

Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan

*planning for a stronger, more liveable
and sustainable community*

September 2009



Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan

Prepared by:

The Honourable Stirling Hinchliffe MP,
Minister for Infrastructure and Planning in
accordance with the *Integrated Planning Act
(IPA) 1997*, Division 4, Section 2.5A.

With assistance from:

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In consultation with:

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Committee

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Release notes

The *Maranoa-Balonne Regional Plan* is released by the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning in accordance with the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, section 2.5A.15. It is a statutory instrument under the *Statutory Instruments Act 1992*.

The regional plan applies to the Maranoa-Balonne regional local government areas, as defined under IPA, section 2.5A.2. It replaces the *Draft Maranoa and Districts Regional Plan* (the draft plan) released by the regional planning Minister on 5 August 2008. The draft plan was subject to community consultation and comment up to 30 November 2008. A consultation report, which summarised the issues raised during the consultation period was released on 22 September 2009. It is available at www.dip.qld.gov.au/maranoa-balonne or by calling 1300 724 051.

The regional plan has been prepared in good faith, taking into account all public submissions, to provide a framework for the management and development of the region for more than 20 years.

The regional plan represents an agreed Queensland Government position on the future of the Maranoa-Balonne region. Any plans, policies and codes being prepared or amended by state agencies or local government must reflect and align with the regional plan.

The regional plan does not commit or pertain to commit any government, industry or community organisation to implement, fund or otherwise resource specific activities or programs.

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Copies of the regional plan are available:

online www.dip.qld.gov.au/maranoa-balonne
for viewing at most council chambers, libraries and customer service centres within the local government areas covered by the regional plan

for free on CD-ROM or in hard copy by contacting Department of Infrastructure and Planning offices in Bundaberg and Brisbane
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Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan

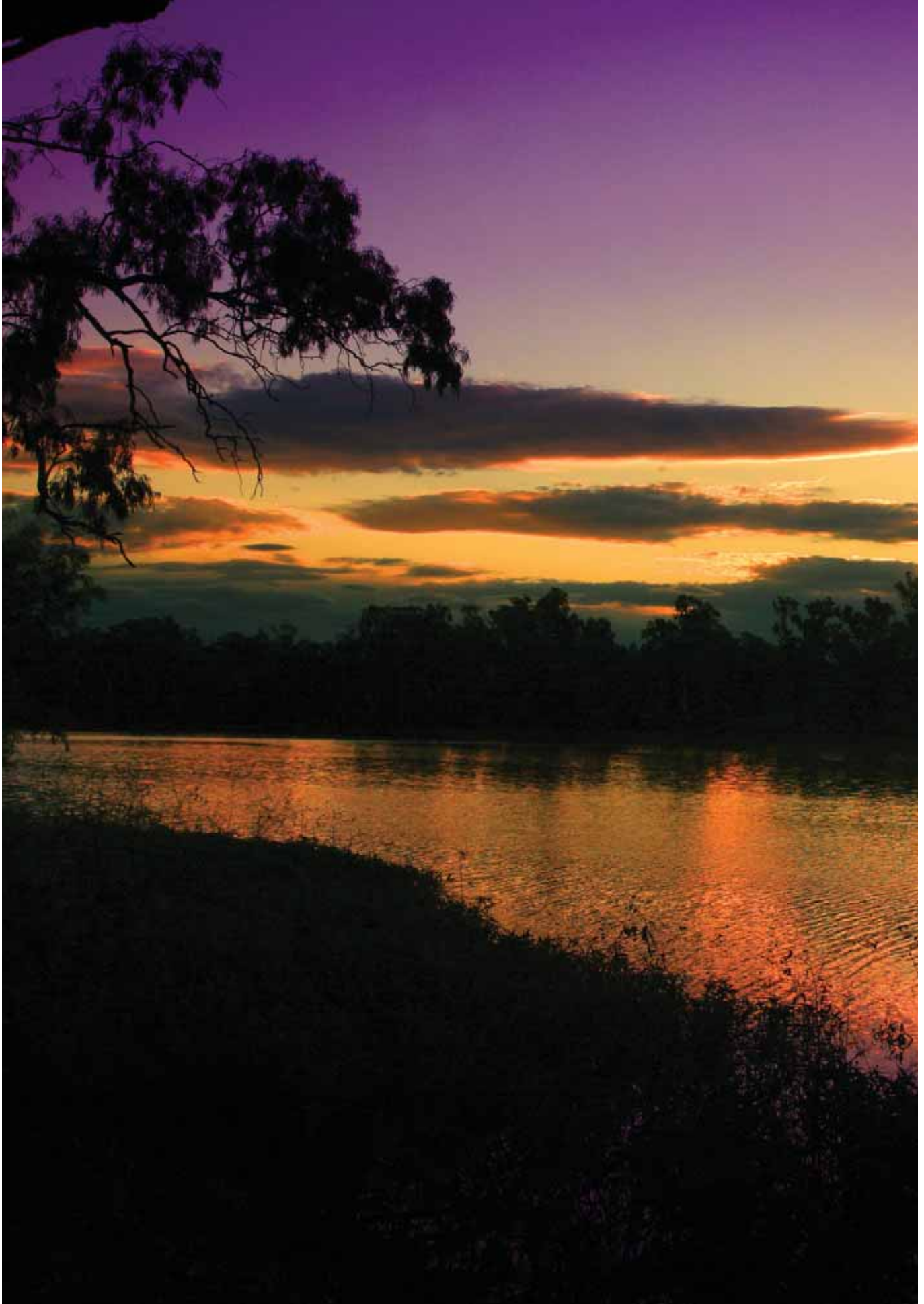
*planning for a stronger, more liveable
and sustainable community*

Regional vision

We will have safe, healthy communities with thriving, sustainable industries.

Guided by the lessons of our history, we will respect our past, nurture our diverse landscapes and create a wealth of opportunity for future generations.

A welcoming and growing region for all.





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PART A—Introduction



Background and purpose

Maranoa–Balonne is located in southern Queensland, taking in rich cropping and grazing lands and significant reserves of coal seam gas, conventional gas and petroleum. The region includes a significant part of the Queensland Murray–Darling Basin, including the catchments of the Maranoa and Balonne–Culgoa river systems. The region’s population is approximately 18 000¹. Modest growth is anticipated over the next 20 years, largely arising from developments in the energy sector.

The region comprises the local governments of Maranoa Regional Council and Balonne Shire Council.

Preparation of the *Draft Maranoa and Districts Regional Plan* was based on the former local government areas of Balonne, Bendemere, Booringa, Bungil, Murilla, Roma, Tara and Warroo. The Maranoa and Districts region was designated for regional planning purposes under provisions of the *Integrated Planning Regulation 1998* in September 2007. The region corresponded to the area encompassed by these former shires.

At the time of local government amalgamation in 2008, the Murilla and Tara Shires were incorporated into the Western Downs Regional Council. After its formation, the Western Downs Regional

Council did not engage in preparation of the draft regional plan. As regional planning for Maranoa and Districts involved only two of the six shires amalgamated to form the Western Downs Regional Council, the Planning Minister resolved to use the plan’s consultation phase to seek advice from the community about the preferred planning boundary for the region.

Submissions to the draft regional plan strongly favoured the region encompassing only Maranoa Regional Council and Balonne Shire. Further, it was recommended that the region be renamed the Maranoa–Balonne region.

Accordingly, the plan has been finalised to incorporate only the Maranoa Regional Council and Balonne Shire Council. The former Murilla and Tara Shire Councils are no longer included.

An amendment to the *Integrated Planning Regulation 1998*, in May 2009, redefined the designated region—changing the boundary and name. The plan now reflects these changes.

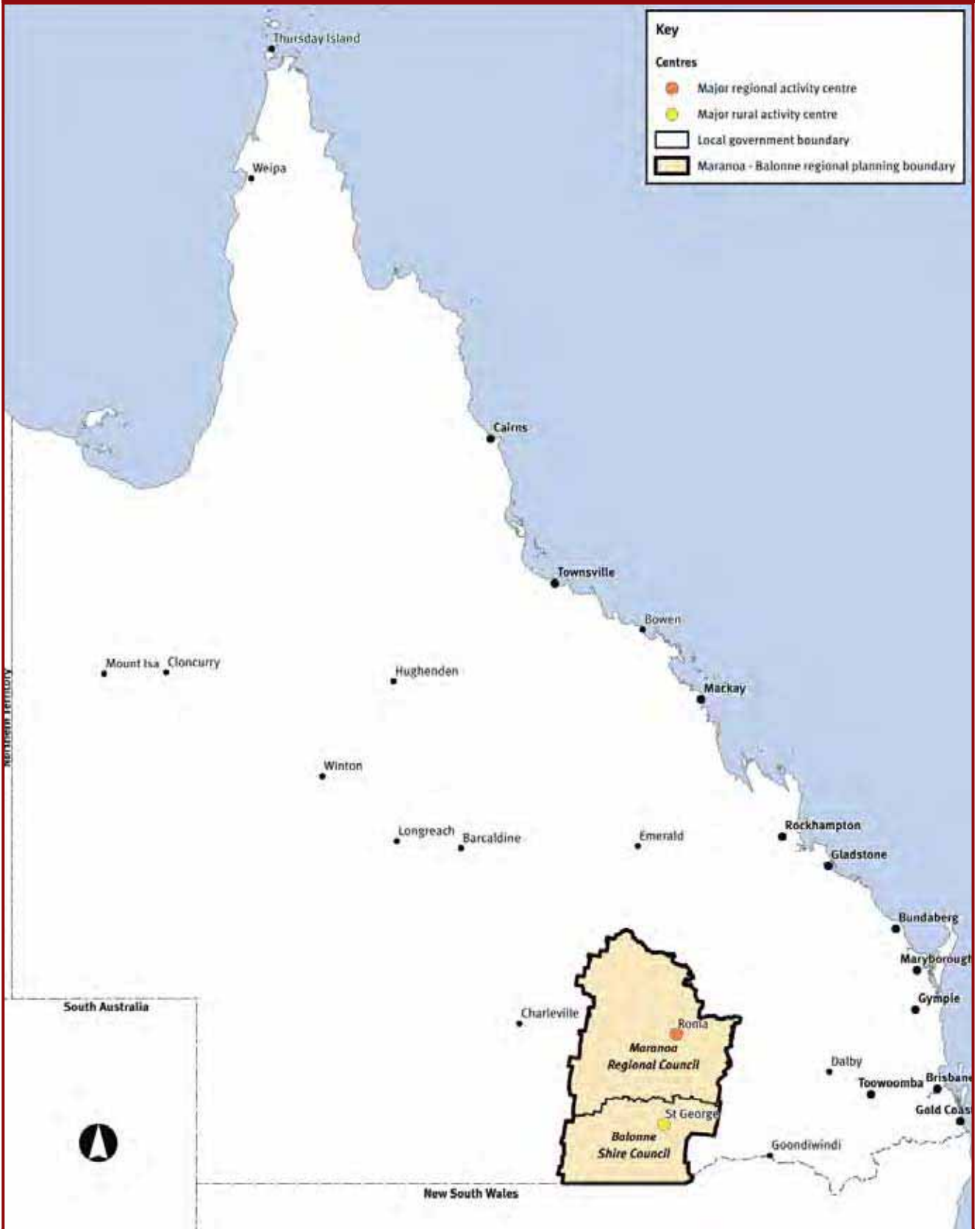
As part of resolving planning boundaries, before undertaking regional planning to encompass all of the Darling Downs, the state government will review the appropriateness of the Maranoa–Balonne boundary. The *Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan* is now final, but may be subject to early review in the light of future regional planning boundary decisions.

The regional plan applies to the western section of the Surat Basin, approximately half its area. There is currently no regional plan for the Darling Downs, apart from the Toowoomba Statistical Division, which is incorporated into the *South East Queensland Regional Plan*. Nor is there a regional plan to fully encompass the Surat Basin. Pre-planning studies being undertaken for the Surat Basin will inform future regional planning for the basin and the broader Darling Downs region, including the former Murilla and Tara shire sections of Western Downs Regional Council.

People who live and work in the Maranoa–Balonne region are faced with a number of opportunities and challenges over the next 20 years. These include:

- managing growth associated with the development of energy resources in the Surat Basin
- maintaining profitability of enterprises reliant on transport services and facing fluctuating commodity prices
- addressing irregular climatic and weather conditions
- providing opportunities for young people who have traditionally migrated to urban areas
- attracting and retaining skilled staff
- accessing and providing essential services in smaller centres.

Maranoa-Balonne locality map



Disclaimer: The information on this map should be treated as indicative only and subject to ongoing refinement. Based on or contains data provided by the State of Queensland (Department of Environment and Resource Management) 2008. In consideration of the state permitting use of this data you acknowledge and agree that the state gives no warranty in relation to the data (including accuracy, reliability, completeness, currency or suitability) and accepts no liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for any loss, damage or costs (including consequential damage) relating to any use of the data. Data must not be used for direct marketing or be used in breach of the privacy laws. Data source: Department of Environment and Resource Management and Department of Infrastructure and Planning.

Future challenges for local communities may also include population reductions in smaller centres, water shortages associated with shifting climate patterns and the effects of significant energy developments.

In response to these challenges affecting rural Queenslanders, the Queensland Government’s *Blueprint for the Bush*² initiative and the *Rural Economic Development and Infrastructure Plan* were developed to lay the foundations for the future sustainability, liveability and prosperity of these communities. The regional plan will be an essential mechanism for managing change and shaping the prospects of rural communities by:

- addressing key economic, social and environmental issues
- prioritising infrastructure and service needs
- maximising benefits and managing the impacts of major projects
- driving innovation and productivity
- mobilising the public, private and community sectors
- aligning efforts across agencies and all levels of government.

The regional plan, whilst meeting some of the government’s *Blueprint for the Bush* commitments, is also part of a wider process—ensuring that a consistent and contemporary regional planning framework is operating across all of Queensland. This framework is a key mechanism for integrating federal, state and local government planning agendas, linking infrastructure and service provision to manage future population change, and providing certainty to communities and the business sector.

Statutory regional plans

Recent amendments to the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* (IPA) allow new or amended regional plans to take statutory effect. Under a statutory regional plan, all subject development³ and land use in the region will need to comply with the regional plan. The responsible local government authority must amend its planning scheme to reflect the regional plan, within 90 business days of the regional plan’s gazettal. The regional plan prevails where there is inconsistency between it and a local government planning scheme within the region.

The plan also recognises local governments in the region have planning schemes prepared under the IPA and many of the strategies that can be incorporated into planning schemes may already be evident.

The regional plan does not include regulatory provisions in relation to land

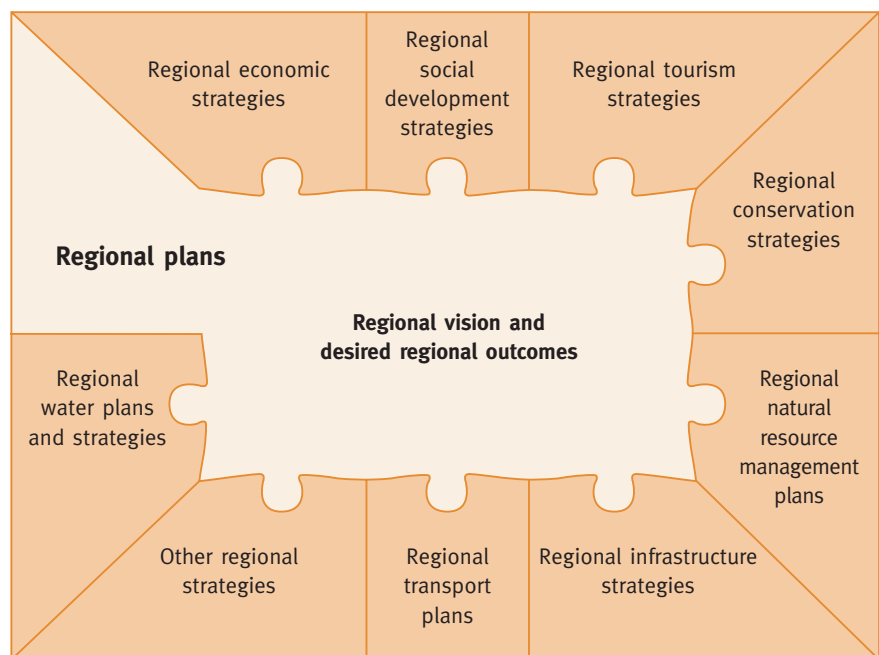
use, nor does it specify region-specific variation to current state planning policies.

Working with other plans and strategies

The regional plan sets out desired regional outcomes, which identify aspirations for ecological sustainability for the region. These desired regional outcomes cannot, however, be achieved through the policies and strategies in this plan alone. Implementation of the strategies and actions of other plans is critical to achieving the region’s vision. Figure 1 depicts the relationship between the regional plan and other plans and strategies.

The regional plan is not an economic, environmental or social plan, and it does not attempt to take the place of conservation or tourism plans or strategies. However, the plan does

Figure 1. Relationship between this plan and other regional plans and strategies



² Department of Communities (2006) *Blueprint for the Bush*, Queensland Government, Brisbane

³ Some development assessment and approval processes lie outside the jurisdiction of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*. For example, approvals relating to mining and energy developments on mining tenements and for state-significant projects are provided under other legislation. Regional plans are taken to be state interests under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, and to the extent that state interests apply in those legislative processes, the regional plan’s policies apply.



include regional land use planning policies that will directly and indirectly work towards achieving environmental, social and economic outcomes.

Other regional planning initiatives in Maranoa–Balonne include the development of the non-statutory regional health services plan and scenario planning for energy developments in the Surat Basin. These were considered in the development of the draft regional plan.

Also considered were statutory planning activities including:

- the development of water resource and resource operations plans for the Moonie, Condamine-Balonne, Warrego-Paroo-Bulloo-Nebine, Fitzroy and Great Artesian basins
- regional vegetation management codes for the western and Brigalow Belt and New England Tableland bioregions.

Preparation

The regional plan has been developed with extensive advice from the Maranoa–Balonne Regional Coordination Committee⁴. The role of the committee is to:

- provide advice to the Planning Minister on regional planning matters
- assist with the preparation, implementation and review of the regional plan
- facilitate the resolution of regional planning issues
- promote a coordinated approach to regional planning.

The Regional Coordination Committee draws representatives from local governments, state government, AgForce, the former Southern Inland Queensland Area Consultative Committee, community organisations and the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee. The advice of other key stakeholders is sought as required.

The draft regional plan was initially made available for public comment for a period of 60 business days, as per the provisions of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*. This was extended for a further 22 business days. After considering comments received through formal submissions from the public, local government and other state agencies, the state government produced the final plan.

Application, implementation and review

The regional plan is a statutory instrument under the *Statutory Instruments Act 1992* and is a planning instrument under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

Local government planning schemes are the primary mechanisms for managing urban development. Best practice will be achieved through the implementation of comprehensive local planning schemes, resulting in sustainable regional communities.

Regional policies and strategies provide the planning principles and guidelines for managing future land use and development. Where appropriate, a combination of land use policies and aligned strategies is used to implement the desired regional outcomes for the regional plan.

Land use policies are those policies relating to land use matters under the jurisdiction of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*. These are primarily implemented through local government planning schemes and any other mechanisms that fall under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

Aligned strategies are designed to assist in achieving a desired regional outcome, generally through a collaborative and voluntary approach, and are aligned with other legislation, plans, processes and voluntary programs.

They may be implemented by various stakeholders including local, state and federal government, non-government organisations such as community groups or natural resource management groups, and the private sector. Resourcing of programs to achieve these policy outcomes may come from government, non-government or private sector investment. Aligned strategies do not commit the government to providing funding for any particular action or program.

The statutory regional planning framework provides for a formal, statewide monitoring and review process, which is an important element in any regional land use planning framework. The outcomes and policies of the regional plan will be monitored and used in the formal review of the regional plan. A formal review will be undertaken at least every 10 years, however, the planning Minister can amend the regional plan at any time under the procedures set out in the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

Structure of the regional plan

As shown in figure 2, the regional plan comprises the following:

Part A Introduction—provides background material to establish the context and intent of the regional plan. It also outlines the need for the regional plan and its relationship with other planning processes and instruments.

Part B Regional vision—outlines the desired future for the Maranoa–Balonne region.

Part C Strategic directions—sets down the broad policy framework for the regional plan.

⁴ The Maranoa and Districts region was designated as a region for statutory planning purposes in March 2008. After a region is designated, the Planning Minister must establish a regional coordination committee. If a regional planning advisory committee already exists, it is generally taken to be the regional coordination committee.

Part D Regional activity centres network—applies a statewide framework—used to characterise Queensland’s centres, their facilities and services—to Maranoa–Balonne centres.

Part E Regional policies and strategies—provides the planning principles and guidelines for managing the future land use and development of the Maranoa–Balonne region. They should be reflected in all relevant plans, policies and codes being prepared or amended by the Queensland Government or local governments in the Maranoa–Balonne region.

Part F Implementation, monitoring and review—sets out the proposed governance arrangements for implementing the regional plan and describes how these will be monitored and reviewed.

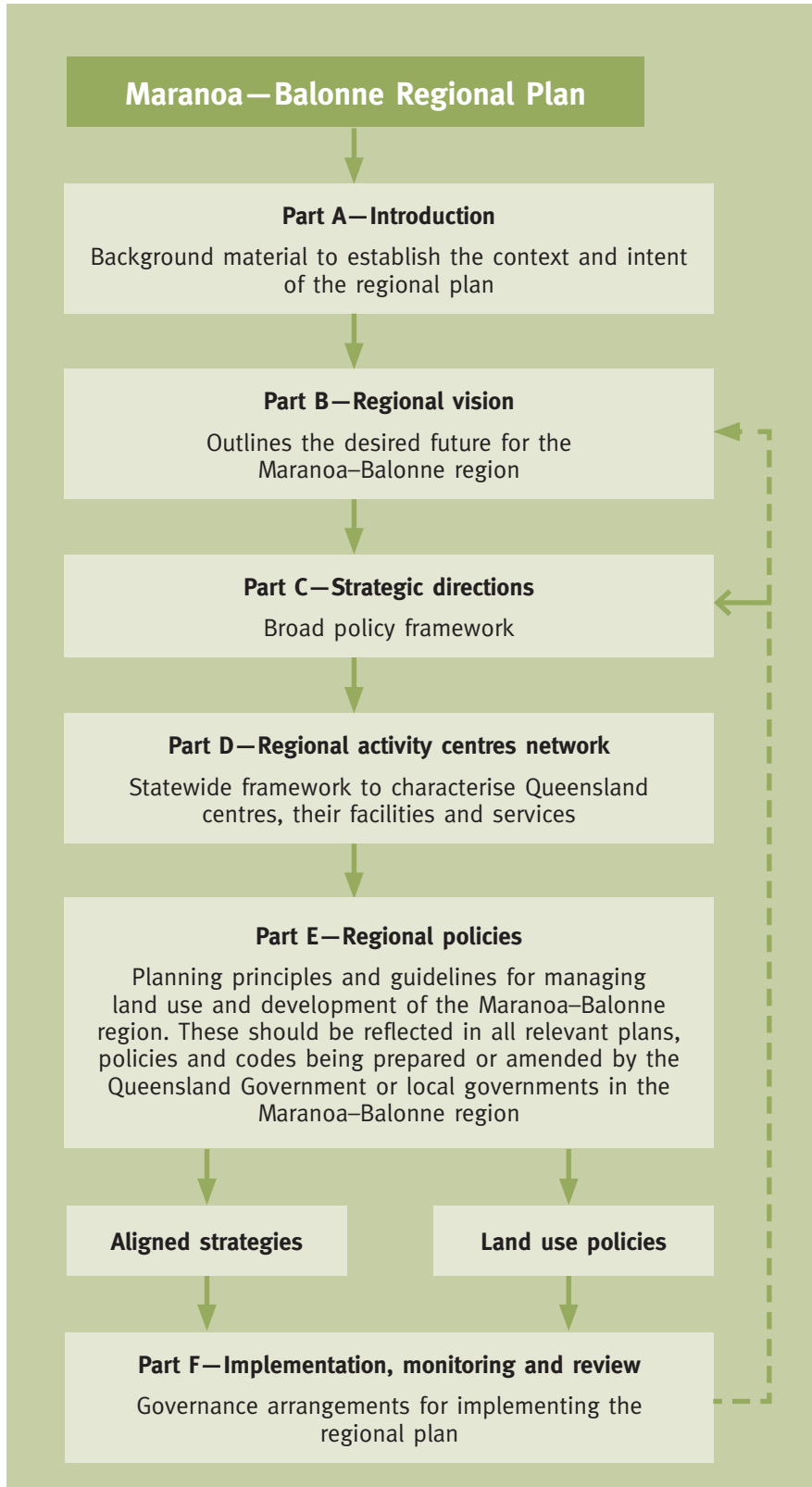
Maps

The maps contained in the regional plan are based on available data at the time of printing. The information sources used to prepare these maps vary, with respect to scale, accuracy and currency.

The Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) has prepared mapping showing areas of ecological significance. The maps have been prepared from high quality data sets of terrestrial vegetation, key threatened species’ habitats and wetlands. The accuracy of mapping is considered reliable for planning purposes at a detailed level. Given the size of the region, the scale used in map 2 of the regional plan should only be used as general information. More detailed information on the region’s areas of ecological significance is available from the Department of Environment and Resource Management website.

The maps in the plan are not regulatory maps and are to be used as information guides only.

Figure 2. Regional plan flowchart





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Guided by the lessons of our history we will respect our past, nurture our diverse landscapes and create a wealth of opportunity for future generations.

A welcoming and growing region for all.

Soon after its inception in 2004, the former Regional Planning Advisory Committee adopted the vision for Maranoa–Balonne and reconfirmed this vision statement at its first meeting of 2007.

The vision focuses attention on the key elements of sustainability—social wellbeing, economic prosperity and a healthy environment.

Maranoa–Balonne nurtures its people and celebrates their diverse cultural backgrounds. Prosperity is driven by the region’s traditional strengths and a culture of business opportunism, delivering balanced economic, social and environmental dividends based on sound investments. The Maranoa–Balonne’s landscapes flourish under land and water management frameworks that are informed by best practice, are well-researched and have community support.





To achieve the region’s vision and desired outcomes, the regional plan proposes a range of policies to manage change and a sustainable future for Maranoa–Balonne. These policies are guided by strategic directions necessary to achieve change and sustainability in the region.

Traditional strengths

This plan highlights the powerful linkage between the region’s long-term prosperity and primary production. Policies that encourage innovation and diversification by the sector are also included. Developing new and diverse opportunities, value-adding to primary products and capitalising on emerging markets are future challenges for the sector.

The traditional strengths of the Maranoa–Balonne region include sheep and cattle grazing, grain and cereal cropping, irrigated cropping and timber production (especially cypress pine). These activities remain central to the future of the region and are important aspects addressed by the regional plan’s policies.

Other challenges confronting agriculture and primary production operators in Maranoa–Balonne include labour supply shortages, due to young people leaving the region or moving to work in other industries, and the increasing corporatisation of the sector. Producers are also deeply aware that the health of the region’s natural asset base underpins their productivity and the region’s prosperity and must therefore be nurtured.

Supporting infrastructure, such as transport and product storage and processing facilities, must also be improved and maintained, to protect the future of these industries.

Emerging opportunities

Energy reserves in the Surat Basin are a major resource for international and domestic consumers. Gas reserves from the region play a pivotal role in Queensland’s achievement of clean electricity generation targets and will generate increased export earnings with the development of liquefied natural gas facilities to supply overseas markets.

The regional plan includes land use policies that aim to:

- ensure the appropriate development of land in the region
- support key infrastructure for all users
- ensure adequate supply of industrial land for mining support industries
- provide diverse housing opportunities to meet the needs of an expanding regional workforce.



The regional plan's aligned strategies encourage business development, particularly that associated with mining support activities. They also aim to improve collaboration between resource companies, infrastructure providers and regional communities, working towards a shared approach to future service and infrastructure delivery. The aligned strategies aim to support harmonious interaction between mining operators, landholders and the broader community.

An uncertain future, in terms of climate variability and change and carbon reduction strategies, provides opportunities, as well as challenges, across all sectors. The regional plan strives to develop a culture of entrepreneurship that will broaden the region's economic and social base and respond to environmental challenges.

Lifestyle

The regional plan identifies that people choose to live and work in the Maranoa–Balonne region for its rural culture and relaxed lifestyle.

The regional plan describes a regional activity centres network, which will help communities plan for services and infrastructure and identify appropriate developments and activities for each centre. This classification system will guide service delivery to the region over the next two decades.

The regional plan recognises that to attract new residents, particularly those with no previous regional ties, services and recreation opportunities in the region will need to meet or exceed those of other Queensland centres, and offer a viable alternative to metropolitan living. Enhancing the liveability of existing centres and ensuring new developments contribute to the region's liveability is essential. Providing essential infrastructure and business support systems will also enhance long-term liveability, by encouraging new businesses.



A classification system has been developed to describe towns within regions, based on their population, employment, business activities, facilities and services. The classification’s purpose is to highlight significant service delivery roles, especially for small centres serving dispersed populations. This classification system, called the regional activity centres network, will help governments plan how and where to deliver services and infrastructure throughout the region.

There are four classifications of activity centres that apply to Maranoa-Balonne:

- major regional activity centre
- major rural activity centre
- district rural activity centre
- community activity centre.

The regional activity centres network will also help communities plan for services and infrastructure and identify the type of developments appropriate for each centre. It will improve social and economic benefits for the local community by:

- avoiding the loss of services and infrastructure that could undermine the sustainability of a centre
- providing justification for service provision apart from population figures
- strategically identifying where growth should be encouraged and infrastructure and services located
- identifying the type and scale of developments and activities appropriate for each centre, and informing planning application decisions

- promoting access between communities
- promoting cost sharing of infrastructure and services between centres, in turn reducing competition between local governments in obtaining funding, services or facilities
- maintaining and enhancing the environmental values of the region.

The network of centres is dynamic and there may be changes over time. Subsequent reviews of the regional plan will reflect any significant change in role and function of the centres. Centre populations are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Population of centres—Estimated resident populations

Population	2006	2007(r) ⁵	2008 (p) ⁵
Dirranbandi (L) ⁵	467	437	431
Injune (L)	391	357	364
Mitchell (L)	993	1 022	1 021
Roma	6 402	6 372	6 414
St George	2 571	2 529	2 528
Surat (L)	465	474	476
Wallumbilla (L)	301	297	284
Maranoa-Balonne	17 997	17 985	17 955

(Source: Planning Information and Forecasting Unit (PIFU), unpublished statistics)



Major regional activity centre

Roma

In general, major regional activity centres serve catchments of subregional to regional significance and offer employment and business opportunities, convenience and retail shopping, and services. Populations typically range from 5000 to 20 000 residents.

The major regional activity centre of Maranoa–Balonne is Roma. Roma provides a secondary administration focus for Maranoa–Balonne that supports administrative activities, particularly by state government, delivered from the principal regional activity centre of Toowoomba⁶.

Many government departments are based in Roma. Several resource development companies coordinate their regional operations in Roma and banking and financial services are delivered from this centre. The operation of a daily, high-demand passenger air service to and from Brisbane reflects a high level of activity by service providers. Roma is strategically located at the intersection of the Warrego Highway (national network) and Carnarvon Highway (strategic freight route). There is also a significant east–west rail link. These links are critical to national and state freight movement, but also especially important for Roma's saleyards, the largest in the southern hemisphere.

Roma is a focal point for subregional and regionally significant concentrations of employment and urban development. The economy is robust and diverse and not entirely dependent on fluctuations in agriculture and climate. Significant opportunities exist for employment with a range of state and local government service providers, along with considerable levels of urban and rural residential development in and around Roma.



The regional plan envisages that Roma will maintain its role as the region's most significant centre. Roma will continue to provide the services and facilities required to support the region's communities. Infrastructure and service delivery developments in Roma will occur in line with future demand. This demand is expected to reflect population growth associated with energy resource developments.

Major rural activity centres

St George

Generally, major rural activity centres serve catchments of subregional to regional significance, with populations of 2000 to 5000 residents. These centres accommodate concentrations of employment, businesses and convenience retail shopping opportunities.

St George, with a population of approximately 2500, is the region's only major rural activity centre. Its population fluctuates, in response to changing labour needs of the rural sector.

St George provides the business and administrative services required to support major dryland and irrigated cropping activities in the lower Balonne.



It provides an important hub for delivery of health services and senior schooling services for the surrounding centres of Dirranbandi, Thallon and Hebel. The town is also a significant point for coordinating service delivery to Aboriginal populations in southern Queensland. St George's airport services regular commercial flights connecting to Brisbane and centres further west.

The future need for an increase in the level of services delivered in St George will depend on population change and economic and industry factors. As a minimum, however, service delivery mechanisms are expected to remain at least at the same level.

St George has links with Roma as the region's major regional activity centre, as well as strong ties with both Goondiwindi, particularly in relation to agriculture, and Toowoomba, for administrative, health and financial services.

District rural activity centres

Mitchell, Injune, Surat, Dirranbandi

These centres provide essential functions for surrounding districts. Their population range is generally between 300 and 2000. They provide weekly and essential services, such as grocery shopping and postal services, to populations at a reasonable travelling distance of one to two hours. They offer limited local government and health services, which may include a local general practitioner or visiting specialist medical services.

These centres have educational facilities, some to Year 12, and police stations that often have more than one officer. In some cases, a Queensland Government Agents Program office (providing multiple government services) is also located in the centres. The centres have good access to a major rural activity centre, or a major regional activity centre, and may have an airport that services emergency and charter requirements.

The district rural activity centres provide subregional community interaction and social events. Historical trends show peaks and troughs in population, investment and employment, based on commodity prices, resource demand and climate.

Of these centres, Mitchell has the largest population and, based on its location and opportunities, the potential to grow. Mitchell is a thriving community and a key delivery point for a number of remote health services. Residents take advantage of the centre's proximity to Roma for higher order services, including senior schooling. Mitchell is also an important step off point for tourists making day trips and provides linkages to key tourism attractions such as the Mount Moffatt section of Carnarvon National Park. The all-weather, sealed airstrip and airport facilities provide 24-hour access and departure opportunities for aircraft.

Injune, with its close proximity to major coal seam gas deposits, has experienced a considerable increase in traffic flow in recent years, due to energy industry exploration and travel by construction workforces. The accommodation policies of construction and mining companies will influence activity levels and demand for services and accommodation in Injune and, to a lesser extent, the other district rural activity centres. To date, companies have concentrated on accommodating workers in single person quarters on site. Accommodation providers use council facilities for waste and sewage disposal. Subcontractors seem to be the main 'new' users of local accommodation, retail and, occasionally, health services.

During the life of this plan, the employment practices and policies of regional mining and energy operators will be major determinants of population change and service demand in Injune and all of the region's centres.

Surat's strong links with Cobb and Co provide a focus for tourism. The Cobb and Co Changing Station Complex and other historic buildings, including the restored timber town hall, are key attractions. Surat has a state school offering education to Year 10, a hospital with visiting services, an industrial estate, and motel, hotel and caravan park accommodation. Demand for accommodation and additional services has fluctuated recently, in line with the status of gas pipeline construction projects.

Dirranbandi is a hub for delivery of local government and other services to key cropping areas in the south of the region. It provides a gateway to the Culgoa Floodplains National Park and New South Wales. Cubbie Station, believed to be the largest privately owned cotton property in the southern hemisphere, is also located here. Dirranbandi's population shows major fluctuations, in response to seasonal conditions and the agricultural cycle of surrounding cropping enterprises.

The regional plan recognises the need to sustain services in district rural activity centres, especially in view of their dispersed service populations. Although future service delivery models may not

reflect existing mechanisms for service delivery, these models take advantage of new approaches and technology, to ensure services will be appropriately delivered to these centres.

Community activity centres

Yuleba, Wallumbilla, Mungallala, Bollon, Thallon, Amby, Hebel, Mungindi, Jackson

These centres provide hubs for essential services and social interaction for residents in rural and remote locations. They are characterised by low populations of generally fewer than 300 residents. In Maranoa–Balonne, these centres provide a limited range of services, such as a single convenience store, a service station and a public bar.

Most of these centres have limited educational facilities, few links to locally delivered health services and limited access to other government services. They may have a single-officer police station. The centres may provide important road travel centres for transport and tourism services.

Population growth in these centres is not anticipated, however, the need to sustain services is recognised. The current level of services in these towns may reflect times of higher population. Although future service delivery models may not reflect existing mechanisms, they take advantage of new approaches and technology to ensure services will be appropriately delivered to these centres.

Other community hubs

Other localities provide the focus for social interaction and services, often centred on a school, church or sporting facility. Due to their limited population and service diversity, these community hubs are not classified as part of the regional activity centres network.



This section outlines the fundamental principles, policies and desired regional outcomes that will guide planning and development assessment in Maranoa–Balonne over the next 20 years.

The policies guide state and local government planning processes and decision making, as well as private investment in the region. They also assist the Commonwealth Government in determining funding priorities for natural resource management, under other Commonwealth funded programs.

The regional plan is the primary planning document in Maranoa–Balonne. Local government planning schemes must be consistent with the intent of the desired regional outcomes, objectives and policies contained within this plan.

The policies are set out under the following headings:

1. Natural environment
2. Natural resource management
3. Strong communities
4. Urban development
5. Economic development
6. Infrastructure.

Underlying principles

Ecological sustainability

The overriding intent of the regional plan is to ensure a coordinated, sustainable response to future growth pressures in the region. The challenge is to enhance the region's economy and people's quality of life, without compromising ecological sustainability.

Since 1994, sustainable development principles have been included in a range of Queensland's legislative instruments such as the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*, *Integrated Planning Act 1997* and *Water Act 2000*. The Queensland Government is also a signatory to the *Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment 1992* and the *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992*.

The Queensland framework for ecologically sustainable decision making has been used to inform the development of objectives, policies and strategies in the regional plan. The framework comprises:

- integrated and long-term decision making—incorporating long-and short-term environmental, economic and social considerations

- inter-generational equity—ensuring the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations
- intra-generational equity—ensuring a fair share of resources and opportunity among present generations
- precautionary principle—ensuring that where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, a lack of full scientific certainty is not used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation
- conserving biological diversity and ecological integrity—protecting the variety of all life forms, their genetic diversity and the ecosystem of which they form a part, recognising the various services they provide to humans as well as their intrinsic values
- internalising environmental costs—ensuring that the true costs and life-cycle costs (incurred from when inputs are produced through to waste disposal) of protecting from and restoring environmental damage are reflected in the price of a product or service
- engaged governance—ensuring broad community involvement in decisions and actions that affect its members.

Sustainability and climate change

Queenslanders are becoming increasingly concerned about climate change and its impacts. There is overwhelming scientific evidence that human-induced climate change is occurring primarily due to increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Increased temperatures, decreased rainfall and increased severity of droughts are only some of the expected changes. At the very least, the expected changes in temperature and rainfall are likely to

affect the industries of the Maranoa–Balonne region. Table 2 portrays projected impacts.

International and Australian research indicates that there are significant benefits in responding immediately to climate change, by both reducing the emission of greenhouse gases and adapting to climate change impacts that will occur regardless of global efforts to reduce emissions. In simple terms, earlier reduction of emissions and adaptation to climate change will mean fewer costs to economic growth and lifestyle.

Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland sets a target to cut Queensland's households' carbon footprint by one-third with reduced waste, fuel and electricity use by 2020. Regional climate change actions for Maranoa–Balonne will also be influenced by statewide and national climate change initiatives and policies, including the Queensland Government *ClimateSmart* strategy and the Commonwealth Government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme⁷.

Responding to oil supply

Most of the world is now dependent on a diminishing number of oil-producing countries for their oil needs. The amount of oil discovered each year peaked in the mid-1960s and has been falling steadily since. Whilst oil production has been essentially stable since 2005, current rates of production are predicted to decline within the next five years.

On a national level, Australia no longer produces enough oil to meet the nation's needs. Australia and Queensland are therefore becoming more dependent on imported oil and oil-based fuels, so that Queensland's consumption (and that of other states) is strongly linked to global supply and demand. As in many parts of the world, Maranoa–Balonne's communities and economic sectors are firmly structured around an abundant supply of low-cost oil, making the region vulnerable to changes in the supply and price of oil.

The target to cut the carbon footprint by one-third by 2020 is a key component in achieving the 'green ambition' outlined in *Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland*. Given the region's dependence on vehicular transport and industries that are heavy users of oil-based fuels, such as agriculture and mining, mechanisms that contribute to the reduction of greenhouse emissions and that reduce vulnerability to rising oil prices are essential. These are reflected throughout the policies in part E of the regional plan.

Table 2. Specific climate change projections for Maranoa–Balonne

	Increase in annual temperature (°C) (Region: Maranoa)	Number of days greater than 35 °C (Location: St George)
Present		53
2030 average (mid emissions)	1.1 [0.7–1.6]	71 [64–81]
2070 average (low emissions)	1.8 [1.2–2.6]	84 [72–101]
2070 average (high emissions)	3.5 [2.3–5.0]	116 [90–151]

(Source: CSIRO, baseline period 1971–2000)



7 See www.climatechange.qld.gov.au



1. Natural environment

Desired regional outcome

The region's natural assets are valued and managed to sustain a healthy, functioning natural environment, resilient to the impacts of climate change.



The region takes in the catchments of Maranoa and Balonne Rivers, and includes two bioregions—the Southern Brigalow Belt and the Mulga Lands. Before European settlement the region was covered by extensive forests and woodlands with grasslands on clay floodplains.

Maranoa–Balonne is considered an ecological transition zone between the tropical north and temperate south, providing significant habitat for a range of species.

The major water assets of the region include the Maranoa, Balonne and Moonie Rivers, the Great Artesian Basin, and alluvial aquifers, wetlands and water storages. Nationally important wetlands include the Balonne River floodplain, Myola-Mulga Downs salt lake and claypans of the Balonne.

Landscape management in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin, of which the region forms a significant part, affects a Ramsar site⁸, the Narran Lakes, in northern New South Wales. The lower Balonne floodplains are highly developed for agriculture, with consequential impacts on water flows and quality.

The region's rainfall is highly variable and shows a general predominance of summer falls. As a consequence of this variability, landholders must manage their cropping and livestock enterprises to take account of widely fluctuating soil moisture levels. Climate change has the potential to increase these fluctuations and threaten the viability of some activities.

Extensive alluvial floodplains have been developed, mainly for dryland cropping and grazing, with irrigated cropping largely restricted to Balonne Shire. Native remnant vegetation has been extensively cleared in these areas, but significant stands of remnant vegetation have been retained in upland areas. These vegetation communities include brigalow, eucalypt and cypress pine forests and woodlands on various soil types, as well as restricted areas of softwood forests and riparian communities.

State forests are found across the region. Along with areas of native vegetation on reserves and stock routes, these play an important role in providing habitat for native species.

Sedimentary rocks of the Surat Basin lie beneath the region. These, in turn, are underlain by older sedimentary rocks of the Bowen Basin. This geology has considerable economic significance, because of the widespread presence of Great Artesian Basin (GAB) aquifers and the energy resources of the Surat and Bowen Basins. Historically, the groundwater flow systems, soils and landforms have supported highly productive cropping and livestock industries.

Climate change scenarios projecting significant moisture deficits are of concern to Maranoa–Balonne. Even small temperature increases (1–2°C) could have significant impacts on biodiversity and natural systems.

1.1 Protecting biodiversity and ecological processes

The region's extensive rangelands, floodplains and riverine and wetland habitats host a broad range of native species at the headwaters of the Murray-Darling Basin. Land management practices and water extractions from the Maranoa and Balonne catchments have the potential to adversely affect aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity values. Climate change also poses immediate and significant threats to the region's natural assets.

Some of the region's land and water management practices have contributed to loss of species and communities, changes in the abundance of others and the introduction of non-endemic species that have become pests. Classifying species according to their values—for example, rarity, invasiveness or economic impact—has provided one important means of targeting efforts to manage negative impacts.

Actions with potential to affect biodiversity and ecological processes are subject to both regulatory provisions (e.g. governing the clearing of native vegetation or extraction of water from watercourses, springs and aquifers and imposing conditions on new developments) and voluntary actions (e.g. adoption of best-practice tillage/irrigation/pasture management by farmers and graziers). Employing a mix of regulatory and voluntary actions helps engage local communities and achieve good environmental outcomes. All such provisions need to reflect current findings and best practice, so that development

⁸ A site protected by an international treaty on the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. From Ramsar, a city in Iran where the treaty was signed in 1971.

approval and extension practices focus on continuous improvement.

Objective

To protect, manage and enhance the extent, diversity, condition and connectivity of the region's natural areas to maintain ecological integrity and processes, reverse biodiversity decline and increase resilience to the expected impacts of climate change.

Land use policies

- 1.1.1 Design and operate development for urban purposes within areas of high ecological significance to avoid impacts on ecological values. Where avoidance is not possible, minimise the impacts and then offset residual impacts.
- 1.1.2 Design, operate and setback development for urban purposes adjacent to areas of high ecological significance, to avoid adverse impacts on the ecological values.
- 1.1.3 Design and operate development for urban purposes, in or adjacent to areas of general ecological significance, to avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimise any adverse impacts on ecological values.

Aligned strategies

- 1.1.A Undertake ongoing research to continuously improve understanding of the region's biodiversity and ecological processes.
- 1.1.B Make all information relevant to improved management and decision making regarding biodiversity, and other matters of ecological significance, readily available and accessible at a suitable scale.
- 1.1.C Protect biodiversity and ecological processes by undertaking on-ground actions—derived from landscape scale initiatives—to address key regional priorities.

- 1.1.D Allocate public funds for on-ground works enhancing regional biodiversity or improving ecological functioning on the basis of current, best available information and planning at bioregional or regional ecosystem scales.
- 1.1.E Use tools such as stewardship programs, nature refuge agreements, systematic conservation planning incentives, market-based instruments and tender-based incentive mechanisms, to encourage implementation projects at all scales.
- 1.1.F Prioritise revegetation programs so that they are undertaken within state and regional conservation corridors, or degraded areas of high ecological significance, using local native species in a mix that enhances ecological function.

Explanatory notes

Areas the state has identified as being of particular interest, and where specific development controls are required, are shown in map 2 (see appendix 2)⁹. These areas of high ecological significance include:

- wetlands
- protected areas
- endangered and of-concern regional ecosystems
- essential habitat for endangered, vulnerable and rare species
- non-woody regional ecosystems (not protected by provisions of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*).

Areas of general ecological significance include other areas containing remnant vegetation.

Corridors establish connections between core areas of remnant vegetation and provide opportunities for flora and fauna to respond to climate change impacts.

Environmental offsets are positive measures taken to counterbalance negative

environmental impacts that cannot otherwise be avoided or minimised to ensure no net loss of ecological values. An offset may be located within or outside the development site and should be legally secured. Approval of an offset requires, in the first instance, that the government's environmental standards are met. The Queensland Government's *Environmental Offset Policy, Policy for Vegetation Management Offsets September 2007*, and *Draft Policy for Biodiversity Offsets: Consultation Draft December 2008*, jointly provide a policy base and offset calculation methodology for achieving effective offsets.

Regional stakeholders identified a number of knowledge gaps requiring further research including:

- poor understanding of surface–groundwater interactions
- the need to consider ecological, as well as human-use impacts, in water resource planning and water allocations
- the need to monitor stream flows, to understand the impact of extractions on the ecological condition of aquatic systems
- incomplete aquatic conservation assessments
- poor understanding of the impact of climate change on biodiversity
- incomplete terrestrial biodiversity planning assessments
- the need to develop environmental values and water quality objectives for regional water bodies, to generate regionally specific water quality parameters.

Current programs and projects to achieve regional biodiversity benefits at property scale (individual landholding) include:

- the Back on Track program¹⁰—an initiative of the Department of Environment and Resource Management guiding species conservation and recovery that prioritises Queensland's native species
- recovery plans for specific species identified as threatened
- the Delbessie Agreement (formerly known as the Rural Leasehold Land Strategy)¹¹—one component of which awards longer term leases over state land to reward improved management of biodiversity.

9 See also Appendix 1 for mapping methodology

10 See www.epa.qld.gov.au/natureconservation/wildlife/backontrackspeciesprioritisationframework

11 See www.nrw.qld.gov.au/land/state/ruralleasehold/strategy



2. Natural resource management

Desired regional outcome

The productive capacity and social and cultural values of the region's landscapes and supporting ecosystems are maintained through the stewardship of informed resource managers.



Land, water and vegetation are critical resources in Maranoa–Balonne. Since European settlement, the region's wealth has largely derived from their use and management. Early European settlers viewed the region's vegetation as an impediment to agricultural development. Considerable effort, supported by public and private investment, has been made to clear native vegetation for agricultural development. The rate of woody vegetation clearing accelerated from the 1950s. This was a result of the availability of heavy equipment and the demand for more cropping land due to better prices for cereals.

Changing community attitudes to land clearing and international agreements in relation to greenhouse gas targets and the environment contributed to the phasing out of remnant vegetation clearing in Queensland. Broadscale clearing of native remnant vegetation is no longer permitted under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.

A native timber industry, with a major focus on the harvest and milling of cypress pine, contributes significantly to the local economies of Injune, Roma, Mungallala, Surat and Mitchell. Approximately 80 000 cubic metres of cypress sawlog is sold annually by the Department of Environment and Resource Management. This is derived from state forests and other state controlled land. Additional cypress sawlog is sourced from private lands.

The Statewide Forests Process will determine future forest management arrangements and supply commitments for timber from state-owned lands. Smaller volumes of hardwood timber are also accessed from state controlled native forests north of Roma. All timber harvesting is subject to compliance with environmental codes and other standards.

SunWater operates two water supply schemes in Maranoa–Balonne. The St George scheme provides water for the irrigation of cotton, cereals, grapes, melons, peanuts and small crops, as well as urban supply to St George for domestic and industrial use. The open channel system is supplied from Beardmore Dam via several regulating weirs. The Maranoa River scheme is based on the Neil Turner Weir on the Maranoa River at Mitchell. Town water supplies are sourced from both sub-artesian bores and surface water from local watercourses. Water made available as a consequence of extracting coal seam gas is another potential supply of water that could be used for various purposes. The variable quality of this water may, however, necessitate treatment for potential use. The presence of salts requires careful management of water storage, release to natural systems and disposal of residual salt, to avoid wider problems.

Maranoa–Balonne takes in the Surat Energy Resources Province, associated mainly with the Surat Basin. In general, shallower coal seams exploitable by open-cut methods lie to the east of the region. Deeper Surat Basin coal seams with significant stores of coal seam gas occur in the eastern and central parts of the region. A north-trending unit of the Bowen Basin underlies the Surat Basin. Located near Injune, it contains coal seam gas and has conventional gas and petroleum deposits further south. Significant bentonite clay deposits, as well as extractive (construction aggregate) resources, are found in the region.

Coal seam gas reserves in the Fairview and other Roma gas fields will experience increased exploration and extraction activity over the life of the regional plan. Current proposals for construction of liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facilities in Gladstone are based on increased gas supplies from the region.



2.1 Water—access and sustainable use

Water is arguably the region's most important natural resource. Its availability underpins urban settlement, agricultural production and the development of the resources and energy sector. Water enriches community life through recreation, arts and tourism opportunities and contributes to regional liveability. Prolonged drought periods and uncertainty regarding the regional impacts of climate change on water flows and supplies highlight the need for adaptive water management regimes. These regimes must be responsive to improved scientific understanding of climate change and variability, and competing demands for water to support ecological functions and meet consumptive needs.

The continued delivery of water to natural systems and users depends on the maintenance of both natural systems (wetlands, watercourses and aquifers) and water infrastructure (storages, pumping facilities and reticulation networks). Water from coal seam gas production requires careful management, owing to its variable quality.

Planning and decision making for activities that impact on water assets must consider ecological sustainability development principles, support viable development and maximise public benefit.

Objective

To ensure that the use of surface water and groundwater resources for urban¹² and non-urban¹³ purposes is sustainable, thereby maintaining aquatic ecosystems, protecting environmental values and responding to climate change impacts.

Land use policies

2.1.1 Approve development for urban purposes only where there is secure access to adequate supplies of water of suitable quality to support proposed activities.

2.1.2 Adopt demand management principles in the planning, design and construction of water cycle infrastructure, including water supply, sewerage and drainage infrastructure.

2.1.3 Plan, design, construct and operate urban development to protect environmental values and meet the water quality objectives of the *Environmental Protection (Water) Policy 2008* for regional surface water, groundwater and wetlands.

2.1.4 Design, locate and operate development near waterways and wetlands to incorporate suitable buffers and avoid impacts on water quality and aquatic ecosystems.

Aligned strategies

2.1.A Water users adopt efficient practices, focusing on use minimisation and reuse, source substitution and 'fitness-for-purpose' quality measures.

2.1.B Eliminate point source wastewater discharge of pollutants where practicable. Otherwise, handle wastewater in accordance with best-practice environmental management, to protect or enhance environmental values and meet water quality objectives of receiving waters.

2.1.C Investigate and promote impact-neutral opportunities for the beneficial reuse of water associated with coal seam gas extraction.

2.1.D Provide safe, healthy and reliable water supplies to all urban consumers.

2.1.E Address threats to allocation security, water quality and natural system integrity, through the use of tools that promote the protection of riverine and wetland habitats, manage weeds and pests, and improve land management practices that adversely affect the environment.

2.1.F Support the use of a range of mechanisms to protect, conserve, enhance and restore the environmental, social and economic values of river and groundwater systems and wetlands.

2.1.G Ensure that the extraction and use of water associated with coal seam gas extraction complies with statutory requirements¹⁴ and demonstrates minimal adverse impacts on water quality and quantity in regional water bodies and aquifers.

2.1.H Use water consumption targets for water supply planning and financial assessment purposes.

Explanatory notes

Planning scheme measures should require an applicant to demonstrate how much water is needed to support the proposed activity and provide evidence of secure access to an adequate volume of water (e.g. a water supply contract from a water service provider).

New development involving reused or recycled water should be subject to development assessment measures that address human health and safety concerns, as well as other environmental impacts. The Department of Environment and Resource Management's *Manual for Recycled Water Agreements in Queensland December 2005*, provides guidance for establishing agreements between suppliers and users of recycled water.

Water resource plans and resource operations plans are in place across the Maranoa–Balonne, covering the Moonie, Condamine-Balonne, Warrego-Paroo-Bulloo-Nebine and Fitzroy catchments, as well as the Great Artesian Basin. These statutory plans are vital in addressing competing demands for water. They provide strategies that balance the water needs of the environment with human water needs, such as those associated with irrigated agriculture, mining and

¹² Urban uses include residential, industrial and other uses associated with urban centres.

¹³ Non-urban uses include water for agriculture and mining.

¹⁴ See Queensland Government policy position in relation to coal seam gas water at www.dip.qld.gov.au/growth-strategies/management-of-coal-seam-gas-water



town water supply, as well as stock and domestic water use. Preparation of water plans that provide for the environment's water needs are a Queensland Government commitment under the National Water Initiative.

There are a number of relevant government instruments that aim for ecologically sustainable management of water, waterways and wetlands. These include:

- *Environmental Protection (Water) Policy 1997* Schedule 1 (environmental values and water quality objectives for waters) and the *Queensland Water Quality Guidelines 2006*, which provide environmental values and water quality objectives for water quality management and protection of aquatic ecosystems
- regional vegetation management codes, which provide criteria for assessing development in proximity to wetlands and waterways
- water resource plans, resource operations plans and regional water supply strategies
- Department of Environment and Resource Management *Stormwater quality control guidelines for local government 1998*.

Water quality values in the region are determined by targets set in the regional natural resource management plan, or values established under the

Environmental Protection (Water) Policy 1997. The Queensland Government has responded to ambiguity regarding the management of associated water from coal seam gas extraction by developing the *Queensland Coal Seam Gas Water Management Policy*¹⁵. The policy balances the need for disposal with protection of environmental values and beneficial use options.

The Queensland Murray-Darling Committee has been working with councils in the region towards establishing water-use efficiency objectives and appropriate mechanisms for each town. This work will help establish per capita consumption targets for towns. These targets will help local and state government plan for better investment in water infrastructure for town supplies and will inform councils' development of total water management plans. Metering of all domestic water use to provide baseline consumption data is an essential first step in understanding usage patterns and identifying opportunities for water-use efficiency gains. Options for treating wastewater to reuse standard are to be investigated.

Sewerage treatment plants and operations have the capacity to release pollutants into waterways. These pollutants flow downstream and have adverse impacts on the natural environment and water quality and can be harmful for human health. Conversely, waste water discharged from sewerage systems and treatment plants can be beneficially reused or recycled,

which are preferred outcomes as they help to ensure that environmental values and water quality objectives are achieved.

2.2 Primary production – sustainability

Primary production has been a fundamental driver of the Maranoa–Balonne economy since European settlement. Sheep and cattle grazing, dryland and irrigated cropping, and the production of timber products—especially from cypress pine—have been regional economic mainstays. Agriculture provides direct employment and generates wider social and economic benefits across the region, through related employment in transport, processing, value-adding and ancillary service sectors.

Healthy natural systems underwrite the regional economic and social benefits that accrue from agriculture. To ensure the resilience and continued healthy functioning of these systems, primary production must be based on sound management practices. New understandings about natural resource management best practice must be readily available to producers and the uptake of these practices actively encouraged. Research in the following areas will inform improvements in the sustainable management of primary production enterprises:

- natural resource management, including shifts in natural system behaviour and the regional implications of such shifts
- economic opportunities for environmental stewardship, including better understanding of the opportunity for bio-sequestration¹⁶ and geo-sequestration¹⁷
- primary production techniques, including use of improved genetic stocks, low-impact chemicals, integrated pest management and conservation farming techniques.

¹⁵ See www.dip.qld.gov.au/growth-strategies/queensland-coal-seam-gas-water-management-policy

¹⁶ Bio-sequestration is the capture and storage of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, from burning fossil fuels, in soil and plants.

¹⁷ Geo-sequestration is the capture and storage of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, from burning fossil fuels, in deep underground rock reservoirs.

Increasingly, new agricultural ventures based on delivering a range of environmental services will supplement economic returns from traditional activities. Developing a culture of encouragement, capacity building and entrepreneurship is essential to this broadening of the region's agricultural base.

Objective

To ensure the long-term prosperity and sustainability of primary production while maintaining environmental values.

Land use policies

- 2.2.1 Good quality agricultural land in the region is identified and protected.
- 2.2.2 Protect the viability of primary production through land use planning measures such as restricting inappropriate subdivision and development.

Aligned strategies

- 2.2.A Encourage the uptake of property management systems to improve environmental, social and economic outcomes.
- 2.2.B Facilitate the effective operation of regional networks to engage industry organisations, natural resource management groups, researchers, community sector organisations, government agencies and individual producers to collaboratively build sector capacity to enable sustainable management of natural resources.
- 2.2.C Encourage local governments, industry groups and individual enterprises to reflect climate change policy positions in their strategic and operational plans, in accordance with policy positions adopted at state and national levels.

- 2.2.D Protect and manage the region's land by adopting sustainable land management practices to minimise the risk of land degradation.

Explanatory notes

Further guidance in relation to rural residential development is included in 4.3. The urban fringe and rural residential/rural production interfaces are the most likely sources of conflict. *State Planning Policy 1/92 Development and the Conservation of Agricultural Land* and related separation guidelines apply.

It is recommended that minimum lot sizes be identified in local government planning schemes, to restrict rural subdivisions in agriculturally productive areas. This will ensure viable, productive farm sizes are maintained and reduce land use conflicts between agricultural and residential uses. For minimum lot sizes suited to particular agricultural purposes (mainly grazing enterprises), information from the Department of Environment and Resource Management provides guidance.

The current initiatives revolve around incorporating the principles of OnePlan¹⁸ and other practices currently recommended by industry. Aligning development of property plans with overall sub-catchment natural resource management plans to achieve coordinated landscape-wide approaches to land management is recommended.

2.3 Pest management

The proliferation of weed species and pests is of continuing concern and expense to Maranoa–Balonne land managers. Coordinated efforts by landholders, local and state government, and Landcare and catchment management groups are directed at addressing the introduction and spread of pest plants and impacts of wild dogs, feral pigs, cats and goats.

Climate change can potentially alter the distribution of pest species. Hotter weather, less rainfall and carbon dioxide fertilisation will affect plant growth and productivity and may change native and cultivated pastures. There could be a shift in the distribution of existing pests, diseases and weeds and new ones may appear.

Objective

To manage known animal and plant pests for the protection of present and future land use and economic opportunities.

Aligned strategies

- 2.3.A Prevent and monitor exposure to exotic and introduced pests, weeds and diseases in the region, through the combined efforts of government, industry, community and landholders.
- 2.3.B Support responsible pest management strategies that protect the environment and the productive capacity of natural resources, communities, industries and businesses.
- 2.3.C Improve the community's ability to manage, and where possible eliminate, pest weeds and animals, in a manner consistent with any endorsed pest or biosecurity management plans or strategies.

Explanatory notes

Weed and pest animal species cause significant economic, environmental and social problems across the Queensland Murray–Darling basin region. Successful management of problem plants and animals can be difficult, given the large numbers of species and land area that must be considered within resource limitations.

Key government, industry and community stakeholders in pest management and planning across the Maranoa–Balonne region, have set agreed targets for the

¹⁸ OnePlan is a framework to simplify the preparation of property-level management plans currently required by government, promoted by the Queensland Government's *Blueprint for the Bush* initiative.



management and control of prioritised pest species. The targets contribute to the development of regional pest management plans, to ensure that key stakeholders are working towards the same outcome for each pest plant or pest animal, and resources, expertise and effort are coordinated.

The regional planning and prioritisation process encompasses pests that are declared under the *Pest and Stock Route Management Act 2002*. There are three classes of declared pests under this Act. These pests are targeted for control, because they cause, or have potential to cause, serious economic, environmental or social impacts. Regional priority species are not all declared under the Act, but have been identified as an inherent threat to the region, or as a new and emerging threat, and upon which stakeholders have the ability to successfully implement control measures.

2.4 Partnerships and knowledge

Responsibility for the management of Maranoa–Balonne’s natural assets rests with a diverse range of individuals and organisations. Management responsibilities range from regulation to adoption of best practice within specific industries.

All sectors seek a sustainable future. They share an increasing reliance on research and development and the innovative adoption of the findings. Region-specific research, coupled with regional interpretation of broader discoveries, informs understanding of ecosystems and processes that support the region’s environments and livelihoods.

Increasingly sophisticated and powerful tools for property and catchment planning and management rely on accurate natural resource data at appropriate scales. Such data is also the foundation of much of the resource management research undertaken. Regional management partnerships will continue to identify and address data gaps, in terms of coverage and scale, through targeted investment.

Sharing of knowledge and understanding is also a critical factor in achieving best practice management of land, water and biodiversity assets and fostering a shared appreciation of the region’s natural values. Organisations serving natural resource stakeholders will only maintain relevance and achieve longevity if they effectively serve the interests of locals, constantly strive for best available scientific understandings and engage broadly with stakeholders.

To ensure the best possible outcomes for the region’s natural environment, effective, cooperative partnerships are essential. Resource managers, industry and Traditional Owner groups, all levels of government, and community sector organisations, all have a role to play. Collaborative partnerships between researchers and funding bodies, researchers and their peers, and land managers across all sectors are essential.

Stakeholders have identified a number of principles to help achieve the regional plan’s objective for partnerships and knowledge sharing. These principles include:

- increased education attainment levels through a range of vocational and formal education programs
- improved understanding of natural resource management programs and outcomes by decision makers, especially in relation to development approval
- inclusive partnerships that better engage all sectors of the community, especially Indigenous people and women
- coordination across local government and regional planning boundaries
- information sharing through an effective system of natural resource management data collection, analysis and communication
- a triple bottom line approach to natural resource management.

Objective

To establish and maintain effective, cooperative working partnerships which foster improved natural resource management outcomes through a shared and continually improving understanding of the region’s resources.

Aligned strategies

- 2.4.A Support research activities and innovative implementation projects aimed at improving natural resource management practices.
- 2.4.B Identify information gaps and adopt a cooperative approach to addressing those gaps.
- 2.4.C Promote access to information on the region’s natural resources and store data in formats that are accessible to the region’s communities.
- 2.4.D Use collaboration, information sharing and alignment of partner efforts to strengthen strategic regional partnerships and influence regional natural resource management practices.
- 2.4.E Regional coordination groups engage all stakeholders and provide holistic input into strategic natural resource management planning and implementation activities.

Explanatory notes

A priority issue raised by a number of stakeholders is the need for a method to assess the cumulative impacts of developments in Maranoa–Balonne. This understanding is needed to inform policy and procedural changes for the assessment and approval of project proposals.

Initiatives to broaden knowledge and understanding of the range of key organisations, and their roles in natural resource management, are vital to facilitating partnership development.

Partnerships need to be developed across environmental, economic and social spheres to address plans and policies that propose physical environmental change that may affect other spheres of community life. The findings of social impact assessments, now required as part of revised environmental impact assessment procedures, will inform the considerations of such groups. (See also section 4.3, Enhancing and promoting lifestyle and quality of life).

3. Strong communities

Desired regional outcome

Engaged residents, actively participating in a healthy community that is enriched by its diversity, empowered by its influence on service provision and attractive to new residents.



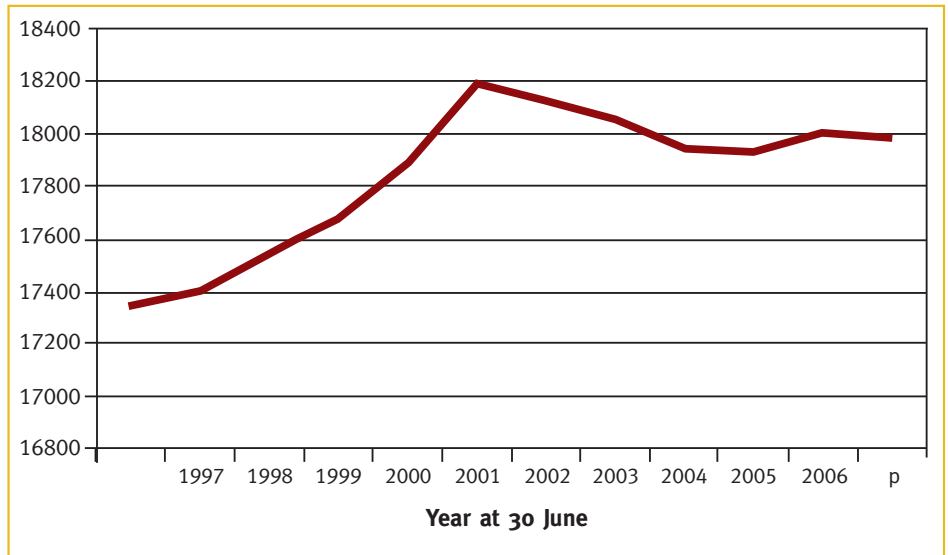
Demographic analysis for regional populations has traditionally focused on estimates of the resident population. The increasing occurrence of fly-in and fly-out and drive-in and drive-out workforces to service the mining industry across Australia has highlighted the need to account for non-resident populations in planning for infrastructure and services.

Maranoa resident population

In 2007, the estimated resident population of Maranoa–Balonne was 17 985. This represents approximately 0.4 per cent of Queensland’s total population. The projected population for Maranoa in 2031 is 19 842, an annual average increase of 74 people. The population of Maranoa–Balonne is increasing annually at a rate of 0.4 per cent, which is lower than the expected annual population change of 1.7 per cent for Queensland (see figures 3 and 4).

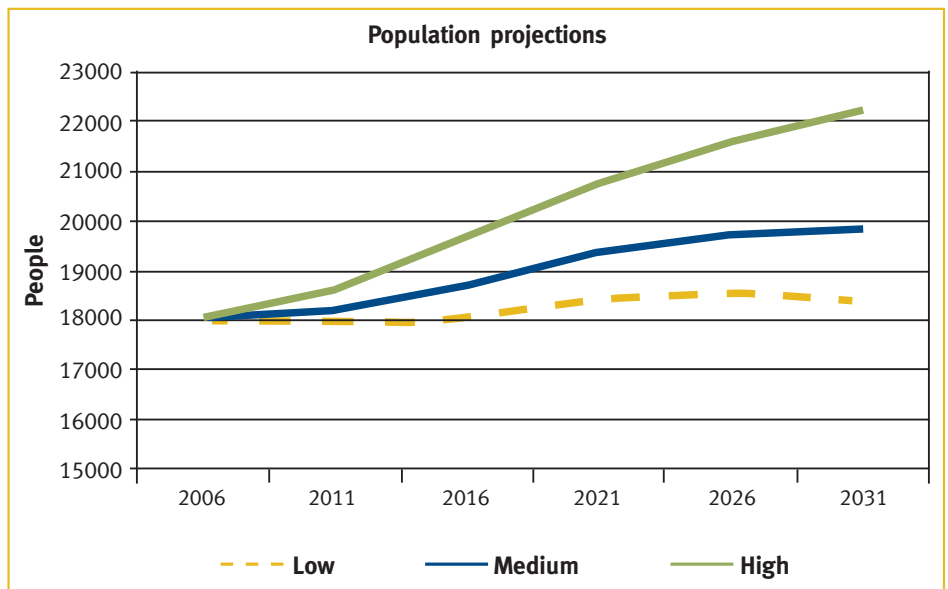
Maranoa–Balonne is home to almost 1600 Indigenous people, representing 9.5 per cent of the region’s total population. This percentage is considerably higher than the 3.3 per cent who make up Queensland’s total population. The region has a significantly lower proportion of people born overseas than the Queensland average, with 3.6 per cent born outside Australia, compared with 17.9 per cent across the state. The median age of Maranoa–Balonne’s population is projected to increase by two years from a median age of 34 years in 2001 to a median age of 36 years in 2031. This is younger than the predicted median age for Queensland, which is expected to rise from 35 in 2001 to 41 in 2026.

Figure 3. Estimated resident population



(Source: Planning Information and Forecasting Unit, 2007)

Figure 4. Maranoa population projections



(Source: Planning Information and Forecasting Unit, 2007)



Maranoa non-resident population

The workforce of Maranoa–Balonne currently includes a component of non-resident workers, mainly associated with the resources sector, and to a lesser extent the agricultural sector. Work camps in the Injune area and the high occupancy rate of workers in non-private dwellings—such as hotels, motels, guest houses and single-person quarters—in Roma, provide evidence of this rising trend. For various reasons, estimating the size of this population is problematic.

In June 2008, the count¹⁹ of non-resident workers in the Surat Basin²⁰ was about 1850, consisting of fly-in and fly-out and drive-in and drive-out employees and contractors of resource sector and construction companies. Of the 648 non-resident workers counted in the Maranoa Regional Council portion of the study area, 71 per cent lived in single person quarters (SPQ) or accommodation or work camps located on resource leases. Approximately 190 of Roma's non-resident workers occupied commercial accommodation located in towns.

Issues in the Bowen Basin relating to service delivery and infrastructure capacity shortfalls, as well as the social issues associated with large concentrations of workers separated from family support networks, highlight the imperative for accurate estimation of the non-resident population, and inclusion of these statistics in the Maranoa–Balonne demographic profile. Potential growth in Maranoa–Balonne's non-resident population is demonstrated by the Bowen Basin example, whereby in 2006²¹ it was estimated that there was one non-resident worker for every seven permanent residents.

3.1 Changing demographics

Projections indicate the region's population will experience a gradual increase over the next 20 years. This change will not be uniform, with growth in resource developments expected to significantly boost some local populations. Other projections also highlight that household sizes will generally decline, the average age of the population will increase and the population will become more concentrated in larger centres. The regional plan recognises the need for planning at a regional level, to address predicted demographic changes.

Demographic projections are by no means certain. Population change over the next two decades will be closely linked to major developments in the resources and energy sector. Significant departure from the region's population projections is canvassed as part of scenario planning for the development of the Surat Energy Resources Province²². A concentration of transient resource and energy sector workers is anticipated. Consequently, planning for future needs should consider temporary, short-term and long-term housing and service delivery needs, as forecast in various scenarios.

There is also evidence to suggest a general increase in the proportion of Aboriginal people in western centres for a variety of reasons including:

- Aboriginal resident populations tend to be sedentary, so the proportion of Aboriginal people leaving communities when there is a downturn in local economies/employment opportunities is lower than for the wider community
- as regional opportunities for career advancements arise, Aboriginal people return to country and make up the majority of the incoming population.

This difference is illustrated by data²³ from the 2006 census. In the 0-24 year age category— in the non-Indigenous population 35.3 per cent comprises people of these ages whereas in the Indigenous population 55.7 per cent of people are in this age category.

Objective

To ensure that reliable and current demographic data and projections are available and understood throughout the region and that this information underpins planning for, and delivery of, regional services and infrastructure.

Land use policy

3.1.1 Incorporate measures into planning schemes in accordance with the regional activity centres network to:

- ensure an adequate supply (a minimum of 15 years) of urban land for the expansion of residential development, light industry and community infrastructure, which does not compromise significant regional natural resources such as areas of high and general ecological significance, floodplains and identified good quality agricultural land
- cater for the region's changing housing needs
- enable assessment and conditioning of development applications for workers' camps located outside mining leases.

Aligned strategies

3.1.A Maximise the accuracy of regional profiles and statistical analyses through active participation of regional residents and other stakeholders.

19 Planning Information and Forecasting Unit 2009: Surat Basin population report 2008 Full-time equivalent (FTE) population estimates at 30 June 2008

20 The report relates to Western Downs and Maranoa Regional Councils

21 Planning Information and Forecasting Unit 2006 & 2007. Note: this ratio has reduced to one for eight in the 2007 estimate.

22 www.siqacc.com/services/sbss_other

23 ABS 2007, 2006 Census - Community profile series, South West statistical division (Catalogue No. 2002.o)

- 3.1.B Promote and publish findings of demographic research in formats readily accessible by regional stakeholders and community members.
- 3.1.C Adopt the best available demographic data for all planning initiatives in the region.

Explanatory notes

Adequate land supply is required to ensure accommodation is available and affordable in growth areas of the region and to provide for light industrial land requirements associated with energy developments in the Surat Basin. Land supply options need to be mindful of constraints on land, such as areas of remnant vegetation and land tenure associations, as well as other state interests.

Increased development of the resources sector has the potential to increase the number of non-resident workers in Maranoa–Balonne. The Planning Information and Forecasting Unit will monitor non-resident Surat Basin populations, in an attempt to ensure that better demographic information is available to inform decisions about service provision in the region.

3.2 Cultural values

Maranoa–Balonne has a proud Indigenous and European cultural heritage. Considerable effort has been made to record the rituals, significant places, stories and customs of the region's Aboriginal people—the Bidjara, Bigamubul, Gunggari, Iman, Kooma and Mandandanji. Their rich history links to a living culture increasingly appreciated for its uniqueness and spiritual value by contemporary Australian society. This is reflected in the adoption of Aboriginal language programs by schools in the region and a rise in demand for Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences. It has been established that there were

at least 40 tribal groups in the area now covered by southern and south-west Queensland²⁴.

Aboriginal people had elaborate cultural rituals, sacred sites and social structures, often aligned with their strong relationship to country. European settlement and the subsequent treatment of Aboriginal people have seen the loss of much of that knowledge and relationship to country. Changing attitudes in the broader community should ideally be harnessed to protect and better understand the many remaining sites and cultural items significant to Aboriginal people. Art sites, bora rings, tree markings, spears and tools are some of the physical manifestations of this long history that require recognition and protection from inappropriate development.

European settlement of Maranoa–Balonne started in the mid-1800s. A heritage of numerous historic buildings, Cobb and Co coach sites, old timber road bridges and antique farm cottages and equipment remains. This rich rural history plays an important part in the development of the tourism industry, as identified by the regional attractions such as the Cobb and Co complex in Surat and Queensland's oldest winery in Roma.

To protect the region's rich history, the potential impact of development must be considered and any negative impacts avoided.

Objective

To identify, protect, maintain and foster a shared appreciation of the unique identity and cultural heritage values, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, of the Maranoa–Balonne region.

Land use policies

- 3.2.1 Incorporate measures into planning schemes to protect items and places of cultural significance.
- 3.2.2 Identify heritage places in local government planning schemes.

- 3.2.3 Ensure development adjacent to heritage places or on heritage sites does not compromise the cultural heritage significance of those places.

Aligned strategies

- 3.2.A Encourage local governments to identify places of cultural heritage significance through a heritage survey using key historical themes for Maranoa–Balonne.
- 3.2.B In carrying out development activity, take all reasonable and practicable measures to ensure that Indigenous cultural heritage is preserved (the 'cultural heritage duty of care').
- 3.2.C Perpetuate broader understanding of the cultural significance and history of Maranoa–Balonne's sites and artefacts through collaborative and inclusive endeavours.
- 3.2.D Support activities to identify, interpret, protect and promote appreciation of the region's cultural heritage.
- 3.2.E Celebrate the region's diverse communities, culture, arts and recreation through initiatives that highlight cross-sector coordination, facilitate tourism growth and deliver wider regional benefits.

Explanatory notes

The strategies refer to both Aboriginal and European heritage, so that both the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* and the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* apply.

Planning scheme measures to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage should cater for both identified and mapped sites, as well as sites that are currently unrecorded or undisclosed due to cultural sensitivities. There is a concern that the use of a map to inform a planning scheme code creates a false impression regarding the location of heritage and incorrectly implies that unrecorded sites and artefacts are not protected.

²⁴ Tindale, Norman. 1974, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*.



The *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* provides for a register of state heritage areas, archaeological places and protected areas. Development of a place registered under the Act is assessable development. The Act also requires local governments to keep a local heritage register of places of cultural heritage significance in its local government area. The *Queensland Heritage Regulation 2003* includes a local heritage place code, which is an Integrated Development Assessment System code for development on a local heritage place.

The Department of Environment and Resource Management is currently undertaking a statewide survey of Queensland's heritage places. Key historical themes that are relevant to Maranoa–Balonne have been identified in the *Queensland Cultural Heritage Places Context Study—Report to the Environmental Protection Agency*. Local government should use these themes when undertaking a local heritage survey of its area.

Historical themes for Maranoa–Balonne (non-Indigenous)

Using the land

- pastoral industry – began as the primary economic activity and remains prominent
- irrigation schemes on the Balonne – encouraging the development of the cotton industry
- oil and gas production – significant since the 1960s.

Examples of places which may be of cultural heritage significance

- sites illustrating development of the pastoral industry in the 19th century, particularly homesteads constructed prior to 1880
- sites demonstrating the development of the oil and gas industry in the region.

Decision makers operating in this area should refer to the Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites and the Burra Charter²⁵.

The Department of Environment and Resource Management maintains two registers of cultural heritage sites that are useful for decision makers:

- Indigenous significance register²⁶
- Queensland Heritage Register²⁷

The Queensland Murray-Darling Committee's *Regional Caring for Country Plan 2008-2011* was developed and adopted in consultation with Aboriginal communities who reside in the region. It provides region-specific guidance in relation to a wide range of issues facing these communities.

Cultural heritage sites are 'valuable features', and one of the core matters to be addressed in planning schemes under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

The Cultural Heritage Duty of Care Guidelines (*Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*) state that in carrying out development activity, all reasonable and practicable measures must be taken to ensure that it does not harm Aboriginal cultural heritage (the 'cultural heritage duty of care'). Compliance with the cultural heritage duty of care must be in accordance with gazetted cultural heritage duty of care guidelines. An assessment of proposed activity against these guidelines will help determine whether, or to what extent, Aboriginal cultural heritage may be harmed.

Suggested implementation actions include:

- continuing to document Maranoa–Balonne's sites of historic and cultural significance and maintaining these records in a comprehensive, accessible database, ensuring that access to information and sites is culturally appropriate and does not compromise the sites' values

- promoting an appreciation of Maranoa–Balonne's history and store of significant sites, places, icons, buildings, infrastructure and artefacts, and raising awareness of responsibilities relating to their protection.



3.3 Promoting health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing is a concept that emphasises social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities. To reach a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, communities must allow people to realise their aspirations, satisfy their needs and be resilient to change. Healthy lifestyles and health promoting environments significantly reduce the long-term costs of health care to governments and improve the quality of people's lives. Preventing ill health and improving physical and mental health also helps people participate in work and thereby improves productivity.

25 See www.icomos.org/australia

26 See www.epa.qld.gov.au/culturalheritage/registerandsinventories/queenslandheritageregister

27 See www.nrw.qld.gov.au/culturalheritage/searchrequest/accessingdataguidelines

Changing patterns of life, work and leisure impact on health and wellbeing. Satisfying work and leisure experiences contribute to improvement in the health of individuals. In order for people to accept personal responsibility for their wellbeing, they must first understand the health consequences of lifestyle decisions. This raised awareness and acceptance encourages life-long learning about personal health, preparation for all of life's stages and better ability to cope with, and be supported, in times of chronic illness and injury.

Improving the health status and access to personal fulfilment opportunities for Maranoa–Balonne residents is crucial. Important contributors to health and wellbeing include a secure upbringing in a supportive environment, ready access to information and services, safe communities, development of life skills and broad opportunities for making healthy choices. Realising the region's health potential will depend on widespread acceptance by individuals of the need to take control of those factors that determine health and wellbeing, and on governments and communities working together to provide the conditions that enable control of those factors.

Objective

To foster safe, inclusive communities and supportive environments which encourage health and wellbeing, celebrate the diversity of residents and provide enriching personal growth opportunities for everyone.

Land use policy

3.3.1 Ensure new development promotes healthy lifestyles and social interaction by incorporating the following features:

- safe, attractive, shaded and conveniently located parklands, playgrounds and open spaces
- well-maintained, connected and well-lit street and pathway networks to encourage walking, cycling and other forms of active transport

- buffering of high-impact land uses and separation from residential areas
- provisions for personal safety
- access for people with reduced mobility.

Aligned strategies

- 3.3.A Deliver safe and sustainable health services to regional communities.
- 3.3.B Demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of maintaining and strengthening rural and remote health service delivery by analysing the flow-on impact of a strong health sector on the economic and social wellbeing of communities.
- 3.3.C Actively involve consumers in the planning of health services to ensure these services are responsive to the needs of those who use them.
- 3.3.D Deliver services through effective partnership arrangements between agencies and sectors that make an important contribution to health.
- 3.3.E Provide Indigenous health services in a culturally and geographically appropriate way, maximising integration with other health care services.
- 3.3.F Support and promote community health and wellbeing programs.
- 3.3.G Deliver community infrastructure—recreational, sporting and cultural—in line with the regional activity centres network and local and regional priorities, and support delivery by an ongoing maintenance program.
- 3.3.H Use public health, cultural, social, sport and recreation plans to inform corporate and business plans for local governments.
- 3.3.I Develop appropriate cultural and social support mechanisms for new residents settling into Maranoa–Balonne's rural lifestyle and use these mechanisms to attract professional staff and their families to the region.

Explanatory notes

The planning schemes may incorporate and encourage the use of mechanisms such as crime prevention through environmental design principles. Possible implementation actions include conducting an audit of the design of larger centres across the region and reporting problematic areas to local governments and the police.

Queensland Health identifies the need to plan for delivery of safe and sustainable health services to small communities, those with populations of 200 to 2000 people. This includes developing a minimum suite of health services that each community will be able to access. These are known as the universal service obligations. The range of services offered will address the needs of the community, be linked to services provided in larger communities and be delivered in a safe and sustainable way.

A range of health services are currently funded by Queensland Health for the Maranoa–Balonne. These services are provided from the activity centres of Roma, St George, Mitchell, Injune, Mungindi, Surat, Dirranbandi, Wallumbilla and Yuleba, or through access to larger facilities in Toowoomba and Brisbane. A number of visiting specialist services are also provided. Service delivery varies, with some services offered daily, while others range from weekly to annually. Roma is the key health service provider for Maranoa–Balonne. Primary emergency services are available out of each centre—with the exception of Wallumbilla and Yuleba, where after-hours emergency services are provided through Roma. Uncomplicated birthing services for Maranoa–Balonne are offered through Roma and St George, with access to complicated birthing services available through Brisbane and Toowoomba.

It should be noted that future service decisions will be guided by changes in need, demand, service models, workforce and other parameters.

Queensland Health is considering possible service options that could be delivered by a range of providers and funding partners, as it will not



be possible for Queensland Health to be the sole provider. In many cases, the suite of services may be provided through existing organisations such as the Division of General Practice, Community Controlled Health Services, Queensland Police, Education Queensland, Department of Emergency Services, Royal Australian Flying Doctor Service and other community organisations such as Police Citizens Youth Clubs. The next step will be consultation with both the communities and service providers to determine sustainable service options.

3.4 Education and learning

Learning is a lifelong building block of sustainable communities that begins in the early years. It increases people's work and life skills, provides individual fulfilment, assists in gaining employment, supports those who are isolated from their communities, provides for economic growth and facilitates community capacity building. Social and economic development is dependent on the provision of, and access to, adequate education, training and skill development services by both community and businesses.

Support for students undertaking courses delivered online and by distance education strategies is essential. While it is important to expand these delivery modes, other training delivery strategies must also be explored.

Opportunities for enhancing education in the region include improving partnerships between local education providers and the following sectors:

- resources
- agricultural
- other regional employers.

Other initiatives include broadening high school curricula, improving access to tertiary education and employing flexible delivery methods to reduce the impact of remoteness.

Objective

To encourage and support a regional culture of lifelong learning.

Aligned strategies

- 3.4.A Flexible delivery modes are available for young people to complete senior studies across the broadest possible curriculum in their local communities.
- 3.4.B Deliver education and training programs and provide facilities in a manner consistent with the regional activity centres network.
- 3.4.C Support education and training programs, such as short courses and technical training opportunities.
- 3.4.D Government, industry and business collaborate to provide local professional development activities, so that employees can develop and enhance their skills without the need to travel outside the region.
- 3.4.E Investigate, develop and encourage opportunities to improve access to higher education in the region.
- 3.4.F Increase the uptake of qualifications within the region by streamlining and making education and training programs more user-friendly, and recognising prior learning.

Explanatory notes

The Department of Education and Training currently applies a statewide staffing model to deliver Prep–Year 10 key learning areas. Prep–Year 12 teaching is delivered in various school settings with negotiated access to 'virtual learning' technologies. The Department of Education and Training's ability to provide human resources must be considered when expanding subject offerings in rural and remote locations.

Provision of high-quality early childhood care and education is a vital ingredient in preparing children for school and in supporting working families. This is

especially true in centres with relatively high proportions of young people and high birth rates. Trained and accredited childcare workers and quality-care opportunities are both required to maximise learning outcomes for the very young and, at the same time, workforce participation by adults.

The expansion of the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy to include the Surat energy region is one potential implementation action. The academy is supported by a comprehensive and accessible online delivery service. Opportunities may exist to use Landcare and catchment centres as focal points for natural resource management education and capacity building.

The uptake of qualifications in Maranoa–Balonne could be encouraged by developing a strategy to identify opportunities for sustained higher education (tertiary) support through an education hub, to coordinate delivery of services and support to students.

3.5 Community organisations

Human services in Maranoa–Balonne are delivered by all levels of government and various community organisations. Together, they work to maintain or improve the wellbeing of the region's communities. Given the variety and number of providers, an integrated approach is essential to avoid duplication and ensure efficient resource use.

A decline in volunteers is also evident in the region, with many organisations struggling to meet their governance, accountability and reporting obligations, due to difficulty in attracting and retaining new staff. Competition for funding between organisations, service providers and government agencies can also affect trust and collaboration levels, and increase the risk of service duplication.

Objective

To have empowered and inclusive community organisations in Maranoa–Balonne, providing appropriate and diverse services to the community.

Aligned strategies

- 3.5.A Encourage community organisations to enhance their organisational and self-governance capacity.
- 3.5.B Encourage community members to participate in the continued growth and improvement of their community.
- 3.5.C Make better links between community organisations to improve service delivery and strengthen their operational capacity.
- 3.5.D Strengthen volunteer organisations through strategies to improve resources and efforts to attract and retain volunteers.

Explanatory notes

Stakeholders expressed a strong view that ‘community organisations should be steered by the community not driven by government.’ However, the region’s community capacity and social capital can be improved through measures to encourage volunteers, link similar organisations and departments, improve communication between government and non-government organisations, and encourage increased participation in community groups and events. Community organisations can be further supported through programs that develop formal opportunities for engagement, mentoring and volunteering in community activities that provide experience, skill development and ownership.

Improved processes for local and regional participation in decision making are required. Improvement in this area will enhance the quality and relevance of decisions, increase awareness of government and political processes, and empower regional stakeholders.



The need for improved collaboration and cooperation between all levels of government, business and the community is widely recognised.

3.6 Regional governance

A coordinated and collaborative approach to regional governance is essential to foster community development in the region. All levels of government and non-government organisations must work together in order to address the region’s needs and work towards achieving the vision and outcomes outlined in the regional plan.

Several concerns relating to governance in the region exist. These include:

- lack of incentive for business relocation or establishment outside South East Queensland

- ensuring that small communities are engaged in the activities and decisions of their local government
- concern that decisions that have significant and direct impact on the region are made without adequate local input.

Significant change to the social structure of associated centres may accompany energy-related developments. There is therefore a growing need for improved communication and coordination between regional industry developers and their support enterprises, government and local communities.

Objective

To facilitate a culture of communication, allowing governance and decision making to occur in a collaborative and coordinated manner.



Aligned strategies

- 3.6.A Engage regional stakeholders from all levels of government, community and industry groups in cross-sector forums, working groups and advisory bodies.
- 3.6.B Ensure forums, working groups and advisory bodies operate effectively and avoid overlap of jurisdictions by adopting measures such as clearly defined terms of reference.
- 3.6.C Encourage a regional culture of information sharing to broaden community understanding of significant regional issues.
- 3.6.D Facilitate interagency collaboration through measures such as resource sharing where appropriate (e.g. offices, transport and staff accommodation).

Explanatory notes

The Queensland Government has developed *A Sustainable Futures Framework for Queensland Mining Towns (2007)*, as an important way for communities to engage more broadly with resource development companies. The framework identifies six guiding principles and strategies for their adoption. These principles have broad application, beyond their immediate purpose of ensuring common understanding between communities and resource development companies operating in Maranoa–Balonne. They are highly relevant to improving regional governance. The six principles are:

- 1. Leadership** capability to support stakeholders to respond effectively to issues and accept responsibility for their actions.
- 2. Collaboration** between stakeholders leading to strong alliances and sharing of resources at local and/or regional levels.
- 3. Corporate social responsibility** is demonstrated at all levels of government and the private sector through action to ensure sustainable futures for mining communities.

4. Sustainability achieved through strategic planning to manage the social, economic and environmental impacts of mining operations.

5. Communication between stakeholders is clear and effective with appropriate testing of options.

6. Community engagement is achieved through the selection of appropriate engagement strategies, involvement of community stakeholders, and the effective use of skills and knowledge.

Current regional networks are disjointed and not inclusive of all key stakeholders. For example, participation in the South West Regional Managers' Coordination Network does not encompass all state government departments. Differences in boundaries, administrative structures and staff location complicate coordination. Further, the region only partially encompasses the Surat Energy Resources Province, making it difficult to coordinate and deliver a consistent regional approach to energy and mining-related matters in the basin.

4. Urban development

Desired regional outcome

Affordable, safe and climate-friendly residential accommodation with urban facilities and infrastructure suited to the diverse needs of a changing population.



Maranoa–Balonne is characterised by its rural landscape and road network that provides the major link between centres. Centres of the region tend to retain a small rural town feel, with a central business district concentrated on a traditional main street and predominantly single detached houses in residential areas.

In the centres of Roma and St George, and also in Mitchell, there are some multi-unit dwellings and levels of rural residential development are rising.

Increasing housing demand to accommodate workers in the resources sector is foreshadowed, mainly in Roma. Diverse housing options to cater for wide-ranging needs are encouraged. For example, there is high demand for short-term temporary worker accommodation, especially for seasonal agricultural workers and during the construction phase of mining and infrastructure projects. Much, but not all, of this demand is met by on-site work camps. At the other end of the spectrum, providing attractive urban and rural residential options for relocating families is central to the region's long-term prosperity.

Attractive, functional urban centres that effectively deliver services, provide for business growth and appeal to new residents are essential to the region's future.

4.1 Regional activity centres network

The settlement pattern of Maranoa–Balonne is characterised by relatively small population centres separated by considerable distances. Settlement size and location is primarily based on historical influences such as river crossing points, transport routes and resource availability. In more recent times, the development of the region's towns has been influenced by infrastructure development, such as Beardmore Dam, and resource industry developments.

The region's relatively small population and wide dispersal make the efficient and effective provision of services and infrastructure a challenging task. Settlements in Maranoa–Balonne are closely linked to the health, education, retail and commercial services available in Toowoomba.

Objective

To reinforce Maranoa–Balonne's activity centres network by providing timely and efficient infrastructure and services.

Land use policy

- 4.1.1 Ensure that all new urban development supports the centres identified in the plan's regional activity centres network, unless a clear need for departure is indicated by strong and sustained local population growth, or other significant development opportunities.

Aligned strategies

- 4.1.A Guide government investment in infrastructure and services in the region's activity centres by activity centre designations in Maranoa–Balonne's regional activity centres network.
- 4.1.B Recognise the need for, and preserve and enhance appropriate service provision for people in all communities within the region.

4.2 Housing and accommodation

Maranoa–Balonne's changing demographics have resulted in a significant shift in consumer demand, greatly increasing the need for affordable housing options for existing residents and for workers moving to the region.

There is a widening gap in the affordability and availability of housing in the region. The private housing market is characterised by lower quality and quantity of rental accommodation and poor maintenance standards. Further, there is limited understanding of the rights and responsibilities of both accommodation providers and tenants in the private rental market.

Housing costs in the region for both private rental and home purchase are increasing, and consequently affecting people on low and moderate incomes. Given the changing demographics across this region, there is a need to consider



housing options that meet community needs over time, to achieve choice and affordability.

Social housing in Maranoa–Balonne is currently provided to clients who meet the eligibility requirements of the Queensland Government's one social housing system, which offers housing options for a range of household types on the lowest incomes²⁸.

Transient housing needs, largely associated with agriculture and energy developments, should be met in a manner that fulfils regional needs, considers benefits beyond project time frames and complements, rather than competes with, existing regional housing supplies.

Housing designs for Maranoa–Balonne should reflect regional climatic conditions, energy efficiency initiatives and the diversity of housing type and tenure required to satisfy broadening community demand.

Objective

To ensure housing and accommodation options in the region are diverse, affordable and able to meet the changing demographic and economic needs of Maranoa–Balonne.

Land use policies

4.2.1 Allocate sufficient zoned land for urban and rural residential purposes in planning schemes that:

- provides access and proximity to essential services
- minimises the effects and risks of climate change and natural hazards such as flooding, landslip and bushfires
- protects areas of high ecological significance and areas of general ecological significance, as depicted in map 2 (see appendix 2)

- is not on good quality agricultural land, unless there is an overriding need in terms of public benefit and it cannot be located on alternative sites of poor or no agricultural quality
- does not compromise the viability of existing activities
- is able to be efficiently serviced with infrastructure
- allows for the development of a diverse housing stock.

4.2.2 Accommodate a greater mix of dwelling types and lot sizes in areas close to services, employment and other facilities in planning schemes.

Aligned strategies

- 4.2.A Encourage major employers to work with governments to ensure adequate accommodation is available for employees, with any additional accommodation taking into account potential future use.
- 4.2.B Explore and encourage opportunities and measures to facilitate new housing development in the region.
- 4.2.C Monitor residential land activity²⁹ in Maranoa–Balonne to measure take-up and supply of residential lots, to the extent warranted.
- 4.2.D Ensure an adequate supply of appropriate public and community housing is provided in the region.

Explanatory notes

A number of State Planning Policies (SPPs) and supporting documents provide guidance in relation to implementation of land use policies 4.2.1 and 4.2.2. These include:

- SPP 1/07 Housing and residential development
- SPP 1/03 Mitigating the adverse impacts of flood, bushfire and landslide

- SPP 1/92 Development and the conservation of agricultural land and Guideline 2 Separating agricultural and residential land uses
- SPP 2/07 Protection of extractive resources and accompanying guideline.

Housing options for short-term accommodation should consider future potential uses of the facilities. Reuse is an essential component of sustainability.

The Planning Information and Forecasting Unit generally monitors residential land activity for high-growth regions. Should Surat Basin developments result in significant population growth and residential development, the unit will consider the need for monitoring to inform orderly development aligned to infrastructure provision.

Measures to facilitate investment in housing might include guaranteed rental contracts.

4.3 Enhancing and promoting lifestyle and quality of life

Maranoa–Balonne offers a unique and enviable lifestyle, of which rural living is a key element. The region's lifestyle benefits include established sport and recreation clubs and facilities, more affordable housing than most metropolitan areas, no peak-hour traffic congestion, a diverse natural environment, safe communities, wide open spaces and an abundance of employment opportunities for tradespeople and professionals. The highways and rail lines link to major markets. Relatively affordable serviced land is available for industrial development. Furthermore, the development of energy resources within the Surat Basin has the potential to significantly enhance the range of regional employment opportunities and change the region's fundamentally rural character.

28 See www.housing.qld.gov.au/programs/ch/publications/info_pack_links

29 Available in the case that the extent of residential land development warrants monitoring and Planning Information Forecasting Unit capacity and resources are adequate.



Maranoa–Balonne can further enhance its reputation as a desirable place for new residents by ensuring new development contributes to the region’s liveability and services and facilities are effectively delivered.

Objective

To recognise, promote and enhance the enviable rural lifestyle Maranoa–Balonne provides, increasing appreciation both from within and outside the region.

Land use policies

- 4.3.1 Ensure new development adopts urban design principles—for both industrial and residential uses—that:
 - make best use of available infrastructure

- minimise the impacts of air and noise emissions so that environmental standards for the air and acoustic environments are not exceeded at the boundary of sensitive land uses
 - minimise greenhouse gas emissions
 - adequately buffer intensive uses such as resource developments, intensive agriculture and ‘hard-to-locate’ sport and recreation areas
 - cater for energy-efficient, eco-friendly and climate sensitive design.
- 4.3.2 Identify sites for integrated waste disposal, including recycling and reuse and incorporate regionally specific best-practice waste management, in a manner applicable to sparsely populated, low density communities that are separated by substantial distances.

Aligned strategies

- 4.3.A Market the region’s diverse employment opportunities and lifestyle benefits to attract new residents and businesses to Maranoa–Balonne.
- 4.3.B Plan and deliver public facilities, including cultural, sporting and social facilities, to reflect a centre’s classification in the regional activity centres network.
- 4.3.C Deliver health services that are responsive to community needs and complement other mechanisms for service delivery.
- 4.3.D Use social research conducted as part of social impact assessment processes, to assist local and state government in guiding future development decisions and strategic planning for resource communities³⁰.

- 4.3.E Share outcomes of social impact assessments through existing regional forums, to ensure a greater understanding of the social impacts of new mining developments.
- 4.3.F Avoid waste generation, and in instances where waste generation cannot be avoided, implement practices to reuse, recycle or recover wastes and materials prior to disposal.

Explanatory notes

It is not always possible to eliminate the effects of air and noise pollution. Providing separation distances between industry and sensitive activities serves to reduce the potential impacts on health, amenity and quality of life that may result from air and noise pollution. Wherever possible, sensitive land uses, such as residential development, should be located away from industrial or intensive agricultural land uses, and major transport routes.

Air and noise pollution is currently managed under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and specific statutory instruments of that Act, including:

- *Environmental Protection Regulation 2008*
- *Environmental Protection (Air) Policy 2008*
- *Environmental Protection (Noise) Policy 2008*.

This legislation establishes local, regional or state standards for air and acoustic quality. A state planning policy for air and noise is currently being developed by the Department of Environment and Resource Management. The state planning policy will contain a hierarchy of planning and management tools to protect sensitive land uses from the impacts of air and noise. It also protects land uses that are known to produce emissions from encroachment on sensitive land uses. The planning tools will include separation distances and separation areas.

³⁰ Resource communities are those local or regional communities that depend on, or are affected by, mineral extraction and associated activities, including petroleum and gas proposals.



Historically, there has been widespread use of chemicals in common farming practices. Residual chemicals persist in soils and buildings and on specific sites, such as dips and stockyards, with potential risk to people, animals and the environment. Several programs offer safe collection and recycling of cleaned chemical containers and the collection of unwanted rural, agricultural and veterinary chemicals. The ChemClear program provides for the collection of agricultural and veterinary chemical containers, while drumMUSTER has also been set up for the collection and recycling of certain chemical containers. Management strategies are required to address issues regarding contamination.

Implementation of health service delivery can be enhanced by regular audit and review of community and health services, such as doctors, dentists, specialists, mental health care, childcare and aged care, to identify gaps in services and priority areas for improvement. Service improvement should align with the designations of the regional activity centres network, to the greatest extent possible.

Social infrastructure refers to the community facilities, services and networks that help individuals, families, groups and communities meet their social needs, maximise their potential for personal development and enhance community wellbeing. They include:

- universal facilities and services such as education, training, health, open space, recreation and sport, safety and emergency services, religious, and arts and cultural facilities and services, and community meeting places
- lifecycle-targeted facilities and services, such as those for children, young people and older people
- targeted facilities and services for groups with special needs, such as families, people with a disability and Indigenous and culturally diverse people.

Social impact assessments are undertaken by proponents of major new and expanded mining and petroleum developments, as part of the application and approval process for the grant of mining and petroleum tenures. These assessments are required as part of existing environmental impact statement processes under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* and under the State Development and *Public Works Organisation Act 1971*, for projects declared to be significant projects under that Act.

The social research conducted by resource companies as part of a social impact assessment is expected to provide government with improved information on the cumulative social impacts of mining and petroleum developments on communities. This information is critical in guiding future development decisions and strategic planning for resource communities, for land use, service delivery and infrastructure requirements³¹.

The state government, in partnership with industry and local government, is committed to strengthening social impact assessment in the mining and petroleum industries through the Sustainable Resource Communities Policy. This policy includes initiatives that aim to build equitable and sustainable resource communities.

4.4 Disaster management

Objective

To prepare, review and implement emergency and disaster management plans addressing the response to, and recovery from, hazards likely to affect the region.

Land use policy

- 4.4.1 Development is not located in areas that are at risk of being affected by natural hazards.

Aligned strategies

- 4.4.A Ensure disaster management for the region includes mitigating the impact of natural disasters on the community, development, infrastructure and the environment. This includes strategies to raise awareness of the implications of inappropriate development and infrastructure within areas prone to natural hazards.
- 4.4.B Develop, implement and review a coordinated regional approach among all levels of government, industry and community to disaster management that integrates regional, subregional and local level plans for risk assessment, disaster mitigation and emergency planning.

Explanatory notes

The Queensland Government has released the State Planning Policy 1/03: *Mitigating the Adverse Impacts of Floods, Bushfire and Landslide*, which provides policy to ensure development is not affected by these natural hazards.

Queensland Police and the Department of Community Safety are currently preparing interim arrangements for district disaster coordinators, including details of relationships between district disaster management groups and local disaster management groups.

5. Economic development

Desired regional outcome

A robust, dynamic regional economy building on historic strengths, operating within the limits of natural systems and responding to new opportunities, so that balanced economic, social and environmental dividends accrue from sound business investments.



A strong and resilient regional economy is essential for the sustainable development of Maranoa–Balonne. It underpins the health and wellbeing of the regional population. Land use planning must recognise the importance of sustainable economic development and ensure that planning facilitates such development, particularly in regard to the provision of adequate land for business and industry purposes and the prevention of incompatible land uses.

The economy of Maranoa–Balonne has traditionally been supported by agricultural activities, predominantly dryland cropping of grains and irrigated farming of crops such as cotton and grazing. A transition from wool to beef cattle production has taken place over the last two decades. Feedlot production of beef cattle to capitalise on local grain supplies is becoming more prominent.

The region's agricultural production is typically worth more than \$500 million annually, with crops representing 30 per cent of that value and the remainder being stock production or disposals. It should be noted that these proportions fluctuate, dependent on seasonal conditions and cropping opportunity. The following table 3 details gross value of economic production by crop, as sourced from the 2006–2007 Australian Bureau of Statistics Agricultural Survey.

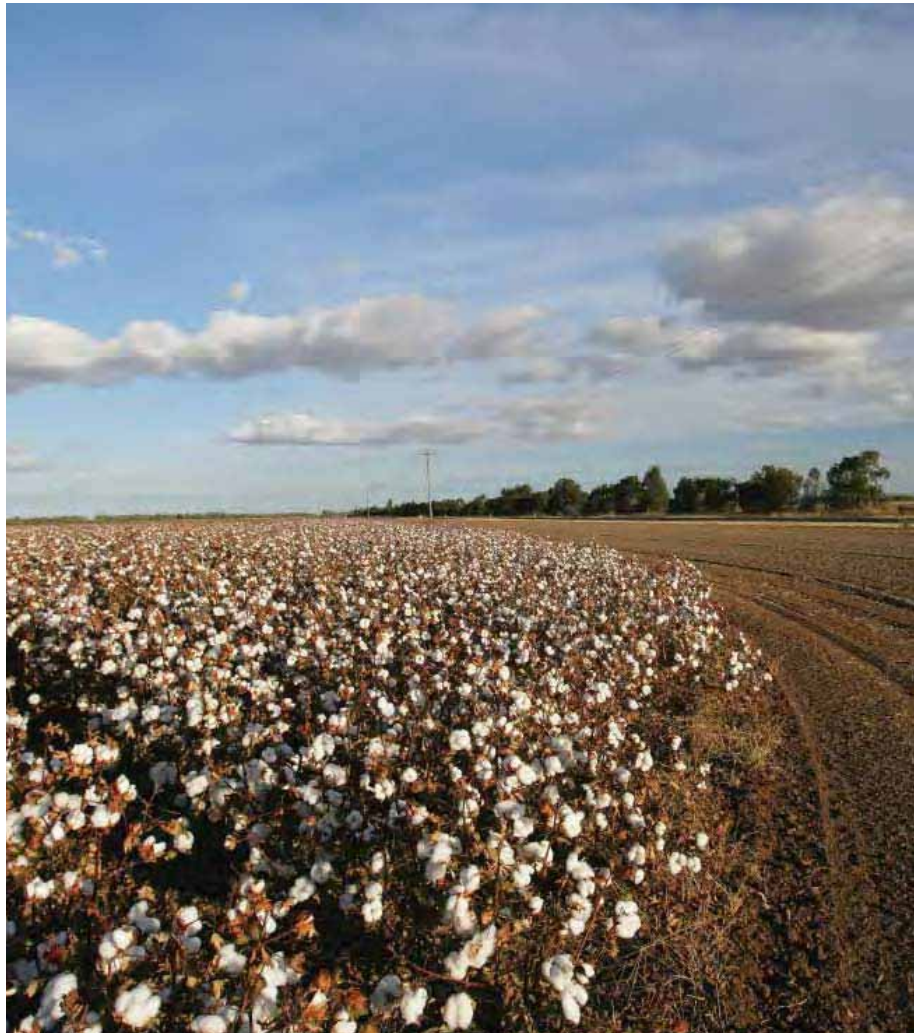


Table 3. Gross value (\$ millions) of agricultural production

Local Government Area	Pasture*	Crops**	Vegetables	Fruit	Livestock slaughterings	Livestock products	Agriculture total
Balonne	1.3	132.8	3.9	13.0	77.9	1.4	213.4
Maranoa	2.6	37.6	0.0	0.2	257.0	3.8	301.0
TOTAL							514.4

*cereal and other crops cut for hay
 **excluding hay



The Surat Energy Resources Province, of which the region is a part, contains extensive thermal coal and coal seam gas deposits that are largely undeveloped, but have the potential to support large-scale energy and industry development. Coal seam gas developments are of greatest significance to Maranoa–Balonne, with extensive fields located in the region. Proposals for development of Gladstone export facilities for liquefied natural gas are underpinned by Maranoa–Balonne's extensive coal seam methane deposits. Electricity generation, carbon dioxide sequestration, coal gasification and gas to liquid conversions have all been flagged as potential development opportunities for Surat Basin resources.



Further development of the gas pipeline network and associated infrastructure, and construction of the Wandoan to Banana rail link to facilitate access to Gladstone port are key enablers for Surat Basin resource developments.

Maranoa–Balonne has higher percentages of managers, administrators and labourers than the Queensland average. The employment of almost one third of the region's workforce in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, compared with 4.9 per cent for Queensland as a whole, demonstrates the sector's importance.

Despite the low regional unemployment rate of 1.9 per cent³², businesses and government have difficulty in attracting and retaining staff, and there is a high departure-rate for people in the 15 to 24 years age range from Maranoa–Balonne.

5.1 Primary production — prosperity

Agricultural production is a mainstay of the economic wellbeing of Maranoa–Balonne. Protecting the health of the land and maintaining essential ecosystem services is of vital economic, social and environmental importance to the region.

Challenges confronting agricultural industries in the region in coming years

include managing potential conflict and competition from the emerging resources industry for employees, responding to declining infrastructure and freight capacity, and adapting to the impacts of climate change and variability. Producers in Maranoa–Balonne are increasingly exposed to rising fuel costs, fluctuation in global commodities markets and competition from low-cost imports.

Buy-back of water allocations in the Murray Darling Basin and potential climate change impacts have the potential to reduce water availability for the irrigated farming sector, especially in the lower Balonne. Supporting agricultural enterprises and local populations may also be affected if irrigation production is significantly impacted. Adoption of efficient water use practices and consideration of opportunities for producers to diversify into non-irrigated production systems may assist in lessening any impacts on the region from the voluntary buy-back.

A lack of understanding of the variable nature of agribusiness by banks and insurance providers is an issue for many producers, who often carry high levels of debt, particularly during drought events. Capacity building and education measures must be implemented to help landowners and managers better manage their land and plan for fluctuations in climate and global markets.

Australia's image as a clean, green agricultural producer will assume greater prominence as consumers' expectations regarding the environmental standards associated with food production rise. Eco-branding and origin marketing by food retailers are current indicators of this trend. Innovative producers will lead a shift in production paradigms, reap the economic rewards and set the standard for natural resource management.

Building economic returns on the opportunities afforded by the natural assets of Maranoa–Balonne requires a regional culture of innovation and opportunism. Organisations, investors and land managers require early access to accurate information about new opportunities and support from all tiers of government and the community to foster this culture.

Also essential is the organisational capability to drive the development of market-based instruments for environmental services, environmental banking and related products, as well as trading markets. Robust, transparent brokering services, operating in accordance with sound business practices, are pivotal to the success of such initiatives.

³² As reported in September 2008, compared to the Queensland average unemployment rate of 3.8 per cent.

Objective

To strengthen rural industries in a sustainable manner by increasing adaptability and productivity, value-adding and expanding market access.

Land use policies

- 5.1.1 Encourage preparation of a detailed land use study, to inform planning scheme provisions and to determine the capability, limitations and opportunities for rural land development.
- 5.1.2 Locate rural residential development where it:
- can be efficiently and cost-effectively provided with essential services and infrastructure
 - is not on good quality agricultural land, unless there is an overriding need in terms of public benefit and it cannot be located on alternative sites of poor or no agricultural quality
 - does not compromise the continuing operational capacity of rural activities.
- 5.1.3 Investigate and facilitate opportunities for new and diversified agricultural activities and supporting industries in appropriate locations.

Aligned strategies

- 5.1.A Encourage producers to improve their skill and knowledge levels in the areas of production management, particularly financial management and marketing.
- 5.1.B Investigate and promote innovative opportunities for generating viable farm income.
- 5.1.C Business development groups support ancillary and processing sector operators to efficiently deliver products and services tailored to client needs.

- 5.1.D All stakeholders adhere to endorsed strategies in responding to cross-jurisdictional issues such as biosecurity threats and pest, stock route and disaster management.
- 5.1.E Provide opportunities for rural industry workers to improve their skills and knowledge through regional training programs.
- 5.1.F Support and implement the findings of research into sustainable primary production, in the following areas:
- processing and value-adding opportunities
 - development of regional marketing and branding strategies
 - future environmental risks to the region's agriculture base
 - global market demands and related government policy.
- 5.1.G Encourage landholders to adopt sustainable land management practices, in accordance with identified land capability/ sustainability and to reduce the risk of land degradation, including soil salinity and soil erosion.
- 5.1.H Support the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation's Land Access Working Group in the development of a land access single code of conduct, standard compensation agreement and exploration of rehabilitation obligations.

Explanatory notes

Planning schemes play an important role in protecting agricultural land from incompatible development, allowing new production opportunities and providing appropriately zoned land for support enterprises. Urban fringes are potentially the most contentious areas and managing the aspirations of 'rural lifestylers', the most contentious issue. Poorly managed

expansion of both urban and rural residential development poses a threat to productive enterprises.

Opportunities for expanded agricultural production in Maranoa–Balonne include:

- agricultural use of water produced in the coal seam gas extraction process
- expansion of agriculture-based tourism
- increased demand for high-quality, fresh fruit and vegetables in local markets— particularly the Maranoa–Balonne and South West regions—to address recognised health benefits and to meet increased demand associated with increases in the resources sector population
- carbon farming³³
- expansion of local value-adding to production
- ethanol production
- sustainable development of the cypress timber industry
- feedlot growth
- wild-game processing.

Peak industry bodies and regional natural resource management groups will be the primary implementers of initiatives designed to take advantage of these opportunities.

The importance of workplace training for workers and owners of all types of enterprises will continue to rise. Increased demand will provide further opportunities for the collaborative delivery of training. For example, expanding the links between landholders and schools and universities to undertake training about land management provides reciprocal benefits for students, workers and landholders.

The Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation has established the Land Access Working Group to facilitate better communication and improved relations between the rural and resource sectors. The purpose of the group is to provide an open forum for relevant state government agencies and peak resource and rural industry bodies

³³ Carbon farming is the cultivation of trees in order to carbon and then to obtain tradable rights in that carbon. These rights can then be sold to emitters of CO₂ and other interested parties' from *The Carbon Farmer Model: A report for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation* by Hassall & Associates, June 2001 RIRDC Publication No 01/060 RIRDC Project No HAS-8A.



to collaborate on issues concerning exploration activity on rural land. The Land Access Working Group is led by the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation with representatives from AgForce, Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF), Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA), Queensland Resources Council (QRC), Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC), Department of Environment and Resource Management, and Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Land Access Working Group is currently developing a single Code of Conduct for land access and a standard compensation agreement. The group is also exploring land rehabilitation obligations in detail.

5.2 Energy and mineral resource development

The development of the energy resources in the Surat Basin and the underlying portion of the Bowen Basin is anticipated to be a primary driver of economic and social change in Maranoa–Balonne over the next 20 years and beyond. Projects such as the Gladstone liquefied natural gas export facilities, reliant on supply from the Maranoa–Balonne’s gas fields, have long-term outlooks of 40 or more years.

Commencement is, however, contingent on national and global factors such as economic activity levels and the policy positions of various governments. Yet, even though uncertain start times challenge local labour and service providers, these projects have the potential to create both benefits and challenges for the regional community.

The extensive gas pipeline network in Maranoa–Balonne supports further exploration and development of coal seam gas reserves. It is estimated that the Surat Energy Resources Province will have defined coal seam gas reserves of between 10 000 and 15 000 petajoules³⁴, an estimate that is likely to increase. Table 4 details regional pipeline and coal seam gas projects currently under consideration.



Table 4. Coal seam gas and pipeline projects—Maranoa–Balonne

Project/Site name	Company	Activity type	Council/LGA	Status
Coxon Creek	Santos Ltd	Coal Seam Gas (CSG)	Roma	planning
Lacerta	Sunshine Gas Limited	Coal Seam Gas (CSG)	Roma	planning
Pipeline License No 123	AGL Pipelines Investments Pty Ltd	Pipeline	Roma	proposed
Pipeline License No 124	Hunter Gas Pipeline Pty Ltd	Pipeline	Roma/Balonne	proposed
Pipeline License No 134	Origin Energy	Pipeline	Roma	proposed

(Source: Department of Mines and Energy, January 2009)

³⁴ One petajoule (PJ), or 280 gigawatt hours, is the heat energy content of about 43 000 tonnes of black coal or 29 million litres of petrol.

Extraction of coal seam gas also produces water as a by-product. This could potentially produce 60 000 megalitres of water per year, at varying levels of quality. An emerging industry, that of converting coal to liquid fuels, has the potential to add to Surat Basin energy activities. To date, trial plants and operations have focused on sites in the Western Downs Regional Council area.

The development of the Surat Basin provides unique opportunities to:

- increase employment and prosperity in Maranoa–Balonne
- upgrade infrastructure
- develop locally based value-adding opportunities
- encourage the growth of support industries that have the potential to drive economic growth in Maranoa–Balonne.

This development may also give rise to significant challenges. These include increased demand on the capacity of regional infrastructure, including road, rail and electricity supply, skills shortages, changes to social structure, demand on the region's water and housing resources, and the need to consider opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It is important that the resources sector effectively engages with communities and governments to maximise the economic and social benefits of development where possible and addresses community concerns relating to potential impacts.

Objective

To broaden Maranoa–Balonne's economic base, employment and business investment, by taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by development of the oil, mineral and gas extraction industry.

Land use policies

- 5.2.1 Locate development for urban purposes appropriately to avoid impacts on, or from, existing and future mineral, energy and extractive resource development and associated infrastructure.

5.2.2 Planning instruments and agencies respond in a timely fashion to:

- tenure changes associated with mining approvals granted under legislation other than the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*
- protection of important extractive resource sites from incompatible development
- areas identified as having potential for future mineral, energy and extractive resources development.

Aligned strategies

5.2.A Encourage collaborative responses by government, resource companies and the community to the social, economic and environmental pressures associated with large-scale mining and energy resource projects.

5.2.B Maximise regional economic benefit from mining by encouraging regional and local businesses to provide services to the mining sector.

5.2.C Facilitate infrastructure provision to support new development through timely advice and collaborative partnerships between developers, infrastructure providers and all levels of government.

5.2.D Promote mineral, energy and extractive resource development as a key component of the economic development of Maranoa–Balonne.

Explanatory notes

Land use policies aim to avoid inappropriate urban development close to the resources, by defining resource and urban boundaries, separation zones and haul routes.

State Planning Policy 2/07 *Protection of Extractive Resources* provides a state interest-level approach to planning scheme measures to prevent sterilisation of key resource areas and provides guidance for other extractive resource sites.

The aligned strategy for infrastructure provision (5.2.C) relates to land use policy 5.3.1 and focuses on business encouragement. Future infrastructure provision for mining activities within Maranoa–Balonne will be determined as projects arise and through collaborative industry and government partnerships at all levels.

The Queensland Government is working to get the balance right between meeting the state's increasing energy demands, the world's increased demand for minerals and food, and the government's priority of building sustainable communities.

Resource developments can potentially bring significant benefits for surrounding communities, including:

- increased employment opportunities
- investment attraction
- economic diversification
- attraction of new people to the region
- retention of young people in the region.

On the other hand, large-scale developments also present local communities with a range of challenges, including increased demand for infrastructure and services.

Challenges facing resource communities in mining regions include:

- increased demand in the housing market, resulting in high rents and property prices and reduced affordability
- increased pressure on local medical, dental and social services
- potential impacts of dust, noise and vibrations from future resource developments
- increased number of drive-in and drive-out and fly-in and fly-out workers employed
- demand for new road infrastructure to support proposed new development.

The Queensland Government has signed the Sustainable Resource Communities Policy³⁵. The policy focuses on resource



communities where rapid development, resulting from the resources boom, has significant impacts on community infrastructure and services and the social structure of local and regional communities.

The policy outlines a partnership between the state government, the Queensland Resources Council, local government and the Local Government Association of Queensland. This policy builds on the previous *Sustainable Futures Framework for Queensland Mining Towns*.

Key initiatives of the policy include:

- coordination of responses to cumulative social impacts and regional issues through strategic partnerships
- improved planning processes to strengthen regional land use planning and infrastructure coordination
- minor legislative amendments that require the establishment of social impact plans for all new mines and major mine expansions, as part of social impact assessment processes.

The Sustainable Resource Communities Policy includes a partnership agreement, aimed at strengthening links between all levels of government. The partnership will improve the guidelines around social impact assessment that will govern all new major mines and expansions.

5.3 Regional business encouragement, opportunities and investment

To develop in a prosperous and economically sustainable way, Maranoa–Balonne needs to support existing business enterprises and provide an attractive environment for new investment ventures. The development of resources in the Surat Basin affords an excellent opportunity to encourage business diversification and investment.

Businesses in Maranoa–Balonne are working in an increasingly global marketplace. Business development in the region needs to recognise this and focus on developing globally competitive practices and products. Advances in communications technology will reduce dependence on businesses being close to marketplaces and create greater opportunities.

Direct and indirect measures can be used to encourage regional business investment. Direct tools include financial incentives for industry to establish or relocate and the zoning and servicing of suitable areas of industrial land. Indirect measures include strengthening the region's skills base through education and training, and providing appropriate housing, infrastructure and community and social facilities. The development of high-quality and cost-effective information and communications technology is essential to broadening the region's business and industry base.

Objective

To establish Maranoa–Balonne as an attractive and prosperous place to do business, based on the region's traditional strengths, while taking advantage of new opportunities.

Land use policy

- 5.3.1 Ensure that planning schemes identify an adequate supply of serviced industrial land linked to infrastructure, with sufficient capacity to support business investment and expansion and, to the extent possible, avoid other impacts identified in land use policy 4.2.1.

Aligned strategies

- 5.3.A Encourage business operators and investors to improve their understanding of the development application, assessment and approval processes.

- 5.3.B The business community promotes Maranoa–Balonne as an attractive place to conduct business at all levels—international, national, state, regional and local.

- 5.3.C Encourage regional business operators to improve their management skills.

- 5.3.D Establish and strengthen linkages between government and industry to foster existing businesses and take advantage of new opportunities.

Explanatory notes

Planning schemes are important mechanisms for ensuring that land use needs are met for new and expanding industry. Land supply for industrial purposes should not compromise significant regional natural resources and ecologically significant areas, as depicted on map 2 (see appendix 2). An audit of current and projected needs for industrial land, to inform planning scheme provisions should be undertaken as a preliminary action to assist implementation of this policy.

Regional stakeholders have raised the need for training and support in the use of the Integrated Development Assessment System (IDAS), especially for new developers. Improved understanding of IDAS has the potential to accelerate the transition of projects, from concept to inception. By reforming Queensland's planning system, the Department of Infrastructure and Planning aims to move the focus from the planning process to the delivery of sustainable outcomes.

These outcomes will be delivered by:

- introducing new planning legislation to improve tools for state and local government to manage planning and development proactively
- reducing complexity through greater standardisation
- adopting a risk-based approach to development assessment
- streamlining the dispute resolution processes

- encouraging active community participation in the planning and development assessment system.

A targeted marketing campaign highlighting the benefits Maranoa–Balonne can offer to business investors has the potential to broaden the region's economy and increase business investment. Such a campaign should first seek to understand potential business investors' needs and target appropriate audiences.

5.4 Training, skills formation and staff retention

A well-educated and skilled workforce is essential to the region's social and economic wellbeing. Educated and skilled workforces assist in building social capital and facilitate productive engagement with government and community organisations.

Maranoa–Balonne is currently experiencing skills shortages and staff retention issues. In particular, the region experiences serious difficulties attracting and retaining medical professionals and engaging Indigenous people in education and employment. Further, people who wish to undertake tertiary studies are most often obliged to move away to larger centres.

The importance of providing high-quality early childhood care and education facilities, staffed by well-trained professionals, has been highlighted by stakeholders from the region.

Objective

To increase provision and uptake of local training and education in order to increase the region's social and economic wellbeing and meet business needs, now and in the future.

Aligned strategies

- 5.4.A Investigate and facilitate opportunities to introduce and expand school-based apprentice and vocational training opportunities for secondary school students, with a focus on promoting a variety of career options.
- 5.4.B Regional training organisations and employers adopt a 'grow-your-own' approach to technical and professional staff recruitment, as part of workforce planning.
- 5.4.C Encourage collaboration between all levels of government and community groups to develop industry-specific training programs that can be delivered by accredited trainers.
- 5.4.D Encourage employee training/sharing opportunities between government and private industry.
- 5.4.E Support market research to identify appropriate packages of benefits for specific groups of workers to attract them to and retain them in Maranoa–Balonne employment.
- 5.4.F Investigate and implement mechanisms for retaining rural workers in the region during periods of drought, where appropriate.
- 5.4.G Encourage the development of programs to address the pre-employment needs of the unemployed.

Explanatory notes

The region must ensure equitable access to training and education initiatives for all, in a culturally appropriate context. In particular, the needs of Indigenous people and migrant workers in the region must be considered. Existing training opportunities include online courses provided by the Department of Education and Training. Importantly, the agriculture and natural resource management sectors provide diverse and long-term career opportunities.

Regional organisations have benefited from providing opportunities for existing local employees to develop their skills and assume higher level positions in their organisations, rather than relying on external applicants for positions. In the region, this has become known as the 'grow-your-own' approach and has delivered staff stability and longevity benefits for several organisations. The *Blueprint for the Bush* community careers initiative working group is an example of a current project focusing on the review, planning and trialling of strategies to train workers for community service organisations.

Packages of benefits to attract workers to relocate to Maranoa–Balonne will only be effective if the right workers are offered the right benefits. A thorough market research activity to determine what workers want, what attracts them to a new place and what keeps them there is the first step required to inform the effective design of benefit packages.

Downturn in rural industries in response to commodity price fluctuations and seasonal variability, such as drought, is common. Often enterprises struggle to obtain new workers after downturns and are faced with having to train them at an extra cost to the organisation. This affects productive capacity, economic returns and wider community benefits. Therefore, programs that assist rural workers to remain in the region during downturns are important for delivering community benefits, not just individual worker benefits.

5.5 Tourism industry investment and development

Tourism is increasingly important to Maranoa–Balonne, yet it remains a poorly understood sector of the region's economy. The industry impacts significantly on retail, accommodation and café and restaurant businesses. Visitors to Maranoa–Balonne have the chance to experience authentic rural character, see wide open spaces and gain an



understanding of rural Australia's history. Major regional events provide a focus for many of these values and attract significant numbers of return visitors.

There is increasing enthusiasm for tourist activities involving active recreation and interests including bushwalking, horse riding, cycling, four-wheel driving, motorcycling, canoeing, bird watching, fishing and touring. Regional opportunities to capitalise on this market are plentiful and largely untapped, as are other tourism investment opportunities such as farm stay. Strategies to grow the region's tourism industry include improving tourism signage, providing better public access and facilities in national parks and reserves, improving package marketing opportunities (e.g. rail, air and car hire) and implementing programs to attract different demographic groups and increase the time visitors spend in the region.

Challenges within the region's tourism industry include:

- lack of understanding of the economic impact of tourism on the region
- the need for a collaborative, rather than competitive relationship with other regions
- poor engagement with the Indigenous community
- difficulty attracting and retaining high-quality staff
- the need to further capitalise on natural attractions and relevant infrastructure to develop the industry.

Although current trends indicate no decline in the rate of tourist visits to the region by private vehicle, rising fuel costs may affect this market sector in the future, given the long travel distances and the high percentage of tourists who rely on cars.

The region's diverse range of environments, communities, cultural opportunities and recreation activities provides the opportunity to promote Maranoa–Balonne as a single destination for tourists, as well as an additional stop for theme-based tourism in other regions.

Objective

To foster a cooperative and coordinated approach to tourism across the region, adjacent regions and the state as a whole.

Land use policy

5.5.1 Planning schemes provide for rural and environmentally based tourism developments in rural zoned areas, without compromising future long-term agricultural use, subject to:

- infrastructure and services provision
- agricultural production
- scale of operations
- environmental and landscape values.

Aligned strategies

5.5.A Improve understanding of the regional economic benefit of tourism and use it to inform industry planning.

5.5.B Promote private-sector investment in regional tourism opportunities that are known to have under-supplied demand.

5.5.C Engage Indigenous groups to investigate, develop and participate in tourism, based around Indigenous culture, foods and heritage and emerging tourism opportunities.

5.5.D Provide tourism signage, visitor information facilities and infrastructure in a manner that benefits the whole community.

- regional events related to art and culture as well as sport and recreation
- nature-based activities including national park visits, bushwalking, fishing and bird watching
- active recreation opportunities including cycling, horse riding, motorcycling and four-wheel driving, using existing trails and networks and exploring options for new networks.

Other opportunities to grow the region's tourism industry include the identification of service hubs to support active recreation activities and the development of maps for themed visits with links to nearby regional points of interest.

The *Outback Destination Management Plan* provides the current key focus, guiding sustainable development of tourism in the region. A key implementation mechanism for the *Queensland Tourism Strategy* is the *Regional Tourism Investment and Infrastructure Strategy*.

Explanatory notes

Regional under-supplied demand has been identified in the following areas:

- farm stays and agri-tourism
- the mining and gas industry
- Indigenous tourism and cultural heritage education

6. Infrastructure

Desired regional outcome

A coordinated, safe and efficient network of all facets of infrastructure, which is well maintained and underpins the social, economic and environmental health of the region.

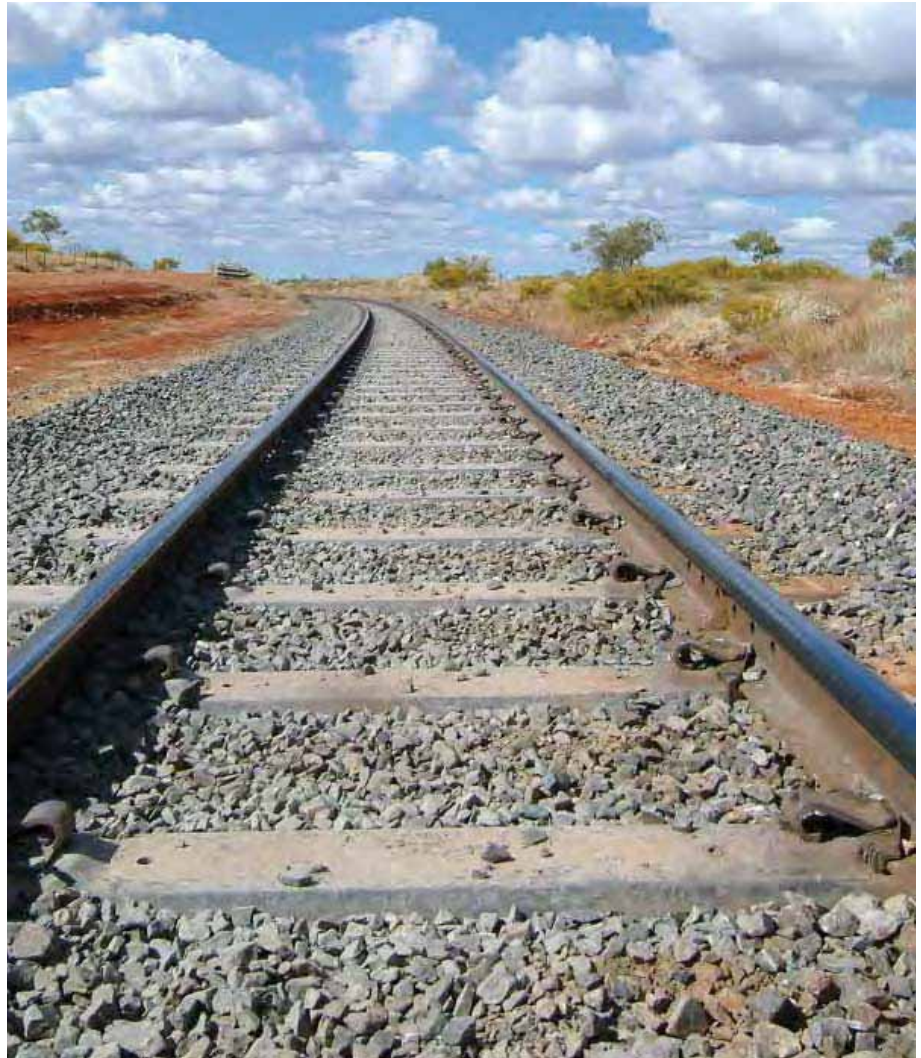


Infrastructure does not solely refer to items such as roads, rail, electricity transmission, information and communications technology, and water supply ('hard' infrastructure). It also refers to the region's 'soft' infrastructure assets and requirements, such as health services, fire and ambulance facilities, access to community services, skills, knowledge, and the strength of local relationships and networks. These assets are addressed in 3. Strong communities.

A third dimension of infrastructure is 'natural' infrastructure, which includes the region's natural ecosystem services, such as rivers, landscapes, soils and water resources. This is addressed in section 1. Natural environment, and section 2. Natural resources.

In particular, the infrastructure needs of local communities will need to be managed in planning for growth in the resource sector. As reported at the 2008 resource summits³⁶, the benefits and opportunities that will be created by growth are recognised by local communities, however, challenges will also need to be addressed to ensure the current quality regional lifestyle is maintained.

Road infrastructure, for example, will be impacted by increased traffic volumes in areas where mining exploration is undertaken. The provision of regional infrastructure, including the maintenance and funding of roads, will therefore require collaborative planning solutions that will need to be developed in consultation with all key stakeholders.



³⁶ Bowen Basin resource summit, 20 November 2008; Dalby resource summit, 21 November 2008; Mount Isa resource summit, 28 November 2008.



Greater communication between all levels of government and the local community will be achieved by working together to develop regional infrastructure solutions through planning partnerships ‘founded on shared ambitions, shared responsibility and shared action’³⁷.

6.1 Delivering regional infrastructure

The large area and dispersed population of Maranoa–Balonne make delivery of an efficient, well-maintained and cost-effective infrastructure network a challenging task. The expansion of the resources industry in Maranoa–Balonne will increase pressure on infrastructure capacity and increase the need for

improved planning, upgrading and maintenance of the region’s infrastructure. Table 5 details major elements of the region’s infrastructure.

Key infrastructure concerns facing Maranoa–Balonne include:

- infrastructure provision not keeping pace with increased demand associated with resources development
- the need to address water supply requirements for new agricultural, mining, urban and industrial development
- provision of non-traditional services, such as community development, by local government
- poor collaboration and communication between infrastructure providers and their stakeholders.

Objective

To provide and maintain all facets of infrastructure in a transparent, coordinated and planned manner.

Land use policy

- 6.1.1 Deliver infrastructure planning and charging through priority infrastructure planning, as a component of local government planning schemes.

Aligned strategies

- 6.1.A Coordinate infrastructure planning and development for Maranoa–Balonne with broader infrastructure planning frameworks guided by the Maranoa–Balonne’s regional activity centres network.
- 6.1.B Encourage and facilitate improvements in telecommunications infrastructure such as broadband internet and mobile phone coverage, aspiring to equitable service access across the region, using service standards in urban areas as a benchmark.
- 6.1.C Provide an adequate level of utilities and communications infrastructure for new urban development³⁸.
- 6.1.D Ensure infrastructure development does not detrimentally impact the natural environment or existing uses, including agriculture, unless overriding community need is identified.
- 6.1.E Current condition reports inform maintenance programs for regional infrastructure.
- 6.1.F Consider safety, energy-efficiency, compatibility with existing land uses, cost-effectiveness and climate change vulnerability when undertaking regional infrastructure planning, delivery and maintenance.

Table 5. Key elements of the region’s hard infrastructure (see Maps 4 and 5)

Transport	Warrego, Leichardt and Carnavon Highways and supporting local routes.
	East–west link and the proposed Surat Basin rail link in adjacent Western Downs Regional Council.
	Daily flights between Brisbane and Roma and from Roma to Charleville, and twice weekly flights from Brisbane to St George.
Electricity transmission and generation	Roma gas-fired power station and the distribution network incorporating high-voltage links to dispersed mining and energy projects and substations associated with population centres.
	Proposed Spring Gully gas-fired power station.
	The adjacent interstate connector near Dalby.
Gas and oil transmission	An extensive gas pipeline network linking gas fields in the region to Brisbane and Gladstone.
	Oil pipelines in the region’s south connecting South West Queensland oil fields to Brisbane (now closed) and to South Australia.
Water supply	SunWater schemes at Mitchell and St George, centred on the Neil Turner Weir and Beardmore Dam respectively, and related water supply infrastructure.

³⁷ Queensland Government, *Toward Q2 Tomorrow’s Queensland*, September 2008.

³⁸ Urban land is provided with reticulated water, sewerage, drainage, electricity and telecommunications services, where reasonable.

Explanatory notes

A key implementation action is to develop and implement a priority infrastructure plan for each new local government area. This will establish a consistent charging regime for developers across the region and guide local government infrastructure funding priorities.

The provision of telecommunications infrastructure is a matter for private investment under the direction of Commonwealth Government policies. Regional policy provides direction and support for the provision of telecommunications infrastructure and services, particularly for broadband internet and mobile phone services.

6.2 Transport networks

Transport infrastructure is fundamentally important to the social and economic function of all communities. It is especially important in a rural region such as Maranoa–Balonne, given the dispersed settlement pattern, long distances to services and markets and dependence on private vehicle use.

Major roads in Maranoa–Balonne carry a higher than average proportion of commercial heavy vehicles and tourism traffic, such as caravans and campervans. Increases in traffic volume on some major routes are exceeding 10 per cent per year. Traffic growth can be expected to continue, given increased resources development in the Surat Basin.

The stock route network may play an increasingly important role in the future in response to peak oil and rising fuel costs, as well as climate change. The stock route network must be well managed to protect its inherent values and to ensure it is available to serve its intended purpose.

Rail use has declined in the region, although it still plays a major role in transporting freight to ports, particularly the cartage of cattle and grain. Passenger rail services will also play a role in the development of the region's tourism industry. Challenges to the viability of rail include the Toowoomba freight bottleneck and increasing freight charges. Retention of the region's rail links and services strongly depends on usage. It is highly probable, however, that future rail use will rise, given predictions of increased oil prices and rail's greater fuel efficiency over road transport. Retaining disused rail

corridors that can be recommissioned or reinstated in the event of future practical opportunities for their use, is an initiative that will support endeavours to preserve or develop efficient regional transport systems.

Air transport has experienced an increase in passenger and freight volumes and this is expected to continue in the future. Passenger services currently operate from Brisbane to Roma and St George, from Roma to Charleville and from St George to Cunnamulla and Thargomindah.

Walking and cycle links have the potential to play an important role in short-distance (within towns) transport and contribute to healthy lifestyle choices for residents. Low traffic volumes, flat terrain and a dry climate make the region's towns ideal for cycling. Council planning schemes and development assessment should incorporate provisions to encourage walking and cycling.

Key challenges to the region's transport infrastructure include:

- minimising the impact of heavy-vehicle traffic on residents' amenity and safety
- supporting economic development
- servicing a dispersed settlement pattern
- dealing with ageing infrastructure, rising maintenance costs and funding constraints
- addressing the effects of expansion of the resources industry
- enabling delivery of high-quality services, including the delivery of fresh goods.

To address these and other challenges, all levels of government and private service providers need to collaborate to identify and implement transport infrastructure strategies that meet regional needs. Regional infrastructure delivery by state government agencies will be governed by the priorities and commitments of each agency.





Objective

To maintain at its current standard, or develop to a better standard, a transport network that supports economic development, healthy lifestyle choices and demographic needs, and allows people and goods to move in a safe, efficient and sustainable manner.

Land use policies

- 6.2.1 Protect and buffer existing and identified transport corridors from inappropriate development.
- 6.2.2 New development that may adversely affect transport infrastructure incorporates:
 - a transport hierarchy that provides for efficient and safe movement
 - measures to reduce the impacts of transport infrastructure on existing residential amenity
 - emergency vehicle access.
- 6.2.3 Plan and design urban areas to encourage walking and cycling.
- 6.2.4 Major transport corridors allow for multiple transport modes (e.g. road, rail) and other public infrastructure requirements, such as pipelines and electricity distribution.

Aligned strategies

- 6.2.A Ensure that transport planning coordinates the interests of all levels of government and other providers, addresses industry and community needs and accommodates the effects of severe and extreme weather events, especially in relation to the location of new transport infrastructure.
- 6.2.B Ensure airport facilities and infrastructure meet the requirements of passenger, freight and emergency services users and are maintained at an appropriate level to cater for demand.

6.2.C Integrate tourism transport networks via a system of hubs and step-off points to tourism trails and networks.

6.2.D Improve access to essential services and facilities for transport-disadvantaged community members, through the flexible use of transport services and resources.

6.2.E Manage the regional stock route network for use by travelling stock and ensure its biodiversity, cultural and amenity values are retained.

6.2.F Preserve disused rail corridors³⁹, where feasible, to meet future demands for alternative transport or movement of freight.

6.2.G Encourage development of a strategic transport network that meets current and projected community and industry needs, including links to rural and remote areas, uses best practice approaches and technologies and makes best use of existing transport infrastructure.

Explanatory notes

Implementation may be through planning scheme identification of integrated systems of pedestrian and cycle links throughout urban areas.

Transport planning must consider economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts. It should minimise impacts on agricultural land and biodiversity (especially fish passage), and include facilities to address the dispersal of weed species and diseases via transport networks.

Regional stakeholders advocate the development of a regional transport plan. The plan should outline a policy framework for the development of transport services and infrastructure, to support efficient travel, freight movement and settlement patterns, in order to avoid ad hoc responses to land use

development and demand. Consideration of energy efficiency and oil vulnerability should be central to the plan.

Oil vulnerability refers to the wider problem of energy resource depletion as a result of reaching the peak of world oil production. Rising energy costs are widely cited as catalysts for changing behaviour and expectations related to energy consumption.

A key implementation action is the identification of gaps and weaknesses across the region's transport network, allowing priority upgrades that will give the most beneficial outcomes at a regional and inter-regional scale to be identified.

Transport-disadvantaged members of the community are largely drawn from the pre-driving and post-driving age groups. Often, young people who rely on limited public transport facilities to access education, training and work are thereby disadvantaged. Similarly, access to health and human services can be a significant challenge for older residents and those with disabilities.

³⁹ Disused rail corridors – the land component, owned by State Government.



The *Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan* establishes a basis for better planning, management and development in the Maranoa–Balonne region. The value of the regional plan will be largely determined by how successfully its outcomes are supported and implemented by government and the community.

Effective implementation requires cooperation by community stakeholders and the coordination of state and local government activities and plans. Implementing the regional plan involves coordinating and reviewing a range of plans, infrastructure and services.

The monitoring and review elements of this plan are critical to charting the progress of land use planning and are essential to a performance-based approach. The monitoring and review cycle provides a feedback loop to allow adaptive management to be implemented, as a response to changing circumstances and new information. If land use plans are to achieve their goals and objectives, the planning process (figure 5) must be designed to be cyclical and should not begin or end at a distinct point in time. Instead, the process should always be structured to include monitoring, evaluation and feedback as recognition of the need to learn and therefore adapt over time⁴⁰.

Figure 5. The adaptive management planning process



Plan making

The regional plan is a statutory instrument under the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, effects of the regional plan established under section 2.5A of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

Relevant provisions of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* include:

- establishing a Regional Coordination Committee to advise the planning Minister on regional issues
- ensuring local government planning schemes reflect the regional plan

- ensuring state and local governments take account of the regional plan when preparing or amending a plan, policy or code that may affect a matter covered by the regional plan
- ensuring development assessment processes, including referral agency obligations for development applications, address matters covered in the regional plan
- allowing the planning Minister to exercise ‘call-in’ powers—the Minister’s ability to call in development applications that are outside the scope of planning schemes
- establishing processes for amending the regional plan.

Implementation

Implementation requires the cooperation and involvement of all levels of government, non-government organisations, the private sector and the community.

Implementation mechanisms will include:

- incorporating regional planning outcomes into capital works and service programs and policy-making processes of state and local government

⁴⁰ Low Choy DC, Worrall RH, Gleeson J, McKay P and Robinson J (2002) in *Environmental Planning Project: Volume 1-Management Frameworks, Tools and Cooperative Mechanisms. CRC for Coastal Zone Estuary and Waterway Management, Technical Report 4.*



- incorporating regional planning outcomes into local government policies, development assessment processes and local government planning schemes.

The effective implementation of the regional plan requires an efficient coordination system to guide, monitor and assist implementation activities. In addition, the implementation process should, wherever possible, make use of existing administrative structures and frameworks and avoid duplication of process.

Primary implementation responsibilities for elements of the regional plan will generally be designated to either state government agencies based on portfolio responsibilities, or to local government in the region. Lead agencies will be responsible for coordinating the actions of any other agencies that have a role in the implementation of strategies.

A five-year detailed action plan will be prepared in consultation with the Regional Coordination Committee, to outline the key priorities to implement the regional plan within this time frame. The action plan will identify the projects, the actions required and the lead agencies.

The implementation process also requires the preparation of detailed work programs, budget estimates and resource requirements. This work will be coordinated by nominated government agencies. Longer term planning for infrastructure will also be guided by the policies of the regional plan.

Roles and responsibilities

The Regional Coordination Committee advises the Queensland Government, through the Planning Minister, on the development and implementation of the regional plan.

The rights and responsibilities of individual agencies, authorities and bodies are to be respected and retained, including the responsibility for development, resourcing and funding of programs within their portfolio interests.

Monitoring and reporting

Regional planning is a dynamic process and will not end with the completion of the regional plan. There is a clear need to establish mechanisms to:

- monitor progress and changes in the region
- identify new and emerging issues
- monitor implementation of the outcomes and strategies of the regional plan
- periodically review the status of the region and to initiate changes to regional strategies and priorities where required.

Implementation will also involve a wide range of community and industry groups and individuals, particularly at the subregional and local levels. The regional plan sets out the need to involve all levels of government, industry and the community in the planning, development and management of the region.

Review process

The review process guides further policy development and assists in setting future priority projects and actions.

The regional plan will be reviewed formally at least every 10 years, in accordance with section 2.5A.10 (2) of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*. In addition, the Planning Minister may amend, replace or approve minor revisions of the regional plan at any time, if required.

Any review will include input from government and the community. It will provide an open and accountable process that will involve and inform the community of the outcome of any regional monitoring program.

Community involvement in implementation

The regional plan sets out the need to involve all levels of government, industry and the community in the planning, development and management of the region.

When implementing specific strategies and actions arising from the regional plan, appropriate consultation and negotiations will be undertaken with the community and relevant stakeholders. The extent, level and timing of consultation will depend on the particular strategy or action conditions. The responsibility to ensure that appropriate community and stakeholder consultation is undertaken will primarily rest with the lead agency for the particular strategy.

Members of the community and specific interest groups can also provide input into the implementation process through the Regional Coordination Committee.

Appendix 1

Mapping methodology for areas of ecological significance

The Department of Environment and Resource Management has prepared mapping showing areas of ecological significance. The maps have been prepared from high-quality data sets of terrestrial vegetation, key threatened species habitats and wetlands. The accuracy of mapping is considered reliable for planning purposes.

To prepare maps, the Department of Environment and Resource Management takes data for specific ecological resources and, using geographic information system methodologies, identifies areas of relative significance. More information is available from the Department of Environment and Resource Management website.

Areas of high ecological significance

The Department of Environment and Resource Management used the following data and ecological significance assessment methods to map areas of high ecological significance:

Conservation estate: These areas include Department of Environment and Resource Management-managed areas such as national parks and conservation parks—excluding forest reserves, state forests and timber reserves.

Wetlands areas: In the catchments of the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin, wetland mapping prepared under the Queensland Wetlands Program was used as a base. The Department of Environment and Resource Management tool AquaBAMM is being used for aquatic conservation assessments throughout the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin and, where completed, high ecological significance areas can be identified from sites assessed as being of ‘very high’ or ‘high’ significance under this system. Included in wetland areas are specific wetland decisions that have ‘state’ significance

from the Brigalow Belt and Mulga Lands biodiversity planning assessments and have been designated as areas of high ecological significance. Specifically, areas of artesian springs have been identified and designated high ecological significance through the biodiversity planning assessments process.

Terrestrial areas: Essential habitats were outlined as high ecological significance by either having a habitat suitability map or EVR⁴¹ points that have been buffered by double the precision of the point data. The following are assigned a high ecological significance value:

- biodiversity planning assessment B1 status = ‘high’ or ‘very high’
- nature refuges
- criterion B2 very high regional ecosystem value = ‘very high’
- biodiversity planning assessment special areas—state significance that have terrestrial values.

Corridors: Terrestrial corridors that are a part of the State Corridor Network (used within biodiversity planning assessments and some outside of biodiversity planning assessments) are used as a centre line. Remnant vegetation that has 30 per cent of its total area within the corridor buffer is selected as high ecological significance. Corridor buffer outlines indicate areas of non-remnant high ecological significance. Riparian corridors are based on major rivers that have been identified with the biodiversity planning assessment process. Again, remnant vegetation that has 30 per cent of its total area within the buffer of the riparian corridor is high ecological significance, as is a 100m buffer of any non-remnant areas.

Threshold ecosystems: Regional ecosystems that are at risk of the remnant extent falling below 30 per cent of its pre-clearing extent, or having a remnant extent of less than 10 000 hectares.

Assessable⁴² non-remnant or regrowth endangered and of concern regional ecosystems.

Further information about the Department of Environment and Resource Management’s biodiversity mapping methodology can be found on the agency’s website.

For wetland areas: see www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/SupportTools/AssessmentMethods/AquaBAMM

For terrestrial areas: see www.epa.qld.gov.au/publications?id=471

Areas of general ecological significance

The Department of Environment and Resource Management used the following data and ecological significance assessment methods to map areas of general ecological significance:

Wetland areas: The following are assigned a general ecological significance value:

- wetland biodiversity planning assessment special areas that have regional significance
- Queensland wetland mapping—where approved
- topographic lakes layer taken from GEODATA Australia 1:250K map where Queensland Wetlands Program is not approved.

Terrestrial areas: The following are assigned a general ecological significance value:

- biodiversity planning assessment fauna/flora habitat models
- biodiversity planning assessment B1 status—not of concern in subregions with less than 30 per cent of remaining vegetation
- biodiversity planning assessment special areas that have regional significance
- essential habitats—models of high mobility vulnerable or rare species.

Mapped remnant vegetation: including not of concern regional ecosystems.

Assessable non-remnant or regrowth not of concern regional ecosystems.

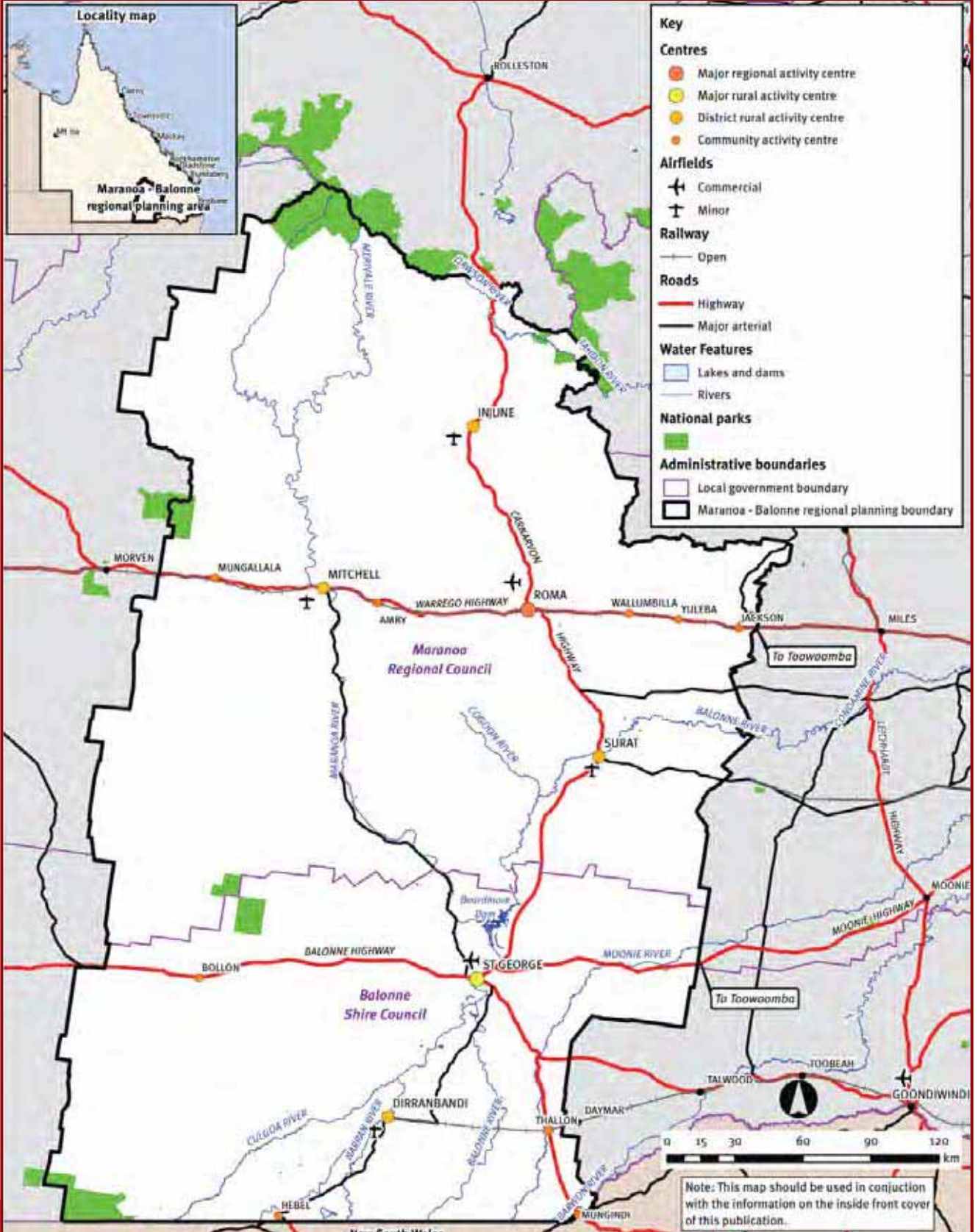
⁴¹ E-endangered, V-vulnerable and R-rare—designations of abundance for native species scheduled under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

⁴² Requiring an approval under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* for clearing.



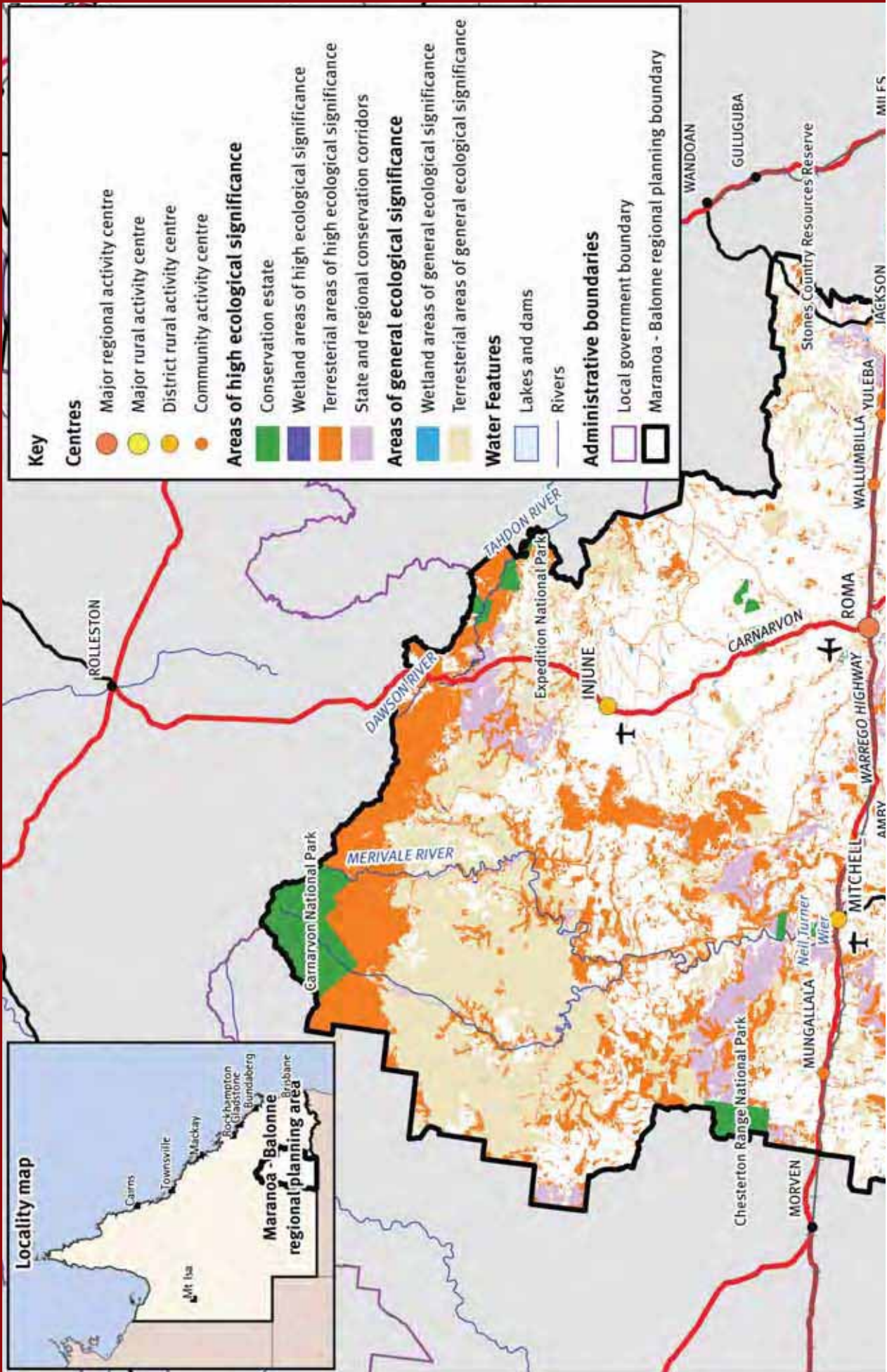
Appendix 2

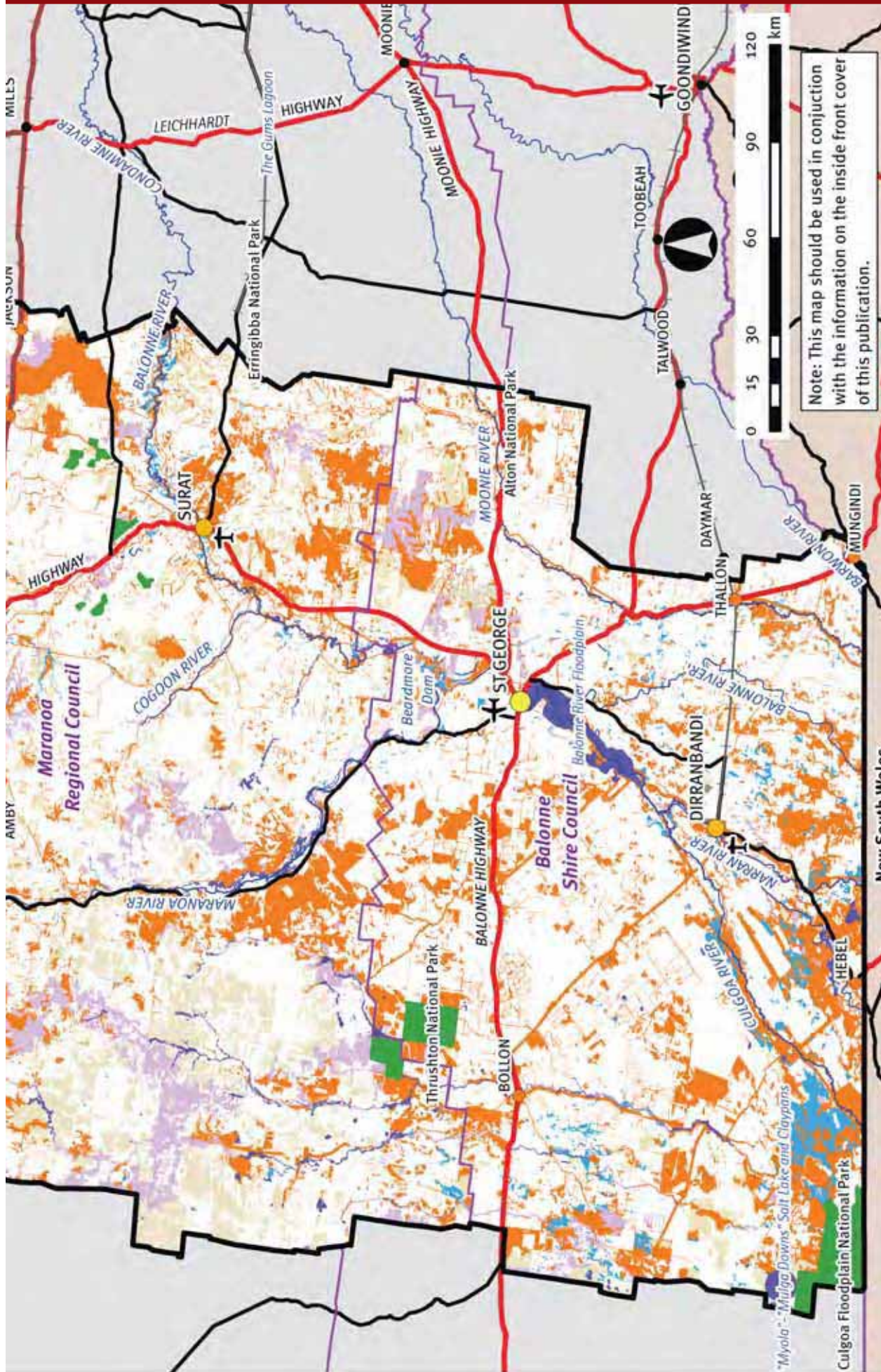
Map 1: Regional activity centres



Disclaimer: The information on this map should be treated as indicative only and subject to ongoing refinement. Based on or contains data provided by the State of Queensland (Department of Environment and Resource Management) 2008. In consideration of the state permitting use of this data you acknowledge and agree that the state gives no warranty in relation to the data (including accuracy, reliability, completeness, currency or suitability) and accepts no liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for any loss, damage or costs (including consequential damage) relating to any use of the data. Data must not be used for direct marketing or be used in breach of the privacy laws. Data source: Department of Environment and Resource Management and Department of Infrastructure and Planning.

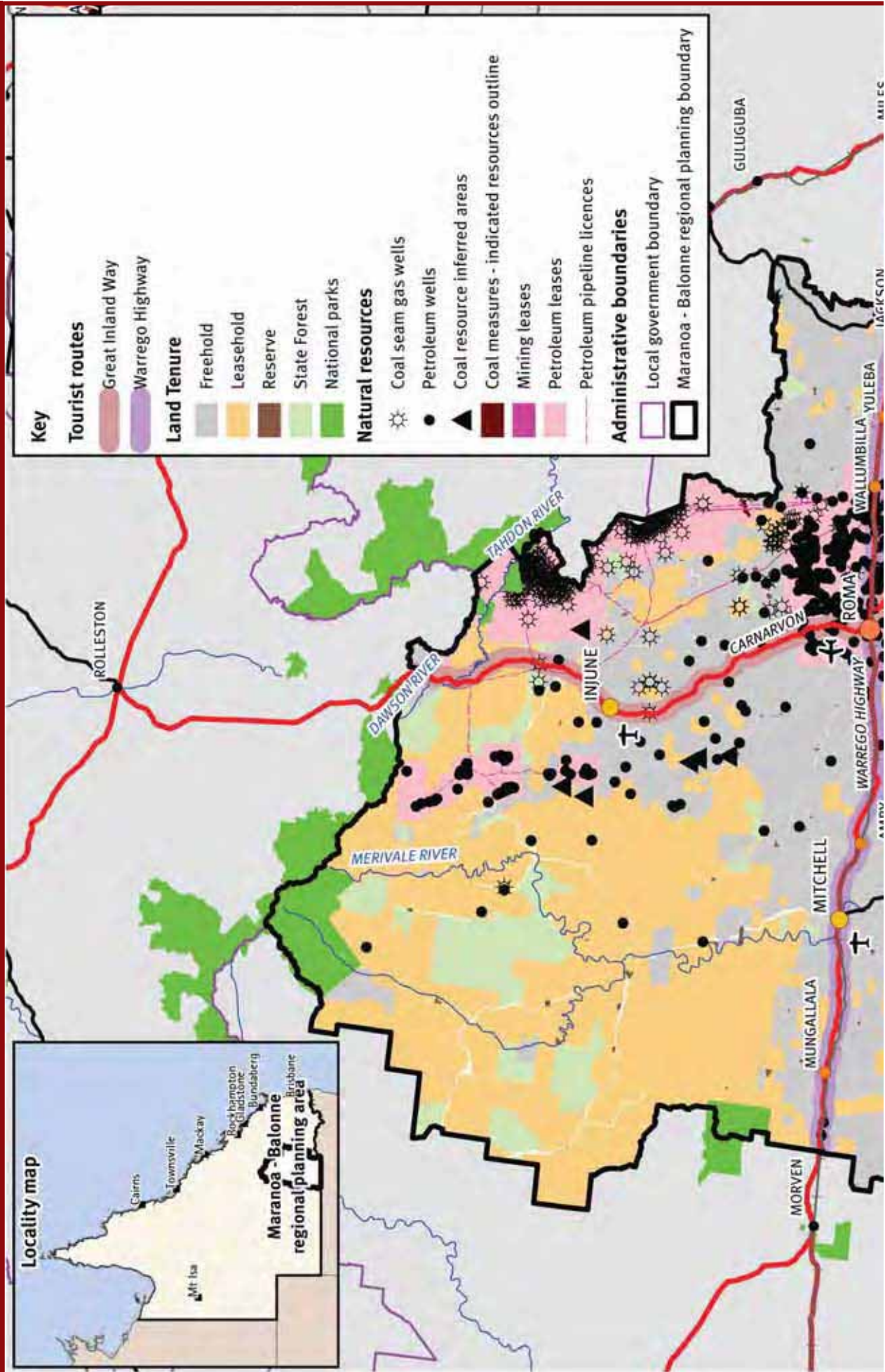
Map 2: Natural environment

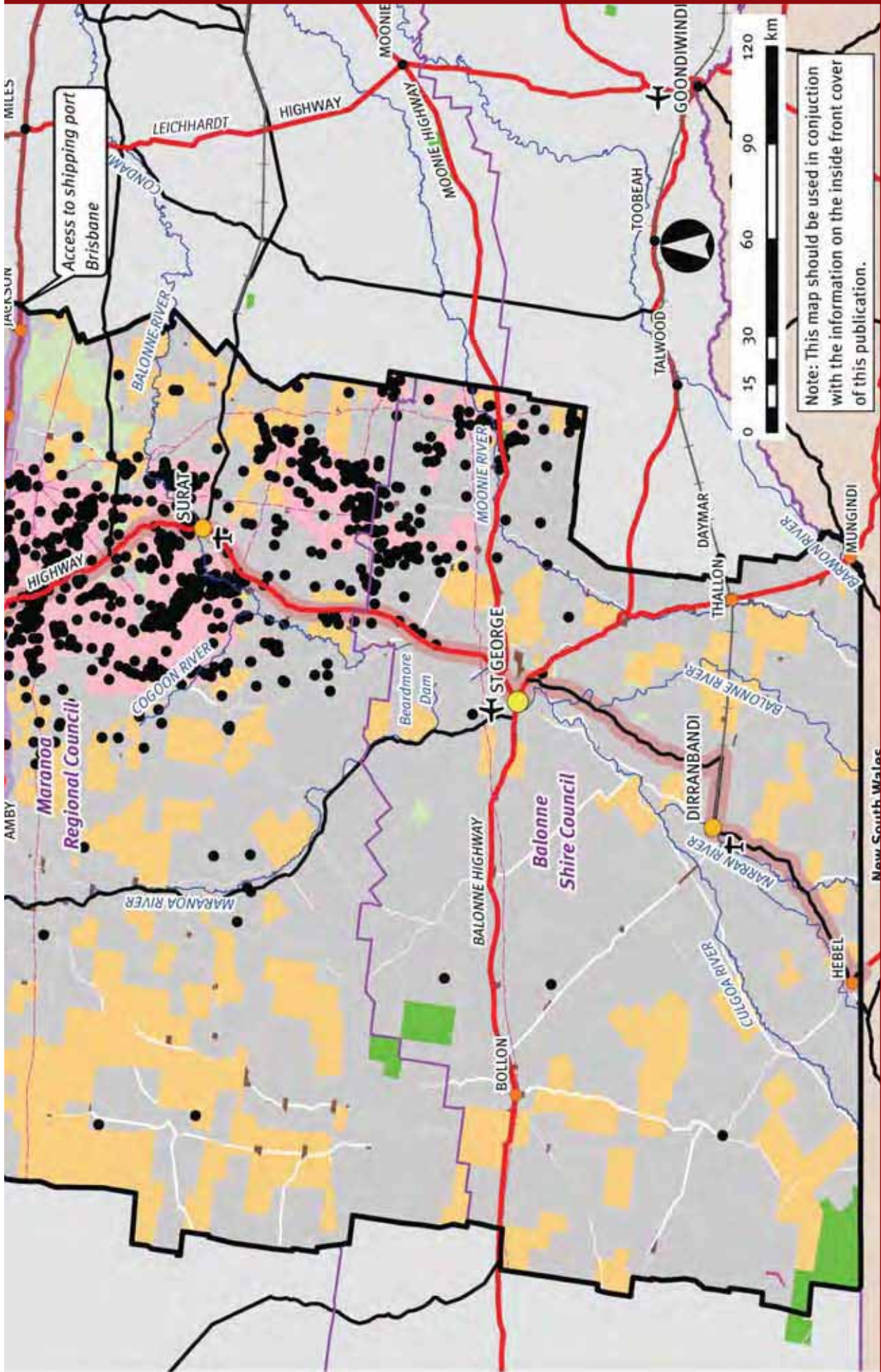




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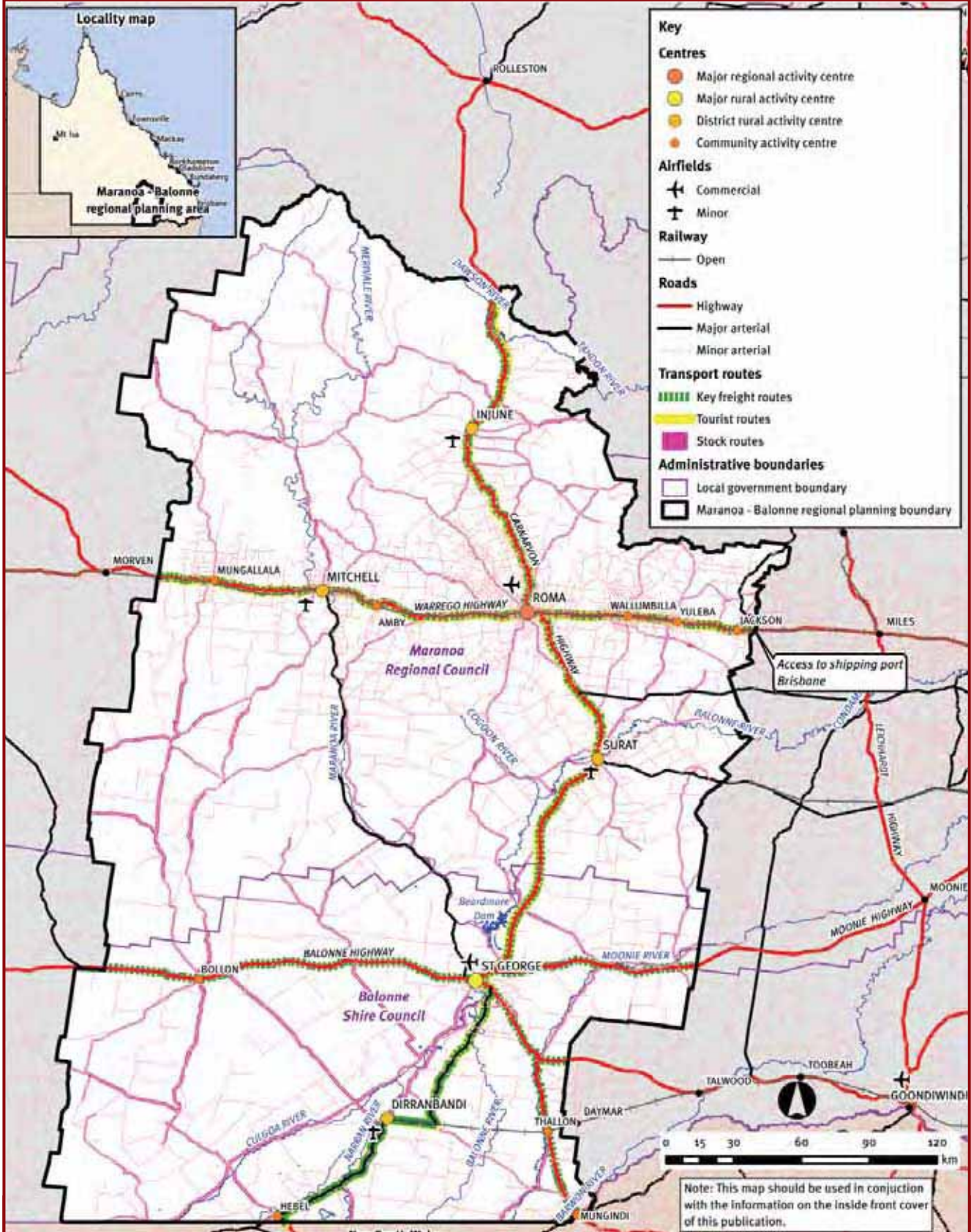
Map 3: Natural economic resources





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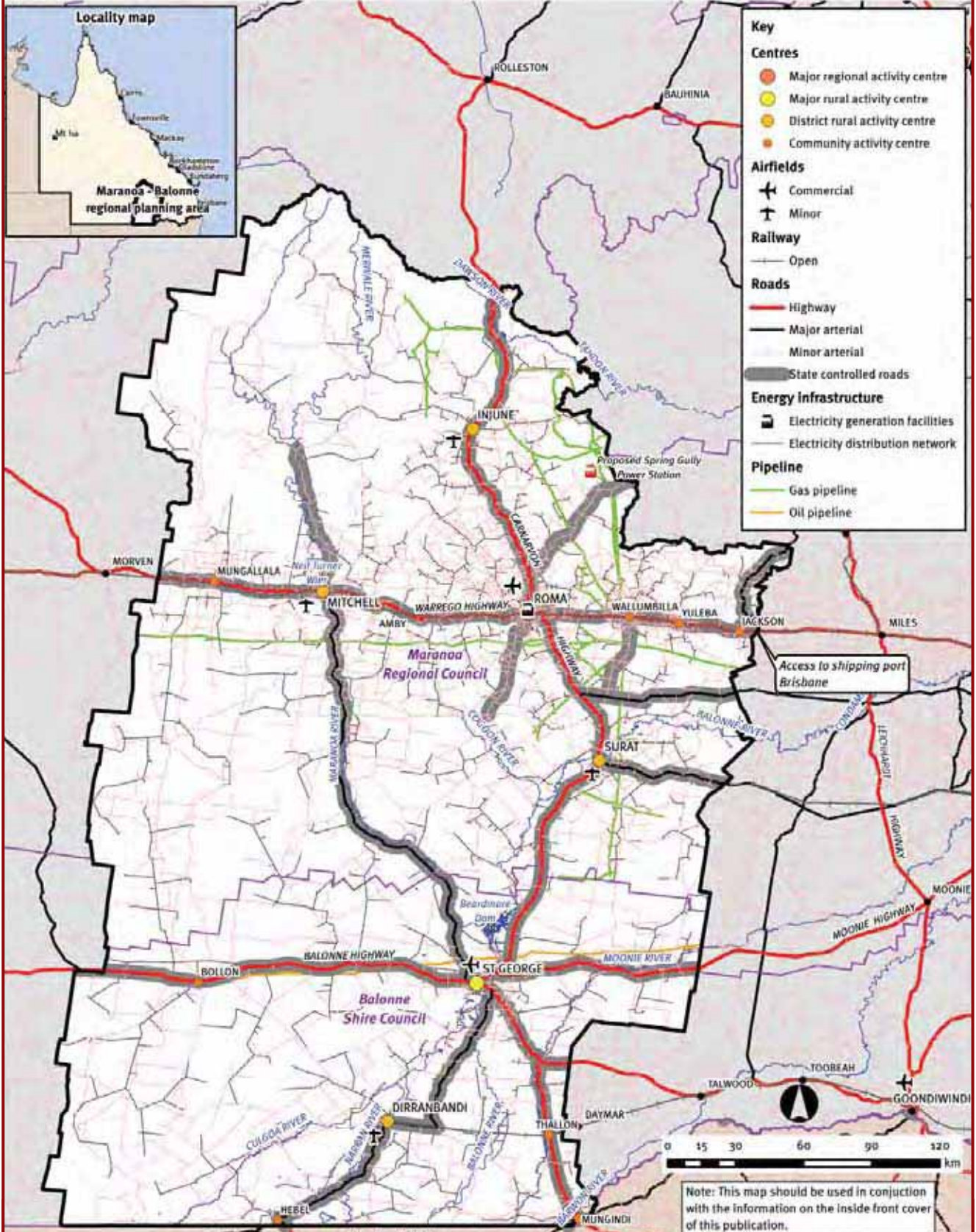
Map 4: Transport



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Map 5: Infrastructure



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Glossary

Agriculture: The production of food, fibre and timber, including grazing, cropping, horticulture and forestry.

Aligned strategies: Aligned strategies are statutory principles designed to achieve a desired regional outcome, generally through a collaborative and voluntary approach. They are aligned to other legislation, plans, processes and voluntary programs. They may be implemented by various stakeholders, including local, state and federal government; non-government organisations, such as community or natural resource management groups; and the private sector.

Associated water: Water necessarily taken as part of petroleum production under a petroleum tenure (*Petroleum Regulation 2004*).

Biodiversity: The variety of all life forms including the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems of which they form a part.

Bioregion: The primary level of land classification in Queensland based on regional geology and climate, as well as major biota.

Climate change: A change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, which alters the composition of the global atmosphere, and is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

Conservation: The protection and maintenance of nature while allowing for its ecologically sustainable use (section 9 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*).

Cultural heritage: A place or object that has aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social or technological significance to the present, past or future generations.

Desired regional outcome: Regional policies set out the desired regional outcomes, principles and policies to address growth management in a region. The policies guide state and local government planning processes and decision making. Local government

planning schemes must be consistent with the intent of the desired regional outcomes, objectives and policies. A statement that addresses the desired regional growth for the life of the plan. Local government planning schemes must be consistent with the intent of the desired regional outcomes, objectives and policies.

Development: Carrying out building work, plumbing or drainage work, operational work, reconfiguring a lot, or making a material change of use to premises.

Ecological sustainability: A balance that integrates a) protection of ecological processes and natural systems at local, regional, state and wider levels; b) economic development; and c) maintenance of the cultural, economic, physical and social wellbeing of people and communities.

Ecosystem: A community of organisms interacting with one another and the environment in which they live.

Ecosystem services: Services provided by the natural environment essential for human survival.

Ecotourism: Nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable.

Environmental offset: A mechanism to ensure that unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of development are counterbalanced by environmental gains, with the overall aim of achieving a net neutral or beneficial outcome.

Good quality agricultural land: Land that is capable of sustainable use for agriculture, with a reasonable level of inputs, and without causing degradation of land or other natural resources (refer to the State Planning Policy 1/92).

Implementation action: An action which serves to implement part or parts of the regional plan.

Indigenous cultural heritage: Landscapes, places objects and intangible aspects such as language, song, stories and art that hold significance for Indigenous people.

Integrated Development Assessment

System: Established under Chapter 3 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, the system through which development applications are assessed by the relevant assessment manager.

Landholder: A landowner, land manager, person or group of people with an interest in the planning area through freehold tenure, a term lease, special lease, mining claim, occupational licence, occupation permit, exploration permit, stock grazing permit, pastoral holding or permit to occupy, and trustees of land set aside for community and public purposes.

Land use policies: Policies that have a land use planning focus and can be delivered through a range of *Integrated Planning Act 1997* planning tools (e.g. planning schemes, priority infrastructure plans, the Integrated Development Assessment System). A number of other planning tools, such as integrated regional transport plans, may be utilised and could prove more effective for some strategies.

Land use study: A study that establishes a land use pattern thus identifying land use categories.

Natural resources: soil, vegetation, plants, animals, minerals, air and water that are used for economic benefit and/or community wellbeing.

Pest species: Plant and animal species that have established in areas outside their naturally occurring distributions.

Planning Minister: The minister administering section 2.5A of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

Planning scheme: An instrument made by a local government under division 3.8, section 2.1.1 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

Population projection: A population prediction that is the most likely outcome over the 20-year time frame of the plan.

Glossary continued

Protected area: Protected areas including national parks, conservation parks, resources reserves, nature refuges, coordinated conservation areas, wilderness areas, world heritage management areas and international agreement areas (section 14 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*).

Regional Coordination Committee: The committee established by the regional planning minister under section 2.5A.3 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* to advise the Queensland Government through the Planning Minister on the development and implementation of the statutory regional plan.

Regional ecosystem: Vegetation communities that are consistently associated with a particular combination of geology, landform and soil.

Regional plan: The *Maranoa–Balonne Regional Plan*, developed in accordance with section 2.5A of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* (the regional plan).

Regional Planning Advisory Committee: The committee established under section 2.5.2 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* to provide advice on regional planning issues (not limited to regional plans) to the Planning Minister and the local governments in the region.

Residential development: Development for a residential purpose that is at a scale greater than a single dwelling on an existing lot.

Riparian: The banks of land adjacent to a waterway or wetland, which contribute to its ecological balance, preservation and continuation.

Rural residential purposes: A purpose that is predominantly a residential purpose involving a single dwelling on a lot greater than 2500 square metres.

Settlement pattern: The spatial distribution of urban and rural land use, employment, population, centres and infrastructure.

Traditional Owners: Members of an indigenous group that has a particular connection with land under Indigenous tradition.

Urban purposes: Purposes for which land is used in cities or towns, including residential, industrial, sporting, recreation and commercial purposes, but not including environmental, conservation, rural, natural or wilderness area purposes.

Vision: The community's long-term aspirations for the region.

Waterway: a river, creek, stream, watercourse or inlet of the sea (*Schedule Fisheries Act 1994*).

Wetland: Areas of permanent or periodic/intermittent inundation with static or flowing water that is fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water.

Zoned land: Land allocated or identified as a zone or other similar term such as domain or area in a planning scheme, including a strategic plan in a transitional planning scheme.



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