500. Stationery & Office Consumables	129	6,000	6,000	129	5,871
0527. Furniture & Equip under $xxxx - Expensed	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0640. Telephone Charges	181	3,000	3,000	181	2,819
0360. Professional Services	0	37,000	37,000	0	37,000
0405. Consultants Other	0	37,000	37,000	0	37,000
0370. Subscriptions and Memberships	695	2,000	2,000	695	1,305
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	695	2,000	2,000	695	1,305
0375. Office Equipment & Furniture	0	9,500	9,500	0	9,500
0527. Furniture & Equip under $xxxx - Expensed	0	9,500	9,500	0	9,500
0390. Library Resources	0	23,000	23,000	0	23,000
0510. Book Purchases	0	23,000	23,000	0	23,000
0410. Insurance	0	15,500	15,500	0	15,500
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	15,500	15,500	0	15,500
0415. Utilities	0	5,100	5,100	0	5,100
0518. Water Charges	0	600	600	0	600
0520. Electricity	0	4,500	4,500	0	4,500
0420. Security	165	1,000	1,000	165	835
0419. Security Building Surveillance	165	1,000	1,000	165	835
0425. Cleaning Costs	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0401. Contractors	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0450. Sundry Expenses	60	3,000	3,000	60	2,941
0506. Materials Purchased	60	3,000	3,000	60	2,941
0460. Community Programs & Events	324	7,000	7,000	324	6,676
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	324	7,000	7,000	324	6,676
0510. Grounds Maintenance	768	8,000	8,000	768	7,232
0300. Salaries	567	7,000	7,000	567	6,433
0311. Other Employee Allowances	9	0	0	9	(9)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	192	1,000	1,000	192	808
0530. Building Maintenance	367	10,000	10,000	367	9,632
0301. Wages	268	0	0	268	(268)

0311. Other Employee Allowances	3	0	0	3	(3)
0401. Contractors	97	10,000	10,000	97	9,903
0970. Plant Hire (Internal)	128	300	300	128	173
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	128	300	300	128	173
Children Youth and Family Services	**1,269**	**41,000**	**41,000**	**1,269**	**39,731**
03780. Children and Family Services	**1,269**	**41,000**	**41,000**	**1,269**	**39,731**
0300. Employee Costs	1,269	37,000	37,000	1,269	35,731
0300. Salaries	1,269	37,000	37,000	1,269	35,731
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	4,000	4,000	0	4,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	4,000	4,000	0	4,000
Aged and Disability Care Services	**38,741**	**569,000**	**569,000**	**38,741**	**530,260**
03810. Aged & Disabled	**38,501**	**541,000**	**541,000**	**38,501**	**502,500**
0300. Employee Costs	16,778	200,000	200,000	16,778	183,222
0300. Salaries	5,467	90,000	90,000	5,467	84,533
0301. Wages	10,694	110,000	110,000	10,694	99,306
0311. Other Employee Allowances	617	0	0	617	(617)
0310. Staff Training	0	7,550	7,550	0	7,550
0300. Salaries	0	6,050	6,050	0	6,050
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	1,500	1,500	0	1,500
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	15,665	80,000	80,000	15,665	64,335
0401. Contractors	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	14,849	0	0	14,849	(14,849)
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	636	40,000	40,000	636	39,364
0640. Telephone Charges	180	0	0	180	(180)
0375. Office Equipment & Furniture	26	20,000	20,000	26	19,974
0401. Contractors	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0506. Materials Purchased	26	10,000	10,000	26	9,974
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	9,000	9,000	0	9,000
0400. Volunteer Support	240	21,000	21,000	240	20,760
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	240	21,000	21,000	240	20,760
0460. Community Programs & Events	5,792	212,450	212,450	5,792	206,659
0401. Contractors	1,705	60,000	60,000	1,705	58,295
0410. Other External Services	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	21,000	21,000	0	21,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	4,086	120,000	120,000	4,086	115,914
0640. Telephone Charges	0	1,450	1,450	0	1,450
03820. Health Related Transport	**240**	**28,000**	**28,000**	**240**	**27,760**
0400. Volunteer Support	240	10,000	10,000	240	9,760
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	240	10,000	10,000	240	9,760
0460. Community Programs & Events	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0680. Depreciation	0	8,000	8,000	0	8,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	8,000	8,000	0	8,000
Community Transport	**11,074**	**108,000**	**108,000**	**11,074**	**96,925**
03860. Community Transport	**11,074**	**108,000**	**108,000**	**11,074**	**96,925**
0300. Employee Costs	1,767	37,000	37,000	1,767	35,233
0300. Salaries	1,767	37,000	37,000	1,767	35,233
0310. Staff Training	0	4,500	4,500	0	4,500
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	2,500	2,500	0	2,500
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	4,484	5,000	5,000	4,484	515
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	4,365	0	0	4,365	(4,365)
0506. Materials Purchased	26	0	0	26	(26)
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0640. Telephone Charges	94	0	0	94	(94)
0375. Office Equipment & Furniture	0	6,000	6,000	0	6,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0527. Furniture & Equip under $xxxx - Expensed	0	4,000	4,000	0	4,000
0400. Volunteer Support	545	2,500	2,500	545	1,955
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	545	2,500	2,500	545	1,955
0460. Community Programs & Events	4,278	53,000	53,000	4,278	48,722

0401. Contractors	3,054	53,000	53,000	3,054	49,946
0410. Other External Services	792	0	0	792	(792)
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	432	0	0	432	(432)
Arts and Culture	**3,216**	**133,200**	**133,200**	**3,216**	**129,985**
03880. Theatres & Museums	**3,216**	**128,200**	**128,200**	**3,216**	**124,985**
0410. Insurance	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0415. Utilities	0	20,200	20,200	0	20,200
0518. Water Charges	0	7,000	7,000	0	7,000
0520. Electricity	0	9,000	9,000	0	9,000
0521. Internal Rates	0	4,200	4,200	0	4,200
0425. Cleaning Costs	0	3,500	3,500	0	3,500
0401. Contractors	0	3,500	3,500	0	3,500
0510. Grounds Maintenance	2,556	55,500	55,500	2,556	52,944
0301. Wages	2,119	30,000	30,000	2,119	27,881
0311. Other Employee Allowances	23	0	0	23	(23)
0401. Contractors	0	18,000	18,000	0	18,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	1,500	1,500	0	1,500
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	414	6,000	6,000	414	5,586
0530. Building Maintenance	660	17,000	17,000	660	16,341
0301. Wages	149	5,000	5,000	149	4,851
0311. Other Employee Allowances	1	0	0	1	(1)
0401. Contractors	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0410. Other External Services	472	0	0	472	(472)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	38	2,000	2,000	38	1,963
0680. Depreciation	0	7,000	7,000	0	7,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	7,000	7,000	0	7,000
03890. Other Culture	**0**	**5,000**	**5,000**	**0**	**5,000**
0460. Community Programs & Events	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
Engineering	**319,974**	**19,357,566**	**19,357,566**	**319,974**	**19,037,600**
Manager Engineering Office	**53,037**	**659,460**	**659,460**	**53,037**	**606,424**
03200. Engineering Operations Management	**53,037**	**659,460**	**659,460**	**53,037**	**606,424**
0300. Employee Costs	37,508	599,000	599,000	37,508	561,492
0300. Salaries	37,463	599,000	599,000	37,463	561,537
0311. Other Employee Allowances	45	0	0	45	(45)
0310. Staff Training	0	20,960	20,960	0	20,960
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	13,910	13,910	0	13,910
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	7,050	7,050	0	7,050
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	895	9,000	9,000	895	8,105
0500. Stationery & Office Consumables	895	7,000	7,000	895	6,105
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0370. Subscriptions and Memberships	10,624	10,000	10,000	10,624	(624)
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	10,624	10,000	10,000	10,624	(624)
0375. Office Equipment & Furniture	0	500	500	0	500
0500. Stationery & Office Consumables	0	500	500	0	500
0970. Plant Hire (Internal)	4,010	20,000	20,000	4,010	15,991
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	4,010	20,000	20,000	4,010	15,991
Parks and Reserves	**21,135**	**898,000**	**898,000**	**21,135**	**876,864**
03220. Noxious Weeds Expenditure	**700**	**130,000**	**130,000**	**700**	**129,300**
0519. Pest Plant Control	700	130,000	130,000	700	129,300
0301. Wages	0	70,000	70,000	0	70,000
0506. Materials Purchased	524	17,000	17,000	524	16,476
0640. Telephone Charges	176	0	0	176	(176)
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	38,000	38,000	0	38,000
03230. Parks Reserves & Horticulture	**20,435**	**728,000**	**728,000**	**20,435**	**707,564**
0415. Utilities	52	71,500	71,500	52	71,448
0518. Water Charges	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
0520. Electricity	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
0640. Telephone Charges	52	1,500	1,500	52	1,448

0510. Grounds Maintenance	17,466	297,000	297,000	17,466	279,533
0301. Wages	12,055	187,110	187,110	12,055	175,055
0311. Other Employee Allowances	150	0	0	150	(150)
0401. Contractors	0	14,850	14,850	0	14,850
0412. Freight Delivery	32	0	0	32	(32)
0505. Cleaning Supplies	140	0	0	140	(140)
0506. Materials Purchased	2,185	35,640	35,640	2,185	33,455
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	14,850	14,850	0	14,850
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	2,905	44,550	44,550	2,905	41,645
0512. Irrigation System Maintenance	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0301. Wages	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0401. Contractors	0	8,750	8,750	0	8,750
0506. Materials Purchased	0	3,750	3,750	0	3,750
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	750	750	0	750
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	1,750	1,750	0	1,750
0513. Playground Maintenance	1,452	6,500	6,500	1,452	5,049
0301. Wages	1,214	3,250	3,250	1,214	2,036
0311. Other Employee Allowances	14	0	0	14	(14)
0506. Materials Purchased	0	2,925	2,925	0	2,925
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	130	130	0	130
0572. Miscellaneous	0	195	195	0	195
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	223	0	0	223	(223)
0515. Tree Maintenance/Management	429	20,000	20,000	429	19,570
0301. Wages	279	14,000	14,000	279	13,721
0311. Other Employee Allowances	3	0	0	3	(3)
0401. Contractors	0	4,000	4,000	0	4,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	148	2,000	2,000	148	1,852
0530. Building Maintenance	1,036	58,000	58,000	1,036	56,964
0301. Wages	544	12,760	12,760	544	12,216
0311. Other Employee Allowances	5	0	0	5	(5)
0401. Contractors	367	34,800	34,800	367	34,433
0506. Materials Purchased	0	8,700	8,700	0	8,700
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	120	1,740	1,740	120	1,620
0680. Depreciation	0	250,000	250,000	0	250,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	250,000	250,000	0	250,000
07230. Parks Reserves & Horticulture Capital Works	**0**	**40,000**	**40,000**	**0**	**40,000**
0712. Other Improvements to Land Capital Works	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
0401. Contractors	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
Sport and Recreation Facilities	**2,583**	**47,000**	**47,000**	**2,583**	**44,417**
03240. Sport Grounds & Recreation Facilities	**2,583**	**47,000**	**47,000**	**2,583**	**44,417**
0510. Grounds Maintenance	2,583	47,000	47,000	2,583	44,417
0301. Wages	1,629	6,000	6,000	1,629	4,371
0311. Other Employee Allowances	13	0	0	13	(13)
0401. Contractors	0	3,000	3,000	0	3,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	941	3,000	3,000	941	2,059
Roads Bridges Footpaths	**118,823**	**10,005,516**	**10,005,516**	**118,823**	**9,886,697**
03260. Roads & Bridges Maintenance	**174**	**46,126**	**46,126**	**174**	**45,952**
0550. Road Signs Maintenance	174	46,126	46,126	174	45,952
0301. Wages	0	25,369	25,369	0	25,369
0506. Materials Purchased	0	16,144	16,144	0	16,144
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	1,384	1,384	0	1,384
0640. Telephone Charges	174	0	0	174	(174)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	3,229	3,229	0	3,229
03280. Bridges Maintenance	**0**	**70,000**	**70,000**	**0**	**70,000**
0680. Depreciation	0	70,000	70,000	0	70,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	70,000	70,000	0	70,000
03300. Footpaths & Bike Track Maintenance	**161**	**170,000**	**170,000**	**161**	**169,840**
0560. Footpath Maintenance	161	30,000	30,000	161	29,840
0301. Wages	98	11,400	11,400	98	11,302

0311. Other Employee Allowances	1	0	0	1	(1)
0401. Contractors	0	12,000	12,000	0	12,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	3,000	3,000	0	3,000
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	600	600	0	600
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	61	3,000	3,000	61	2,939
0680. Depreciation	0	140,000	140,000	0	140,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	140,000	140,000	0	140,000
03310. Kerb & Gutter Maintenance	**3,153**	**20,000**	**20,000**	**3,153**	**16,848**
0546. Kerb & Gutter Maintenance	3,153	20,000	20,000	3,153	16,848
0301. Wages	2,420	6,000	6,000	2,420	3,580
0311. Other Employee Allowances	30	0	0	30	(30)
0401. Contractors	0	7,000	7,000	0	7,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	4,000	4,000	0	4,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	702	3,000	3,000	702	2,298
03320. Road Furniture Maintenance	**69**	**21,000**	**21,000**	**69**	**20,931**
0547. Road Furniture Maintenance	69	9,000	9,000	69	8,931
0301. Wages	0	2,700	2,700	0	2,700
0401. Contractors	0	5,400	5,400	0	5,400
0506. Materials Purchased	69	0	0	69	(69)
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	270	270	0	270
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	630	630	0	630
0680. Depreciation	0	12,000	12,000	0	12,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	12,000	12,000	0	12,000
03330. Urban Streets Maintenance	**14,227**	**578,000**	**578,000**	**14,227**	**563,774**
0515. Tree Maintenance/Management	224	65,000	65,000	224	64,777
0301. Wages	155	26,000	26,000	155	25,845
0311. Other Employee Allowances	2	0	0	2	(2)
0401. Contractors	0	26,000	26,000	0	26,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	3,250	3,250	0	3,250
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	1,300	1,300	0	1,300
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	66	8,450	8,450	66	8,384
0540. Road Maintenance	14,003	123,000	123,000	14,003	108,997
0301. Wages	7,215	49,200	49,200	7,215	41,985
0311. Other Employee Allowances	236	0	0	236	(236)
0401. Contractors	325	18,450	18,450	325	18,125
0506. Materials Purchased	0	36,900	36,900	0	36,900
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	6,150	6,150	0	6,150
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	6,227	12,300	12,300	6,227	6,073
0680. Depreciation	0	390,000	390,000	0	390,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	390,000	390,000	0	390,000
03340. Regional Roads Maintenance	**28,190**	**1,190,000**	**1,190,000**	**28,190**	**1,161,811**
0540. Road Maintenance	28,190	550,000	550,000	28,190	521,811
0301. Wages	2,290	105,000	105,000	2,290	102,710
0302. Overtime	48	0	0	48	(48)
0311. Other Employee Allowances	30	0	0	30	(30)
0401. Contractors	0	325,000	325,000	0	325,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	66,000	66,000	0	66,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	25,821	39,000	39,000	25,821	13,179
0680. Depreciation	0	640,000	640,000	0	640,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	640,000	640,000	0	640,000
03350. Sealed Rural Roads	**1,997**	**890,974**	**890,974**	**1,997**	**888,977**
0540. Road Maintenance	1,997	120,974	120,974	1,997	118,977
0301. Wages	930	36,292	36,292	930	35,362
0302. Overtime	48	0	0	48	(48)
0311. Other Employee Allowances	10	0	0	10	(10)
0401. Contractors	0	6,049	6,049	0	6,049
0506. Materials Purchased	0	24,195	24,195	0	24,195
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	36,292	36,292	0	36,292
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	1,009	18,146	18,146	1,009	17,137
0680. Depreciation	0	770,000	770,000	0	770,000

0740. Depreciation Expense	0	770,000	770,000	0	770,000
03360. Unsealed Rural Roads Maintenance	**46,286**	**856,000**	**856,000**	**46,286**	**809,715**
0540. Road Maintenance	46,286	856,000	856,000	46,286	809,715
0301. Wages	8,236	380,000	380,000	8,236	371,764
0302. Overtime	494	30,000	30,000	494	29,506
0311. Other Employee Allowances	209	0	0	209	(209)
0401. Contractors	648	50,000	50,000	648	49,353
0506. Materials Purchased	0	50,000	50,000	0	50,000
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	36,699	306,000	306,000	36,699	269,301
07300. Footpaths & Bike Track Capital Works	**0**	**30,000**	**30,000**	**0**	**30,000**
0761. Bike Track Capital Works	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
0301. Wages	0	3,000	3,000	0	3,000
0401. Contractors	0	21,600	21,600	0	21,600
0506. Materials Purchased	0	3,000	3,000	0	3,000
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	900	900	0	900
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	1,500	1,500	0	1,500
07320. Road Furniture Capital Works	**0**	**17,000**	**17,000**	**0**	**17,000**
0749. Road Furniture Capital Works	0	17,000	17,000	0	17,000
0300. Salaries	0	3,740	3,740	0	3,740
0506. Materials Purchased	0	11,900	11,900	0	11,900
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	340	340	0	340
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	1,020	1,020	0	1,020
07330. Urban Streets Capital Works	**0**	**247,748**	**247,748**	**0**	**247,748**
0740. Road Capital Works	0	247,748	247,748	0	247,748
0301. Wages	0	60,000	60,000	0	60,000
0401. Contractors	0	52,748	52,748	0	52,748
0506. Materials Purchased	0	70,000	70,000	0	70,000
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
07340. Regional Roads Capital Works	**0**	**360,000**	**360,000**	**0**	**360,000**
0740. Road Capital Works	0	360,000	360,000	0	360,000
0300. Salaries	0	18,000	18,000	0	18,000
0401. Contractors	0	313,200	313,200	0	313,200
0506. Materials Purchased	0	18,000	18,000	0	18,000
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	3,600	3,600	0	3,600
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	7,200	7,200	0	7,200
07350. Sealed Rural Roads Capital Works	**24,567**	**5,101,090**	**5,101,090**	**24,567**	**5,076,523**
0740. Road Capital Works	24,567	5,101,090	5,101,090	24,567	5,076,523
0301. Wages	0	240,664	240,664	0	240,664
0401. Contractors	13,700	3,875,098	3,875,098	13,700	3,861,398
0506. Materials Purchased	9,930	495,109	495,109	9,930	485,179
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	247,555	247,555	0	247,555
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	938	242,664	242,664	938	241,727
07360. Unsealed Rural Roads Capital Works	**0**	**407,578**	**407,578**	**0**	**407,578**
0740. Road Capital Works	0	407,578	407,578	0	407,578
0301. Wages	0	122,273	122,273	0	122,273
0401. Contractors	0	76,758	76,758	0	76,758
0506. Materials Purchased	0	93,031	93,031	0	93,031
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	8,152	8,152	0	8,152
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	107,364	107,364	0	107,364
Street Lighting	**0**	**100,000**	**100,000**	**0**	**100,000**
03390. Street Lighting Operations	**0**	**100,000**	**100,000**	**0**	**100,000**
0415. Utilities	0	100,000	100,000	0	100,000
0520. Electricity	0	100,000	100,000	0	100,000
Stormwater Drainage	**7,487**	**360,000**	**360,000**	**7,487**	**352,512**
03400. Stormwater Drainage Maintenance	**7,487**	**310,000**	**310,000**	**7,487**	**302,512**
0570. Stormwater Drainage Maintenance	7,487	60,000	60,000	7,487	52,512
0301. Wages	4,209	15,000	15,000	4,209	10,791
0311. Other Employee Allowances	37	0	0	37	(37)
0401. Contractors	0	39,000	39,000	0	39,000

0506. Materials Purchased	503	0	0	503	(503)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	2,739	6,000	6,000	2,739	3,261
0680. Depreciation	0	250,000	250,000	0	250,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	250,000	250,000	0	250,000
07400. Stormwater Drainage Capital Works	**0**	**50,000**	**50,000**	**0**	**50,000**
0770. Stormwater Drainage Capital Works	0	50,000	50,000	0	50,000
0301. Wages	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0401. Contractors	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
Waste Management	**56,639**	**1,132,000**	**1,132,000**	**56,639**	**1,075,362**
03420. Domestic Refuse Collection	**10,487**	**150,000**	**150,000**	**10,487**	**139,513**
0622. Kerb Side Collections	10,487	150,000	150,000	10,487	139,513
0301. Wages	4,286	75,000	75,000	4,286	70,714
0311. Other Employee Allowances	93	0	0	93	(93)
0506. Materials Purchased	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	6,108	70,000	70,000	6,108	63,892
03430. Waste Disposal Site Operations	**46,152**	**965,000**	**965,000**	**46,152**	**918,849**
0623. Waste Site Maintenance	14,327	580,000	580,000	14,327	565,673
0301. Wages	5,833	300,000	300,000	5,833	294,167
0302. Overtime	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0311. Other Employee Allowances	100	0	0	100	(100)
0401. Contractors	4,810	10,000	10,000	4,810	5,190
0410. Other External Services	0	130,000	130,000	0	130,000
0506. Materials Purchased	314	30,000	30,000	314	29,686
0524. Parts	427	0	0	427	(427)
0614. Merchant Fees	60	0	0	60	(60)
0640. Telephone Charges	189	0	0	189	(189)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	2,594	100,000	100,000	2,594	97,406
0624. Recycling Operations	31,824	200,000	200,000	31,824	168,176
0301. Wages	26,182	170,000	170,000	26,182	143,818
0302. Overtime	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0311. Other Employee Allowances	623	1,000	1,000	623	377
0401. Contractors	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0508. Protective Clothing & Accessories	562	0	0	562	(562)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	4,457	15,000	15,000	4,457	10,543
0680. Depreciation	0	185,000	185,000	0	185,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	185,000	185,000	0	185,000
07430. Waste Disposal Site Capital Works	**0**	**17,000**	**17,000**	**0**	**17,000**
0820. Waste Disposal Capital Works	0	17,000	17,000	0	17,000
0301. Wages	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0401. Contractors	0	12,000	12,000	0	12,000
Sanitation	**17,136**	**192,000**	**192,000**	**17,136**	**174,865**
03450. Public Amenities Maintenance	**13,516**	**170,000**	**170,000**	**13,516**	**156,485**
0425. Cleaning Costs	13,516	170,000	170,000	13,516	156,485
0301. Wages	6,452	100,000	100,000	6,452	93,548
0302. Overtime	1,217	20,000	20,000	1,217	18,783
0311. Other Employee Allowances	171	0	0	171	(171)
0401. Contractors	800	10,000	10,000	800	9,200
0505. Cleaning Supplies	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0506. Materials Purchased	3,279	0	0	3,279	(3,279)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	1,596	15,000	15,000	1,596	13,404
03460. Other Sanitation Expenditure	**3,620**	**22,000**	**22,000**	**3,620**	**18,380**
0500. General Maintenance	3,620	22,000	22,000	3,620	18,380
0301. Wages	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0401. Contractors	3,620	10,000	10,000	3,620	6,380
0506. Materials Purchased	0	8,000	8,000	0	8,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
Water	**48,775**	**1,915,490**	**1,915,490**	**48,775**	**1,866,717**
23000. Water Infrastructure Operations Fund 2	**741**	**1,045,490**	**1,045,490**	**741**	**1,044,749**

0310. Staff Training	0	28,590	28,590	0	28,590
0301. Wages	0	8,145	8,145	0	8,145
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	8,145	8,145	0	8,145
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	12,300	12,300	0	12,300
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	55,000	55,000	0	55,000
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	55,000	55,000	0	55,000
0370. Subscriptions and Memberships	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0401. Contractors	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0415. Utilities	741	168,900	168,900	741	168,159
0506. Materials Purchased	741	10,000	10,000	741	9,259
0518. Water Charges	0	38,000	38,000	0	38,000
0520. Electricity	0	110,000	110,000	0	110,000
0521. Internal Rates	0	6,900	6,900	0	6,900
0640. Telephone Charges	0	4,000	4,000	0	4,000
0680. Depreciation	0	425,000	425,000	0	425,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	425,000	425,000	0	425,000
0980. Overheads / Internal Recharges	0	367,000	367,000	0	367,000
0980. Overheads Allocated	0	367,000	367,000	0	367,000
23100. Water Infrastructure Asset Maintenance Fund 2	**24,123**	**500,000**	**500,000**	**24,123**	**475,879**
0581. Water Mains Maintenance	3,523	150,000	150,000	3,523	146,477
0301. Wages	2,070	75,000	75,000	2,070	72,930
0311. Other Employee Allowances	33	0	0	33	(33)
0401. Contractors	0	22,500	22,500	0	22,500
0506. Materials Purchased	748	22,500	22,500	748	21,752
0508. Protective Clothing & Accessories	85	0	0	85	(85)
0573. Maintenance	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	587	15,000	15,000	587	14,413
0582. Water Meter Maintenance	1,990	40,000	40,000	1,990	38,010
0301. Wages	1,213	24,000	24,000	1,213	22,787
0311. Other Employee Allowances	16	0	0	16	(16)
0401. Contractors	0	4,000	4,000	0	4,000
0506. Materials Purchased	452	8,000	8,000	452	7,548
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	309	4,000	4,000	309	3,691
0583. Filtration Plant Maintenance	16,620	200,000	200,000	16,620	183,381
0301. Wages	4,666	100,000	100,000	4,666	95,334
0302. Overtime	3,390	0	0	3,390	(3,390)
0311. Other Employee Allowances	99	0	0	99	(99)
0401. Contractors	7,863	36,000	36,000	7,863	28,137
0506. Materials Purchased	27	0	0	27	(27)
0573. Maintenance	0	54,000	54,000	0	54,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	575	10,000	10,000	575	9,426
0584. Reservoir Maintenance	1,200	40,000	40,000	1,200	38,801
0301. Wages	291	9,200	9,200	291	8,909
0311. Other Employee Allowances	6	0	0	6	(6)
0401. Contractors	880	26,800	26,800	880	25,920
0506. Materials Purchased	0	3,200	3,200	0	3,200
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	23	800	800	23	778
0590. Pump Station Maintenance	791	70,000	70,000	791	69,210
0301. Wages	338	35,700	35,700	338	35,362
0302. Overtime	28	0	0	28	(28)
0311. Other Employee Allowances	27	0	0	27	(27)
0401. Contractors	300	24,500	24,500	300	24,200
0506. Materials Purchased	0	6,300	6,300	0	6,300
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	98	3,500	3,500	98	3,403
27000. Water Infrastructure Capital Works Fund 2	**23,911**	**370,000**	**370,000**	**23,911**	**346,089**
0781. Water Mains Capital Works	0	85,000	85,000	0	85,000
0401. Contractors	0	85,000	85,000	0	85,000
0782. Water Meter Capital Works	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
0410. Other External Services	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
0783. Filtration Plant Capital Works	19,211	110,000	110,000	19,211	90,789
0401. Contractors	19,211	110,000	110,000	19,211	90,789

0790. Pump Station Capital Works	4,700	135,000	135,000	4,700	130,300
0401. Contractors	4,700	135,000	135,000	4,700	130,300
Sewer	**19,624**	**1,644,376**	**1,644,376**	**19,624**	**1,624,753**
33000. Sewerage Services Operations Fund 3	**888**	**1,038,876**	**1,038,876**	**888**	**1,037,988**
0310. Staff Training	0	3,900	3,900	0	3,900
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	2,800	2,800	0	2,800
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	1,100	1,100	0	1,100
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	47,000	47,000	0	47,000
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	47,000	47,000	0	47,000
0415. Utilities	888	80,200	80,200	888	79,312
0518. Water Charges	0	3,000	3,000	0	3,000
0520. Electricity	0	55,000	55,000	0	55,000
0521. Internal Rates	0	7,200	7,200	0	7,200
0604. Audit Services Financial Reports	741	0	0	741	(741)
0640. Telephone Charges	147	15,000	15,000	147	14,853
0680. Depreciation	0	450,000	450,000	0	450,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	450,000	450,000	0	450,000
0945. Loan Repayments	0	147,776	147,776	0	147,776
0701. Interest Payment on Other Loans	0	10,487	10,487	0	10,487
0945. Principal Repayments	0	137,289	137,289	0	137,289
0980. Overheads / Internal Recharges	0	310,000	310,000	0	310,000
0980. Overheads Allocated	0	310,000	310,000	0	310,000
33100. Sewerage Services Asset Maintenance Fund 3	**18,736**	**312,500**	**312,500**	**18,736**	**293,765**
0590. Pump Station Maintenance	2,823	60,500	60,500	2,823	57,677
0301. Wages	1,732	33,275	33,275	1,732	31,543
0302. Overtime	534	0	0	534	(534)
0311. Other Employee Allowances	28	0	0	28	(28)
0401. Contractors	0	18,150	18,150	0	18,150
0506. Materials Purchased	0	6,050	6,050	0	6,050
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	529	3,025	3,025	529	2,496
0591. Fixed Plant & Equipment Maintenance	1,829	130,000	130,000	1,829	128,171
0301. Wages	973	78,000	78,000	973	77,027
0302. Overtime	106	0	0	106	(106)
0311. Other Employee Allowances	585	0	0	585	(585)
0401. Contractors	0	26,000	26,000	0	26,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	19,500	19,500	0	19,500
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	165	6,500	6,500	165	6,335
0601. Sewer Mains Maintenance	14,084	122,000	122,000	14,084	107,917
0301. Wages	5,731	46,750	46,750	5,731	41,019
0302. Overtime	647	0	0	647	(647)
0311. Other Employee Allowances	276	0	0	276	(276)
0401. Contractors	510	62,500	62,500	510	61,990
0506. Materials Purchased	2,575	5,100	5,100	2,575	2,525
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	3,400	3,400	0	3,400
0508. Protective Clothing & Accessories	187	0	0	187	(187)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	4,157	4,250	4,250	4,157	93
37000. Sewerage Services Infrastructure Capital Works F3	**0**	**293,000**	**293,000**	**0**	**293,000**
0790. Pump Station Capital Works	0	33,000	33,000	0	33,000
0401. Contractors	0	33,000	33,000	0	33,000
0801. Sewer Mains Capital Works	0	260,000	260,000	0	260,000
0401. Contractors	0	260,000	260,000	0	260,000
Car Parks	**0**	**15,500**	**15,500**	**0**	**15,500**
03500. Parking Facilities	**0**	**15,500**	**15,500**	**0**	**15,500**
0680. Depreciation	0	15,500	15,500	0	15,500
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	15,500	15,500	0	15,500
Aerodrome	**2,785**	**237,674**	**237,674**	**2,785**	**234,888**
03510. Aerodrome Operations	**2,785**	**187,674**	**187,674**	**2,785**	**184,888**
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	41	700	700	41	659
0640. Telephone Charges	41	700	700	41	659
0410. Insurance	0	3,400	3,400	0	3,400
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	3,400	3,400	0	3,400

0415. Utilities	0	15,350	15,350	0	15,350
0518. Water Charges	0	6,000	6,000	0	6,000
0520. Electricity	0	6,000	6,000	0	6,000
0521. Internal Rates	0	3,350	3,350	0	3,350
0510. Grounds Maintenance	372	22,300	22,300	372	21,927
0301. Wages	278	15,610	15,610	278	15,332
0311. Other Employee Allowances	4	0	0	4	(4)
0401. Contractors	0	2,007	2,007	0	2,007
0506. Materials Purchased	0	223	223	0	223
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	91	4,460	4,460	91	4,369
0530. Building Maintenance	0	12,924	12,924	0	12,924
0301. Wages	0	1,163	1,163	0	1,163
0401. Contractors	0	11,503	11,503	0	11,503
0506. Materials Purchased	0	129	129	0	129
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	129	129	0	129
0610. Airstrip Apron & Marker Maintenance	2,372	28,000	28,000	2,372	25,628
0301. Wages	354	8,400	8,400	354	8,046
0311. Other Employee Allowances	3	0	0	3	(3)
0401. Contractors	1,940	6,160	6,160	1,940	4,220
0506. Materials Purchased	0	10,080	10,080	0	10,080
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	75	3,360	3,360	75	3,285
0680. Depreciation	0	105,000	105,000	0	105,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	105,000	105,000	0	105,000
07510. Aerodrome Capital Works	**0**	**50,000**	**50,000**	**0**	**50,000**
0810. Airstrip Apron & Marker Capital Works	0	50,000	50,000	0	50,000
0401. Contractors	0	50,000	50,000	0	50,000
Quarry Operations	**2,451**	**20,000**	**20,000**	**2,451**	**17,549**
03520. Quarries & Pits Operations	**2,451**	**20,000**	**20,000**	**2,451**	**17,549**
0640. Quarry Operations	2,451	10,000	10,000	2,451	7,549
0300. Salaries	0	1,500	1,500	0	1,500
0301. Wages	887	1,000	1,000	887	113
0311. Other Employee Allowances	9	0	0	9	(9)
0401. Contractors	550	4,900	4,900	550	4,350
0521. Internal Rates	0	2,600	2,600	0	2,600
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	1,005	0	0	1,005	(1,005)
0680. Depreciation	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
Cemeteries	**7,453**	**144,700**	**144,700**	**7,453**	**137,247**
03530. Cemetery Operations	**7,453**	**125,500**	**125,500**	**7,453**	**118,047**
0514. Memorial Monument & Plaque Maintenance	1,297	20,000	20,000	1,297	18,703
0506. Materials Purchased	1,297	20,000	20,000	1,297	18,703
0630. Cemetery Maintenance	6,156	85,000	85,000	6,156	78,844
0301. Wages	3,644	55,250	55,250	3,644	51,606
0302. Overtime	601	0	0	601	(601)
0311. Other Employee Allowances	54	0	0	54	(54)
0401. Contractors	0	11,050	11,050	0	11,050
0506. Materials Purchased	101	1,700	1,700	101	1,599
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	1,756	17,000	17,000	1,756	15,244
0680. Depreciation	0	20,500	20,500	0	20,500
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	20,500	20,500	0	20,500
07530. Cemetery Capital Works	**0**	**19,200**	**19,200**	**0**	**19,200**
0712. Other Improvements to Land Capital Works	0	19,200	19,200	0	19,200
0301. Wages	0	15,360	15,360	0	15,360
0401. Contractors	0	3,840	3,840	0	3,840
Plant Operations	**(86,186)**	**565,000**	**565,000**	**(86,186)**	**651,186**
03550. Plant Operating Expenses	**27,945**	**1,369,000**	**1,369,000**	**27,945**	**1,341,055**
0505. Plant Operating Expenditure	27,945	769,000	769,000	27,945	741,055
0301. Wages	6,050	140,000	140,000	6,050	133,950
0401. Contractors	2,080	20,000	20,000	2,080	17,921
0412. Freight Delivery	35	0	0	35	(35)
0506. Materials Purchased	1,863	15,000	15,000	1,863	13,137

0507. Inventory Issued From Store	10,740	300,000	300,000	10,740	289,260
0524. Parts	2,122	70,000	70,000	2,122	67,878
0570. Tyres/Tubes	1,703	35,000	35,000	1,703	33,297
0571. Oils/Grease	144	5,000	5,000	144	4,856
0572. Miscellaneous	284	15,000	15,000	284	14,716
0573. Maintenance	0	18,000	18,000	0	18,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0631. Motor Vehicle Registration Fees	0	48,000	48,000	0	48,000
0635. Motor Vehicle Insurance	0	80,000	80,000	0	80,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	2,925	18,000	18,000	2,925	15,075
0680. Depreciation	0	600,000	600,000	0	600,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	600,000	600,000	0	600,000
03560. Plant Recovery of Operating Costs	**(114,131)**	**(1,369,000)**	**(1,369,000)**	**(114,131)**	**(1,254,869)**
0975. Plant Hire Recovery (Internal)	(114,131)	(1,369,000)	(1,369,000)	(114,131)	(1,254,869)
0975. Plant Hire Recovered	(114,131)	(1,369,000)	(1,369,000)	(114,131)	(1,254,869)
07540. Plant Purchases	**0**	**565,000**	**565,000**	**0**	**565,000**
0705. Plant Purchases	0	565,000	565,000	0	565,000
0555. Plant Purchases	0	565,000	565,000	0	565,000
Depot Operations	**42,450**	**155,350**	**155,350**	**42,450**	**112,901**
03570. Works Depot Operations	**4,062**	**155,350**	**155,350**	**4,062**	**151,288**
0415. Utilities	92	15,350	15,350	92	15,258
0518. Water Charges	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0520. Electricity	0	5,500	5,500	0	5,500
0521. Internal Rates	0	2,850	2,850	0	2,850
0640. Telephone Charges	92	5,000	5,000	92	4,908
0450. Sundry Expenses	100	20,000	20,000	100	19,900
0508. Protective Clothing & Accessories	100	20,000	20,000	100	19,900
0501. Tools Replacement/Repairs	0	13,000	13,000	0	13,000
0401. Contractors	0	3,000	3,000	0	3,000
0525. Tools/Equipment Expensed (under $xxxx)	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0530. Building Maintenance	734	22,000	22,000	734	21,266
0301. Wages	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0401. Contractors	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0412. Freight Delivery	55	0	0	55	(55)
0501. Printing & Photocopying Costs	61	0	0	61	(61)
0506. Materials Purchased	296	3,000	3,000	296	2,704
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	189	1,000	1,000	189	811
0508. Protective Clothing & Accessories	133	0	0	133	(133)
0572. Miscellaneous	0	6,000	6,000	0	6,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0591. Fixed Plant & Equipment Maintenance	3,136	85,000	85,000	3,136	81,864
0301. Wages	1,571	22,000	22,000	1,571	20,429
0311. Other Employee Allowances	46	0	0	46	(46)
0401. Contractors	0	23,000	23,000	0	23,000
0506. Materials Purchased	981	15,000	15,000	981	14,019
0572. Miscellaneous	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	538	10,000	10,000	538	9,462
03580. Works / Labour Overheads	**136,649**	**1,850,890**	**1,850,890**	**136,649**	**1,714,242**
0300. Employee Costs	136,045	1,762,000	1,762,000	136,045	1,625,956
0311. Other Employee Allowances	197	7,000	7,000	197	6,803
0315. Fringe Benefit Taxes	0	20,000	20,000	0	20,000
0321. Public Holidays	0	90,000	90,000	0	90,000
0322. Annual Leave	24,354	350,000	350,000	24,354	325,646
0323. Sick Leave	12,351	200,000	200,000	12,351	187,649
0324. Long Service Leave	8,822	150,000	150,000	8,822	141,178
0326. Other Leave Expenses	413	80,000	80,000	413	79,587
0330. Superannuation - Council Contribution	52,394	640,000	640,000	52,394	587,606
0340. Other Employee Costs	4,978	35,000	35,000	4,978	30,022
0341. Medicals	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0345. Workers Compensation Insurance	30,975	180,000	180,000	30,975	149,025
0506. Materials Purchased	166	0	0	166	(166)

0508. Protective Clothing & Accessories	1,394	5,000	5,000	1,394	3,606
0310. Staff Training	604	88,890	88,890	604	88,286
0300. Salaries	597	10,000	10,000	597	9,403
0301. Wages	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0311. Other Employee Allowances	7	0	0	7	(7)
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	54,990	54,990	0	54,990
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	13,900	13,900	0	13,900
03590. Works / Labour Overhead Recovery	**(98,261)**	**(1,850,890)**	**(1,850,890)**	**(98,261)**	**(1,752,629)**
0986. Oncosts Recovered	(98,261)	(1,850,890)	(1,850,890)	(98,261)	(1,752,629)
0986. Oncosts Recovered	(98,261)	(1,850,890)	(1,850,890)	(98,261)	(1,752,629)
Private Works	**27**	**130,000**	**130,000**	**27**	**129,973**
03600. Private Works	**27**	**130,000**	**130,000**	**27**	**129,973**
0695. Private Works	27	130,000	130,000	27	129,973
0301. Wages	0	20,000	20,000	0	20,000
0311. Other Employee Allowances	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0401. Contractors	0	50,000	50,000	0	50,000
0506. Materials Purchased	27	5,000	5,000	27	4,973
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0520. Electricity	0	20,000	20,000	0	20,000
Recreation Sport Leisure	**3,648**	**567,000**	**567,000**	**3,648**	**563,352**
03720. Swimming Pool(s) Operations	**3,648**	**567,000**	**567,000**	**3,648**	**563,352**
0410. Insurance	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0415. Utilities	85	42,000	42,000	85	41,915
0518. Water Charges	0	25,000	25,000	0	25,000
0520. Electricity	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0640. Telephone Charges	85	2,000	2,000	85	1,915
0535. Swimming Pool Maintenance	3,563	340,000	340,000	3,563	336,437
0301. Wages	2,121	160,000	160,000	2,121	157,879
0302. Overtime	539	30,000	30,000	539	29,461
0311. Other Employee Allowances	60	0	0	60	(60)
0401. Contractors	117	20,000	20,000	117	19,883
0506. Materials Purchased	140	100,000	100,000	140	99,860
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	7,500	7,500	0	7,500
0572. Miscellaneous	0	12,500	12,500	0	12,500
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	586	10,000	10,000	586	9,414
0680. Depreciation	0	160,000	160,000	0	160,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	160,000	160,000	0	160,000
Fire Prevention and Emergency Services	**2,107**	**568,500**	**568,500**	**2,107**	**566,393**
04070. Fire Control Expenses	**2,040**	**552,000**	**552,000**	**2,040**	**549,960**
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	90	12,500	12,500	90	12,410
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	11,000	11,000	0	11,000
0640. Telephone Charges	90	1,500	1,500	90	1,410
0400. Volunteer Support	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0651. Volunteer Reimbursement of Expenses	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0410. Insurance	0	5,500	5,500	0	5,500
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	5,500	5,500	0	5,500
0415. Utilities	0	297,000	297,000	0	297,000
0520. Electricity	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0625. Emergency Services Levy	0	295,000	295,000	0	295,000
0510. Grounds Maintenance	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
0401. Contractors	0	40,000	40,000	0	40,000
0530. Building Maintenance	389	10,000	10,000	389	9,611
0401. Contractors	389	10,000	10,000	389	9,611
0591. Fixed Plant & Equipment Maintenance	1,561	85,000	85,000	1,561	83,439
0401. Contractors	1,561	69,000	69,000	1,561	67,439
0506. Materials Purchased	0	6,000	6,000	0	6,000
0522. Fuel	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0680. Depreciation	0	100,000	100,000	0	100,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	100,000	100,000	0	100,000
04080. State Emergency Service Expenses	**67**	**16,500**	**16,500**	**67**	**16,433**

0350. Office Administration Expenditure	67	7,000	7,000	67	6,933
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	6,000	6,000	0	6,000
0640. Telephone Charges	67	1,000	1,000	67	933
0415. Utilities	0	9,500	9,500	0	9,500
0625. Emergency Services Levy	0	9,500	9,500	0	9,500
Development and Environmental Services	**44,218**	**2,001,095**	**2,001,095**	**44,218**	**1,956,875**
Buildings and Property	**12,269**	**1,240,000**	**1,240,000**	**12,269**	**1,227,730**
03490. Buildings Maintenance & Operations	**12,269**	**1,070,000**	**1,070,000**	**12,269**	**1,057,730**
0410. Insurance	0	52,000	52,000	0	52,000
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	52,000	52,000	0	52,000
0415. Utilities	9,813	116,000	116,000	9,813	106,186
0518. Water Charges	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0520. Electricity	0	28,000	28,000	0	28,000
0521. Internal Rates	0	53,000	53,000	0	53,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	9,589	20,000	20,000	9,589	10,411
0640. Telephone Charges	225	5,000	5,000	225	4,775
0425. Cleaning Costs	0	100,000	100,000	0	100,000
0401. Contractors	0	100,000	100,000	0	100,000
0510. Grounds Maintenance	747	35,000	35,000	747	34,253
0301. Wages	433	28,000	28,000	433	27,567
0311. Other Employee Allowances	6	0	0	6	(6)
0401. Contractors	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	308	5,000	5,000	308	4,692
0530. Building Maintenance	1,709	167,000	167,000	1,709	165,291
0301. Wages	568	73,000	73,000	568	72,432
0311. Other Employee Allowances	6	0	0	6	(6)
0401. Contractors	876	75,000	75,000	876	74,124
0506. Materials Purchased	0	5,000	5,000	0	5,000
0507. Inventory Issued From Store	0	7,000	7,000	0	7,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	259	7,000	7,000	259	6,741
0680. Depreciation	0	600,000	600,000	0	600,000
0740. Depreciation Expense	0	600,000	600,000	0	600,000
07490. Buildings Capital Works	**0**	**170,000**	**170,000**	**0**	**170,000**
0730. Building Capital Works	0	170,000	170,000	0	170,000
0401. Contractors	0	170,000	170,000	0	170,000
Planning	**20,516**	**395,530**	**395,530**	**20,516**	**375,014**
04010. Town Planning Office	**20,516**	**395,530**	**395,530**	**20,516**	**375,014**
0300. Employee Costs	16,508	328,000	328,000	16,508	311,492
0300. Salaries	16,508	328,000	328,000	16,508	311,492
0310. Staff Training	0	25,530	25,530	0	25,530
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	19,530	19,530	0	19,530
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	6,000	6,000	0	6,000
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	32,000	32,000	0	32,000
0503. Subscriptions Reference Materials	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
0601. Advertising Press	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
0360. Professional Services	3,535	0	0	3,535	(3,535)
0405. Consultants Other	5	0	0	5	(5)
0408. Planning Consultant Fees	3,530	0	0	3,530	(3,530)
0970. Plant Hire (Internal)	473	10,000	10,000	473	9,527
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	473	10,000	10,000	473	9,527
Building	**4,094**	**161,500**	**161,500**	**4,094**	**157,406**
03740. Halls & Community Centres	**1,309**	**75,500**	**75,500**	**1,309**	**74,190**
0410. Insurance	0	19,000	19,000	0	19,000
0632. General Asset Insurance	0	19,000	19,000	0	19,000
0415. Utilities	0	17,500	17,500	0	17,500
0520. Electricity	0	14,000	14,000	0	14,000
0521. Internal Rates	0	3,500	3,500	0	3,500
0425. Cleaning Costs	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0401. Contractors	0	15,000	15,000	0	15,000
0510. Grounds Maintenance	78	2,000	2,000	78	1,921

0301. Wages	63	2,000	2,000	63	1,937
0311. Other Employee Allowances	1	0	0	1	(1)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	15	0	0	15	(15)
0530. Building Maintenance	1,230	22,000	22,000	1,230	20,769
0301. Wages	533	10,000	10,000	533	9,467
0311. Other Employee Allowances	5	0	0	5	(5)
0401. Contractors	194	11,000	11,000	194	10,806
0506. Materials Purchased	285	0	0	285	(285)
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	214	1,000	1,000	214	786
04020. Building Control Office	**2,785**	**86,000**	**86,000**	**2,785**	**83,216**
0300. Employee Costs	2,358	76,000	76,000	2,358	73,643
0300. Salaries	2,348	76,000	76,000	2,348	73,652
0311. Other Employee Allowances	9	0	0	9	(9)
0399. Agency Fees	0	8,000	8,000	0	8,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	8,000	8,000	0	8,000
0970. Plant Hire (Internal)	428	2,000	2,000	428	1,573
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	428	2,000	2,000	428	1,573
Regulatory Services	**7,340**	**194,065**	**194,065**	**7,340**	**186,725**
04030. Parking & Other Ranger Services	**7,191**	**193,065**	**193,065**	**7,191**	**185,874**
0300. Employee Costs	7,021	148,600	148,600	7,021	141,579
0300. Salaries	6,983	148,600	148,600	6,983	141,617
0311. Other Employee Allowances	38	0	0	38	(38)
0310. Staff Training	101	4,465	4,465	101	4,364
0644. Course Seminar & Conference Registration	0	2,365	2,365	0	2,365
0646. Travel Accommodation	0	2,100	2,100	0	2,100
0649. Meal Reimbursements	101	0	0	101	(101)
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	69	0	0	69	(69)
0640. Telephone Charges	69	0	0	69	(69)
0351. Animal Control	0	10,000	10,000	0	10,000
0401. Contractors	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0506. Materials Purchased	0	6,000	6,000	0	6,000
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000
0970. Plant Hire (Internal)	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	30,000	30,000	0	30,000
04050. Other Law & Order Expenditure	**149**	**1,000**	**1,000**	**149**	**851**
0352. Abandoned Vehicles	149	1,000	1,000	149	851
0401. Contractors	149	1,000	1,000	149	851
Public Health	**0**	**10,000**	**10,000**	**0**	**10,000**
04100. Health Administration & Inspection	**0**	**10,000**	**10,000**	**0**	**10,000**
0300. Employee Costs	0	9,500	9,500	0	9,500
0300. Salaries	0	9,000	9,000	0	9,000
0970. Plant Hire - Internal Usage	0	500	500	0	500
0350. Office Administration Expenditure	0	500	500	0	500
0603. Other Sundry Expenses	0	500	500	0	500
Grand Total	**(6,236,124)**	**6,225,374**	**6,225,374**	**(6,236,124)**	**12,461,511**

*Report Contains Filters

C7 – Planning and Compliance Report

REPORTING OFFICER	Executive Manager– Planning and Compliance
ATTACHMENTS	Nil

DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

Development Applications – 9th July 2026 to 12th August 2026

The following applications were lodged, approved, or are in process for the above period:

DA 2024-63 - Ramps Ridge Pty Ltd & R.N Harris & S.P Harris - Stock and domestic pipeline to provide secure water access to farm from Ravensworth to Murrumbidgee River – In process *(additional information requested)*
DA 2026-23 Justin Meinsz - 318 Russell St, Hay - Installation of Dwelling - Approved
DA 2026-24 M & J Expose It- 498 Cadell St, Hay- change of use - Approved
DA 2026-27 Hay Shire Council – 107-109 Thelangerin Road, Hay – Awning & sheds - Approved
DA 2026-29 Dysons Buses - 265 Bourke St, Hay – Change of use to bus depot – Approved
DA 2026-30 Dillon Cox – 375 Macauley St, Hay – Additions & Renovations – Approved
DA 2026-31 Zane Gash – 364 Macauley St, Hay – Shed – In process *(additional information requested)*
DA 2026-32 Donald Payne – 460 Church St, Hay – Verandah – Approved
DA 2026-33 Ben Phillips – 389-391 Macgregor St, Hay – Subdivision/Re-alignment – Approved

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Staff has commenced with two Planning Proposals, one for the Resource Recovery Eco Park around the Hay Waste Facility and one for the Aerodrome. More details will follow.

BUILDING AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Building and Public Health

Building Asset Inspections:

- Monthly high-risk inspections as usual.
- General building assets being inspected for ongoing maintenance
- Some concerns regarding Hay Park Grandstand structure being assessed
- Cleaning Contract finalised and awarded
- All public high usage sites are inspected prior to/after weekends

Public Health Inspections:

- Ongoing inspections.
- 2 New Business inspected prior to completion/advice given.
- Begun Food Inspections for Balranald Shire
- Annual Food Authority Report for Hay Shire submitted successfully.

Aerodrome:

- Hangar repair completed
- CASA request updating of ERSA information, completed
- Manual validation inspection reserved for November
- OLS completed, directives given and actioned shortly
- Awaiting quotes for update of runway lines i.e.- 'Turn Pad Lines' and 'Taxi Way Hold Lines'

Swimming Pool Precinct:

- Pool – Received scheduled warranty visit from Elm Aquatics-
    - Modifications to chemical dosing unit to prevent on going WHS issues
    - Heat pumps are not performing as desired
    - Water balancing has begun
    - Addressing rest of contract defects
- Splash Park – Maintenance underway

Other:

- Monthly playground inspections in progress as per requirements
- Maude Hall, flooring issues still being monitored
- Madman's Bend - Pontoon re-installed, all repairs completed
- Hay Park Toilets - Investigating refurb/painting
- Hay Park – Investigating upgrade of surveillance equipment
- Cemetery Columbarium - Design agreed awaiting completion
- Lion's Park - Investigate updating of area.

RANGER ACTIVITIES

Pound activities

- 3 dog/s have been placed in the pound having been picked up by the Ranger, surrendered by their owners or dumped at the pound.
- 2 Dog/s returned to their owners, after fees paid.
- 2 dogs in pound released into the re-homing program.
- 5 dogs Currently impounded waiting for Rescue.

Callouts attended for: Stray animals, Illegal Camping, Stock, Barking Dogs, Air Ambulance, Police assistance

Abandoned Vehicles: 1

Issued Orders:
Orders: 0
Nuisance dog order/s: 0
Dangerous dog order/s: 0
Menacing dog order/s: 0
Non-Compliance Orders: 0

Fines: 0
Caution Letters: 7

Others:

0 dog destroyed over the month as dangerous.
0 injured dog humanely euthanised.
0 cats destroyed deemed to be feral animals.
0 cats currently impounded due to be destroyed no owner identified unable to rehome.
0 cat picked up.
0 cats Surrendered.
4 cats rehomed.
8 domesticated cats currently in care with foster carers waiting for rescue.
0 cats dumped in cage.
0 Sick/injured cat euthanised.

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Civic Leadership** 4.2 Our community is supported by a strong and resilient Council that is responsive to its needs 4.2.1 Provide an advocacy role on behalf of the community 4.2.2 Inform and empower community input into decision making 4.2.3 Our community has access to Council information, services and facilities
FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	N/A
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 Hay Local Environmental Plan 2011 Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) and Companion Animals Regulation 2018 (NSW) Impounding Act 1993 (NSW) and Impounding Regulation 2017 (NSW) Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (NSW) (POCTA) and associated Regulations Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW) and associated Regulations Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act 2021 (NSW)
POLICY IMPLICATION	Compliance with relevant policies and legislation
ASSET IMPLICATION	N/A
RISK IMPLICATION	Potentially high risk of litigation

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the information provided in the report.

C8 - Major Projects Update

REPORTING OFFICER	General Manager
ATTACHMENTS	- Nil

INTRODUCTION

Council has been successful in attracting a variety of funding over the last several years.

COMMENTARY

Find below a summary of the projects, and actions currently being undertaken.

STRONGER COUNTRY COMMUNITY – ROUND 2 PROJECTS

Project	Progress
Hay Park Female & Officials Amenities	• Complete.
Lachlan Street Civic Space Project (Witcombe Place)	• Complete.
Booligal Community Project – New toilet block and installation of Public Art	• Complete.
Maude Community Projects - New toilet block, Re-stumping and re-roofing of hall and installation of Public Art	• Complete.
Upgrade and extension to the Hay Park number 1 oval canteen	• Complete.

STRONGER COUNTRY COMMUNITY – ROUND 3 PROJECTS – COMPLETION BY END OF 2022

Water Play	• Complete.

DROUGHT PROJECTS ROUND 1 – ALL PROJECTS EXTENDED TO JULY 2021

Dunera Museum	• Complete.
Hay Gaol	• Complete.
Recalibrate Hay	• Complete.
Water Tower Art	• Complete.
War Memorial Hall Upgrades	• Complete.

DROUGHT PROJECTS ROUND 2 –ALL PROJECTS EXTENDED TILL JULY 2021

Pocock Park	• Complete.
No 3 and 4 Oval Toilets	• Complete.
VIC Expansion	• Complete.
Bike Paths	• Complete.
Gaol Toilets Refurbishment	• Complete.
Shire Entrance Signs	• Complete.
Recalibrate Hay Phase 2	• Complete
Adverse Event Plan	• Complete.
Showgrounds	• Complete.

SHOWGROUNDS STIMILUS FUNDING ROUNDS 1 AND 2 – AND CROWN LANDS GRANT

Phase 1	• Complete.
Phase 2c	• Complete
Phase 3	• Complete

STATUS OF OTHER PROJECTS

Federal Government's 'Local Roads & Community Infrastructure Funding' Phase 1	• Complete
Federal Government's 'Local Roads & Community Infrastructure Funding' Phase 2	• Complete
COAG19(2) Funding	• Complete.
Regional Aerodrome funding (Round 1)	• Complete
NSW Boating Now Round 3	• Complete.
Heavy Vehicle Access Program	• Complete.
Maude Bridge	• Complete.
Community Resilience Grant	• Complete.
Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan (IWCM)	• Complete.
Developer Servicing Plan (DSP)	• Complete.
Scoping Study – Water Treatment Plant	• Complete.

RFS Shed - Booligal	• Complete.
Streetlighting Upgrade	• Complete.
Flood Risk Management Grant	• Complete.
Lachlan Street Civic Space Project (Witcombe Place) – Phase 2	• Complete.
Fixing Country Roads & Fixing Local Roads	• FLR R1 – complete. • FLR R2 - complete. • FLR R3 – complete.
Bridge Renewal Program (Round 5)	• Complete
Fixing Country Bridges Program	• Complete
NSW Heritage Grants 2021-23	• Complete.
NSW Heritage Grants 2025-27	• Council has been successful in its application for funding for the next two years. Funding agreement signed. • Next visit by the heritage advisor is scheduled for mid-2026.
Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program – Round 3	• Complete.
NSW Regional Sports Facility Fund (Round 1)	• Complete.
Regional Airports Program (Round 2)	• Complete.
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 4	• Complete.
2021-22 Crown Reserves Improvement Fund	• Complete.
Local Roads and Community Infrastructure – Phase 3	• Complete.
NSW EPA – FOGO Infrastructure and Collection Grants	• Complete
NSW EPA – Remanufacture NSW Grant Round 2	• Complete
Open Spaces Program – Places to Play	• Complete.
Recreational Fishing and Camping Program	• Complete.
Murray Street Entrance Park	• Complete.
Swimming Pool Refurbishment	• Complete.

Growing Regions Program – Round 2	• Complete.
Bridges Renewal Program (Round 6)	• Complete.
Fixing Local Roads Potholes Program – Rounds 1 and 2.	• The NSW Government released a $50M & $500M programs for funding to repair potholes in each LGA. • Round 1 application successful - $323,242.97– Complete. • Round 2 application successful - $1.716M. Heavy – Complete. • Council received a further $2.4M under the Regional Roads emergency Relief Program. This one has been held over until 24-25 year and Council has three years to spend the monies. Works moved to 25/26 and 26/27 years.
Strategic Business Case Fund	• Complete.
Fixing Local Roads – R4	• Complete.
Stronger Country Communities Fund – R5	• Complete.
Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund	• Complete
Fixing Country Roads Program	• Complete.
Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program	• Complete
Integrated Water Cycle Management Plan (IWCM)	• Completed.
Heavy Vehicle Safety & Productivity Program	• Cobb Highway intersection into aerodrome - $1.4M, with 80% ($1.120M) from HVSPP and 20% ($0.28M) from Council. Application successful. • Start up meeting held with the funding body. • Fully executed funding agreement received and start up meeting held. • Initial design sent to TfNSW for comment/approval. Initial comments received; design being finalised. TfNSW concurrence has been received for the final design. 'For Construction' drawings now finalised and REF completed. Fencing have been completed and watermain protection works have also been completed. • Finalising WAD with TfNSW. Some redesign work required, plus start up documentation for TfNSW. This is still ongoing. Works are expected to commence on site late August 2026 and be completed in December 2026. • Tenders have been awarded. • Survey set out completed.

Local Government Recovery Grant	• Completed.
Heavy Vehicle Safety & Productivity Program	• The mix of funding able to be 80% BRP and 20% Council, as there is no planned next round of Fixing Country Roads at this stage. • HVRA application for truck stop in Hay - $3.389M, with grant funding request of $2.711M. • Grant successful and funding agreement signed. • Part 5 Environmental Assessment (REF) has been completed. • Design finalised 'For Construction'. Received s138 Approval from TfNSW. Fencing works completed, and services protection completed. • Plan of Management (POM) has been updated and adopted by Council. • The main construction works have commenced and are progressing well. Ground works and drainage completed. Works to recommence in coming weeks. • Tenders have been awarded.
Local Roads Community Infrastructure (LRCI) – Phase 4	• Complete.
Crown Reserves Improvement Fund (CRIF) 23-24	• Complete.
Boating Now – Asset Maintenance Program	• Complete.
Community Energy Upgrades Fund Program (CEUF) – Round 2	A targeted, competitive grant program that provides co-funding for energy upgrades at existing local government facilities. An application was submitted in Round 2 to reapply for the same project and to also include solar/battery for the Leonard Street pump station as our largest energy use site. Application submitted – total project of $154,000 with funding 50/50. • Council has been successful with this grant. Funding agreement executed. • Quotes sourced and scope of works finalised. • Additional funding allocated to project at QBR to increase scope. • Funding body has approved increased scope of works and orders placed with suppliers. Works are anticipated to commence on site in the coming months.
Saluting Their Service – War Memorials Grant	• Application submitted for interpretative displays and memorial works at the Showground, as per draft Master Plan.

	• Total project cost $20,000, with $10,000 received in grant funding. • Council was successful with grant application. Executed finding agreement. • Project in planning phase with Heritage Advisor.
Floodplain Management Program 2025/26	• Staff are working on application as reported to the March meeting for: - North and South Hay Levee Upgrade Feasibility Study - The total cost is $160K (ex GST) which requires a Council contribution of $22,857; and - Hay and Maude Flood Warning System Review - The total cost is $110K (ex GST) which requires a Council contribution of $15,714. Applications close 28th May 2025. Application has been submitted. Council successful with grant application for the - North and South Hay Levee Upgrade Feasibility Study. Funding agreement signed. Quotations sourced and consultant awarded. Community consultation session was held Wednesday 22nd July 2026 and the Floodplain Risk Management Committee (FRMC) meeting 23rd July 2026. Consultant met with a number of property owners. Next steps include calculation of levee height, survey and geotechnical assessment. • Works expected to be completed late 2027.

OTHER FUNDING APPLIED FOR AND PENDING

Crown Reserves Improvement Fund (CRIF) - 2026-27 Round	• To financially support projects that will have a high community impact. • Minimum grant is $50,000 to maximum $1M • Staff recommend an applicable to renew the existing facilities at Lions Park, as these are outdated and no longer fit for purpose. Estimated cost is $250,000 with a suggested council co-contribution of $32,000. • Application has been submitted. Application for 25-26 round was unsuccessful. • Staff re-submitted the application in the 26-27 CRIF funding round.

2026-27 Floodplain Management Program	• The next round of the Floodplain Management Program is open. Staff are in discussions with the Department to submit the following application: 1. Detailed design for the Maude Flood Levee 2. Booligal Flood Study and FRMS&P • Funding is at 6:1 ratio • Both projects are estimate to cost $180,000 each, meaning Council's contribution is approximately $25,715 per project • Applications submitted.
Sustainable Communities Program – Business & Industry Round	• The $50 million NSW Sustainable Communities Program Business and Industry Round will invest in projects that improve business and industry sustainability, retain and create jobs and provide lasting economic growth for local communities. • This round is focused on real and positive outcomes by delivering opportunities that encourage business and industry growth, support workforce participation and enable economic development in NSW Basin communities exposed and vulnerable to the impacts of the Australian Government's Voluntary Water Purchase Program for the 450 GL. The objective of the Program is to support businesses, industry and jobs now and into the future in exposed and vulnerable NSW southern Basin communities. This includes opportunities that: • Sustain and strengthen local businesses, including retaining jobs and creating new employment opportunities and improving workforce participation • Increase local economic activity through innovation, skills development, productivity improvements, business growth, job creation, asset activation and local business opportunities • Support existing businesses and industry to value-add or diversify their product offerings • Enable the development of new and emerging industries and associated businesses and employment opportunities. • Projects must commence within 6 months of the commencement date of the funding deed and be completed by 31 May 2029. Business productivity and enhancement that supports job creation and/or retention

	• Expansion of existing or development of new facilities that contribute to an increase in capability and productivity • Introduction of new technologies, innovations, plant and equipment, systems and processes to improve business growth • Purchase and integration of more advanced technologies that will enhance the business's deliverables and competitiveness • Value-add of local product, including initiatives such as a processing and packing facility • Industry specific program to improve business capability and sustainability • Stage 2 of the Hay Resource Recovery & Eco Park, being the expansion of the MRF facility to include secondary and tertiary waste processing and recovery, tyre crumbing, undercover storage and weighbridge would be a suitable project. This would enable Council to take advantage of the opportunity of the renewable energy transition projects and circular economy initiatives. • Project cost is estimated at $3.6M • 25% co-contribution is required ($900,000), which could be funded from the SW REZ CEBF, Planning Agreements, renewable energy developers as part of waste agreements and the NSW Government. • The project would fall within the current limits of the waste facility EPL threshold limits. • A development application will be required for the proposed sheds and storage areas. A DA has been submitted and will come to Council for approval as per our Policy. DA approved. • An application has been commenced, with updated quotes and letters of support obtained. • Application submitted.

Other projects that are in the project formulation phase or that staff are looking for funding include:

Project	Shovel Ready	Estimated Cost	Comment
Lions Park upgrade	Yes	$750,000	Create interactive and high visitor experience, tying into Hay's history
Halse Park upgrade	No	$50,000	Low priority
Dal Wright Park	Yes	$100,000	• The concept of redevelopment of the park was a result of the Murrumbidgee River Master Plan, where the redevelopment of the park was included as a "Arboretum / botanical garden which showcases local vegetation communities and

			associations. Includes plant identification and interpretive signage, public art and installations, gathering spaces and connections to existing path networks." • The proposed park reflects the natural areas in the LGA, with suitable artworks, seating and viewing platforms.
Gaol frontage and surrounds – landscaping and heritage walking trail	Yes	$252,000	Includes gravel footpaths, landscaping, irrigation, signage, disabled access, another exhibition shed.
Refurbishment of Hay Grandstand	Yes	$80,000	Received Heritage Advice, will need to go on quote to get estimate
Refurbishment of Hay Park Water Tower	No	$200,000	Received Heritage Advice, will need to go on quote to get estimate
Lachlan Street Upgrade	Yes	$4M	Upgrade of Lachlan Streetscape as determined in the Lachlan Street Masterplan.
Marking of un-marked graves at Hay Cemetery.	No	$450,000	The Marking of the un-marked graves, including Servicemen at the Hay Cemetery.
Community Building	No	$4.2M	The community building is in need of a facelift. As part of the Youth Funding, the building upgrade is currently being designed and consulted.
Museums	Yes	Unlimited	The museums will need continued expenditure to keep up with required maintenance and renewal.
Hay War Memorial Hall	Yes	$200,000 (phase 3&4) $150,000 (phase 5)	Phases 3&4 of the refurbishment of the Hall including supper room, storage areas and stage area. Phase 5 – stage area including sound, lighting & curtains.
Refurbishment of RSL/CWA Room – Kay Hull Centre	No	$500,000	Design plans endorsed by Council. DA approval obtained. Project is shovel ready.

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Social** 1.2 Recreational, Civic Spaces, and Infrastructure that meet community needs 1.2.1 Enhance public recreation areas and facilities 1.2.2 Placemaking with purpose 1.2.3 Deliver infrastructure that are responsive to the community's needs 1.2.4 Create a safe, inclusive, and resilient community where all members feel secure, supported, and empowered to thrive 1.5 Our community is inclusive and sustainable

	1.5.1 Residents of all abilities and cultures have access to public facilities 1.5.5 Facilitate access public spaces for cultural and community events 1.5.6 Support cultural programs and initiatives, including First Nations **Environmental** 2.3 Celebrate and Promote our unique natural environment 2.2.2 Support local community groups, first nations groups, and other agencies working with the natural environment 2.4 Enhance the built environment 2.4.1 Maintain and beautify urban areas. 2.4.2 Support and promote public art initiatives 2.4.3 Provision of sustainable infrastructure that is adaptive to changing needs, suitability, betterment and funding levels. 2.5 Our community is inclusive and sustainable 2.5.1 People of all abilities have access to natural environments, cycleways and passive areas. 2.5.2 Support cultural environmental initiatives 2.5.3 Advocate for water security and practices 2.5.4 Develop and implement a sustainable waste management strategy 2.5.5 Facilitate and support sustainable practices across our community **Economic** 3.2 Our community values its history and tourism 3.2.4 Showcase our open space, recreation and cultural facilities **Civic Leadership** 4.2 Our community is supported by a strong and resilient Council that is responsive to its needs 4.2.2 Inform and empower community input into decision making 4.2.3 Our community has access to Council information, services and facilities
FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	Minimal. Some grant programs require co-contribution, which would be funded through current budget or other grant funded programs.
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Nil
POLICY IMPLICATION	Nil
ASSET IMPLICATION	Any new assets must be operated and maintained by Council into the future.
RISK IMPLICATION	Minimal.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the information provided in the report and the actions being undertaken.

C9 – Operations Monthly Update Report

REPORTING OFFICER	Executive Manager Engineering & Operations
ATTACHMENTS	Nil

INTRODUCTION

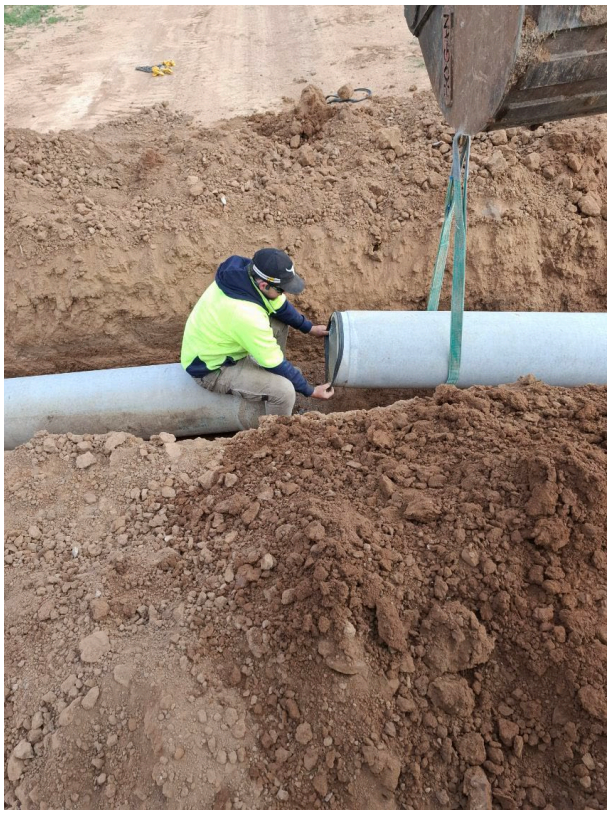
This report is an operations progress update.

COMMENTARY

This report outlines the operational activities of the Engineering and Operations sector over the last reporting period.

Roads

- Recommence earthworks on Heavy Vehicle Rest Area.
- Slashing Murrumbidgee River Road.
- Install new culverts on Old Thelangerin Road.
- Pothole patching.
- Replace culvert headwalls on Old Thelangerin Road.
- Wongalea Road maintenance grading.
- Stormwater pipe and pit cleaning.
- Mutherumbung Road maintenance grading.
- Urban street cleaning.
- NBN works including concrete removal and replacement beside the Council Office.



Humes
375

Upcoming Roadworks

- HVRA earthworks

Plant Purchases

- Ordered new Garbage Truck
- Ordered new zero turn lawn mower

Plant Disposal

- Nil

Major Plant repairs/breakdowns

- Large Garbage Truck

Depot

Servicing small engines in the workshop

Kero stand and new pump for patching truck.

Receival of bollards for the HVRA

Council sign/sticker making unit

Storage room for public amenities supplies

Stores items – guideposts and mechanical driver. Delivery bay for stores receivals

Aerodrome

- Weekly inspections.
- Grounds maintenance.

Slashing at Hay Aerodrome

Parks and Gardens

- Regular mowing and whipper snipping of all parks, cemetery, and aerodrome.
- Tree maintenance
- Roundabout maintenance
- Sports field maintenance
- Garden bed maintenance.
- Irrigation maintenance
- Booligal and Maude vegetation maintenance

Trees for nature strip planting

Pool

- Grounds maintenance.
- Monitoring pool chemicals
- Investigation of the outside irrigation issues

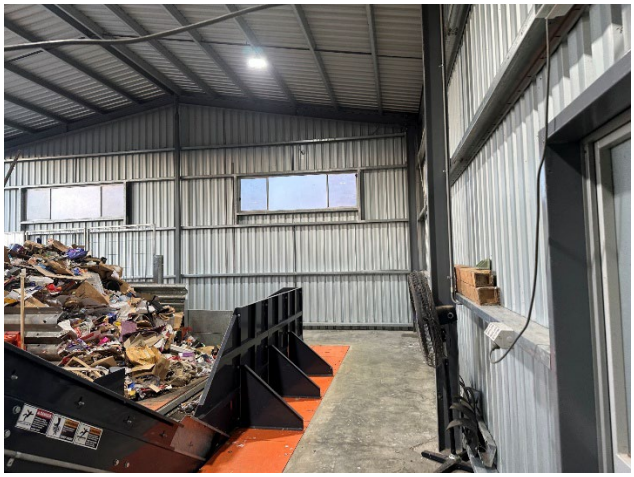
Irrigation investigations – pool outside

Cemetery

- Maintenance of the Lawn and traditional cemeteries.
- Grave digging lawn and general cemetery.
- Irrigation repairs

Waste

- Normal operating duties at Hay Waster Transfer Station.
- Separation of the recycleables for bailing
- Baging soil enhancer
- Transfer of waste from Waste Transfer Station site to tip site.
- Pressing cardboard and plastic.
- FOGO processing
- Drum Muster



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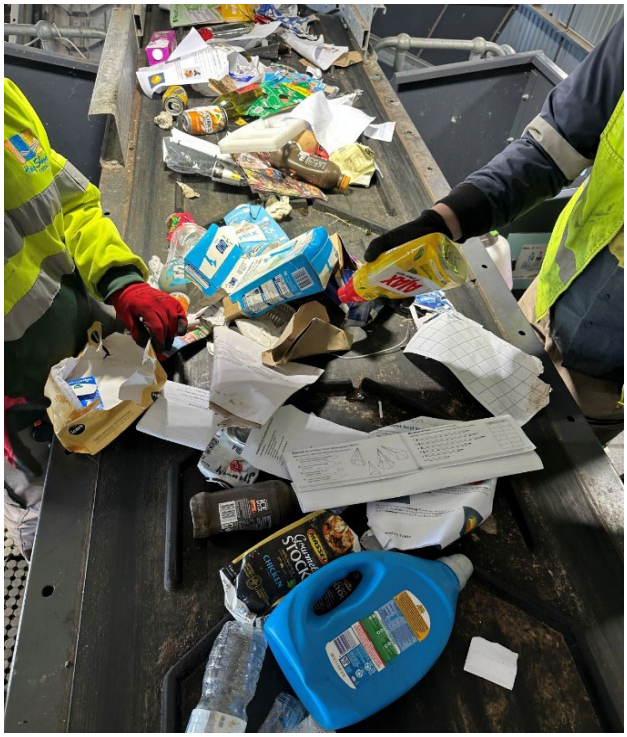


Town Construction

- Town Streets pothole maintenance.
- Road shoulder repairs
- Local sealed road pothole repairs
- Assisting the Water and Sewer Department.
- Tip maintenance.
- Grave digging.
- Slashing hazard reduction.

Replaced concrete band from new NBN works

Repaired footbridge from fallen tree branch – Bushy Bend

Stormwater pipe and pit cleaning

Utilities

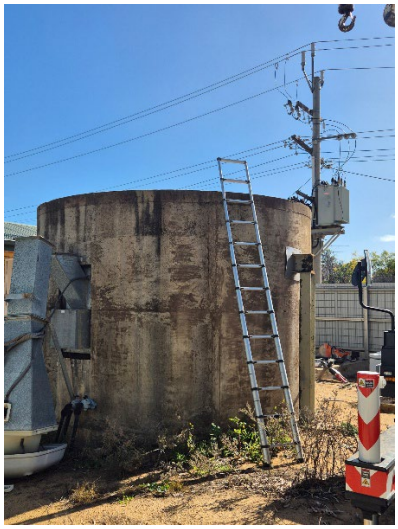
- Various water meter replacements.
- Replace the water treatment plant filter media
- Remove the sludge from one of the drying beds at the water treatment plant.
- Water meter reading
- Water Treatment Plant daily operations and maintenance.
- Sewer Treatment Plant daily operations and maintenance.
- Various water leak repairs.
- Stormwater pit maintenance.
- Various fire hydrant replacements.
- Fire hydrant flushing.
- Sewer Main Repairs

Receival of water treatment plant filter media bulk bags

Filtered Water Break – Moama Street

Water Treatment Plant sludge clean out

Filtered Water Break – South Hay



Roof replacement on the Leonard Street Pump Station

Water Main Valve Replacement – Alma St

New residential sewer connection inspection

Sewerage Treatment Plant grounds maintenance

Council has a raw water standpipe located near the truck wash, the water supply point has a standard water meter. Council intends to convert this meter to accommodate a fob system for capturing consumption from individual users, including anticipated use from the renewable energy projects. This would require installing an AVdata logger for invoicing purposes similar to the current truck wash system.
The project is estimated to cost $10K and can be funded from the current water capital works budget.

Weeds

- Weed spraying urban areas, cemetery, and Hay roundabout.

New pump for herbicide chemical

Staff Training

- Chainsaw crosscut training
- Fire Warden training
- First Aid training

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Social** 1.2 Recreational, Civic Spaces, and Infrastructure that meet community needs 1.2.1 Enhance public recreation areas and facilities 1.2.2 Placemaking with purpose 1.2.3 Deliver infrastructure that are responsive to the community's needs 1.5 Our community is inclusive and sustainable 1.5.5 Facilitate access public spaces for cultural and community events **Environmental** 2.1 Council is resilient and adaptive 2.1.1 Council considers climate change resilience in our services, and the maintenance and management of our buildings, public spaces and infrastructure. 2.1.2 Foster sustainable energy solutions and practices to reduce Council's footprint. 2.4 Enhance the built environment 2.4.1 Maintain and beautify urban areas. 2.4.3 Provision of sustainable infrastructure that is adaptive to changing needs, suitability, betterment and funding levels. 2.5 Our community is inclusive and sustainable 2.5.1 People of all abilities have access to natural environments, cycleways and passive areas. 2.5.4 Develop and implement a sustainable waste management strategy **Economic** 3.2 Our community values its history and tourism 3.2.4 Showcase our open space, recreation and cultural facilities **Civic Leadership** 4.1 Our Council leads by example 4.1.1 Implement and promote best practice governance 4.1.2 Monitor and evaluate Council's strategic planning documents 4.1.3 Be environmentally responsible in decision making 4.1.4 Council will seek to continuously improve

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	Works undertaken in accordance with adopted Operational Plan.
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Nil
POLICY IMPLICATION	Nil
ASSET IMPLICATION	Assets are maintained and replaced as they fall due.
RISK IMPLICATION	Minimal

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

(i) Notes the information provided in the report; and
(ii) Allocates $10,000 from the 2026-27 water capital works budget for the installation of a fob system at the Old Thelangerin Road raw water standpipe.

C10 – Requests from Business at 147 Lachlan Street

REPORTING OFFICER	Executive Manager Engineering & Operations
ATTACHMENTS	Nil

INTRODUCTION

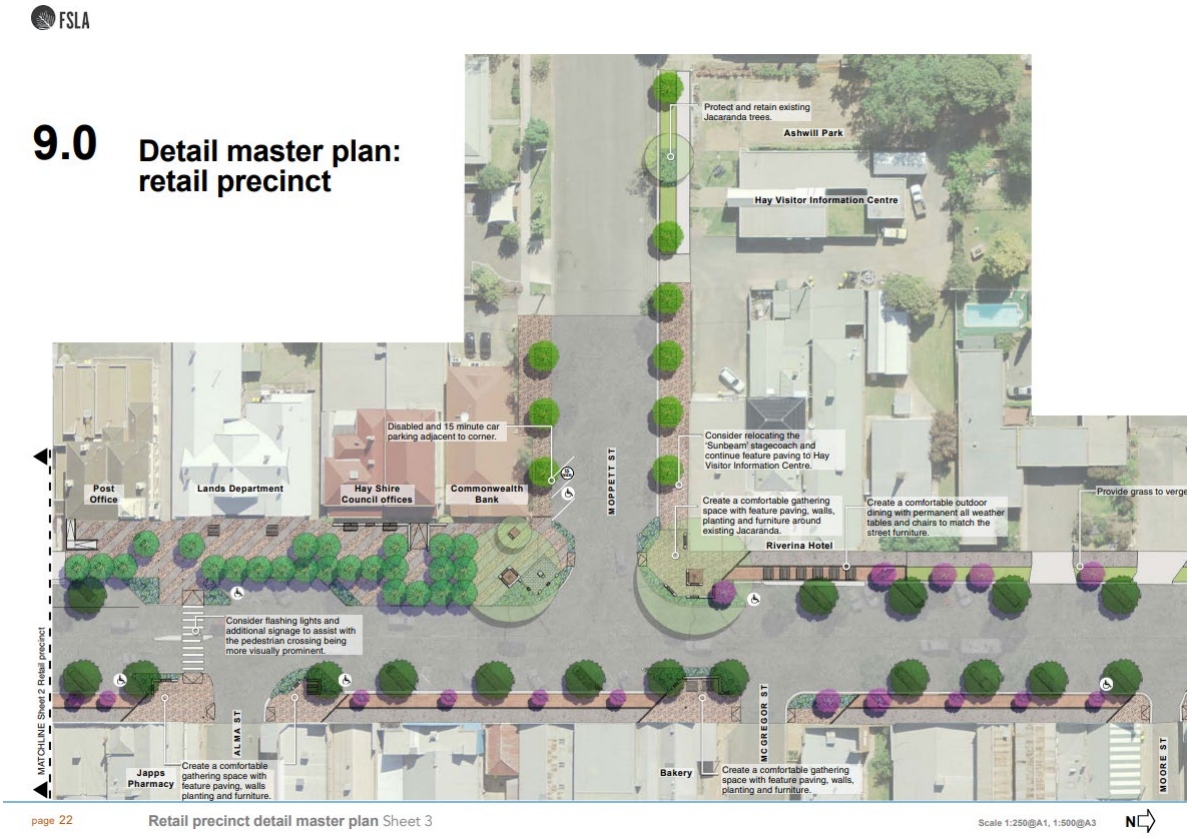
Council has received requests relating to the front of the property at 147 Lachlan Street, Hay.

COMMENTARY

Council has received a request for the removal of the existing tree and planter box (tree surround) in front of 147 Lachlan Street and to change the existing parking space to a designated loading zone. The loading zone request was made to facilitate the loading and unloading activities associated within the business.

The request has been assessed by Council staff with consideration given to the existing parking arrangements, access requirements and potential impact on surrounding parking availability and believe the granting of the request would be setting a precinct for loading zones to be established within Lachlan Street.

Council staff consider the tree as undesirable for this location. The planter box (tree surround) is of sound condition. In addition, the Lachlan Street Master Plan, adopted by Council in 2020, shows the retaining of the existing brick paving in the proximity of 147 Lachlan street:



Below are the requests Council has received from the property owner.

To whom it may concern,
I'm writing to enquire about the possibility of removing the tree that is on the footpath in front of Bidgee Blooms @147 Lachlan street.
It is such a hindrance on so many levels.
Here are a few points that concern us.
1- Most days I see people reverse into it, once a mini hirevan reversed into it and it left a large dent!
2- It makes it very hard to pack flowers & casket covers into our delivery car as it's in the way and the boot of the car can not completely open without it pushing up into the tree, whilst trying not to trip over the raised brickwork.
3- It is blocking our signage, we are a small frontage so our signage is mostly covered which is not good for advertising.
4- It is creating damage to the front facade, it keeps the verandah facade wet and dripping most of winter.
5- We'd like to repair and improve the front of Bidgee Blooms so the removal of the tree will make it easier to do this while improving the overall look, addressing accessibility and safety issues, and street presence of Bidgee Blooms.
We would appreciate your assistance with this, if you need to chat please give me a call anytime.

In addition:

To whom it may concern,
I have previously sent an email about a tree removal at 147 Lachlan and I forgot to also ask about the possibility of a loading zone sign directly out the front of Bidgee Blooms (for just 1 marked spot from the corner for our delivery car), we offer a free delivery service and it is very hard/ frustrating when people take up 3 parking spots with their car as we are in and out of the delivery car quite a bit loading and unloading, also when we have to put casket covers in. it's not ideal to have to wheel it half a block away up the Main Street to load it. We would really appreciate your assistance is helping us streamline Bidgee Blooms efficiency and time.

Also:

Our preference would be total removal of the raised garden brickwork that currently exists and replaced with flat footpath brickwork, we constantly see people struggling to manoeuvre around them trying to load their boots, total accident waiting to happen.

Another point to note is the garden bed in front of the bakery. I see kids jumping up there walking along the edge all the time, again a slip and it's all over for them, there needs to something planted there that deters climbers and people sitting on it - perhaps roses - they don't grow too big.
Thanks for your consideration.

RELEVANCE TO STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN	**Social** 1.2 Recreational, Civic Spaces, and Infrastructure that meet community needs 1.2.1 Enhance public recreation areas and facilities 1.2.2 Placemaking with purpose 1.2.3 Deliver infrastructure that are responsive to the community's needs 1.5 Our community is inclusive and sustainable 1.5.5 Facilitate access public spaces for cultural and community events **Environmental** 2.1 Council is resilient and adaptive 2.1.1 Council considers climate change resilience in our services, and the maintenance and management of our buildings, public spaces and infrastructure. 2.1.2 Foster sustainable energy solutions and practices to reduce Council's footprint. 2.4 Enhance the built environment 2.4.1 Maintain and beautify urban areas. 2.4.3 Provision of sustainable infrastructure that is adaptive to changing needs, suitability, betterment and funding levels. 2.5 Our community is inclusive and sustainable 2.5.1 People of all abilities have access to natural environments, cycleways and passive areas. 2.5.4 Develop and implement a sustainable waste management strategy **Economic** 3.2 Our community values its history and tourism 3.2.4 Showcase our open space, recreation and cultural facilities **Civic Leadership** 4.1 Our Council leads by example 4.1.1 Implement and promote best practice governance 4.1.2 Monitor and evaluate Council's strategic planning documents

	4.1.3 Be environmentally responsible in decision making 4.1.4 Council will seek to continuously improve
FINANCIAL IMPLICATION	Works undertaken in accordance with adopted Operational Plan.
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATION	Nil
POLICY IMPLICATION	Nil
ASSET IMPLICATION	Assets are maintained and replaced as they fall due.
RISK IMPLICATION	Minimal

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

(a) Refuses the request for a loading zone in front of 147 Lachlan Street due to reasons outlined in the report;
(b) Retains the current planter box (tree surround); and
(c) Replaces the tree with a suitable species shrub.

MINUTES INDEX

- Hay Showground Management Committee 20th July 2026

HAY SHOWGROUND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

General Meeting

Meeting Date and Time: 20th July 2026 **Meeting Opened:** 6.02pm

Meeting Location: Council Chambers **Meeting Chair:** Alex Curtis

Attendance:

Secretary/BNS	**Serena Wall**
Treasurer/Canassist	**Jane Griffiths**
Hay Gun Club	
Hay Jockey Club	**Mike Cannon**
Hay Rodeo	**Alex Curtis/Barry Nisbet**
Hay Show Society	
Hay Sheep Show	**Stacey Lugsdin**
Ground Supervisor	
Council	
Caretaker	
Visitors	**Cassandra Hooke/Kiara Billing/Melissa Low (Pony Club)**

	Agenda Items	Proposed Motions
1	**INTRODUCTION / WELCOME** 1.1 Attendance & Apologies	**1.1** Attendance noted & apologies accepted ***Apologies: Jason Wall, David Webb, Geoff Chapman, Lionel Garner***
`	**CONSENT AGENDA – FOR DECISION** 2.1 Approval of Previous Minutes 2.2 Business Arising previous minutes 2.3 Correspondence 2.4 Financial Report	***2.1 Motion: That the minutes from the meeting held 15th June 2026 are a true and correct record of that meeting.*** ***Moved M Cannon Second B Nisbet*** **2.2 Business Arising** Tiny House update – Nil Pits have been attended to by Council **2.3 Correspondence** **In** • Request for school group stay quote • Mitchell Reunion – request for quote • Invoice from HSC for keys for Pavilion - 2 x $246.82 for each door of Pavilion kiosk Total $493.64 & fuel $221.55 • Statement & invoice from Antonakas Hardware for keys for Pavilion - $48 **Out** ○ Mitchell Reunion quote - $330 Easter weekend ○ Living School Quote $200 26/27th August ○ Invite to the Pony Club EOI committee

		2.4 Financial Report Presented by Jane Griffiths Report attached Jane presented accounts for payment totalling **$3,925.23**. **Accounts** DG Harrison $13.95 Antonakas $48.00 HSC Electricity $ 1,737.16 HSC Electricity $1,410.93 HSC Keys cut & Fuel $715.19 ***Motion: That the accounts as presented, approved for payment.*** ***Moved J Griffiths Seconded B Nisbet*** ***Carried.***
3.	**MATTERS FOR DISCUSION** **3.1** New caretaker **3.2** Lawn Mower **3.3** Western end toilets **3.4** Living School Camp group **3.5** Caretaker accommodation **3.6** Pony Club **3.7**	**3.1 New caretaker** Steve Hickman contacted the Jane expressing his interest in the Caretaker position. Another applicant also made an enquiry; however, they have since withdrawn their interest. It was agreed that Steve will undertake a one-month trial period. Should the trial be successful and the committee wishes to continue his appointment, a police check and WWCC can be arranged. Discussed the monthly payment. Steve will receive the same allowances as previous caretaker. Including rent, electricity and a payment of $200 love Hay gift card per month. ***Motion: That we pay Steve Hickman (caretaker) $200 Love Hay Gift card per month.*** ***Moved J Griffith Second S Lugsdin*** We will review Steve performance and suitability at the August meeting, then determine if he will remain caretaker on an ongoing basis. **3.2 Lawn Mower** The mower had stopped working a few times recently. Council mechanic has inspected it, repaired and it appears to be operating normally again. FYI for committee **3.3 Western end toilets** It was thought by the committee that the toilets had been closed; however, they have continued to be used due to their convenience to the campground. It was agreed to engage a plumber to inspect the toilets and determine whether they are

worth repairing. We could also consider refurbishing the facilities in the near future.

3.4 Living School camp over

Contacted by Libby at the Living School group, camping at the grounds on the 26th August. Sent photos of camp area options and they have selected the grassed area between the grandstand and pavilion. Serena to mark out watering system prior to the group arriving. Will close off the eastern end to accommodate the group and their vehicles.

3.5 Caretaker accommodation

Moved for discussion at the August meeting. Need a completion date of the tiny house. Would like to look at temporary accommodation for the caretaker in the interim. Will refer to David Webb for follow up.

3.6 Introduction of new Pony Club

Kiara Billing, Cassandra Hooke and Melissa Low attended the SGMC meeting to introduce themselves and inform the committee of the plan to restart Pony Club.
Advised that they plan to affiliate with the Victorian Pony Club and will be holding a public meeting on Monday 27 July. They currently have 15 children interested in joining, and the response so far has been very positive.
The group requested access to the Pony Club rooms to assess the existing facilities and equipment and determine what items may need to be purchased. They are planning to apply for grants to fund new equipment. It was agreed that a committee member would meet with the group to open the sheds and clubrooms so they can inspect the facilities.
SGMC advised the group that any grants that are applied for that relate to council assets must be put through the management group prior to applying, however equipment grants are not.
Pony Club also requested assistance from Council with cleaning up the area. It is currently quite untidy, with several items left behind from the previous caretaker who lived in the area. Council will be approached to see if they can assist with slashing and general maintenance. The group is happy to help clean up and remove items, with other user groups able to assist if required. The space needs to be cleaned and some repairs possibly prior to starting up.
Discussed what the SGMC is reasonable for and what each user group should do for their areas.
Have requested keys, at the June meeting it was approved that the rodeo club can update the keys for the building. This will still go ahead, and Alex Curtis will ensure that barrel is updated and keys are allocated to both rodeo and pony club.

		Pony Club have requested to host a welcome day for members, however will not have public liability or be incorporated at that date. Have enquired as to whether they will be able to go ahead. Discussed that we do have casual riders which they may fall under for that event. We will investigate and will locate and send through a form to cover this event.
4	**OTHER GENERAL BUSINESS** 4.1 Secretary 4.2 Hay Show 4.3 Rodeo Club 4.4 Hay Jockey Club 4.5 BNS 4.6 Ground Supervisor 4.7 CanAssist 4.8 Sheep Show 4.9 Hay Gun Club 4.10 Council 4.11 Caretaker	**4.1 Secretary** When washing out the pavilion water runs down into the kitchen. Kitchen floor is lower than the pavilion. Could potentially damage the wall or flooring over time. Could look into installing a curved gutter along the kitchen wall to ensure water run off doesn't go in the kitchen – Serena happy to investigate **4.2 Hay Show Society** Jill texted information, show schedule is due out next week. Full program with some new competitions. Working on a junior gymkhana for horse events. Pony Club committee expressed interest in being involved in this event. Referred to contact Jill Chapman. **4.3 Hay Rodeo Club** Proposed event date March 2027, plan to start earlier in evening, approx. 4pm. Unsuccessful with grant application for the arena, work completed by the rodeo committee. **4.4 Hay Jockey Club** N/A **4.5 Hay BNS** N/A **4.6 Ground Supervisor** The drain along Showground Road, between the pavilion end and the main gate entry, is backing up. There's a strong smell coming from the area, and a slimy green growth has formed, possible stagnant water. It appears that excess water is collecting there. This needs investigation, and we may need a plan to either divert, capture, or remove the runoff from the drain. **4.7 CanAssist** Nil **4.8 Hay Sheep Show** Will organise some extra muscle to move the wool stands back into the pavilion

		4.9 Hay Gun Club Shoot on Sunday. Will chase up Russell Turner for a potential start date for the office renovation. **4.1 Hay Shire Council** N/A **4.1 Caretaker** Nil
5	**MEETING FINALISATION** **5.1 NEXT MEETING**	**5.1 17th August 2026, Council Chambers, 6pm** **Meeting closed 7.09pm**

HAY SHOWGROUND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
General Meeting

HAY SHOWGROUND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
TREASURER'S REPORT TO GENERAL MEETING 20.7.2026

Month of JUNE 2026

INCOME	AMOUNT	Year to Date	EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT	Year to Date
Membership		1,870.00	Electricity	2,718.73	28,412.30
Hire	400.00	4,035.00	Water	992.00	3,348.31
Camping/Yard fees	4,095.00	77,425.00	Rates		920.00
Subsidy		25,000.00	Insurance		13,829.30
Lease			Maintenance	1,641.20	65,102.80
GST Refund			GST		7,867.73
Deposit returned			Caretaker		1,200.00
Lease		200	Capital works		
			Refund		400.00
			Event		
			Administration		937.95
	$6,330.00	**108,430.00**		**$5,351.93**	**122,018.39**

BANK RECONCILIATION

Opening Balance as at 1.6.2026	**$99,796.38**
Add Income	**$4,495.00**
Less Expenditure	**$5,351.93**
Closing Balance 30.6.2026	**$98,939.45**

CAPITAL WORKS **NIL**

BANK ACCOUNTS

Westpac Community Solutions One Account	$14,845.71	Showgrounds	$97,545.86
Westpac Community Solutions One Account - Camping Fees	84,093.74	Pony Club	$1,393.59
	$98,939.45		**$98,939.45**

Upcoming Payments

$13.95	DG Harrison - Spray Paint
$48.00	Antonakas - keys cut
$1,737.16	HSC Electricity
$1,410.93	HSC - GST
$715.19	HSC - Keys cut & fuel

Outstanding invoices - Nil

COMMITMENTS

Tiny House - $40,000
Gun Club - $6,000

CAMPING

Jul - Sept	$29,745
Oct - Dec	$17,160
Jan - Mar	$15,170
Apr - Jun	$16,175

Electricity

May-25	$2,246
18,5,25-17,6,25	$3,830
16.6.25-30.6.25	$1,900
18.6.25-30.6.25	$1,900
1.7.25-17.7.25	$1,871
18.7.25-17.8.25	$2,881
18.8.25-17.9.25	$4,114
18.9.25-17.10.25	$2,121.01
18.10.25-17.11.25	$1,790.72
17.11.25-17,1,25	$1,182.55
18.12.25-17.1.26	$1,338.99
18.1.26-17.3.26	3,117.78
28.3.26 - 27.4.26	$1,307.45
28.4.26 - 27.5.26	$1,078.71

Jane Griffiths
Treasurer
Hay Showgrounds Management Committee
20.7.2026