

Quote No L17/351 - 11/58  
FV:LB

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13 March 2017

ABN 84 873 116 132

Director Regions - Western  
PO Box 58  
DUBBO NSW 2830

Dear Sir/Madam

**Submission in relation to draft Far West Regional Plan**

Broken Hill City Council would like to thank the Department of Planning and Environment for the opportunity to lodge this submission in relation to the exhibited draft Far West Regional Plan and for explaining the draft document to the local community at a meeting held in Broken Hill on the 8 February 2017.

Council acknowledges that an enormous amount of effort went into the preparation of this plan and appreciates that it aims to promote and secure economic opportunities, environmental and social wellbeing of the people living in the Far West of NSW and Broken Hill in particular.

This submission contains constructive comments aimed at increasing the goals and objectives of the draft Far West Regional Plan in order to secure and enhance the future of Broken Hill and surrounding regional areas.

**Goal 1: A diverse economy with efficient transport and Infrastructure networks**

Direction 1: Grow the economic potential of the agribusiness sector – Agree with actions.

Direction 2: Increase value-adding opportunities – Agree with actions.

Direction 3: Sustainably manage mineral resources – Agree with actions.

Direction 4: Diversify energy supply through renewable energy generation – Agree with actions.

Direction 5: Promote tourism opportunities – Agree with actions, but propose amendment to text, removing reference to Broken Hill City Council's film studio precinct. This project is no longer being carried out and the premises was recently sold to a private party.

Direction 6: Unlock economic potential through improved freight transport and other enabling infrastructure – **Additional action proposed:** Identify, coordinate and prioritise the delivery of projects that enhance the economic productivity of rail networks.

Cont'd...

Motivation: The draft Regional Plan focusses predominantly on road infrastructure, the importance of rail transport should not be overlooked and thoroughly be investigated.

Direction 7: Improve regional airport connections - **Additional action proposed:** Work with stakeholders to investigate and prioritise projects to develop Broken Hill Airport to be a major inland airport in regional NSW.

Motivation: As noted on page 28 of the draft plan, Broken Hill Airport has considerable strategic value to regional NSW as it is the only airport within a 300km radius that can cater for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, medical specialists and industry experts within mining and associated industry.

With upcoming major development such as Silverton Windfarm, North Mine Recommencement project, Hawsons Iron Ore Mine and Murray River to Broken Hill water supply pipeline, the importance of a suitable major inland airport cannot be overemphasised.

Direction 8: Enhance access to telecommunications – **Additional action proposed:** Identify and coordinate options to increase access to and use of high-speed internet services and related technologies.

Motivation: As discussed in the draft plan, a significant number of homes in the region do not have internet access at home. Currently, large areas of South Broken Hill do not have access to internet or the service is very slow and not able to support current internet based services and technologies.

The lack of suitable internet services is a major constraint for the region. It hinders distance education, making it difficult for training providers to reach students and increases the costs of trade and providing professional development of staff for local organisations and businesses. As noted in the draft plan (page 32), high-speed internet services are economic drivers for agribusiness, mining and tourism services.

As the NBN and other networks (such as the 4G mobile network) are rolled-out across the region, support will be required to promote individual engagement and use of these technologies and the services they can deliver.

**Additional action proposed:** Identify and implement measures to prevent the disruption of new technology development, distribution and implementation in the region.

Motivation: The draft plan (on page 32) identifies the significant potential benefit presented by new technologies for freight and passenger transport and agricultural and mining production. Also identified is that infrastructure development has the potential to jeopardise use of technology in the future. There is however, no action under Direction 8 that addresses these issues.

Direction 9: Sustainably manage water resources for economic opportunities – Agree with actions.

Direction 10: Enhance the productivity of employment land – Agree with actions.

Direction 11: Enhance the self-determination of Aboriginal communities – Agree with action.

Direction 12: Support new planning and land management arrangements – Agree with action.

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## **Goal 2: An exceptional and distinctive natural environment**

Direction 13: Protect the region's environmental assets – Agree with actions.

**Comment- Actions 13.1 and 13.2:** Broken Hill City Council strongly supports and recommends the mapping of the Menindee Lakes system as an area with high environmental value. Council supports controls being placed on relevant EPIs and other relevant State strategic planning documents to prevent inappropriate development or activity that would endanger the biodiversity and environmental value of the lakes system.

Menindee Lakes play an important role in the region's biodiversity. Mapping Menindee Lakes as an area of high environmental value will prevent incompatible land uses and protect the rich biodiversity of the lakes. Relevant planning instruments should reflect both the system's environmental value and its function as a water storage facility.

Direction 14: Manage and conserve water resources for the environment – Agree with actions.

Direction 15: Increase resilience to natural hazards and climate change – Agree with actions.

## **Goal 3: Strong and connected communities**

Direction 16: Manage change in the region's settlements – Agree with actions.

Direction 17: Improve access to local health and aged care – Agree with actions.

Direction 18: Enhance access to skills and training – Agree with proposed actions in general.

**Comment – Action 18.1:** Council is of the view that one of the greatest barriers to education and training in regional and rural NSW is the unavailability of funding. Tertiary education in regional and remote NSW has become unsustainable, and the impact on the local community is severe.

Funding has been cut to local TAFE institutions to such a degree that no trade courses can be taught, only short courses. The local TAFE in Broken Hill previously taught trades such as automotive mechanic, fitter and turner, carpenter, electrician, boilermaker etc. It is undesirable that those well-equipped workshops now sit empty and underutilised. Those who can afford to, must now move out of the region for four or more years to study at a university or TAFE in more densely populated areas, incurring additional expenses such as accommodation, travel etc. to study these or other higher tertiary qualifications.

Strong and connected communities will never be achieved if state and federal governments do not re-evaluate and change their approach to funding regional and remote NSW education, especially with regard to tertiary education.

Direction 19: Improve public and community transport **Action 19.2 – amendment proposed:** Work with local transport operators and community transport providers to investigate a range of delivery models for flexible and affordable transport and determine suitability for different areas.

Motivation: Affordable rail transport is especially important considering the low socio-economic status of Broken Hill and the large number of senior citizens depending on

specialised medical treatment in Adelaide and Sydney. Rail transport is the preferred method of transport for people on the low income bracket.

Affordable rail transport also makes strong positive influences on economic development and tourism.

Direction 20: Manage and conserve water resources for communities – Agree with actions.

Direction 21: Increase housing choice – Agree with actions.

Direction 22: Improve the availability of affordable housing and worker accommodation options – Agree with actions.

Direction 23: Manage rural residential development – Agree with actions.

Direction 24: Create healthy built environments – Agree with actions.

Direction 25: Protect cultural heritage – Agree with actions.

Direction 26: Enhance planning between cross-border communities – Agree with actions.

**Comment:** Council strongly supports the concept of cross-border strategies. The actions under this direction should also investigate and develop (where appropriate) strategies and relationships between the South Australian Government and Broken Hill and the unincorporated area in NSW.

Yours faithfully



JAMES RONCON  
GENERAL MANAGER