

Please contact

Mr Tony Donoghue

Council Ref.

TD:GOB:W.01-04 (SC435)

Your Ref.



T: 02 6930 1800

F: 02 6927 3168

P.O. Box 101, Coolamon, NSW 2701

E: council@coolamon.nsw.gov.au

W: www.coolamon.nsw.gov.au

ABN: 32 573 173 265

8 July 2016



General Manager
Planning & Environment
Director Regions, Western
P O Box 58
DUBBO NSW 2830

Dear Sir

RE: SUBMISSION TO THE DRAFT RIVERINA MURRAY REGIONAL PLAN

Coolamon Shire Council have considered the Draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan and would like to make the following comments:

- The Plan is a relatively well researched document that includes significant input from all levels of government and sections of the community.
- It has identified the importance that agriculture plays in this region and acknowledges the important interconnectivity between the Regional Centres and smaller supporting communities that agricultural production relies on. Coolamon Shire believes this is an important acknowledgement in the Strategic Plan and should be interwoven into decision making about our future in the region.
- Some of the shortcomings associated with this Plan is that it fails to identify the importance of the Murrumbidgee River in the vision for the region, not only for its social and tourism qualities, but for the provision of water and therefore resources to the MIA. The issues of water security is an important national debate and it appears to have been left off this draft Plan. Outcomes associated with water access and availability are seen as a significant issue to the region
- The Plan points out some generic demographic information that includes an ageing population and increased population migration to the major centres with static or declining numbers in the rural areas. Council has questioned this broad brush approach in the past as it does not apply to the Coolamon Shire and can be perceived by some State departments and investors as a negative issue across the region rather than drilling down to specifics as they apply to communities. Therefore some positives in this Plan are the intention to use accurate population projection data to understand population trends.

- From a regional perspective, this projected decline in population does not equate to a decline in productivity. In fact the reverse is occurring with Agricultural improvements therefore the infrastructure necessary to undertake continued agricultural production, must be maintained to standards appropriate to the needs of all users. Rural and Regional areas are losing their voice and therefore no one sees the importance of maintaining the supporting infrastructure.
- For this reason it is imperative to support Local Government as the closest level to the people. Local Government is acutely aware of their community's needs such as social, infrastructure, advocacy etc., and can support communities or remove obstacles to improvement. An example of this is the Regional Freight Transport Plan developed by REROC.
- The protection of prime agricultural land is important and should be a priority. This can be supported through the right to farm policies and appropriate legislation. In the same breath Council needs to continue to be flexible in determining and permitting agricultural based businesses that support local community growth.
- There are opportunities for value adding to the agricultural resource by developing tourism, manufacturing and supporting industries. This must be balanced between the need to maintain agricultural land to ensure that the productivity base remains.
- The current broad acre aggregation of farm practices increases efficiency but to the detriment of the environment and communities. Environmental areas need to be included and offset as part of the aggregating practices. Similarly Communities need to be protected and encouraged to grow.

SUMMARY

The document adequately represents a vision for the region as it pertains to Coolamon Shire Council and we are supportive of it moving forward. The above comments are for your review and where appropriate, hopefully, inclusion into the final document.

Yours sincerely



Tony Donoghue
General Manager