



Planning &
Environment

Draft Riverina

Murray Regional Plan





DRAFT RIVERINA-MURRAY REGIONAL PLAN
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Cover Images:

Left: Wheat

*Right: PS Emmylou, Murray River,
courtesy of Peter Sutherland, Destination NSW*

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Foreword

The Riverina-Murray region's agriculture and natural resources underpin its regional economy. It is an area with an enviable lifestyle and it has a unique environment with many beautiful waterways, natural areas and highly productive agricultural lands.

We need to plan for the future of this important part of the State, whilst also protecting the natural resources and environment of the Riverina-Murray region.

The *Draft Riverina-Murray Regional Plan* is a blueprint to create a sustainable future for the region, with strong, resilient local communities that are capable of responding to changing economic, social and environmental circumstances.

It makes developing a diverse and competitive economy central to creating more jobs, strengthening the region's cities, towns and villages, and sustainably managing its agricultural, extractive and natural resources.

Capitalising on the region's strengths in the agribusiness sector is a priority given the global demands for food and fibre, and the region's location at the confluence of all the major freight routes between Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

The draft Plan proposes greater investment in food and beverage manufacturing, processing and agricultural value-adding; and in improving the region's freight and logistics networks.

It proposes strengthening the regional cities of Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith, as well as the connections with their surrounding towns and villages, to make them more vibrant places to live and work, to create more jobs, and to provide housing and services that meet the changing needs of the community, particularly the increasing ageing community.

The draft Plan also aims to improve the planning, coordination and delivery of services and infrastructure for the region's cross-border communities, and to protect and support the region's agricultural, mineral and extractive resources, and its renewable energy potential.

The sustainable use and conservation of water resources is a priority and a regional planning approach is proposed to conserve the nationally significant Murray River.

The NSW Government wants to know what you think about the vision, goals and actions in this 20-year plan for the Riverina-Murray so we can unite behind a common vision for this important region.

Have your say.

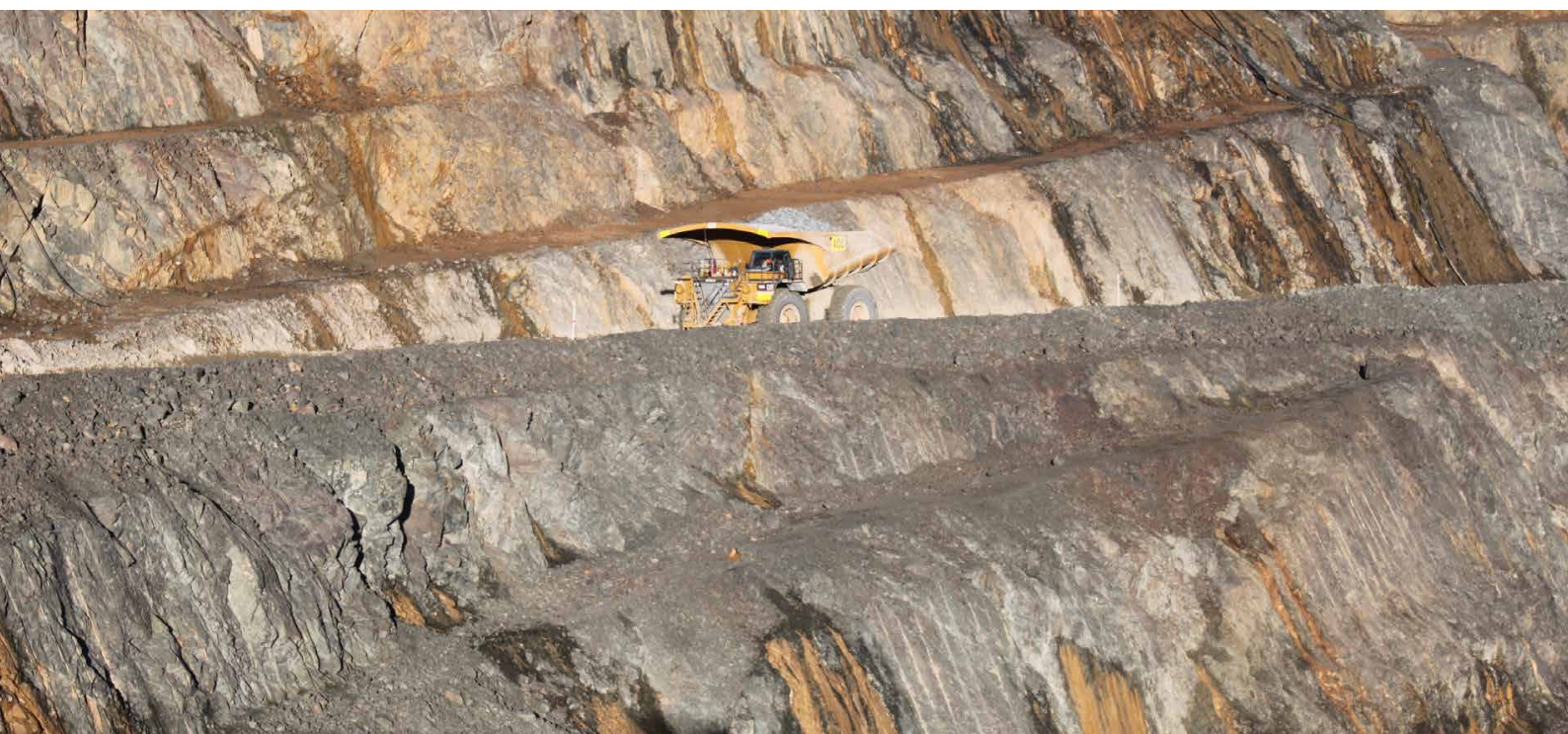
Katrina Hodgkinson

Parliamentary Secretary for Southern NSW

Top:
Albury, courtesy of
Albury City Council

Centre:
Riverina rice harvest,
courtesy of SunRice

Bottom:
Paddling in Cottadidda
State Forest, Barooga,
courtesy of Office
of Environment and
Heritage



Introduction

The *Draft Riverina-Murray Regional Plan* (draft Plan) applies to 26 local government areas (see box) covering an area of 114,373 square kilometres.

Riverina-Murray Local Government Areas

Albury, Berrigan, Bland, Carrathool, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Corowa, Conargo, Deniliquin, Greater Hume, Griffith, Gundagai, Hay, Jerilderie, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murray, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Temora, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Urana, Wagga Wagga, Wakool.

The character of the region is defined by its productive, scenic and high biodiversity value rural lands. They include rich agricultural slopes and plains, river red gum forests, Ramsar wetlands, alpine forests in the east and semi-arid rangelands in the west. Each of these landscapes supports a wide range of flora and fauna, including over 180 threatened species.

The region's three regional cities - Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith - are supported by smaller towns and villages dispersed across the region.

Biodiversity corridors extend along the region's rivers; the longest follows the Murray River, from Tumbarumba in the east to Wakool in the west and onward to South Australia.

The Aboriginal communities of the Riverina-Murray retain strong cultural connections to the region's landscapes, and particularly its river systems, which are of spiritual and cultural significance.

The attraction of the Murray River has resulted in a concentration of settlements along the riverfront. The river is the border with Victoria and this has resulted in many river communities connecting across the border to share services, and business, recreational and cultural interests.

Agriculture and natural resources underpin the regional economy. Employment is primarily driven by agribusiness and service industries. The region is well-placed to diversify its economy into a number of other sectors such as freight and logistics; food and beverage manufacturing, processing and agricultural value-adding; and education and health.

Capitalising on the region's economic, heritage and environmental assets will help strengthen its smaller towns and villages and create self-sufficient and resilient communities.

Albury and Wagga Wagga are projected to accommodate the largest portion of population growth across the region. By 2036, the combined number of residents living in and around Albury and Wagga Wagga is projected to grow by 16,550 from 116,550 to 133,100. Population growth will result from migration to the region and from people retiring to take advantage of its lifestyle options. The population in other parts of the region will remain stable or decline.

The demographic structure of the Riverina-Murray will change over the next 20 years. By 2036, 27 per cent of the region's population will be aged 65 years and over, representing an increase of 46 per cent from 2016. The region is expected to have relatively fewer younger people and more older people. This change will have implications for future housing, jobs and services across the region. There is likely to be higher demand for age-related services, and supporting health infrastructure and public transport. With fewer people of traditional working age there will be pressure to extend the working lives of those in the workforce and to focus on skills and training. At the same time, an ageing population presents economic opportunities associated with the expansion of products and services across education and training, supported housing, health and leisure, tourism, and recreation and home services.

The region will need 7,650 new homes over the next 20 years to meet the demands of a growing and ageing population. This figure reflects demand for new dwellings, replacement dwellings and greater housing choice.

Top:
Processing plant,
Bomen Business
Park, Wagga Wagga,
courtesy of Riverina
Oils and Bio Energy
Pty Ltd

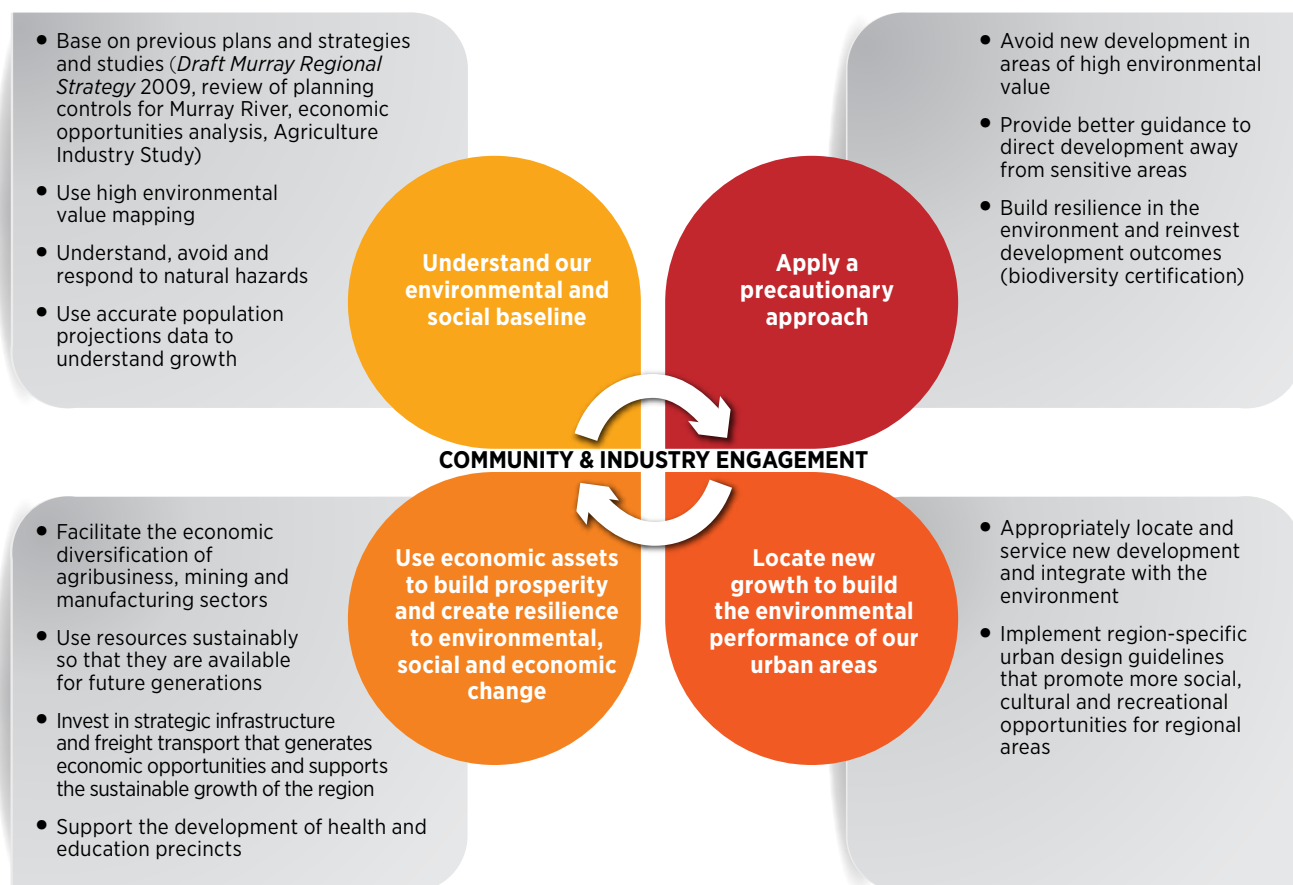
Centre:
Lake Cowal Gold Mine,
near West Wyalong,
courtesy of Tony
Glasgow, Evolution
Mining

Bottom:
Visy Pulp and
Paper Mill, Tumut,
courtesy of Visy



Murrumbidgee River, Wagga Wagga,
courtesy of Wagga Wagga City Council

FIGURE 1: BUILDING THE DRAFT PLAN





The draft Plan makes developing a strong, diverse and competitive economy central to building prosperity and resilience in the region, to meet any economic, social and environmental challenges that arise.

Growth will be planned to manage competing land uses such as agriculture, natural resource use, housing and settlement, and industrial activities. It will focus on existing urban areas to capitalise on access to jobs, services and transport, and new urban areas that will be designed to support sustainable, healthy communities.

The draft Plan provides the strategic policy, planning and decision-making framework to guide the region's sustainable growth over the next 20 years. It integrates economic, social and environmental considerations in the interests of achieving ecologically sustainable development for the region.

Underpinning the planning framework for this draft Plan are the following key principles:

- facilitate economic growth, environmental management and social wellbeing;
- respond to the region's landscape, environmental assets, and natural and cultural resources;
- respond to long term structural economic and demographic changes, with a focus on ageing, migration patterns and productivity;
- address the implications of a changing climate and build resilience to natural hazards;
- guide the locations for new housing and provide a diversity of housing choice;
- facilitate economic activities consistent with changing market demands and industry needs;
- inform investment in infrastructure and services, coordinated with land use; and
- integrate cross-border drivers of change and coordinate responses Statewide and nationally.

Developing the draft Plan

The NSW Government has engaged with councils across the region, and importantly, members of both the Joint Organisation and

Regional Organisation of Councils while developing this draft Plan. Their input has helped to inform the draft Plan.

The draft Plan is also underpinned by a strong evidence base. Data and evidence on population growth and change, the regional economy, the housing and employment market, the location of important environmental and resource areas, and natural hazards has been gathered and analysed.

Inputs to the draft Plan include:

- *Review of Murray River Planning Controls* (2016) – completed by EcoLogical Australia;
- Draft Agricultural Lands Development Study (2015 – still being prepared by RMCG);
- *Murray-Murrumbidgee Profiles & Opportunities Parts 1 and 2* (2014) – completed by the Western Research Institute;
- mapping of regional biodiversity corridors and high environmental value lands in the Riverina-Murray, prepared by the Office of Environment and Heritage (see Figure 17: Riverina-Murray Environmental Assets Map);
- *Energy Paper* by ARUP (2014); and
- previous draft strategies including the *Draft Murray Regional Strategy* (2009).

A range of NSW Government plans have helped to inform the draft Plan including the *Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW* (2015), as well as specific agency plans like *Transport for NSW's Regional Boating Plan Murray-Riverina Region* (2015), *Trade and Investment's Murray-Murrumbidgee Regional Economic Profile* (2015), the *NSW Freight and Ports Strategy* (2013), the *Murray-Murrumbidgee Regional Transport Plan* (2013), the *State Infrastructure Strategy* (2012) and the *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* (2012),

The work of other stakeholders has also been of value, including councils' Community Strategic Plans, Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils' *Regional Freight Transport Plan* (2014), the Riverina and Murray Regional Organisation of Councils' *Regional Transport Plan* and *Regional Development Australia's Riverina Regional Plan* (2013-2016) and *Murray Regional Plan* (2013-2016).



Vision

The vision for the Riverina-Murray is for a sustainable future, with strong, resilient local communities capable of responding to changing economic, social and environmental circumstances.

The region will be an appealing place to live, work and invest. Residents and visitors will be able to access a range of lifestyle options; connect with the attractive landscapes and biodiversity; access well-established and emerging work opportunities; enjoy a strong network of city, town and village centres; and access high-quality education and health facilities.

Investment in major services, facilities and industrial activities will drive growth in the regional cities of Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith, and distribute benefits across the wider Riverina-Murray region. The cities will continue to support an extensive network of well-connected towns and villages, which will capitalise on emerging economic opportunities and their abundant environmental and heritage assets to build resilience. A diverse and resilient economy will enable the community to respond to environmental, economic and social challenges.

Agricultural land and natural resources will be used sustainably. Important agricultural land will be protected to support continued growth and diversity in the agribusiness sector. This sector will remain a major contributor to the regional economy, generating high-quality jobs that retain and attract young people and university graduates. The connection between agriculture and value-adding opportunities from manufacturing and processing will become increasingly important in supporting the commercial viability of many towns and villages. Positive regulatory settings and policies that overcome barriers to investment will help the region to grow and prosper.

The region will benefit from its unique strategic location at the confluence of all of the major freight corridors between Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Access to the Newell, Hume and Sturt highways, alongside continued investment and growth in the region's intermodal facilities, will boost regional economic activity.

The region will leverage its competitive advantage of relative water security through the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Coleambally Irrigation Areas, which will continue to support some of the most productive agriculture in the region.

Delivering greater housing diversity will meet the needs of singles, families and older people; help to satisfy the demand for student, visitor and seasonal worker accommodation; and contribute to greater housing affordability. A diverse range of housing will promote social inclusion, community wellbeing and environmental sustainability. The largest proportion of new homes will be delivered in the regional cities.

The funding and timely delivery of infrastructure will be critical to underpinning economic growth across the region. A coordinated approach to improving local road networks and connectivity to the wider regional and State network will better link the region to Sydney, Melbourne and other markets. The upgrade of bridge crossings over the Murray River will make it easier for residents to get to work, for visitors to access the wide range of tourist activities in the region, and for industries to expand through better access to Melbourne.

The introduction of high-speed broadband will promote employment opportunities at home, enhance the efficiency of business, and enable the effective roll-out of online health and education programs. Improved public transport options will enable people to more easily and affordably access inter-regional and intra-regional services. Access to public transport will be particularly important for the increasing ageing community.

There will be sound environmental stewardship of the region's natural and environmental resources, productive and important agricultural lands, the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers, and other significant waterways, forests and biodiversity. Environmental assets will be valued and actively managed so that future generations can enjoy and benefit from them as the community does today.

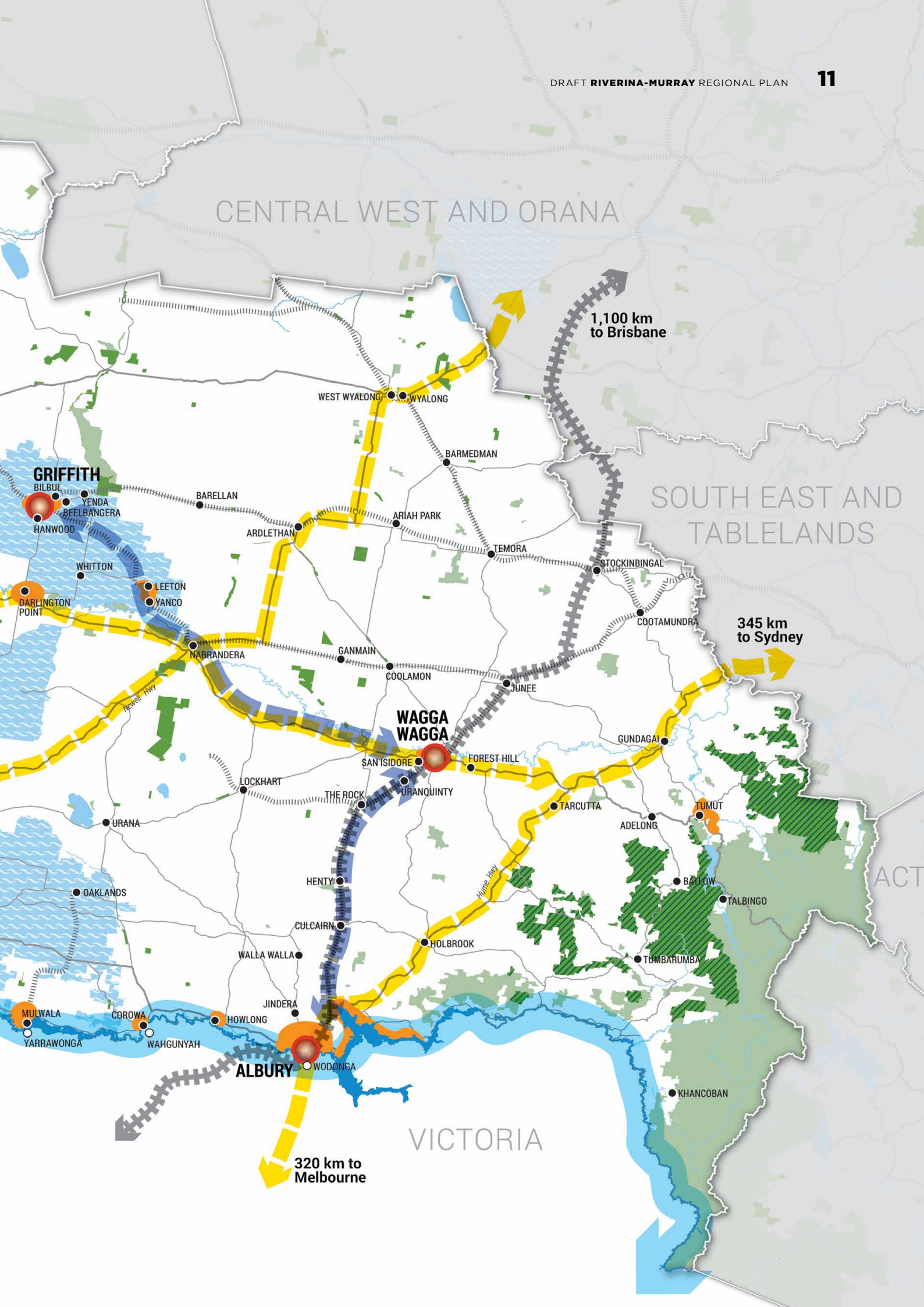
*Top:
Herding sheep at Shear
Outback, Hay, courtesy
of Hay Shire Council*

*Centre:
Grain storage and
handling facility,
Coolamon, courtesy of
Emerald Grain*

*Bottom:
Fivebough Wetlands,
Leeton, courtesy of Paul
Foley, Destination NSW*

FIGURE 2: REGIONAL VISION MAP







*Narrandera Nature Reserve on the Murrumbidgee River,
courtesy of Office of Environment and Heritage*

The Murray River will be a pristine waterway, actively managed and valued as an asset by residents and visitors alike. The river and its catchment will continue to attract residents and tourists and support a diversity of activities along its length from settlement, agriculture, tourism, biodiversity and heritage.

The benefits of growth will be used to protect and restore the environment and build its resilience to natural hazards and climate change, and to rebuild vulnerable communities.

To achieve this vision, the following goals have been set:

- GOAL 1: A growing economy supported by productive agriculture and sustainable use of natural resources;
- GOAL 2: Improved regional transport networks and utility infrastructure to support economic activity;
- GOAL 3: Strong regional cities supported by a network of liveable towns and villages that meet the community's changing needs; and
- GOAL 4: A protected environment and a community resilient to natural hazards and climate change.

Delivering the Plan

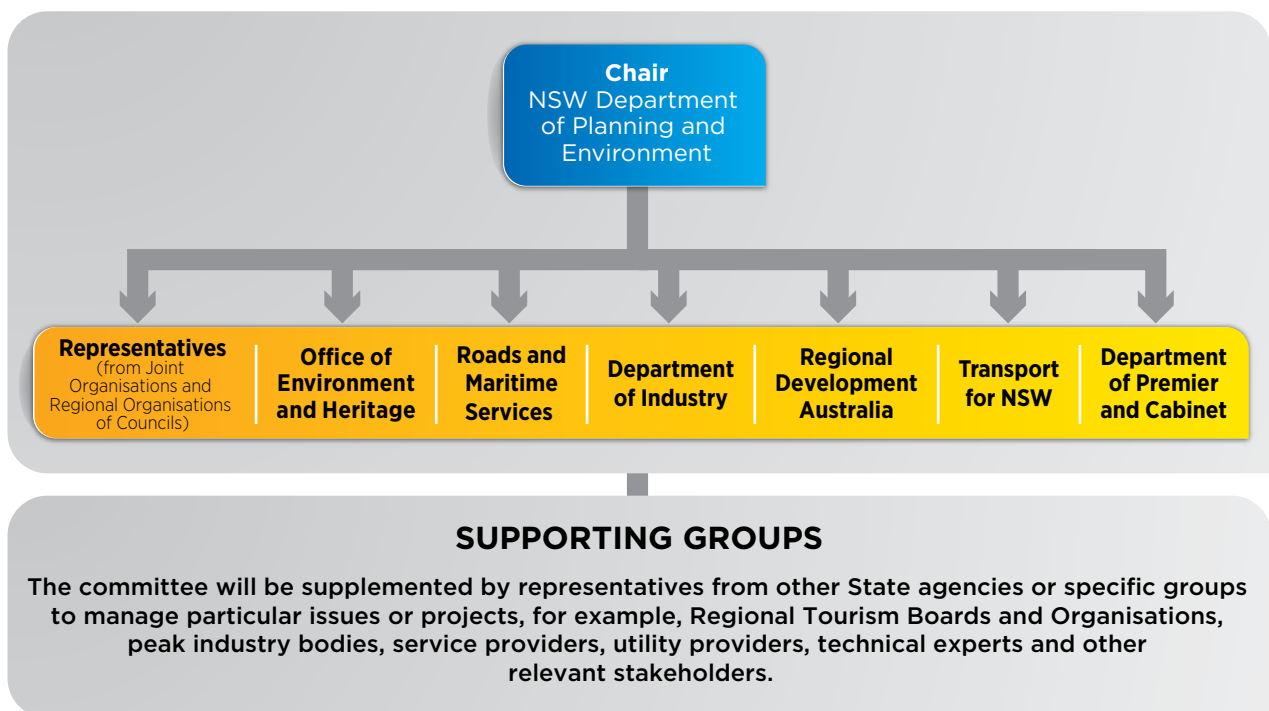
Achieving the vision and the goals of the final Riverina-Murray Regional Plan will be a shared responsibility that will require the ongoing commitment of all stakeholders, including councils, State agencies, and the development and services sectors.

Governance

A Coordination and Monitoring Committee will be established to oversee the implementation of the final Plan. It will be chaired by the Department of Planning and Environment and comprise representatives from Joint Organisations of Councils and Regional

Organisation of Councils, Office of Environment and Heritage, Roads and Maritime Services, Transport for NSW, Department of Industry, Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Regional Development Australia. It will be supplemented by representatives from other State agencies or specific groups to manage particular issues or projects, for example, Regional Tourism Boards, peak industry bodies, service providers, utility providers, technical experts and other relevant stakeholders.

FIGURE 3: COORDINATION AND MONITORING COMMITTEE





Left: Olive harvest, Wagga Wagga, courtesy of Wollundry Grove Olives

Right: Recycling operations at Tumut, courtesy of Visy Pulp and Paper Mill

The committee will:

- coordinate and drive the delivery of actions, supported by an Implementation Plan;
- identify potential policy interventions or resourcing issues;
- establish a framework to monitor issues such as:
 - population;
 - housing;
 - economy and employment; and
 - natural environment and resources;
- prepare an annual report on the implementation of the actions identified in the final Plan, and to provide recommendations for land use and infrastructure funding priorities; and
- provide input to the review, update and revision of the Plan every five years, or as necessary.

The committee will be supplemented by outcome-specific groups to provide advice on particular issues or projects in the Plan.

Implementation

The actions in the final Plan will be implemented through a number of mechanisms, including:

- local planning directions under section 117 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, issued by the Minister for Planning, which require council planning strategies and controls to be consistent with the aspirations of the final Plan;
- whole-of-government policy alignment; and
- regional collaboration across government, business, key stakeholders and the wider community for specific projects and processes.

The NSW Government will be responsible for implementing these actions and will work with councils on relevant initiatives.



Infrastructure Coordination

The draft Plan aligns regional planning for housing and economic activity to existing and planned infrastructure investments. The infrastructure context and priorities in this draft Plan are drawn from the *Rebuilding NSW – State Infrastructure Strategy* (2014), the *NSW Freight and Ports Strategy* (2013) and the *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* (2012).

The NSW Government will use the final Plan and the annual monitoring of development activity to advise infrastructure agencies about the timing of new developments, to inform ongoing planning and delivery of infrastructure, asset management and services. Opportunities for private sector delivery of infrastructure will also be explored to support growth.

The NSW Government will continue to work with State infrastructure providers to plan and deliver infrastructure that responds to place and community needs across regional NSW. This includes:

- aligning future infrastructure priorities to support planned growth and change;
- coordinating infrastructure delivery to support strategic employment and housing land; and
- exploring innovative design and delivery approaches across infrastructure sectors.

Local Planning Initiatives

A Ministerial Direction will require all councils to implement the objectives and actions of the final Plan appropriate to their local area in their council planning strategies and local environmental plans. When councils review or amend planning strategies and local environmental plans they will need to be consistent with the policies and actions in the final Plan. This will provide a connection between this Plan and the statutory requirements of the plan-making process under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Once finalised, the Plan will replace the previous *Draft Murray Regional Strategy* (2009) for the local government areas of the City of Albury, Balranald, Berrigan, Conargo, Corowa, Deniliquin, Greater Hume, Murray, Wakool and Wentworth.



GOAL 1 – A growing economy supported by productive agriculture and sustainable use of natural resources

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

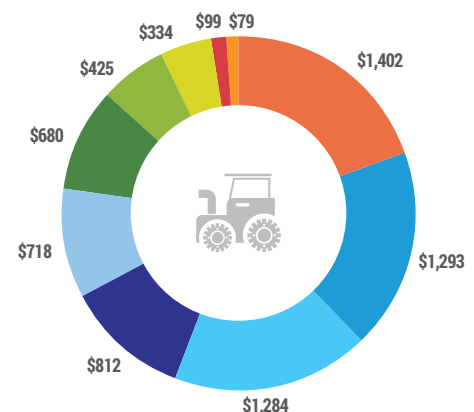
The largest contribution to gross regional product in the region was made by agriculture, forestry and fishing. In 2011, the Riverina-Murray contributed almost 20 percent (\$1.4 billion) to the total NSW gross regional product for agriculture.¹

Manufacturing was the next largest contributor to gross regional product, contributing \$1.3 billion. Combined, these two industries contributed more than a quarter of the region's gross regional product.

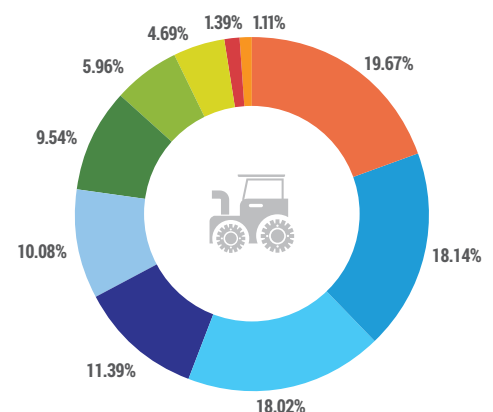
Agriculture, forestry and fishing was the third largest employer in the region, employing 11,700 people.² Agricultural production also supports an important manufacturing, warehousing and trade industry. Agriculture and its supporting range of businesses, such as manufacturing, are the most important industries in the region.

The gross value of agricultural production in 2011-2012 was \$3.3 billion.³ This created an economic multiplier effect⁴ – equating to \$7.6 billion – in the form of additional spending and demand for goods, services and employment across the broader agribusiness sector. A productive agribusiness sector is vital to the development of NSW and contributes to the

FIGURE 4: GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING IN NSW, 2011 (\$m)



Riverina-Murray
 Central West and Orana
 New England North West
 North Coast
 South East and Tablelands
 Sydney Metro
 Hunter
 Far West
 Illawarra
 Central Coast

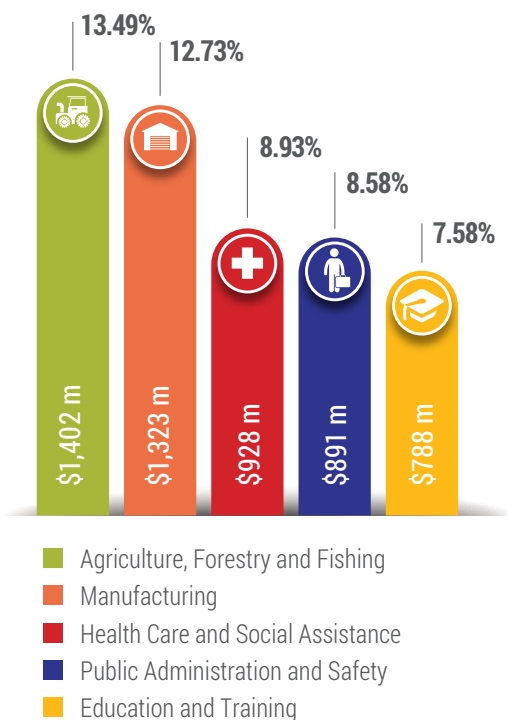


Top:
Cotton production,
courtesy of Hay
Shire Council

Centre:
Courtesy of De
Bortoli Wines,
Griffith

Bottom:
SunRice Mill,
Deniliquin, courtesy
of SunRice

FIGURE 5: – RIVERINA-MURRAY TOP 5 INDUSTRIES BY GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT IN 2011 (\$m)



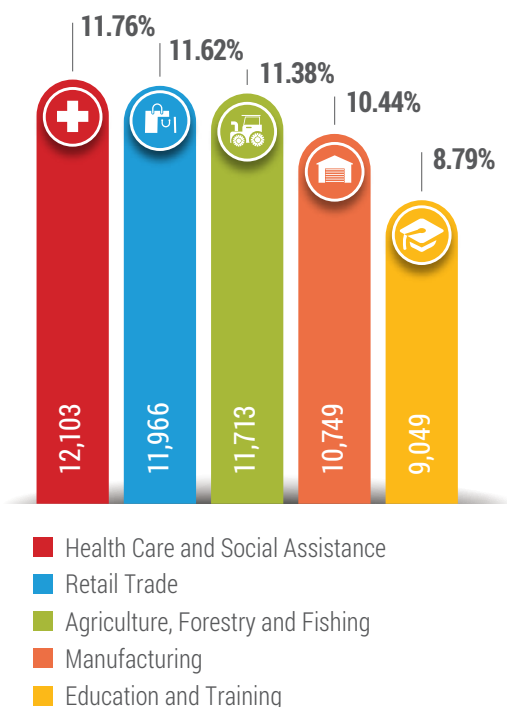
local, regional and State economies and export earnings. Agribusiness provides the economic base of many rural and regional towns and creates jobs and economic wealth.

The region's landscapes also attract housing, jobs and tourism. Sustainable use of agricultural land and natural resources is essential for long term economic and social viability and prosperity. The NSW Government will require councils to adequately address agricultural production issues such as water supply, waste management, biosecurity risks, energy needs, quality of transport routes and intensive agricultural production systems in local planning strategies.

This draft Plan outlines the NSW Government's approach to growing agribusiness and sustainably using natural resources, to manage the interface with the environment and to drive a strong and diverse economy that generates high-quality jobs.

DIRECTION 1.1 Grow the economic potential of the agribusiness sector

FIGURE 6: RIVERINA-MURRAY TOP 5 INDUSTRIES BY EMPLOYMENT IN 2011



The agriculture sector is supported by a range of agribusinesses such as professional services; transport and logistics; storage and warehousing; machinery and equipment; and food, beverage and other product outlets. The region is well-placed to take advantage of expected global demands for food and fibre – particularly from Asia – due to stable investment, the climate, and geographic proximity to regional, national and international markets.

The region has access to major capital cities, including Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane – and their respective ports – Port of Melbourne, Port of Brisbane and Port Botany. There is potential to build on this competitive advantage to stimulate further economic development and to provide more local jobs.

The region's agribusiness sector is influenced by:

- a changing climate;
- water availability;
- infrastructure needs;
- economic competitiveness;
- skilled labour shortages;
- market access restrictions and fluctuations;
- potential resource scarcity due to urban development and climate change; and
- land use conflict arising from the interaction between rural activities and urban land uses.

The draft Plan contains actions that will enable the region to take advantage of future opportunities.

ACTION 1.1.1 Provide enabling planning controls to facilitate diversification and attract investment in the agribusiness sector

A large range of irrigated crops are produced in the region including rice, fodder and cotton. Viticulture and horticulture, including vegetable crops, are also undertaken in the region. The main dryland broadacre enterprises are meat and wool production and grain and oilseed cropping. Aquaculture also occurs within the region; fish are produced for human consumption and native fingerlings are produced to restock waterways.

Agribusiness sustains economic output and employment across the region and will do so into the future. Agricultural productivity is increasing as a result of new technology, innovation and farm mechanisation. These factors have also contributed to a decline in employment over the past decade. In 2011, this sector employed 11.3 per cent of people across the region,⁵ and in some smaller communities employed up to 36 per cent of residents.⁶

The agribusiness sector needs to identify opportunities for innovation, value-added investment and industry diversification to sustain and generate new jobs. Access to new and expanding international markets can provide increased commercial opportunities for exporters, buyers and investors. The

agribusiness and manufacturing sectors are set to gain from recent free trade agreements with Asian markets.

A key component of growing the agribusiness sector is the expansion and protection of the agricultural supply chain. Supply chains can extend beyond regional and State borders to gain access to inputs and markets. The agricultural supply chain includes important transport infrastructure and enabling infrastructure such as silos, abattoirs and saleyard facilities. This infrastructure supports secondary processing facilities, and transport and logistics industries.

The planning system needs to be responsive to the needs of industry to enable business to grow and take advantage of innovation opportunities. The NSW Department of Industry (through the Department of Primary Industries, Agriculture and Local Land Services) plays a role in this by providing industry and stakeholders with agricultural research to encourage innovation and to help them deliver best practice agricultural management. It also helps to identify opportunities for future agribusiness and industry diversification.

The NSW Government will:

- work with councils to identify potential local planning impediments to agribusiness industry diversification;
- require councils to undertake local strategic planning to protect the agricultural supply chain; and
- work with key stakeholders across a number of sectors to identify opportunities and barriers to supply chain infrastructure investment to facilitate the growth of agribusiness.

ACTION 1.1.2 Encourage value-add manufacturing opportunities across the region to increase regional economic diversification

A significant opportunity exists to capitalise on value-added manufacturing of agricultural produce that is still largely exported from the region in base commodity form.

In 2014, the Department of Planning and Environment commissioned a *Murray-Murrumbidgee Profiles and Opportunities* study



Wine making, courtesy of De Bortoli Winery, Griffith

to better understand value-adding opportunities in the region. The study provides comprehensive economic and population analyses that highlight the region's strengths, challenges and opportunities for development.⁷ It identified food and beverage manufacturing as a significant value-add contributor to the Riverina-Murray economy, with strong connections to the agricultural and transport sectors.⁸ Innovation in farming practices, technology and renewable markets will open additional opportunities for biomass and renewable energy production, and carbon sequestration.

Value-add enterprises, manufacturing and intensive operations should be strategically located in areas where the significant investment made by businesses in industry development and infrastructure can be protected from land use conflict. Co-location of related manufacturing industries should be encouraged, where appropriate, to maximise opportunities for co-efficiency, decrease supply chain costs, increase economies of scale and attract further investment. There are also opportunities for industries that co-locate to use the by-products and waste materials of other industries to create new products and services.

Value-adding

'Value-adding' is the enhancement of products or services offered by a business prior to the product or service being made available to customers. This 'value' can be added in a number of ways, through marketing, service provision, or by transforming the product into something better from the customer's perspective. The diversity of the region's key commodities and products has significant potential, given the region's road, rail and port connections.

Examples of value-adding in the region include organic and free-range production methods; milling of grain and oilseeds; ginning and spinning of cotton; packaging of raw fruits, vegetables and meats; and preparing processed foods such as jam or dairy products.

The NSW Government will:

- identify potential land use planning impediments to manufacturing in the region, in collaboration with councils.

DIRECTION 1.2 Manage productive agricultural lands in a sustainable way

The total area of land potentially available for agriculture is large. Comparatively, there are few locations with a high economic productive capacity (access to water, high-quality soils and suitable climates). Increasing domestic and global demand for food and fibre – coupled with the risks of declining productivity from land fragmentation, climate change and land use conflict – highlights the need to protect and plan for productive rural lands.

Land use conflict may arise due to the competing use of land for broadacre agriculture; resource extraction; forestry; energy generation; intensive plant and animal agriculture; rural living; and tourism. Land use conflict can restrict growth and discourage investment in good agricultural practices and productivity. It is important to protect primary and secondary production land and related supply chain infrastructure – such as regional saleyards, silos and abattoirs – so that they can continue to operate unaffected by conflicting land uses.

Travelling Stock Reserves are an important agricultural production asset in the region. They are used to move livestock and as supplementary grazing areas in times of drought. The reserves are located on Crown Land and are generally managed under trust by Local Land Services.

The region also contains privately owned Travelling Stock Reserves that are also used for bushfire and floods, biodiversity habitat links and tourism and horseriding opportunities. These lands need to be protected from the encroachment of incompatible uses.

ACTION 1.2.1 Identify and protect regionally important productive agricultural lands

The biophysical and socio-economic requirements for sustainable agricultural production vary between agricultural industries. Each industry requires access to a specific combination of resources including land and water, favourable climatic conditions, labour, infrastructure, and proximity to markets and processing facilities. They must operate with the available resources, protect and restore the natural resource base, and manage onsite and offsite impacts to be sustainable. Maintaining agricultural land efficiently, and preventing fragmentation, are critical to sustainable and profitable agricultural production.

A critical mass of agricultural industries must be maintained to support important parts of the supply chain, including ancillary services, infrastructure, markets, processing facilities and related industries.

The NSW Government's 2014 Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land mapping identifies agricultural land in the region that is of significance to the State. This land is capable of sustaining high levels of agricultural production for a variety of agricultural industries due to high-quality soil and water resources, and a lack of constraints. The value of this land, and its ongoing viability, must be considered when determining the relative merits of coal and coal seam gas extraction.

There is an opportunity to complement the existing Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land mapping with additional regional-scale mapping that reflects regional climatic and geological conditions, as well as regional industry needs. Mapping that incorporates biophysical, infrastructure and key socio-economic factors can be used to inform strategic land use planning for diverse agricultural sectors.

The NSW Government will:

- prepare a Regional Agricultural Development Strategy to map important agricultural land, identify emerging opportunities, and give guidance and direction for local planning of agricultural development, complementing the existing Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land mapping;

- require councils to recognise and protect the economic potential of productive agricultural land in local planning controls; and
- implement the Government's *Agriculture Industry Action Plan-Primed for growth: Investing locally, connecting globally* (November 2014).

ACTION 1.2.2 Establish a strategic planning framework that protects the productive values of agricultural land and manages land use conflict

The planning system is currently being reviewed so it can provide the strategic and legal framework to protect rural land uses, natural resources, developing industries, and dependent industries and communities. The new planning framework aims to manage land use conflict that can result from the cumulative impacts of successive development decisions.

An updated policy framework will help guide local strategic planning to provide certainty and consistency, support investment in new and existing agricultural industries, and enable planning that manages future risks such as climate variability.

Such a framework can inform local planning, support ongoing investment and employment, and capture new opportunities for the sustainable use of rural land.

The NSW Government will:

- deliver an updated strategic policy framework that:
 - recognises the importance of agricultural lands;
 - protects land and resources for key agricultural industries from inappropriate development;
 - provides clear and consistent direction for the management of agricultural lands;
 - provides guidance on managing the interface between agricultural lands and other land uses;
 - considers the potential impacts associated with climate change; and
 - provides direction to councils about the sustainable management of agricultural lands when they are preparing evidence-based local strategies; and



Khancoban spillway release gates, Snowy Hydro-electric Scheme, courtesy of Snowy Hydro

- work with councils to protect productive agricultural land through land use zoning, and where possible, increase opportunities for agricultural and horticultural uses to keep fresh foods available locally and require local planning strategies to reflect these outcomes including managing the interface between agricultural lands and other land uses.

ACTION 1.2.3 Encourage the increased use of biosecurity measures to protect the region's agricultural assets

Effective biosecurity is important because it contributes to the wellbeing and prosperity of the region, and more broadly the nation. A biosecurity event has a negative impact not just on an industry, but may also extend to surrounding activities and associated industries such as manufacturing and processing, transport and tourism.

Potential biosecurity risks are increasing due to a number of factors such as globalisation of trade, population growth, climate variability and competing priorities for resources, including land use conflicts.⁹

Biosecurity risks can be minimised by appropriate land zoning and land uses in local environmental plans, and by applying buffers to separate different land uses, through distance, vegetation or topography.

The NSW Government's commitment to strengthening and maintaining biosecurity measures across NSW is reflected across a number of documents, including the *NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021*,¹⁰ the *NSW Weeds Action Program 2015-2020* and the *Draft NSW Invasive Species Plan 2015- 2022*. Local Land Services will continue to play a key role in this issue, in collaboration with other organisations such as the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

The NSW Government will require councils to:

- identify opportunities to minimise biosecurity risks for current and future industries through biosecurity plans, and strategic planning, including a review of land use zones in local plans; and
- promote the application of buffer areas to minimise biosecurity risks when assessing the potential impacts of new development.

DIRECTION 1.3 Manage and use the region's natural resources sustainably

The region's future prosperity depends on industries that rely on the use of natural resources, which contribute significantly to both the regional and State economies (see Figure 8).

The region's water resources are limited and therefore must be managed for immediate needs and for the long term economic prosperity and environmental sustainability of the region's communities, industries and the environment. Water resource management is an issue that is external to land use planning.

The region has extensive mineral and metallic deposits; building and construction materials; significant coal and petroleum and renewable energy potential; and extensive forestry and timber resources. These natural resources must be managed to minimise the potential for land use conflict, avoid unintentional sterilisation of valuable resources and maximise available economic opportunities.

ACTION 1.3.1 Support the sustainable use and conservation of water resources

The region's water is sourced from rivers, streams, and lakes (surface water) and from underground aquifers (groundwater). With increasing demand for water and a changing climate, sound policies are required to provide a sustainable supply of water for present and future generations.

Historic water use and drought have led to the need to prioritise and rationalise water supply for all users, including the environment. Major water users include councils and water utilities; forestry; tourism; and agriculture, including rice, dairy, wool, wheat, beef, lamb, grapes and citrus.¹¹ Sharing water equitably between competing water users and the environment, particularly during periods of drought, is a key water management issue.

Maintaining and protecting water catchments, watercourses and riparian land is important for the health of the region. These measures support water quality, biodiversity, recreation and economic outcomes.

Different aspects of water resource management are vested in all three tiers of government, so a cooperative and collaborative approach that involves all stakeholders is required.

The Murray Darling Basin Authority is responsible for developing and overseeing the planning framework that manages the basin's water resources in the national interest. It does this by:

- promoting the use and management of the basin resources in a way that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes;
- protecting, restoring and providing for the ecological values and ecosystem health of the basin; and
- returning the extraction of water resources to environmentally sustainable levels.

Through the *Murray-Darling Basin Plan* (November 2012), integrated responses that include management of water supply, recycling, conservation and increased efficiency across all sectors are already being implemented. The *Basin Plan* limits water use at environmentally sustainable levels by determining long term average sustainable diversion limits.¹⁴ Communities will need to be responsive to new methods of using and managing water.

Water Resource Plans are currently being prepared to implement the outcomes of the *Basin Plan*. Existing water sharing plans are expected to become a component of these new plans. Water sharing plans are being

Major Infrastructure Investment

The region has benefitted from past investment in major infrastructure projects such as the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme, irrigation areas and the regulation of the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers. For example, the Blowering Dam in Tumut and the Burrinjuck Dam in the nearby Yass Valley provide a water storage capacity of over 2.6 million megalitres. This water storage supplies water to the Murrumbidgee and Coleambally Irrigation Areas (covering 128,000 hectares). In response to water scarcity and climate change, more efficient irrigation technologies are being adopted to use water more efficiently.¹²

FIGURE 7: WATER GOVERNANCE¹³

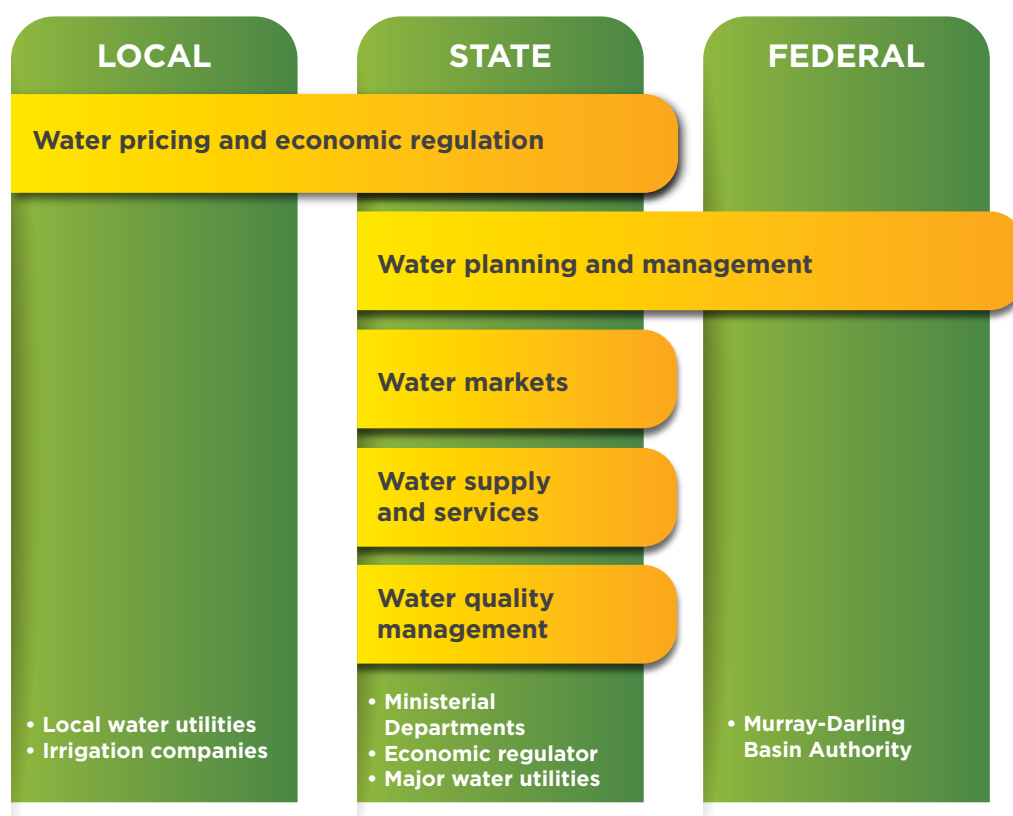
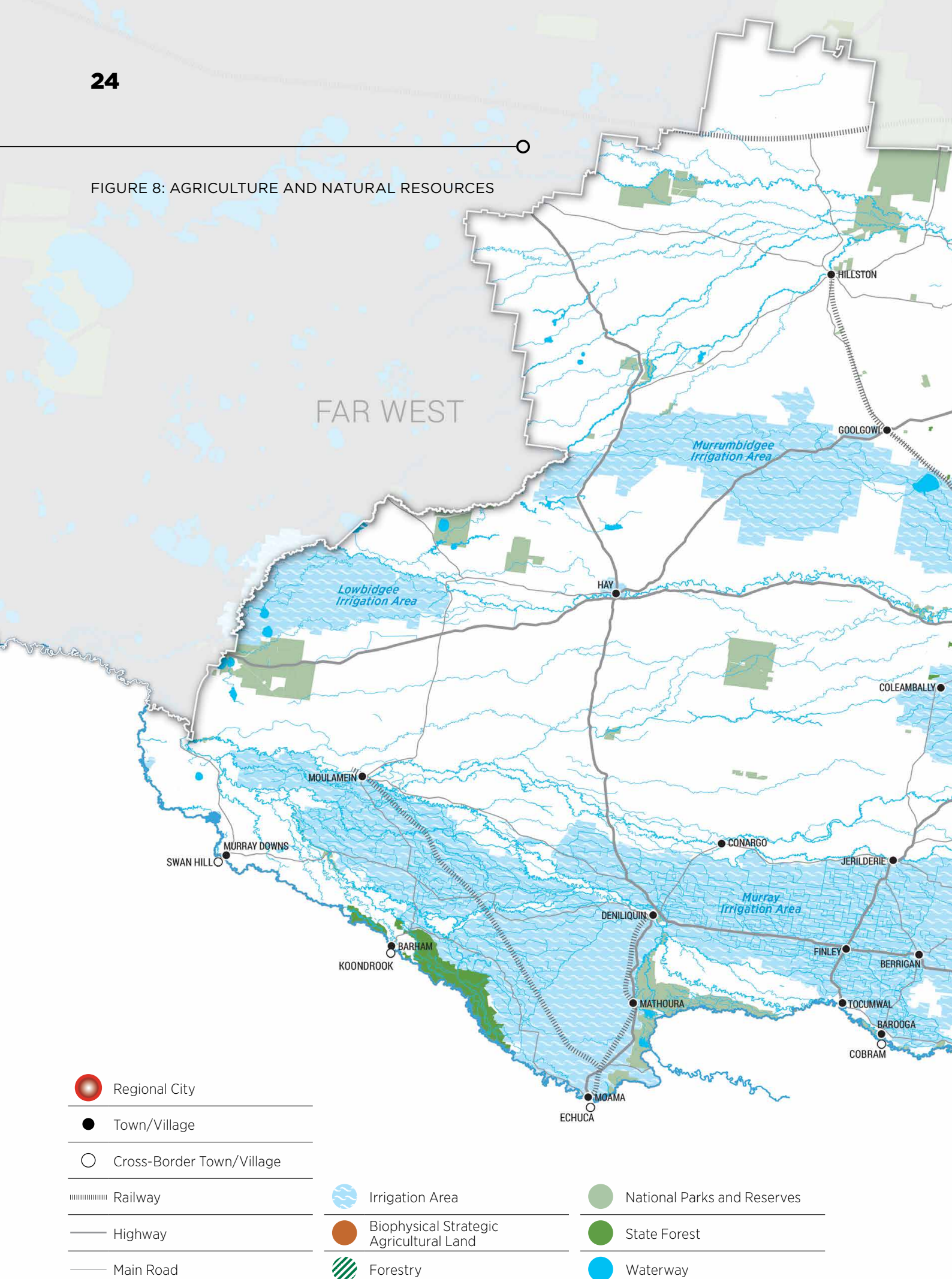
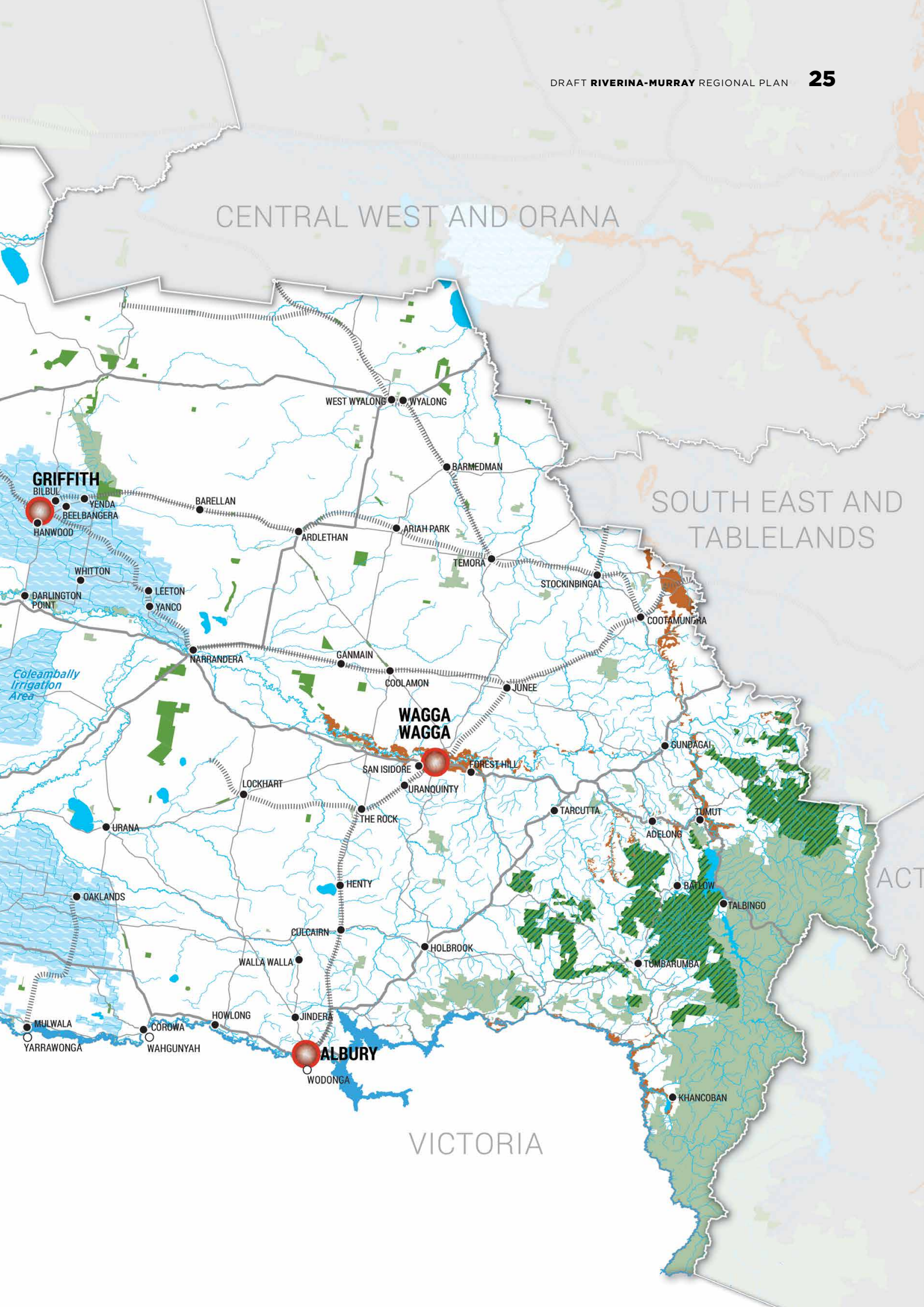


FIGURE 8: AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES







Albury water filtration plant, courtesy of Albury City Council

progressively developed for rivers and groundwater systems across NSW, following the introduction of the *Water Management Act 2000*. These plans establish rules for sharing water between the environmental needs of the river or aquifer and the needs of water users, and also between different types of water use such as town supply, rural domestic supply, stock watering, industry and irrigation.

In response to water scarcity and climate change, more efficient irrigation technologies are being employed in the region.¹⁵ The Australian and NSW Governments will support efficiencies in irrigation that continue to create a demand for agricultural land. They will also provide appropriate opportunities for agribusiness growth through projects such as Water for the Future.¹⁶

Population and settlement growth will continue to place pressure on the region's water resources. Urban water security will continue to be a concern for the region, and as a result, innovative and adaptive measures such as integrated water cycle management and water harvesting initiatives will need to be put in place. This will help to make sure water is used efficiently and sustainably to cater for projected growth.

The NSW Government will work with councils, industry and stakeholders to:

- adopt an integrated approach to water cycle management across the region taking into account climate change, water security, sustainable demand and growth, and the natural environment;
- support the Murray-Darling Basin resource allocation plans to provide clarity for producers on changes to and management of water allocations; and

- recognise and plan for the pressures of a changing climate on the environment, agriculture, settlements and communities, and industry.

ACTION 1.3.2 Protect areas of mineral and energy, extractive and renewable energy potential

The region already has, or has the potential for, significant mineral, metallic, coal, petroleum and renewable energy resources that need to be protected from the encroachment of sensitive land uses (see Figure 9). These resources are important to the region as reflected in the analysed expenditure for 2014/15 that equated to approximately \$20 million direct and approximately \$35 million indirect expenditure in the region. These resources provide opportunities to diversify the existing economy.¹⁸ The NSW Government has identified energy and mineral resource lands across the State.

Definitions

COAL SEAM GAS – natural gas from coal seams.

EXTRACTIVE MATERIAL – sand, gravel, clay, soil, rock, stone or similar substances, but does not include turf.

GAS – natural gas found in several different rock types including sandstone, limestone, shale and coal.

MINERAL – any substance prescribed by the schedule 1 of the Mining Regulation 2010, and includes coal and oil shale, but does not include petroleum. E.g. includes, but is not limited to, copper, clay, diamond, emerald, gold, lead, opal, rutile, zinc.

MINERAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES – minerals, petroleum, gemstones, extractive materials and renewable energy.

MINING INDUSTRIES – industries that mine mineral and petroleum resources.

PETROLEUM (INCL. OIL & GAS) – any naturally occurring hydrocarbon, whether in a gaseous, liquid or solid state, or a mixture thereof.

Water for the Future

This is a long term (10-year) initiative to better balance the water needs of communities, farmers and the environment. As part of this initiative, \$3.1 billion will be invested in the *Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin Program*¹⁷ to purchase water entitlements from irrigators looking to sell. This investment aims to address excessive consumptive use and declining river health as urgent priorities.

Approximately half the region (the area covered by 'Lachlan Orogen') has potential for metallic minerals, with the most significant metallic active mining activity occurring at Lake Cowal Gold Mine, near West Wyalong.

There is ongoing, active exploration for a range of metallic minerals (including gold, silver, tin, copper, base metals and iron ore) in the Bland, Temora, Junee, Gundagai, Tumut, Tumbarumba, Lockhart, Greater Hume and Narrandera Local Government Areas. There is also potential for industrial minerals (including mineral sands and gypsum) in the Wakool Local Government Area.¹⁹

Coal activities are focused on the Oaklands Basin, where there are two coal titles. Exploration activities cover the majority of the Jerilderie Shire, the southern portion of the Murrumbidgee Shire, the western and southern portions of the Urana Shire and the north-western portion of the Corowa Shire.

The Strategic Release Framework has been developed by the NSW Government to ensure that any areas identified for new coal and petroleum exploration licences and assessment leases are subject to an upfront assessment of social, environmental and economic matters.

The NSW Government has recently completed a voluntary buy-back of petroleum (coal seam gas) exploration licences across NSW. There are currently no petroleum titles within the Riverina-Murray region and there are currently no plans for issuing any new licences in the region.

The region is situated in the Murray Basin, which is 300,000 square kilometres in size and has large deposits of mineral sands – regionally significant industrial minerals (bentonite, kaolin, and gypsum) – and heavy mineral sands such as rutile, zircon and ilmenite, and quartz sand, which are used for a range of industrial purposes and represent important regional exports.

Quarries of local and often regional significance are found across much of the region. These supply materials which are critical to the ongoing needs of the building and construction industries. Products include sand and gravel aggregates, dimension stone, road base and fill. In some parts of the region however,

alluvial gravel and hard rock aggregate are scarce and have to be transported significant distances. Transport is a critical cost factor for these resources, making some construction and infrastructure projects more expensive.

Mineral and extractive industries and associated infrastructure such as freight routes and energy transmission networks are important to the region and should be protected from adverse development that could affect current or future extraction.

Strategic Release Framework

The region holds a rich and diverse geology creating a future potential for mineral and energy resource exploration and extraction.

It is recognised that there are competing uses for land in this region and that there is a need to balance these interests in order to deliver the vision for this region. That is, to deliver a region with a sustainable future that maximises the advantages of its diverse climates, landscapes and resources.

As part of the process to achieve balanced outcomes, the NSW Government has introduced a Strategic Release Framework for coal and gas. This is as a mechanism to review and define which lands may constitute new exploration release areas.

New exploration licences will only be issued in areas released by the Minister for Resources and Energy after an assessment of resource potential, economic, environmental and social factors.

Community consultation and an upfront assessment of social, environmental and economic matters will occur through a preliminary regional issues assessment.

Overall, the new Framework resets the NSW Government's approach to issuing exploration titles to ensure that it is transparent, informed and consistent with the NSW Government's broader mineral and energy resource strategies.

Renewable energy generation

The region enjoys a large strategic advantage in terms of hydro-electric resources and energy generating capacity.

Snowy Mountains Scheme

The Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme, with a capacity of 3,800 megawatts, is Australia's largest hydro-electric scheme and one of the most complex integrated water and hydro-electric schemes in the world. It comprises 16 major dams, seven power stations, a pumping station, 145 kilometres of interconnected trans-mountain tunnels, and 80 kilometres of aqueducts.

The scheme accounts for around half of Australia's total hydro-electricity generation capacity and provides base-load and peak-load power to the eastern mainland grid of Australia.²⁰ Water from the scheme is sent to the irrigation districts in the region and is extremely important for its future.

Parts of the region are suited to the development of wind-generated energy infrastructure. Areas south of Tumut and Wagga Wagga may have wind energy potential and are identified on the *NSW Wind Atlas* map produced by the Solar Energy Development Association.²¹ Improvements in technology may allow the development of wind infrastructure in these areas in the future.

The region has solar capability and suitability that presents opportunities for investment in solar energy generation. The areas west of Griffith and Albury generally have a slope of less than 1 per cent and are ideal for developing large-scale solar power generation.²² To this extent, three solar farm projects have advanced to the development application phase, being the Temora, Riverina and Griffith Solar Farm projects, that combined could deliver 72MW of power per annum. Capacity within the current transmission system will, in part, provide the impetus for more renewable energy projects. Transgrid's NSW Connection Opportunities identifies a number of locations with spare connection capacity, including around Griffith.²³

The Riverina-Murray also has high potential for geothermal energy, particularly around Deniliquin, Hay, Carrathool and Griffith.²⁴

Communities can benefit from the development of mineral, extractive and renewable energy industries. The degree of benefit varies across the lifecycle of a development and can affect communities in different ways. Communities need to be prepared to manage population change and economic fluctuations associated with the development of these resources. In the long term, in areas where mineral extraction is decreasing, some regional communities will need support to diversify and transition their economy out of the sector, for example, the Lake Cowal Gold Mine near West Wyalong.

The NSW Government has several policy and legislative tools to support the sustainable growth of the mining industry, with resource planning across the State currently guided by the *NSW Gas Plan*; *Strategic Statement on NSW Coal*; *State Environment Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007*; *Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment Guideline*; *Strategic Release Framework for Coal and Petroleum Exploration*; and the *Preliminary Regional Issues Assessment for Potential Coal and Petroleum Exploration Release Areas Guidelines*.

The NSW Government will:

- require that councils protect areas of mineral and extractive and renewable energy potential through land use zoning in local environmental plans;
- identify and plan for the infrastructure needs of the resources and energy sector;
- support communities that are transitioning out of mining operations to plan for new economic opportunities; and
- develop analytical tools to identify and map renewable energy potential, including wind, large-scale solar, bioenergy and geothermal, building on existing information such as the Australian Government's *Australian Renewable Energy Mapping Infrastructure*.

Explanatory note: Current Mining and Mineral Resources map

Figure 9 (over) identifies the current mining activities in the Riverina-Murray, based on existing licences issued under the *Mining Act 1992*. These include:

- **coal exploration titles** – identifying areas where an exploration licence or assessment lease has been granted to enable title holders to establish the quality, quantity and commercial viability of underlying coal resources;
- **current minerals mining titles** – identifying areas where a mining lease has been granted to allow the mineral to be extracted;
- **current minerals exploration titles** – identifying areas where an exploration licence or assessment lease has been granted to enable title holders to establish the quality, quantity and commercial viability of underlying mineral resources; and
- **known and potential non-energy resource areas** – where geological surveys suggest there may be a high likelihood of a particular resource, which may be confirmed through future exploration and assessment.

There are also locations where mining activities are excluded by the:

- *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*; and
- *State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007*.

The data shown draws on information relating to existing title approvals and is correct at February 2016. The data does not indicate the nature, timing or location of specific mining activities. Further information about recent or current development applications for mining projects in specific locations can be found on the Department of Planning and Environment's Major Projects website at: <http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/>.

ACTION 1.3.3 Avoid urban expansion and rural residential development on productive agricultural land and identified mineral and energy resources

Urban and rural residential encroachment into identified agricultural and mineral and energy resource lands affects the viability and future growth of these industries. The identification of land suitable for urban and rural residential expansion should not lead to land use conflicts, land speculation, or place pressure on the infrastructure and services used by primary producers and the resources and energy sector.

Preventing fragmentation of productive agricultural land is critical to achieving sustainable and profitable agriculture. The management of rural residential development is particularly important because residential areas are typically permanent and often highly sensitive to impacts affecting residential amenity.

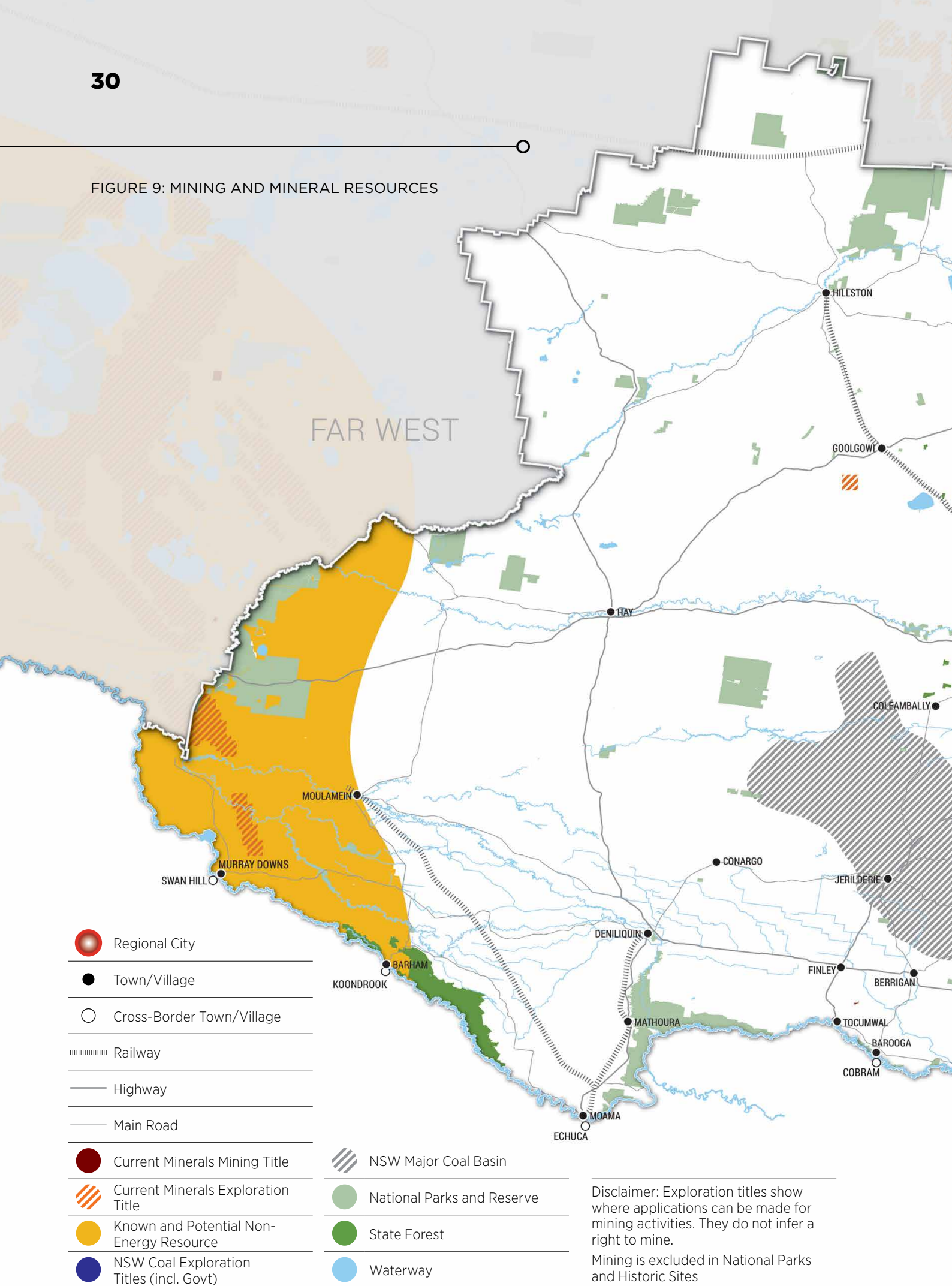
Councils should assess the local demand for housing based on regional priorities, including support for the sustainable growth of the agricultural, and resource and energy sectors. For example, when assessing applications for land use changes (strategic land use planning, rezoning and planning proposals) and new developments or expansions, councils will need to consult the NSW Department of Industry's Geoscience Data Warehouse and the exploration and mining activity maps (including the Common Ground website), so that valuable resources such as coal, gas and construction materials are not sterilised.

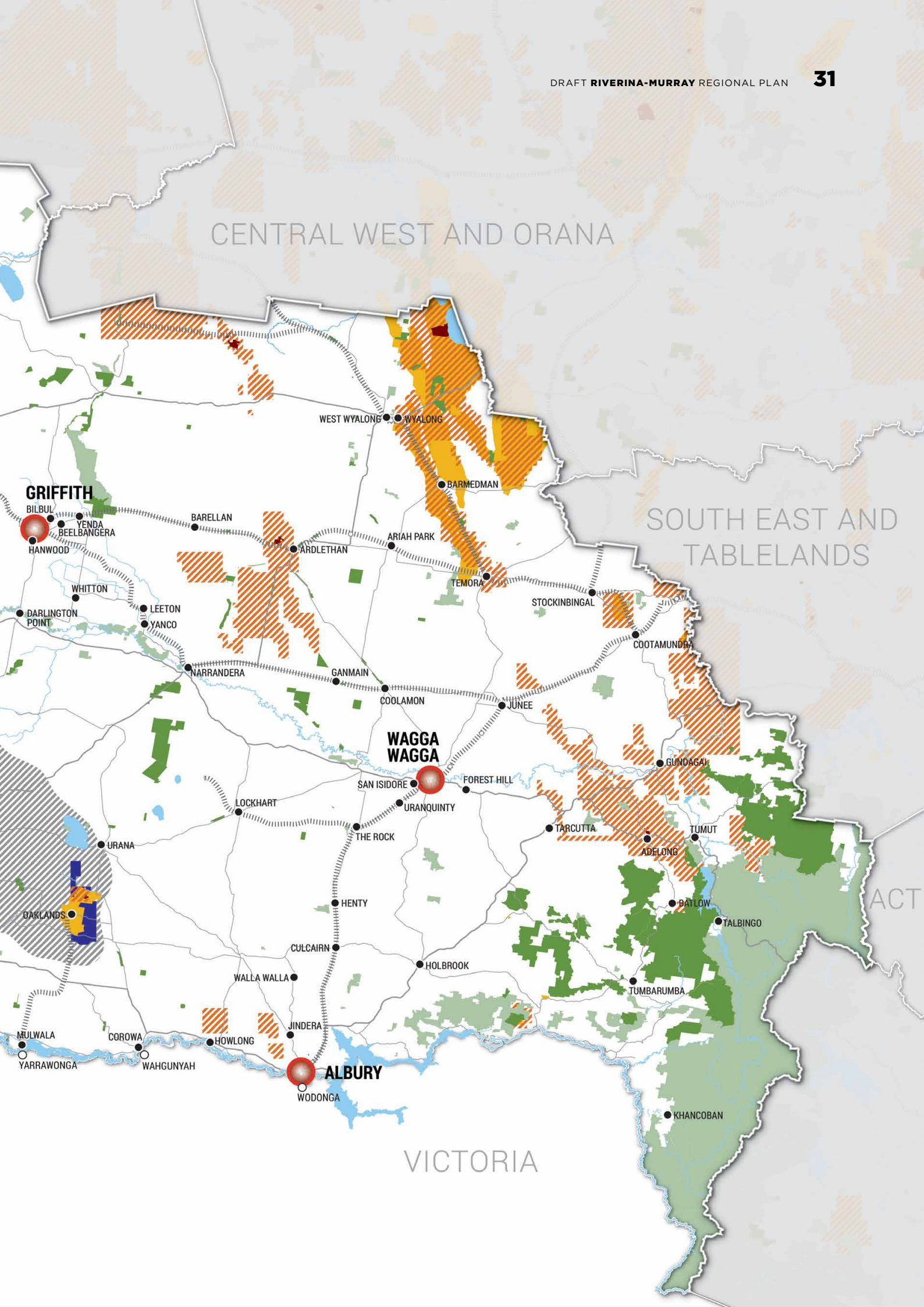
It is important to safeguard energy resource potential once it is identified to accommodate long-term growth and change in energy demand for the State and the region.

Mining and energy production activities have specific operational needs that may compete with other sensitive uses. But in many cases these activities are also temporary, dependent on the productive life of the facility or resource.

The COAG Standing Council on Energy and Resources prepared a *Multiple Land Use Framework* to assist in planning and managing multiple land uses. This Framework includes a series of planning principles that can assist in planning around known mineral and energy resources where other high value land uses also exist.

FIGURE 9: MINING AND MINERAL RESOURCES





CENTRAL WEST AND ORANA

SOUTH EAST AND
TABLELANDS

ACT

VICTORIA



Left: Housing on large land blocks, courtesy of Albury City Council
Right: Housing, courtesy of Jerilderie Shire Council

Multiple Land Use Framework

Developing staged land use plans that respond to the lifecycle of the energy mineral and energy resources will enable all stakeholders to better understand the long term productive value of the land and provide greater certainty for investments. These can consider how identified energy resource lands may accommodate a range of uses, either sequentially or simultaneously with energy-related activities.

Having a staged approach to land use planning for a resource area will recognise the sequential nature of activities:

- **lead-in stage**, to determine the project's suitability and viability, consideration needs to be given to the:
 - potential local and cumulative environmental or social impacts of the proposed activity; and
 - the productive value of the resource and the investments in land and infrastructure required to support ongoing operations'
- **operational stage** – consideration needs to be given to the requirements that should be set to manage the production of resources in line with global and national demands, and to maintain buffers to sensitive uses; and
- **transitional stage – consideration needs to be given to** transitioning to other land uses, once the underlying resources have been extracted.

Throughout the lifecycle of the resource consideration should also be given to opportunities to provide:

- rural and agricultural activities;
- conservation – to protect biodiversity and sustain habitat connectivity; and
- housing – to accommodate long term demands for expanding cities, towns and villages (this will be informed by and support a separate action for long-term settlement planning).

The NSW Government will:

- work with councils to avoid the impacts of urban and rural housing encroachment into identified agriculture and mineral and energy resource areas, when preparing local environmental plans, to support the ongoing success of these sectors;
- assess the implications of housing and sequencing of urban release areas in existing and known resource areas; and
- require councils to consult the Department of Industry's Geoscience Data Warehouse and the exploration and mining activity maps (on the Common Ground website) so that valuable resources such as coal, gas and construction materials are not sterilised.

ACTION 1.3.4 Implement the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan to increase renewable energy generation

The NSW Government has prepared a *NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan* (2013) to help achieve the national target of 20 per cent of energy generation by renewable energy by 2020. These targets have been a driver of wind and solar farm proposals across NSW.

The *NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan* details three goals (and 24 actions) to most efficiently grow renewable energy generation in NSW:

- attract renewable energy investment and projects;
- build community support for renewable energy; and
- attract and grow expertise in renewable energy technology.



The NSW Government will:

- implement the actions in the *NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan*; and
- explore opportunities to attract research and commercial investment into the region.

ACTION 1.3.5 Support the protection of native and plantation forests from encroachment

The region has significant forestry and timber resources, supporting a wood product industry worth over \$2 billion. The industry is based mainly on softwood plantations, with some hardwood forests that are mainly located in the far eastern portion of the region (Tumut, Tumbarumba, Holbrook and Gundagai).²⁵ Smaller industries are associated with the cypress forests of the South West Slopes, and the red gum forests at Perricoota-Koondrook. Private native forestry also exists in other locations across the region.

Timber processing takes place in Albury, Greater Hume, Tumut and Tumbarumba for timber, print paper, kraft paper, and pulp and particle board products. At December 2013, the wood and paper products manufacturing sector employed 1.1 per cent of full-time equivalent employees and comprised 0.7 per cent of value-added within the Riverina-Murray economy.²⁶ In the Tumut and Tumbarumba Local Government Areas, the sector is significant, employing 9.7 per cent of full-time employees and comprising 6.3 per cent of value-added for these areas.²⁷

Between 2006 and 2011, there was a shift in employment from wood product manufacturing to paper product manufacturing, with a slight increase in employment. The industry faces a number of challenges, including securing ongoing access to wood resources, encroachment of sensitive

and incompatible land uses, conversion of available land for plantation forestry activities, shifting market demand and identifying and resolving transport infrastructure barriers. There are increasing opportunities in diverse markets such as the kraft paper market.

Protecting and securing adequate future timber supplies from both within and outside the region, will be necessary to support the industry, and to enable the region's transport networks to respond to increasing demand.

The NSW Government will:

- work with councils to protect native and plantation forests and processing industries from the encroachment of sensitive land uses.



GOAL 2 – Improved regional transport networks and utility infrastructure to support economic activity

The Riverina-Murray region is unique on the eastern seaboard because of its strategic location at the confluence of all of the major freight corridors between Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane (see Figure 10, page 36). This gives the region a competitive advantage to maximise economic activity.

Economic growth in the Riverina-Murray will be driven by efficient, capable, reliable and sustainable transport networks and utility infrastructure. Improvements to the transport network (see Figure 11, page 42) and upgrades of utility infrastructure across the region will deliver increased benefits to communities and industries.

Agricultural output and productivity is projected to increase, generating increased freight. Freight volumes across NSW are projected to double by 2030 and triple by 2050.²⁸ A portion of this growth is expected to occur in the Riverina-Murray and will result in the need to significantly expand and upgrade the existing transport networks. Cross-border connections to Victoria, via road and rail river crossings, will remain a critical component of the regional freight transport network, enabling the continued movement of freight to the Port of Melbourne.

Much of the freight generated from the region's agriculture, and food and beverage manufacturing and processing, starts and travels on local roads. These roads were not designed, or expected to take the load of larger vehicles. Some local roads are either failing under the pressure of freight movements, or limiting the ability to move freight due to their

condition, alignment, or impediments to high productivity vehicles. This issue will become increasingly challenging as freight movements increase.

Councils have already initiated and engaged in collaborative partnerships to collectively improve and better manage the local road network. The draft Plan aims to support and grow these efforts.

The private sector has started to capitalise on the region's locational competitive advantage by committing investment to a number of intermodal terminals across the region. These proposals offer business and industry the opportunity to move freight more efficiently and competitively.

The NSW Government already has a suite of strategies to improve transport infrastructure across the region, including the:

- *Newell Highway Corridor Strategy* (2015) and *Albury to Cowra Corridor Strategy* (2010);
- *NSW Freight and Ports Strategy* (2013);
- *Murray Murrumbidgee Regional Transport Plan* (2013); and
- *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* (2012).

Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services are progressively preparing network and corridor strategies to cover every State road in NSW, to better manage transport infrastructure and maximise benefits for all road users.

Left:
Dean Street
pedestrian access
bridge over the
Hume Motorway,
courtesy of Albury
City Council



Left: Heavy freight from Visy Pulp and Paper Mill, Tumut, courtesy of Visy
Right: Grain haulage from Coolamon, courtesy of Emerald Grain

Regional infrastructure requirements and investment need to be coordinated to maximise the benefits to the economy and broader regional community. A coordinated and collaborative approach to improving local road networks, and connectivity to the wider regional and State networks, will better link the region to Sydney, Melbourne and other markets, and improve the region's economic competitiveness.

The NSW Government will continue to work with stakeholders to improve network reliability and efficiency; make best use of infrastructure; and provide ongoing network capacity to allow the region's settlements, industries and agribusinesses to grow.

DIRECTION 2.1 Enhance the region's freight networks through coordinated investment

There is a strategic need to improve connectivity, reliability and efficiency across the region's freight network (see Figure 10), to increase economic growth and to provide a competitive advantage for its industries, particularly the agribusiness sector.

The majority of freight transported from the region, either by road or rail, is moved most efficiently via established north-south connections focused on the Port of Melbourne, with road and rail links bridging the Murray River. During consultation, stakeholders identified a need to improve access to Port

Botany, Port Kembla and the Adelaide domestic market through better east-west connections such as the Sturt, Riverina and Mid-Western highways and Burley Griffin Way.

Connections to the Port of Melbourne

Connections to the Port of Melbourne are critical for the region's economy. A large majority of the region's exports are transported south to the Port of Melbourne, for example, approximately 35 twenty-foot equivalent units of bulk and bottled wine from Casella Wines in Yenda (in the Griffith Local Government Area) are transported to the Port of Melbourne every day, destined for the international market.²⁹ Maintaining connections and access to the port will become increasingly important as agricultural production and output increases into the future.

The agribusiness sector relies heavily on transport infrastructure to efficiently move its products to market. Maximising industry productivity and output and reducing industry transport costs, will help to increase industry growth into the future.

Freight and logistics growth will be supported into the future by identifying the region's defined freight network and road pressure points, and then developing a program of works in collaboration with councils to undertake the necessary network improvements.



Transport for NSW administers two programs to coordinate investment in the freight network:

- *Fixing Country Rail* is a program to remove productivity and efficiency constraints on the regional rail network; and
- *Fixing Country Roads* is a program to provide targeted funding to local councils for road projects that will eliminate connectivity constraints on local roads in NSW.

Country Regional Network Upgrades

Transport for NSW has consulted with major grain receivers and regional transport operators to identify key sites for potential upgrades across the Country Regional Network. The NSW Government has committed over \$3.4 million to extend the existing rail siding in Ardlethan (in the Coolamon Local Government Area) as one of the first projects under the rail sidings program announced in the 2014-15 NSW Budget. Together with new 'over-rail' loading equipment, this upgrade is expected to save seven hours in loading time by reducing train shunting.³⁰

The NSW Government collects information on the goods and commodities generated within and transported out of the region, as well as through freight movement from other areas and interstate, to better inform freight network planning.

ACTION 2.1.1 Identify and prioritise pinch points in the freight network

More than 41 million tonnes of freight are moved annually between NSW and Victoria, and six million tonnes between NSW and South Australia, with the majority traversing the Riverina-Murray by either road or rail.³¹

Identifying and addressing potential network impediments will help to improve network efficiency.

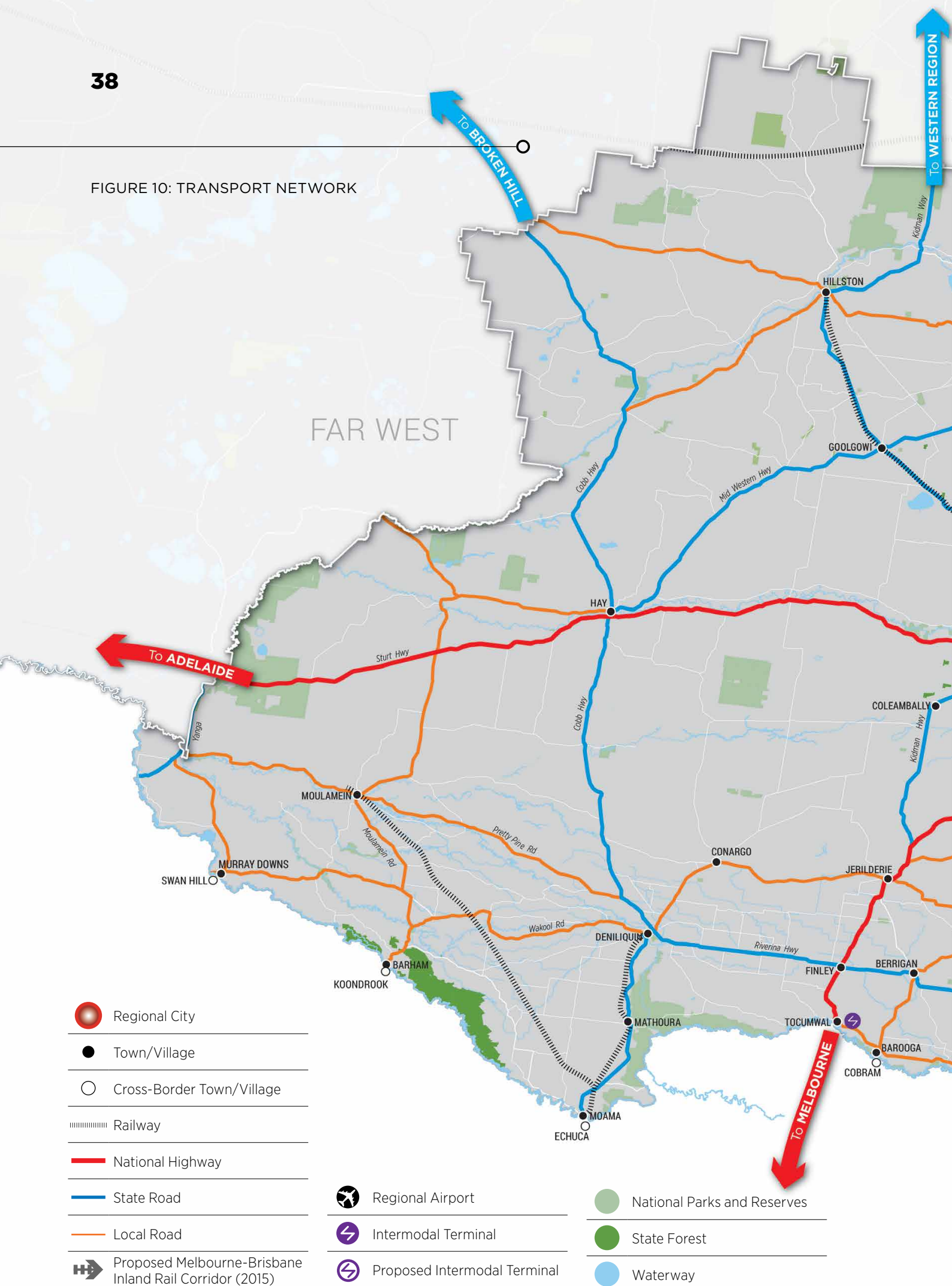
The NSW Government has announced funding to address freight pinch points on regional roads and rail including:

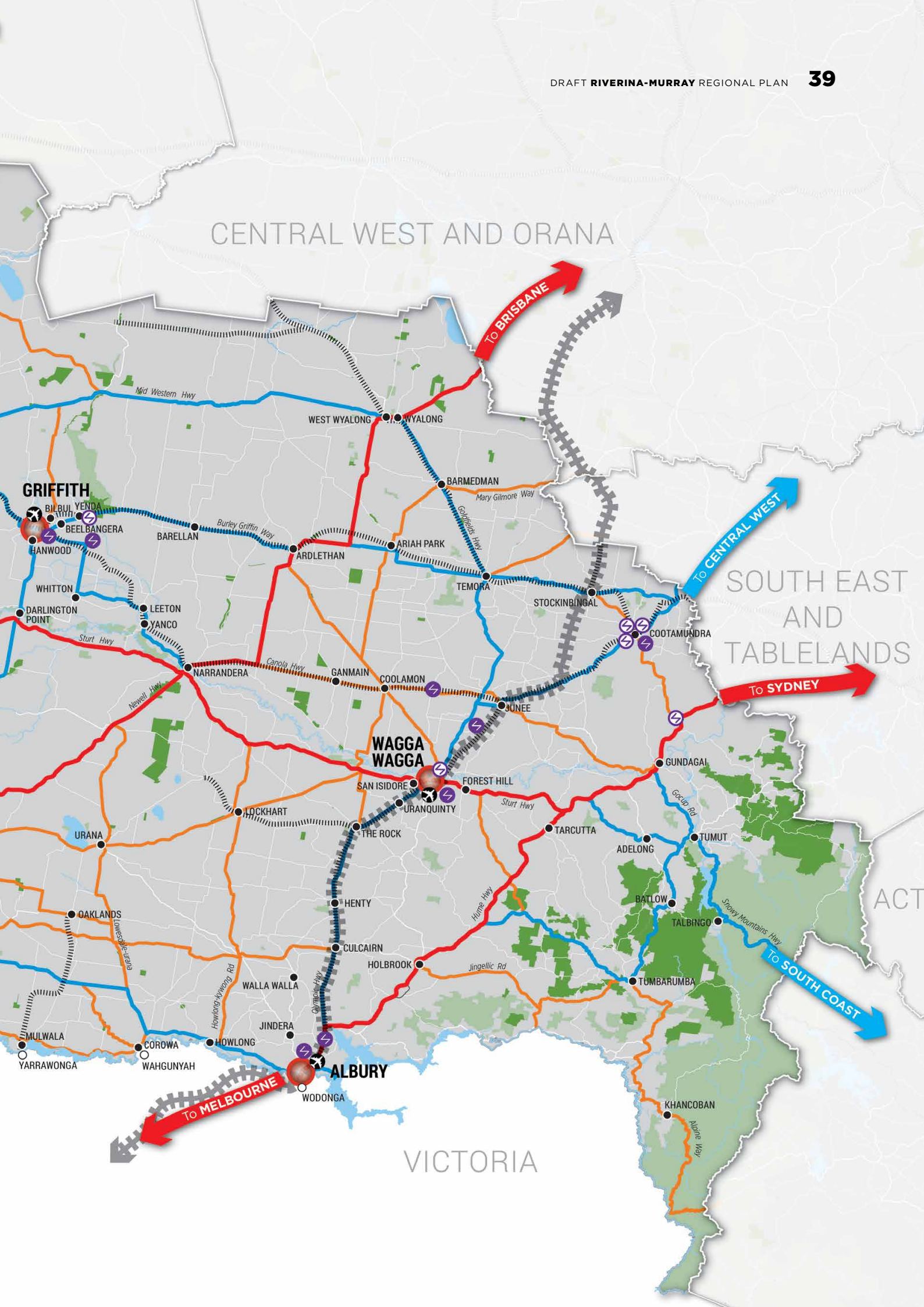
- \$200 million for a *Regional Freight Pinch Point and Safety Program*;
- \$50 million for a Western NSW Freight Productivity Program;
- \$443 million for *Fixing Country Roads*; and
- \$400 million for the *Fixing Country Rail Program (Rebuilding NSW)*.

Bypasses

Town and city bypasses help to improve freight efficiency, reduce travel times and costs, improve safety for road users and increase the amenity of towns. The *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* (2012) proposed to develop a program of town bypasses, based on priorities determined through community consultation and defined criteria.³² Councils and State agencies should consider the viability of local bypasses and strategically plan for bypass corridors.

FIGURE 10: TRANSPORT NETWORK





Temora Town Centre Bypass

Currently, there is no heavy vehicle bypass at Temora on the Goldfields Way. Between 1,500 and 2,000 heavy vehicles use this highway daily and travel through the main centre of Temora. Temora Shire Council has funded the development of a strategy to identify a suitable alternate route for heavy vehicles which may yield an alternative route.

Griffith CBD Bypasses

Two bypasses are proposed by Griffith City Council – a southern bypass and northern bypass. The proposed southern bypass will significantly reduce the traffic pressure on Willandra and Watkins Avenues and reduce the amount of traffic entering the Griffith CBD from major roads such as the Kidman Way, Burley Griffin Way and Irrigation Way. The northern bypass, known as the Yenda bypass, which has been partially achieved through the Northern, Bilbul and Beelbanger corridors, will create the link that completes the bypass around the city of Griffith.

The provision of both bypasses corresponds with the proposed relocation of the Griffith Freight Terminal east of Griffith. This will move heavy vehicle traffic from Griffith's CBD to the new site.³³

Wagga Wagga Urban Highway Study

Wagga Wagga is located at the intersection of the Olympic Highway (a State highway) and the Sturt Highway (a national highway), and is an important regional freight and service centre. In conjunction with Wagga Wagga City Council, Roads and Maritime Services are developing a corridor study of the State road network that passes through the Wagga Wagga CBD. The study will consider road safety, traffic efficiency, freight network assessment, rest areas and coupling/decoupling areas, land use patterns, and intersection treatments.

Bridge crossings

Bridge crossings provide important regional connections that support the existing freight network, critical connections to the Port of Melbourne, and attract and enable industry to locate in NSW. The NSW Government manages bridge upgrades and improvements through the *Bridges for the Bush* initiative.

Bridges for the Bush

The \$145 million *Bridges for the Bush* initiative will improve the capability and capacity of a number of bridges in the region to support modern freight vehicles:

- Kapooka Bridge on the Olympic Highway, south of Wagga Wagga – funding has been secured and replacement works are expected to be completed in late-2016;³⁴
- New Murray River crossing at Echuca on Cobb Highway – a new bridge is to be designed to carry over-size agricultural vehicles with no height restrictions. The new bridge is being planned by VicRoads with a NSW contribution expected to be approximately \$60 million;
- Carrathool Bridge over the Murrumbidgee River, Murrumbidgee Local Government Area – work is funded 50 per cent from the Australian Government's *Bridges Renewal Programme* and 50 per cent from the *NSW State Fixing Country Roads Program*; and
- Gee Gee Bridge over the Wakool River at Swan Hill and the Tooleybuc Bridge over the Murray River on the Mallee Highway – work is partially funded through the Truss Bridge Replacement Program. These bridges are longer term priorities.

The NSW Government will work with councils to:

- investigate roads and bridges which provide potential impediments to the existing freight network; and
- progressively deliver improvements to the freight network.

ACTION 2.1.2 Identify and protect intermodal freight terminals to facilitate growth in the freight and logistics sector

Freight and industry hubs, and intermodal terminals, will support improved freight movement throughout the region and potentially reshape the way freight is moved.

Transport for NSW established a NSW Cargo Movement Coordination Centre in 2014 to optimise freight movements from regional NSW, including the Riverina-Murray region, and to coordinate and increase the movement of cargo to and from Port Botany and Port Kembla.³⁵ Business Development Managers from this centre work with transport operators to identify network constraints.

The NSW Government supports regional intermodal terminals and their ongoing role in the freight system. Transport for NSW is committed to engaging with councils to explore planning issues associated with the development of intermodal facilities within industrial precincts, including adjoining land use, and road and rail access to proposed sites.

A number of the region's freight intermodal terminals, including Bomen and Ettamogah, have been integrated within industrial precincts to provide safe and efficient road and rail access. It is important that these industrial precincts are protected from the encroachment of sensitive land uses to enable their future expansion. Existing and proposed intermodal terminals are shown on Figure 10.

The NSW Government will require that councils:

- implement local planning controls to protect freight and logistics facilities from encroachment of sensitive land uses; and
- protect freight and transport corridors, and strategically locate freight hubs to support further industry development.

Regional Freight and Logistics Facilities

NEXUS INDUSTRIAL PRECINCT AND ETTAMOGAH RAIL HUB

The Ettamogah Rail Hub, located within the Nexus Industrial Precinct in Albury, is a significant intermodal hub. The hub has capacity to service the movement of more than 16,000 containers per annum. Rail freight services have increased through the hub as a result of strong industry growth.

During early consultation, Albury City Council identified the need to construct a full interchange at the intersection of the Hume Highway and Davey Road to increase access for vehicles to this hub. The project is estimated to cost \$14 million; the Australian Government committed \$7 million toward this project under round four of the *Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme*.³⁶ In March 2015, Roads and Maritime Services provided the Council with a revised project estimate of approximately \$20.4 million. To date, the additional \$13.4 million remains unfunded.

TOCUMWAL

A freight terminal exists at Tocumwal for containerised trains heading to Melbourne via Shepparton. This is a key freight hub for transporting freight to the Port of Melbourne.



left: Albury regional airport passenger service, courtesy of Albury City Council
 Right: Australian Airline Pilot Academy, courtesy of Wagga Wagga City Council

ACTION 2.1.3 Identify and prioritise opportunities to improve regionally significant local road connections

The *NSW Freight and Ports Strategy* (2013) outlines the NSW Government's commitment to improving connectivity between transport networks and key freight precincts. Transport for NSW is proposing to develop a Defined Freight Network³⁷ to improve coordination between all levels of government and stakeholders.

Initial work has already been completed by the Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils and the Riverina and Murray Regional Organisation of Councils to identify local road pressure points within the regional freight network (see Figure 11). A key input to this work is the role that Victorian transport networks play in supporting NSW freight and passenger demands. A prioritised rolling program of works to upgrade and improve local roads that connect to the State and national road freight network needs to be developed. Transport for NSW will work with councils to further develop these projects.

The connectivity of the road networks within the Riverina-Murray region will influence its economic potential, and road planning needs to be considered as a comprehensive whole-of-government matter.³⁸

The NSW Government will work with councils to:

- identify, coordinate and prioritise the delivery of local road projects that help support the regional freight network.

ACTION 2.1.4 Work with the Australian Government on the proposed Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Rail Corridor

The *2010 Melbourne-Brisbane Inland Rail Alignment Study*, prepared by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC), identified the preferred corridor for inland rail, passing through the region in Wagga Wagga and Albury.³⁹ The fine-scale alignment of the corridor is yet to be settled. The Australian Government and ARTC are working to finalise planning, engineering design and assessment of the Melbourne - Brisbane Inland Rail Corridor.

The NSW Government will:

- work with the Australian Government to develop an agreement to finalise planning, engineering design and assessment of the Melbourne - Brisbane Inland Rail Corridor.

DIRECTION 2.2 Improve inter-regional transport services

Access to more reliable and affordable transport options that meet the needs of the community, such as air transport, will be important in the future. Air travel enables residents and businesses to connect to larger centres, both inter-regionally and interstate, while rail services support the movement of residents and visitors to the region.



ACTION 2.2.1 Implement local planning controls that protect regional airports from the encroachment of incompatible land uses

Regional economic growth will be underpinned by the ongoing operation and expansion of air travel and related facilities across the region.⁴⁰

In addition to traditional uses for residents and business, air-based operations support essential community services such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service and military and training operations such as the Royal Australian Air Force, which has a significant airbase at Wagga Wagga. The Australian Airline Pilot Academy at Wagga Wagga trains local pilots in what will be an increasingly important sector for economic growth.

The region's largest airports at Albury, Griffith, Wagga Wagga and Narrandera-Leeton, provide regular passenger connections, with charter and freight flights operating out of smaller regional airfields and aerodromes. Both Albury and Wagga Wagga provide daily connections to Sydney and Melbourne and have considerable investment in air traffic control and other airport facilities.

Long term strategic planning will need to be undertaken by airport operators and the NSW Government to identify opportunities for long term investment and expansion. Councils should include provisions in local environmental plans that provide regionally significant airports with the opportunity to expand and to avoid encroachment from incompatible development.

The NSW Government will support the maintenance of the 20 per cent of flight slots allocated to regional NSW services and will seek a greater allocation in peak periods.⁴¹ These flight slots determine the convenience of air travel for regional communities accessing

Sydney by air and are critical to supporting business within the region.

The NSW Government will require that councils:

- implement controls in local environmental plans to protect airports from the encroachment of incompatible development.

ACTION 2.2.2 Identify and protect future rail corridors

The Australian Government is investigating opportunities for a high-speed rail network between capital cities along the east coast. If feasible, it would significantly reduce travel times between the east coast capital cities and regional centres, and increase transport options in regional NSW. This may generate new opportunities for economic development in the region.

The NSW Government will:

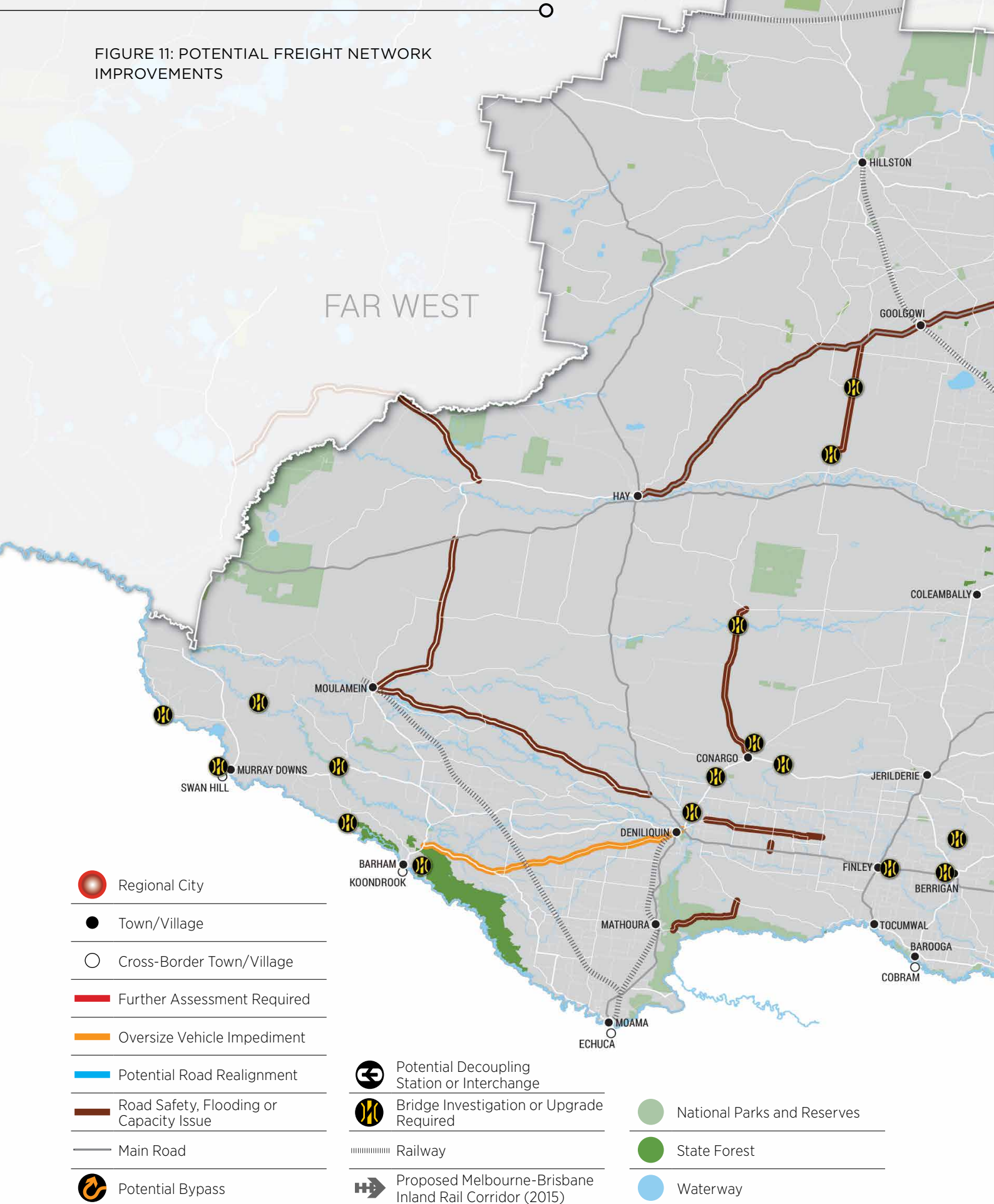
- work with the Australian Government to plan for future rail corridors in the region.

DIRECTION 2.3 Coordinate infrastructure delivery to facilitate economic opportunities

Settlements and industries across the Riverina-Murray are supported by infrastructure networks associated with energy, water, waste water, and telecommunications. Upgrades to these infrastructure networks will be required at various times throughout the next 20 years, for example, to develop or expand greenfield release areas.

Improved coordination in the delivery of local, State and private infrastructure investment will better align user demands with utility capacity

FIGURE 11: POTENTIAL FREIGHT NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS



CENTRAL WEST AND ORANA





National Broadband Network roll-out, courtesy of NBN Co

and provide cost-savings through planned delivery. The NSW Government aims to deliver a more coordinated approach to infrastructure investment, to maximise economic opportunities and make the best use of existing infrastructure across the region.

The region relies on high-quality information and communications technology to service industries, and drive future economic competitiveness. Access to reliable telecommunication services during emergency events is critical, particularly in communities subject to natural hazards such as bushfires and floods. The Australian Government is delivering the National Broadband Network which is critical for the economic future of the region.

ACTION 2.3.1 Coordinate the delivery of infrastructure to support the future needs of residents, business and industry

The coordination and timely delivery of infrastructure across the region's industrial areas is essential for future large-scale infrastructure investment, for example, high energy-consuming industries. This is particularly important for regionally significant industrial land releases such as the Bomen Business Park in Wagga Wagga and the Nexus Industrial Precinct in Albury.

At present, there is sufficient capacity across all utility infrastructure networks to cater for projected residential growth to 2036. Some residential areas may require new or extended infrastructure services to accommodate future housing growth. In some instances, the provision of infrastructure will help to attract new or accelerated housing growth.

With an ageing population, providing adequate burial space is an important issue for governments and communities. Land needs to be identified and protected for the future so that current and future generations can have burial space that meets their needs. The NSW Government will support councils and infrastructure providers to identify appropriate sites and capacity infrastructure such as cemeteries and crematoria.

Energy

Access to energy, including electricity and gas, is an essential requirement for residential and industrial development. Many parts of the region do not have access to reticulated natural gas. Access to natural gas will be important in the future and will help make areas more attractive for settlement and business investment.

Deficiencies in the energy network can impede future business development. Councils have indicated that proposed industrial and agricultural enterprises have been delayed, moved or abandoned due to site-specific energy supply shortages and the cost of supply. This can affect potential investment and industry diversification.

The challenge of providing cost-effective extended and upgraded services to some remote areas in the region creates opportunities for standalone alternative energy generation, and the use of renewable energy options such as wind and solar generation.

Water and Waste

Water is required for residential, business, environmental and irrigation purposes. Competing demands for water need to be carefully managed both within and outside the region. The region's water supply infrastructure will be able to meet projected future growth, except in Tumbarumba Shire, where there is a forecast supply deficiency greater than 50 per cent by 2036.⁴² The NSW Government supports councils investigating capacity issues to support growth.

As the region's population and industry grow, demand for waste and resource recovery management facilities will increase. Technological advancement in waste management may result in new ways of managing waste in all urban areas. Currently, sufficient landfill capacity exists to manage the region's waste to 2036.

Regional Water and Waste Water Backlog Program

On 6 March 2015, the NSW Government announced \$110 million in *Restart NSW* funding to clear a backlog of projects in country towns affected by ongoing water quality and sewerage problems.⁴³ Funding will be delivered under the *Regional Water and Waste Water Backlog Program*, managed by the Department of Primary Industries, Water.

This program is part of the \$325 million *Water Security for Regions* reservation in the 2014-15 NSW budget, which is assisting the Government to meet its targets for access to and quality of potable water.

Telecommunications

The region relies on high-quality information and communications technology to service industries, and drive future economic competitiveness. Access to reliable telecommunication services during emergency events is critical, particularly in communities subject to natural hazards such as bushfire and floods.

Currently, access to telecommunications is inconsistent across the region, which affects its ability to attract jobs, grow business and deliver e-programs for health and education.

The delivery of reliable telecommunications infrastructure is problematic in some areas, with mobile phone black spots and delays in the roll-out of the National Broadband Network to areas including Hay, Carrathool, Deniliquin and Jerilderie. Areas not identified in the National Broadband Network roll-out program will need to investigate alternative access arrangements.

The Australian Government invested \$100 million to improve mobile phone coverage in regional Australia through the *Mobile Black Spot Programme*. In addition to government funding commitments, the program has leveraged over \$185 million in private sector investment.⁴⁴

It is also critical that regionally significant defence communication infrastructure, such as the Morundah and Royal Australian Navy defence communications stations, are protected for long term use, and that surrounding land uses preserve their operational capabilities.

The NSW Government will:

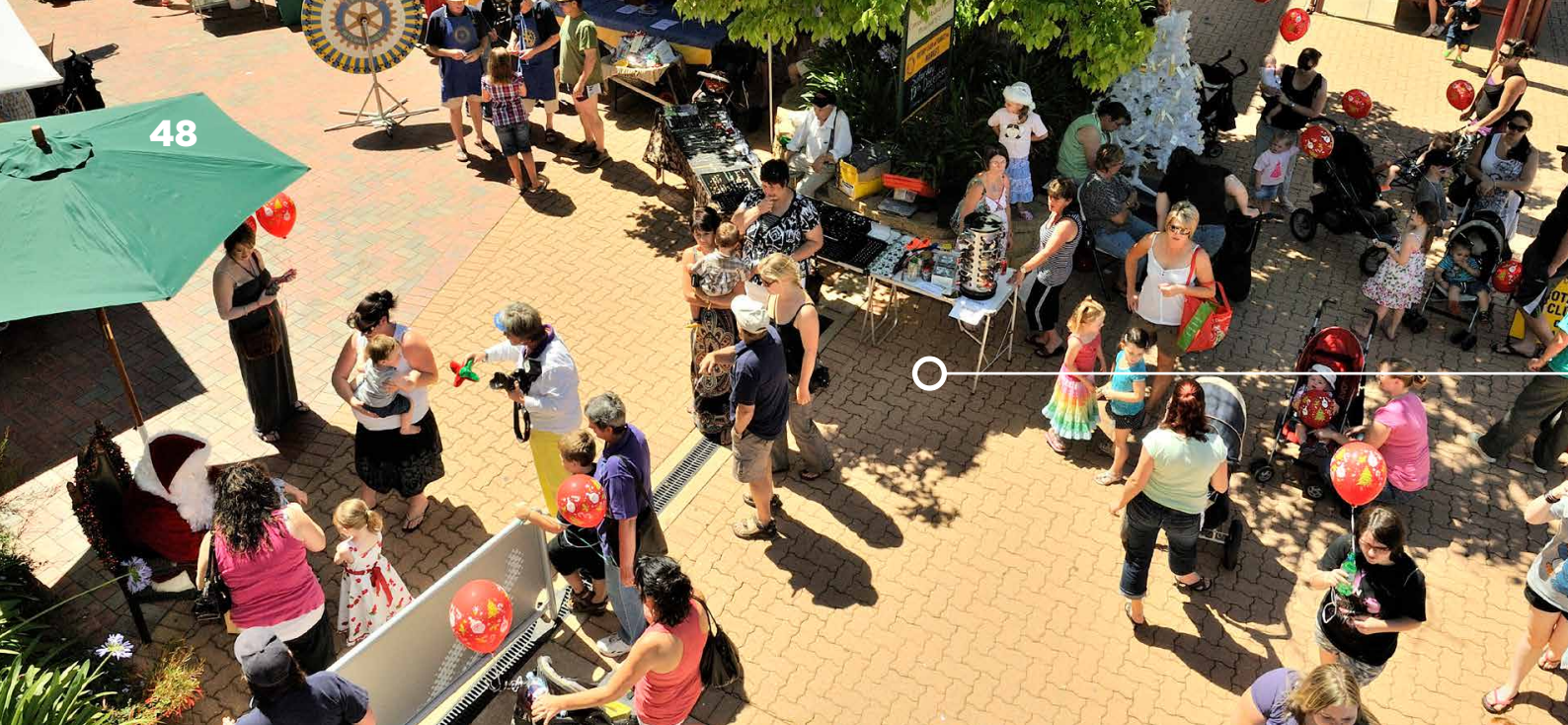
- work with councils and servicing agencies to coordinate infrastructure planning and delivery for residential zoned land and regionally significant industrial zoned land;
- work with councils to enable the use and development of standalone alternative energy generation and renewable energy options;
- work with councils and defence agencies to protect the function of the defence communication facilities within the Wagga Wagga, Lockhart, Urana and Narrandera Local Government Areas; and
- support councils and infrastructure providers in identifying appropriate sites for local and capacity infrastructure such as emergency service facilities, energy production and supply facilities, waste disposal areas, cemeteries and crematoria.

ACTION 2.3.2 Establish monitoring mechanisms to enable better demand forecasting to inform infrastructure coordination

Establishing mechanisms to monitor development will enable councils, industry and infrastructure providers to better plan for future demand and infrastructure requirements. This can assist in planning for infrastructure that has longer lead times for delivery and needs to be planned strategically, in conjunction with councils. This type of infrastructure includes schools, emergency service facilities, bus depots, energy generation and supply facilities, waste disposal areas, cemeteries and crematoria, and a range of other infrastructure.

The NSW Government will:

- monitor and coordinate the development of land releases to inform infrastructure needs.



GOAL 3 – Strong regional cities supported by a network of liveable towns and villages that meet the community’s changing needs

Over the next 20 years the region will experience a number of changes. Growth will be driven by changes in agricultural technology and productivity; freight and transport connections; water trading and regulation; climate change; and economic or market conditions. These changes will affect the make-up of the population and are likely to influence settlement patterns.

Population growth across the region will not be evenly distributed, with the regional cities of Albury and Wagga Wagga projected to experience the highest rate of growth. Investment in major services, facilities and industrial activity will drive growth in the regional cities, distributing benefits across the region.

Smaller towns and villages that support local services will experience a relatively stable population. In some cases, communities that are dependent on agricultural production will experience decline as agricultural technology and innovation reduce the need for workers. The connection between agriculture and value-adding opportunities, including manufacturing and processing, will become increasingly important to support the commercial viability of many towns and villages.

Success across the region will be measured by growth in the regional cities; the strength of smaller towns and villages; and the creation of strong, liveable centres that support healthy lifestyles, as well as social cohesion and community wellbeing. Creating liveable places will become increasingly important due to future population and demographic changes.

The NSW Government supports efforts to grow the region to create strong and diverse communities that are resilient to economic, social and environmental changes.

The draft Plan aims to create attractive, healthy and sustainable communities which are great places to live, work and visit.

DIRECTION 3.1 Grow the regional cities of Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith

Albury and Wagga Wagga have emerged as leading service centres within the Riverina-Murray region. They are located in relative proximity to each other and provide commercial, residential, cultural and industrial opportunities and higher-order services to their surrounding catchments. The regional city of Griffith is geographically separate from Albury and Wagga Wagga and plays a key role in providing higher-order services to a large catchment area. The three cities function as the core of an interconnected and interdependent network of settlements (see Appendix A).

Significant industrial land releases in Nexus (Albury), Bomen (Wagga Wagga) and Tharbogang (Griffith) underpin the economic importance of the regional cities. These land releases will become important hubs for the freight and logistics sector and will support the growth of the agribusiness and manufacturing industries.

*Top:
Tumut town centre,
courtesy of Tumut Shire
Council*

*Centre:
Lake Talbot Aquatic
Park, Narrandera,
courtesy of Riverina
Tourism*

*Bottom:
Wagga Wagga health
services upgrade,
courtesy of Wagga
Wagga City Council*

Partnership-based initiatives such as the 'Evocities' program have been successful in attracting new residents and investment into regional cities like Albury and Wagga Wagga. Both the Australian and State Government's support for this partnership initiative has resulted in increased funding and dedicated resources.

'Evocities' - Local Government Partnership Initiative

Seven of the State's largest regional cities – Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga – formed a partnership in 2010 to encourage capital city residents to relocate to and invest in an Evocity.

The Evocities have collectively welcomed 2,375 new households at June 2015, generating over \$225 million in additional annual direct spending. The initiative has also helped to lift median incomes, encourage business growth, increase tourism and grow participation in community groups.⁴⁵

ACTION 3.1.1 Develop a regional cities strategy for Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith

Each of the regional cities offer a range of specialist and retail services, major hospitals and regional health services, universities, airports and significant industrial hubs. The growth of the cities will encourage future investment, help to grow and diversify industry and increase job opportunities and services – all of which will benefit the immediate and broader regional community.

The higher-order commercial services and institutions located in the cities provide many of the region's high-value/high-skill employment opportunities. In 2011, more than 20 per cent of residents were employed in the healthcare and social assistance, and education and training sectors.⁴⁶ Both sectors contributed more than 16.5 per cent to gross regional product in 2011.⁴⁷

The NSW Government has expanded health infrastructure capacity in the regional cities through a number of initiatives and substantial investment, including the \$282 million redevelopment of the Wagga Wagga Rural Referral Hospital (stages 1 and 2) to which the Australian Government contributed \$55 million through the Health and Hospitals Fund. Planning is currently under way for Stage 3 of the redevelopment.

In 2011, the Australian Government committed \$65 million toward the development of the Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre, which will consolidate and expand existing public and private cancer services in the region. In addition, the Border/East Hume Cancer Network partners contributed in-kind funding to the facility. Other private investment from councils, in conjunction with Australian Government funding, is also contributing to health service expansion in the region, with \$16.7 million committed toward the construction of St Vincent's Private Community Hospital in Griffith.

Maximising opportunities for complementary activities around the existing health precincts will encourage further development and co-location of services. This will increase access for patients and provide opportunities for business synergy. There is opportunity to further support education and health service providers to offer medical training within the region, particularly in association with the already established university rural health schools, and more recently through the co-location of the private hospital in Griffith with the Murrumbidgee Clinical Teaching and Learning Centre.⁴⁸

Detailed strategic planning is required to maximise the role of the cities as centres of influence, to optimise outcomes for economic growth, efficient delivery of infrastructure, and long term planning that meets the broader community's future needs.

The NSW Government will work with:

- Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith City Councils to develop a strategy that:
 - investigates linkages between health and education precincts;
 - manages areas of growth;

FIGURE 12: ALBURY

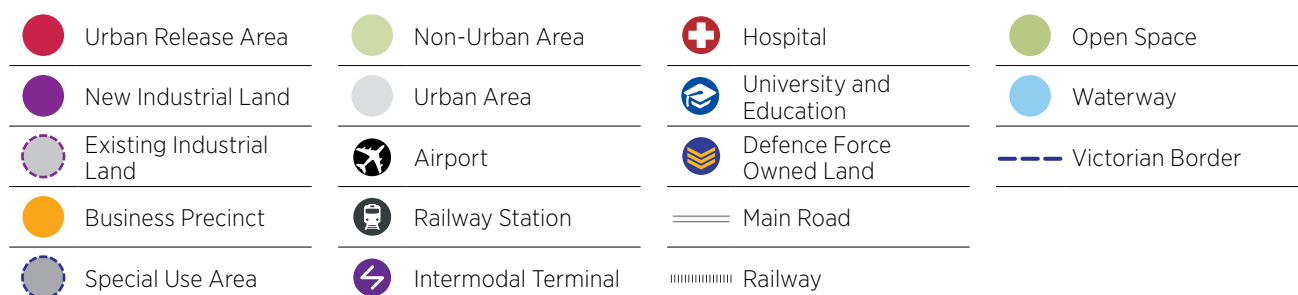
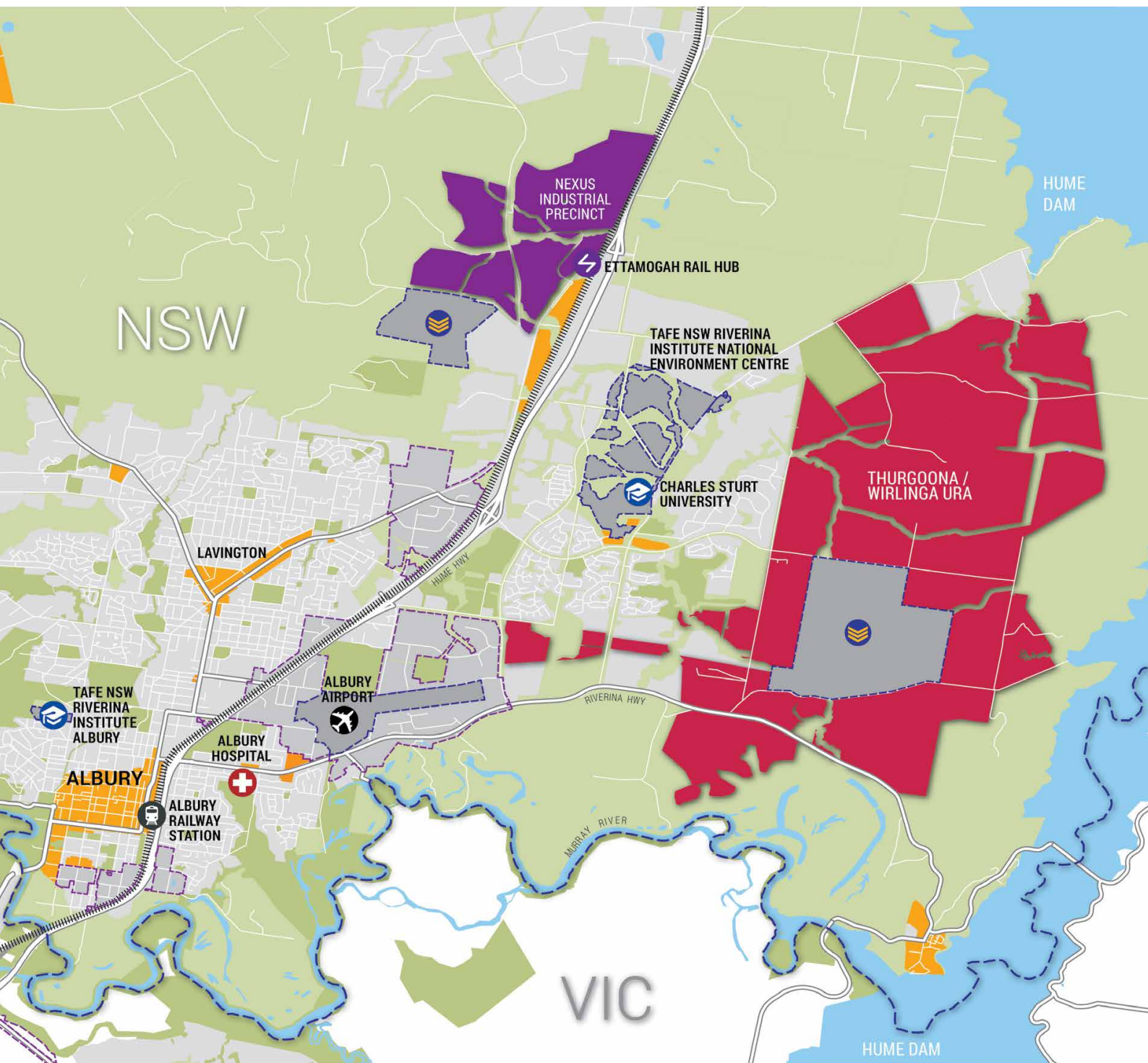


FIGURE 13: GRIFFITH

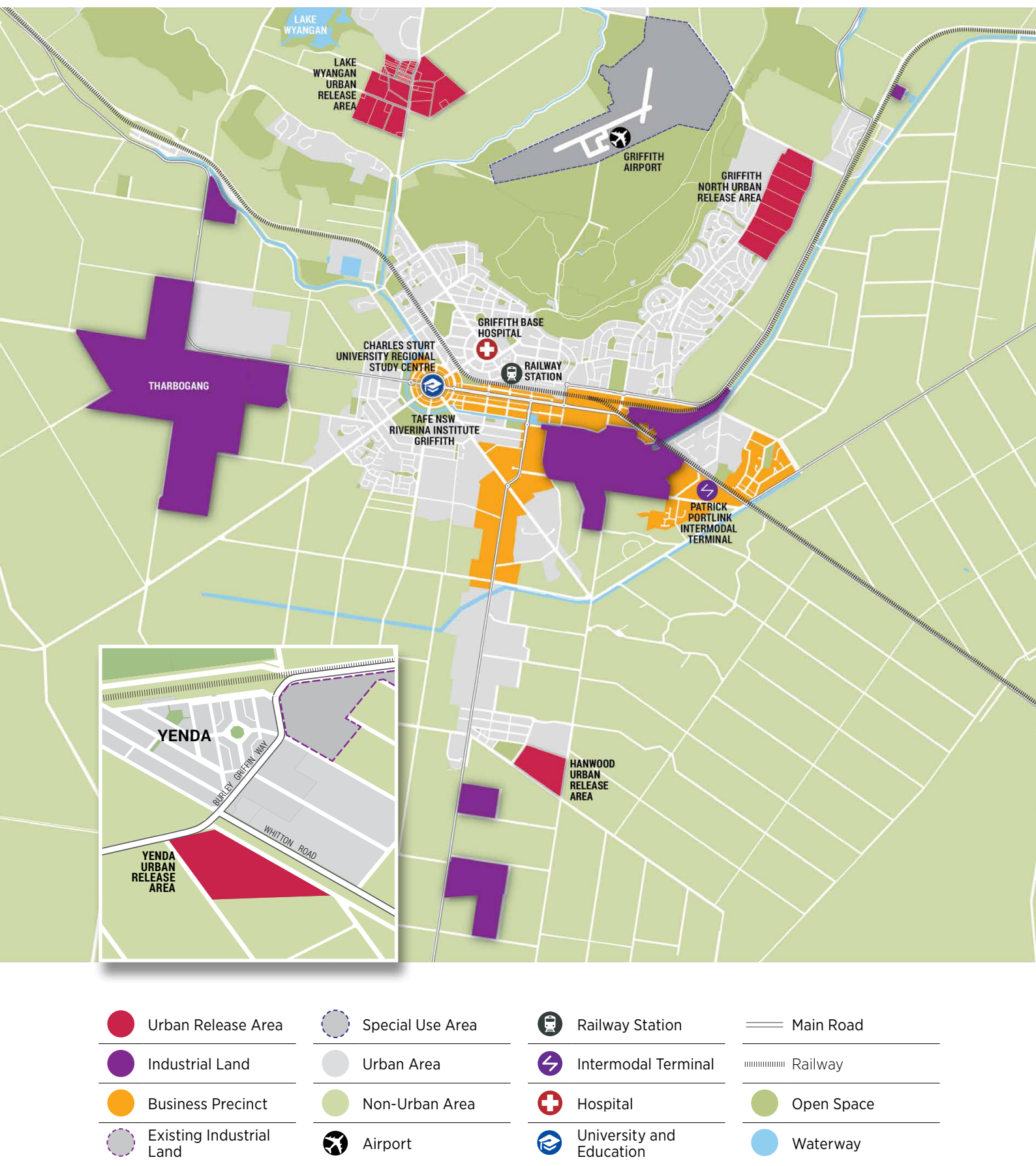
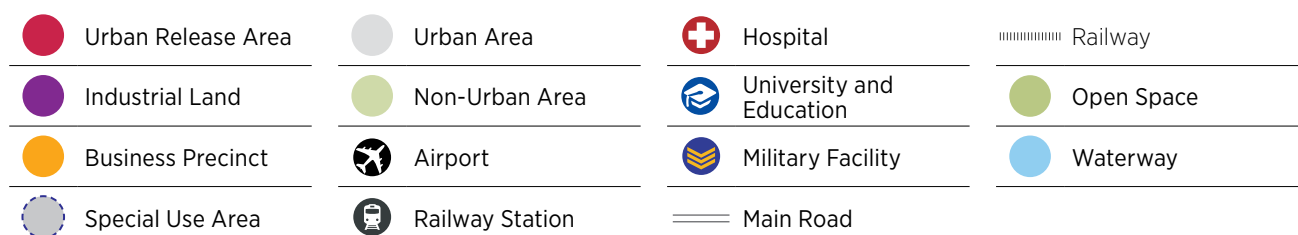
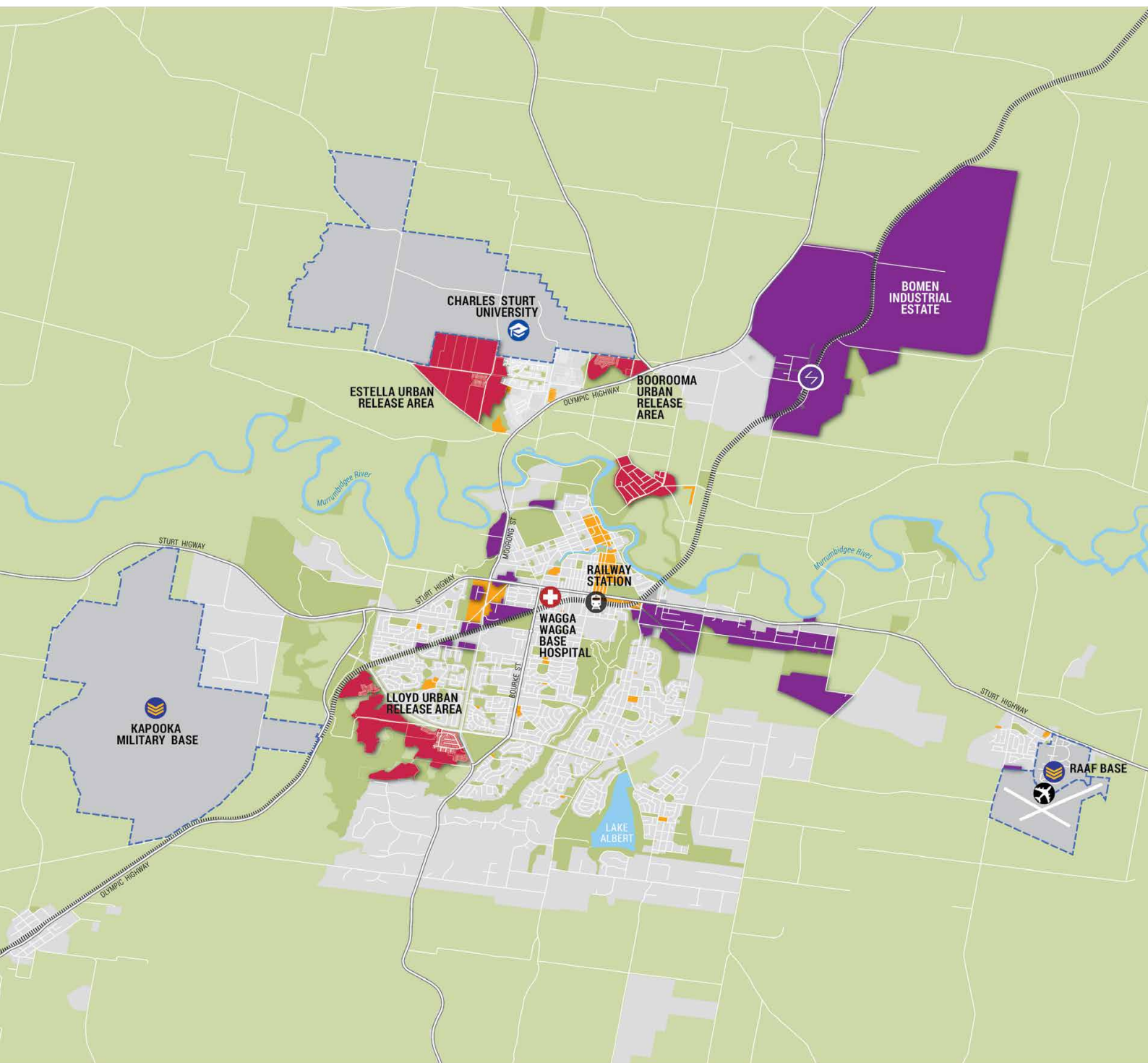


FIGURE 14: WAGGA WAGGA



- coordinates infrastructure delivery across residential, industrial and rural land;
 - considers the role, function and relationship of the regional cities with other centres; and
 - assigns responsibility for actions and projects across all levels of government.
- Wagga Wagga City Council to establish a health precinct around the Wagga Wagga Rural Referral Hospital.

ACTION 3.1.2 Implement an industrial land monitoring program to maintain a supply of well-located and serviced industrial land

As agricultural output continues to increase, agribusinesses will rely on the availability of appropriately located industrial land to develop and operate processing and manufacturing facilities. This is particularly likely with food and beverage processing and manufacturing, and value-added products.

The regional cities are expected to have the highest growth and take-up of industrial land in the region. There is considerable opportunity to develop further industrial activity by identifying land in the cities (see Table 1 over).

Continued investment in and development of industrial land such as the Bomen Business Park in Wagga Wagga and the Nexus Industrial Precinct in Albury will be vital to the region's economy and will contribute significantly to jobs growth in the long term. The NSW Government will develop monitoring mechanisms for industrial lands to identify when and where infrastructure is needed to promote further economic development.

Through their planning strategies and local plans, councils should identify and maintain adequate quantities of zoned industrial land to support ongoing economic growth. Councils should further seek to protect and separate regionally significant industrial land from potential land use conflicts such as

inappropriate or incompatible land use. To achieve this, councils should apply the Draft Principles for Industrial Land Identification, as outlined over. These draft principles will inform the preparation of Statewide criteria.

Bomen Business Park

Located 12 kilometres north of Wagga Wagga, the Bomen Business Park is the region's largest strategic industrial area. It provides 2,040 hectares of zoned industrial land and is well-located for heavy industry, providing processing and value-adding opportunities to the region's extensive primary production resources, for export or domestic markets.

The release of land in Bomen will provide significant opportunities for future employment-generating business and industry. It is estimated that 4,000 additional jobs will be generated from businesses relocating to the park,⁴⁹ boosting the region's economy by \$264 million.⁵⁰

The NSW Government will:

- prepare Statewide land release criteria to assess locations for industrial uses across regional NSW;
- develop and implement an industrial land development program for the region to monitor the supply and demand of industrial land to identify future employment land requirements; and
- require that councils protect regionally significant industrial land from potential land use conflicts, arising from inappropriate and incompatible surrounding land uses.

TABLE 1: REGIONAL CITIES – INDUSTRIAL LAND SUPPLY

Centre	Land Supply
Albury	■ 385 hectares in Nexus Industrial Precinct, including the Ettamogah Rail Hub
Griffith	■ 300 hectares of zoned industrial land in Tharbogang ⁵¹
Wagga Wagga	■ 2,040 hectares of land identified for large floor-space industries and freight transport uses at Bomen ■ 42 hectares of vacant industrial land in East Wagga Wagga

TABLE 2: DRAFT PRINCIPLES FOR INDUSTRIAL LAND IDENTIFICATION

Principle 1	New industrial land should meet the long term needs of industry growth for the region.
Principle 2	Industrial land should be protected and separated from sensitive and incompatible land uses.
Principle 3	Isolated, unused or underused pockets of industrial land should be consolidated to create opportunities over the long term.
Principle 4	Regionally significant industrial lands should be retained and supported to meet the changing needs of industry.
Principle 5	At a regional-scale, industrial land supply should provide capacity to enable the development of specialised industry clusters.
Principle 6	Plan for and maximise the use of infrastructure to encourage sustainable development of industrial land, including access to markets and workers, and connectivity to the existing freight network.
Principle 7	Co-location should be encouraged, where appropriate, to maximise opportunities for co-efficiency and decreased supply chain costs.

ACTION 3.1.3 Develop and deliver strategies that strengthen the commercial function of CBDs and town centres

Strengthening the commercial core of each of the regional cities is essential to growing and attracting future investment. The regional cities are expected to have the highest growth and take-up of commercial employment land in the region, primarily focused on the existing CBDs.

The NSW Government's preference is to place retail activity into existing centres. Proposals for new retail centres (including retail proposals) should demonstrate how they:

- respond to retail supply and demand needs;
- respond to innovations in the retail sector;
- maximise the use of existing infrastructure (including public transport and community facilities) commensurate with the scale of the proposal; and
- enhance the value of the public realm.

Councils need to provide an adequate supply of serviced commercial employment land without compromising their core commercial and retail centres.

TABLE 3: REGIONAL CITIES – COMMERCIAL LAND SUPPLY

Centre	Commercial Land Supply
Albury	■ 208 hectares in Albury and Lavington CBDs
Griffith	■ Zoned commercial land in the existing Griffith CBD, projected to cater for demand to 2031
Wagga Wagga	■ 160 hectares of commercially zoned land in the existing Wagga Wagga CBD



Albury railway station,
courtesy of Albury City
Council

In some instances, this may require planning and revitalisation to promote the CBD as the central place for retail and business.

Where it is not possible to expand or accommodate growth in existing centres, or where there is significant market demand, new centres of an appropriate size and scale relative to their purpose and to the area they will serve may need to be considered. Future growth should be accommodated on or adjacent to existing business centres and should not be supported without strategic justification.

The NSW Government will work with councils to:

- provide strategic direction for commercial land use in CBDs and town centres; and
- focus retail activity in existing commercial centres, unless there is a demonstrated need and positive social and economic benefits for the community.

DIRECTION 3.2 Enhance the liveability and economic prosperity of the region's towns and villages

The prosperity and liveability of the region is dependent on the strong interrelationships that exist between the regional cities and the towns and villages. Towns and villages provide district and local level retail, health, education and community services. They offer more affordable housing, attractive lifestyle choices and a range of jobs that support key economic sectors such as agribusiness and tourism.

Resilience is important for all settlements in the region. The region's towns and villages are more vulnerable to the effects of demographic, economic and climatic change than the cities because of their size and sometimes isolated locations.

Communities need to be able to develop, implement and sustain solutions at a regional and local level. There are opportunities to build resilience by capitalising on community assets such as heritage, lifestyle amenity, the environment, and the ability to provide specialised services and products. Towns and

villages need to be well-connected with the regional cities so people can access high-level services, including health, education, recreation and administrative services.

Diversifying the economy and growing skills across the region will be important for future economic growth and prosperity. Access to a skilled workforce is essential to attract future industries and to retain businesses. The NSW Government is improving community access to quality vocational education and training to help make the region more competitive.

The NSW Government funds several community transport programs to connect people living in regional areas to larger regional cities, including the:

- *Community Transport Program*;
- *Regional Transport Coordination Program*;
- *Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme*; and
- *Home and Community Care Program* (a jointly funded NSW and Australian Government initiative).

ACTION 3.2.1 Deliver improved tools and partnerships to build community capacity in towns and villages to strengthen community resilience

Communities need support to build skills, identify opportunities, and enhance involvement in decision-making so they can build capacity and become more resilient to change.

The NSW Government will work collaboratively with stakeholders to build community capacity. The pilot Joint Organisation of Councils promotes capacity-building and resource-sharing across councils, to jointly advocate for and pursue common issues and goals.

Other tools and resources, such as the *NSW Strengthening Rural Communities Resource Kit* (2001), can be used by communities to enhance their capabilities and become more self-sufficient. This resource needs updating to accurately reflect the current challenges facing communities.

Resilient communities depend on the quality of – and ongoing access to – core services such as health and education. Ongoing and equitable access to these services, and particularly aged care, will help smaller regional communities retain and potentially grow their population and improve their liveability.

Ongoing investment in community-based healthcare facilities such as Multipurpose Service Centres, and the roll-out of e-health initiatives and distance education programs to smaller and isolated communities, will facilitate local access to services and sustain community wellbeing. Over \$400 million has already been invested in the development of 60 Multipurpose Services across NSW including Culcairn, Tumbarumba, Urana, Coolamon, Jerilderie, Henty, Junee, Batlow, Berrigan, Boorowa, Lake Cargelligo, Tullamore, Gundagai, Lockhart and Hillston.

The Multipurpose Services model tailors healthcare needs for the local community, integrating health and aged care services, as well as emergency and urgent care services, to provide flexible health service delivery.

Communities can increase their resilience to economic and social change by having a skilled workforce. Access to quality tertiary education can contribute to the growth of the regional economy, increase skills, attract and retain a skilled workforce, allow people to retrain to adapt to changing demands (particularly through vocational training), and encourage younger people to stay in the region.

The region's agribusiness sector faces a number of skill shortages that may affect its future economic potential.⁵² Agribusiness education and training opportunities are provided across the region by universities, TAFE and the Department of Primary Industries Total College, Yanco Campus. These organisations provide industry expertise and advice about opportunities for diversification to support regional economic development. This is important and will help to support core industries that are experiencing skill shortages.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries and NSW Local Land Services provide producers, industry and consultants with up-to-date research and information to encourage innovation, increase productivity gains and build resilience in the sector.

The NSW Government will:

- work with councils to review and update existing tools, resources and strategies focused on building capacity and resilience in rural and regional communities;⁵³ and
- work to improve partnerships between councils, industry, research institutes, and education and training providers to align skill shortages with tailored regional training programs.

ACTION 3.2.2 Support the continued identification and protection of the region's heritage

The region has diverse Aboriginal and European cultural, historical and recreational assets that enrich the character of its places. There are 81 identified heritage items on the NSW State Heritage Register, in addition to 1,653 local heritage items listed in local environmental plans.⁵⁴ Many of the items are associated with early European settlement and development, including bridges, courthouses, railway stations and homesteads.

Rivers have spiritual and cultural significance for many Aboriginal communities, including the Yorta Yorta, Wiradjuri, Wamba Wamba, Barapa Barapa, Wadi Wadi, Muthi Muthi, Latji Latji, Barkanji and Nyampa peoples.⁵⁵ Historically, the region's rivers have also facilitated European settlement, trading, agriculture, irrigation and transport.⁵⁶

Consultation with councils has identified a need to strengthen the way in which Aboriginal cultural heritage is considered in the planning system. The NSW Government's model for standalone Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation was released in September 2013. It aims to remove all Aboriginal cultural heritage provisions from the current *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and introduce them in a new act.⁵⁷

Public consultations have been conducted to collect information and consult about the reforms. A strategic approach to Aboriginal cultural heritage will make clear that Aboriginal cultural values are to be considered in the future planning and management of the region. This will enable Aboriginal communities to maintain a sense of place and community.



Left: Albury Regional Airport, courtesy of Albury City Council

Right: Riding in the Murrumbidgee National Park, courtesy of Office of Environment and Heritage

Heritage protection and promotion can attract more visitors to a place and thereby support a visitor economy that can help to sustain smaller communities.

Currently, there are barriers that restrict the promotion and management of heritage assets. For example, adaptive reuse of heritage assets is limited due to the costs associated with building upgrades and change of use, and a lack of community awareness of the benefits of heritage protection. Better promotion and targeted community education initiatives, such as advertising and access to information, may help to increase community support for managing and protecting heritage assets.

The art-deco 1930s Roxy Theatre in Leeton and the 1930s Montreal Theatre in Tumut are good examples where councils have been able to leverage their heritage assets through interpretation and adaptive reuse.

The NSW Government will work with councils to:

- undertake and implement heritage studies to inform the development of strategic plans, including regional Aboriginal Cultural Heritage studies;
- investigate opportunities to increase the protection of heritage items and the revitalisation of main streets and town centres through community education and development incentives in local environmental plans; and
- recognise and protect sites that have Aboriginal and European cultural significance in local environmental plans.

ACTION 3.2.3 Deliver enabling planning controls to diversify regional tourism markets and increase tourism opportunities

Tourism presents a significant opportunity to boost local economies in the region. The tourism sector contributed \$851 million in direct expenditure in 2013, with nearly 3.5 million people visiting the region in that year.⁵⁸

Diversifying into tourism markets such as ecotourism, agritourism, lifestyle (events and festivals) recreation and cultural heritage, will support the long term economic and social sustainability of the region's towns and villages, and may help to attract visitors in 'off-peak' seasons.⁵⁹

The emergence of festivals and events such as the *Deni Ute Muster* (Deniliquin) and *Warbirds Downunder Airshow* (Temora) are providing visitors with unique regional experiences. Recently, there has also been a more coordinated regional approach to agritourism and food tourism to help grow and improve the resilience of individual businesses and rural communities.⁶⁰ Initiatives such as *Taste Riverina*, an annual food event held across 20 different locations in the region, and the *Murray River Slow Food* and *Paddock to Plate* initiatives aim to connect consumers directly with local producers.

Tourism in the region is represented by the Murray Regional Tourism Board, the Riverina Regional Tourism Organisation and Snowy Mountains Regional Tourism Organisation. Each of these tourism groups has developed a Regional Destination Management Plan to grow visitation and assist government and industry to prioritise investment opportunities in tourism facilities, products and services. The plans have identified product gaps, including



accommodation diversity, event promotion, river access, international-quality golf courses and 'destination' dining, cellar door and farm gate experiences.⁶¹ Councils should aim to align local land use tourism planning with the applicable regional Destination Management Plan.

The NSW Government will:

- work with councils to align local land use and tourism strategies with relevant Destination Management Plans.

ACTION 3.2.4 Deliver regionally specific urban design guidelines

Good urban design has the capacity to add to the community's cultural and economic wellbeing. Communities should be safe and socially inclusive places that promote social, cultural and recreational opportunities. Places should be designed to meet the different needs of the population – children, young people, families, people with disabilities and the ageing community.

When planning and redeveloping town and city centres, design and environmental considerations such as pedestrian movement, vegetation, public open space and public domain infrastructure should be incorporated into the planning process. New and existing development in the region should also be designed to provide opportunities for physical activity and active transport (such as walking and cycling), where appropriate or where demand exists.

Urban design guidelines are commonly developed with a metropolitan focus and are often not applicable to regional and rural environments. Developing regional urban design guidelines will help councils when they are preparing their local environmental plans

and development control plans, revitalising their town centres, developing new release areas and conducting infill development.

The NSW Government will:

- develop regional urban design guidelines that can be used by councils when preparing amendments to local environmental plans and assessing development proposals.

ACTION 3.2.5 Identify opportunities to provide improved and increased transport connections between the region's towns and villages to the regional cities

Public transport is necessary to connect people to jobs, housing, services, including health care and education, and for community interaction. Two key transport issues affect the region:

- a need for more flexible and demand-responsive transport options that adequately cater for user demands; and
- better connections between cross-border communities, where connections are currently restricted by differences in policy, regulation and transport planning between NSW and Victoria.

The *Murray Murrumbidgee Regional Transport Plan* (2013) recognises the importance of investing in public transport infrastructure and services to improve connections with urban areas and help reduce social disadvantage. Detailed plans to implement and deliver these strategies by providing integrated timetables and more flexible and demand-responsive transport options are currently being developed.



A scarred tree by the Gulpa Creek, Murray Valley National Park, courtesy of Office of Environment and Heritage

Transport connections across the Murray River, between NSW and Victorian communities, are provided by two vehicular ferry services; Wymah (Wakool) and Speewa (Greater Hume).⁶² These are the only operational ferries along the Murray River and have historic significance. They provide vital transport links for residents, tourists and commodities, including postal services. They generally operate daily, with connection times under 10 minutes. These services are significant as bridge crossings do not exist nearby.

With an increasing ageing population, public transport will be important to sustain access to services and quality of life. Transport for NSW will work with bus operators to develop routes and timetables to improve bus services in the region's major centres and their connections with regional communities. It will also work with local transport operators and councils to develop programs that focus on serving the unique characteristics of each town. Community transport providers (in most cases councils) will need to identify and plan for future community transport needs.

Transport for NSW is committed to developing a long term plan for regional rail to improve rail services to Griffith and connections to other regional centres and metropolitan cities, including Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne.⁶³

The NSW Government will:

- investigate opportunities to improve bus operations in the regional cities and their connections with regional communities;
- develop strategies to better link the region's towns and villages to regional cities and other major centres; and
- work with local transport operators and community transport providers, to investigate a range of delivery models for flexible transport, to determine what works best for different areas.

DIRECTION 3.3 Enhance the economic self-determination of Aboriginal communities

OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment) is the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs. It focuses on revitalising and promoting Aboriginal languages and culture; creating opportunities; increasing the Aboriginal community's capacity; providing choice; and empowering Aboriginal people to exercise that choice, as well as giving them the tools to take responsibility for their own future.

ACTION 3.3.1 Conduct a strategic assessment of land held by the region's Local Aboriginal Land Councils to identify priority sites for further investigation of their economic opportunities

Many of the OCHRE actions are outside the planning system; however, there is an opportunity to look at the landholdings of Local Aboriginal Land Councils to see how they can best be planned, managed and developed for the benefit of the local Aboriginal community. This will allow Aboriginal people to gain economic benefit from their land and provide greater opportunities for economic independence.

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

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

The NSW Government will:

- work with the Local Aboriginal Land Councils to identify priority sites that can create a pipeline of potential projects.

DIRECTION 3.4 Provide a continuous supply of appropriate housing to suit the different lifestyles and needs of the region's population

Historically, housing in the region has been characterised by single detached dwellings, with some larger residential lots and rural lifestyle options. As the population grows and changes, there will be a demand for new housing and a greater variety of housing.

By 2036, 7,650 new dwellings will be required. By this time, more than 27 per cent of the region's population will be aged 65 years and over (see Figure 16 over). There will also be an increase in the number of single person households and a decrease in the occupancy of each household.

A greater choice of housing to cater for seasonal workers, tourists and the demand generated by an ageing population and smaller-sized households, will also be necessary.

ACTION 3.4.1 Deliver enabling planning controls that facilitate an increased range of housing options including infill housing close to existing jobs and services

The region has sufficient zoned land to accommodate projected residential growth. Over the next 20 years, the majority of housing is likely to be delivered in the land release areas, primarily concentrated in and around the regional cities – at Thurgoona/ Wurlinga in Albury, Estella, Lloyd and Boorooma in Wagga Wagga, and Hanwood and Lake Wyangan in Griffith.

There is sufficient residential land supply in Albury and Griffith, however, depending on current take-up rates and the efficient use of existing zoned urban areas, Wagga Wagga City Council may need to release further land to meet demand. The Council has already identified a number of opportunities in its *Spatial Plan 2013-2043* to cater for urban demand in the next 15 years.

Towns and villages will have an ongoing need to provide housing choice. Even in areas with stable or no population growth, there will still be some demand for new dwellings and for a greater variety of housing types. New housing in these areas should aim to reflect local built form, heritage and rural character.

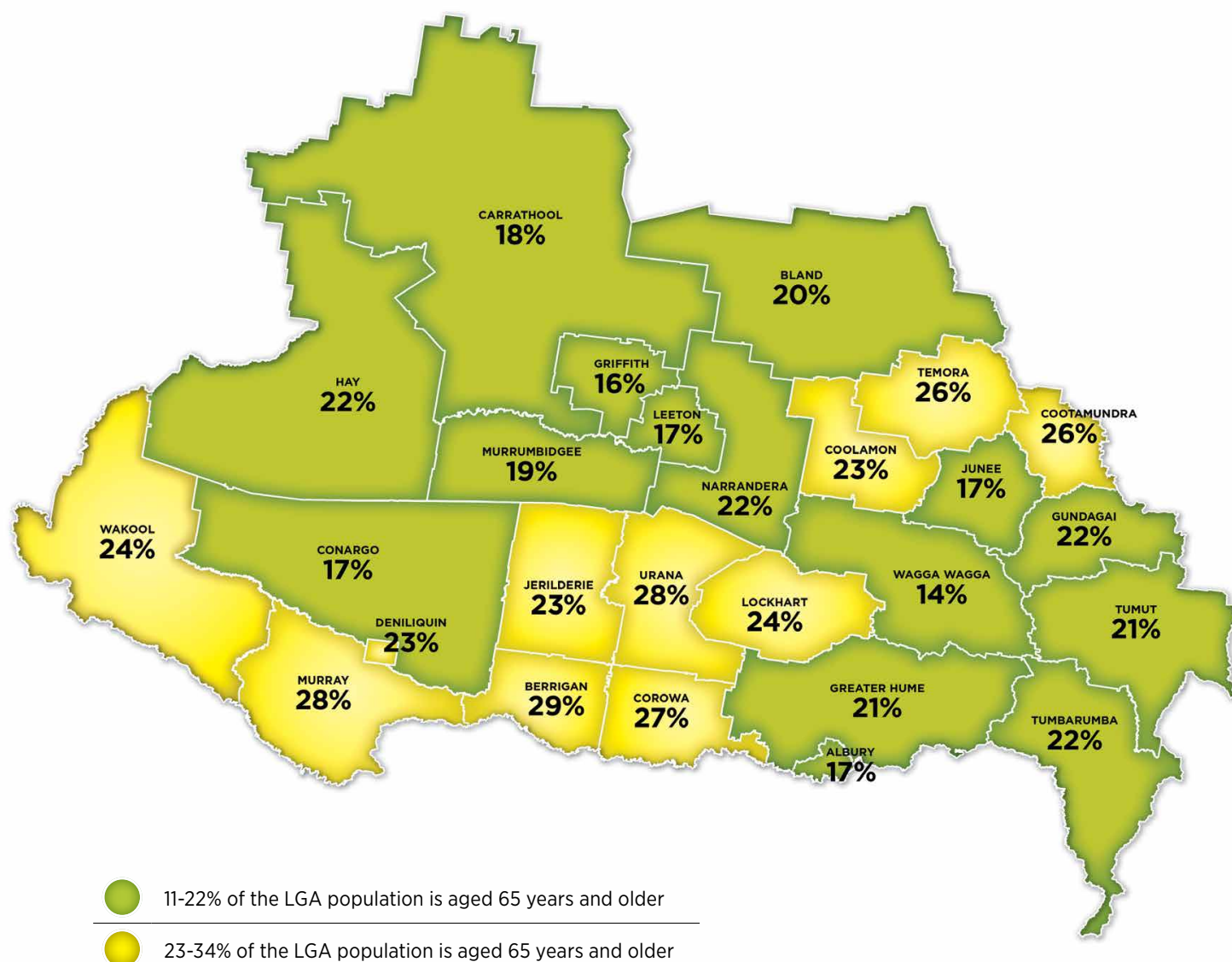
Across the region, many councils have planned for aspirational growth, which reflects the desires of their local communities for the future. Aspirations for greater growth are reflected in land use planning decisions, for example, making land or infrastructure available for development. This may influence population growth patterns.

Given the amount of land already available for housing, councils will need to carefully consider locations for new land release options prior to land rezoning. Approximately half of the region's councils have either commenced or finalised local strategies to guide future residential land use planning. Some smaller councils are unlikely to need residential strategies, as their existing land supply and planning provisions are adequate to meet expected demand.

The NSW Government will work with councils to:

- develop and implement a monitoring program for residential lands across the region to identify future strategic requirements and regional supply and demand;
- review planning controls in existing urban areas to identify opportunities to increase the range of housing options, including townhouses, villas and apartments, in regional cities and locations close to existing services and jobs;
- prepare Statewide land release criteria to assess locations for residential uses across regional NSW, for use as an input to settlement planning;
- align infrastructure planning with land release areas, to provide new developments with adequate infrastructure; and
- regularly review and update local strategic plans, where required, to provide a range of housing types that reflect the changing needs of the community.

FIGURE 15: AGEING POPULATION BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, 2016



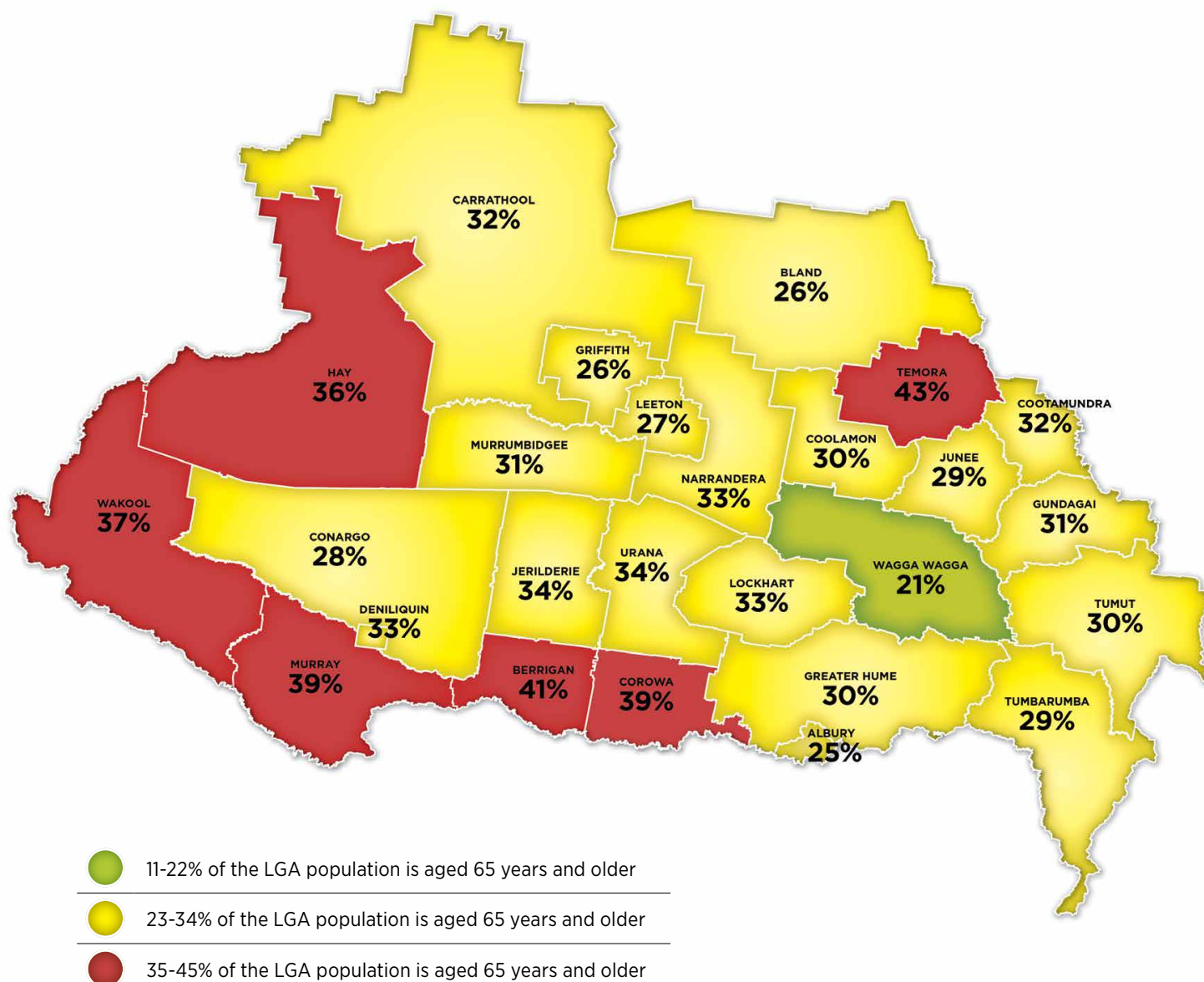
ACTION 3.4.2 Facilitate a more diverse range of housing for seniors

Providing sufficient housing for people as they age helps to retain their connection to the community and provides opportunities for local employment in related service industries. Housing for seniors ranges from smaller housing that is specifically built to meet the needs of people as they age, to communal independent living arrangements, residential aged care facilities, and hospital and palliative care facilities.

By 2036, demand for a variety of aged care housing will increase, so steps need to be taken now to provide greater housing choice for people as they age and to allow for ageing-in-place.

The regional cities have greater potential to accommodate this type of specialised development through increases in medium and higher-density development. Higher-density development should be located within close proximity to town centres and villages to

FIGURE 16: AGEING POPULATION BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, 2036



capitalise on existing infrastructure and to provide increased housing choice close to services and amenities. This will allow residents to downsize to smaller, more manageable homes, close to the services they require. Any new facilities should be appropriately located, in close proximity to existing services and facilities, and located on land free from hazards including floods and bushfires.

There are State planning policies that streamline approval processes for aged housing. Developers use these policies to provide larger-scale public and aged care housing. The incentive provisions contained in these policies need to be reviewed to better suit regional circumstances. Often they do not deliver benefits for private developers due to higher development costs and lower demand (facilities need to cater for smaller populations compared to metropolitan areas).



Left: Preparing apples for market, Batlow, courtesy of Batlow Fruit Co-operative
Right: Housing options, courtesy of Jerilderie Shire Council

The NSW Government will:

- work with councils to investigate the demand for seniors housing and to identify barriers to providing a range of low-care and independent seniors' accommodation options across the region; and
- review the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability)* 2004 and determine how to make it more applicable for private developers in regional areas.

ACTION 3.4.3 Develop a framework to facilitate a range of accommodation options for seasonal and itinerant workers

There is an identified need for seasonal workers across the region to support agribusiness industries, including wine, orchard fruit (including citrus and nuts) and cotton and berry industries, particularly during harvest periods. The region experiences a large influx of seasonal workers during harvest periods, particularly in the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Coleambally Irrigation Areas.

Currently, the region does not have an adequate range of accommodation options or capacity within existing options, to appropriately accommodate the future needs of seasonal workers. This undersupply of suitable accommodation results in increased rental housing pressures and health and safety concerns from overcrowding and makeshift housing in sheds, containers and rural buildings. Tourism and visitor accommodation providers also experience accommodation pressures by renting rooms to seasonal workers, which reduce their availability for the visitor economy.

Councils require further guidance about the development of appropriate accommodation options for seasonal workers.

The NSW Government will:

- prepare guidelines to help councils plan and manage seasonal and itinerant worker accommodation.

ACTION 3.4.4 Develop and implement principles for rural residential development

Poorly located rural residential development can create land use conflict with other land uses, result in the loss or alienation of agricultural lands, socially isolate residents, increase the demand and cost for services and facilities, and adversely affect the environment. Managing this type of development will become increasingly important as the regional economy diversifies and as development pressure for this type of housing increases.

Demand for this type of development is driven by the desire for a rural lifestyle in close proximity to larger settlements or to scenic features such as the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers. Historically, some councils have regarded this type of development as a way of attracting residents, to reverse or stabilise decline. During consultation, councils indicated that this type of development increases pressure to provide additional services outside the existing settlement, with service costs borne by the council and broader community.

Directing future growth to locations that can sustain additional housing and are readily serviced will help land to be developed more efficiently and sustainably. To achieve this outcome, proposals that seek to rezone additional land for urban purposes will need to address the Draft Settlement Planning Principles outlined in the table over. These draft principles will inform the preparation of Statewide criteria.



The NSW Government will:

- prepare Statewide land release criteria to assess locations for rural residential uses across regional NSW, to be used as an input to settlement planning; and
- work with councils to apply the criteria to locate rural lifestyle housing growth in appropriate areas.

TABLE 4: DRAFT SETTLEMENT PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Principle 1	New rural residential areas will only be supported if identified through an endorsed comprehensive strategic planning process and comprehensive housing strategy.
Principle 2	New rural residential areas will be located in close proximity to existing urban settlements to maximise the efficient use of existing infrastructure and services, including water, sewer and waste services.
Principle 3	New rural residential areas will be located to avoid and minimise the potential for land use conflicts with productive, zoned agricultural land and natural resources.
Principle 4	New rural residential areas will avoid areas of high environmental, cultural and heritage significance, regionally important agricultural land or areas affected by natural hazards.
Principle 5	New rural residential areas will be designed to provide an alternative housing choice and enhance the semi-rural character of the area.

ACTION 3.4.5 Facilitate the delivery of more affordable housing options through improved planning policies

The cost of housing in the region is relatively affordable in comparison to other areas of NSW, particularly metropolitan areas. Some parts of the region, such as Coolamon, Gundagai and Griffith have experienced rental supply shortages as a result of the conversion of private rental stock to owner-occupied housing.⁶⁵ Providing sufficient rental and affordable housing for seasonal workers and professional contract employees will remain a key concern for the region.

The NSW Government recognises that more needs to be done to meet the housing needs of people on very low, low and moderate incomes. The Government aims to develop a comprehensive approach to affordable housing that involves all stakeholders – the Government, councils, and the private and community sectors.

Councils can help to improve affordable housing by including the following in their planning strategies and local environmental plans:

- model controls that require that affordable housing is included in developments. For instance, councils may consider a bonus provision requirement to deliver a percentage of affordable housing in a development;
- development controls and reduced contributions, or other development incentives that may boost construction of secondary dwellings as alternative affordable housing. Councils could also consider planning incentives under the *State Environmental Planning Policy Affordable Rental Housing (2009)*; and



Above: Bell Bridge crossing Lake Hume on the Murray River, courtesy of Albury City Council

- promotion of new caravan parks and manufactured home estates on unconstrained land in existing settlements, and new land release areas in urban growth areas. Councils can identify sites strategically through their local planning strategies.

The NSW Government is also working on a whole-of-government strategy for affordable housing. This strategy will assess the need for social, public and affordable housing across NSW, provide greater planning certainty and facilitate complementary activities, such as partnering with affordable housing providers.

The NSW Government will:

- prepare guidelines for local housing strategies;
- work with councils to prepare local housing strategies that plan for a range of housing types, and to consider local affordable housing needs and strategies; and
- consider amendments to relevant environmental planning instruments informed by updated strategies.

DIRECTION 3.5 Enhance connections and planning between cross-border communities to improve service quality and infrastructure delivery

A number of the region's settlements are located along the Murray River, with neighbouring settlements located across the river in Victoria. Often these 'twin towns' function as one larger settlement, for example, Albury-Wodonga and Echuca-Moama.

The twin towns are subject to different NSW and Victorian laws, policies and service delivery models. This in turn influences their role, function, liveability and competition for housing, employment and investment. The twin towns relationship highlights the need for an approach that integrates regional land use with coordinated infrastructure and service planning.⁶⁵

The proximity of the NSW towns to Victorian regional cities provides them with benefits such as retail and business opportunities and access to health care and education. For example, health services in Albury are provided by the Albury-Wodonga Health Service, a cross-border public health service that supports a catchment of over 250,000 people.⁶⁶ The Victorian Government is responsible for providing hospital and health services in Albury and Wodonga.

The Victorian Government has been working on settlement strategies for the Murray River for a number of years, providing vital information on settlement functions and service availability to inform planning on the NSW side of the river.

ACTION 3.5.1 Investigate opportunities to improve cross-border planning outcomes, including infrastructure and service delivery

When planning for communities along the Murray River, an understanding of the relationships and dynamics of the cross-border communities is needed. People often move between the twin towns for housing, employment and services, with some people working in NSW and living in Victoria and others working in Victoria and accessing services in NSW. Infrastructure networks, including road and rail bridges and ferry crossings, are critical for facilitating these relationships and cross-border flows.

A Cross-Border Commissioner was appointed in 2014 to address cross-border issues facing communities, businesses and organisations that live, work and operate in NSW. The objective is to create resilient cross-border communities.

The *NSW Cross-Border Commissioner Business Plan 2015-2018* identifies the strategic direction for the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner, and is guided by *NSW 2021* and the *NSW Trade and Investment Strategic Plan 2012-2015*. The Business Plan aims to maximise the opportunities for business and communities in NSW cross-border areas by delivering NSW Government functions and services more effectively, and by ensuring that legislative, regulatory or policy impediments to business, economic and social development are appropriately addressed.⁶⁷

Consistent and complementary approaches, supported by the NSW and Victorian Governments, can help to achieve cost-efficiencies in retail catchment planning and delivery of shared services, such as transport, health care, education and water supply. Future growth and development in cross-border communities should also aim to avoid unnecessary red-tape restrictions. The NSW Government will require that councils consider cross-border strategies, including land use, infrastructure and tourism, when planning for the region.

The NSW Government will:

- work with the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner and cross-border councils to investigate:
 - barriers to and enablers of economic, housing and jobs growth;
 - service delivery models; and
 - infrastructure delivery, including transport infrastructure.

ACTION 3.5.2 Develop a cross-border land monitoring program

There is a significant relationship between the demand and supply of land and housing for both NSW and Victorian Murray River councils, as they both operate within the same housing market. This has impacts on infrastructure and servicing for both jurisdictions.

The cross-border land and housing monitor will improve the tracking and forecasting of housing and employment land release in the region, to enhance understanding of supply and demand, and the infrastructure and service implications arising from growth and demographic change.

The NSW Government will:

- work with the Victorian Government and adjoining Victorian councils to develop a cross-border land and housing monitor.



GOAL 4 – A protected environment and a community resilient to natural hazards and climate change

The region's unique landscape contributes to its cultural heritage, settlement and agricultural character. The Riverina-Murray is a mosaic of diverse landscapes, with rivers, lakes and wetland systems; alpine and river red gum forests; lignum swamps; semi-arid shrublands; open woodlands and grassy plains. They support native flora and fauna, and aquatic habitats, including threatened and vulnerable species.⁶⁸

The Murray River and its catchment characterises the Riverina-Murray region. There are many different and competing interests at play along the Murray, including settlement, environment, agriculture and tourism – each with an arguably equal right. For this reason, the river needs to be actively managed so that it is available for both current and future users.

This draft Plan adopts the principles of ecological sustainable development in the interests of protecting and maintaining the Murray River system. A whole-of-government approach is necessary that allocates responsibility for data collection, policy development and land use decision-making.

The region's natural environment presents a number of challenges for hazard management and planning. Major natural hazards such as floods, bushfires and droughts are already a challenge and are expected to be exacerbated by climate change.

This draft Plan takes a landscape-based approach to planning that understands the importance of the region's unique environmental features to residents, and as tourist and recreational attractions (see Figure 17). It is important not just to protect, but also to actively manage and restore environmental

values and connections, support healthy riverine environments, and contribute to healthy, engaged communities.

DIRECTION 4.1 Protect the nationally significant Murray River

The Murray River is one of Australia's most iconic and valuable waterways. It supports agriculture; has great scenic beauty and diversity; a rich cultural heritage; and boasts enviable lifestyle, tourism and recreational opportunities.

The river is heavily regulated by all levels of government. A number of plans, policies and legislation apply to the river, ranging from planning legislation to manage development; water sharing plans to manage water allocations; and the overarching requirements of the *Murray-Darling Basin Plan* to limit water use to sustainable levels.

Some activities on waterfront land require approval and are specifically regulated under the *Water Management Act 2000* as controlled activities.⁶⁹ A number of guidelines have been prepared by the Department of Primary Industries, Water, to assist applicants on the design and construction of a controlled activity, and other ways to protect waterfront land.

The NSW Government is in the process of reviewing its approach to land use planning for the river, to represent the needs of all river users and regulators. The overall objectives of the current planning scheme – to protect the Murray River while allowing for its use and enjoyment – are still considered appropriate and are widely supported by stakeholders.

Top:
Edward River, Murray Valley National Park, courtesy of Office of Environment and Heritage

Bottom:
Wonga Wetland, courtesy of Albury City Council

**DISCLAIMER:**

The map is recommended for use at a regional planning level and gives an indication of relative biodiversity values at this scale. While this data may provide an indication of relative biodiversity significance at the local level, users should be aware that the data has limitations including those of scale and positional accuracy of attributes. The environmental values on the map are an amalgam of available data at the time of preparation. It is envisaged that the map will continue to evolve as ongoing work and identified mapping actions in the Plan are progressed.

ACTION 4.1.1 Actively manage settlement and competing land uses along the Murray River

Managing settlement along the river is of national importance. It must be managed so that future generations are able to use and benefit from the river as people do today. In order to conserve and enhance environmental values, planning for housing and settlement must be well considered.

Due to the amenity and landscape values of the river it has been attractive for residential development and tourist accommodation. Historically, development along the river has been ad-hoc, resulting in some instances in undesirable development outcomes (such as extensive ribbon development along the river's banks) and increased pressure for further development.

The northern bank of the Murray River (NSW) offers direct access to the river and development opportunities. In comparison, the southern bank of the river in Victoria is Crown Land and is not available for development. This situation exacerbates the pressures for more residential development in NSW, particularly in close proximity to cross-border communities, for example, Moama, Barham and Mulwala.

More recently, a more strategic approach to local land use planning has resulted in better management of development. Generally, settlement is directed away from the river bank, in accordance with setback provisions contained in local environmental plans.

A regional approach is required to achieve a sustainable outcome for the future of the

Murray River. Managing this natural resource is essential, particularly as competition between agriculture, industry, environmental flows, residential and recreational uses increase.

Such an approach needs to consider, among other things, the complex relationship between land uses (sometimes competing), the objectives of various policies and legislative requirements, locations with projected growth pressures, heritage protection and climate variability impacts.

There is an opportunity to bring each of these issues to conclusion by developing a Waterfront Management Strategy. To achieve this, the NSW Government will work with councils to deliver a strategy that considers the various competing uses of riverfront land and identifies how the integrated planning system can actively respond to manage these pressures.

The NSW Government will:

- prepare and implement a Waterfront Management Strategy for the Murray River;
- require councils to retain setback provisions in local environmental plans to protect the biodiversity, water quality and aesthetic values of the Murray River; and
- require councils to limit ribbon development along the Murray River.

DIRECTION 4.2 Protect the region's environmental assets and biodiversity values

The Riverina-Murray region supports a wide range of environmental assets and native vegetation communities. It is home to over 180 threatened species⁷⁰ and 11 threatened ecological communities, four of which are identified as critically endangered. The region is also home to a collection of important environmental assets located along the Murray River, which have high ecological value and cultural significance (see Figure 17).⁷¹

Many of the region's natural features are already subject to a high level of regulation to protect environmental values. Land use planning can assist by indicating locations where these high environmental values are likely to occur. Strategic planning can help

Review of Murray River Planning Controls

The Department of Planning and Environment commissioned a study to review the planning controls applicable to the Murray River. The study provided a consolidated overview of the legislation applicable to the river and the issues affecting it and its users, and recommended a process for moving forward.

The study identified the importance of continuing the use of river setback provisions to protect riverine values and provide a wide range of benefits to the environment. The study will form part of the evidence base required to support the review of the *Murray Regional Environmental Plan No. 2 - Riverine Land*.

The Living Murray Initiative: Icon sites along the Murray River

The Living Murray Initiative⁷² was established to help improve the health of the Murray River by recovering water for six icon sites. These sites were chosen for their high ecological and economic value as well as their cultural significance.

Two of these icon sites are located in the Riverina-Murray: the Barmah (VIC)-Millewa and Gunbower (VIC)-Koondrook-Perricoota forests. These forests support both the largest and second largest river red gum forests in Australia⁷³ and are listed as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

In 2010, the NSW Government declared the Millewa forest as a new national park, conserving the largest area of river red gums in the world. The forest is being actively restored through the removal of regulating structures, and by delivering increased environmental flows.

provide the right regulatory environment to avoid or minimise impacts to these values from the outset.

Locations with a high probability of containing high environmental values are identified in Figure 17. High environmental value assets identified in the Riverina-Murray include:

- areas protected for conservation, including national parks, state flora reserves and Crown reserves that connect biodiversity in extensively cleared landscapes;
- native vegetation of high conservation value, including over-cleared vegetation types and vegetation within over-cleared landscapes;
- threatened species, population or ecological communities, represented as threatened ecological communities such as vegetation of high conservation value;
- wetlands and lagoons, such as the Ramsar-listed Werai, Koondrook and Millewa wetlands, and Fivebough and Tuckerbil swamps;⁷⁴ and
- areas of geological significance, such as karst landscapes like Yarrangobilly Caves and Cooleman Plain Karst.⁷⁵

Groundwater-dependent ecosystems and aquatic habitats also have high environmental values. Maps of these areas are available from the Department of Primary Industries.

Explanatory note: Environmental Assets map

The high environmental values identified in Figure 17 relate to natural features that have existing protections under legislation, regulation, policy or intergovernmental agreement.

Some areas, not identified on the map, including terrestrial and aquatic environments, may still require environmental assessment.

The data used to identify high environmental values in this draft Plan is intended to provide a regional-level overview for the purposes of strategic planning. This data will continue to be updated as new information becomes available. Interested parties should contact relevant agencies, including the Office of Environment and Heritage, Local Land Services and the Department of Primary Industries, for current data and further support.

ACTION 4.2.1 Facilitate improved access to quality information relating to high environmental values, to avoid, minimise and mitigate the impacts of development on significant environmental assets

Currently, the availability of local-scale, field-validated vegetation mapping varies across the region.

Field-verified vegetation mapping is used to identify, protect and manage environmental assets at a local scale, and to validate any new growth areas. Areas identified for new or more intensive development can then be located to avoid or mitigate potential impacts on these values. Where it is not possible to avoid impacts, councils will be required to consider how impacts can be managed through planning controls or other environmental management mechanisms such as biodiversity offsets.

The *NSW Biodiversity Offsets Policy for Major Projects* applies to all biodiversity in NSW, including aquatic biodiversity. All other offsets



Breer Swamp,
Murrumbidgee River,
Berrigan, courtesy of
Office of Environment
and Heritage

or compensation requirements are covered by the Department of Primary Industries' *Policy and Guidelines for Fish Habitat Conservation and Management* (updated in 2013).

The Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries has completed key fish habitat mapping for the entire State. This can be used to identify sensitive waterways and riparian lands within the region. In order to protect significant aquatic environmental values, the final Regional Plan should identify key fish habitats, riparian lands and wetlands and establish policies and strategies to protect these areas.

The Office of Environment and Heritage will continue to work in partnership with councils to validate or field-verify environmental data for planning purposes, and to identify biodiversity information gaps. When preparing local planning strategies and amending local environmental plans, councils will need to consider appropriate measures to protect key environmental assets.

In areas identified as having high environmental value, including those identified in Figure 17, the NSW Government will work with councils to protect biodiversity by:

- creating the right regulatory environment and implementing appropriate measures to conserve validated high environmental values, including through the application of planning controls and environmentally sensitive mapping in local environmental plans;
- developing local strategies to avoid and minimise potential impacts arising from development in areas of high environmental value, and subsequently considering appropriate mechanisms to identify offsets or other mitigation mechanisms for unavoidable impacts; and
- identifying and assessing the potential impacts on biodiversity and establishing plans to manage offsets, or, at the earliest stage of the planning approvals process, using appropriate assessment methodologies.

The NSW Government will also work to continuously update information about – and map – high environmental values to assist

decision-making. It will continue to make this information publicly available, including through the use of the Planning Viewer.⁷⁶

ACTION 4.2.2 Maintain healthy waterways and wetlands, including downstream environments

Water quality is an important factor influencing the ability of waterways and aquifers to sustain healthy aquatic ecosystems. The Department of Primary Industries' *Policy and Guidelines for Fish Habitat Conservation and Management* (2013) provide guidance, and assist in managing and protecting our important aquatic resources.

New and enlarged developments need to be appropriately located, designed, constructed and managed to minimise impacts, including downstream impacts, on key fish habitats. The NSW Government's Water Quality and River Flow Objectives are a resource councils should use to guide catchment and local strategic plans.

Key fish habitats are those marine, estuarine and freshwater habitats that are important for the preservation of fish communities and for the ongoing productivity of recreational and commercial fishing and the aquaculture industries. Key fish habitats have been mapped by the Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries and along with the fish community status and aquatic threatened species distribution maps, will be used by councils during strategic planning and when they are developing local environmental plans.

The NSW Government will require that councils:

- use appropriate provisions to protect water catchment areas and groundwater sources from potential impacts from development. Any development should have a neutral or beneficial effect on water quality; and
- minimise the impacts of development on fish, fish habitat, aquaculture, commercial and recreational fishing, and waterways (including watercourses, wetlands and riparian lands), and meet the Water Quality and River Flow Objectives.

DIRECTION 4.3 Increase the region's resilience to natural hazards

Climate change poses significant risk for the region's ecosystems, agricultural productivity, and the sustainability of rural communities.

In December 2014, the NSW Government released climate projections and impact information at scales relevant to local decision-makers.⁷⁷ Projections indicate the region will be affected by altered rainfall patterns; a drier and hotter climate; and more intense bushfires, droughts and floods (caused by intense rainfall events) to 2050 and beyond (see box).

Some of the most vulnerable ecosystems in Australia are located in the Riverina-Murray

region and are expected to be significantly affected by climate change, for example:

- the rangelands will experience heat stress, reduced rainfall, intense flood events and vegetation adaptability;
- the alpine areas will experience the loss of snow cover, reduced melt waters and invasion by exotic species; and
- the inland freshwater and groundwater systems will be subject to drought, over-allocation and altered timing of floods.

Agricultural productivity is likely to be significantly affected by climate change due to decreased rainfall and increased dry periods (drought). Farmers are already preparing for and managing severe cyclic variations to water by improving irrigation, water trading, the use of modern machinery, climate forecasting, crop and animal genetics and marketing.

Land use planning is a factor influencing when and how the potential impacts of natural hazards can be identified, considered and managed over time.

Potential Climate Change Effects on the Riverina-Murray

The region is likely to be one of the most severely affected by a changing climate in NSW.⁷⁸ A drier and warmer climate will result in:

- increased evaporation; increased occurrence of heat waves; and an increase in hot days, extreme winds and fire risk;
- potential for increases in seasonal extremes, particularly rainfall events;
- an overall annual reduction in rainfall, with the rainfall patterns projected to vary across the region – a decrease in spring and an increase in summer and autumn;
- increased short and intense rainfall events, resulting in increased localised flooding events from smaller urban streams and urban drainage systems;
- a projected increase in maximum temperatures in the near future (2020-2039) by 0.4 to 1.0°C and in the far future (2060-79) by 1.6 to 2.5°C;
- a projected increase in minimum temperatures in the near future by 0.4 to 0.8°C and in the far future by 1.3 to 0.4°C;
- a projected increase in average fire weather days in summer and spring; and
- a projected increase in severe fire weather days in summer and spring.

Combined climatic changes are likely to affect natural systems, species and ecosystems, and those that cannot adapt are likely to decline, contract or become extinct.

ACTION 4.3.1 Review and map natural hazard risks to inform land use planning decisions

Understanding the nature and location of hazards in relation to the location of communities and development is an important part of strategic planning. Most councils currently include hazard mapping, such as flood prone land mapping in local environmental plans, which provides governments, developers and landowners with a level of certainty about site constraints and risks.

Mapping is currently based on the best available information, which in some cases is quite limited and inconsistently applied, forcing councils to rely on historical data and individual site assessments. A more strategic approach to mapping is required, including progressively updating regional hazard datasets and communicating with councils about the availability of updated data.

Managing flooding is an important priority for the NSW Government and councils.⁷⁹ The Office of Environment and Heritage provides both financial and technical support to councils



Left: Pine Plantation, courtesy of Tumut Shire Council
 Middle: Rice production in the Riverina, courtesy of SunRice
 Right: Tumut 3 Power Station, Talbingo, courtesy of Snowy Hydro Limited

so they can develop and implement floodplain risk management plans to manage flood risk in local communities.

Bushfire hazards and risks are identified on maps of bushfire-prone land that are prepared by councils and certified by the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service. The extent of bushfire-prone land may increase with climate change and it is prudent that existing mapping is reviewed and monitored at regular intervals.

To reduce the community's exposure to flood hazards, the NSW Government will require councils to:

- update and implement new flood planning levels (where necessary) using updated flood mapping from floodplain risk management plans; and
- update flood planning area maps in local environmental plans, using updated information from endorsed floodplain risk management plans.

The NSW Government will:

- update and share current information on environmental assets and natural hazards with councils to inform planning decisions.

ACTION 4.3.2 Support communities to build resilience to the impacts of natural hazards and climate change

A systematic and coordinated approach is necessary to manage climate change risks. Communities in the region need skills and knowledge about the issue, and need to be prepared with adaptive measures across the economic, social, environmental and infrastructure sectors to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The NSW Government can help the region to prepare for climate change through land use planning, investment in technology, infrastructure and education. The NSW Government's strategic plan, *NSW 2021*, commits to assisting local communities to minimise the impacts of climate change and build resilience to future extreme events and hazards.⁸⁰

Riverina-Murray Integrated Regional Vulnerability Assessment

In 2012, the NSW Government, in partnership with the University of Technology, Sydney, conducted a collaborative planning process with local communities and other stakeholders across the Riverina-Murray to identify and better understand regional vulnerabilities and emerging risks from a changing climate. This work is known as the Integrated Regional Vulnerability Assessment.⁸¹

This project provides a strong evidence base to inform the Riverina-Murray Enabling Regional Adaptation Project and will identify adaptation pathways and opportunities to minimise climate change impacts on local communities. It will help to identify responses to vulnerabilities and will inform government service delivery at a regional and sub-regional scale.



The Office of Environment and Heritage will continue to distribute information about managing and protecting vulnerable ecosystems. Through local environmental plans, councils can recognise and prevent development pressures in and adjacent to vulnerable areas.

The NSW Government will require councils to reduce the community's exposure to natural hazards by:

- incorporating best available hazard information into local planning controls;
- prohibiting new urban releases in high flood hazard areas and designated waterways, consistent with floodplain risk management plans;
- implementing the findings of flood studies, modelling and floodplain risk management plans, for example, by including amendments to planning instruments and incorporating findings into local strategic plans; and
- locating developments away from areas of known high biodiversity value, and high bushfire and flooding hazards.

The NSW Government will:

- consider the outcomes of the regional climate change adaption planning program to inform future land use planning decisions;
- adopt a whole-of-government approach to information exchange, to support climate change adaptation and preparedness; and
- work with councils to understand and respond to climate-related risks by applying and communicating fine-scale climate information to support decision-making.

ACTION 4.3.3 Minimise the potential impacts of naturally occurring asbestos on communities

Naturally occurring asbestos with potential impacts from ground disturbing activities occur in the Riverina-Murray, primarily in the Gundagai and Coolac Serpentine Belt areas, including the local government areas of Cootamundra, Junee, Gundagai, Tumut and Tumbarumba.⁸²

Naturally occurring asbestos only poses a health risk when elevated levels of fibres are released into the air, either by human activities or by natural weathering, and the fibres are inhaled.

The Local Government and Shires Association of NSW has developed a *Model Asbestos Policy* on behalf of the Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities. The policy has been developed to help councils formulate asbestos policies and to promote a consistent approach to asbestos management.

The NSW Government will:

- require councils that are affected by areas of naturally occurring asbestos to use appropriate approaches to manage the risks of disturbance.

Glossary

Agribusiness

The group of industries that deal with agricultural produce and services required in farming, including the production, processing, storage, and distribution of farm commodities, equipment and related products.

Agritourism

The act of visiting a working farm or other farm or food-related business (including restaurants, markets, produce outlets and natural attractions) for enjoyment, education or active participation in activities and events.

Biodiversity certification

A streamlined biodiversity assessment process for areas marked for development at the strategic planning stage, including a range of options for offsetting impacts on biodiversity.

Biodiversity corridor

An area of land identified to connect flora and fauna populations, separated by human developments and activities, for the purpose of increasing the biodiversity of an area.

Biosecurity

The procedures and measures employed to protect the economy, environment and public health from negative impacts associated with pests, diseases and weeds.

Community strategic plan

The long term strategic plan for the future of a local government area. It reflects the aspirations, vision and long term objectives of the community and is informed by key local plans and policies as well as government policy.

Ecotourism

The act of responsible travel to natural areas and places that conserves the environment, sustains the wellbeing of the local community, and involves interpretation and education.

Appendix A - Centres Classification Definition

Regional Cities

- Have the largest commercial component of any location in the surrounding region.
- Provide a full range of higher-order services including business, office and retail uses with arts, culture, recreation and entertainment centres.
- Generally have a population of 30,000 or more and are expected to be a focus for growth over the next 20 years.
- Service the wider community through principal referral hospitals, tertiary education services and major regional airports.
- Have economic roles that are significant to the entire population catchment.
- Have opportunities for housing growth and choice.
- Have centres that may not fulfil all of the above criteria but may substitute economic roles and population levels with an important geographical role within a region.
- Have a different population and economic profile, depending on their location, surrounding assets and development history.

Centre Name	LGA	Category	2016 Population	Centre Population (ABS Urban Centre Locality) ⁸³
Wagga Wagga	Wagga Wagga	Regional City	64,950	52,042
Albury	Albury	Regional City	51,600	45,627
Griffith	Griffith	Regional City	25,650	17,616

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