



Planning &
Environment

2036

Far West

***Regional
Plan***

FAR WEST REGIONAL PLAN 2036
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Foreword



The Far West is NSW's largest region and one of the most environmentally diverse. Landscapes range from the 'outback' semi-arid desert areas to rich farmlands, rangelands and wetlands. It is traversed by one of Australia's longest river systems, the Barwon-Darling, home to some of the world's oldest heritage assets and dotted with historic mining and agricultural towns that are influenced by surrounding states and regions.

We've heard and understood community and stakeholder aspirations for the region, and we've drawn on this feedback to create a Regional Plan that focuses on a more diverse economy, supported by the right infrastructure, with strong and resilient communities.

Improving regional capacity and local leadership will be key in unlocking the unique opportunities presented in the Far West. Community wellbeing and economic growth will be improved by harnessing the strong sense of identity and community and by developing locally initiated and coordinated approaches to service delivery.

This Plan recognises the value of the landscapes and their important role in leveraging opportunities for new economic ventures, including value-added manufacturing and tourism. The Plan includes directions to support the Far West to become a leader in renewable energy and climate change adaptation.

Significant opportunities exist for tourism, taking advantage of the unique 'outback' experiences, dynamic communities, as well as European and Aboriginal culture. The region has some of Australia's most significant Indigenous artefacts, many of which are among the oldest in the world.

Major interstate transport routes connect to Sydney, Adelaide, Victoria and Queensland, allowing for efficient freight and passenger transport to the rest of the country and ports for global export. Improving transport links and access to reliable telecommunications will provide untold economic and social benefits.

This Plan sets out to help communities in the Far West adapt to meet future challenges, and supports water security infrastructure to ensure ongoing liveability and sustainability of local communities and health of the environment.

The remoteness coupled with mining and agricultural history has resulted in the development of many unique towns and villages. This Plan aims to meet the needs of these changing communities by promoting greater housing choice, access to health and education services and public and community transport.

We recognise the traditional custodians of the region and the contribution they make to the local economy and communities. They are important partners and leaders in the region, and greater collaboration with these stakeholders has the potential for improved environmental, social and economic outcomes for the future of the Far West.

The Far West Regional Plan 2036 encompasses a vision, goals and actions geared towards delivering greater prosperity in the years ahead for those who live, work and visit this important region.

Anthony Roberts MP

Minister for Planning
Minister for Housing
Special Minister of State





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Introduction

A region at the heart of South-East Australia, with an abundance of unique opportunities



Communities in the Far West are among Australia's most diverse, self-reliant and forward-looking. Leveraging these community strengths through regional coordination and local leadership will create strong networks and a stronger, more resilient and capable Far West.

Distance is a constant challenge in the Far West, requiring investment in roads, rail networks and telecommunications to boost opportunities for the agribusiness, value-added manufacturing, mining, renewable energy and tourism sectors.

Emerging opportunities in unique food processing, tourism, arts and cultural opportunities set this outback region apart. Combined with the Menindee Lakes and the internationally recognised Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area, these opportunities will increase investment and grow visitor numbers.

The Barwon–Darling River system, one of the longest in Australia, connects Far West towns and communities to each other and southern Australia's rural food bowl. Waterways are the lifeblood of communities, and must be actively and sustainably managed.

The region has an exciting future, and the *Far West Regional Plan 2036* is the blueprint for that future.

The Plan will guide the NSW Government's land use planning priorities and decisions over the next 20 years. It is not intended to be a step-by-step approach to all land use planning. Rather, it provides an overarching framework to guide subsequent and more detailed land use plans, development proposals and infrastructure funding decisions.

The accompanying Implementation Plan includes priority actions as well as medium-and longer-term actions to coincide with population and economic change.

Local Government Narratives set out priorities for each council to guide further investigation and implementation.

The *Far West Regional Plan 2036* is the product of extensive consultation with councils, stakeholders and the wider community, following the release of a draft Plan in 2016. The feedback from this consultation has been integrated into this final Regional Plan.

Investment in Far West communities

NSW Government investments in the Far West include:

- \$40.4 million for upgrade works on the Silver City and Cobb highways, and \$4.25 million to widen Kidman Way south of Cobar, funded by the Restart NSW Western Freight Productivity Program¹;
- a share of \$110 million in Restart NSW funding, under the Regional Water and Wastewater Backlog Program, for projects in Bourke, Central Darling, Cobar and Walgett²; and
- funding for six projects under Water Security for Regions across the Walgett, Brewarrina, Bourke and Central Darling local government areas to improve water security and help communities prepare for drought conditions.

Regional Population
2016

0.6%
NSW's
population



47,500

Largest Gross Regional Product
Contributor
2011



Mining

\$783m | **9% Jobs**

Broken Hill Pipeline
2016



Investment  **\$500m**
Pipe length **270km**
Employment **240 jobs**

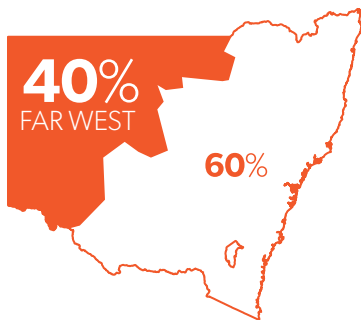
Second Largest Gross Regional Product
Contributor
2011



Agriculture

\$334m | **15% Jobs**

323,477 Square Kilometres



Major River Systems



The Barwon-Darling System
(one of the longest in Australia)

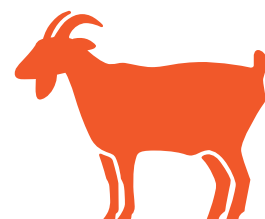
Tourism Expenditure
2014-2015

381,000
overnight visitors

\$500m
direct spend



Estimated Goat Population
2016



5.8 million

Delivering the Plan

The NSW Government's commitment



To deliver the *Far West Regional Plan 2036*, all levels of government, the private sector and the community will have to work together. The Plan needs to be incorporated into each stakeholder's future activities.

This is the first time the NSW Government has undertaken strategic land use planning for the Far West. Unifying stakeholders through this Plan is an early step to improve regional coordination and facilitate local leadership.

Coordination

The NSW Government has established the Far West Delivery, Coordination and Monitoring Committee to deliver, coordinate and be accountable for achieving the vision and goals of the Plan. This dedicated new body comprises representatives from local government and State agencies. It will listen and work with stakeholders to align infrastructure to support growth and change in the region.

The Committee's ongoing role to implement the Regional Plan will align with the outcomes of the Far West Initiative, and be consistent with the NSW Government's strategic vision for the region.

Delivery

The Committee will take ownership for implementing this Plan – prioritising the actions needed to seize on immediate and emerging opportunities for the region. In the short term, its focus will be on growing the agribusiness, value-added manufacturing, mining, renewable energy and tourism sectors; enhancing the regional freight network; and planning for change in the region's settlements. Over time, the Committee will identify new priorities to support regional growth and change.

The Plan sets regional planning priorities and provides a framework for regional and local planning decisions. The NSW Government will use it to advise infrastructure agencies about the timing of new developments, and to inform the ongoing planning and delivery of infrastructure, asset management and services.

Figure 1: **Far West Delivery, Coordination and Monitoring Committee**

Far West Delivery, Coordination and Monitoring Committee		
Coordination	Delivery	Accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aligning across Government• Partnering with local government• Listening to the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actioning the Implementation Plan• Supporting local planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring activity and trends• Publishing annual reports and information• Revising and adjusting directions towards goals

The Plan sets in place line-of-sight land use planning for the region and local government areas to identify and resolve issues. Line-of-sight planning will allow issues to be identified and resolved early, rather than at the development application stage.

This Plan is accompanied by an Implementation Plan for 2017-2019.

More detailed regional district planning may be undertaken in partnership with all stakeholders, led by the Committee. The Plan highlights potential priorities for regional district planning where matters cross jurisdictional boundaries.

A Government direction will be issued so that when councils prepare new planning proposals or update local planning controls, they must be consistent with the vision and guiding principles of this Plan.

The Local Government Narratives provide guidance for each council as they prepare local land use strategies. The Committee will support this work to ensure local plans translate the vision and guiding principles of this Plan into local priorities for growth and change.

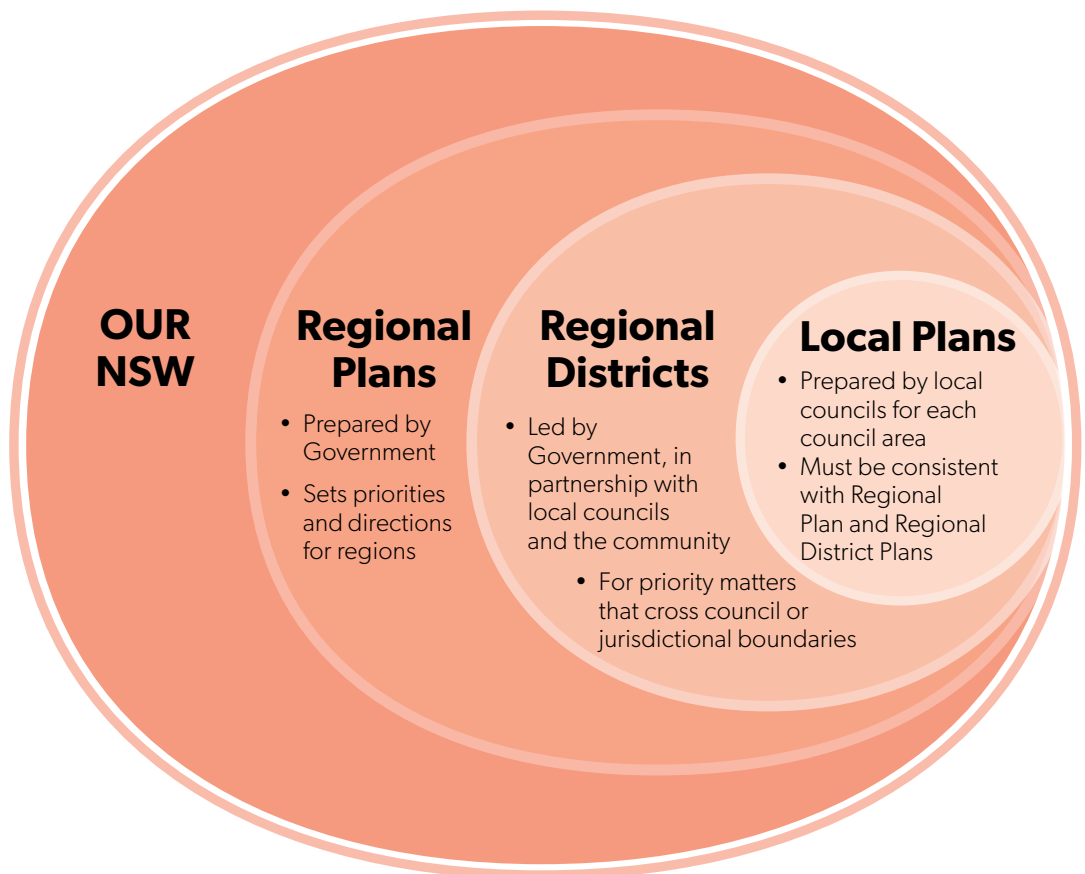
Accountability

The Committee will monitor and review progress towards achieving the vision and goals for 2036 to help prioritise infrastructure delivery and influence policy settings.

An annual report will measure performance against indicators for housing, employment, communities and the environment, and include advice to the NSW Government on the delivery of short-term actions.

The Committee will review the Plan every five years, or as necessary, to help realise the vision for 2036.

Figure 2: **State planning hierarchy**



Vision

A unique part of Western NSW with a diverse economy, supported by the right infrastructure, an exceptional natural environment and resilient communities

In 2036, communities across the Far West enjoy the distinctive rural character of their communities, with a higher standard of living driven by stronger partnerships.

The regional economy is diversified. Innovative industries have developed around goat and kangaroo processing, and the region takes advantage of opportunities presented by increased global demand for alternative protein sources.

A sustainable mining sector in Broken Hill, Cobar, Wentworth and Balranald generates direct employment and provides flow-on benefits to communities. Growth in renewable energy - including wind, solar and bioenergy generation - promotes local jobs in smaller communities and provides opportunities for associated industries.

People visit from around the world to enjoy significant Aboriginal and European heritage and the unique outback experiences.

Collaborative partnerships between government and local stakeholders facilitate major improvements to inter-regional rail and road infrastructure, which increase choice and deliver more competitive freight costs for the agriculture and mining sectors.

The region is a leader in climate change adaptation. Communities access the latest information to manage the risks from natural hazards, and respond to the impacts of climate change and water availability. The Far West meets benchmarks for sustainable and innovative water resource management in agriculture, mining and community water supply, and water is shared equitably among users, including the environment, and with new developments.

Major rivers - including the Barwon, Darling and Murray - natural waterways, wetlands and environmental corridors are protected. Together with the region's many other environmental and cultural heritage features, they enrich the lives of residents and attract domestic and international tourists.

Innovative public and community transport services make it easy for people to travel to work, socialise and enjoy recreation options. Inter-regional, intra-regional and interstate travel is affordable. Regular and affordable airline services extend travel opportunities in and out of the region.

Communication technologies allow more people to work and access services locally - particularly younger people. New residents are arriving and older people are finding it easier to age-in-place. New jobs attract young families and skilled workers to relocate to the region or return to the communities where they grew up.

Well-designed, climate-resilient housing meets the needs of communities, including the Aboriginal community, the older population, singles, families, low-income households, and seasonal and itinerant workers.

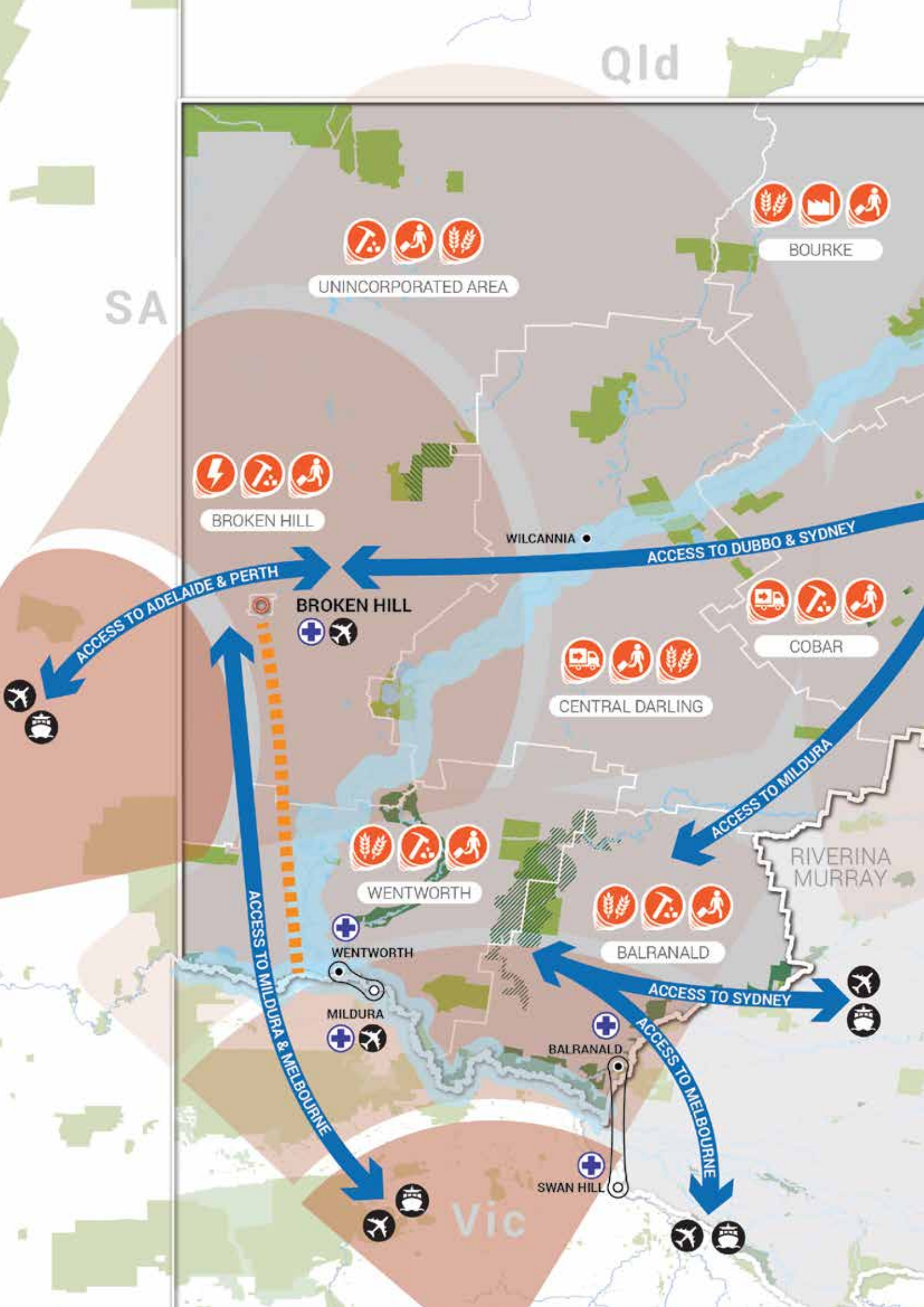
Walgett, Brewarrina, Bourke and Cobar local government areas have developed further connections with the Orana and take advantage of services in Dubbo. The Wentworth and Balranald local government areas benefit from increasing ties with other communities along the Murray River, and leverage opportunities associated with growth in Mildura, Victoria. Broken Hill has established stronger connections with Adelaide and operates as a strategic centre servicing the western part of the region, with strong connections to the Central Darling.

***To achieve this vision,
the NSW Government has:***

***acknowledged the opportunities for
improved regional coordination and
local leadership emerging through
the Far West Initiative and ...***

***set the following regionally
focused goals:***

- **A diverse economy with efficient transport and infrastructure networks**
- **Exceptional semi-arid rangelands traversed by the Barwon-Darling River**
- **Strong and connected communities**



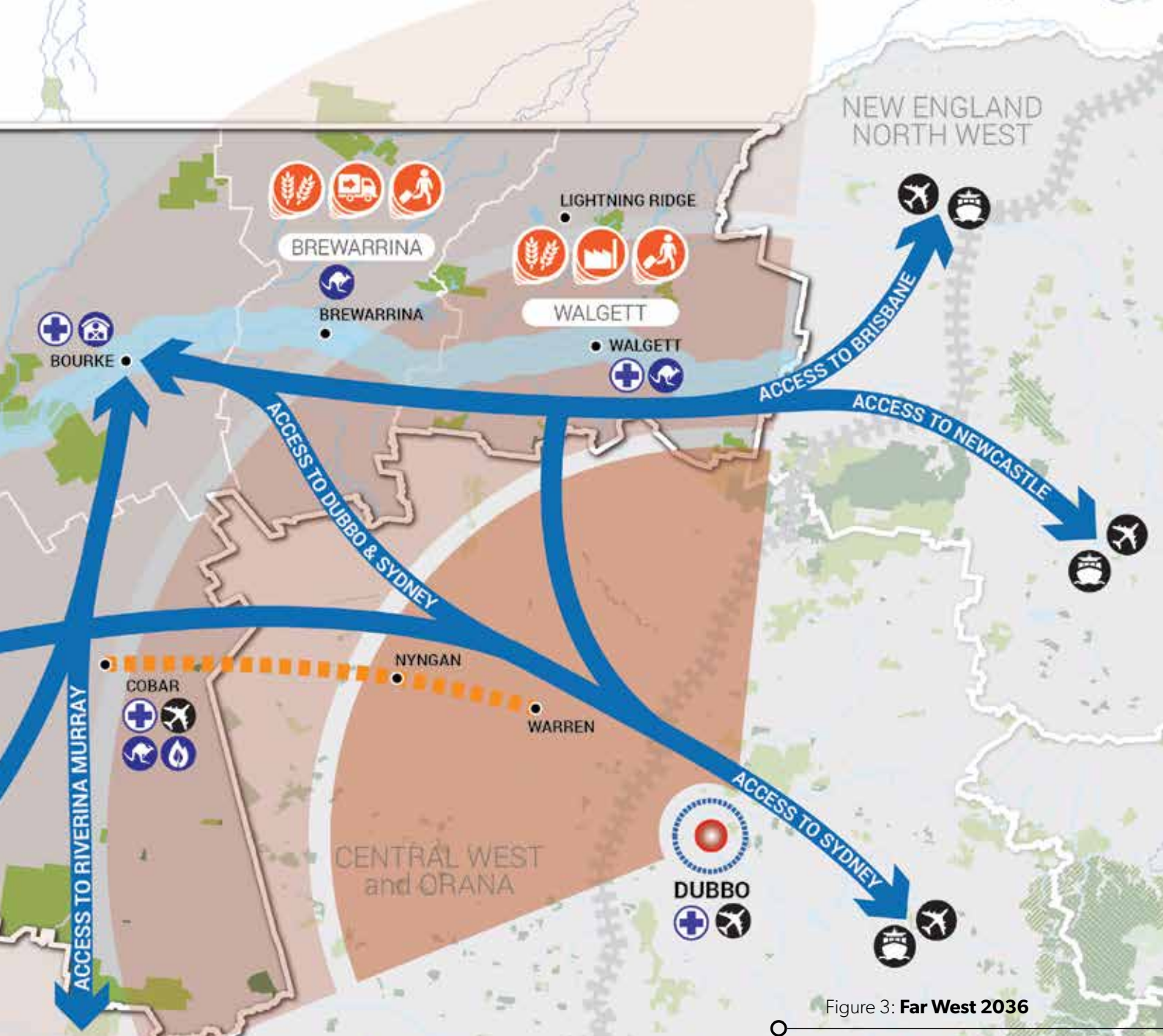


Figure 3: Far West 2036

	Strategic Centre		Proposed Inland Rail Corridor	Potential Far West Projects	
	Centre		National Park and Reserve		Proposed BioHub Facility
	Cross-Border Settlements		State Forest		Proposed Abattoir
	Inter-regional Connection		Forestry Area		Kangaroo Processing Facility
	Airport		World Heritage Area	Local Government Area Economic Opportunities	
	Port		Declared Wilderness		Agribusiness
	Hospital		Waterway		Value-Add Manufacturing
	Area of Influence		Barwon-Darling River System and Murray River		Tourism
	Proposed Water Infrastructure Security Project		Local Government Area		Transport and Logistics
					Renewable Energy
					Mining

Improved regional capacity and local leadership to unlock unique opportunities



A key component in the success of the Far West

The focus for the future of the Far West is to leverage its competitive advantages and unlock the potential for unique economic opportunities.

Diverse landscapes support historic pastoral and mining activities, an array of native species, and world-class cultural heritage. Varied communities of interest stretch across regional and state borders to include Adelaide, Mildura, Melbourne, Dubbo, Sydney and Brisbane. Strengthening these connections will be critical to continued economic growth.

The region can leverage the value of these landscapes to expand existing industries and support new economic ventures, such as value-added manufacturing, tourism and renewable energy.

Realisation of the opportunities will require extensive support from all levels of government and a collaborative community approach. This Plan is the beginning of better planning across the Far West.

With vast distances, small populations and challenges across government and regional boundaries, all tiers of government and the region's service providers face significant challenges.

Understanding the local needs and challenges of these communities is essential to overcoming the barriers created by the remote nature of communities and the high level of social disadvantage in some areas. There is an opportunity to harness the strong sense of, and commitment to, the community to create local solutions.

Developing locally coordinated whole-of-government service models and approaches, united behind a single vision for the region, will be facilitated by strong governance arrangements. Seizing opportunities to reduce service delivery duplication and inefficiency will have real effect on community wellbeing.

This Plan identifies where the NSW Government can support social, environmental and economic outcomes in partnership with councils, the community and local Aboriginal people. The process for regional planning will evolve and is focused on building regional capacity and strengthening local leadership.

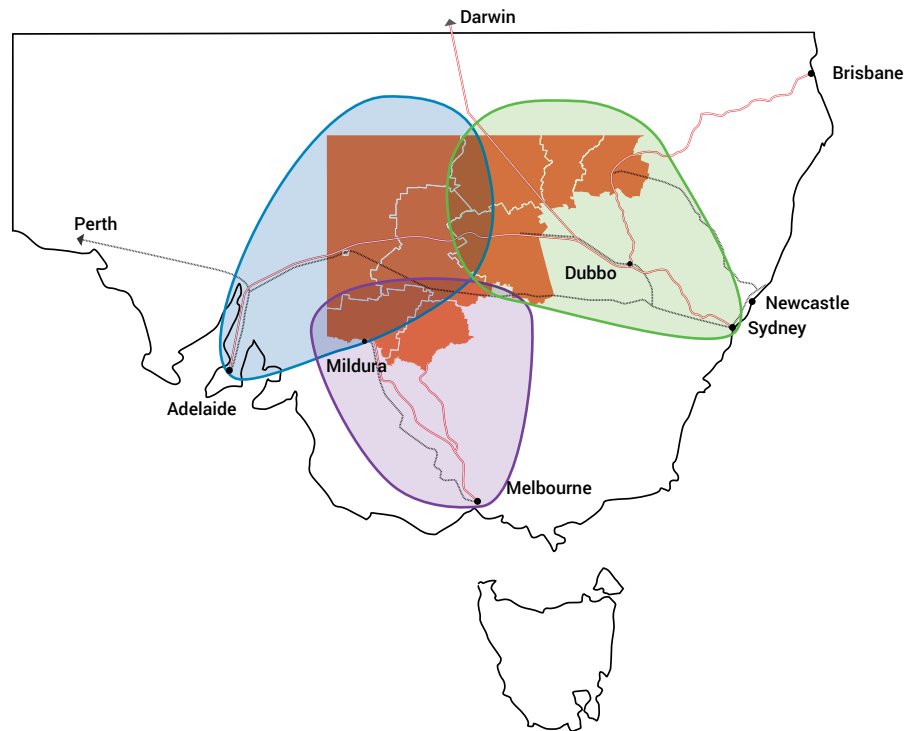
Diverse landscapes

With a semi-arid climate across much of the region, the Far West is also home to a natural landscape that includes bushlands and nationally and internationally recognised wetlands. The Darling and Murray rivers and the Menindee Lakes enable irrigated farming, helping to drive the growing agribusiness sector.

The economy is built on these diverse landscapes, which support mining operations in Broken Hill, Cobar and Lightning Ridge, and diverse agricultural enterprises, such as intensive and irrigated cropping, wine and table grapes, and kangaroo and goat production.

The historic connection with mining, which has flourished from the birth of BHP in Broken Hill, will continue to play a defining role for the Far West. New revenue streams from mining operations in the Broken Hill, Balranald and Wentworth local government areas will increase local employment and economic output.

Connected Communities and Strategic Location



Leveraging opportunities from the landscapes will be important to support new economic ventures, such as value-added manufacturing and wind, solar and bio-energy generation, particularly where capacity exists for new connections.

As the agriculture sector expands beyond traditional wool production, opportunities are emerging for unique industries, such as goat and kangaroo processing. Enormous potential exists for the Far West to become the leading international exporter of goats to expanding world markets.

Success will depend on coordination across the entire supply chain and securing certainty of supply through sustainable land management arrangements. Maximising economic development outcomes will require tailored skills development programs, supported by local education services and access to modern telecommunication infrastructure.

Places and heritage

The Far West is steeped in culture, history and heritage. Its tourism industry is connected to the backdrop of the outback, important sites to Aboriginal people and areas that influenced Australia's colonial history.

Developing tourism products related to the unique outback landscape and its varied economic, social and cultural history is a major opportunity. Marketing organic and native produce and promoting arts, cultural and museum attractions will also increase the region's profile as a visitor destination.

Some of the world's most significant cultural heritage items are found in the Far West, including Mungo Man and Mungo Lady and the Brewarrina Aboriginal Fish Traps, which are estimated to be the world's oldest human-made structures. The challenge lies in conserving, sharing and promoting this heritage within Australia and the rest of the world.

Aboriginal culture and art help underpin an important tourism sector and could increase local employment and social improvements for Aboriginal people. Harnessing existing community capacity, including Aboriginal leadership, will be integral to the growth and strength of tourism.

Enhancing established local and regional partnerships, such as the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and Local Business Councils, and creating strong networks will position the Far West as one of the leading regions in the State.





GOAL 1

A diverse economy with efficient transport and infrastructure networks

Despite its relatively small population, the Far West is a significant regional economy. The economy is centred on agriculture and mining, which directly contribute almost 40 per cent to the Far West's gross regional product (GRP).³

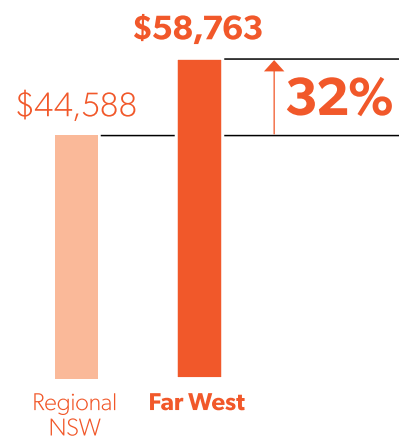
However, with most communities largely focused around one industry, such as mining or agriculture, they can be more vulnerable to economic downturns.

The regional plan aims to promote the efficient use of infrastructure and cluster compatible land uses in the right places to support the region's competitiveness and productivity.

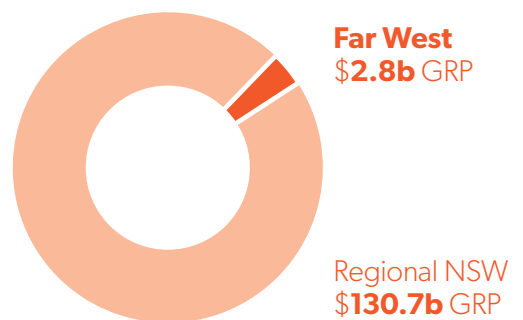
Complex global supply chains create challenges in terms of transport and infrastructure - these elements must be efficient and competitively priced to maximise the region's productive capacity.

A large proportion of products are exported from the region in base commodity form, often for processing elsewhere within NSW or overseas. An opportunity exists to attract industries to the region to produce value-added products.

Economic Output Per Person
2011

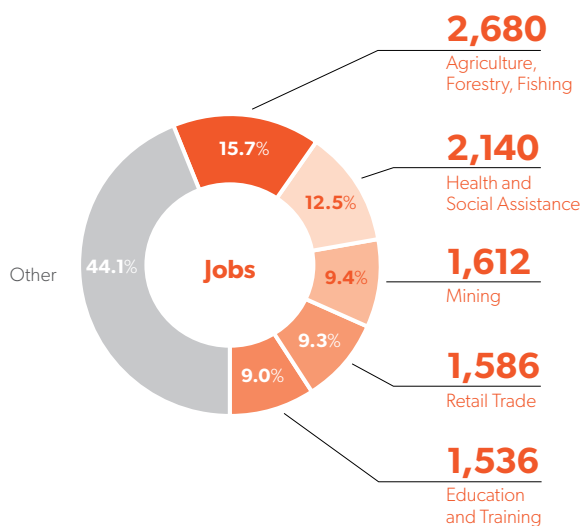


Economic Contribution
2011





Top Five Industries by Employment 2011



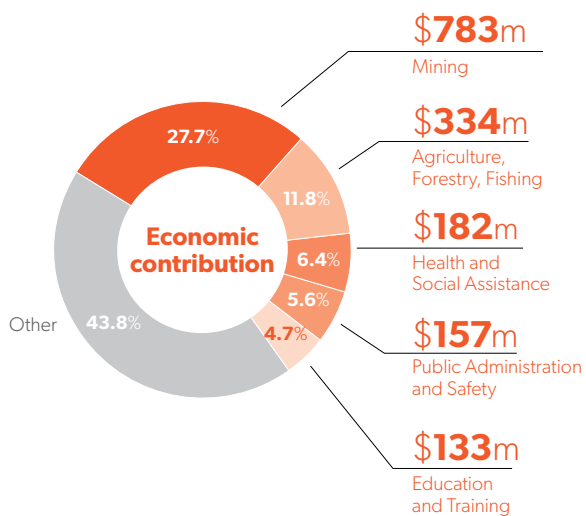
Direction 1: Grow the agribusiness sector, value-added manufacturing opportunities and supply chains

Growing Asian economies are expected to drive a 77 per cent increase in food demand by 2050.⁴ This presents opportunities for more and higher-value agricultural and food products to be exported from the Far West. Value-adding opportunities include agritourism, providing additional revenue streams for farms, and producing bioenergy and biofuels from agricultural waste and woody weeds.

Identifying and supporting further value-added manufacturing and processing industries will encourage greater industry diversification and associated job opportunities. Value-adding opportunities include meat processing, native and feral animal harvesting and processing, chickpea flour processing, a BioHub plant and other emerging niche and integrated developments.⁵

Significant opportunities exist in Bourke and Cobar to become leading international exporters of goat meat and live goats. Australia exports goat meat to the US and Taiwan and live export to Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. The industry is constrained by inconsistent supply and quality. There is a need to develop supply chains which better satisfy the needs of specific markets and thus add value to the industry.

Top Five Industries by Economic Contribution 2011



Bourke abattoir

An approved, \$60 million state-of-the-art small stock abattoir for the processing of goats and lambs north of Bourke will capitalise on the growing export demand for these products. Livestock will be principally sourced from the Far West. The facility will have the capacity to process up to 6,000 head of livestock a day and employ 200 staff when fully operational. It will service customer markets in the Middle East, Asia and North America.



There is international demand for Far West agricultural products and native foods or bush foods, such as the quandong, and through marketing products as sourced from outback NSW. Other potential opportunities exist for a small species abattoir in Broken Hill and the potential re-opening of the non-operational Walgett abattoir.

The focus for the future is to be responsive to the needs of agriculture and agribusiness, including value-added manufacturing, to enable industry growth and to promote the take-up of emerging opportunities.

Value-adding enterprises need ready and cost-effective access to the regional freight network, utility infrastructure, skilled labour and export markets.

The right policy settings must be in place to provide agricultural land and a critical mass of agri-industries to encourage investment in agriculture and agricultural supply chains.

The significant investment in establishing new value-added manufacturing facilities must be supported and protected. The co-location of related industries will maximise efficiency and infrastructure use, decrease supply chain costs, increase economies of scale and attract further investment.

Reliable telecommunications will also be critical to encouraging innovative farming that can increase productivity and tap into new markets.

Given the fragile nature of some of the region's environments, production systems must be managed appropriately to enable continuity of supply.

Estimated Kangaroo Population

2016

12.6m



Actions

- 1.1 Promote agribusiness diversification by reviewing local plans and removing planning barriers.
- 1.2 Facilitate investment in the agricultural supply chain by protecting freight and logistics facilities from conflicting land use and the encroachment of incompatible land uses.
- 1.3 Promote investment in value-added manufacturing in employment lands through suitable land use zonings and land use definitions in local environmental plans.
- 1.4 Encourage co-location of related advanced and value-added manufacturing industries to maximise efficiency and infrastructure use, decrease supply chain costs, minimise land use conflict, increase economies of scale and attract further investment.
- 1.5 Develop and implement land management arrangements to ensure continuity of supply for the emerging goat industry.
- 1.6 Promote the sustainable management of kangaroo populations by investigating potential economic opportunities associated with harvesting and processing through policy and legislative mechanisms.

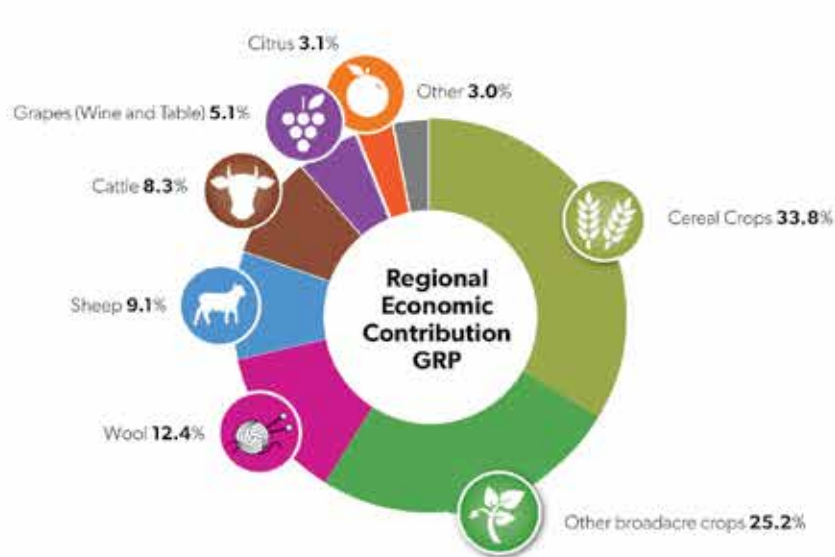
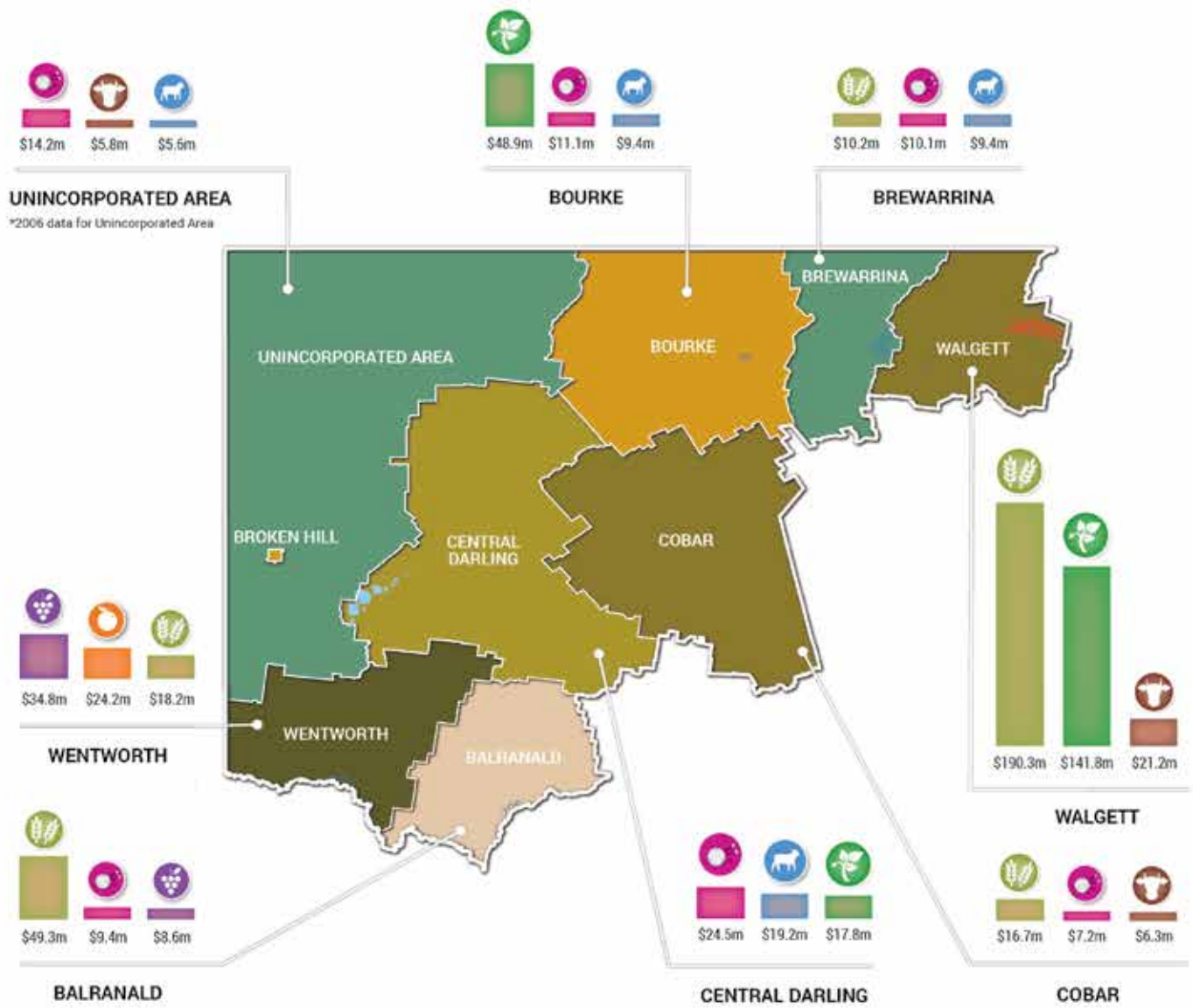
Kangaroo management

Kangaroo populations present a challenge and an opportunity. The commercial harvest of wildlife is advocated as a pathway for employment and economic development for Aboriginal people. Opportunities exist to utilise local business knowledge, develop programs and offer incentives to encourage new people to enter the industry as professional harvesters. A more collaborative approach to kangaroo management will sustainably manage issues.

Left: Trilby Station, Louth, Courtesy of AJ Murray

Above: Merriman Shearing School, Brewarrina, courtesy of SixtybyTwenty

Figure 4: **Top Three Contributors to Agricultural Production in the Far West, 2011**



- Cereal Crops
- Other Broadacre Crops
- Wool
- Sheep
- Cattle
- Grapes (Wine and Table)
- Citrus Fruit
- Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land
- Water Storage
- Irrigation Area

Direction 2: Protect productive agricultural land and plan for greater land use compatibility

Agricultural production occurs across the region, from intensive and irrigated crops – including vegetables, fodder, stone fruits, viticulture, cotton and horticulture including citrus and flower growing – to extensive broadacre cropping. Agricultural hubs include wine and table grape production along the Murray River in the south, and wool, kangaroo and goat production in the north. Significant irrigation also occurs in the Central Darling, Balranald, Wentworth, Bourke and Walgett local government areas.

Highly productive agriculture requires ready access to water, high quality soils, labour and a suitable climate. While the total area of land available for agriculture is large, comparatively few locations have access to all these characteristics.

The NSW Government will undertake targeted mapping of important agricultural land to support producers and councils in future planning. Protecting important agricultural land will also help to keep fresh food available locally. Targeted mapping will incorporate biophysical, infrastructure and socio-economic factors, complementing existing Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land mapping. This will inform land use planning decisions.

The potential for land use conflict across agricultural lands is high in some areas due to competing demands from incompatible land uses and urban encroachment. This can inhibit farming practices and over time affect productivity and economies of scale.

Land use planning can provide greater certainty for investment by establishing clear parameters and transparent processes to support new development. A consistent planning approach can avoid fragmentation of productive agricultural land and identify suitable locations for new rural residential development. This approach will also limit potential impacts on areas of high environmental value and cultural and heritage assets.

The planned separation of sensitive land uses can allow more diverse land uses to develop and complement each other, while contributing to the better management of biosecurity risks.

In contrast to much of NSW, the Far West has the potential to effectively manage biosecurity risks due to its separation from major populations and intensive industries, and the semi-arid climate which is challenging for exotic animals and plants to survive. The region can also capitalise on its clean and green organic farming and marketing advantage. The NSW Government's commitment to strengthening and maintaining biosecurity measures is reflected in the *NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021*, the *NSW Weeds Action Program 2015-2020*, and the *Draft NSW Invasive Species Plan 2015-22*.

Actions

- 2.1 Undertake targeted mapping to identify important agricultural land in local land use strategies and local plans.
- 2.2 Manage the interface between agricultural lands and other land uses to minimise land use incompatibility and fragmentation.
- 2.3 Appropriately zone irrigated land and land with potential for irrigation purposes to minimise inappropriate development and land use incompatibility.
- 2.4 Minimise biosecurity risks by undertaking risk assessments, taking into account biosecurity plans and applying appropriate buffer areas when assessing the potential impacts of new development.
- 2.5 Implement the NSW Government's *Agriculture Industry Action Plan – Primed for growth: Investing locally, connecting globally*.
- 2.6 Develop local strategies to limit urban and rural housing development in agricultural and extractive resource areas, industrial areas and transport corridors.



Direction 3: Sustainably manage mineral resources

Over the coming decades, the region will continue to benefit from the economic and employment flow-on effects of the mining industry.

Mineral resource mining can benefit and impact communities in different ways during the mining lifecycle, from exploration and construction to extraction and operational wind-down. The sustainable management of mineral resources must consider and balance these varying impacts to produce long-term sustainable economic, social and environmental outcomes.

The Far West employs a high level of drive-in, drive-out workers. The nature of this type of employment in mining operations changes resident populations, and creates different demands for retail, health, education and emergency services.

Once extractive resource lands have been identified, there may be opportunities to identify interim activities that will enable productive use of the land without sterilising the potential of the underlying resource.

In the long-term, in areas where mineral extraction is declining, some regional communities will need to diversify and transition their economies. Rehabilitating former mines can provide an opportunity for a new development or use.

Local land use strategies must respond to the lifecycle of mining to give all stakeholders, including investors, certainty around the long-term productive value of land. The COAG (Council of Australian Governments) Standing Council on Energy and Resources Multiple Land Use Framework includes planning principles in this regard.

Through the work of the Western NSW Mining and Resource Development Taskforce, the NSW Government is investigating how western NSW communities can capitalise on the economic benefits and manage the impacts of the mining sector. Regional-scale modelling tools enable a better understanding of how benefits will be distributed across affected communities.

For example, using modelling tools to guide planning outcomes can prepare communities and service providers for the impact of mining and reduce the risk of one community being overly disadvantaged compared to another that receives full economic benefit. It is important to plan for communities experiencing mining growth and those transitioning out of mining.

The location of current exploration and mining production titles in NSW, explanations of mining and production titles, and the roles of community and government in the decision-making process for mining and resource projects is available at www.commonground.nsw.gov.au.

The NSW Government has developed a draft Strategic Release Framework for Coal and Petroleum (including coal seam gas). This draft Framework outlines a process for the controlled, strategic release and competitive allocation of new exploration licences. New exploration licences would only be issued in areas released by the Minister for Resources and Energy after an assessment of resource potential and economic, environmental, social factors and community issues. The draft Framework is a transparent and informed approach, consistent with the NSW Government's broader land use resources strategy.

Mining operations require water and energy infrastructure to support them. It will be important to strategically plan for water and energy infrastructure to support new and emerging mining opportunities. In established mining areas, such as Cobar, potential future water supply deficiencies could impact mining operations as well as the community. Securing funding for future water security projects will be important for the future of the mining industry. Regional Water Security Program projects are discussed in Direction 26.





Actions

- 3.1 Work with Councils to implement a modelling tool to understand servicing needs and opportunities for communities to better capture the economic benefits of mining, and help communities plan for the implications of mining.
- 3.2 Consult with the Division of Resources and Geoscience when assessing applications for land use changes (strategic land use planning, rezoning and planning proposals) and new development or expansion.
- 3.3 Protect areas of mineral and energy resources potential through local land use strategies and local environmental plans.
- 3.4 Protect infrastructure that facilitates mining industries, such as road and rail freight routes, and energy transmission networks, including gas pipelines, from development that could affect current or future extraction.
- 3.5 Support communities that are transitioning out of mining operations and help them to plan for new economic opportunities.

Mining in Cobar Shire

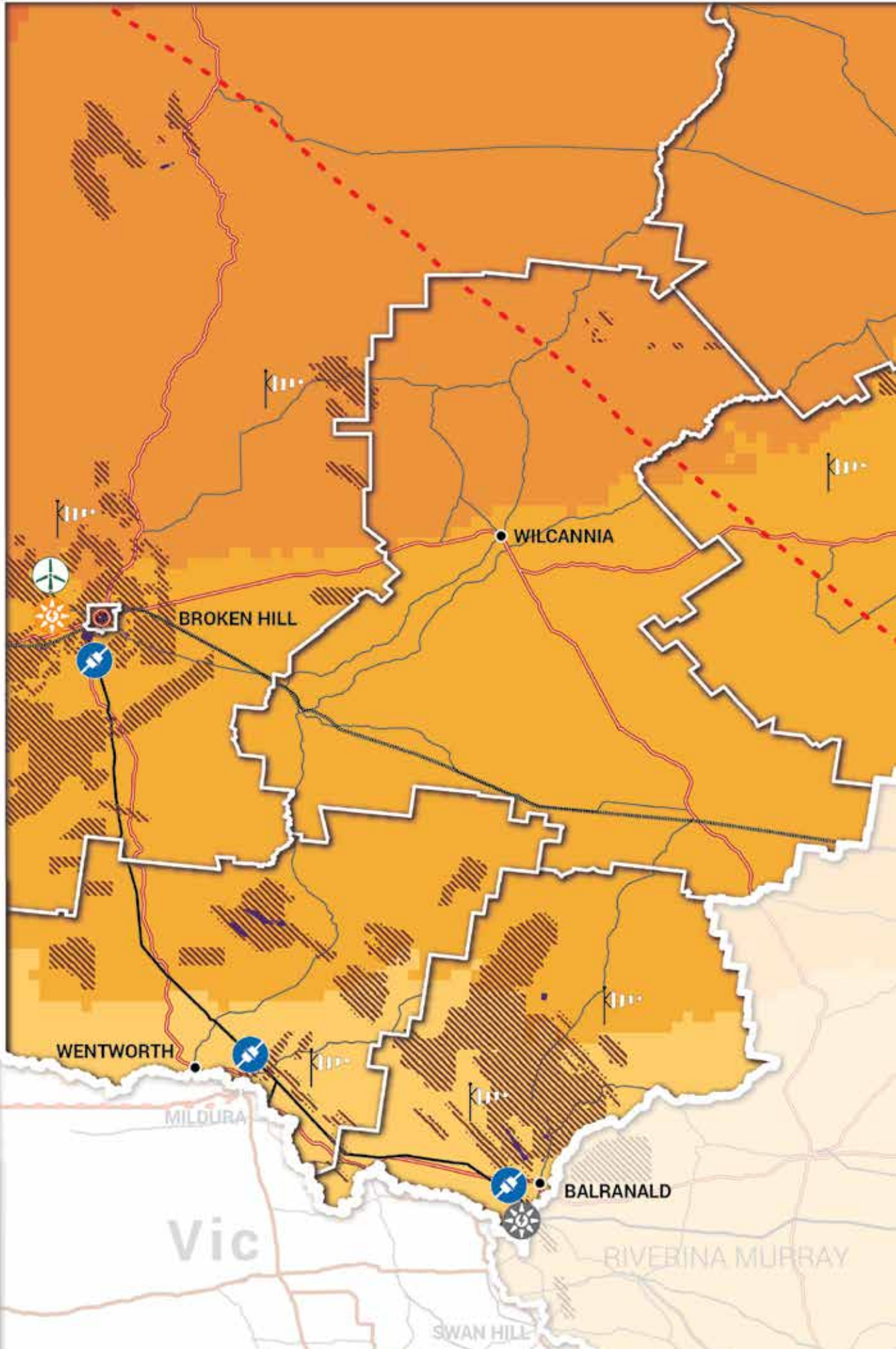
Cobar Shire has been an important copper, gold, lead, zinc and silver mining district for nearly 140 years.⁶ Peak, CSA, Endeavour, Manuka and Hera mines operate in the Shire and there is potential for further development in the area, such as the Nymagee Copper mine, Mallee Bull prospect near Gilgunnia and Mount Boppy near Canbelego. Potential exists for further discoveries of gold, copper, silver, lead and zinc in two belts of north-west to south-east trending prospective rocks, referred to as the Cobar–Nymagee and Mount Drouin potential resource areas.

Mining in the Far West

The mining industry is the primary economic driver in Broken Hill (silver, lead and zinc), Cobar (copper and gold), Lightning Ridge (opal) and White Cliffs (opal). Mining of mineral sands occurs within the Broken Hill, Balranald and Wentworth local government areas. There is also the opportunity for iron ore, copper, gold, cobalt and magnetite mining around Broken Hill.

Qld

SA



BROKEN HILL

WILCANNIA

WENTWORTH

MILDURA

BALRANALD

Vic

RIVERINA MURRAY

SWAN HILL

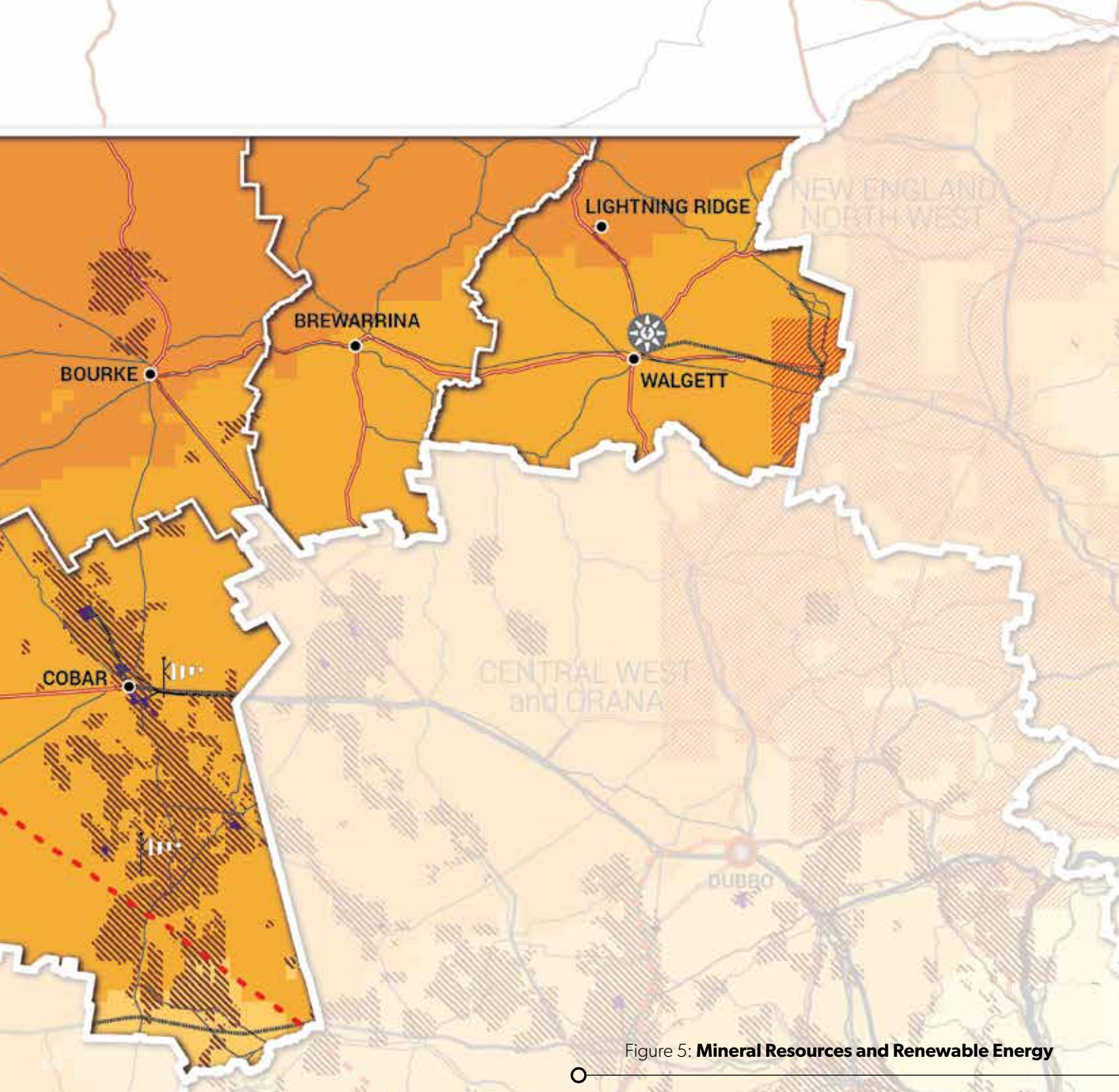
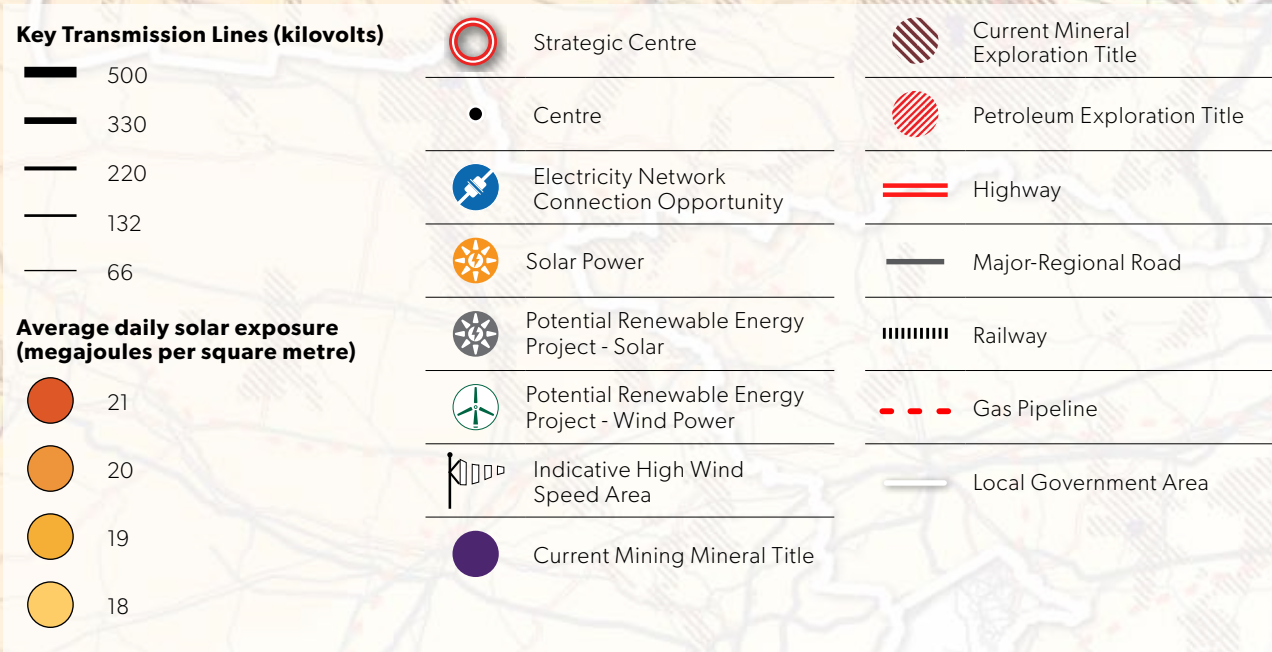


Figure 5: Mineral Resources and Renewable Energy





Direction 4: Diversify energy supply through renewable energy generation

The Far West has many opportunities for investment in renewable energy, including large-scale wind and solar generation and bioenergy.

TransGrid's NSW Connection Opportunities identifies Broken Hill, Wentworth and Balranald local government areas as having capacity for high renewable energy generation. An interactive map of renewable energy potential is available at www.resourcesandenergy.nsw.gov.au.

The NSW Government's *Renewable Energy Action Plan* (2013) has driven wind and solar proposals across the State, including the existing 53 MW Broken Hill Solar Voltaic Power Project and the Silverton Wind Farm.

Broken Hill can capitalise on investment in renewable energy to develop generation and associated secondary industries, including research, project management, installation and asset maintenance.

Opportunities to co-locate renewable energy generation at resource or industry sites can attract other similar industries. Biomass (including agricultural, forestry and municipal waste), carbon sequestration and methane from coal mines are emerging energy sources. Existing waste management facilities could add power generators and harness sewage and landfill gases. Early and effective community engagement will be promoted on these projects.

Actions

- 4.1 Identify areas and project sites with renewable energy potential, and infrastructure corridors with access to the electricity network, to inform land use planning.
- 4.2 Promote best practice community engagement to realise community benefits for all utility-scale renewable energy projects.

- 4.3 Facilitate small-scale renewable energy projects using bioenergy, solar, wind, small-scale hydro, geothermal or other innovative storage technologies through local environment plans.

Silverton Wind Farm

The approved Silverton Wind Farm will be constructed in the Barrier Ranges, 25 kilometres north-west of Broken Hill. The \$450 million project will create up to 150 jobs during construction, produce enough renewable energy to power over 137,000 average Australian homes and represent a significant economic investment. Improvements in technology may also allow future development of other wind infrastructure in areas currently less suited to wind energy generation.⁷

Cobar BioHub project

In addition to the proposed Orana BioHub in Dubbo, the proposed Cobar BioHub facility has been conceived to utilise and value-add locally generated invasive native scrub materials (currently burnt in the paddocks from where it has been removed) resulting in the manufacture of highest value bio-products.

The Cobar facility could improve the economics of land rehabilitation for local land managers by increasing property productivity and creating by-product bioenergy.

The \$36 million project is expected to generate up to 20 skilled jobs.⁸



Direction 5: Promote tourism opportunities

The region appeals to domestic and international visitors as it offers an authentic outback experience. Unique features include the Brewarrina Aboriginal Fish Traps, artesian baths and opal mining in Lightning Ridge, heritage and film tourist trails, the underground opal mining town of White Cliffs, the Louth Races, the Murray, Darling and Barwon rivers and the Gundabooka, Sturt, Toorale, Mutawintji and Mungo national parks.

Domestic visitor numbers to outback NSW are increasing, mainly due to the popularity in camping/driving holidays, the growing number of travelling retirees, improved mobility and accessibility, and growing appreciation of the landscape.

Tourism opportunities that help to extend the time visitors spend in the region need to be further explored. This could include a focus on organic and native produce, natural landscapes, European heritage and scientific and paleo-archaeological-focused tourism around Aboriginal heritage. Promoting arts, cultural and museum attractions, such as the Mad Max Museum and Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre, in addition to contemporary Aboriginal and European artists, could help increase visitor numbers.

Tourism generates employment and business growth that contributes to better economic outcomes for Aboriginal communities. Destination NSW's *Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan* is being updated for 2017-2020 to support the development of Aboriginal tourism experiences and businesses. This will lead to economic and social benefits for Aboriginal people, both as operators and employees.

Limited transport and access within and outside the region appeals to some visitors because it adds to the remote experience; however, maintaining and improving transport connections for visitors, managing seasonal fluctuations in local employment, and greater investment in attractions will boost tourism.

Line of Lode, Broken Hill

The Line of Lode is an iconic tourist attraction with State and National industrial heritage values and heritage, tourism and economic significance to Broken Hill. Investment in the development of the Line of Lode Precinct is critical to capitalise on the precinct's potential as a major tourist attraction.

In 2016, the Department of Industry – Lands & Forestry commissioned a masterplan and development opportunities to revitalise the Line of Lode Precinct. These opportunities include making the site more accessible, adding complementary attractions and experiences to the existing iconic Broken Earth Cafe and Miner's Memorial, and reconfiguring the cafe to maximise its efficient operation.

Australian Opal Centre, Lightning Ridge

The Australian Opal Centre is a not-for-profit facility dedicated to opal-related scientific research, education and training, heritage and arts, travel, cultural and economic development. More than \$1 million in local, State and Federal grants and private donations have been received to fund the Centre. A full cost benefit analysis is required to complete the business case for further investment.



Access to tourism assets

Better access to tourism assets will unlock their tourism potential. For example, Mungo National Park, the site of the oldest known human cremations in the world, can only be accessed via unsealed roads, which are heavily affected by wet weather. Roads can be closed on short notice for preservation, affecting the main entrance to Mungo National Park via Arumpo Road, which reduces visitor numbers.⁹

The *Murray-Mallee Regional Transport Study 2011 Final Report* recommended a sealed, all-weather tourist loop road to Mungo National Park, connecting to Mildura and Balranald.

The NSW Government has invested \$1.3 million from the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund to upgrade Lightning Ridge and Bourke airports to boost capacity and safety, and increase their ability to attract visitors.¹⁰

Actions

- 5.1 Implement Destination NSW's Draft *Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2017 – 2020* when finalised.
- 5.2 Expand Aboriginal Export Ready Tour Products by partnering with relevant stakeholders.
- 5.3 Consult with native title holders, particularly prescribed body corporates, to determine how land subject to native title rights may be utilised in the tourism sector.
- 5.4 Implement the Line of Lode Redevelopment Strategy.
- 5.5 Improve access and infrastructure for the tourism sector, focusing on all-weather transport routes.
- 5.6 Investigate development of a regional tourism trail between Balranald, Wentworth, Mallee Cliffs, Mungo and Yanga floodplains; and between White Cliffs, Menindee, Tibooburra and Silverton.
- 5.7 Investigate development of a Far West Sculpture Trail encompassing sites at Broken Hill, Mutawintji, White Cliffs and Wilcannia.
- 5.8 Align local land use and tourism strategies with the relevant Destination Management Plan.
- 5.9 Identify opportunities for tourism and associated land uses in local plans.

Qld

To Cameron Corner

TIBOOBURRA

WHITE CLIFFS

Darling River

SA

BROKEN HILL

WILCANNIA

To Adelaide

Menindee Lakes

Willandra Lakes

To Adelaide

Lake Victoria

WENTWORTH

Murray River

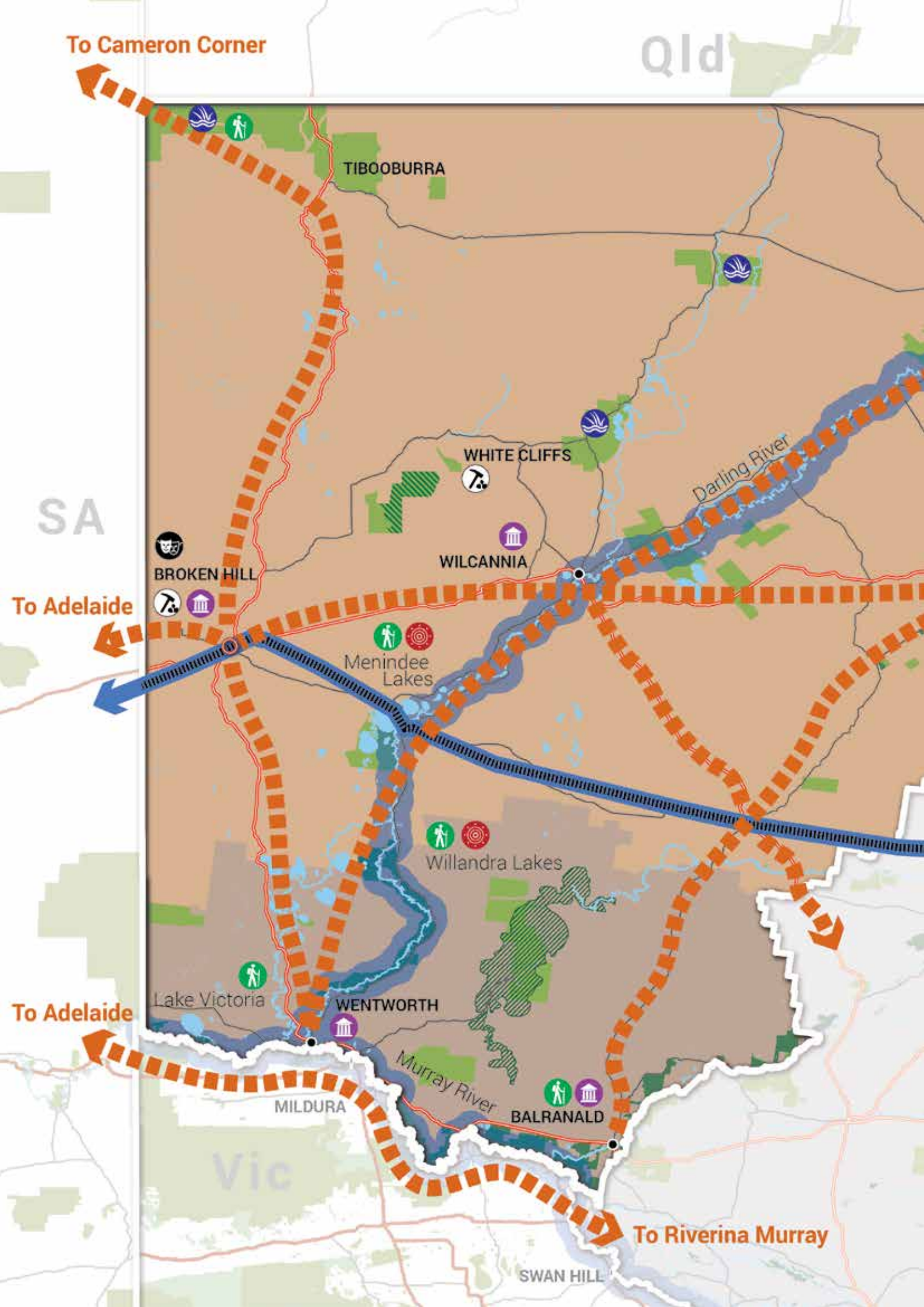
MILDURA

BALRANALD

Vic

To Riverina Murray

SWAN HILL



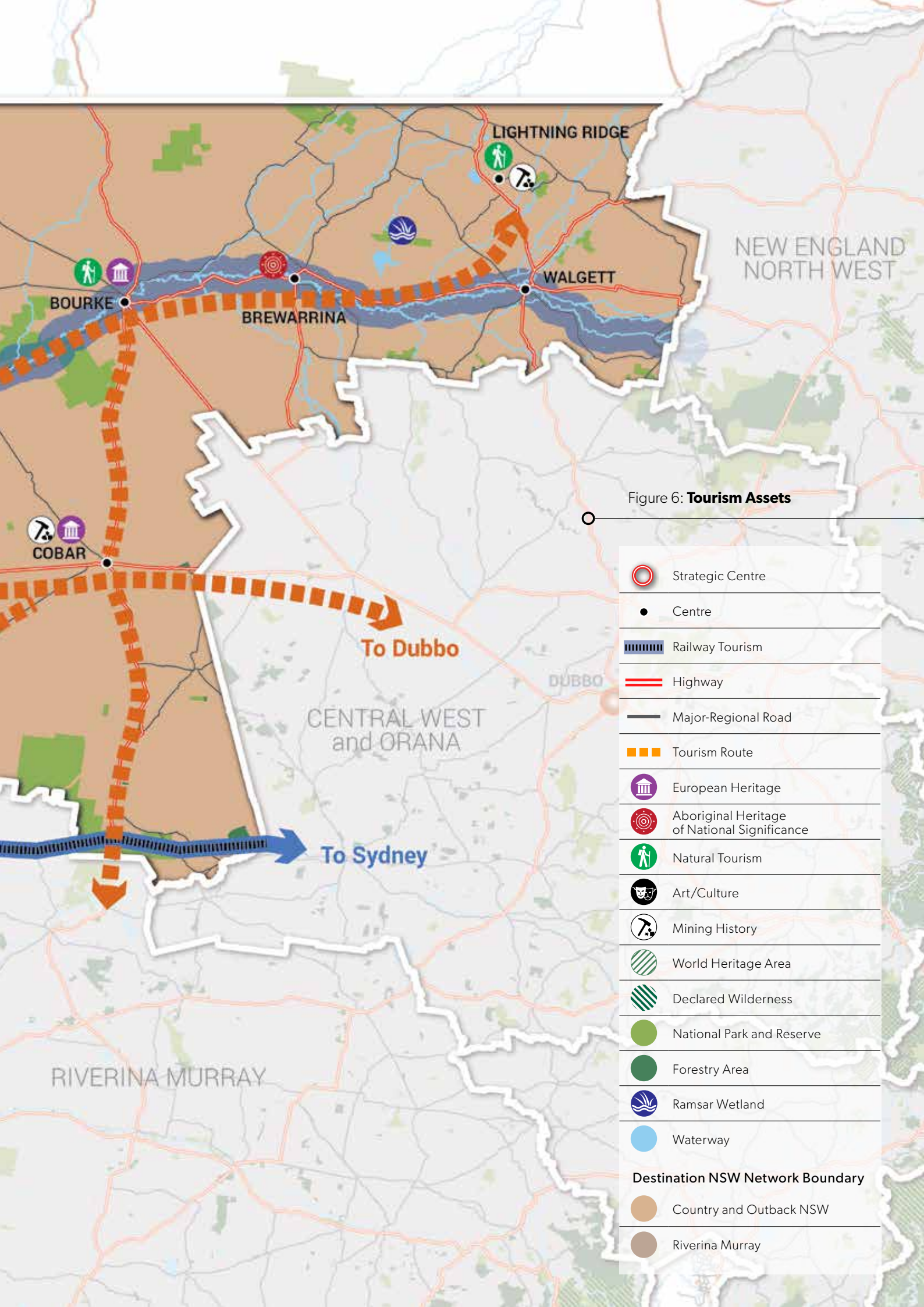





















Figure 6: **Tourism Assets**

-  Strategic Centre
-  Centre
-  Railway Tourism
-  Highway
-  Major-Regional Road
-  Tourism Route
-  European Heritage
-  Aboriginal Heritage of National Significance
-  Natural Tourism
-  Art/Culture
-  Mining History
-  World Heritage Area
-  Declared Wilderness
-  National Park and Reserve
-  Forestry Area
-  Ramsar Wetland
-  Waterway
- Destination NSW Network Boundary**
-  Country and Outback NSW
-  Riverina Murray



Unsealed roads

Many local roads are unsealed due to the expensive cost of sealing and maintenance. Unsealed roads are generally more vulnerable to closure than sealed roads during weather events, which may cause lengthy detours and isolation for remote communities.

Sealing strategically identified portions of the region's roads could help the efficiency of the network. For example, the finalisation of sealing portions of the Silver City Highway from Broken Hill through Tibooburra could provide an alternative freight route between Queensland and Victoria.¹¹

GrainCorp investment in the agricultural supply chain

Private organisations are rationalising grain storage and distribution facilities in the region. GrainCorp has partnered with the NSW Government through the Fixing Country Rail program to invest in the construction of additional storage facilities and railway sidings at Burren Junction (Walgett Local Government Area). GrainCorp has funded new train loading equipment, roads, grain bunkers and other supporting infrastructure, while the NSW Government has funded the rail siding extension and supporting infrastructure works on the Narrabri to Walgett line.

These improvements will reduce shunting, allow for faster train loading and save a projected \$9 per tonne in freight costs between farm and port.¹² The siding will be lengthened to allow up to 40 wagons and the facilities upgraded so that a train can be loaded in four hours. The project responds to the need to help service a major grain receival site.

Direction 6: Unlock economic potential through improved freight transport infrastructure

The Mitchell, Barrier, Silver City and Cobb highways connect the region directly to South Australia, Queensland and Victoria, as well as the east coast. The nationally significant rail corridor between Adelaide and Sydney also passes through the region.¹³ This diversity of connections can be leveraged to benefit the economy and communities into the future.

Improved network connections

Agriculture and mining rely on efficient road, rail and air freight networks. The vastness of the region, and the distances to ports and markets, present a great challenge.

Local road connections that feed into the State and national road freight network are important for transporting agricultural produce and mining products. Identifying and resolving freight and road pressure points will help to grow agricultural and mining activities.

Restrictions on certain freight vehicles using local roads, unsealed local roads and the cost of local road maintenance, are significant impediments to the road freight network. The NSW Government acknowledges that these constraints can substantially affect economic productivity.¹⁴

The *2010 Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Rail Alignment Study*, prepared by the Australian Rail Track Corporation, identified the preferred corridor for inland rail.¹⁵ Although this corridor is not located in the Far West, this infrastructure will provide better access for Far West producers to export markets.



Above: Bridge over the Murrumbidgee River, courtesy of Balranald Shire Council

Right: Road access, Mungo National Park, courtesy of Destination NSW



Coordination of investment in the transport network

Ongoing investment to maintain and upgrade transport routes is essential to support future economic growth in the Far West. The NSW Government will continue to support coordinated investment in freight, priority road and rail infrastructure and airline services because of their importance to the regional economy.¹⁶

A regional economic development strategy, developed in collaboration with regional stakeholders will identify key enabling infrastructure, investigate policy interventions and provide recommendations to support future economic development of the Far West.

Identifying potential freight network corridors can promote nearby economically valuable land uses. Private investment can be directed at road and rail pressure points, as is occurring in the program commenced by GrainCorp at railway sidings in NSW and Victoria.

Transport for NSW administers two coordinated programs for network investment:

- *Fixing Country Rail* removes productivity and efficiency constraints on the regional rail network; and
- *Fixing Country Roads* targets funding to local councils for road projects that will eliminate connectivity constraints on local roads in NSW.

The NSW Government has invested \$3.3 million for road projects that eliminate constraints on connections in Broken Hill, Cobar and Walgett, under *Fixing Country Roads*.

Some councils may not have sufficient resources or capacity to prepare detailed business cases to support infrastructure investment, and government and infrastructure agencies will need to work with councils to share skills and expertise.

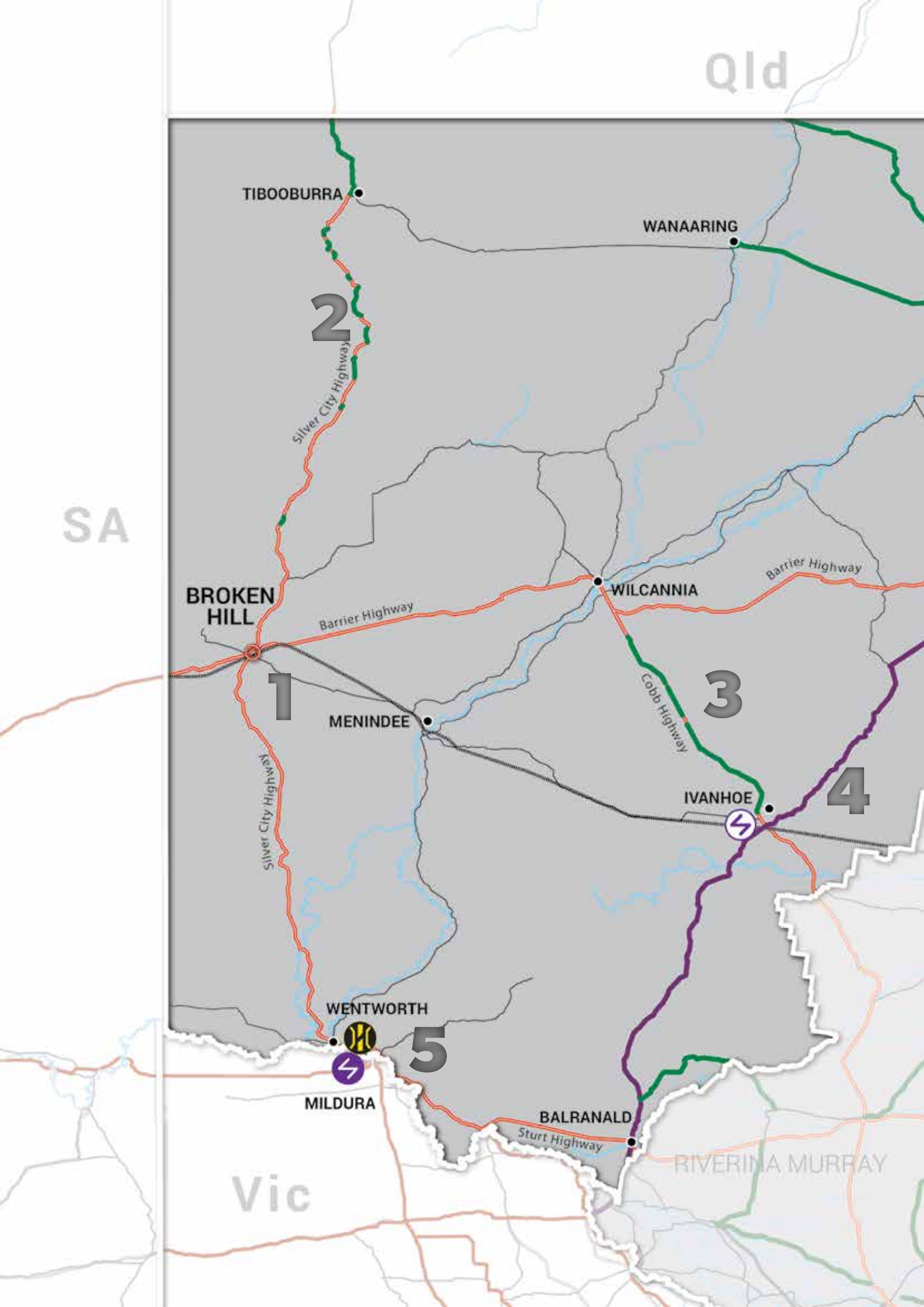
Actions

- 6.1 Identify the regional freight network (including key national, State, regional and local roads and the rail network).
- 6.2 Investigate and prioritise Council-identified projects to address impediments to the regional freight network and improve capacity and opportunities in the network.
- 6.3 Identify, coordinate and prioritise the delivery of local and regional projects forming part of the regional freight network.
- 6.4 Locate freight and logistics facilities to capitalise on connections to external markets, maximise the use of existing infrastructure and support future industrial development.
- 6.5 Prepare a regional economic development strategy that drives economic growth opportunities by identifying key enabling infrastructure and other policy interventions to unlock growth.

Central Darling Roads



93%
of roads
remain unsealed



Qld

TIBOOBURRA

WANAARING

2

SA

BROKEN HILL

Barrier Highway

WILCANNIA

Barrier Highway

1

MENINDEE

3

Cobb Highway

4

IVANHOE

WENTWORTH

5

MILDURA

BALRANALD

Sturt Highway

RIVERINA MURRAY

Vic

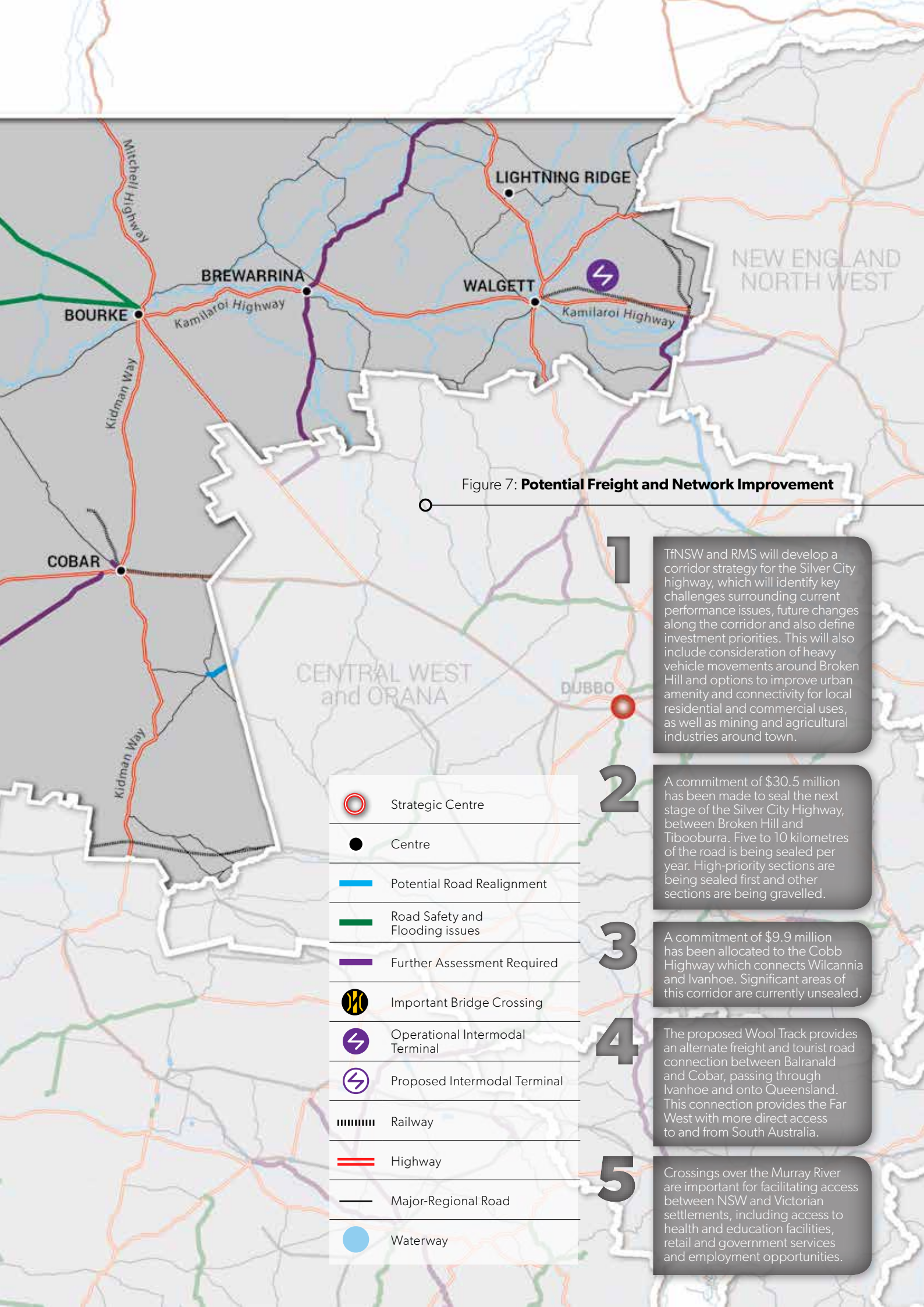


Figure 7: **Potential Freight and Network Improvement**

1

TfNSW and RMS will develop a corridor strategy for the Silver City highway, which will identify key challenges surrounding current performance issues, future changes along the corridor and also define investment priorities. This will also include consideration of heavy vehicle movements around Broken Hill and options to improve urban amenity and connectivity for local residential and commercial uses, as well as mining and agricultural industries around town.

2

A commitment of \$30.5 million has been made to seal the next stage of the Silver City Highway, between Broken Hill and Tibooburra. Five to 10 kilometres of the road is being sealed per year. High-priority sections are being sealed first and other sections are being gravelled.

3













A commitment of \$9.9 million has been allocated to the Cobb Highway which connects Wilcannia and Ivanhoe. Significant areas of this corridor are currently unsealed.

4

The proposed Wool Track provides an alternate freight and tourist road connection between Balranald and Cobar, passing through Ivanhoe and onto Queensland. This connection provides the Far West with more direct access to and from South Australia.

5

Crossings over the Murray River are important for facilitating access between NSW and Victorian settlements, including access to health and education facilities, retail and government services and employment opportunities.

-  Strategic Centre
-  Centre
-  Potential Road Realignment
-  Road Safety and Flooding issues
-  Further Assessment Required
-  Important Bridge Crossing
-  Operational Intermodal Terminal
-  Proposed Intermodal Terminal
-  Railway
-  Highway
-  Major-Regional Road
-  Waterway



Broken Hill Airport

Broken Hill Airport offers daily connections to Sydney, Adelaide, Dubbo and Mildura and is home to facilities including Regional Express Airlines, Express Freight, charter companies, general aviation and the Royal Flying Doctor Service base. The airport has considerable strategic value, and its growth as a major inland airport in regional NSW is one of seven long-term goals contained in the *Regional Development Australia Far West NSW Regional Plan 2013-2023*. The airport may require runway, taxiway and apron area improvements to allow for use by larger aircraft.

Tibooburra Aerodrome

Tibooburra Aerodrome is a Crown Reserve for aviation purposes managed by the Department of Industry – Lands & Forestry, through the Land Administration Ministerial Corporation. The NSW Government has provided more than \$350,000 to enable various upgrades, including resealing the bitumen runway, installing animal-proof fencing and replacing the solar lighting system.

Cobar Airport

The NSW Government has provided \$2.5 million from the Resources for Regions Fund to upgrade Cobar Airport, including runway pavement and lighting upgrades. These upgrades support continued airport operations, compliant with required standards. These works have also enabled opportunities to capitalise on Cobar's central location for regional emergency service responses.

Direction 7: Improve regional air connections

Due to the distance from capital cities, air travel is crucial for quick connections. The ongoing operation and expansion of affordable air travel and related facilities will be essential to influencing future economic growth.

Maintaining 20 per cent of flight slots at Sydney Airport for regional NSW services is critical to business, and provides convenient access for regional communities to crucial healthcare services in other centres such as Dubbo and supporting fly-in-fly-out workers.

Regular commercial passenger air services operate to and from Broken Hill and Cobar. Some residents access regular passenger services from Dubbo, Mildura, Moree and Griffith in adjacent regional areas.

These inter-regional connections provide opportunities for direct air connections to all major metropolitan cities except Perth and Darwin, enhancing access to high-level social and medical services. Local airport and aerodrome facilities also support the Royal Flying Doctor Service medivac and NSW Rural Fire Service operations based in Broken Hill and Dubbo, along with private aircraft services business, industry and tourism.

Airport facility operations should not be impeded by the encroachment of incompatible development. Airport expansions will be identified and planned through local land use strategies.

The NSW Government's response to the 2014 Inquiry into Regional Aviation Services noted that the Department of Premier and Cabinet had undertaken a feasibility study into expanding commercial air services to remote communities in western NSW, including Lightning Ridge, Walgett, Brewarrina and Bourke.¹⁷ The *Western Regional Transport Plan (2013)* proposed a similar investigation into commercial air services to the Far West.¹⁸

Above: Broken Hill Airport, courtesy of Broken Hill City Council

Right: Weir on the Darling River north of Menindee



Actions

- 7.1 Protect airports and airfields from the encroachment of incompatible development.
- 7.2 Support the continued allocation of 20 per cent of flight slots at Sydney Airport to regional NSW services and seek greater allocation in peak periods.
- 7.3 Work with stakeholders to investigate and prioritise projects to expand the capacity of Broken Hill Airport.
- 7.4 Investigate opportunities to leverage economic growth in the Far West from proximity to Mildura Airport.

Direction 8: Enhance access to telecommunications

Better access to reliable telecommunications and high-speed broadband internet can unlock a range of benefits including the development of small business, innovative farming technology (such as automated farm vehicles) and enhanced delivery of health, education, tourism and cultural services.¹⁹

Continued identification and funding to fix mobile phone black spots and delivery of new or upgraded mobile base stations will ensure a reliable telecommunications network, which is particularly important for some remote communities during emergencies.

Health services are increasingly delivered through telecommunications technology. Emergency room observation and remote doctor video-conferencing narrows the gap in service provision. Similarly, students rely on online access for course content. Future growth in these sectors will be heavily dependent on access to reliable telecommunications.

Internet connectivity is critical to social, community and economic wellbeing; however, more than one-third of households do not have access to the internet at home.²⁰

The roll-out of the National Broadband Network will be critical, and will enable the wider take-up of technology. Over the next 20 years, the Far West will benefit significantly from the use of new technology.

Actions

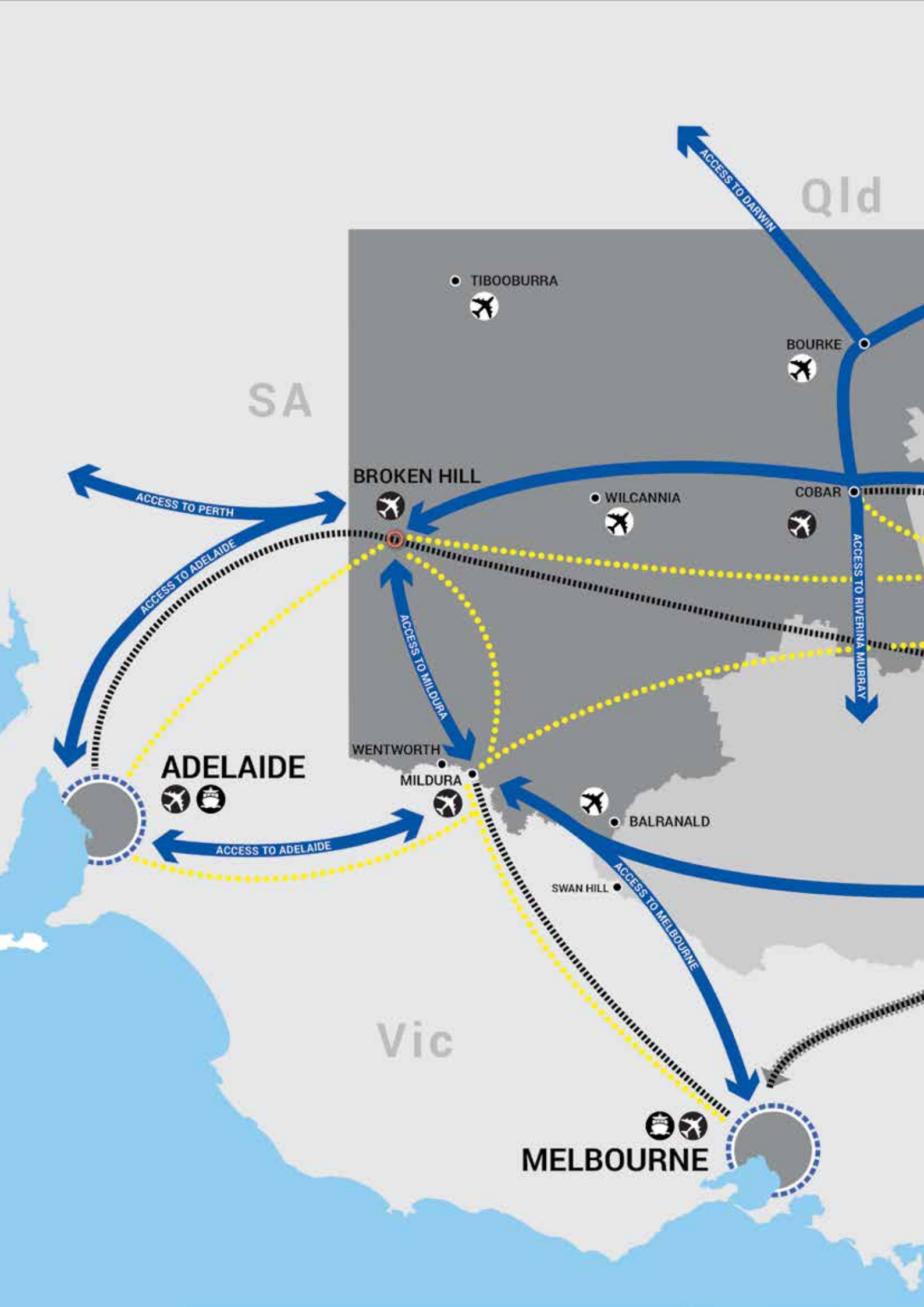
- 8.1 Identify options to improve access to shared telecommunication and internet services, including public access to services at community centres and schools.

Direction 9: Sustainably manage water resources for economic opportunities

The availability of water and the security of its supply is critical for continued economic development. Water is a key input for agriculture and mining, as well as for community sustainability.

Coordinating and managing water requirements across business, industry, communities and the environment requires a better understanding of local water allocations and more resourceful water use. Water allocation is complex due to seasonal fluctuations, and is an ongoing concern for some agricultural producers. More efficient irrigation technologies and non-traditional agricultural pursuits can help address water scarcity issues. Broken Hill and Cobar have been given high priority for infrastructure upgrades to improve their water security.²¹

Land use planning can help to secure water supplies by appropriately locating, monitoring and managing development. This is especially relevant in the irrigation areas of Central Darling, Wentworth, Balranald, Bourke and Walgett local government areas where communities require greater certainty about seasonal water allocations to allow producers to increase investment and take advantage of global demand for agricultural products.



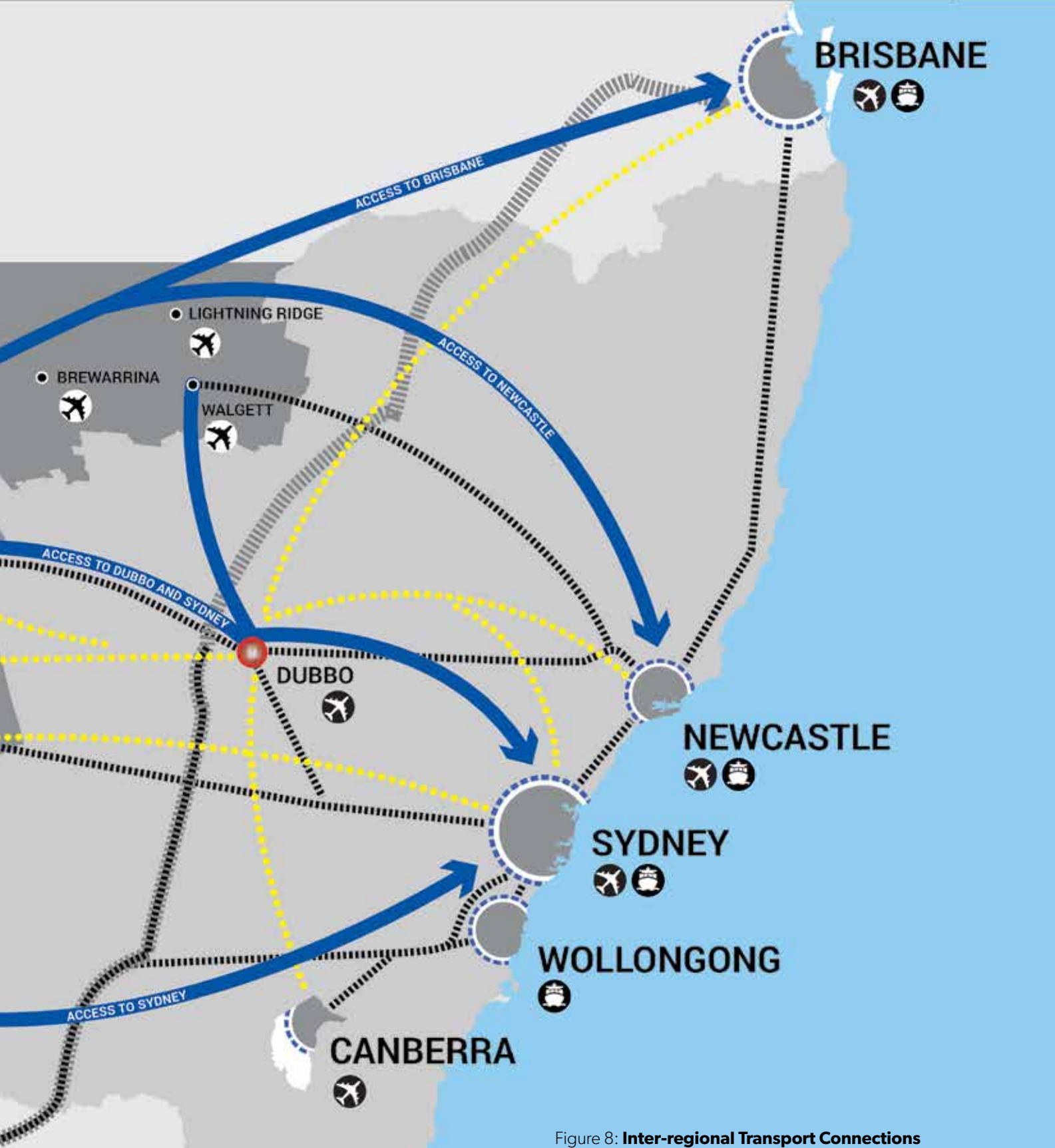
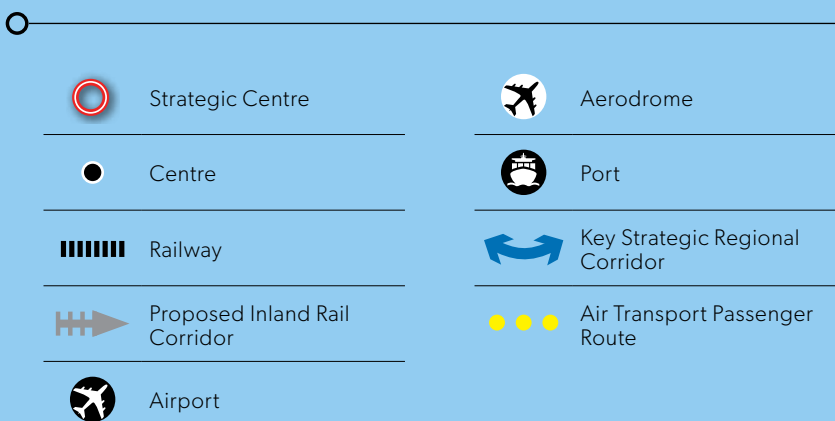


Figure 8: Inter-regional Transport Connections





The NSW Government will adopt a coordinated approach to water resource management that provides greater certainty by managing environmental, industrial and residential water requirements in consultation with all stakeholders.

Actions

- 9.1 Focus high-security water use industries in locations with appropriate water access.
- 9.2 Enhance the productive capacity of land in irrigation areas by limiting encroachment of inappropriate and incompatible land uses.
- 9.3 Consult with native title holders and prescribed body corporates as a part of determining water management policy.

Direction 10: Enhance the economic self-determination of Aboriginal communities

OCHRE is the NSW Government plan for Aboriginal Affairs, which focuses on revitalising and promoting Aboriginal languages and culture, creating opportunities, increasing the Aboriginal community's capacity and empowering Aboriginal people to exercise choice.

Many OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment) actions are outside the scope of the planning system. However, there is an opportunity to look at the landholdings of Local Aboriginal Land Councils to see how they can best be planned, managed and developed for the benefit of the local Aboriginal communities. This will give Aboriginal people greater input into planning and development, encourage Aboriginal enterprises to gain economic benefit from their land, and provide greater opportunities for their economic independence and self-determination.

There are opportunities for Aboriginal people in the Far West to develop tourism businesses as a means of increasing economic participation on country. One way this is happening in the Far West is through establishing partnerships and mentoring programs between NSW National Parks and Wildlife and Aboriginal groups to increase Aboriginal employment opportunities within national parks.

Native title and water resources

The conservation and use of water is a key issue for native title holders. Native title holders in and around the Murray-Darling Basin have expressed the need for sustainable and adequate flows for a range of community and commercial uses within their traditional country. Further consultation with Aboriginal communities is required.

Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly

The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly is a regional non-incorporated body that represents the interests of Aboriginal people in 16 communities in western NSW, many of which are in the Far West. The Assembly's membership comprises representatives from the Local Aboriginal Land Councils, community working parties and a young leaders program.²²

The Murdi Paaki Local Decision Making Accord was agreed between the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and the NSW Government in February 2015. Both parties made commitments in the following key priority areas:

- affordable and appropriate housing;
- economic development;
- education;
- early childhood services; and
- governance capacity and support.



Native title and economic opportunities

Using native title lands in economic development has been identified as a priority by government, industry and representative bodies. The Australian Government's *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2011-2018* highlighted how native title agreements "often include practical benefits, such as training and employment, title to land, business, cultural and heritage opportunities".²³

Lands subject to native title could be for agribusiness, mining, renewable energy, tourism and as employment lands. For example, there is potential for land subject to native title to be leveraged in the tourism sector, as much of the land in the Far West is both culturally and environmentally significant.

Aboriginal Affairs NSW, the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Planning and Environment will work with Local Aboriginal Land Councils to identify their landholdings and to map the level of constraint at a strategic scale for each site.

This information can be used to develop practical solutions for the potential commercial use of the land, such as for Aboriginal housing and employment. It has the potential to provide economic returns to the Local Aboriginal Land Councils that can be invested in assistance programs.

Actions

- 10.1 Work with the Local Aboriginal Land Councils to identify landholdings and map the level of constraint for each site at a strategic scale to develop options for the potential commercial use of the land.
- 10.2 Identify priority sites that can create a pipeline of potential projects that the Local Aboriginal Land Councils may wish to consider.
- 10.3 Support pilot projects and opportunities that empower Aboriginal people to develop tourism businesses as a means of increasing economic participation on country.

Barkandji Traditional Owners #8 determination

Understanding and respecting native title rights is key to unlocking the economic interests of Aboriginal people in the Far West. The Barkandji Native Title Group Aboriginal Corporation, a Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate, holds native title in trust for the Barkandji and Malyangapa people of Far Western NSW.

Significant areas of land and waters in the Far West are subject to the Barkandji Traditional Owners #8 determination, which gives Aboriginal people the opportunity to use this land for commercial purposes.



Direction 11: Support new planning and land management arrangements

Crown Lands Management – Western Division of NSW

The Western Division of NSW includes all local government areas in the Far West, the Unincorporated Area and parts of Bogan and Carrathool local government areas in adjoining regions.

Approximately 96 per cent of this land is held as Western Lands leases, administered by the Minister for Lands and Forestry under the *Western Lands Act 1901*,²⁴ and granted for purposes such as grazing, mixed farming, horticulture, and residential and business development. In early 2018, the *Western Lands Act 1901* will be repealed and the provisions to manage the leasehold land within the Western Division will be administered through the new *Crown Land Management Act 2016*.

In Lightning Ridge, historic residential mineral claims will continue to apply. *Walgett Local Environmental Plan 2013* allows the building and rebuilding of dwellings and subdivisions on existing residential mineral claims, consistent with the *Walgett Shire Growth Management Study and Strategy (2010)* and advice from The Department of Industry - Lands & Forestry and the Division of Resources and Geoscience.

There is a need to continue to improve the opal mining regulatory and enforcement system in the Lightning Ridge Opal Prospecting Areas. Management and rehabilitation of opal prospecting sites has historically been ad-hoc, resulting in major and permanent changes to the landscape that render large areas unusable for productive agriculture.

Lightning Ridge Voluntary Surrender Scheme

In May 2016, the NSW Government, through a voluntary expression of interest process, purchased four leasehold properties in the Lightning Ridge area as part of the Voluntary Surrender Scheme for Western Lands Leases.

Under the Scheme, leaseholders within Opal Prospecting Areas 1, 2 and 3 were given an opportunity to surrender lots heavily affected by opal mining in recognition of the unique circumstances surrounding dual land use activities in the area.

The majority of land surrendered has been reserved in the Lightning Ridge and Surrounding Opal Fields Management Reserve and will be managed under the new *Crown Land Management Act 2016*. Areas of surrendered land that are considered agriculturally productive will be returned to agricultural use via a publicly competitive process. The Department of Industry – Lands & Forestry will manage the classification and sale of these lands. Remaining leaseholders will continue to operate in the existing dual land use regulatory framework and will continue to coexist with opal mining activity.²⁵



Above: Flooded Paroo overflow lakes, courtesy of Office of Environment and Heritage

Right: Lightning Ridge aerial, courtesy of M P Goodwin



The Unincorporated Area

The Unincorporated Area is not governed by a local council and forms part of the Western Division. It includes the communities of Silverton, Tibooburra and Milparinka. The Unincorporated Area also has many Local Aboriginal Land Council groups, including Tibooburra, Wanaaring, Mutawintji, Wilcannia, Menindee, Broken Hill and Dareton.

There are limited planning controls on freehold land in the Unincorporated Area to guide land use and related decision-making²⁶ or any applicable formal governance and planning arrangements. The Unincorporated Area has significant heritage features such as Mutawintji National Park and rock art (engravings and paintings) and environmental assets with limited protection. Similarly, there are no local planning controls or guidance on development thresholds and the community has a limited say in land use development and management.

In the absence of a local government authority, the Western Lands Commissioner has a consent authority role for various pieces of legislation relating to the Unincorporated Area. With the commencement of the *Crown Land Management Act* in early 2018, the role of the Western Lands Commissioner will cease to exist and these responsibilities will be managed by appropriate government agencies.

Actions

- 11.1 Prepare a local plan for the Unincorporated Area.
- 11.2 Conduct a pilot project to progressively improve the mineral claims process around Lightning Ridge.
- 11.3 Continue to work with stakeholders to strengthen the regulation and compliance regime for the opal mining industry in Lightning Ridge to improve land management, including rehabilitation.

Direction 12: Enhance the productivity of employment lands

The timely supply of well-located and serviced land for new processing and manufacturing facilities will support the projected growth of agribusiness, and provide regional-scale facilities that can process agricultural produce. The largest towns are expected to have the highest take-up of commercial and industrial employment lands, primarily focused in central business districts and zoned industrial areas. Wentworth Local Government Area has a unique opportunity to capitalise on growth in Mildura. Smaller towns and villages will also need to provide land for local business and industrial activities.

Councils have indicated that there is sufficient supply of employment and industrial land to meet projected demand over the next 20 years.²⁷ In some cases, however, this land may not be adequately located, zoned or serviced. Councils will need to provide sufficient supply, protect it from incompatible land uses, and identify infrastructure requirements in planning strategies and local plans.

Councils have reported capacity issues in some parts of the electricity supply network²⁸ which is discouraging high-energy users from locating in zoned industrial lands.²⁹ There may be opportunities for standalone alternative energy generation and the use of renewable energy options, such as wind and solar generation, to meet local energy needs. Monitoring the supply and take-up of industrial land will inform planning for water, waste water, electricity, gas and telecommunications infrastructure.

Strengthening the commercial core of centres by clustering commercial activities will sustain and attract business investment and create more vibrant and sustainable main streets. New retail activity and small business growth should be in or adjacent to main streets and existing commercial centres to capitalise on existing transport and community infrastructure, enhance public spaces and strengthen the role and function of the area.

Any development proposed for land outside existing commercial centres will need to demonstrate the social and economic benefits of development at that location.

Actions

- 12.1 Encourage the consolidation of isolated, unused or under-utilised pockets of industrial zoned land to create long-term economic opportunities.
- 12.2 Create land use strategies that identify opportunities to develop industrial and employment land and reduce land use incompatibility.
- 12.3 Ensure an adequate supply of industrial land with the capacity to enable development of specialised industry clusters and encourage co-location of related industries to decrease supply chain costs.
- 12.4 Encourage the sustainable development of industrial land to maximise the use of infrastructure, including access to markets and workers, and connectivity to the existing freight network.
- 12.5 Investigate barriers to industrial land take-up in Wentworth Local Government Area to leverage opportunities from growth in Mildura.
- 12.6 Accommodate future commercial and retail activity in existing commercial centres, unless there is a demonstrated need and positive social and economic benefits for the community.
- 12.7 Require proposals for new retail developments to demonstrate how they:
- respond to retail demand;
 - respond to innovations in the retail sector;
 - maximise public transport and community infrastructure commensurate with the scale of the proposal; and
 - enhance the quality of public areas.









GOAL 2

Exceptional semi-arid rangelands traversed by the Barwon-Darling River

The Far West has some of the most exceptional natural landscapes in Australia, which have special significance for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The natural environment and landscape support economic activity and must be managed sustainably.

The Barwon–Darling River system is crucial in connecting waters from Queensland through NSW to the Murray River and the Great Artesian Basin, which provides water for the northern part of the region.

It is these landscapes that give the Far West its distinctive character and lifestyle. Improved management of environmental assets will allow them to be enjoyed in the future.

The landscapes support a diversity of species and ecosystems. Some of these ecosystems are fragile and susceptible to disturbance. Most vegetation has been substantially modified through the expansion of pastoralism and the effects of feral animals. The rangelands have degraded over time due to seasonal droughts, overgrazing and introduced species, such as rabbits and goats. Development of irrigation infrastructure has modified floodplains and lake systems.

Ecosystems and communities are subject to natural hazards that will be exacerbated by climate change, with predicted seasonal shifts in rainfall, more hot days, fewer cold days and greater fire danger. Living and working in the region is likely to become more challenging and land use and infrastructure planning must respond to these risks.

Communities have shown great capacity to adapt to what can be a harsh environment, using generations of knowledge, skills, hard work and innovation.

Menindee Lakes

The competing demands of cultural heritage, environmental values and efficient water storage make the Menindee Lakes one of the most complex water systems to manage in Australia.³⁰

The Menindee Lakes were modified during the 1950s and 1960s to provide Broken Hill with a reliable water supply and to provide water for irrigation to NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

A series of investigations by the NSW Government identified potential structural works and management changes to improve the efficiency of the Menindee Lakes and reduce evaporation losses. In 2014, the Australian and NSW Governments announced funding to undertake project planning and detailed design work to achieve significant average water savings from the lake system.³¹

Direction 13: Protect and manage environmental assets

Abundant environmental assets deliver clean air and water and improve lifestyles and wellbeing. Assets include the Darling, Barwon and Murray rivers, Menindee Lakes and the internationally significant Ramsar wetlands, including Narran Lake, Lake Pinaroo and Paroo River wetlands. Major conservation reserves include the Sturt, Paroo–Darling, Mutawintji, Kinchega and Mungo national parks.

These natural resources underpin industries and are the foundation of a significant tourism sector. Protecting environmental assets will have flow-on economic benefits to communities through nature-based tourism.

Many ecosystems are not protected within formal reserve systems and face pressure from development, a changing climate and introduced species. Protection and management mechanisms must respond to these pressures. This could include restoring perennial grasses in rangeland pastures to increase livestock production and provide environmental stability. Improved land management arrangements – such as exclusionary fencing, grazing management and coordinated pest management – would benefit the fragile rangelands.

Improved data will inform strategic and land use planning and allow consideration of the impacts of development on areas of potential high environmental value at the strategic planning stage, rather than later at the development assessment stage.

Some parts of the region are covered by carbon offsets or conservation agreements. It is important that offsets and other appropriate mechanisms are established to mitigate potential impacts of development. This includes offsets required for developments under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* or *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and those in accordance with the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Policy for Major Projects. These offset areas should be appropriately recognised in local plans to ensure future protection and to recognise the alternative land management economy that they now represent.

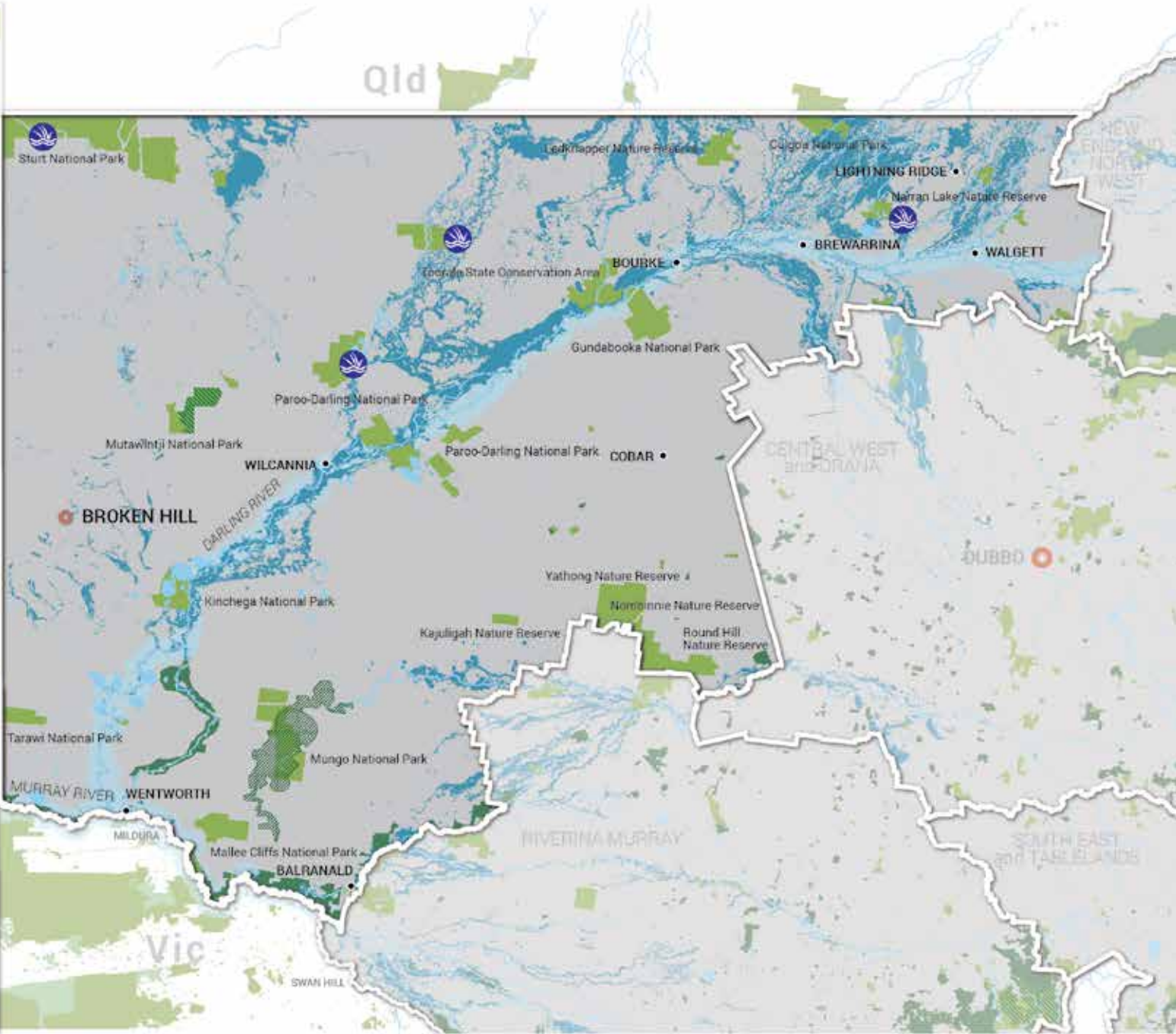
The NSW Government will introduce more consistent protection for environmental assets through regulation and conservation measures including updated mapping for potential high environmental value areas. Local plans will need to consider measures to protect these areas. In this regard, maps of groundwater-dependent ecosystems and aquatic habitats are available from the Department of Primary Industries.











Travelling Stock Reserves that primarily move livestock and provide supplementary grazing areas in times of drought, bushfire or flood can have regionally significant biodiversity value, as well as Aboriginal cultural heritage value. Strategic planning can help to carefully manage this land.

Actions

- 13.1 Map potential high environmental value areas and protect these areas through local plans and strategies.
- 13.2 Minimise potential impacts arising from development in areas of high environmental value, and consider appropriate mechanisms in local plans to identify offsets or other mitigation mechanisms for unavoidable impacts.
- 13.3 Improve the quality of, and access to, information relating to high environmental values.
- 13.4 Finalise a NSW Travelling Stock Reserve state planning framework to guide the management and development of regional Travelling Stock Reserve management plans.
- 13.5 Recognise offset areas in local plans to protect their values in perpetuity.
- 13.6 Support the recognition and protection of cultural, heritage and biodiversity values of Travelling Stock Routes within the region.

Figure 9: Environmental Assets



- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|--|
|  | Strategic Centre |  | Declared Wilderness |
|  | Centre |  | Ramsar Wetland |
|  | National Park and Reserve |  | Waterway |
|  | Forestry Area |  | Floodplain Wetland |
|  | World Heritage Area |  | Barwon-Darling River System and Murray River |



High environmental value areas

Potential high environmental value areas include:

- existing conservation areas including national parks and reserves, declared wilderness areas, flora reserves, and Crown reserves dedicated to environmental protection and conservation;
- native vegetation of high conservation value, including vegetation types that have been over-cleared or that occur within over-cleared landscapes and old-growth vegetation;
- threatened ecological communities and key habitats;
- important wetlands; and
- sites of geological significance.

Mungo National Park

The Willandra Lakes region, including Mungo National Park, has evolved over the past two million years. Mungo National Park, located 110 kilometres north-east of Wentworth, protects an area of unique international and national landscape and cultural heritage values. The area is significant to the Paakantyi, Mutthi Mutthi and Ngyiampaa Aboriginal groups.

These values are maximised and conserved under the *Mungo National Park Plan* and *Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area Plan*.

Direction 14: Manage and conserve water resources for the environment

Healthy water catchments, waterways, floodplains and riparian land underpin good water quality, biodiversity, recreation and a strong economy. Responding to water allocation and climate change impacts will be a major challenge for the region and its communities.

Sustainable use of water resources

The region's water supply is mostly delivered through its major rivers, which are susceptible to rainfall deficiencies and interruptions upstream. Surface water in some areas may not be suitable for drinking water and could place pressure on groundwater to meet community needs.

Water use needs to be carefully and equitably managed, and consider the welfare of current and future residents, environmental needs and long-term economic prosperity.

Significant volumes of water have been allocated to the environment through water sharing plans and significant water recovery programs, such as *The Living Murray* and the Commonwealth's *Murray–Darling Basin Plan* released in 2012.

The *Murray-Darling Basin Plan* sets out regional water use at environmentally sustainable levels by determining long-term average sustainable diversion limits. It also sets lower extraction limits for surface water that will be implemented through water resource plans to be completed by 2019 and long-term watering plans.³²

The Barwon-Darling and Murray-Lower Darling long-term watering plans will include objectives and targets for fish, plants, waterbirds and links between rivers and wetlands. Following community consultation, the *Barwon-Darling Long-Term Watering Plan* is scheduled to be completed by May 2019 and the *Murray-Lower Darling Long-Term Watering Plan* by July 2019.

Above: Murrumbidgee River, courtesy of Balranald Shire Council

Right: Menindee Lakes



Healthy waterways and wetlands

Water quality in waterways and aquifers is essential to sustain healthy aquatic ecosystems. The Department of Primary Industries has released the *Policy and guidelines for fish habitat conservation and management* (2013) to help manage and protect valuable aquatic resources.

Maintaining key freshwater habitats preserves fish communities, recreational fishing and the productivity of commercial fishing and aquaculture industries. Given the region's stocks of endangered and critically endangered fish species and habitats, the Department of Primary Industries has mapped key fish habitats and many waterways and lakes, such as the Darling, Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers. Together with fish community status and aquatic threatened species distribution maps, these maps will guide councils strategic planning and local plans.

While the risk to water quality from a small population and limited development pressures is low, the fragility of the landscape means water resources are even more vulnerable to individual and cumulative impacts. New development, particularly along the Murray and Darling rivers, needs to be located to avoid and reduce negative effects on aquatic habitat, waterways and wetlands.

Rural floodplain management plans, administered by the Department of Primary Industries, identify and protect water flows and connectivity to wetlands which supports the floodplain environment.

Actions

- 14.1 Implement the *Murray–Darling Basin Plan* to balance social, economic and environmental outcomes.
- 14.2 Finalise water resource plans and long-term watering plans for surface water and groundwater systems in accordance with the *Murray–Darling Basin Plan*.
- 14.3 Support the preservation of Aboriginal cultural flows in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- 14.4 Locate, design, construct and manage new developments in a way that minimises impacts on water catchments, including downstream impacts and groundwater sources.
- 14.5 Minimise the impacts of development on fish habitat, aquaculture and waterways (including watercourses, wetlands and riparian lands) and help deliver the objectives of the *Water Management Act 2000*.
- 14.6 Implement and monitor the environmental water program associated with the Darling Anabranch Pipeline to ensure the long-term health of the ecosystems associated with the Great Darling Anabranch.

Willandra Lakes Region

2016



1 of only **6**
World Heritage
Areas in NSW



Direction 15: Manage land uses along key river corridors

Any settlement along the Murray, Darling and Barwon River corridors must be managed to conserve and enhance the corridors' environmental values and enable future generations to use and benefit from these rivers.

Flows in the Barwon-Darling River system carry water from catchments in northern NSW and Queensland, including the Paroo River. The flow is highly variable and many of the waterways only reach the Barwon-Darling River system after major floods.

Development along the Darling and Barwon rivers is generally less intensive compared to the Murray River; however, water flows in these rivers and tributaries remain important for most communities in the Far West and should not be further compromised by land use activities, particularly agricultural activities, in the upper catchments.

Generally, settlement and urban land uses are directed away from riverbank areas, consistent with setbacks in local plans. However, some planning policies applying to rivers, particularly the Murray River, are outdated, irrelevant or inconsistently applied. This results in poor development outcomes, such as extensive ribbon development along the riverbank.

A waterfront management strategy for the Murray River will consider existing and potential riverfront land uses, applicable government policies, projected growth pressures, heritage values and the effect of climate change, and identify appropriate responses to these issues. This strategy should be applied, where applicable and appropriate, to the Darling-Barwon River system.

Ongoing collaboration with regional stakeholders and all levels of government will improve policy and create innovative policy responses to the complex relationships and legislative requirements of various jurisdictions, as well as mechanisms to manage often competing land uses along the river corridors.

Actions

- 15.1 Prepare and implement a waterfront management strategy for the Murray River.
- 15.2 Implement the outcomes of the Murray River waterfront management strategy in the Barwon-Darling River system, where appropriate and applicable.
- 15.3 Retain riverfront setback provisions in local plans and limit ribbon development along the Murray River to protect biodiversity, water quality and aesthetic values.
- 15.4 Consider and assess the potential impacts of new development on biodiversity along river corridors, including the Murray, Darling and Barwon rivers.

Direction 16: Increase resilience to climate change

Climate change poses significant risks for the Far West's ecosystems, agricultural productivity, community health and wellbeing, and the sustainability of rural communities. Projections indicate a changing climate will mean an increase in average temperatures, more hot days, fewer cold nights, changes in rainfall patterns and more intense bushfires.

These changes will affect the business cycles of farms and their productivity, with potential flow-on effects for the regional economy, and could increase the risk of health problems for residents, particularly older people. Ecosystems and biodiversity may also be threatened and some native species could be put at risk, particularly where introduced species compete with native flora and fauna.

To manage and respond to climate change risks, communities need access to the best climate and water level data to inform adaptive responses.



Above: Avoca Homestead,
Wentworth



The NSW Government is providing information and investing in technology, research and a policy review to help communities prepare for climate change. The Office of Environment and Heritage is identifying communities at risk from climate change and prioritising adaptation responses in NSW.

This work will help local decision-makers build their capacity to respond to climate change, as reflected in programs such as the Western Enabling Regional Adaptation project that will include the Far West.³³

Actions

- 16.1 Incorporate the findings of the Far West Enabling Regional Adaptation project to inform land use and planning decisions.
- 16.2 Adopt a whole-of-government approach to information exchange, to support climate change adaptation and preparedness.
- 16.3 Respond to climate-related risks by applying and communicating fine-scale climate information to support decision-making.

Climate Change Impacts

2014-2030



An extra
10-20
hot days (+35°C)
by 2030

Projected climate change impacts in the Far West

The Far West, like other NSW regions, is projected to be affected by climate change by experiencing:

- an increase in both minimum and maximum temperatures of up to 0.7°C by 2030 and 2.1° C by 2070, particularly in the far north-west;
- an increase in the number of hot days (above 35° C) per year, particularly in the northern parts of the region, with an extra 10–20 hot days by 2030, and around 30 by 2070;
- fewer cold nights (below 2° C) on average, with the greatest decrease in the number of cold nights likely to be in the south-east – between five and 10 fewer nights by 2030, and 10 and 20 fewer nights by 2070;
- reduced rainfall in spring, and more rainfall in autumn, with the largest reduction in rainfall within the southern areas; and
- more intense periods of fire weather in the near future, including increased risk of bushfires and bushfire weather in spring and summer.³⁴



Direction 17: Manage natural hazard risks

A more robust, strategic approach to identify and map regional hazards will help councils and other stakeholders make decisions. Climate change makes the regular review, update and sharing of data essential.

Bushfire hazards and risks are mapped by councils and certified by the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service. The extent of bushfire-prone land may increase with climate change, requiring regular monitoring and reviews of mapping.

Managing flooding is a priority for the NSW Government and councils. *The NSW Floodplain Development Manual (2005)* and the *NSW Flood Prone Land Policy* aim to reduce the impact of flooding on individual owners and occupiers of flood-prone property and private and public losses resulting from floods.

Councils manage flood risks in urban areas, including the development and implementation of floodplain risk management plans. The Office of Environment and Heritage provides financial and technical support to councils to fulfil this responsibility.

Naturally occurring asbestos with potential impacts from ground-disturbing activities occur primarily in and around Broken Hill. Naturally occurring asbestos only poses a health risk when elevated levels of fibres are released into the air, either by human activities or by natural weathering, and the fibres are inhaled. The Office of Local Government's *Model Asbestos Policy for NSW Councils (2015)* helps councils to formulate asbestos policies and promotes a consistent approach to managing asbestos.

Preparing and adapting to climate change

In 2016, the NSW Government, in partnership with the University of Technology Sydney, consulted local decision-makers, including in Wentworth and Balranald Councils, to identify and better understand regional vulnerabilities and emerging risks from a changing climate. This work is known as the Far West Enabling Regional Adaptation project.

The project identifies adaptation pathways and opportunities to minimise climate change impacts on local communities. It will help to identify responses to vulnerabilities, identify the region's ability to cope (known as its 'adaptive capacity') and inform government service delivery at a regional and subregional scale.

The Office of Environment and Heritage will continue to develop information to help councils protect and manage ecosystems, and minimise risks to local communities. The NSW Climate Change Policy Framework and the *Climate Change Fund Draft Strategic Plan 2017 to 2022* also set policy directions and prioritise investment to reduce carbon emissions and to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change.



Better weather data for regional communities

Agricultural and mining activities, and aviation and emergency services (including fire and flood management) rely on accurate and real-time weather information.

Regional Development Australia Orana has investigated the feasibility of installing a Doppler weather radar service in the Orana region, which would significantly improve the accuracy of weather data in the Far West and Central West and Orana.

Real-time weather data will help communities to better deal with natural hazards, and enables emergency services, aviation, businesses, authorities, tourists and residents to make better decisions on immediate weather conditions. Weather information can be added to existing meteorological record-keeping to give a clearer picture of rainfall trends.

The possibility of remote power sourcing through renewable energy may allow the optimum location of a weather radar to service the region from a central position.

Actions

- 17.1 Locate developments, including new urban release areas, away from areas of known high biodiversity value, high bushfire and flooding hazards, and designated waterways to reduce the community's exposure to natural hazards.
- 17.2 Implement the requirements of the *NSW Floodplain Development Manual 2005* by updating flood studies and floodplain risk management plans.
- 17.3 Incorporate the best available hazard information in local plans consistent with current flood studies, flood planning levels, modelling and floodplain risk management plans.
- 17.4 Update and share current information on environmental assets and natural hazards with councils to inform planning decisions.
- 17.5 Manage the risks of disturbance in areas affected by naturally occurring asbestos.
- 17.6 Identify a suitable location for a new Doppler weather radar to provide more accurate weather information in the Far West so that planning decisions better respond to natural hazard risks and changing climatic conditions.
- 17.7 Improve the existing water level gauge network in the Far West to enable more accurate prediction and response to regional flooding risks.



Direction 18: Respect and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage assets

The region's rich Aboriginal cultural heritage is integral to its identity and character. Aboriginal cultural heritage includes places and items significant to Aboriginal people because of their traditions, observances, lore, customs, beliefs and history. They include important burial, battle, camping, hunting and fishing sites. Aboriginal cultural heritage also relates to the connection and sense of belonging that people have with the landscape and with each other.

Ongoing data collection will identify and protect cultural heritage assets. Conserving these assets, and respecting the Aboriginal community's right to determine how these assets are identified and managed, will help preserve their significant values.

Engagement and partnerships with Aboriginal communities provide opportunities for information sharing and more effective management of cultural values and cultural heritage. Harm to Aboriginal objects and places, or areas significant to Aboriginal people, must be avoided. Any proposed management or development activity must consider the potential impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

Actions

- 18.1 Promote opportunities for unique visitor experiences associated with Aboriginal cultural heritage in national parks and reserves.
- 18.2 Protect, manage and respect Aboriginal objects and places in accordance with legislative requirements.
- 18.3 Undertake Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments to inform local land use strategies and to identify any appropriate heritage management mechanism.
- 18.4 Consult with Aboriginal people and the broader community during strategic planning to identify and protect heritage values; minimise the impact of urban growth and development; and recognise their contribution to the character and landscape of the region.
- 18.5 Continue to work with Aboriginal communities to jointly manage national parks and reserves to contribute to economic, social and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal Heritage

2016



11

places declared under
NSW National Parks and
Wildlife Act 1974

Brewarrina Aboriginal Fish Traps



estimated to be
one of the world's
oldest human-made
structures



Direction 19: Conserve and adaptively re-use European heritage assets

European heritage enriches the character of places and can generate economic value, particularly through tourism, which can in turn sustain smaller communities.

Heritage-listed buildings from the early settlement of towns include Wilcannia Hospital and Courthouse, Bourke Post Office and Courthouse and Cobar Railway Station. The entire town of Broken Hill is on the National Heritage List for its planning, design, landscaping, desert isolation and its role in Australia's mining industry and national development.³⁵

Heritage conservation enhances main streets and town centres, attracts new businesses, residents and visitors. Better promotion and targeted community education initiatives will engender community support to manage and protect heritage assets.

Broken Hill retains a cluster of significant cultural facilities that could be formed into a designated cultural precinct, with branding, tourist trails and activities. Other opportunities could leverage existing arts and cultural activities in public areas to reactivate and revitalise the CBD.

Removing barriers to the adaptive re-use of heritage items will help communities to retain physical connections to settlement history and promote the benefits of re-use, particularly in smaller communities.

Development can have a cumulative impact on historic places. Early investment to protect and preserve heritage at the strategic planning stage will provide greater certainty for stakeholders.

Actions

- 19.1 Increase heritage protection and revitalise main streets and town centres through community education and development incentives in local plans.
- 19.2 Prepare, review and update heritage studies in consultation with the community to recognise and conserve heritage assets and items, and include in appropriate local planning controls.
- 19.3 Prepare a masterplan for a designated cultural precinct in Broken Hill to leverage arts activation for tourism, visitor attraction and community benefit.
- 19.4 Consult with the Heritage Division of the Office of Environment and Heritage when assessing applications for land use changes, new developments or expanding uses within or near heritage items.
- 19.5 Map and protect heritage items (including archaeology) from land use conflicts arising from inappropriate and incompatible surrounding land uses, including from cumulative impacts of development.





GOAL 3

Strong and connected communities

The region's success is linked to the strength and character of its communities. Building community resilience and capacity requires strong networks between communities and with key centres in adjoining regions, states and beyond.

The region enjoys many competitive advantages and community assets, such as cultural and heritage attractions, its lifestyle and environment, and specialised services and products.

Over the next 20 years, changes to agricultural productivity, freight and transport connections, water trading and regulation, climate and economic conditions, as well as varying degrees of population change could reshape the communities of the Far West.

Bourke and Central Darling local government areas and the Unincorporated Area will see a slight increase in their population, with other local government areas expected to see numbers stabilise or slightly decline.³⁶ These numbers do not reflect the dynamic nature of many communities with high levels of transient workers, tourists and populations that fluctuate at different times of the year.

A changing population increases demands on health and aged care services, education and training, and public and community transport. It also presents opportunities. For example, demographic shifts can be the impetus to improve the design of seniors housing, social housing, Aboriginal community housing and accommodation for seasonal and itinerant workers.

Improving coordination and collaboration will strengthen local leadership and proactively address the challenges ahead.

Regional Accommodation Types

2011

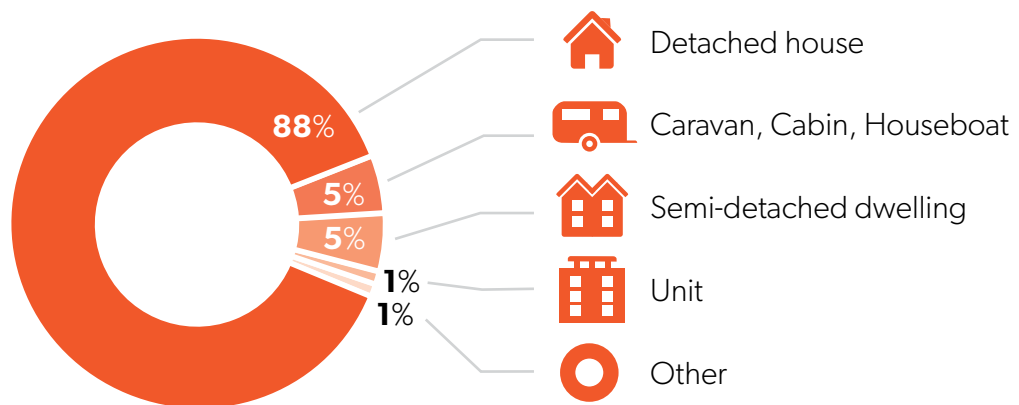
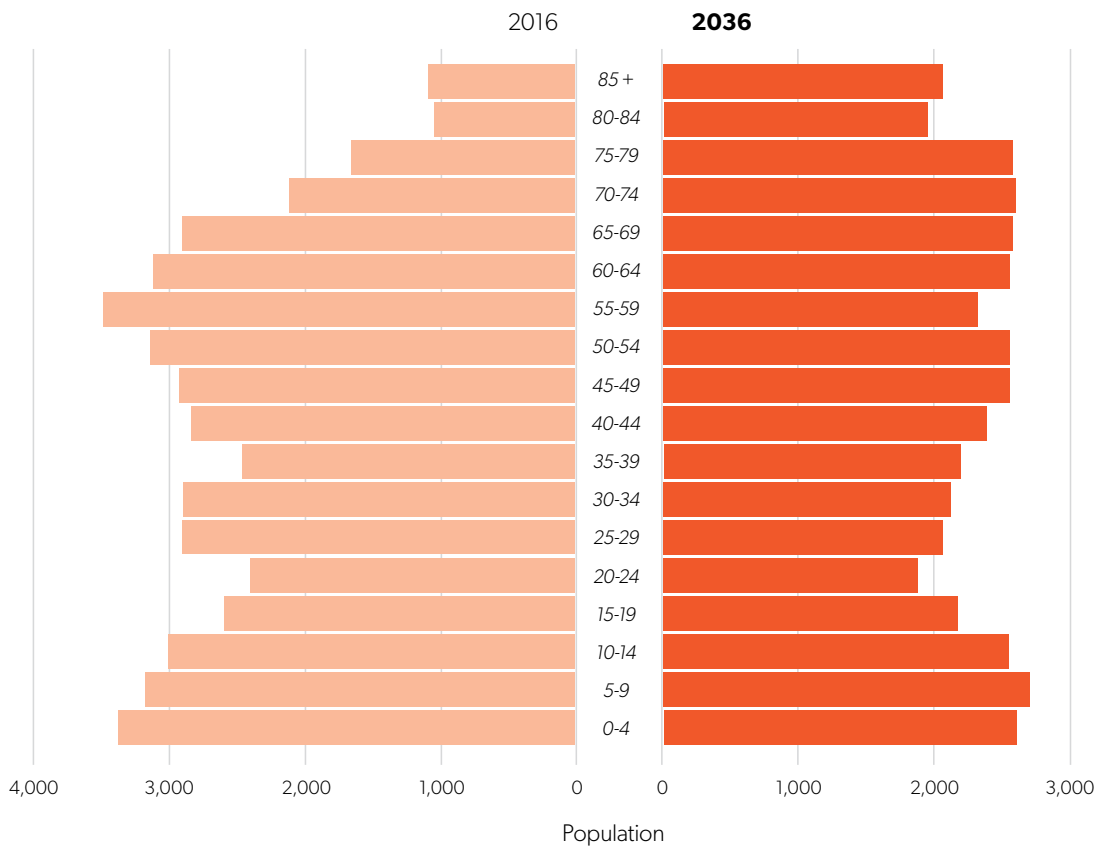


Figure 10: 2016-2036 Population pyramid



Direction 20: Manage change in settlements

Proactively planning for change will benefit communities. An ageing population requires shifts in the way health and leisure, information technology, tourism, recreation, housing, and home services and support are planned so that seniors remain healthy, productive and engaged in their communities. Similarly, younger people can be encouraged to remain in their communities with better services, education and employment opportunities.

There are many successful examples of collaborative partnerships and innovative solutions to meet the challenges of demographic change and service delivery. The work will be ongoing as communities continue to change.

The *NSW Strengthening Rural Communities Resource Kit* (2001) can enhance community capabilities and self-sufficiency. This kit will be updated to reflect challenges such as the ageing population and a decline in the younger adult population.

The NSW Government’s *NSW Drought Strategy* (2015) assists rural communities that are vulnerable to climate-related economic downturns by improving their business, reducing risks and building resilience to future droughts. The Strategy delivers a more transparent and targeted system of drought support.

Actions

- 20.1 Update the *Strengthening Rural Communities: Resource Kit* as a resource for councils to help rural communities build capacity and resilience.
- 20.2 Undertake modelling with local communities to better understand the implications and factors contributing to population change.
- 20.3 Build drought resilience in rural communities by providing targeted support to primary producers and communities to improve preparedness and decision-making.

Direction 21: Strengthen communities of interest and cross-regional relationships

The Far West has many dynamic relationships across local government and state boundaries. These relationships create broader communities of interest based on unique social and economic links and the potential for a more diverse economy.

Relationships with the Orana region

Well-established communities of interest will be leveraged between Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett, Cobar and the Orana, particularly with Dubbo as the primary service centre for many of these communities. These councils will strengthen their organisational relationships and associations with the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (OROC) and Regional Development Australia (RDA) Orana NSW to share information relating to the planning and delivery of infrastructure, policy-making and government initiatives.

Relationships with Victoria

Several settlements along the Murray neighbour twin settlements in Victoria (Wentworth and Mildura, and Balranald and Swan Hill). These communities are subject to different laws, policies and service delivery models which influences each community's role, function, lifestyle options, and competition for housing, employment and investment.

People will continue to move between settlements in these communities; for example, some people work in NSW and live in Victoria and others work in Victoria and access services in NSW. Infrastructure networks, including road and rail bridges and ferry crossings, are critical to these relationships and cross-border flows.

An ongoing relationship between the demand and supply of land and housing, particularly in Wentworth and Mildura, will continue as both centres operate within the same housing market and have similar requirements for infrastructure and servicing. Matching future investment incentives between the states could produce complementary development outcomes in cross-border settlements.

Relationships with South Australia and Queensland

Road and rail connections from Broken Hill to South Australia create a valuable cross-border relationship, borne primarily out of proximity to Adelaide. This will continue to develop and include remote settlements in the Unincorporated Area that rely on Adelaide for higher-order services. Leveraging the tourism route from Adelaide to Broken Hill, Wilcannia and Cobar will benefit many communities.

Communities near the Queensland border also connect through freight movements and the tourism route from inland Queensland to Broken Hill and Wentworth. Continued investment in the Barrier Highway linking Adelaide to Brisbane via Broken Hill will facilitate greater freight and tourist movements.

In January 2017, the NSW and Queensland Governments signed a landmark agreement to deliver better services for communities near the border. The agreement signals a clear intent for greater regional collaboration to enhance economic development, align services, share information and improve cross-border transport routes. The communities of Lightning Ridge, Walgett, Brewarrina and other smaller settlements enjoy cross-border relationships with Queensland, which will be leveraged to forge better outcomes for the region.

Councils will need to consider cross-border strategies, including land use, infrastructure and tourism, when planning for their local community.

Actions

- 21.1 Work with cross-border councils to investigate:
 - barriers to, and enablers of, economic, housing and jobs growth;
 - service delivery models; and
 - infrastructure delivery, including transport infrastructure.
- 21.2 Work with the Victorian Government and adjoining Victorian councils to develop a cross-border land and housing monitor.
- 21.3 Investigate opportunities to standardise development standards in NSW and Victoria, focusing on seniors housing and affordable housing developments.
- 21.4 Work with the Cross Border Commissioner to make travel across the NSW border easier and more convenient.
- 21.5 Implement key initiatives from the *Statement of Principles and Priorities for Cross-border Collaboration 2016-2019* to improve service delivery to Far West communities near the Queensland border.
- 21.6 Consider cross-border land use, infrastructure and tourism strategies when planning for the region.
- 21.7 Enhance the twin town role of Wentworth and Mildura through collaborative land use planning, including opportunities to increase housing in Buronga.

Aboriginal Population 2011



16%
identify as
Aboriginal

Direction 22: Collaborate and partner with Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal communities connect to their ancestral country by passing down histories and place awareness through generations. Consultation and partnerships with Aboriginal communities on future land use planning must acknowledge, respect and consider the views and interests of Aboriginal people.

Local housing strategies and local environmental plans should be prepared in consultation with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal communities can be empowered, through collaborative and inclusive planning, to identify their own issues, strategic directions and solutions. This will build trust and integrity within the community and requires mechanisms that acknowledge the diversity of communities and the resources needed to participate.

Housing for Aboriginal communities

Aboriginal communities have distinct housing requirements. Homes should be designed to meet cultural needs and climatic conditions and be planned in consultation with local Aboriginal communities.

New housing also needs to be designed to cope with temperature extremes, heavy rainfall, droughts, bushfires and flooding. Design should incorporate passive solar access, water-efficient features and thermal qualities to contribute to affordable long-term housing options, lower energy costs and a more comfortable and sustainable lifestyle. Future housing delivery programs should also seek to engage local skills and tradespeople.

Actions

- 22.1 Develop partnerships and engagement protocols with Aboriginal communities during the planning process.
- 22.2 Engage Aboriginal communities during the preparation of local housing strategies and local environmental plans.
- 22.3 Work with stakeholders, including Aboriginal housing providers and prescribed body corporates, to identify opportunities for social and affordable housing options to meet the distinct cultural needs of Aboriginal communities.

Direction 23: Improve access to local health services, aged care and seniors' housing

Health services must meet the needs of remote communities, including Aboriginal people, people with a disability, the disadvantaged, young people and families. Community-based health care and the roll out of e-health initiatives and distance education to smaller and isolated communities are examples of integrated service delivery.

Investments in existing public health facilities can drive the development of complementary health services that meet community needs and support local employment.

Ongoing and equitable access to aged care services will help smaller regional communities retain and potentially grow their population and enable people to stay in their homes as they age.

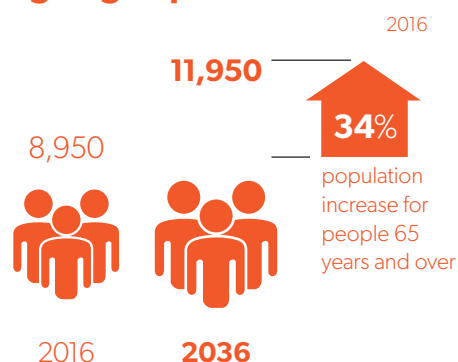
Older residents need homes that allow them to retain a connection to their community and transition into higher-needs care if necessary. Tailored seniors housing close to town centres will make best use of existing infrastructure and services and allow residents to downsize to smaller, more manageable homes close to the services they require.

State planning policies streamline approval processes for seniors housing. The incentives in these policies need to be reviewed to better suit regional circumstances. Often, they do not deliver benefits due to higher development costs and lower demand, as facilities need to cater for smaller populations compared to metropolitan areas.

Actions

- 23.1 Where practical, promote opportunities to establish health precincts around hospitals and encourage opportunities for development of complementary services.
- 23.2 Identify and plan for multipurpose, flexible and adaptable health infrastructure that responds to changing and emerging community needs.
- 23.3 Improve access to health facilities for cross-border communities through better transport connections.
- 23.4 Minimise the encroachment of inappropriate and incompatible land uses near existing and proposed health facilities.
- 23.5 Remove planning barriers to provide a range of low-care and independent seniors accommodation options.
- 23.6 Review the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability) 2004* to make it more applicable for developers in regional areas.
- 23.7 Provide opportunities for retirement villages, nursing homes and similar housing for seniors in local land use strategies.
- 23.8 Locate new housing for seniors close to existing services and facilities, and on land free from hazards, including floods and bushfires.
- 23.9 Promote ageing in place by adopting relevant components of Livable Housing Australia's *Livable Housing Design Guidelines* in development controls for housing, where possible.

Ageing Population Forecast





Direction 24: Enhance access to education and training

As the economy and population profile changes, so too will demand for skilled workers, particularly in the health, education, manufacturing, mining and renewable energy sectors.

The semi-arid climate has traditionally fostered an agricultural and mining economy; however, emerging industries, such as cultural tourism, provide more diverse employment opportunities, particularly for Aboriginal communities.

With the support of the NSW Government, local training can build the skills necessary to improve employment options and increase opportunities for social participation.

New economic developments, such as the Bourke abattoir, can offer training for local people. Training must align with regional employment opportunities. Education and training providers may partner with government and private industry to tailor training programs, including vocational training and retraining opportunities. For example, the Broken Hill Royal Flying Doctor Service base offers training for medical and health science students in partnership with the University of Sydney, and provides essential remote health services. Expanding online access to tertiary and distance education will be vital.

Other opportunities include harnessing transferable skills across different industries, and providing greater incentives to attract and retain skilled workers, including housing, travel and holiday leave.

Attracting and retaining skilled professionals, such as general practitioners, tradespeople and training providers is difficult, due to the long distances and often limited and expensive transport options. Remote communities obtain specialised services from Broken Hill or Dubbo, with some communities accessing services from Mildura and Adelaide. Most primary health care services are provided on a visiting basis to local service centres only.

Limited internet connectivity is a major constraint to distance education. The National Broadband Network is a priority for education, health and emergency services, agribusiness, mining and tourism.

The NSW Department of Education is reviewing its approach to asset and network planning through a strategic plan to 2036 to identify schooling needs and improve education delivery. Managing declining enrolments while providing infrastructure to improve education delivery is a challenge. Resource pooling and cost-sharing between schools and councils will be explored to make the best use of community assets.

Actions

- 24.1 Remove barriers to the access and expansion of the education and training sector.
- 24.2 Work with councils, industry, research institutes, and education and training providers to align skill shortages with tailored regional training programs.
- 24.3 Facilitate joint venture opportunities for shared community/school facilities on school sites.

Regional Internet Connection

2011



Households have **no** internet access



Direction 25: Improve public and community transport services

Public and community transport services connect people to jobs, housing and services including health care and education, both within the region and with centres in adjoining regions and states. These services are an essential and affordable mode of transport for remote communities, offering regular connections to vital services for older people. The remote White Cliffs community in the Central Darling local government area, for example, needs greater access to community transport to support its ageing population. This is similar for many remote Far West communities.

Affordable rail and bus transport is particularly important to disabled and ageing people and low income earners. Transport for NSW will work with bus operators to improve bus services and provide the necessary transport services between regional communities. Transport for NSW will also work on programs that serve the unique needs of each town through other transport initiatives to ensure that realistic travel options exist.³⁷

The *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* noted that the western region has the highest per capita use of community transport in regional NSW. Community transport providers need to identify and plan for future community transport needs.

Actions

- 25.1 Investigate opportunities to improve bus operations in strategic centres and local service centres and their connections with regional communities.
- 25.2 Work with local transport operators and community transport providers to investigate delivery models for flexible and reliable transport, suited to the distinct needs of each community.
- 25.3 Prepare strategies to better link the region's towns and villages to strategic centres and other major centres.

Future Transport Strategy

The development of Transport for NSW's *Future Transport Strategy* will involve comprehensive engagement with the community and industry across NSW.

The first stage of this engagement will focus on rural and regional NSW and include a combination of activities with local entities and across coastal, inland and remote locations covering regional cities, centres and towns. This engagement is taking place during 2017.

Direction 26: Manage and conserve water resources for communities

Reliable and clean water supplies are critical to maintain liveability, attract new residents and support economic development. Securing adequate and reliable water supply for communities is a major issue for the Far West.

Future water supply deficiencies have been identified and need to be progressively addressed to ensure a sustainable and liveable future. Issues vary across the region; for example, in Bourke, issues with town water supply stem from prolonged drought conditions, including ongoing lack of upstream flows into the weir pool and algal blooms in dry, hot conditions. Funding to connect Walken Bore to North Bourke and Bourke's town water supply systems has been granted, which will help to alleviate this supply problem.³⁸

Local water supply and sewerage services are provided by councils as well as a NSW Government-owned corporation in Broken Hill. The costs associated with servicing water infrastructure can be a major barrier to maintaining and upgrading water supply treatment facilities. For example, securing funding to replace and upgrade the water reticulation system in Cobar will be critical to improving future water quality. Even with investment in water security infrastructure, innovative and adaptive measures will still be needed, given the potential effects of climate change.

Water security and native title

Water is not only a social and environmental issue for Aboriginal communities, but is reflected in their native title rights. Native title holders have an obligation under their traditional laws and customs to protect the environmental and cultural integrity of water sources within their country.

Water security initiatives need to respect the native title rights of Aboriginal communities by ensuring water quantity is sufficient to maintain cultural flows and other uses. Establishing partnerships and sharing the cost of capital between communities by collaborating with the prescribed body corporates of native title holders, local industries and councils may overcome barriers to water security.

Actions

- 26.1 Protect the Broken Hill pipeline corridor to deliver a secure long-term water supply to Broken Hill and its surrounding communities.
- 26.2 Adopt an integrated approach to water cycle management across the region.
- 26.3 Investigate ongoing water supply issues and collaborate with stakeholders to deliver long-term water security for residents and industries, including funding works from the Water Security for Regions program.
- 26.4 Investigate supplementary water sources for town water supply during periods of drought.

Far West water security projects

Broken Hill pipeline

In 2016, the NSW Government appointed WaterNSW to build, own and operate a 270-kilometre pipeline from the Murray River to Broken Hill. Scheduled for completion by 2018,³⁹ it is part of a \$500 million strategy to ensure that Broken Hill and nearby communities have a secure, long-term supply of water. The project will contribute to water recovery targets under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan, and will help irrigation industries across the State.

Albert Priest Channel, Cobar

Cobar's water supply is provided via the ageing and unreliable Albert Priest Channel and delivery system, which relies primarily on the Macquarie River. Funding from Restart NSW has been secured for a feasibility assessment of piping the Albert Priest Channel.⁴⁰

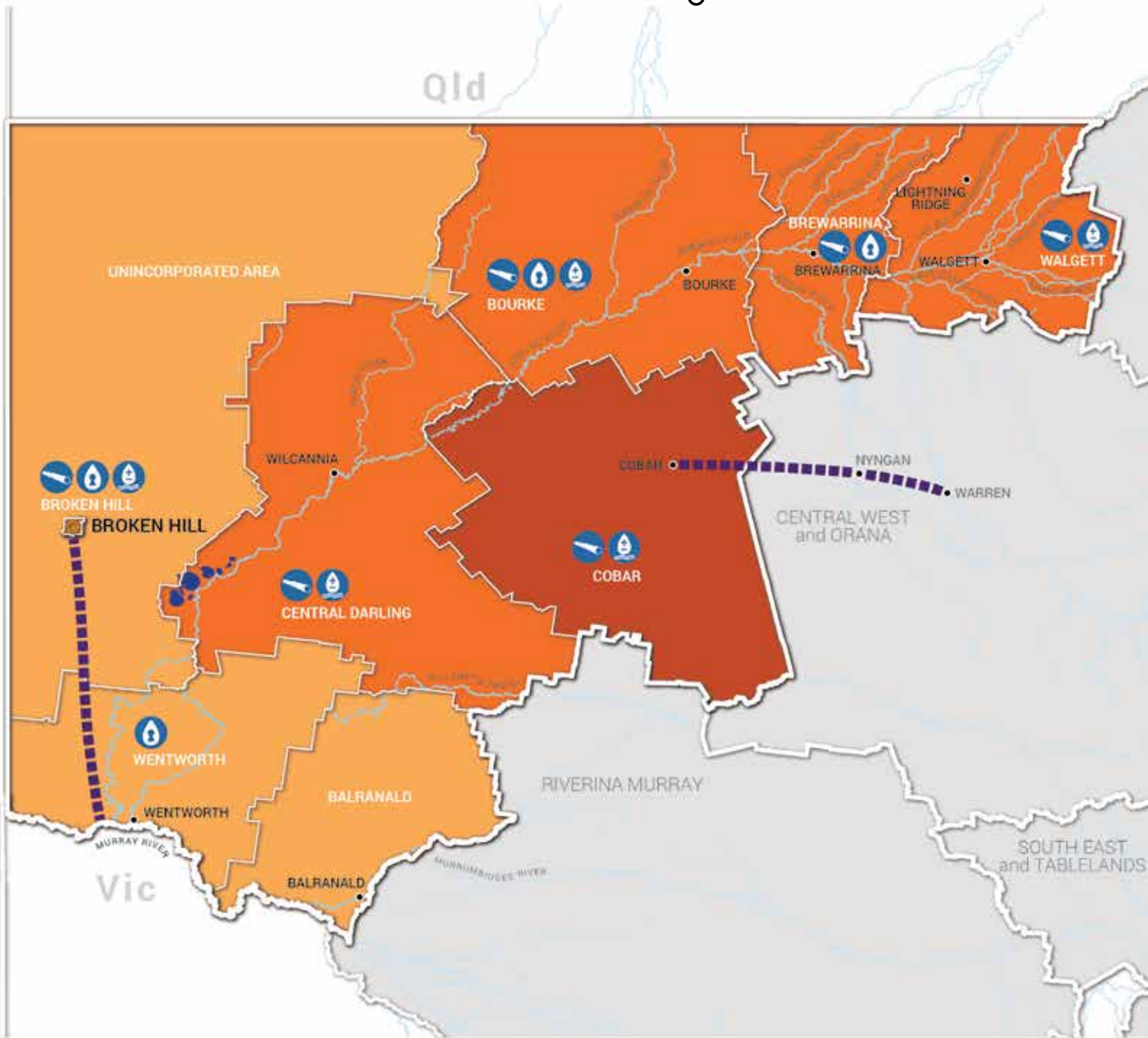
Cobar to Nyngan pipeline replacement

The replacement of 130 kilometres of existing water pipe from Nyngan to Cobar has to date received funding of \$17.1 million, funded partly from \$10 million of Resources for Regions program and \$7.1 million contributed by Cobar Water Board. Funding is still required to replace 100 kilometres of remaining pipeline.

Bogan water storages, Nyngan

\$10 million has been allocated to construct water storages on the Bogan River at Nyngan as part of the water security project to secure Cobar's water supply.

Figure 11: **Urban Water Security**



Forecast urban water supply deficiency 2036

- 0 to 20%
- 21 to 50%
- 51 to 98%

Source: *State Infrastructure Strategy 2014*

- Strategic Centre
- Centre
- Proposed Water Security Infrastructure Projects
- Water Storage
- Waterway
- Potential Water Quality Project
- Potential Water Security Project
- Potential Sewage Treatment Project
- Local Government Area

Direction 27: Provide greater housing choice

Increased housing choice with diverse tenure, design and configuration will improve affordability, help meet the needs of an ageing population and support the trend for smaller household size.

Local housing strategies identify housing needs, plan for a range of housing types and identify the infrastructure needed to support local communities. The strategies need to be flexible and responsive to shifts in demand and supply and deal with uneven rates of development or unexpected population growth. Infrastructure must be planned for and provided prior to the construction of new housing.

Even in areas with stable populations, demand is still likely for new dwellings, as the number of people living in each household will decrease. Where it is no longer viable to maintain existing dwellings, there is also likely to be demand for new dwellings. This presents difficulties, in that some centres will have to access building and construction tradespeople from neighbouring areas.

Housing for seasonal and itinerant workers

In mining communities such as Broken Hill and Cobar, demand for housing fluctuates, with high demand during mining construction phases. These workers need a range of accommodation options. Any undersupply increases rents, affects affordability and may cause health and safety issues from overcrowding and makeshift housing. It can also put pressure on tourism and visitor accommodation, such as motels, caravan parks and camping grounds.

During harvest periods, particularly in irrigation communities, seasonal demand associated with viticulture, cotton and stone fruit industries increases demand for accommodation. In isolated areas, temporary worker accommodation is often provided in purpose-built accommodation camps, which may conflict with existing uses and increase pressure on limited services and amenities.⁴¹

Transient populations put pressure on housing and accommodation supply. Peaks in housing demand may be satisfied through short-term workers accommodation in temporary housing villages.

Further guidance is required to plan for temporary mining accommodation. The size and scale of these facilities should be decided with local communities and consider social integration, land use conflicts and impacts on community facilities.

Actions

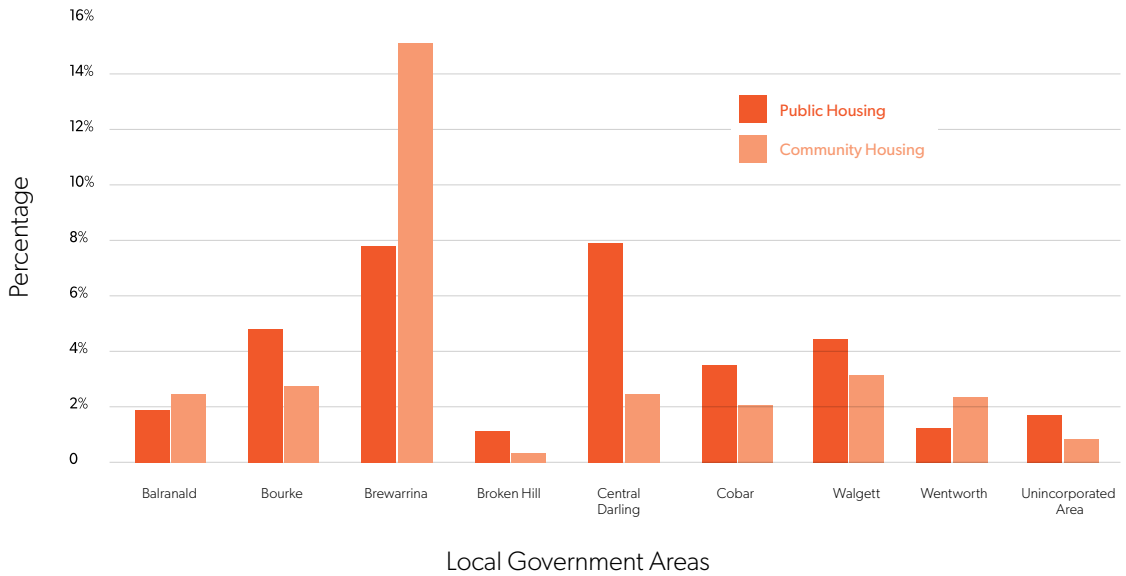
- 27.1 Review planning controls in existing town centres to increase housing options in centres and locations close to services and jobs.
- 27.2 Align infrastructure planning with land release areas to support new developments with adequate infrastructure.
- 27.3 Locate multi-dwelling housing developments close to town centres and villages to capitalise on existing infrastructure and to provide a greater choice of housing close to services and amenities.
- 27.4 Produce guidelines to help councils plan for and manage seasonal and itinerant worker accommodation.
- 27.5 Prepare planning guidelines for the short-term accommodation of mining employees to support workforce needs during mining construction, operation or shutdown.

Temporary housing villages

Temporary housing provides short-term accommodation for construction and mining employees during peak periods. Remote temporary housing villages should avoid duplicating services and facilities in existing townships.

In some circumstances, locating temporary populations on the outskirts of established centres may be preferable to enable temporary residents to use and contribute positively to facilities that serve the entire community, while better integrating temporary workers into these communities.

Figure 12: **Public and Community Housing by Local Government Area (2011)**



Direction 28: Deliver greater opportunities for affordable housing

Providing housing that meets the needs of residents on a range of incomes can address housing affordability and social housing issues and help reduce social disadvantage. Housing needs to be affordable to enable many of the region’s low-income households to enter the housing market.

The NSW Government can help councils to improve the availability of affordable housing by:

- expanding the range of model provisions that promote or require the inclusion of affordable housing in developments. For instance, councils may consider floor space bonuses to deliver a percentage of affordable housing in a development;
- providing additional development incentives and reduced contributions, or using other mechanisms under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Affordable Rental Housing) 2009* that may boost construction of secondary dwellings as alternative affordable housing; and
- promoting caravan parks and manufactured housing estates on unconstrained land in existing settlements and new land release areas. Councils can identify appropriate sites that meet the needs of residents and tourists through their local planning strategies.

There is a significant amount of public and community housing in the region. Overcrowding is an issue in some communities, including in Brewarrina where close to 10 per cent of homes were occupied by six or more people in 2011. Overcrowding can lead to social problems and poor health, education and community wellbeing.

The NSW Government’s 10-year strategy for social housing, *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW* (2016) will see the NSW Department of Family and Community Services and the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office working with community housing providers to improve access to affordable housing.⁴²

Actions

- 28.1 Promote incentives to encourage greater housing affordability, including a greater mix of housing in new release areas.
- 28.2 Prepare planning guidelines for local affordable housing needs in local housing strategies.
- 28.3 Promote a range of housing types and affordable housing options in local housing strategies.



Direction 29: Manage rural residential development

Some people are looking for a semi-rural lifestyle, and a larger block of land than is generally available in urban areas. Demand for rural residential living is higher in areas close to waterways, such as the Murray and Darling rivers.

Rural residential development can conflict with agricultural, industrial or resource lands. It may also increase pressure for new services outside existing settlements, with costs borne by councils and the broader community. Managing this development and its cumulative impacts will be essential as the regional economy diversifies and development pressures increase.

A consistent planning approach is required to identify suitable locations for new rural residential development to avoid fragmentation of productive agricultural land and protect high environmental value assets, cultural and heritage assets, or areas with important rural landscape values. Rural residential development should not increase pressure on infrastructure and services and should be located on land free from natural hazards.

Actions

- 29.1 Provide opportunities for rural residential development only where it has been identified in a local strategy prepared by council and approved by the Department of Planning and Environment.
- 29.2 Ensure the design of rural residential areas respects the semi-rural character of the area.
- 29.3 Locate rural residential areas:
 - close to existing urban settlements to maximise the efficient use of existing infrastructure and services, including roads, water, sewer and waste services, and social and community infrastructure;
 - to avoid and minimise the potential for land use conflicts with productive, zoned agricultural land and natural resources; and
 - to avoid areas of high environmental, cultural and heritage significance, important agricultural land or areas affected by natural hazards.
- 29.4 Manage land use conflict that can result from cumulative impacts of successive rural residential development decisions.



Direction 30: Create healthy built environments

Good urban design can create safe, healthy and socially inclusive places that meet the different needs of children, young people, families, singles, people with a disability and seniors.

When planning and redeveloping town centres, decision-makers need to consider how design and the environment influence the way people walk within the centre, landscaping requirements and infrastructure for public places. New and existing development should provide opportunities for walking and cycling, where appropriate.

Councils need to promote water sensitive urban design techniques that will improve water use planning, supply and security. Wastewater can be re-used on parks, gardens and reserves, or can supplement agricultural uses. The Far West can lead the application of water sensitive design techniques.

Urban design guidelines are commonly developed with a metropolitan focus and do not apply to regional and rural environments. Regional urban design guidelines will assist councils as they prepare environmental planning instruments for new development to revitalise town centres and to respond to climate and water security challenges.

Actions

- 30.1 Enhance the quality of neighbourhoods by providing and promoting accessible, adaptable and well-connected open spaces that support physical activity, including recreational walking and cycling networks in the design of new communities.
- 30.2 Develop regional urban design guidelines for planning, designing and developing healthy built environments in the Far West's unique climate.
- 30.3 Incorporate water and climate sensitive urban design in new developments and when revitalising town centres.
- 30.4 Design new housing developments to reflect the local and distinct built form, heritage and character.





Local Government Narratives

Local Government Narratives have been prepared for the region's eastern, western and southern areas. The narratives identify:

- priorities that will guide implementation;
- population, housing and employment information; and
- strategic aspirations and opportunities for centres and economic opportunities.

The NSW Government will assist councils to translate these priorities into local plans.

The region's east – the gateway to outback NSW

The eastern area comprises Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar and Walgett local government areas and is known as the gateway to outback NSW. It is recognised for its productive and diverse agriculture and mining sectors.

The eastern area is home to approximately 34 per cent of the Far West population. The local centres of Cobar, Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett and Lightning Ridge provide business, office, retail, health, education, arts, culture, recreation and entertainment uses and support smaller settlements across the area. The region's east also has a strong cross-regional relationship with the Orana, and residents access higher-order health, education, retail, commercial and transport services in Dubbo.

The area is traversed by major transport and freight links, including the Kamilaroi, Mitchell, Castlereagh, Gwydir and Barrier highways and Kidman Way. This network provides links to Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane. Cobar also provides a regular airline passenger service to Dubbo, with connecting flights to Sydney.

The area's economy is underpinned by mining and agriculture, with significant mineral deposits in Cobar (including gold, copper, lead and zinc), opal mining in Lightning Ridge, and diverse irrigated and broadacre cropping and grazing. Local centres provide ancillary service industries to support agriculture and mining.

Diverse and unique tourist attractions include the heritage-listed Brewarrina Aboriginal Fish Traps, Old Barwon Bridge, Culgoa National Park, Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Back O' Bourke Exhibition Centre and the Gundabooka National Park. Mining tourism in Lightning Ridge and Cobar are drawcards for visitors, as are outback tourist routes and boat trips, including the Paddle Vessel Jandra that travels the Darling River.

Diverse landscapes and environmental features, from the fertile black soil plains that support productive agriculture around Walgett to semi-arid rangelands and desert areas, are supported by major river systems such as the Macquarie, Castlereagh, Barwon and Darling rivers and associated floodplain areas and tributaries.

The traditional owners of this land are the Wiradjuri, Wailwan, Kamilaroi, Muruwari, Ngemba, Barranbinja, Wongaibon, Gunu and Barundji people,⁴³ who maintain a proud connection to country, as celebrated through a variety of cultural heritage sites and experiences.

Priorities:

- Grow and diversify agribusiness.
- Establish value-added manufacturing industries.
- Capture economic benefits from mining.
- Promote unique tourism opportunities to enhance the Far West as a quality tourism destination.
- Sustainably manage water resources, including the Macquarie, Castlereagh, Barwon and Darling rivers.
- Plan for and build community resilience to population and demographic change.
- Resolve skilled worker shortages.
- Build resilience to climate change and natural hazards.

- Capitalise on key freight corridors, including the Kamilaroi, Mitchell, Castlereagh, Cobb, Gwydir and Barrier highways and Kidman Way.

Centres and employment

- Local centres: Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Walgett and Lightning Ridge.
- Main economic drivers: Agribusiness, value-added manufacturing, mining and tourism.

Priorities:

- Support industrial land development in local centres for ancillary service industries to service the agricultural and mining sectors, and protect industrial areas from incompatible land uses.
- Reinforce existing centres as primary locations for retail and commercial activities, and revitalise main street precincts.
- Increase housing choice, including seniors housing, aged care, and social and affordable housing.
- Appropriately locate future rural residential development.
- Support the continued provision of health and education services.
- Improve public and community transport services to connect smaller towns and villages to local centres, and to connect the area to Dubbo.
- Expand tourism opportunities and enhance visitor experiences.
- Improve telecommunications to support business activities and service delivery such as e-health and education services.

Economic opportunities

Priorities:

- Establish kangaroo and goat meat processing facilities.

- Promote value-added manufacturing opportunities.
- Support existing mining operations and establish new mining operations in areas of mineral potential.
- Develop renewable energy industries, including solar, wind and bio-energy generation.
- Support the ongoing development of the Lightning Ridge Opal Centre.
- Expand tourism opportunities and experiences to increase overnight visitation.
- Establish new businesses linked to improvements in telecommunication services.
- Establish freight and logistics facilities to support mining, agribusiness and value-added manufacturing.

The region's west – the vast outback NSW

The western area comprises the Broken Hill and Central Darling local government areas and the Unincorporated Area. It is known for its isolation, mining heritage and as the birthplace of the world's largest mining company, BHP Billiton.

The area is home to approximately 46 per cent of the Far West population. Of this, 85 per cent of people live in Broken Hill, the largest centre in the Far West. Broken Hill and Wilcannia provide business, office and retail services, and complementary activities such as arts, culture, recreation and entertainment to support the social needs of the community.

Strong cross-border relationships with Adelaide and Mildura give residents access higher-order health, education, retail, commercial and transport services.

The Unincorporated Area covers around 40 per cent of the Far West and surrounds, but does not include Broken Hill. It comprises predominantly pastoral leaseholdings and includes small, dispersed settlements such as Silverton, Tibooburra and Milparinka.

Major transport and freight links include the Barrier, Silver City and Cobb highways and the Sydney to Adelaide rail route. These link to Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Passenger flights from Broken Hill to Dubbo and Mildura connect to Sydney and regular flights are available to Adelaide. Broken Hill is the headquarters of the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

The area's economy is underpinned by mining, agriculture, tourism and renewable energy, with significant mineral deposits around Broken Hill (including iron ore, zinc, lead, cobalt and mineral sands), as well as meat and wool production. Broken Hill and Wilcannia, and to a lesser extent Menindee, Ivanhoe and White Cliffs, provide ancillary service industries to support agriculture and mining.

Diverse and unique tourist attractions include the National Heritage-listed Broken Hill, historic mining and European heritage sites, Aboriginal heritage sites, Mutawintji and Kinchega national parks, Menindee Lakes, art and film production sites at Silverton, and outback tourist routes to Cameron Corner and the Darling River Run. Arts and culture-related tourism is an emerging opportunity.

The area's emerging renewable energy sector takes advantage of some of the highest levels of solar radiation in NSW and includes a 53 MW solar farm south-west of Broken Hill.

Broken Hill has experienced water security issues over many years, and a 270-kilometre pipeline from the Murray River to Broken Hill will secure long-term water supplies and create opportunities for development and new industries.

The area contains diverse landscapes and environmental features, arid and semi-arid desert areas, inland freshwater lake systems at Menindee, and the Darling River and its associated floodplains and tributaries.

The traditional owners of this land are the Barundji, Karenggapa, Wadilgali, Malyangaba, Bandjigalia, Wandjiwalgu, Wiljali, Danggali, Barkindji, Barindji and Wongaibon people,⁴⁴ who celebrate their connection to country through cultural heritage sites and experiences.

Priorities:

- Support Broken Hill as a service centre for the western area of the Far West.
- Capture economic benefits from mining.
- Grow renewable energy industries.
- Grow and diversify agribusiness and irrigated agricultural areas.
- Establish value-added manufacturing industries.
- Develop a regional tourism trail between Balranald, Wentworth, Mallee Cliffs, Mungo and the Yanga floodplains; between White Cliffs, Menindee, Tibooburra and Silverton; and a Far West Sculpture Trail encompassing sites at Broken Hill, Mutawintji, White Cliffs and Wilcannia.
- Respect, protect and conserve European and Aboriginal cultural heritage assets
- Sustainably manage water resources, including the Darling River and Menindee Lakes.
- Build community resilience to population and demographic change.
- Resolve skilled worker shortages by addressing training options, employability skills and the delivery of education options.
- Build resilience to climate change and natural hazards.
- Capitalise on key freight corridors, including the Barrier, Silver City and Cobb highways and the Sydney to Adelaide rail route.

Centres and employment

- Strategic centre: Broken Hill.
- Local centres: Wilcannia, Menindee and Ivanhoe, with Cobar, in the region's east, servicing the western area.
- Main economic drivers: Mining, agriculture, tourism and renewable energy.

Priorities:

- Support industrial land development and protect industrial areas from incompatible land uses.
- Reinforce existing centres and commercial precincts as the primary locations for retail and commercial activities, and revitalise main street precincts.
- Expand tourism and enhance visitor experiences.
- Increase housing choice, including seniors housing, aged care, and social and affordable housing.
- Appropriately locate future rural residential development.
- Support the continued provision of health and education services.
- Improve public and community transport services to connect smaller towns and villages to local centres, and to connect the people to Adelaide and Mildura to access higher-order services.
- Improve telecommunications to support business activities and service delivery such as e-health and education services.

Economic opportunities

Priorities:

- Establish new mining operations in areas of mineral potential.
- Develop renewable energy industries, including solar.

- Expand tourism opportunities and experiences.
- Establish new businesses linked to improvements in telecommunication services.
- Establish new industries following improvements to water security from the Murray River to Broken Hill.

The region's south – the meeting point of the Murray and Darling rivers

The southern area comprises the Balranald and Wentworth local government areas. The area is known for its diverse agriculture, and connections to the Murray River and Victoria.

The southern area is home to approximately 19 per cent of the Far West population. Wentworth is the largest local centre and along with Balranald it provides business, office and retail services, with arts, culture, recreation and entertainment activities to support smaller settlements. The area also has strong cross-border relationships with Victoria, and people access higher-order health, education, retail, commercial and transport services in Mildura.

Major transport and freight links include the Silver City and Sturt highways, that connect to Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Regular passenger air services to Sydney, Melbourne, Broken Hill and Adelaide are available from Mildura.

The growing and diverse economic base is underpinned by agriculture, mining and tourism. The area supports irrigated agriculture linked to the Murray and Darling rivers, including horticultural and viticultural industries such as grapes, citrus and nuts, as well as broadacre cropping, meat and wool production, and organic farming. There is an emerging mineral sands mining industry. Products are exported via freight links to ports in Victoria and South Australia.

Tourism attractions include outback tourist routes, Murray and Darling River experiences, food and wine experiences, Mungo National Park – the site of the archaeological remains of Mungo Lady and Mungo Man, the world's oldest human cremations – and other Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and experiences.

Diverse landscapes and environmental features range from arid and semi-arid rangelands and productive areas of irrigated agriculture, to the Murray and Darling rivers and associated floodplain areas and tributaries.

The traditional owners of this land, the Latje Latje, Dadi Dadi, Madi Madi, Yitha Yitha, Kureinji, Barkindji, Barindji and Dangali people,⁴⁵ maintain a strong connection to country through cultural heritage sites and experiences.

Priorities:

- Capture economic benefits from mining.
 - Grow renewable energy industries.
 - Grow and diversify of agribusiness.
 - Establish value-added manufacturing industries.
 - Promote tourism opportunities.
 - Sustainably manage water resources, including the Murray and Darling rivers.
 - Build community resilience to population and demographic change.
 - Resolve skilled worker shortages.
 - Build resilience to climate change and natural hazards.
 - Foster strong cross-border networks and connections with neighbouring Victorian settlements, including Mildura.
 - Capitalise on key freight corridors, including the Silver City and Sturt highways.
- Reinforce existing centres and commercial precincts as primary locations for retail and commercial activities, and revitalise main street precincts.
 - Expand tourism activities and enhance visitor experiences.
 - Increase housing choice, including seniors housing, aged care, and social and affordable housing.
 - Appropriately locate future rural residential development.
 - Support the continued provision of health and education services.
 - Improve public and community transport services to connect smaller towns and villages to local centres, and connect the area to Mildura, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.
 - Improve telecommunications to support business activities and service delivery such as e-health and education services.

Centres and employment

- Local centres: Wentworth and Balranald.
- Main economic drivers: Agriculture, mining and tourism.

Priorities:

- Support industrial land development and protect industrial areas from incompatible land uses.

Economic opportunities

Priorities:

- Establish new mining operations in areas of mineral potential.
- Diversify agribusiness and capitalise on value-added manufacturing opportunities.
- Develop renewable energy industries, including solar.
- Expand tourism opportunities and experiences.
- Establish new businesses linked to improvements in telecommunication services.
- Support the growth of irrigated agriculture.

Glossary



Affordable housing

Housing for very low and low-income households where rent or mortgage payments are above 30 per cent of gross household income or the household is eligible to occupy rental accommodation under the National Rental Affordability Scheme.

Agribusiness

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

Agricultural supply chain

Comprises input supply (seed, fertilizers, energy), production, storage, processing, transport, marketing and distribution of agricultural produce.

Biodiversity

'Biodiversity' or 'biological diversity' describes the variety of life on Earth – the life forms, the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems they form. It is usually considered at three levels: genetic, species and ecosystem diversity.

Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Lands

Lands with high-quality soil and water resources, capable of sustaining high levels of productivity.

Biosecurity

Biosecurity is the term used to apply to measures that are taken to protect the economy, environment and community from the negative impacts of pests, diseases and weeds.

Central business district

The main cluster of business found within a town or city.

Employment lands

Land zoned for industrial or similar purposes in planning instruments. These are generally lower-density employment areas containing concentrations of businesses involved in manufacturing; transport and warehousing; service and repair trades and industries; integrated enterprises with a mix of administration, production, warehousing, research and development; and urban services and utilities.

Enabling infrastructure

Essential services that are required for a development to occur, such as water supply, energy supply, wastewater systems, stormwater drainage and vehicular access.

Far West region

The local government areas of Balranald, Brewarrina, Bourke, Broken Hill, Central Darling, Cobar, Walgett, Wentworth and the Unincorporated Area.

Gross domestic product (GDP)

A measure of the size of a country's economy and productivity. GDP is defined as the market value of all final goods and services produced in a country within a given period of time.

Gross regional product (GRP)

A measure of the size of a region's economy and productivity. Similar to gross domestic product, GRP is defined as the market value of all final goods and services produced in a region within a given period of time.

Household size

The average number of people living in a dwelling in a state, region or locality.

Housing affordability

The term refers broadly to a person's ability to pay for their housing.

Housing choice

The types of housing available to meet the current or future needs of the community. Housing diversity is driven by factors such as the make-up of the population, affordability and lifestyle trends.

Housing density

One of several measures that describe how intensively an urban area is developed. It is normally measured as the number of dwelling units in a given area.

Housing types

Forms of housing, such as single dwellings, boarding houses, dual occupancies, group homes, hostels, multi-dwelling homes, residential flat buildings, secondary dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, seniors' housing and shop top housing.

Important agricultural land

The existing or future location of local or regionally important agricultural industries or agricultural resources, mapped using the NSW Department of Primary Industries important agricultural lands methodology.

Infill development

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

Local centres

Local centres provide jobs and services such as shopping, dining, entertainment, health and personal services to meet the daily and weekly needs of the local community.

Local plans

A statutory, spatial plan, typically prepared for a local government area by a council, and endorsed by the Minister for Planning. Through the use of land zoning and other development controls, a local plan is typically the main mechanism for determining the type and amount of development that can occur on each parcel of land in NSW. Local plans are the main planning tool that shape the future of communities and ensure local development is appropriate. They guide planning decisions by local councils.

Strategic Centres

Centres of regional strategic importance. Broken Hill is the only Strategic Centre in the Far West Region.

Sustainability

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





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